

STATEMENT

BY

Mr. Yashar ALIYEV

**Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of
the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC)**

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Dear Mr. President,
Distinguished Participants in the Congress,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, allow me first of all to thank the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN) and the Organisation Committee of the Congress for kindly inviting the PABSEC to participate in this important meeting. As a host, on behalf of the Milli Meclis, the Azerbaijani Parliament, let me say welcome to all of you and to convey the best wishes of success and a very nice stay in our capital. Baku.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may know, the PABSEC is the parliamentary dimension of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. As such, it devotes most of its attention to the issues concerning development of economic cooperation among the Black Sea countries. The principal objective of the Assembly is to provide a political and legislative support to the BSEC economic projects. At the same time, the PABSEC serves as a forum for discussions and dialogue on various aspects of cooperation in the legal, political, cultural, educational and social fields.

Promotion of academic, educational and scientific cooperation in the Black Sea region as a contribution to the development of the human and cultural dimension of the Black Sea Cooperation process has been from the beginning one of the priorities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

Taking into consideration the importance of broad-scale cultural cooperation for the promotion of better understanding, mutual respect and tolerance among the peoples inhabiting the Black Sea region, as well as wishing to strengthen their cultural ties and develop cooperation in the field of culture, education, science and information, the PABSEC has supported implementation of the *Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information*, signed in 1993. The Convention provides essential legal framework for both bilateral and multilateral cooperation of the Black Sea countries in the fields of culture, education and science. Within this context, in 1994 the Parliamentary Assembly adopted Recommendation on "*Ratification and Implementation of the Black Sea Convention on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science: and Information*", calling the Parliaments of the signatory Participating States to expedite the ratification of the Convention.

Aiming to develop cooperation between the PABSEC and the Black Sea University (BSU), the Assembly adopted in November 1995 the "*Decision 4/1995 on the Framework of Cooperation between the PABSEC and the Black Sea University*" and has been actively supporting the activities of the BSU. We are proud to say that one of the provisions of this Decision expressed "a special interest in **the organisation of the network of universities in the Black Sea region** - having the existing BSU as a pivotal point and a communication centre enhancing contacts, cooperation, summer courses and joint research". Today, we are happy to see that our initiative was not only implemented, but also developed and getting on very good results.

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The PABSEC has on several occasions discussed issues pertaining to the development of educational cooperation among the countries of the region, and more specifically, to the cooperation of the academic communities as part of the BSEC process. In this respect, the PABSEC Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee worked out and the Assembly adopted, in its ten years of existence, the following Recommendations:

- A Recommendation on "*Cooperation among the BSEC Member Countries for the Improvement of Education*" was adopted in 1995. In this Recommendation, the PABSEC has for the first time proposed to consider the elaboration of bilateral and multilateral agreements on the recognition and equivalence of academic courses, diplomas, degrees and other education-related documents.
- The Recommendation on "*Cooperation of the Academic Communities of the BSEC Member Countries and its Legal Framework* ", adopted by the Assembly in 1998 urged the National Parliaments and Governments:
 - to promote the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements promoting academic mobility in the Black Sea region through the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications,
 - to accede to the UNESCO and Council of Europe conventions in this field.
- A Recommendation, adopted also in 1998, deals with the very important matter - the "*Mutual Recognition of higher education Diplomas by BSEC Member Countries*", a process which leads to the increased mobility of students, researchers and lecturers, paves the way for useful synergies among the academic communities of our countries, and contributes to attaining the goals set by the Black Sea Cooperation process.

The main conclusions that PABSEC has drawn on this matter are the following:

- A considerable diversity in the education systems is a reality, which should be fully respected;
- The existing legal framework should be fully utilised: the international and European instruments, first of all the comprehensive UNESCO/Council of Europe Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in Europe, signed in Lisbon in 1997 and entered into force on 1 February 1999; the Black Sea Convention on Co-operation in the Fields of Culture, Education, Science and Information (1993); numerous bilateral educational cooperation agreements.
- The existing mechanisms should be utilized and strengthened: direct inter-university cooperation; university associations, such as the Black Sea Universities Network; international cooperation with UNESCO, Council of Europe, EU, etc.
- The signature of bilateral agreements should be encouraged. As a prerequisite for bilateral, as well as multilateral agreements, the Black Sea countries should step up information exchange on higher education systems, institutions and recognition matters.
- The possibility of a regional convention should be studied.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you can see, the PABSEC has drawn a broad outline of measures to be undertaken. This was done from the parliamentary perspective, taking into account the views of the

