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**THE TWENTY FOURTH MEETING OF
CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

REPORT*

ON

**“COOPERATION IN THE SPHERE OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE
BLACK SEA REGION”**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the very beginning of its activities the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has drawn particular attention to cultural issues related to this region. Specifically its Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee addressed the following issues: “Protection of the Cultural Heritage of the PABSEC Member Countries”, “Guidelines for the Program of the Protection of the Cultural Heritage in the Black Sea Region”, “Preservation and Enhancement of Cultural Heritage in the BSEC Member States” and “The Role of Culture in the Development of the BSEC Region” and the Assembly adopted corresponding Recommendations 6/1994, 18/1996, 70/2003 and 80/2004.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has already stressed in its Report and Recommendation 32/1999 on “Development of Tourism in the Black Sea Region” that the BSEC region has a vast potential to become one of the main tourist destination of the 21st century. Given the rich cultural and historic heritage of the Black Sea region, the development of tourism is one of the most promising fields of cooperation among the BSEC countries.
3. However, culture is also closely linked with tourism because diversity of traditions, art forms and historical sites have always been major attractions for travelers around the world.
4. Cultural tourism is important since it has a positive economic and social impact, it reinforces identity, facilitates harmony and understanding among people.
5. Since the subject of cultural tourism is of major importance for the BSEC Member States, the Twenty Third Meeting of the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee, held in Chisinau, decided to take up the subject of “**Cooperation in the sphere of Cultural Tourism in the Black Sea Region**” as the main item of the Agenda of the Twenty Fourth Meeting in Izmir on 16-17 May 2005.
6. Contributions for the Report and Recommendation have been received from the national delegations of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece, Moldova and Ukraine. Reference material used for the preparation of the Report was obtained by the International Secretariat mainly through the Internet from the web-sites of international organizations.

II. CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

7. According to the definition given by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), “*Cultural Tourism is that form of tourism whose object is, among other aims, the discovery of monuments and sites and seeks to satisfy their maintenance and protection*”. This form of tourism justifies the efforts demanded by the human community due to the socio-cultural and economic benefits which they bestow on all the populations concerned.
8. Moreover, cultural tourism also includes visual and performing arts as well as other ways of creative and inter-cultural exchanges. Generally, Cultural Tourism has become an economic activity which might improve local employment and permit the inflow of additional income by offering the visitors and tourists the opportunity to participate in and appreciate local culture. Thus, Cultural Tourism generates development, revenues and employment at the local level which contribute to socio-economic development.
9. Cultural Tourism is a means of supporting and sustaining local culture. This reinforcement of local culture is necessary for its protection in an era of fast modernization. Recent discussions about globalization have indicated that local communities along with their activities are increasingly faced with a loss of identity. Cultural Tourism undertakes the twofold task of preserving these local communities and acquainting them with a wider public.
10. On the other hand, due to the globalization of world economy, business tourism (conferences, trade fairs, individual business travel) will considerably increase and thus new trends will appear in different parts of the market with a resulting growth both in conventional tourism and tourism based on special interests, i.e. Cultural Tourism. Therefore, globalization can potentially be beneficial but it can also provide challenges to cultural tourism activity. In other words, in a globalizing world, local communities should cope with the rapid movement of people and at the same time safeguarding the particular local identities.
11. Tourism can positively contribute to the preservation of culture and historical heritage of each country and at the same time finance the protection of heritage and ensure visitor appreciation. There is an urgent need to revive but also to introduce cultural activity in a wider public because in the majority of the countries involved, the traditions are kept alive by the older generation, which is aging quickly. Since culture in its tangible and intangible form is a prominent destination in every society, state policies and intergovernmental organizations should contribute to their revival and preservation. The symbols of cultural expression should not only become an identity of the past but of the future too.
12. A prospective initiative that Turkey launched is the restoration project of 26 houses in the Faith neighborhood of Istanbul under the cooperation of European Union and the Faith Municipality. During the first eight-month phase of the rehabilitation program,

the roofs and skeletons will be repaired, outer gates and windows will be renovated and decrepit attachments will be removed. The aim according to the Turkish authorities is to improve the physical condition of the houses while protecting their original forms and at the same time the main goal of this project is to raise the quality of life for the residents of Fener and Balat.

