

Official launch
of the
"Black Sea and Central Asia Economic Outlook 2008" Programme
Bucharest, June 23, 2008

Welcoming address of
Ambassador Georgios Poukamisas,
Embassy of Greece in Bucharest

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Ministry of Labour, Family and Equal Opportunities of Romania, in cooperation with the OECD Development Centre for their initiative to organize this official launching of the Black Sea and Central Asia Economic Outlook programme for 2008 and for their kind invitation to participate in it. We welcome this opportunity to meet and exchange views on the economic and social development of the region with international stakeholders and representatives from both the public and the private sector from our countries. We are certain that today's event will be a success, giving substance to the long-term interest of the OECD Development Centre for the wider Black Sea and Central Asia regions and providing the necessary publicity to the first annual edition of the BSECAO programme.

Greece, along with Romania and Turkey, the BSEC Organisation and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies – which is a related

body of the BSEC Organisation, with its headquarters in Athens - have provided, right from the outset, the guidance and financial assistance, which were necessary for the implementation of the programme. In our view, the successful completion of the first BSECAO annual edition provides us with a strong example of cooperation between a dynamic international agency, such as the OECD Development Centre and its extensive network of local experts and researchers. We want to congratulate the Development Centre for the preparation of this report. We are certain that your analysis on the shifting dynamics of the labour markets and their impact on the social developments in the area will serve as a reference to all subsequent studies and provide potential international investors with important data for their decision-making.

With more than 300 million inhabitants, strong growth rates and a wide variety of business and investment opportunities, our region, at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and the Middle East, already constitutes a hub of growing importance in energy and transport. Although Greece is not a Black Sea littoral state, we highly consider the growing role that the wider Black Sea and Central Asia regions are called to play in our era. Greece, along with Romania and Turkey, is a member of the BSEC Organisation since its inception in 1992 and considers its involvement in the area as of strategic importance. Today, the BSEC Organisation constitutes the oldest, fully fledged and mature regional economic organisation in the region. We want to thank the BSEC Organisation for its initiative to participate to the BSECAO

project, in the context of its evolution towards becoming a project-oriented organisation. In the same context, we also want to thank the "International Centre for Black Sea Studies" for its contribution and announce its intention to organize, in cooperation with the OECD Development Centre, a similar event for the BSECAO programme, in Athens, next autumn.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In recent years, all the countries in the area have taken significant steps in strengthening their political structures and improving their economies. The new objective, now, should be to increase regional cooperation, to monitor important developments and help potential partners and investors in locating business and investment opportunities in all areas of activity. In our view, the launching of the BSECAO programme is one concrete and important step to this direction.

Concluding, I once more want to thank our hosts for their kind invitation and warm hospitality and congratulate the OECD Development Centre for its expertise and the quality of its work. Let me assure you that Greece highly appreciates initiatives, such as the one launched today, which, in our view, will prove instrumental in benefiting all the States in the region and the maximum number of our citizens.

Thank you very much for your attention.