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members of the Assembly from different Black Sea countries. Within the same context, we welcomed the setting up of the BSUN and highly appreciated its projects, aimed to put in place a specific and well-articulated university network, developing the essential European values and boosting cooperation among the universities in the Black Sea region. The BSUN can act indeed as a catalyst for speeding up the process leading towards the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications in the region, by promoting various steps to recognise qualifications within the Network, among its participating universities.

Having in mind that the "BSEC Economic Agenda for the Future" - the strategy on short and long-term cooperation in the BSEC region -, underlines the role of multilateral cooperation among the academic communities, and taking into account the role and importance of the BSUN, the PABSEC Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee placed on the agenda the topic on "The Black Sea Universities Network: Contribution to the BSEC Academic Cooperation" as the main item of its 17th Meeting, held in Tirana on 10 October 2001 . At its session held in Sofia on 4-6 December 2001, the PABSEC General Assembly discussed the Report worked out by the Committee, and adopted a Recommendation on this subject. Among the recommendations addressed by the Assembly to the Parliaments and Governments of the BSEC Member States, the following were directly related to the BSUN:

- to support the setting up of a coordinated framework for speeding up implementation of the proposals by the PABSEC and BSUN on unifying and harmonising academic curricula, paving the way for recognition and equivalence of courses and diplomas which will open the education systems of the BSEC Member States to each other and to the outside world raising its competitiveness in tomorrow's global labour market, promote academic mobility as a source of intellectual enrichment;
- to encourage relevant national institutions to initiate specific programs with the BSUN on education, research, high technologies, management, environment, natural sciences

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BY

Mr. Michael I. SAVVA,

Project Coordinator

**of the Permanent International Secretariat, Organization of the Black
Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Members of National Delegations,
Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to address such a distinguished audience, where the most prominent figures of the scientific and academic communities of the countries of the Black Sea region are gathered to discuss how to enhance cooperation and promote common objectives.

You would, probably, agree that the word -cooperation- is the key message of this Congress.

Cooperation is the most adequate solution to the problems, which our countries are facing during a very difficult and painful period of transition and restructuring of national economies.

On the other hand, **Cooperation** is the most optimistic answer to the challenges and opportunities, which emerge from the new state of affairs, from the new realities, for the scientific community.

That is why we all heartedly welcome this important forum. We are confident that the Congress will give new momentum to the process of implementation of major objectives set up by the BSUN.

The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), which I am representing at this meeting, has been following with interest the activities of the BSUN. We believe that the steps undertaken by the BSUN to expand the horizons of cooperation are significant and topical. Such efforts effectively complement the interaction at the intergovernmental level encouraging a more effective involvement of the scientific community into the process of designing new policies for scientific exchanges thus facilitating the decision-making on scientific cooperation to become more focused, more adequate and, in final analysis, more reliable. Given all the above mentioned the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC at its last meeting in Kyiv in April 2002 adopted a resolution by which the BSUN has been granted the status of sectoral dialogue partnership. In practical terms this resolution provides to the BSUN access to the meetings of the BSEC which means better conditions for the BSUN to voice its concerns and proposals on academic cooperation as well as to communicate with the respective governmental institutions in the BSEC region.

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We believe that this is only the first step. We will continue to explore the most appropriate ways to further promote the BSEC-BSUN cooperation with a view to achieving synergy effects in the activities of both the organizations.

I would like also to take this opportunity in order to express our deep gratitude to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan His Excellency Geidar Alliev, the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan, particularly, to the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan and foremostly the Baku State University for the warm hospitality and excellent conditions of this Congress.

Thank you.

STATEMENT

BY

Prof. Suha SEVUK

President of the Black Sea Universities Network (BSUN)

Mr. Minister
Dear Colleagues,
and Dear Guests,

It is a great honor and privilege for me to address such a distinguished audience.

As you may all know, BSUN project was initiated by an outstanding academician of our Region, Professor Mircea Malitza, from Romania.

