20 years BSEC: thinking and Re-thinking the Black Sea region’s perspectives in a constantly expanded world

by Dr. Zefi Dimadama

2012 marks the twentieth Anniversary of BSEC, an organisation established to promote, primarily, economic cooperation at a regional and international level. Over the years BSEC has succeeded in enhancing its role amongst the Member States; its related bodies, international and regional organisations such as the EU and the OECD.

Throughout the years, BSEC Member States have clearly set out their priorities in this framework; promoting synergies at a regional level within the context of a wider spectrum of BSEC activities, directly linked to the region’s current challenges and objectives.

From our part, the ICBSS, a related body of BSEC and its acknowledged think tank, in full compliance with BSEC priorities and objectives, has undertaken a number of initiatives for the promotion of further regional cooperation.

On the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of BSEC, the ICBSS focuses on...
a new dimension, the extroversion of the Black Sea area as an influential crossroad between East and West, referring both to territorial and sectoral dimensions and acknowledging the need to shift the debate from the status of “selective closure” to the status of “openness of windows” in the era of Globalization.

In the present, the Black Sea region plays the role of an economic, geo-political and trade hub, connecting Asia with Europe, as an energy trade corridor. At the same time, specific interest for the Black Sea region with respect to energy and security is expressed by major global actors from both sides of the Atlantic (the USA and the EU), the neighboring countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, South Caucasus, the Mediterranean Sea and the Far East (e.g. China, India, et. al.).

Within the context of the 20th Anniversary of BSEC Organization, the ICBSS aims at fostering Sustainable Development and economic cooperation with a view to enhancing stability and energy security in the wider Black Sea region.

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Mr President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I greatly welcome the opportunity to speak at this event here today in front of so many members of civil society representing many millions of people around the world.

I particularly welcome the initiative of President Staffan Nilsson to organise this event because it means we have brought a bit of Brussels to Rio. Thankfully I do not mean the rain, no I am referring to the manner in which we integrate dialogue with our social partners and civil society into our decision making process. I would like to pay tribute to President Nilsson’s personal commitment to making Rio a success.

The immense challenges that the world faces today, the challenges of sustainable economic and social development, require levels of determination and policy coordination that the world has never seen before.

These changes need the ownership and involvement of all levels of society. That is why, more than ever, the European Union privileges the close links with civil society.

Since 2008, the European Union has been facing a severe financial and economic crisis. This crisis is far from over, but we are tackling it with determination and making deep reforms that should ensure the long-term sustainability of our economy, while further integrating the economic and budgetary policies of our 27 member states.

Throughout this process of reform and integration, we attach the greatest importance to working closely with civil society, and to gaining its support for our proposals, notably our long-term agenda for growth, the Europe 2020 strategy.

At the core of this growth agenda, are the objectives to make Europe a smart economy but also a sustainable and inclusive economy. One of its key objectives is to make Europe resource-efficient. This is both an environmental objective and an economic objective. We believe this framework will bring economic opportunities by improving productivity, lowering costs, and boosting competitiveness and innovation.

In this spirit, I warmly welcome that one of the main outcomes of Rio+20 is precisely the agreement on the need for a transition to a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

We believe that the green economy is a key instrument to progress towards more sustainable development.

This means to promote an economy that respects the boundaries of our planet, creates decent jobs, fosters social cohesion, tackles poverty and enhances food security.

An economy based on an efficient management of resources and natural capital and which taps the full ecological and social innovation potential.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I will focus here today on the issues which concern you the most directly - the social dimension of Rio +20.

First and foremost, Rio is sending a message to the world that we all need to strengthen our efforts to change the way we produce and consume, adapting our economies to the boundaries of our planet. This is critical for securing sustainable growth and employment, and it is a precondition to eliminating poverty and achieving food and nutrition security for all.

As the European Union has made clear over the course of these negotiations, development thinking is not enough, we need development doing; we need to agree on concrete actions.

That is why the European Union has developed proposals for clear, operational goals and targets in key areas that address environmental objectives and poverty eradication. And I am happy that the EU efforts to make the outcome document more action oriented has paid off.

For instance, if we want to address food security, we need sustainable energy, water, oceans, land and ecosystems. Some 2 billion people, the very poorest on our planet, depend directly on these ecosystems for their livelihoods. So measures to address land and soil degradation, extreme events, protection of water resources together with resource efficiency, are vital to tackle the twin challenges of sustainable development and poverty reduction. All this shows that the Rio agenda must be concrete to succeed.

Distinguished guests,

The European Union has consistently advocated that the social dimension must be fully integrated in the sustainable development strategy.

This social vision needs to be highlighted at various levels, notably by emphasising the inclusive nature of the green economy and its potential for decent job creation, including green jobs, for all.

Only the access to decent work for all, the implementation of international labour standards and the provision of a social protection floor, can guarantee that growth is not only economically and ecologically sustainable, but
also fair, just and equitable.

Equally important of course, are a range of fundamental, cross-cutting issues, which constitute the basis for sustainable development. In addition to social protection, let me underline, the central role of human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the role of youth and education, civil society and public participation. If these issues are not properly integrated in national policies, we will simply not be able to achieve the concrete goals and targets we have set for ourselves. Obviously, development does not happen in a societal vacuum.

In this context, I would like to highlight here the growing role of civil society. It is one thing to agree on an outcome document. It is quite another to make it work in reality. To make a long lasting success of the Rio commitments, we need the whole-scale, constructive mobilisation of civil society, and widespread backing and ownership of its goals.

The European Union has always supported an open and inclusive process in decision-making.

The EESC is a very good example of the extent to which civil society and the social partners are involved in the decision making process and its benefits are clear to see.

We actively supported the full and active participation of all major groups, relevant stakeholders and social partners during the Rio negotiations - at the Conference itself, and especially in the follow-up and implementation of the commitments made.

Beyond Rio, the transition to an inclusive green economy will not happen automatically: in the longer term, civil society and the private sector will together play a fundamental role in delivering green growth and promoting sustainable consumption and production.

Developing countries in particular, will need the resources and capacity to implement actions on the ground. National means and official development assistance will of course continue to be important catalysts to strengthen investment capacities, particularly in least developed countries.

