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As delivered

Address by Mr. Norbert BAAS, Ambassador, Special Representative for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, Federal Foreign Office, Germany at the Summit of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership Bucharest, 5th June 2006

(Mr. President, Minister, Excellencies,)

Germany warmly welcomes and greatly appreciates the Romanian initiative to host this Forum.

The European engagement in this area has already grown considerably.

A number of initiatives demonstrate this and, indeed, the enlargement of the European Union by Romania and Bulgaria will and should contribute to enhancing the European orientation towards the Black Sea.

Germany introduced some ideas on how to advance the Black Sea focus in the European Union within the framework of the Neighbourhood European policy. We also suggested to introduce a regional cooperation perspective into the Action Plans, particularly into those elaborated by the European Union with the three Southern Caucasus countries.

Perhaps the Baltic Cooperation Council together with the Northern dimension of the European Union can serve as an example for the Black Sea.

At any rate, a more significant role of BSEC, as advocated by Greece and other BSEC countries, will help increase interaction between the EU and the Black Sea area. Perhaps, additional institutional setups are being needed.

It is difficult to say at the beginning of this conference what will be the outcome but we welcome that questions like these are included into the agenda.

Gradually, a new Black Sea Dimension with the EU could take shape. Some of the EU instruments may be in need for readjustment. This could be discussed later in some of the workshops of this Forum.

A European Black Sea strategy should include Turkey and build on the inclusion of Russia and Ukraine. A viable future of the European Union Black Sea strategy should further develop and strengthen the common ground and visions we share with the United States.

In our view, three major challenges will have to be tackled, in particular, if we are developing together a Black Sea strategy of the EU.

First, energy, transport and transport infrastructure. Above all, its inter-connection with the creation of an improved investment climate in all littoral states of the Black Sea, perhaps innovative steps towards harmonized investment conditions in the coastal areas of all Black Sea neighbours.

The second challenge is continued support for the democratic reform agenda, with emphasis on the European Neighbourhood policy goals. Indeed, as was pointed out, regional cooperation has served in the past to advance the case of democracy and reform.

The third challenge I would describe as assistance towards post-conflict rehabilitation. It will probably be difficult to engage Black Sea institutions, as they exist so far, in the political settlement of the regional conflicts, because other institutions like the OSCE - with regard to Nagorno-Karabakh and to Moldova/Transdniestr - and the UN - with regard to the Abkhazia/Georgian conflicts - are in the lead as far as the settlement of these conflicts are concerned.

But the Black Sea cooperation and its structures could help in the rehabilitation of the area in general, i.e. in the course of the settlement of these conflicts a special role may be assigned to the Black Sea institutions. We should reflect on this at an early stage. For instance, this is true, in my view, for Abkhazia. Quite recently, both the Georgian government and the Abkhaz leadership have pointed out the need and the desire to include the Black Sea institutions into a more advanced relationship between Abkhazia and Georgia. Thinking about this prospect has to begin at an early stage and it has to be as concrete and operational as possible.

To sum up, Minister, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that it was very wise to set up the agenda of this meeting in such a way that it contains more questions than answers. The network already existing in the cooperation of the Black Sea area is large, sometimes it is even extensive, and we have to focus on what is important, to work for priorities and to think on which goals we have to combine with the right instruments and institutional arrangements.

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Thank you!