13. Cultural Tourism is essential in building a country's image in a positive way. This can be achieved somewhat elaborately, however, for purposes of consistency and brevity only the more essential are being put forward here whereas a full-scale analysis of the strategies follows. Among them, the deconstruction of stereotypes and xenophobic mentalities, the presentation of the attractive and well-known parts of any given culture in an appealing way, such as advertisement and internet web pages are considered crucial for the proper conduct of the cultural tourist process.
14. Cultural Tourism reflects modern global tourism market trends and is thus likely to see a further increase within the tourism sector. Specifically, Europe has been growing in the non-tradition direction, that is retreating from the sea-sun tourism of Mediterranean countries towards culture and rural (nature and eco) tourism, which is a market with higher need for specialization. The World Tourism Organization points out that 37% of all foreign trips are cultural trips. It has been statistically estimated that participation in cultural activities tends to increase through middle-age, peak between the ages of 45-65 and subsequently fall off. An also important consideration is that the age group between the ages of 25- 44 often have children under 15 years in the household and bring them along on the trip. This last fact is important since children experience and become acquainted with culture. Moreover, the cultural tourist industry can benefit and be benefited by rising educational levels everywhere because education is the single most significant factor that influences cultural participation, affluence and travel.
15. Based on the factors mentioned above, the most prevalent assumption is that people, in order to travel, nowadays, are seeking for meaning beyond conventional tourism. Many people find meaning in cultural-based activities such as visiting monuments and sites, religious and national celebrations or taking part in nature-based activities. Since these people search for meaningful vacation, their expectations are high. They expect and should be provided with good service, convenience, an impressive experience, safety, and predictability in terms of what is offered. A meaning of cultural experience supported by the provision of the abovementioned satisfactory services is the best way of promotion of the host community. That means that these cultural tourists when returning to their native country will recommend the specific cultural activity that they experienced to their acquaintances. This informal but nevertheless powerful promotion is essential for the inflow of cultural tourists in the years to come.
16. The cultural tourist industry has to be aware that in order to achieve the target of sustaining and also making known of a particular activity the key is in maintaining the balance between the protection and use of cultural activity. The dynamics of

demand and supply can lead to a situation where the local niche might be threatened or challenged by environmental issues due to overcrowding of tourists. In other words, some sites can be used to attract more tourists and other sites being used to manage overabundance of tourists.

17. The Black Sea countries are rich in cultural and historical heritage resources but these are not always fully understood and used by the tourism industry. Very often there seems to be supply-centered attention instead of demand-driven approach. Moreover, Cultural Tourism is mentioned in a series of national development plans and strategies, however, mostly briefly.
18. Traditions, which have been lost or dramatically weakened elsewhere in the European region, have been preserved and are still alive in the Black Sea countries. The majority of them surrounding the Black Sea, share a similar historical tradition and development which has shaped their traditions and cultural development. The similarities between these countries in their cultural expression are evident without however every and each one of them losing its particular character. Having shared Christian, Pre-Christian and Muslim traditions for a number of millennia a highly syncretic character has been created, which is unique to the Balkan and Black Sea region.
19. The fact that many people celebrate Easter, Christmas, the Ramadan, the various Bayrams and the various Saint dates which have been incorporated by Pre-Christian and Pre-Muslim traditions respectively, enriches the cultural expression and tradition. The folk songs, dances and celebrations of the year vary from place to place carrying on the one hand the cultural heritage but on the other diversifying it according to particular cultural and social development. The density of art is felt everywhere in the Black Sea countries in both cities and rural areas. However, despite the fact that the larger urban centers have reached multicultural populations it is the rural areas which have been more able to preserve the traditions and the purer way of life. Therefore, the activities that take place in rural areas and villages within the Black Sea region have to be linked with local urban centers but also with international visitors so that due to the proper infrastructure more remote areas are accessible to everyone.
20. In the framework of “The Project on Preservation of the National Heritage”, the relevant work in the Republic of Azerbaijan on restoration and preservation of the monuments “Palace of Shirvanshahs” and “Palace of Sheki-Khans”, shrines “Momina Khatun” and “Garabaghar” has been carried out by the World Bank, as well as the plans of regional development for presentation of these monuments as objects of cultural tourism have been prepared. The attraction of foreign investments for restoration of cultural monuments within the framework of the international and regional cooperation can play encouraging role in the tourism development.
21. In the framework of implementation of the Council of Minister’s Decision No 489 dated 18 December 2001 on “Measures to develop cultural-ethnographic tourism in

Crimea by 2005”, in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea during the period of 2000-2004, 9 cultural-ethnographical centers were established. Seven of them are Crimean-Tatar: “Kapsihor-Ay Serez” (Village Morskoe), “Derekoy” (Yalta), “Kermenchik-Akmechet” (Simferopol), “Dzheviz” (Village Zarechnoe/Simferopol area), “Tashkhan” (Belogorsk), “Suren” (Village Tankovoye/Bachchisariy area), “Yash dag” (Evpatoria). One of them is German: “Kronental” (Village Kolchugino/Simferopol area) and one of them is Greek: “Karachol” (Village Chernopolye/Belogorod area). These centers were founded in the framework of the Crimean traditional folk arts programme with the assistance of the Ministry of Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Republican Commission on Nationalities and Deported Citizens’ Affairs of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and the Representatives of the National Minorities of Crimea.