The main target of the project was to form a well structured Network of Universities in region, for cooperation based on the principles of equality, solidarity and sharing among partners. The ultimate goal being to prepare the new generations with scientific and cultural interface and dialogue and thus to pave the way for peace, prosperity, democracy and security in our region.

The first step in this direction was taken by Prof. BAVARU, the rector of Ovidius University at Constanza, who started the Network with few Universities in September 1997 and served as the president until, I took over in July 2000. Today, at the end of my mandate I am proud to say that, since its initiation our little network has now expanded to include 93 Universities.

One Unique feature of our Network is that it covers such a rich and wide spectrum of academic traditions, values administration and management styles that no other University Network possess. While this variety and colorful mozaich of traditions and cultures is an important asset, it also poses some problems in cooperation, particularly in recognition of degrees and diplomas, credit transfer systems and hence in mobility of students.

Therefore, looking into the future, I believe, like many others, that we must start to harmonize and converge our higher education systems, by learning and adopting the best practices in the region and by considering the new developments and trends in higher education in Europe and across the Atlantic.

For this reason, our first attempt had been to prepare the general report on "Current Status of Higher Education in the Black Sea region" which will be presented in this Congress.

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Another Unique feature of our network is that, it did not evolve around a major national or international fund, but rather it evolved around ideals, and until now it proved to be sustainable. However, looking into the future again, we all realize that, we have to reach to external funds and strengthen our financial base. For this purpose we are trying very hard to promote and elevate the status of our Network within BSEC organization. The developments are summarized in our last Newsletter, and I strongly believe that very soon BSUN will become a major actor within BSEC organization.

Dear Colleagues,

It the end of my mandate as president, allow me to express my gratitude to all the rectors of member universities, to the members of the Executive Board, to our international permanent secretariat, and to many friends faculty and students who shared with me the joy and satisfaction of being a member of this new community.

The last but not the least, I would like to thank, on behalf of all of you, to our host Baku State University, its Rector Prof. Abel Maharramow and Dean Hazret Agabey Ismail Oglu for such an excellent organization.

STATEMENT

BY

Prof. Adrian BAVARU

Rector of the "Ovidius" University of Constantza,

First BSUN President

Mr. President, Mr. Minister,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Respected audience,

On behalf of the Romanian Delegation and of myself, allow me, please to convey a warm greeting to all the participants in the Second Congress of BSUN and the Fourth Conference of the Black Sea Rectors.

I likewise wish to express my gratitude to our hosts in this beautiful city on the shores of the Caspian Sea for their friendly welcome and the excellent conditions offered to this prestigious academic event.

The BSUN, set up four years ago, at the "Ovidius" University of Constanta, Romania, on the initiative of academician Mircea Malitza, has proved, with each new passing year, its practicability as a dynamic academic component of the Black Sea Economic Area.

Our Network has permanently played a significant role in stimulating cooperation and understanding among the states and the peoples in this part of the world and I also think that the same commitment will be honored in the future as well.

A certain number of programs, scientific surveys, and summer courses have been implemented on the suggestion of different member universities of our Network.

The meetings of the Executive Board and our General Sessions centering on various topics were valuable opportunities of exchanging ideas and adopting well thought measures concerning network projects.

Our current gathering here in Baku, seeks as well to debate, examine, and, based upon the suggestions to be made, to adopt the BSUN Statute.

Solutions are going to be found and the Ministries of Education of our countries will be advised to consider the recognition of academic degrees and an increase in the efficiency of the academic cooperation.

We are asked to ensure excellence and competitiveness in higher education so as to match the historic moments we are crossing.

Our Congress has in fact provided, in its program, for several plenary sessions centered upon such debates as are beneficial to all of us.

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Allow me to express my conviction that our current meeting is not only merely ceremonial but it is highly lucrative and meant to offer a good opportunity for new steps to be taken toward our prospective actions.

We assure the honorable participants about the full contribution of our delegation brought to the progress of BSUN.

Thank you for your attention!

STATEMENT

BY

Professor Abel MAHARRAMOV

Rector of Baku State University, Azerbaijan

Dear Guests,
Dear Congress participants,
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me greet you at the Baku State University, the research and educational alma mater of Azerbaijan for more than 80 years, and tell you “Welcome” according to Azerbaijani national traditions. I want to mention that we do appreciate the organization of BSUN’s Second Congress dedicated to the 10th Anniversary of Black Sea Universities Network at Baku State University and we are very honoured to hold such a great and significant event here.

