



PRESS RELEASE

Athens, 6 November 2023

13th International Black Sea Symposium

The Black Sea in crises: challenges & opportunities in an unstable environment

The 13th International Black Sea Symposium with title “The Black Sea in crises: challenges & opportunities in an unstable environment” was held successfully in Athens, on 2 November 2023, organised by the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS).

In its thirteenth edition and amidst immense regional developments, the 13th IBSS provided a dialogue platform for regional and international stakeholders to exchange on **a regional response to address opportunities and mitigate challenges in the Black Sea region**, in relation to economic, geopolitical and environmental perspectives. Special emphasis was placed on the significance of regional cooperation and closer policy-science-business interaction, as means to alleviating the impact of climate crisis and the increasing geopolitical instability in the wider Black Sea region.

Opening the Symposium, **ICBSS Director General, Mr. Georgios MITRAKOS**, highlighted the impact of the multiple human-induced and nature-driven crises currently affecting the Black Sea Region, both within and beyond its borders. Mr. Mitrakos emphasized the efforts of the BSEC family of institutions to provide knowledge and enable synergies that will facilitate joint actions, in order to mitigate the implications of regional crises and harness opportunities for a better future.

Of particular note was the awarding of an honorary plaque by the Secretary General of BSEC PERMIS, **H.E. Ambassador Lazăr COMĂNESCU**, to the Director General of ICBSS, **Mr. George MITRAKOS**, on the occasion of the **25th Anniversary of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)**.

Three interactive panels with prominent experts from policy, business, academia and civil society served as a means to unfold the discussion focusing on the three main nodes: **regional cooperation, economic development, climate change**.

Panel 1 was moderated by ICBSS Director General, Mr. Georgios MITRAKOS and hosted representatives of regional organizations and think-tanks, who exchanged on the importance of regional cooperation and the role of institutions in building mutual understanding and fostering dialogue. The distinguished panelists **Amb. Lazăr COMĂNESCU**, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, **Mr. Asaf HAJIYEV**, PABSEC Secretary General, **Mr. Achraf BOUALI**, Head of the OECD Istanbul Centre, **Mr. Gladden PAPPIN**, President of the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs (HIIA) and **Mr. Marco RICCERI**, Secretary General of Italian EURISPES Institute, stressed the importance of cooperation, correlation and coordination among countries and stakeholders, in order to respond to regional challenges and maintain resilient synergies.

In continuation, the **2nd Panel**, that was moderated by CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission Executive Secretary, **Mr. Stavros KALOGNOMOS**, hosted representatives of academia and business, **Dr. Dragoş MATEESCU**, Director of the Department of Analysis of the Romanian Diplomatic Institute, **Ms. Lina TSALTAMPASI**, President of the Greek Association of Women Entrepreneurs, **Mr. Panayotis GAVRAS**, Head Policy and Strategy at the Black Sea Trade & Development Bank (BSTDB) and **Dr. Dimitris GAVALAS**, Professor at the Ports Management and Shipping Dept. at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, who discussed the state-of-play and future perspectives of regional economic cooperation, in relation to the role of the Black Sea as pivotal corridor connecting regions. Particular emphasis was placed on the potential of women entrepreneurship and the role of women as a valuable driving force of development.

Panel 3 was moderated by **Mr. Thanos SMANIS**, Environmental Analyst at CLIMAZUL. Three renowned experts from civil society and academia, **Ms. Stella KASDAGLI**, Gender expert & Co-founder 'Women On Top', **Ms. Cristina SARRIS**, Sustainability Literacy expert & Director of Resilient Planet and **Dr. Najiba MUSTAFAYEVA**, Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Relations Department at Ibn Haldun University in Türkiye, discussed policy and science-driven solutions to address the devastating effects of climate change on the environment and livelihoods of peoples across regions.

Closing the event, a **special interactive session** was organised by Ms. Cristina SARRIS, who engaged the audience in a foresight exercise for evidence-based policymaking, using the **EnROADS Climate Solutions Simulator**.

The 13th IBSS served as dialogue hub for **seventy regional and international stakeholders**, i.e. policymakers and policy-delivery stakeholders, researchers, business, academia and civil society representatives from Black Sea and European countries.

For more information about the 13th International Black Sea Symposium (IBSS), please visit <https://icbss.org/event/13th-international-black-sea-symposium-2023/>.

About the ICBSS: The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) was founded in 1998 as a nonprofit organisation. It has since fulfilled a dual function. On the one hand, it is an independent research and training institution focusing on the wider Black Sea region. On the other hand, it is a related body of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and its think-tank. Thus, the ICBSS pursues applied, policy-oriented research, promotes knowledge on the Black Sea region both within and outside its boundaries, and offers policy advice with the aim of fostering multilateral cooperation among the BSEC member states as well as with their international partners.

Director General: Mr. Georgios Mitrakos