In this respect, the EU will remain the world’s largest donor. Around 60% of today’s ODA comes from the European Union, and much of it already goes for “Rio Priorities.” For 2012-2013 EU aid to the three dimensions of sustainable development already amounts to 8 billion Euros – more than 10 billion USD.

However, the bulk of the resources needed for the worldwide transition to an inclusive green economy, will need to be mobilised from elsewhere. Civil society and the private sector will increasingly have a central role, as direct agents of change and real contributors for bringing sustainable development on the ground, through for instance large-scale investment and financing, awareness raising, innovation and local level engagement.

A global Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) would ensure not only that the financial sector pays a fair contribution to the economy but could provide valuable resources to fund development. The EU is a pioneer here and the Commission has proposed that much of the revenue generated by a European FTT should be put in the future EU budget. That will help ensure that the EU continues to be one of the world’s biggest providers of development assistance.

These are important factors that can help to make the inclusive green economy a reality, and there are already some instruments to help guide the private sector in this direction.

Even more importantly, a clear political vision is essential to give direction and certainty to companies about future policy developments. It gives long-term orientation to public and private investors and therefore helps to achieve sustainable development, through an inclusive green economy.

For this reason, platforms that bring stakeholders together, like the EESC, have a crucial role in engaging in dialogue with civil society, both inside and outside Europe. They can also provide the basis for Observatories for Sustainable Development with broad ownership.

This crucial outreach is a first necessary step needed to develop the linkages between global civil society organisations that will be essential if we are to achieve global sustainable development.

Mr President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Rio+20 gives all of us a global opportunity to rally behind the sustainability agenda, including the inclusive green economy.

The priorities promoted by the European Union are as much about the environment as they are to do with social empowerment and poverty eradication. These dimensions are linked. Similarly, the cross-cutting issues that have been highlighted at Rio, in particular in its social dimension, will ensure that these priorities are properly achieved.

But, for true success at Rio+20, and indeed in the years ahead, we need active participation from all actors and at all levels. We will not achieve success from Rio+20 with governments alone. The challenge will be to achieve a real commitment from non-state actors to action at international, at national and at sub-national level.

Multilateral negotiations are often challenging, and, the results do not always meet all the objectives of all parties. But in the globalised, interdependent and highly connected world in which we live, we simply must, one and all, be determined and committed to achieving concrete outcomes. That is what the planet needs. That is what our
citizens – especially the poorest – deserve. And that is what future generations demand from us.

I thank you for your attention.

Black Sea Economic Cooperation: the goals for the future

Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation 20th Anniversary Summit

Istanbul, 26 June 2012, Link

[...]

Excellencies,
It is a great honour to be in the magnificent city of Istanbul and represent the European Union at this Summit. President Gül, President Nikolic, thank you for your excellent organisation. I would like to convey President Barroso’s best wishes for a very successful Summit.

Over the years, your Organisation has been a catalyst for cooperation and trust-building in the Black Sea region. And now, the Economic Agenda and the outcome of the Summit set out an ambitious and promising plan for future action. You have come a long way.

Also in Europe, we have come a long way. During the last two and half years, the European Union has taken important and far-reaching steps to overcome the economic crisis. We are at a crossroads. The European Union must make one step further so as to complete the architecture of our economic and monetary union. We are determined to move forward. We must take immediate decisions to correct deep-rooted imbalances and improve the investment environment. Boosting employment, for both women and men, and in particular for young people, is a clear priority for us.

The European Council, taking place at the end of this week, will aim to put Europe back on the track of competitiveness, growth, job creation and prosperity. The key to success is always the same: the firm political will to cooperate, reconcile and compromise.

The 26th Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) will be held on 11 June 2012, in Belgrade. His Excellency Mr. Vuk JEREMIC, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, will chair the meeting in his capacity as the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization.
The representatives of the BSEC Member States1, as well as Related Bodies2, BSEC Observers 3, Sectoral Dialogue Partners 4 and other guests are expected to participate in and deliver statements at the meeting.

In the working session of the meeting, the Ministers will exchange views on issues of common concern to the region.

Some of the items on the agenda of the upcoming meeting in Belgrade are related to the preparations for the 20th Anniversary Summit of BSEC to be organized in Istanbul, on 26 June 2012, appointments in the BSEC Permanent International Secretariat, establishment of the Ad Hoc Working Groups on Massive Forest Fires and on Floods and Torrents, appointment of Country-Coordinators for some of the BSEC Working Groups and the assessment of the activities of the Permanent International Secretariat as well as the Related Bodies of BSEC. During its Belgrade Meeting, the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs is also expected to consider the applications for the renewal of Observer and Sectoral Dialogue Partnership status to various countries and organizations.

One of the main documents which are envisaged to be adopted in Belgrade is the “BSEC Economic Agenda Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership.” More than a decade ago, in 2001, the “BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future” was adopted as a roadmap outlining the action needed to meet the goals set by the BSEC Charter. In the context of the 20th Anniversary of the Organization, a new BSEC Economic Agenda is set to be introduced to face the new challenges and opportunities in the global and local environment, taking into account the developments that have taken place since the establishment of BSEC, both inside the Organization itself and in the broader international system. This regionally shared strategy will set goals in 17 priority areas of action and provide recommendations in the pursuit of further strengthening the Organization.

Another important document which is expected to be considered and adopted by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade is the “BSEC Public Communication Strategy.” The said Strategy will contribute to promoting the visibility of the Organization at the national, regional and international levels and presenting its objectives, activities, projects and achievements in a clear manner to its stakeholders and ultimately to the general public.

At the conclusion of the meeting, there will be a ceremony whereby the Republic of Serbia will hand over the Chairmanship-in-Office of BSEC to the Republic of Turkey. Turkey will officially assume the Chairmanship as of 1 July 2012, for a period of six months until 31 December 2012.

Statement by the spokesperson of High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with President of Armenia

Brussels, 27 June 2012, Link

[...]

The spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today: "High Representative Catherine Ashton discussed today in Brussels with the President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan the recent evolution of EU-Armenia bilateral relations, and reviewed the implementation of internal reforms in Armenia. She welcomed the efforts by the Armenian authorities to hold the recent parliamentary elections in a more transparent and competitive environment, but highlighted the need to address a number of issues, identified by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission’s Report, in order fully to meet internationally recognized democratic standards well ahead of presidential elections scheduled for 2013.

