



**INTERNATIONAL PERMANENT SECRETARIAT  
BLACK SEA UNIVERSITIES NETWORK**

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**Speech of Prof. Marian PREDA at the  
PABSEC General Assembly  
60<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session  
7 December 2022**

*Distinguished Mr. President,*

*Distinguished Members of the Delegations of National Parliaments from BSEC  
Member States,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my pleasure and honor to represent the Black Sea Universities Network to the present distinguished audience.

During the period passed from our previous participation to the PABSEC General Assembly meeting the BSUN activities have been concentrated on a very broad range of activities, some of them driven by major challenges. On one side, we have passed over a difficult period of pandemics that had very difficult impact on our activities. Then, after that, we have been involved in a period of military aggression in our region with complex and complicated consequences. At the same time, within the EU, we have to manage a very complex process of transformation of universities and structuring a continent-wide system of European University Alliances. The BSUN member universities are following all the above mentioned trends and try to enhance cooperation ties in order to address them and to develop possible solutions.

This year, between 12 and 15 October 2022, we organized the BSUN Congress in the format of an International event dedicated to "*Dialogue and Cooperation in the Black Sea and Balkan Regions*". The event was organized and hosted by the

University of Bucharest in collaboration with BSUN member universities, Balkan Universities Association (BUA) and many other regional and international organizations.

On this occasion, we have facilitated a large conversation and exchange of ideas regarding the current problems in the Black Sea and Balkan regions. Outstanding scholars, experts and representatives of national and international organizations, Government officials and members of the Diplomatic Community presented their opinions and proposed different solutions.

The Congress provided a platform for discussions on the following topics: re-launching the dialogue and cooperation in the Black Sea and Balkan regions, the role of universities in the new regional and global context, the role of higher education in turbulent times, sustainable development in the Black Sea and Balkan regions, energy, suppressing the fake-news phenomena, propaganda and other societal challenges, the role of Networks, the role of education in human security, as well as defining pathways for the internationalization of universities from the Black Sea and Balkan regions.

At the Closure Ceremony of the Congress, BSUN and BUA signed an initiative for re-launching the dialogue and cooperation in the Black Sea and the Balkan regions. The initiative is calling for immediate actions and the use of all possible means to stop the conflicts in the Black Sea and Balkan regions and in this way to make possible the re-launching of dialogue and cooperation in the regions. The participating members of the Academic Community expressed their availability to contribute with science-based evidence for defining long lasting solutions to secure peace and cooperation in the region. The text of the document will be distributed to all participants with the support of PABSEC PERMIS.

The debates also brought to the fore the concern of the BSUN member universities regarding the problem of brain drain from the region and underlined the need to start a robust action to change this trend. In this context it was launched a call for the BSUN member universities to propose activities and possible initiatives that can be developed under the frame of BSUN to address this issue.

In addition, the BSUN member universities decided to put a strong emphasis during the next term on the promotion of new and more efficient ways of developing the

university education processes focusing on student-centered and purpose-oriented paradigms.

At the same time, the next period the BSUN activities will prioritize topics related to human security, energy security, climate change, food security and digitalization.

Last but not least, a special attention will be given on the initiation of a regional cooperation framework on Black Sea Studies.

At present, we are following the results of the debates and the conclusions in order to establish a working framework for the implementation of the resolutions of the Congress.

But before everything, we have to firmly express that the crucial priority for the region at the moment is to stop the military aggressions, to stop the crimes against civilians and the destructions of crucial infrastructures, leaving millions of people in dark, in freezing cold and pain. It is, first of all, the duty of the specialized international organizations including PABSEC to make all possible efforts and beyond, to stop the war in the region and to secure peace.

As the President of the Black Sea Universities Network and the Rector of the University of Bucharest, I am here to assure you of all our support in your activity in order to contribute to the call coming from millions of citizens of our region. We have to do something effective and we have to do it now. The Black Sea Universities Network is a major resource in this respect and I urge you to consider us as such, not only regarding the current challenges but also on the long run, with the view to the stabilization, development and growth of the region.

Thank you for your kind attention!

***Prof. Marian Preda, BSUN President***



## BSUN/BUA INITIATIVE FOR RE-LAUNCHING THE DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION IN THE BLACK SEA AND BALKAN REGION

Located at the crossroads of large global pathways from East to West and from North to South, the Black Sea and Balkan Region have facilitated over millennia an ongoing exchange of goods, values, and ideas. At the same time, it had its own share of confrontations and wars. It is known as a cradle of ancient and modern civilizations, but also as a space in which the clash of civilizations may be manifested.

In the current context of open conflict with unprecedented escalation and dangerous outcome, with millions of refugees and thousands of casualties, and with massive infrastructure disruptions and destructions, it is the intellectual, civic and social responsibility of us, the educators and scientists from the Universities of the region, to take a stand. We have both the responsibility and the capabilities to advance solutions to overcome the current situation, and to take a leadership role in the efforts to secure the peace, stability, and development of our region.

The priorities are evident: First, cease fire and de-escalation under a peace process framework involving the United Nations and other international organizations. Second, stabilization and reconstruction of the region, under a framework involving as key stakeholders the States, the universities, as well as the civil societies from the region.

The solution to the current crisis has an inherent regional dimension. That dimension requires a systematic, regional effort of coordination and cooperation as well as a solid foundation in local and regional knowledge, using analytical and normative perspectives robustly grounded in the economies and societies of the region.

We consider that BSUN and BUA are uniquely positioned to provide the knowledge infrastructure and leadership for the efforts to create a regional forum for exchange and development of ideas, visions, and policies, for scientific evidence-based decision making as well as for legitimacy building.

With these ends in view, we suggest the following actions:

- To initiate an internal consultation within the networks of the member universities, and to extend this process to partner organizations and media;
- To capitalize on the results of the discussions and debates during the International Congress on “Dialogue and Cooperation in the Black Sea and Balkan Regions” that have underlined the regional academic and research organizations and epistemic communities in the stabilization, reconstruction, and the sustainable development of the region;
- To initiate contacts with International Organizations, Chiefs of States and other stakeholders, organizations and decision makers;
- To organize under the BSUN and BUA framework with the participation of any other interested organization a large consultative and collaborative platform for supporting the Dialogue and Cooperation in the Black Sea and Balkan Region with a view to the stabilization, reconstruction, integration and development of the region.