



Statement by Dr. Zefi Diamadama

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Thank you! Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to join the other speakers in expressing my deep appreciation to the Government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic for their excellent organization of this meeting and the warm hospitality we have received in Thessaloniki, a place where history, culture and unique environment come together in an exciting way, pointing to further sustainable development.

For the first time I'm participating in the Council of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the highest level BSEC event and I would like to reassure you that the ICBSS will base its work on the elements continuity, commitment and dedication towards the noble goals of our organization – the BSEC!

Dear Mr. Chairman,

The current BSEC Hellenic Chairmanship has made the promotion of **“Greening the Black Sea”** its **strategic focus**, with an eye to endorsing green growth and sustainable development in a broader cooperation process across existing state borders. I am convinced that such a strategic focus, not only will promote “green entrepreneurship” and sustainable development, but it will lead to a new paradigm, that of **Environmental Governance**. **Towards this direction the ICBSS**, as a regional think tank and a key actor, can contribute in the future.

Black Sea countries are endowed with an **invaluable natural heritage**, but fragile enough structurally and institutionally to be threatened by numerous environmental challenges and threats. The divergent economies of the region and the fragmented sectoral policies that are not compatible with environmental sustainability have accelerated the **environmental degradation** of the area. **However, the case has not been lost yet!** There is an alternative way:

A **new strategy that addresses the impact of climate change** and focuses upon **ecological security**, monitoring, risk analysis, management and long-term safety for the Black Sea environment and its population, in order to attain **gradual reliance on renewable** energy resources and a **better balance** between oil, gas and alternative energy sources.

A **new strategy** that aims to the **integration of the environmental “acquis” in all sectoral policies** in the Black Sea area and to the enhancement of **legitimacy, efficiency, accountability and transparency**, in the framework of **Environmental Governance**.

The EU is a strong ally in this effort, but I think that time has come for all of us to think how to transfer those challenging synergies we have developed through the Black Sea Synergy Program (BSS) into some concrete strategies with feasible results. Moreover, whenever we talk about the BSEC – EU interaction or the EU policies toward the Black Sea, we need to keep in mind that there’s a fascinating **world eastward – China, Japan, the Asian countries** – which shares mutually beneficial interests with the Black Sea region, particularly in the area of energy and transportation routs.

Dear Excellencies,

As all of us know, it is important to integrate that set of ideas so that **our work toward that direction will not end with the term in office of the Hellenic Chairmanship!** To that end, we need to develop **operational programs and policies** that will consider environmental protection as an integral part of economic development and regional policies.

Securing regional resources means creating a setting in which all Black Sea countries will have adequate and uninterrupted energy, water and food supply, in order to avoid crises of capable of ending up to intra- and inter- state political conflicts.

Because of the complexity of these issues and their interconnection with broader regional affairs, we should be **grateful that the Hellenic Chairmanship has taken the lead in promoting a discussion** on them. But at the same time, we need to ensure that these issues will not be ignored at any time in the future.

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished participants,

There’s much work for all of us to make the Black Sea region environmentally safe, stable and economically developed! I would like to assure all of you and specifically the upcoming Romanian Chairmanship that the **ICBSS will further promote synergies across regions by making the environment the core dimension of its endeavour!**

Thank you!