The High Representative also welcomed recent reform achievements in Armenia as reflected in the European Neighbourhood (ENP) Progress Report published on 15 May. She noted with pleasure that Armenia had recently launched Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area negotiations with the EU, having implemented a number of recommendations from the European Commission. At the same time she stressed the need for further reforms in other areas such as human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Catherine Ashton expressed her concern at the serious armed incidents in early June along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Line of Contact in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and regretted the loss of life as well as the hardship of those affected by the conflict. She urged Armenia and Azerbaijan, as partner countries, to step up their efforts to reach agreement on the Madrid prin-
principles, as a basis for peace, and to implement fully the commitments made by their Presidents in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group. The High Representative added that progress in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is vital if Armenia’s political association and economic integration with the EU is to achieve its full potential.

**Commissioner Oettinger welcomes decision on "Nabucco West" pipeline**

*Brussels, 28 June 2012, [Link]*

[...]

Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger welcomes today’s decision of the Shah Deniz Consortium (Azerbaijan) for the "Nabucco West" pipeline.

"With this pre-selection, we are a step closer to getting gas directly from Azerbaijan and other countries in the Caspian region. Whatever the final decision on the whole route from the Eastern part of Turkey to Europe, Azerbaijani gas is certain to come to Europe."

"This is a success for Europe and for our security of supply".

Today, in Baku, the Shah Deniz Consortium announced that "Nabucco West" is to become a preferred partner for the distribution of gas within Central Europe. Rather than opting for a one-step-approach, the Consortium had decided to go ahead on the basis of a regional pre-selection. These regions are: Central Europe, Southern Europe and Turkey. Nabucco West, aiming to bring gas from the Western Turkish border to Baumgarten (Vienna, Austria), has been pre-selected to deliver gas to the region of Central Europe. With this decision, the offer of the competitor South East Europe Pipeline (SEEP, owned by BP) has been turned down.

The decisions for "Nabucco West" and yesterday’s Inter Governmental agreement on the Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (TANAP, pipeline through Turkey) assure that the pipelines, in any eventual configuration, will deliver to Europe.

**Background:**

Only next year, the Consortium will decide on the pipeline going through Turkey. Therefore, the final decision on the whole route and the pipelines chosen will be known only in June 2013. Whatever the final decision taken – one or more pipelines - there will be an unbroken system of pipelines that will be built from the Caspian Sea to Europe.

The Shah Deniz Gas field is the largest natural gas field in Azerbaijan. The production from Shah Deniz II (second phase of exploration, starting in a few years), will produce 16 bcm/year. In January 2011, Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Commissioner Oettinger visited Baku and, with President Ilham Aliev, agreed that Azerbaijan will be "the substantial contributor" and "enabler" to Europe’s future gas deliveries from the Caspian region.

The European Union took the lead in developing the Southern Gas Corridor and developed the concepts that have led to the decisions of this week. Notably, the Nabucco Inter-governmental Agreement signed in Ankara in 2009, at which President Barroso was present, showed that it was possible to find agreement amongst many countries on the transit of gas.

The European Union will continue to work with all partners concerned so as to bring further gas into the system, notably from Turkmenistan, through the construction of a Trans-Caspian Pipeline.

**PRIVATE SECTOR CONTRIBUTES LESS THAN 5 % OF TOTAL EXPORT IN AZERBAIJAN**

*04 June 2012, [Link]*

[...]

Total export was $ 8.4 billion in the first forth months of 2012 in Azerbaijan- State Customs Committee Reported. 4764 legal entities and individuals were dealing with export and import operations in Azerbaijan in January-April 2012. According to the Committee, of them 2,638 are legal entities and 2,125 are individuals. The state share in export operations over the past period made 95.25% or $8.033bn, private sector-4.48% or $0.378 billion and individuals-0.27% or 0,021.

In 2011, the state share in export operations made $25,2 billion, or 95.03%, private sector made 4.24% or $1,2 billion, share of individuals made 0.73% or $192,9 million.

Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD) stated
that state dependence in Azeri export show that private sector has low export capacity. Lack of capacity of local business is the main reason why state has dominate share in total export. Local business mainly runs for domestic market. Secondly, since share of oil and oil products in Azeri export is extremely high and such kind of activities is managed by state company, it drives private sector’s contribution to minimum.

CESD also mentioned that the fact confirms that local business in Azerbaijan is underdevelopment in terms of exporting goods and services. There are certain artificial and administrative barriers to export from Azerbaijan. According to World Bank Doing Business 2012 report, 38 days is needed to export from Azerbaijan where 24 days is required only for document preparation. Cost of export procedures is $2,905. The report added that 42 days is needed to import to Azerbaijan and total cost of import procedures is $ 3,405. 8 documents are officially required to export to Azerbaijan meanwhile 10 is need for importing to the country.

Azerbaijan is not yet a member of the World Trade Organization- despite a stated interest in WTO membership, Azerbaijan has been making little effort leading to a serious negotiating-stated in USA Commercial Service report. The report mentioned that there are several barriers to trade with Azerbaijan that make doing business here difficult. Non-tariff barriers include a weak and unpredictable legal regime, arbitrary customs administration, clear conflicts of interest in regulatory and commercial matters often leading to export/import monopolies, and corruption. The Azerbaijani government’s inadequate enforcement of IPR protections also counts as a trade barrier. In addition, tight quality control and international certification is key to realizing the export potential of Azerbaijani produce and products.

Goods imported into Azerbaijan for processing and then re-exported are subject to normal duties and taxes at the time of importation. As soon as processing has been completed and the goods are re-exported, a draw-back procedure can be initiated to recover the taxes and duty paid. There is no formal procedure for submitting an application, and this process is cumbersome to use. Customs establishes the time for the processing and re-export of the goods, usually within two years. In addition, Customs may also stipulate a minimum amount of finished product be held to assure that the imported goods are utilized for the purpose intended.

CESD concluded that keeping high share of the state in Azeri export makes foreign trade unsustainable.

Second round of visa negotiations between EU and Azerbaijan Taken Place in Brussels

30 May 2012, Link

Second round of visa negotiations between EU and Azerbaijan has been holding in Geneva, Belgium on May 31st–June 1st, 2012. The visa facilitation and readmission negotiations follow the political commitment taken at the Prague Eastern Partnership Summit in May 2009 regarding the improvement of people-to-people contacts.

The Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements Negotiations were conducted between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by Elzamin Asgarov, Head of Human Rights, Democratization and Humanitarian Issues Department and chief negotiator and Parviz Musayev, deputy chief of the State Migration Service and the EU mission co-chaired by Rob Rozenburg, Deputy Head of International Affairs Unit and Diederik Paalman, Deputy Head of Visa Policy Unit (both from EU Commission Directorate for Home Affairs).

According to the EC statement, the Visa Facilitation agreement is aimed at the facilitation of personal interaction between the EU and Azerbaijan’s people. The two agreements discussed include reduced visa fees for all citizens; issuance of visas for an intended stay of no more than 90 days per period of 180 days, fee waivers for certain categories of people; a maximum processing time of 10 calendar days; simplified supporting document requirements; wider issuance of multiple-entry visas for certain categories; and enhanced mobility in a secured and well-managed environment. The Readmission Agreement will stipulate mechanisms for the return of nationals staying without authorization on the territories of the EU or Azerbaijan.

Experts do not expect concrete results for ongoing second round of visa negotiations between EU and Azerbaijan.
The Delegation is currently supporting the Ministry of Taxes in establishing a computer assisted audit system. The project recommended legal changes for the functioning of e-audit in Azerbaijan and presented legislations from the Netherlands, Germany and Austria as best practices. The main proposals for amendments to the domestic law aim at enabling the Government in obtaining electronic access to relevant fiscal data of medium and large tax payers, as well as at ensuring a number of rights and obligations in the Tax Code. A draft on the legal basis on e-audit will be presented to the Parliament of Azerbaijan in 2012.

The Project leader of the Republic Azerbaijan Mr. Asaf ASADOV, Advisor of the Minister of Taxes and the Netherlands Advisor Mr. Leendert KERS Resident Twinning Advisor also participated to the event.

Environment: Commission urges Bulgaria to comply with EU nature protection laws

Brussels, 21 June 2012, Link

The European Commission is concerned Bulgaria has not assessed the possible impact of wind turbines and other projects in protected areas of the Kaliakra region. On the recommendation of Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik, the Commission is sending a reasoned opinion to ask Bulgaria to comply with applicable EU laws. If Bulgaria fails to do so within two months, the Commission may refer the case to the EU Court of Justice. Should the case reach the Court, the Commission may ask for interim measures as well as the removal of offending projects.

Under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, any project that may have a significant negative effect on sites that are part of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas should undergo a prior assessment before work begins. In parallel, the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive aims to ensure that any project likely to have a significant effect on the environment is adequately assessed before being approved.

The Commission had previously opened a case against Bulgaria as insufficient territories in Kaliakra – an important area for birds – were designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA) under the Birds Directive. The present (related but separate) concern is that Bulgaria has authorised a high number of economic activities in the Kaliakra area without appropriate environmental impact assessment, and is continuing to do so. Thousands of wind turbines and some 500 other projects have been authorised without adequate assessments of their effect on Kaliakra’s unique habitats and species, and on the thousands of birds and bats that fly over the site each year on their way to and from Africa. No account is being taken of the cumulative effect of the projects, which is also a requirement under the Birds, Habitats and Environmental Impact Assessment Directives.

In December 2008 and September 2011 the Commission sent Bulgaria letters of formal notice concerning the poor application of the relevant EU Directives. While Bulgaria has been in regular contact with the Commission and has supplied information to allow further analysis, it remains in breach of the three Directives. A reasoned opinion has therefore been sent. Bulgaria has two months to respond.

Background

The Birds Directive, the EU’s oldest piece of nature legislation, creates a comprehensive scheme of protection for all wild bird species naturally occurring in the Union. The 1992 Habitats Directive forms a cornerstone of Europe’s nature conservation policy, protecting over 1000 animals and plant species and over 200 "habitat types" such as special types of forests, meadows, and wetlands, which are of European importance. The areas protected by the Directives make up Natura 2000, the EU-wide network of protected natural areas.

Each EU Member State has designated Natura 2000 sites with the aim of assuring the long-term survival of Europe’s most valuable and threatened species and habitats. The Natura 2000 network is comprised of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated by Member States under the Habitats Directive, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the Birds Directive. Natura 2000 is not a system of strict nature reserves where all human activities are excluded: most of the land is privately owned and the emphasis is on ensuring that management is ecologically and economically sustainable.

The aim of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive is to ensure that projects which are likely to have a signi-
-ficant effect on the environment are adequately assessed before they are approved. Hence, before any decision is taken to allow such a project to proceed, possible impacts on the environment are identified and assessed. Developers can then adjust projects to minimise negative impacts before they actually occur, or the competent authorities can incorporate mitigation measures into the project approval.

EU-Georgia: Meeting of Commissioner Füle with President Saakashvili

Brussels, 28 June 2012, Link

The Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle and President of Georgia Mikhail Saakashvili met in Brussels today to discuss EU-Georgia relations.

Commissioner Füle acknowledged that Georgia has made remarkable progress in its modernization and reform efforts. New and more efficient state institutions have been built and the services to the citizens of Georgia are improving. The EU is supporting and will continue to support these efforts within the instruments of the Eastern Partnership.

"It is also clear that Georgia needs to take further steps and continue this path of modernization and to consolidate democracy. The parliamentary election in October and presidential elections in 2013 will be important test cases for Georgian democracy and we encourage all political forces to respect the electoral process and make sure that the voting is free and fair," Commissioner Füle said after the meeting. "The EU is increasingly concerned about growing political tension and polarization in the run-up to the parliamentary elections and I have expressed the conviction that the elections will be first of all about political programmes and ideas," he continued and added that the EU is watching developments in the media landscape with particular attention.

Commissioner Füle and President Saakashvili also discussed the shared strong interest in the resolution of the conflicts regarding the Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Mr Füle reiterated the European Union’s commitment to Georgia’s territorial integrity.

Joint Statement of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

June 2012, Link

"This year marks the twentieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Poland and Georgia. Friendly ties are deeply entrenched in the history of the two countries. Both peoples have fought for their independence and statehood throughout centuries, a quest that bonded Georgians and Poles.