22. According to Armenia’s National Tourist Ministry Report, in recent years hotel construction, development of restaurant sector, growth of volumes of sale of souvenirs, development of the transport system, growth of the supply of intermediary services of the touring result have contributed to the satisfaction of the existing demand. Progress is stated in the development of the existing infrastructure. Cultural events, concerts, festivals and feasts are often held. In 2002-2003 reopening cultural objects and especially museums that are being repaired on the means of “Linsy” foundation will serve as an additional promotion for the growth of tourism as Cultural Tourism plays a significant role in the Armenian touring result. From the stand point of development of tourism infrastructure, road building that is under way in the whole territory of the Republic is very significant. Here the strategical importance of the repairing of roads of Selim pass and Dilijan pass is worth mentioning. It will fully change the importance of the Armenian part of the World Touring Program “Silk Road”, as well as the business interest towards tourism in the villages of the Republic of Armenia. The rehabilitation of roads will create a basis for formation of new touring routes in Armenia, which in its turn will promote the development of other spheres of economy in the local communities.
23. Evaluating the touring potentials, the rich historical and cultural heritage and the variety of nature, the main forms of tourism that can be successfully developed can be singled out and are mainly forms of specialized and non-traditional tourism. **Cultural, historical, and cognitive tourism** generally are of amateur or professional interest. This form of tourism is very promising in many BSEC countries and always had a predominant place due to their rich, historical and cultural heritage.
24. **Eco tourism** can be potentially developed in many BSEC countries due to landscape variety and virgin nature. Historical monuments are in harmony with the nature and with the area, which gives the opportunity to combine successfully this form of tourism.
25. **Religious tourism** constitutes a form of tourism that can bring many countries together. As an example, Armenia was the first to adopt Christianity and to announce it a state religion and it is a country which has rich traditions of Christianity as well as

other BSEC countries. In 2001 in the framework of 1700 Anniversary Celebration of Christianity pilgrim journeys in religious areas is a great potential for religious tourism to be formed and develop.

26. **Ethnic Tourism** is a unique type of tourism since the existence of great diaspora can play a decisive role in the sphere of inbound tourism. In the future, peoples' visits to their ancestors' birthplace can be share in the segment of inbound tourism of all BSEC countries.
27. **Agrotourism** are those forms of tourism that are more and more developed in the whole world. Wine making and the making of dry fruits is a great potential in the sphere of existing rural tourism development. As many historical monuments, within the BSEC region, are generally situated near villages, and ethnographic traditions are well preserved in these very places, it allows combining successfully rural and cultural form of tourism.
28. **Winter sports tourism** is also a form of tourism that can be successfully developed among BSEC countries since the variety of locality creates favorable conditions for its development. Sports and tourism, in particular, are closely interconnected and major or mega events like the Olympic Games in Athens in 2004 can expand the visibility of the area to international tourism and can create conditions of cultural exchange, social and economic development.
29. **Business tourism** has a very big and specific weight among the tourists having visited BSEC countries and the tendency of growth of this type of tourism was very noticeable during the recent years.
30. These forms of tourism that are common to all BSEC countries, should be developed and promoted, considering in particular the possibility of developing complementary actions in key international tourist exhibitions and fairs, recalling, among others, the relevant experience at the International Tourist Fair "Philoxenia 2003", in Thessaloniki.
31. Particular emphasis must also be attributed to the establishment of tourist-cultural itineraries in the BSEC area based on the heritage of our countries, as far as culture, history, mythology, architecture, faith, gastronomy and common traditions are concerned. In this respect, particular lessons can be drawn from the exchange of experiences, networking and the development of special interest itineraries as, among others, from the "Silk Road" project initiated by the World Tourism Organization, the "Argonauts Expedition" initiated by Greece, the regional "Wine Roads" initiated by various BSEC member states, as well as other projects initiated by the BSEC member states.
32. Minorities' cultural heritage also gives an interesting and potentially developing dimension in the role of Cultural Tourism in the BSEC region. Thanks to being on the crossroads of many cultures and trade routes, the Black Sea countries have the

opportunity to take advantage of both their common and distinct character in order to develop a form of cultural tourism which is able to satisfy even the most difficult demands. Minorities' cultural heritage and the rich multicultural resources should be more used to develop cultural tourism and attract international tourists, in particular, from the countries linked to the minorities present in the Black Sea region.

