

Round Table Discussion on
“A Challenge or Obstacle for the Future?
Climate Change & Environmental Strategy for the Black Sea”
Athens, on 19 March 2015

Honorable guests,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all to today's round table discussion, in which we will refer to the crucial problem of the climate change and its implications. Climate change is a phenomenon, the results of which we can feel in our every day lives as well as observe on maps and studies conducted worldwide.

The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), being punctual and committed to its duty to deliver scientific approaches and practical outcomes for an ever more understanding and more efficient cooperation among the countries and the people of the Black Sea, returns every year with a new approach of cooperation in our area. One of our major priorities is to promote systematically the sustainable development to our region.

But first of all, allow me to give your some information for ICBSS, especially for our newcomers.

The ICBSS was founded in 1998 as a related body of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), with the obligation to serve as its acknowledged think- tank, which will provide the organization with the appropriate data for consideration.

Moreover ICBSS, throughout its seventeen year operation, continues to fulfill its second function as an independent research and training institution focusing on the wider Black Sea region.

Over the years, ICBSS has evolved past its institutional role to become a dynamic focal point in the wider Black Sea area, capable of bringing closer the scientific and academic community, entrepreneurs, civil society, and creating long-term synergies and networks.

Through the organisation of events, publications and participation in research projects, the ICBSS has succeeded in establishing a continuously evolving network of stakeholders from the wider Black Sea region, the EU, Central Asia and the US.

Today's Round Table is held within the framework of the FP7 Project INCONET Eastern Partnership, to which ICBSS is partner, along with eighteen partners from the EU and the Eastern partnership countries.

Building on the success of previous Inconets, like the Inconet EECA and Inconet Central Asia-South Caucasus, the **Inconet EaP is aiming to promote further the STI dialogue between the EU and the Eastern partnership countries, focusing on three societal challenges of particular importance for the region, climate change, energy and health.** The conclusions of the first Policy Conference on climate change in Yerevan last year, is available for you in our material.

The environmental problems are continuous challenge for the nations. Numerous initiatives have been implemented and others are being studied and evaluated by the specialists. We have seen improvements, but the hazard is still here and it is especially deriving from ignorant countries that are not willing to cooperate and change their harmful to the environment practices.

On the other hand, we need to manage the increasingly extreme disasters as well as to protect energy and public infrastructure. Governments should provide the robust scientific data needed to understand climate change and evaluate the impact of efforts to combat it.

As all global problems however, the problem of climate change and global warming is **more efficient to be approached not only at an international but maybe more importantly, at regional and multinational level.**

Regional cooperation is highly important in this field, as it can help to the adoption of common policies towards the issue and to the exchange of good practices and information.

In this regard, **the countries of the Black Sea region**, although different in terms of size, demographic numbers, development structure and political systems, are joining forces to tackle the issue. The contemporary need to deal with environmental challenges and the consequences of climate change are a perfect incentive for joint and complementary actions. However, it is really encouraging and promising that step-by-step our region includes the environmental dimension to the agenda.

In this framework, we have to highlight the role of **the BSEC Organisation**, which works actively towards enhancing cooperation among countries and better addressing the challenges of environmental governance and sustainability in the Black Sea area.

The **ICBSS** in line with BSEC objectives and priorities has put the environmental aspect high in its agenda, through the organisation of events like the one today, publications and initiatives such as the **“Greening the Black Sea”** which was the motto of the Hellenic BSEC Chairmanship in 2010, that we aim to further enhance, and **the “Green Cluster of Knowledge Institutions of the wider Black Sea area”**, a network

of 25 academic institutions from the BSEC countries to promote the use of “greener” and cleaner technologies in the region.

Concluding, I would like to express my special thanks to **Mr. Sarantis Moschovis** from the B2 Directorate of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Mr. Makrygiannis Deputy Secretary General of PABSEC** for addressing the welcome speeches, **Mr. Aleksander Bakalov Executive Manager of BSEC Organisation** in charge with environment strategy, for being with us today from Istanbul, **Mr. Alexis Chatzimpiros from the CPMR**, **Mr. Stavros Mavrogenis and Mr. Gerasimos Rodotheatos from EKEPEK** and **Ms. Anastasia Vlyzioti from CERISS** for our continuous productive cooperation, as well as the ICBSS Secretariat for the organisation of this event.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very fruitful discussion.

Thank you for your attention.

Dr. Zefi Dimadama