Having experienced a turbulent past, both nations steadfastly maintain their orientation toward their European future. Georgia and Poland share mutual respect for the fundamental principles of international law, above all the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Poland welcomes reforms undertaken in Georgia in recent years, particularly in the field of democratisation and modernisation. These processes are key to Georgia’s future - its stability, prosperity and relations with the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. Poland continues to support Georgia’s democratic reforms.

Equally, Poland remains unyielding in its resolve to uphold Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is imperative that Georgia be de-occupied, its territorial integrity restored and dignified and voluntary returns of internally displaced persons and refugees to their places of residence allowed.

Both countries share a joint vision of regional peace and stability, underlining the importance of the continuation of the European Union Monitoring Mission - the only international mission assessing the situation on the ground. Georgia hails Poland’s engagement in the EUMM as one of the major contributors.
Georgia and Poland share common values as well as a common vision of a Europe without dividing lines, evolving in peace and prosperity. Our countries share a historic aspiration of becoming firmly embedded in the European and transatlantic structures. Poland continues being a staunch supporter of Georgia’s European and Euro-Atlantic prospects. Poland and Georgia reiterate their strong commitment to the goals of the Eastern Partnership, which proves to be a successful and effective mechanism for advancing political association and economic integration between the European Union and its Eastern European partner countries. The two countries shall pursue their efforts in further strengthening and developing the Eastern Partnership policy, as well as their bilateral cooperation aimed at fostering EU-Georgia cooperation, in particular, the processes leading to the conclusion of the Association Agreement, including the DCFTA and visa-free regime.

Poland is an active supporter of Georgia’s integration into the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization, including through such effective NATO mechanisms as the NATO-Georgia Commission and the Annual National Program, designed to play a central role in supervising the process set in hand at the Bucharest Summit.

Georgia and Poland affirm their intent to continue close cooperation on a number of energy projects with the aim of building and promoting a well-connected, diversified and competitive regional energy market.

Poland and Georgia pledge to continue exerting joint efforts towards fighting terrorism and securing peace and stability in Afghanistan through their contribution to the ISAF operation.

Bearing in mind the existing close historic and human ties and denoting satisfaction with the current level of bilateral relations, the sides reiterate their mutual desire to further diversify and expand political and economic relations and promote people-to-people contacts to the benefit of both nations.”

Grigol Vashadze Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia
Radosław Sikorski Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland

Statement by President Barroso on the formation of the new Greek Government
Brussels, 21 June 2012, Link

“I warmly welcome today’s announcement of the formation of a new government in Greece. I am particularly reassured that the new administration will count on ample and broad-based parliamentary support. I believe that this sends a clear signal of Greece’s determination to honour its commitments and stay in the euro.

I look forward to working again with Prime Minister Samaras, whom I have known for many years and who I know is committed to the European project.

The Commission stands by Greece and its people. We will continue to work with the Greek authorities to bring Greece back to growth and job creation. In the coming days the troika will return to Athens to exchange views with the new government and to begin to assess what has been done and what still needs to be done in relation to the essential reforms set out in the second economic adjustment programme for Greece.”

Moldova’s Prime Minister Filat visits EIB to further mutual cooperation
Luxembourg/Chişinău, 27 June 2012, Link

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova Vladimir Filat visited the European Investment Bank and signed with EIB Vice-President Wilhelm Molterer a loan contract of EUR 17 million to finance the rehabilitation of Moldova’s power transmission network.

EIB Vice-President Molterer commented: “The loan signed today is a good example of cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the EIB. I very much welcome the fact that EIB funds will support the rehabilitation of electricity infrastructure which is crucial for the further development of Moldova’s economy. With PM Filat we have discussed the results achieved and new possibilities for project financing to
support the government’s priorities, mainly in the areas of energy, transport, environmental infrastructure and agribusiness.”

The EIB loan will help increase the capacity and improve the reliability of the Moldovan electricity transmission system bringing it more closely into line with the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity standards (ENTSO-E). The project includes the rehabilitation of key transmission assets, such as substations, transmission lines and transformers which have reached the end of their technical life. It consists of a large number of individual schemes geographically dispersed throughout the country.

This is the ninth EIB loan in Moldova, bringing the EIB’s lending commitment in the country to EUR 272 million. To date, the EIB has provided funds for the development of the Moldova’s transport, energy and municipal infrastructure. It has also provided in Moldova credit lines to partner financial institutions for supporting indirectly smaller projects usually implemented by small and medium-sized companies in various sectors, including the wine sector focusing on the increase of wine quality.

Background:

The EIB – the European Union’s bank – finances projects in Moldova on the basis of an EU Council and European Parliament mandate for the Eastern Partner Countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) and Russia of EUR 3.8 billion for the period 2007-2013. The current mandate provides for the financing of projects that contribute to (1) local private sector development, in particular support for SMEs, (2) development of social and economic infrastructure, and (3) climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The EIB has also set up at its own risk the Eastern Partners Facility (EPF) for an amount of EUR 1.5 billion, with a ceiling of EUR 500 million for loans in Russia. This facility enables the EIB to provide loans to support investment grade projects that sectorwise go beyond the scope of the mandate and helps support EU investment in the region, notably by European corporates.

Transport: Republic of Moldova to gradually integrate into the European common aviation market

Brussels, 26 June 2012, Link

In the framework of the EU-Moldova Cooperation Council, the Republic of Moldova and the European Union have today signed a comprehensive air services agreement which will make Moldova a full partner of the EU in aviation by gradually integrating into the European common market.

Siim Kallas, European Commission Vice-President responsible for mobility and transport, said: “Today’s agreement is very important for further strengthening the overall economic, trade and tourism relations between Moldova and the EU. It will open up and integrate the respective markets, strengthen cooperation and offer new opportunities for consumers and airlines.”

The Republic of Moldova and the EU will develop a "common aviation area" based on common rules in important areas such as aviation safety and security. The Republic of Moldova will harmonise its legislation with European standards and implement EU aviation rules also in areas such as environment, consumer protection, air traffic management, economic regulation, competition issues and social aspects.

Air transport is the single most important mode of transport linking the Republic of Moldova to most EU Member States and has been growing steadily in recent years. It is expected that the agreement will offer more travel opportunities, more direct connections and economic benefits for both sides.

As a result all EU airlines will be able to operate direct flights to the Republic of Moldova from anywhere in the EU and vice-versa for Moldovan carriers. The agreement will remove all restrictions on prices and number of weekly flights between the Republic of Moldova and the EU.
Today, there are direct flight connections between the Republic of Moldova and 11 EU Member States (Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom).

