



14th International Black Sea Symposium

Black Sea: Approaching a tipping point?

The **14th International Black Sea Symposium** with title “**Black Sea: Approaching a tipping point?**” was held successfully online, on Tuesday 2 December 2025, organised by the International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS).

In its fourteenth edition, the IBSS brought together **90 regional and international stakeholders** with an interest in the Black Sea region to explore the evolving geopolitical landscape, its ripple effects, and broader implications for the wider region. The event served as a platform for dialogue to exchange on emerging challenges and opportunities; assess the strategies and interests of major actors, including the Black Sea countries, the BSEC Organisation, the EU, and other regional cooperation frameworks; and foster policy recommendations aimed at strengthening resilience in response to changing geopolitical dynamics.

Opening the Symposium, **ICBSS Director General, Mr. Georgios MITRAKOS**, stressed that the ongoing turmoil in the Black Sea region generates uncertainty and risks for economic cooperation, societal development and environmental resilience both within and beyond the Black Sea region. Mr. Mitrakos highlighted that the next months and subsequent developments for the region will define the future for the generations to come. Introducing the three panels and distinguished panellists, the ICBSS Director General invited participants to engage in an open discussion about the region’s current status and next steps.

Panel 1 panellists **H.E. Amb. Lazăr COMĂNESCU**, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General, **Dr. Serhat KÖKSAL**, President of the Black Sea Trade & Development Bank (BSTDB), and **Mr. Glenn PEARCE-OROZ**, Senior Programme Manager of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), provided insights from the perspective of regional actors in the Black Sea. The panel was moderated by the ICBSS Director General, Mr. Georgios MITRAKOS.

Dr. Mihai SEBE, lecturer at the University of Bucharest and Head of the European Affairs Department of the European Institute of Romania (EIR) moderated **Panel 2**, that focused on the perspectives from the BSEC countries offered by panellists **Dr. Lesia A. VAOLEVSKA**, Head of the Research Service of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, **Mr. Nairi PETROSSIAN**, Permanent Representative of Armenia to BSEC Organization and Acting Chair of the ICBSS Board of Directors, **Amb. Spyridon XANTHOPOULOS**, Minister Plenipotentiary, B4 Directorate for Bilateral Economic Relations,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, **Ms. Tanya MIHAYLOVA**, Director of the Bulgarian Diplomatic Institute, and **Mr. Irakli SIRBILADZE**, Foreign Policy Analyst and Visiting Lecturer at Tbilisi State University.

Last but not least, panel 3 provided the views of stakeholders from neighbouring regions to the Black Sea, moderated by **Mr. Stavros KALOGNOMOS**, CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission Executive Secretary. Panellists **Mr. Marco RICCERI**, Secretary General of the EURISPES Institute, and Member of the ICBSS Board of Directors, **Mr. Roger ALBINYANA**, Managing Director of the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed), **Mr. Abdelrahman SULTAN**, Jordanian Deputy Director and Regional Program Director at EcoPeace Middle East, **Prof. Ms. Agnieszka ORZELSKA-STĄCZEK**, Ph. D, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and **Dr. Sándor SEREMET**, Senior Research Fellow of the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs (HIIA), contributed with their expertise and insights from the Central Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

Key takeaways:

- Cooperation above all –above confrontations and despite the war. Cooperation of all involved actors and across sectors.
- The aftermath of the war in relation to economy, society and more importantly the environmental recovery are pivotal for the entire region, and should remain and promoted in the discussions at national and regional levels.
- The geostrategic location of the Black Sea makes it a point of dispute, especially when it comes to competition over trade corridors.
- The youth is the future and should be supported with trainings and collaborative initiatives.
- Fields of cooperation are identified: demining of the Black Sea, water resources management, digitalisation and the increasing use of AI in sectors other than military, blue economy, trade and connectivity.
- Conflicts unveiled the fragility of political systems and of efforts for regional integration, especially an economic integration.
- The EU's influential role and presence in the region is important for shaping regional dynamics.
- Existing cooperation frameworks, like the BSEC organisation, the 3Seas Initiative, have the potential to assume a central role to support cooperation and resilience across regions.

Watch the full video of the 14th IBSS, here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUHYKVoa94&t=145s>

For more information about the 14th International Black Sea Symposium (IBSS), please visit

<https://icbss.org/event/14th-international-black-sea-symposium-2025/>.

For more information about the ICBSS, please visit <https://icbss.org/>

About the ICBSS: The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) was founded in 1998 as a non-profit 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.