



**Declaration
of the Ministers Responsible for Science and Technology of the BSEC Member States**

Sofia, 9 April 2010

We, the Ministers responsible for Science and Technology of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Member States met in Sofia on 9 April 2010 to assess cooperation in the fields of scientific research and technological development at the end of duration of the BSEC Action Plan on Cooperation in Science and Technology (2005-2009) - *hereinafter referred to as the 'first Action Plan'* - and to chart the way forward by formulating a second BSEC Action Plan for the next four year period.

Guided by BSEC 15th Anniversary Summit Declaration (25 June 2007), which called upon the Member States to deepen cooperation in Science and Technology as one of the priority areas of common interest;

Recognising the significance of the *Athens Declaration* (28 September 2005) and the *Istanbul Statement* (31 October 2007) and following the provisions of the first *BSEC Action Plan (2005-2009)* as key policy documents for the enhancement of the competitive performance of every BSEC Member State and of the Organization as a whole in the fields of scientific research and technological development;

Recalling the Mid-Term Report on the implementation of the first BSEC Action Plan that was approved at our Meeting in Istanbul on 31 October 2007;

Taking into account the assessment of the first Action Plan that was prepared at the end of the four year period of its duration;

Confident that science and technology are major assets for sustainable social and economic development and the BSEC Member States, based on their rich and long-lasting tradition, are willing to devote particular attention for the further development and strengthening of that field, both at national level and in the Organization as a whole;

Desiring to renew the commitment of the BSEC Member States to cooperate in the development of science and technology and to reconfirm the policy orientations for such cooperation, taking into consideration the developments in the policy landscape in the BSEC region;

Reaffirming that science and technology is one of the priority areas for the development of mutually beneficial BSEC-EU interaction and increased EU initiatives aiming at regional cooperation in this field should be further encouraged;

Declare our commitment:

To further strengthen regional cooperation in the fields of scientific research and technological development as a major driving force of dynamic and sustainable economic growth and prosperity for the peoples of the region;

To invest all best efforts in the enhancement of the regional dimension of the cooperation among the BSEC Member States in the agreed areas of action and specific activities, i.e.: (i) human resources; (ii) capacity building; (iii) research infrastructure; and (iv) innovation,

To ensure that the cooperation within the BSEC through benchmarking activities, exchange of good practices, sharing experiences, etc. become instrumental and thus boost the development and implementation of national future-oriented Science and Technology policies.

To initiate joint actions directed toward better utilisation of the existing human and material resources, research infrastructure and administrative capacities through improved access to knowledge, training activities and research programmes, enhanced transnational mobility of scientists and regular exchanges of information and publications, bilateral and regional networking, fellowships and joint scientific events;

To seek innovative ways for combining allocated public expenditure on research and development with private investment, including public-private partnerships for funding specific projects involving transnational cooperation and for disseminating relevant information about procedures for accessing other available financial resources (EU and UN programmes, IFIs, specialised foundations, etc);

To promote a dynamic dialogue among stakeholders in the science and technology community – research organisations, industry, user groups – in order to ensure their cost-effective and result-oriented interaction for the purpose of converting scientific discoveries into innovative, commercially viable products and processes;

To encourage the mobility of students, academic staff and researchers across the BSEC region within the framework of appropriate programmes.

To develop joint research and training programmes between Scientific Institutions and Universities of the BSEC Member States in compliance with their priorities.

To encourage national authorities of the BSEC Member States to provide information, training and other services for project preparation with a view to their submission for funding from international organization institutions (EU, UN, WB, etc) ;

To facilitate closer cooperation in the fields of science and technology with other partners and international organisations and to encourage co-funding schemes in order to formulate and implement regional research projects and to generate new synergies, in particular with the activities carried out under EU programmes and initiatives;

And therefore,

Approve the second *BSEC Action Plan on Cooperation in Science and Technology* (2010-2014) as a means of achieving the goals set forth in this Declaration and as a practical expression of our renewed commitment to regional cooperation in the fields of science and technology;

Agree to convene a mid-term meeting of the Ministers responsible for science and technology of the BSEC Member States to review progress in the implementation of the approved Action Plan and to chart the way forward;

Welcome all other initiatives directed towards strengthening cooperation among Member States and/or with other international organizations in the sphere of science, technology and innovation that are consistent with the broader BSEC objectives;

Commend the Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology, the BSEC PERMIS and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) for their efficient work and dedication towards the implementation of the objectives and priorities set out in the first BSEC Action Plan;

Acknowledge the efforts of ICBSS for the preparation of the initial draft of the second Action Plan and the efficient work of the Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology, the Country-Coordinator, the BSEC PERMIS and the ICBSS for the negotiation and finalization of the second Action Plan.

Express our appreciation and gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria, the BSEC Chairman-in-Office and the Country-Coordinator of the Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology for the successful organization of this Meeting and for their warm hospitality in Sofia.