

Increasing stability and security: Improving the environment footprint on energy related activities in the OSCE region (BSEC experience)

*Alexander Bakalov
Executive Manager
Permanent International Secretariat
Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation
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In the globalized world of today, stability and security defer from the original perception when OSCE was conceived. The stakeholders of OSCE are also different. The challenges and threats of today are different from those of the past.

BSEC Organization is also different from the time it was conceived. There is a clear cut reflection of the awareness of the Member countries of the new challenges and threats to the region reflected in the documents adopted by its forums.

Climate change and environment protection has been defined from the outset as priority field of cooperation within BSEC. Today, we see it as a key factor for sustainable economic development of the countries in the region.

Marking the 20th Anniversary of the BSEC Organization, the **Summit Declaration of Heads of States and governments (Istanbul, June 2012)** point explicitly to the “implementation of sustainable development strategies based on *balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activities and the protection of the environment*”. Further it stipulate the need to “incorporate environmental approaches in the economic and social development programs of the BSEC Member States with particular attention to the promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency, development of environmentally friendly energy technologies and use of environmental impact assessments for all significant projects.” It couldn’t be more conducive to this Forum’s thematic.

BSEC is armed now with a **new Economic Agenda towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership** (adopted in June, 2012, Belgrade and endorsed by the Summit) where a Framework of action in the Environmental Protection and Conservation is defined as Priority (5). It stipulates intra-alia incorporating the ecosystem-based approach in the economic and social development programmes of the Member States and strengthening the cooperation with international organizations and institutions, such as UNECE, UNCSD, UNEP, UNDP, UN FAO, UNESCO and the World Bank. I’m happy to note that BSEC is maintaining close relationship with the Office of Economic and Environmental Activities of the **OSCE** through exchange of information on activities, as well as participation in events.

What international organisations in general and regional organisations in particular could do in regard to improving the **environment footprint on energy related activities in the Black sea region?**

- raise awareness in the Member States – governmental sector, business community, academic community and the general public;
- develop international/intra-regional cooperation;
- promote concrete projects, capable of having multiplying effects in the economies of the Member States.

Raise awareness:

Last year BSEC has adopted a Public Communication Strategy. Communication is essential for any organization to present its objectives, works, projects and achievements in a clear and coherent manner to its stakeholders and ultimately to the general public. The multi-faceted character of the environment protection and its correlation with most of the cooperation activities need to reach broader as possible public and stakeholders.

Develop international/intra-regional cooperation:

The new BSEC Economic Agenda stipulates enhancing the cooperation between the Organization and other regional Stakeholders intra-alia the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, in order to avoid duplication of activities, as well as with the programmes and initiatives for the Mediterranean, Caspian and the Danube basins, with the view to develop region oriented projects of mutual interest.

Implementation of common projects:

1. An important environment and energy related project, launched in 2010, is the joint BSEC-GTZ (Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit of Germany) project aimed at developing the legal framework for a green economy in the BSEC Member States. The project is in a phase of completion but there are suggestions to extend it so to embrace more BSEC countries.

2. The BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs has adopted a Joint Declaration on Combating Climate Change in the wider Black Sea Area (Thessaloniki, November 2010). As a follow up, a project on introducing climate change in the environmental strategy for the protection of the Black Sea is soon to be launched, jointly with the UNDP.

3. Upon a Decision of the Ministers responsible for Environment, BSEC Members countries are in a process of establishing an information exchange mechanism for environmental protection. There is also an on-going study on the possibilities of strengthening cooperation with other organizations, institutions and partners on issues related to the protection and rehabilitation of the Black Sea marine environment.

4. The UNEP Regional Office for Europe is in a process of elaborating a project for a strategy on promoting the green economy in the BSEC Region. It is in a final stage and the discussion on it could start within the current Ukrainian CIO of BSEC.

The financial resources available to BSEC are rather limited. The Organization is open for dialogue and cooperation with international organizations and donors to realize the targeted goals to improve the environment footprint of the region.

Last but not least BSEC has recognized the European Union as a strategic partner (in the last Summit Declaration). The dialogue between the two organizations gain new dynamic and we expect practical steps to follow it. Revitalizing the partnership in environment protection within the Black Sea Synergy could be encouraging in this direction.

The current Preparatory Meeting of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum is important for create synergies between the activities undertaken in different international organizations. We are trustful that the Forum's Concluding Meeting to take place in Prague in September 2013 would lead to practical recommendations to the OSCE and BSEC participating States in improving the environment footprint on energy related activities in our common area.

Wishing success to the Ukraine's Presidency of OSCE and its rotational Chairmanship of BSEC Organization.