33. Despite all the expressions of intangible cultural activity such as the ones mentioned above regarding dances, music, celebrations, etc. particular emphasis should be given also to food culture. All Countries belonging to the Black Sea region have distinct food cultures that should not be neglected. Food and its social implications is a subject that is inherent in any cultural expression. The importance of food, especially in the context of feasts and celebrations, is an important element among the Black Sea countries' cultures. Feasts are held for weddings, funerals, farewells; they are also linked with certain cyclic celebrations around the calendar year marking the importance of shared food and a wider participation of people. These feasts usually serve to maintain certain social and cultural relationships.
34. More investments are needed to develop the rich Black Sea region cultural resources into tourism products, particularly outside the capitals of each member-state and established destinations. It is important that the Black Sea countries should channel more resources into joint international marketing of cultural tourism and at the same time it is vital that these countries should strengthen cooperation with partners in the Black Sea region by sharing development resources, training, marketing services, expertise and equipment. Precise information on the local events should be available on time to be marketed among the Black Sea region but also expanded on a neighboring and most importantly on an international level. Additionally, more of the existing heritage should allow for more active participation and experience by using more entertaining and learning experience as a part of the overall destination or product experience.
35. The benefits of cultural tourism for both the hosting communities and the cultural tourists require above all cooperation among the member-states involved. Cooperation can be expanded on many levels of governmental and private activity and can vary according to each state's or community's capacity.
36. However, some essential elements which have to form the basis of cooperation have to be mentioned here. Among them, one of the most vital is the exchange of information between the member-states of the Black Sea region. This could be achieved by joint conferences and seminars about the analysis and discussion of the needs of every country. These conferences and seminars with a wide participation of analysts, economists, artists, journalists, anthropologists and general experts would permit the exchange of know-how, the training of professionals and would result in the adaptation of cultural tourist strategies according to every country's needs. These conferences could also attract experts and academics from countries which have already developed a cultural tourist industry and have more experienced staff.

37. Through joint festivals, concerts with artists from different countries, song and dance activities, food and drink festivals, the member states could promote a unique character of cultural tourist activities and thus attract a wider public from many countries, including European and international cultural tourists. For example, Moldova has instituted a National Wine Festival, which is held on the second Sunday in October. This follows an old tradition that, as soon as the new wine has settled, the winemaker invites friends and neighbours to taste the new wine.
38. Another essential element for the establishment of fruitful cooperation between the member states having as a target the development cultural tourism, the institutional and intergovernmental bodies need to elaborate and implement coherent policies. The cohesion of the policies is very important especially with regard to issues which can affect more than one country. Environmental issues are top on the list since climatic changes, existing environmental concerns which affect the entire region and which go across national borders and not to mention environmental concerns which result from an inflow of tourists, affect more than one country in the region.
39. Legislation to protect the environment but also to protect the host community/country from any sort of potential threat imported by cultural tourists also has to be coherent among the states of the region. Legislation about the damage of cultural sites, monuments but also the violation of privacy with respect to a particular activity or cultural expression is essential for the reciprocal and mutual respect of both host and guest. The adoption and implementation of such legislative policies regarding various aspects of Cultural Tourism cooperation among the Black Sea region states facilitates the developmental process and thus contributes to an overall safer environment for cultural tourist activities.
40. In a more practical field, cooperation among the countries of the region could also be achieved with the translation in more than one languages of the Black Sea region of prospectuses, brochures, information booklets and documents concerning each member-state's cultural tourist activities. The information to the public within the region and beyond is essential in being accessible to everyone. On this issue, the upload of sufficient and appropriate material about events and information on the web is an essential factor which can contribute to informing the public. Governmental organizations and private companies, active in the area, can cooperate in making a collective effort about the creation of these web pages which can advertise and inform about activities taking place in more than one country thus attracting cultural tourists for a longer period of time with many alternatives.
41. The most important target of cultural exchange through Cultural Tourism is of course the interaction between the countries of the region which will result in their peaceful coexistence and interaction. In an area troubled by internal and external conflicts, cultural expression and development brings people together promoting mutual understanding, respect, tolerance and appreciation of each others' culture, which should be the most important end-result of cultural tourism.

III. CONCLUSIONS

42. The various forms of Cultural Tourism which should be developed in the Black Sea region have to be in accordance with each countries needs and potentials. Therefore, the most important forms of tourism which could be realistically achieved and developed are found in the concepts of historical, cognitive, religious, ethnic, agrotourism, ecotourism, winter sport tourism and business tourism.
43. Culture is an inherent and inseperable force for socio-economic development. As cultural activity is a source and the same time the result of human progress, it is directly connected with development itself. Especially traditional cultures with their richness and diversity can make an important contribution to the development of economic, social and communal factors in the Black Sea region.
44. The needs of the local communities demand the combination of both cultural activity and sustainable development which leads to the newly used term of Cultural Tourism. This term signifies the positive economic and social impact, the establishment and reinforcement of identity, the preservation of the cultural heritage, the facilitation of harmony and understanding among people with culture as an instrument, the support of culture and the expansion of tourism from local to regional and international targets. With regards to economy it enables the creation of jobs as well as the inflow of foreign capital and the overall stimulation of quality of life being achieved by economic and social activity within and among the BSEC member states.