Background information

The agreement will be a further step in creating a wider common aviation area between the EU and its neighbours. Similar comprehensive air transport agreements with neighbouring countries have been concluded with the Western Balkan countries, Morocco, Georgia and Jordan – and negotiations have recently been finalised with Israel and are ongoing with Ukraine, Lebanon and Tunisia.

Next steps

The European Commission received a mandate to negotiate a "common aviation area" agreement with the Republic of Moldova in June 2011. Following two rounds of negotiations, the agreement was initialled in October 2011. Moldova and the EU have agreed that the agreement will be temporarily applied from the date of signature. The agreement still needs to be ratified before it will formally enter into force.

EU-Russia: joint commitment to develop strategic partnership further

4 June 2012, Link

During a two-day summit on 3 and 4 June in St Petersburg, the EU and Russia discussed perspectives for their relationship, economic and financial issues, and international developments. "We (...) have confirmed our joint commitment to further develop the EU-Russia strategic partnership", said President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, who with Commission President José Manuel Barroso represented the EU at the summit that was hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Both sides emphasized that the New Agreement between EU and Russia, on which both parties are currently working, is the best way to develop the bilateral relations further. The New Agreement is to replace the current EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (in force since 2007) and should reflect the many political, economic and social changes that both the EU and Russia have undergone.

Russia is the EU's third largest trade partner, with 108 billion EUR in exports to Russia (7% of all EU exports) and 199 billion EUR in imports (11,8% of all EU imports) in the year 2011.

The President of the European Council welcomed the active implementation of the so-called common steps towards visa-free travel for short-term stays. These steps are actions concerning document security and the fight against illegal immigration and organised crime for both sides to implement.

In the discussions on Syria, President Van Rompuy stressed that "the situation was appalling" and that the Syrian regime should "immediately cease all forms of violence and provide its full support to the UN Supervision Mission."

"The EU and Russia might have some diverging assessments, but we fully agree that the Annan Plan as a whole provides the best opportunity to break the cycle of violence in Syria, avoiding a civil war, and in finding a peaceful and lasting solution."

As for Iran, Mr Van Rompuy said both the EU and Russia "agree on the urgent need to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons". The next round of talks will be held in Moscow, where the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton will lead the discussion with Iran on behalf of six world powers.

In the discussions on economic and financial situation, President Van Rompuy said the EU was addressing systemic challenges of the economic and monetary union and is working on deepening integration. "Let me be clear, there is no way back for the euro. There is only the way ahead towards more integration", Mr Van Rompuy concluded.
Russia and Kazakhstan agreed on Thursday to extend their bilateral Friendship Treaty, originally signed in 1992, for an additional 10 years. The protocol on amendments to the treaty was signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Kazakh counterpart Nursultan Nazarbayev after talks in the Kazakh capital, Astana. The sides also agreed to step up efforts to expand bilateral cooperation and integration. Moscow and Astana are planning to increase trade from the current $24 billion to $40 billion annually over the next few years. Nazarbayev said the sides would focus on cooperation in the energy sector, nuclear and space industry, and exploration of resources in the Caspian Sea. Russia and Kazakhstan have adopted a special statement on preserving the infrastructure of the Baikonur Space Center, which the Russian Space Agency Roscosmos uses to launch various spacecraft into orbit. Nazarbayev also confirmed plans to build a nuclear power plant in Kazakhstan with Russia’s assistance. Kazakhstan has tried to balance relations with Russia and the West since becoming independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. (RIA Novosti)

The contracts were signed today in a public ceremony in Ankara by: EIB’s Vice-President, Mr. Pim van Ballekom, the Deputy Undersecretary of Treasury, Mr. Cavit Dağdaş, Ziraatbank’s Board Member and General Manager, Mr. Hüseyin Aydın, ILBANK’s General Manager, Mr. Ahmet Candan, Halkbank’s Board Member and General Manager, Mr. Süleyman Aslan, and TSKB’s Board Member and CEO, Mr. Fevzi Onat.

On this occasion, EIB Vice-President Pim van Ballekom commented: “As newly appointed EIB Vice-President responsible for Turkey, I am particularly happy to announce that our support to Turkey’s smart growth remains steady and strong. In 2011 we achieved a total of EUR 2 billion for 19 projects in Turkey in key sectors for the country’s development, and prosperity. Supporting smart growth in Turkey is the quintessence of our financing policy in Turkey. Today we sign a further package of EUR 475 million in loans for entrepreneurship and climate change in the country in cooperation with four major Turkish partner banks. Our financial means and expertise as the largest multilateral financing institution blend in with the expertise of our local banking partners for the benefit of the flourishing entrepreneurial activity in Turkey. The operation with ILBANK in favour of water and solid waste infrastructure opens up the cooperation between our two institutions for the benefit of Turkish local authorities and their population. As the European Union’s bank, we are keen to reaffirm our large, swift and strong support to Turkey, which remains the largest recipient country of EIB financing outside the EU. In 2012 we will focus further on the three pillars of the EIB activity in Turkey: public infrastructure, SMEs and corporate lending, the latter with a focus on support in favour of foreign direct investments, and the energy sector. Support in favour of the Knowledge Economy and tackling Climate Change will remain among the top priorities of EIB in 2012.”

The EUR 325 million (repartitioned EUR 150 million to Halkbank, EUR 75 million to TSKB and EUR 100 million to Ziraatbank), is in the form of three separate lines of credit for financing small and medium sized investments by SMEs and mid-cap companies through Halkbank and TSKB, whereby Halkbank will particularly encourage investments located or re-locating to Organised Industrial Zones, while TSKB will focus on investments of mid-cap enterprises which they are particularly well placed to address by using
their in depth knowledge of this market segment. Ziraatbank will concentrate on SMEs in production, trade and services, outside the country’s large urban areas of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir.

These lines aim to support a large number of economic activity sectors. They target the whole range from small to mid-sized companies. The EIB is starting to deploy, for the first time, loans to mid-caps in Turkey, to complement traditional EIB credit facilities and fill the gap between credit facilities for SMEs and individual direct loans for the large projects of bigger enterprises. The EIB partners in Turkey have proven through numerous previous funding arrangements that they are well placed to on-lend EIB funds for the benefit of eligible investments. The EUR 325 million in funding will enable the intermediary institutions to further improve the conditions they can offer to the end beneficiaries of the EIB funding, especially in terms of the maturity of the loans provided.