First, I must mention that we are meeting at the oldest university of Azerbaijan, Baku State University. It was established in 1919. At the very early stage of its work University consisted of 4 faculties, but now it turned into the oldest, biggest and leading university and it unifies 16 faculties. Now about 14.000 students receive their education at BSU, among them are about 500 foreign students. 25 corresponding and full members of Academy of Sciences, 380 doctors of sciences, professors, about 800 candidates of science, associate professor work at the University. Baku State University also cooperates with leading universities of Turkey, USA, Russia, Ukraine, France, Italy, Japan, and Austria, participates in grant programs and the general amount of grants exceeds USD 2 000.000. I am happy with this information, and as we have given you our booklets and you can find additional information there.

It is apparent that the main discussion point of the Congress is “Assurance of high-quality education in academic institutions”, and I suppose it is a very broad and urgent problem of nowadays.

I hope, thorough discussion of the topic will provide prerequisites for the drastic advance in university education.

Let me convince You that Baku State University, supported by the Government of Azerbaijan, has done and will do further its best to acquire expected workable results by the second Congress of the BSUN. Well-respected scholars all over the world have already acknowledged crucial role of the Black Sea region in the foundation and development of religions, sciences, social notions, and literature and art monuments. In all periods of its history, Azerbaijan has paid big importance to versatile cooperation with Black Sea region countries.

Let me quote the President of the Azerbaijan Republic, Mr. Heydar Aliyev, who has recently made a speech on the annual Black Sea States’ Economic Community Organization meeting in Istanbul:

“Black Sea region locates in the center of Eurasia. I suppose it is a very symbolic fact and think, this organization in its future activity will occupy a leading position in unification of continents, states, peoples and persons, and in the achievement of economic and social progress”.

I think, these words of our respectable President are brilliant example of Azerbaijan Republic’s intention to cooperate on a broad basis with states of the Black Sea region countries. We, universities, must play important roles in the development of this cooperation. First of all, due to the fact of uninterrupted increase of universities’ role in contemporary society.

Universities all over the world are considered to be one of the main social institutions as harmonic and natural part of trends and mechanisms of society’s development.

It is worth mentioning that while universities successfully function for thousand years, other scientific-educational, cultural intuitions had originated and disappeared from a societal scene, could not withstand trial of time and had not left any substantial mark on History.

Throughout recent years the universities influenced immensely the process of social opinion formation and created closer relationships with societies of the countries and regions of their location. For instance, the role of universities in the system of international education has changed dramatically in recent years. Along with connecting their home countries with the foreign countries, the universities also select, process and adapt the received information to the requirements of local environment.

Thus, cooperation between the Universities creates a solid base for cooperation in other fields. On another hand, the most important trend of international development in the beginning of 21st century is a process of globalization of social life. Globalization brings to the forefront the integration processes in science and education as well as in other realms of life. It is not by mere chance that during last ten years the Universities began to unify in Associations and Networks as a result of these processes. So, our Network and its successful activity is a demand of our times.

In this connection, I would like to point out that from this point of view Baku State University deeply understands its mission and tries to take an active part in the work of the Black Sea Universities Network.

For instance, Azerbaijan National Secretariat at Baku State University was set up and as result of its activities the number of Azerbaijani Universities presented in the BSUN increased from 4 to 12.

At the same time we develop bilateral cooperation within the frameworks of the BSUN. We have bilateral cooperation agreements with Constansa – “Ovidius” University (Romania), Middle East Technical University, Istanbul University (Turkey), the Odessa Academy of Refrigerating plants (Ukraine).

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With a support of Mr. Carafotias, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Greece to Azerbaijan, we signed Protocols of Intention with a number of Greek Universities. I hope new Universities will join this list during the Congress.

At the end, I would like to welcome you to Baku State University once again and I wish good success to the 2nd Congress of the BSUN. I hope that you will remember well your stay and meetings in Baku.

MESSAGE
OF
Prof. Ecaterina ANDRONESCU
Minister of Romanian Ministry of Education and Research
presented by
Prof. Marian GHEORGHE
Deputy Director General for Higher Education
Romanian Ministry of Education and Research

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to represent the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, Romanian Higher Education System, as well, at this ceremony marking the opening of the “Black Sea Universities Network 2002 Congress”.

