

**BSEC MID-TERM ACTION PLAN
FOR COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

The BSEC Member States:

Fully aware of their responsibility to protect and preserve the environment for the benefit of present and future generations, aiming at sustainable development in the BSEC Member States,

Acknowledging the need for close cooperation among them based on the regional approach for the protection of their environment,

Considering that the aim of BSEC is to achieve a greater unity among its Members for the purpose of promoting economic, technological and social progress,

Confirming their commitment to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment in the BSEC Region,

Recognizing that the establishment of cooperation among the BSEC Member States shall contribute to giving higher priority to climate change issues in national and regional agenda and promoting the investment in green economy which will bring positive changes in socio-economic development,

Being aware that the promotion of green economy concept, which is in line with the response to climate change, will assure the sustainable development of the BSEC region and maintain a long-term development process to the benefit of all,

Determined to act within the spirit of the United Nations Declaration on Environment and Development (Rio Declaration) and Agenda 21 and in consistency with the framework, the priorities and the targets set by the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Sustainable Development Goals and outputs of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20), as well as with relevant rules of the international law, with a view to achieve progress in the protection of their environment,

Appreciating the progress that has been made towards protecting the Black Sea ecosystems and rehabilitating its marine and coastal environment through the actions taken by the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution for the implementation of the Bucharest Convention,

Recalling the adoption of the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution in 1992 and its Protocols,

Have agreed as follows:

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

The BSEC Action Plan for Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection is a general framework to promote cooperation in the field of environment among BSEC Member States. The Plan determines the main directions of environmental cooperation among BSEC Member States.

The main objectives of the Plan are:

- to sustain the efforts of the BSEC Member States in achieving a clean and healthy environment and to contribute to the environment of the quality of life and to provide long term prosperity to the BSEC Region;
- to strengthen solidarity among the BSEC Member States in preserving their common heritage and resources for the benefit of present and future generations;
- to avoid duplication of efforts, with other regional organizations and initiatives acting in the region, or in neighboring regions;
- to promote integration of environmental protection and biological diversity into the economic and social policies of the BSEC Member States;
- to protect the environment, including preservation and management of the natural resources and Protected Areas, by establishing a protected areas network among the BSEC Member States, in line with the principle of sustainable development.

II. MAIN DIRECTIONS FOR COOPERATION

Promoting incorporation of environmentally important approaches in the economic and social development;

Integration of sustainable development into the sectoral policies;

Developing a harmonized environmental legislation in the BSEC Member States, based on the best practice;

Improving functioning of the institutional network of BSEC and coordination with regional organizations, institutions and initiatives, in particular with the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution and International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River;

Strengthening cooperation in the Black Sea region in pollution prevention and biodiversity conservation with particular attention to the areas not covered by the Bucharest Convention;

Supporting the development of plans for the mitigation and adaptation measures to address the impact of climate change, including through promoting regional projects and organizing workshops;

Promoting the use of economic incentives and tools in the field of the environmental protection in order to ensure funding for projects of mutual interest;

Promoting development of innovative, environmentally friendly, wise use of natural resources and green technology;

Establishing a BSEC Information Exchange Mechanism for the Environmental Protection;

Establishing a scientific forum in order to provide the exercise for policy makers in the adoption of effective measures for conservation and preservation of the Black Sea ecosystem.

III. PRIORITY FIELDS OF ACTIVITIES

Regional Cooperation

- Organize and support Meetings of the Ministers of Environment for the promoting of the cooperation at the highest decision-making level;
- Enhance the role of the BSEC Working Group on Environmental Protection through:
 - a) nominating national focal points with participation of experts on environmental protection and economic legislation for coordinating the activities of the BSEC Working Group on Environmental Protection;
 - b) strengthening the role of BSEC Permanent International Secretariat in the coordination of the activities of the Working Group at the regional level;
 - c) organizing regular meetings for the BSEC Working Group on Environmental Protection at least once a year. The draft agenda will be provided by the Country-Coordinator;
 - d) closely cooperating with other relevant Working Groups in BSEC, such as: the Working Group on Energy and the Working Group on Cooperation in Emergency Assistance, as well as the Working Groups of the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution;
 - e) periodically updating the Terms of References of the Working Group;
 - f) exploring ways of developing an Ecotourism Network in the BSEC region in coordination with the BSEC Working Group on Cooperation in Tourism, and if appropriate with the other BSEC Working Groups;
 - g) streamlining the BSEC activities towards exploring investment programs directed at preservation of the region's environment, as well as the development of green technologies;
 - h) seeking ways of complementary cooperation with the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution;

- i) intensifying the control of the transboundary spreading of dangerous substances in the environment of the BSEC region;
- j) providing the mechanisms of integrated management of the rivers' ecosystems of international importance which are covered by the sphere of BSEC activities;
- k) carrying out joint scientific-technical research and programs;
- l) elaborating and executing co-operation projects;
- m) exchanging officials, experts, researchers and members of non-governmental organizations;
- n) organizing training programs, meetings, conferences and symposia;
- o) cooperating in other issues of mutual interest.

International Cooperation

The BSEC Working Group on Environmental Protection shall cooperate with the relevant bodies of UN in the field of environment, such as UNECE, UNCSD, UNEP, UNDP, UN FAO, UNESCO, the European Commission and with other related international organizations.

Exchange of Information on Environmental Legislation

The BSEC Working Group on Environmental Protection shall regularly exchange information on the new developments in environmental legislation and progress towards protecting the environment with more strict regulations.

Protection of the Black Sea Marine and Coastal Environment

The BSEC Member States shall support the activities of the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution in implementing the Bucharest Convention (1992) requirements on the protection of the Black Sea environment.

Environmental Education and Training

The BSEC Working Group on Environmental Protection shall explore the means to design appropriate joint environmental projects, programs, workshops and scientific conferences, taking into consideration the framework of UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

The BSEC Member States will offer technical level courses in the various related environmental fields.

The Member States are encouraged to promote the BSEC activities in the field of environmental protection in their territories.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The Working Group on Environmental Protection, as a permanent subsidiary organ of BSEC, shall monitor the implementation of the Action Plan and submit regular progress reports to the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and to the Ministers of Environment of the BSEC Member States. The practical steps envisaged to that end include:

- a) The Country-Coordinator of the Working Group on Environmental Protection, in cooperation with the Chairman-in-Office and the support of the BSEC PERMIS, shall prepare a Work Program, to be presented for consideration and appropriate action to the next Working Group meeting. The Work Program should include a list of ongoing and planned activities in the context of the Action Plan, with contact details of persons and institutions in charge, provided by the BSEC Member States.
- b) Whenever necessary and practical, upon the initiative of the Country-Coordinator and the Chairman-in-Office, an ad-hoc meeting of high level officials may be convened to assess the implementation of the Action Plan, to update the Work Program, to prepare an interim report for the Working Group meetings and to propose new activities.
- c) The Working Group on Environmental Protection will engage, on a regular basis, in exchange of information and practical cooperation with other BSEC Working Groups in related spheres of activity in order to provide better coordination and to create synergies for the implementation of this Action Plan.
- d) The European Commission is encouraged to attend the meetings of the Working Group on Environmental Protection in order to exchange views and create possible interrelations between the Action Plan and the programs and financial instruments developed by the European Union in the field of environmental protection on the mutually beneficial BSEC-EU equitable cooperation basis.

V. REVISION OF THE ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan is subject of revision by the Meetings of the Ministers of Environment, to be endorsed by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States.