A further EUR 150 million goes to ILBANK in the form of a line of credit for financing municipal investment schemes in the water and solid waste sector throughout Turkey. This is the EIB’s first operation with ILBANK. Over the last few years, the EIB has financed a number of large-scale water and urban transport projects implemented by the Turkish metropolitan municipalities. However, in order to scale up its intervention in the water and solid waste sector and reach smaller municipalities too, the EIB is teaming up with ILBANK to widen its reach in favour of a broader range of local authorities. Using ILBANK as a partner and intermediary, with their local know-how, will complement the EIB’s world-renowned expertise in providing both financial and technical services to local authorities. Apart from making a distinctive contribution to improved environmental conditions and the living standards of the local population, the project will be an important instrument in advancing Turkey’s adherence to the environmental standards and policies of the European Union.

Proposal for “NABUCCO WEST” scenario submitted to SHAH DENIZ II Consortium

17 May 2012, Link

[...]

The Nabucco Consortium submitted a proposal to the Shah Deniz II Consortium for the construction of a “Nabucco West” pipeline, which would bring Caspian gas from the Bulgarian-Turkish border to Baumgarten and beyond. "We are convinced that we have submitted a competitive and comprehensive proposal to the Shah Deniz II Consortium, and that this proposal represents a win-win situation for our shareholders and for suppliers alike", said Reinhard Mitschek, Managing Director of Nabucco Gas Pipeline International GmbH, Nabucco website reported. Nabucco is one of the Southern Gas Corridor projects, which is designed to transport gas from the Caspian region and Middle East to the European countries. Gas to be produced within the second phase of Azerbaijani Shah Deniz gas field development is considered as the main source for the project. The current shareholders of Nabucco project are Bulgarian Energy Holding, Romanian Transgaz, Turkish Botas, Austrian OMV, German RWE and Hungary’s FGSZ. Earlier Germany’s RWE stated that the company analyses the conditions of newly proposed Nabucco West project and its ability to meet Europe’s strategic goals. Nabucco West is a short-cut version of Nabucco project, which envisages a construction of the pipeline from Turkish-Bulgarian border to Austria. According to Ozgul, Turkey assumes that Nabucco West will be the natural continuation of Azerbaijani-Turkish Trans Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP), which will be laid from the eastern border of Turkey to the country’s western border.

Ukraine ready to receive Turkmen gas in exchange for project participation

12 June 2012, Link

[...]

"We are considering the option of importing gas from Turkmenistan which can provide about five billion cubic meters of gas a year," said the Ukraine Minister of Energy and Coal Industry, Yuriy Boyko. UNIAN notes that in exchange for gas, Turkmenistan is ready to consider Ukrainian companies participating in implementing infrastructure projects. "However, such an arrangement requires permission from Russia to use its pipelines," the media said. Earlier, Prime Minister of Ukraine Mykola Azarov, who was received by Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov, ex-
pressed that Ukraine hopes for direct supplies of Turkmen gas. Ukraine can get access to Turkmen gas through the Gazprom controlled Central Asia-Centre (CAC) pipeline, which passes through Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia. According to Kiev, there is a point in the agreement on the free trade zone of the CIS that provides equal access to the gas transport capacity of the CIS countries. Furthermore, Kiev recently reported that Ukrainian enterprises and companies are willing to participate in the Turkmenistan important infrastructure projects of national importance, such as gas pipelines. In particular, participation on the East-West project within the country and internationally on the TAPI route is of interest General contractor for the East-West project is Turkmengaz. This pipeline will connect fields in the east with the western part bordering the Caspian Sea. Azarov also announced Ukraine’s readiness to promote the implementation of the Trans-Caspian project.

Statement by IMF Mission to Ukraine
29 May 2012, [Link]

A team from the International Monetary Fund visited Kiev during May 21–28, 2012 to hold discussions for the 2012 Article IV consultation. The team met with Prime Minister Azarov, National Bank of Ukraine Governor Arbuzov, Minister of Finance Kolobov, other senior officials, and representatives from the private sector and civil society. At the conclusion of the visit, the mission chief Mr. Chris Jarvis issued the following statement:

“The government and the National Bank of Ukraine have made progress in their efforts to support economic stability. We welcome the government’s recent pension reform and the new customs code. The public is benefiting from lower inflation supported by the NBU’s monetary policy. Progress has been made in deregulation and simplifying the tax laws.

“To ensure sustainable growth and reduce financial risks, Ukraine still needs to resolve a range of important issues and deal with external and internal challenges.

“Economic growth is expected to slow this year, hurt by weaker demand for Ukraine’s exports. We project that annual growth will be 3 percent. Inflation is projected at around 7 percent for the year. We expect the current account deficit to widen to 6½ percent of GDP on current policies, though if policies are tightened the deficit could be lower.

“Ukraine has considerable external financing needs that leave it vulnerable to changes in investor sentiment. Persuading investors to support Ukraine requires policies consistent with economic stability and steady progress in implementing a reform agenda in key reform areas.

“Strengthening the fiscal position is a key government objective. The supplementary budget has increased wage and pension expenditures, and targets higher revenue collection to finance this. In order to meet the government’s 1.8 percent of GDP deficit target new measures will be needed. These could include raising tax rates for high earners, ending tax exemptions, or reducing expenditures.

“The government has set an ambitious goal to achieve energy independence. Raising gas and heating tariffs for households is an essential component of any strategy to achieve this. We recommend significant upfront tariff increases and regular increases thereafter as part of a time-bound plan to eliminate subsidies. We also recommend giving more money to the poorest households to offset their increased costs. Raising prices will lower Naftogaz’s deficit, reduce imports, and free up resources for investment in domestic production and energy efficiency.

“The monetary policy stance should continue to focus on maintaining price stability. The current monetary stance is appropriate given heightened external risks. We continue to believe greater exchange rate flexibility can better serve Ukraine in adapting to changing economic circumstances and can provide a buffer for external shocks.

“The financial sector needs to be strengthened further to help revive lending and support economic growth. The banking system appears well capitalized, but further reforms are necessary to reinforce bank balance sheets, including measures to help reduce large non-performing loans.

