



ORGANIZATION OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Permanent International Secretariat

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The Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS) of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) presents its compliments to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States and has the honor to inform the Latter on the following:

In line with the recommendations of the Meeting of the *Steering Committee on Facilitation of Road Transport of Goods in the BSEC Region*, held online on 10 June 2020, the BSEC PERMIS has been actively coordinating efforts with the *International Road Transport Union (IRU)* and the *Union of Road Transport Associations in the BSEC Region (BSEC-URTA)* in taking practical steps and implementing the most urgent and feasible suggestions put forward during the above online Meeting, aimed at facilitating border-crossings in the BSEC Region, especially during the current Covid-19 outbreak. One of the means mentioned for achieving the above aim is the establishment of modern and efficient border station facilities, especially at the more congested border points between BSEC Member States.

To this end, PERMIS and BSEC-URTA established contact with the company that has constructed and is currently running some of the most up-to-date border-crossing points (BCPs) in the BSEC area, i.e. the *Customs and Tourism Enterprises Co. Inc. (GTI)* of Turkey. As it will be recalled, GTI was among the organizers of the inspection visit at the *Kapıkule - Kapitan Andreevo* border-crossing point on the Turkish-Bulgarian border in May 2019, during which the representatives from Customs Authorities of BSEC Member States and of the BSEC-URTA Member Associations had the opportunity to observe the real situation "on the ground" at one of the most busy crossing points in the region, formulating their relevant conclusions and recommendations.

In order to further strengthen cooperation, share best practices and get acquainted with the Turkish experience on the modernization of BCPs, the BSEC PERMIS hosted a preliminary meeting with representatives from GTI, BSEC-URTA and IRU on 31 August 2020.

During the meeting a comprehensive presentation was delivered on the activities of GTI, which was established in 2005 in partnership with the *Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchange of Turkey (TOBB)*. Based on the «*Built-Operate-Transfer*» model, GTI has accumulated a vast experience while modernizing many land-border gates in Turkey, including some at the borders with other BSEC Member States, among them that at *Kapıkule-Kapitan Andreevo*.

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Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States

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The GTI representative underlined that thanks to the modernization and restructuring of border gates, the waiting time has decreased from hours to minutes and the queues at the borders have almost been eliminated, although they serve 3 million trucks, 3 million passenger vehicles and more than 20 million passengers annually, thus, substantially contributing to the growth of foreign trade.

Further, the meeting allowed participants to touch-upon the serious problems that truck-drivers, members of BSEC-URTA, are facing at many border crossing points, not least among them the long truck queues and the complete absence of secure truck-parking areas on key transit routes, with even the most elementary facilities; among all other obvious security risks, this situation enables illegal immigrants to sneak into trucks with the intention to cross the border check-point illegally, thus creating further problems for the logistics companies, the drivers themselves and the relevant authorities of Member States.

Considering the above, BSEC PERMIS believes that the experience of GTI Co. Inc. can prove very useful for any BSEC Member State wishing to modernize and up-grade the facilities at some of its border crossing points. For that reason BSEC PERMIS, in consultation with the coordinator country, will propose the inclusion of a separate item on the «*Establishment of facilities for trucks at the BCPs in the BSEC area*» in the agendas of the next meetings of the BSEC Working Groups on Transport, on Customs Matters and on Combating Crime; also, PERMIS will propose to discuss the issue at the Meeting of Ministers in charge of Transport.

The BSEC PERMIS intends to continue consultations with IRU, BSEC-URTA and GTI, and to facilitate the invitation of their representatives to the above-mentioned meetings, aiming to comprehensively inform the responsible authorities of Member States at all levels. The PERMIS will also continue actively exploring possibilities of practical cooperation with other BSEC partners, taking advantage of every opportunity to secure financing for projects falling within the scope of the BSEC objectives.

In order to facilitate future discussions, the esteemed Ministries are kindly requested to inform accordingly their respective national authorities in charge of transport, customs and of combatting illegal immigration, underlining the importance of border-crossing issues for the BSEC Member States.

The Permanent International Secretariat of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC Member States the assurances of its highest consideration.



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