First of all, we are sending to you our greetings, and our good wishes for a full success of the Congress.

The Congress is assuming very important topics associated to higher education process and to higher education institutions in the Black Sea Region: quality assurance / management / assessment, university management, accreditation, financing, academic cooperation, university – community partnership, teaching and learning technologies, university scientific research.

Romanian Higher Education System is working for achievement of operational developments in all above issues, based on the principles promoted by the Bologna Declaration of 1999, based on advanced features and major trends of the European Higher Education.

We believe that the Congress represents a timely framework for sharing good experiences and some alternative solutions to such of complex issues. We are interested to find out new developments about these, moreover now, when in Romania the new *Law of Higher Education* is in stage of debating process by the Romanian Universities.

So, we are very interested to have, as soon as possible, an operational methodology and proper institutions for implementation a *quality assurance and assessment system* in our universities.

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We are also working to achieve a new system for *accreditation* of *programs* and *institutions*, and a new system for *financing* of higher education.

In context, we underline our special preoccupation for widening of access to higher education for *young people with low income*, and for *the adults* who want to improve or change their statute.

We are doing an intensive work to develop the legal framework for achievement of the *synergy* between *teaching* and *research* in our universities. We know that a real scientific research generates developments of knowledge and of applied methods, and, in the same time, contributes to a higher quality teaching.

We invest important resources for development of training methods based on *IT*, and of *Open and Distance Learning* structures.

We are promoting and supporting all above actions in order to get, in Romania, as major outcomes: an advanced *decentralised* higher education system – with a high *autonomy* of universities, and, inside of these, autonomy of faculties and departments; a real participation of students in university life; the recognition of diplomas in European area, and more; an integration of universities in local, national or international networks for solving problems of our communities.

We sustain all initiatives and actions for the development of our structure “Black Sea Universities Network”.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

We have the opportunity, in our Congress, to change ideas, to promote solutions. I am convinced that these will be entirely accomplished.

Thank you, and all best !

**MESSAGE
OF
Prof. Mircea MALITZA
President, Black Sea University Foundation,
presented by
Ambassador Nicolae MICU**

Mr. Minister,

I am greatly honored to convey to you and to this distinguished audience the following message from Prof. Mircea Malitza, President of the Black Sea University Foundation in Bucharest.

“Mr. President,

I wish you and all participants in this prestigious Congress of the BSUN to know how much I regret that I am unable to be with you today. Circumstances beyond my control have unfortunately prevented me from making the trip to Baku at this anniversary time for the great project we undertook together five years ago. I am not at our Congress physically, but in spirit I am present, and the Black Sea University Foundation, of which I am honored to be actively and effectively contribute to the further development and affirmation of the BSUN.

In this sense, I am pleased to inform you about our intention to establish, within BSUN framework, an Inter-University Consortium for International Relations and Conflict Prevention Research (IUCIRCPR) and a Centre for Research and Application of Information Technology in Higher Education (CRAITHE). Specific aspects of the two initiatives will be discussed during the Congress, and, I hope, they will be received with interest.

There are many things which unite the universities of the Black Sea Region.

All our countries are fundamentally interested in contributing to making the entire European continent more united, democratic, peaceful and prosperous.

All our nations are vitally interested in speeding up their economic and democratic reforms as well as their economic and social

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progress with a view to ensuring better life for their people.

And all our countries know too well that it is in their own genuine interest and in the interest of peace and progress in our region to seek together effective answers to the misunderstandings and disputes we still have in this part of Europe.

Education, and higher education in particular, is called upon to do much more in all these fields.

Hence, the extraordinary importance of the BSUN, which we all have solemnly undertaken to develop. Indeed, by the principles and purposes which were established for the Network and by the intensive, and creative activities carried out for their achievement, the universities of the Black Sea region can play a considerably grater role in the search of answers to the many problems our nations are facing in their aspiration towards peace, security and progress in our area. The General Report on Current Status of Higher Education in the Black Sea region is the best illustration of the validity of the project launched by us five years ago.

I earnestly wish you full success in your deliberations and decisions at the Second BSUN Congress held in the beautiful capital of friendly Azerbaijan.

Mircea Malitza”