“We recommend ambitious reforms to improve living standards and help realize Ukraine’s economic potential. These should include building stronger public institutions and creating a better and more predictable business climate to support investment and growth.”
Recent Publications on the Black Sea Region

The following are selected recent publications pertinent to the Black Sea region:

June 2012

- Rosa Balfour, *Between the past and the future: unfinished business in the EU and the Balkans*, EPC Commentary, EPC, 26 June 2012, [Link](#).
- Molly A. Walton and Leigh E. Hendrix, *The Premise of Renewables: Recent success and the Challenge of getting to Scale*, CSIS Commentary, 07 June 2012, [Link](#).
- Andrey Makarychev and Oleg Reut, *Russian Foreign Policy: What is not seen from the Kremlin*, CEPS WORKING DOCUMENT No. 365, 06 June 2012, [Link](#).

April 2012

- Annika Ahtonen, *Ignorance ain’t bliss: it’s time to recognise the impact of the environment and climate on health*, EPC Commentary, 25 April 2012, [Link](#).
- Anar Valiyev, *The Quest for Political Reform in Azerbaijan: What Role for the Transatlantic Community?*, Istituto Affari Internazionali, IAI WORKING PAPERS 12, 12 April 2012, [Link](#).
- Ralf Dickel and Kirsten Westphal, *EU- Russia Gas Relations, How to Manage New Uncertainties and Imbalances*, SWP Comments, 12 April 2012, [Link](#).
- Michael Emerson, *The Ukraine question*, CEPS Commentary, CEPS, 4 April 2012, [Link](#).
Recent Publications on the Black Sea Region

The following are selected recent publications pertinent to the Black Sea region

- Gözde Yılmaz, *What the EU can do to support further minority protection in Turkey*, IEP Policy Briefs on Enlargement and Neighbourhood No. 4/2012, April 2012, [Link](#)

- Gregory Kiley, Gary Powell and Reed Livergood, *A Case Study for Better Buying Power*, CSIS, April 2012, [Link](#)

ICBSS News and Events

20th Anniversary Summit of the Heads of State/Government of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), 26 June 2012

Director General Dr. Zefi Dimadama represented the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), a BSEC related body, at the 20th Istanbul Summit of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) that was held in Istanbul on 26 June 2012 marking the 20th Anniversary of the launching of BSEC at the Istanbul Summit, on 25 June 1992.

CSO Meeting & 26th Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, 9-11 June 2012

ICBSS DG, Dr. Zefi Dimadama, and ICBSS ADG, Ambassador David Kereselidze, attended the CSO Meeting and the 26th Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, in Belgrade, on 9-11 June 2012.

In the context of the 26th Meeting of the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, in Belgrade, on 11 June 2012, Ms. Dimadama presented briefly the role and activities of ICBSS, as a related body of BSEC and its acknowledged think tank. She additionally noted that the ICBSS has undertaken a number of initiatives for the promotion of further regional cooperation, such as the organization of the 5th International Black Sea Symposium on “The Black Sea region as an influential crossroad between East and West: extroversion of the Black Sea area as an influential crossroad between East and West”, that will be held in Athens, 2-4 July 2012. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of the ratification of the new Article 24 on the BSEC Charter for the ICBSS.

Concluding her speech, Ms. Dimadama expressed her appreciation to the Government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia for their excellent organization of the meeting and their warm hospitality while congratulated Turkey for their upcoming Chairmanship in BSEC.
ICBSS News and Events

International Conference on “Forging the Future of the Caucasus: the past 20 years and its lessons”, 28 June 2012

Dr. Zefi Dimadama, Director General of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), attended the International Conference on “Forging the Future of the Caucasus: the past 20 years and its lessons” that was jointly organised by the Center for Strategic Studies under the President of Azerbaijan (SAM), the Turkish Policy Quarterly and Caucasus International that was held in Baku, on 28 June 2012.

The Conference hosted three personalities from the South Caucasus countries that reflected on their aims and strategies while they addressed economic and political visions for the future.

23rd Crans Montana Forum, 28-1 July 2012

Dr. Zefi Dimadama, Director General of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS), attended the 23rd Annual Session of the Crans Montana Forum, with title “Addressing a Changing World! Which Energy for Which World?” that was organised under the higher patronage of the President of Azerbaijan, in Baku, on 28-1 July 2012.

ICBSS Director General participated as a speaker on “Greening the Black Sea: environmental governance, energy and climate change”, within the framework of the Implementing Energy Efficiency Session, that was held on 30 June 2012. During her speech, Ms. Dimadama underlined the active role of ICBSS as an important actor of the wider Black Sea region.

In the margin of the conference, Ms. Dimadama had the opportunity to discuss issues of common interest with Mrs. Merihban Aliyeva, First Lady of Azerbaijan and Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO and IS-ESCO who is actively involved in the environmental campaign for Baku. The Conference was attended by high level distinguished speakers from around the world; country leaders and ministers; while a special session was dedicated on human rights, gender equality and education and the role of Africa, in cooperation with UNESCO.

5th Policy Stakeholders Conference on “EU-EECA cooperation in the innovation sector: bi-regional responses to major societal and economic challenges”, 25-26 April 2012

The ICBSS has coordinated in close cooperation with the local partner NIP the preparation of the fifth in a series and last Policy Stakeholders Conference under the framework of the IncoNet EECA which took place in
Kiev, on 25-26 April 2012. The focus of the Conference was on “EU-EECA cooperation in the innovation sector: bi-regional responses to major societal and economic challenges”.

The Conference is expected to improve mutual understanding of the perceptions, roles and success factors of innovation policies and systems in EECA and EU countries at national level and to develop scenarios for enhancing joint EU-EECA innovation.

Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials, 18-20 April 2012

The ICBSS DG, Dr. Zefi Dimadama, participated at the Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials, in Istanbul, on 18-20 April 2012.
The ICBSS has identified the need for a special circular on developments in and around the Black Sea region that goes beyond the mere news brief format. Therefore, the Centre has set up an electronic review focused particularly on the Black Sea region, aiming to provide stakeholders and other interested parties around the globe with an exclusive information service. The Monitor offers brief commentaries and refers key documents, publications and events of interest that impact on the wider Black Sea region.