

**REMARKS TO THE BLACK SEA FORUM BY DR. J. D. CROUCH, II,
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Thank you, President Basescu and Foreign Minister Ungureanu for hosting the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership. It is a pleasure to be here to represent the people of the United States. It is a double pleasure to be back in Romania where I served as the United States Ambassador to this wonderful country.

The world is changing rapidly – and as it changes, it presents nations with both opportunities and challenges. People in many countries are experiencing greater prosperity and higher living standards because of the expansion of global trade, investment, information, and technology. At the same time, people in every region are exposed to new threats – some originating in the natural world, and others created by human beings.

To serve their people best in this changing world, nations recognize that they must cooperate more effectively – and this is especially true for the nations of the Black Sea Region. For centuries, these lands have been a cultural crossroads – connecting Europe to the Middle East and Central Asia. Communication across this region was limited during the Cold War, as others have mentioned, but today your nations have a new opportunity to build stronger links with each other – and thereby reclaim your historic position as a region of connections between East and West.

Cooperation in the Black Sea Region is not a new idea. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative are just two examples of how your nations have worked together in recent decades. The United States supports both these organizations, and we want to see them succeed.

Yet the United States also supports your dialogue on how to deepen cooperation among your nations and your peoples – whether through existing institutions or through more flexible, informal frameworks. We want to hear your ideas on how to cooperate more effectively to address a broader range of issues. And we will support your efforts to create a Black Sea Region that is prosperous, free, and at peace.

Dialogue among the Black Sea nations will make clear many possibilities for enhanced partnership, but some areas of challenge and opportunities are apparent already. I would like to highlight just four of them.

First, your nations can cooperate to create sustainable economic opportunity for all your people. The Black Sea Region is a natural trading hub, so open markets and free trade can greatly increase prosperity for all. Your nations can also cooperate on energy and the environment – by facilitating the transport of gas and oil to the global marketplace, and by restoring key waterways such as the Black Sea and the Danube River delta. Economic development and responsible stewardship can go hand-in-hand – and regional cooperation makes both objectives easier to achieve.

Second, the nations of the Black Sea Region can continue to enhance their security cooperation. The same trade routes that offer so much promise for regional economic development are also – unfortunately – attractive conduits for drug smugglers, human traffickers, terrorists, and weapon proliferators.

Illegal migration and organized crime also thrive wherever borders are unprotected.

By working together to strengthen regional security, you will protect your people and bolster their confidence in your ability to keep them safe.

Third, your nations can cooperate in emergency response and crisis management. The United States experienced the devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina just last year, and the whole world is witnessing the impact of the most recent disaster to impact Indonesia. Yet the Black Sea Region also faces threats from natural and man-made disasters – the spread of Avian Flu in the region is just one example. The United States has worked with many nations in this region to enhance emergency response planning, but a regional focus is needed as well. By building capacity to respond to a variety of crises, your nations can help each other in time of need, coordinate your response to threats that cross borders, and be a source of strength for those suffering from disasters in remote corners of the world.

Finally, nations of the Black Sea Region can support each other's efforts to fight corruption and build transparent and accountable institutions of government. Making progress toward these objectives is essential for nations in this region which are traveling the path of democratic reform. This can be a long journey, but people expect to see improvements along the way. Armenia and Georgia are two Black Sea Region countries that are taking positive steps with the help of our Millennium Challenge Corporation program – and Moldova and Ukraine will soon follow. Eliminating corruption will attract foreign investment and build confidence that democratic governments can deliver real change for their people. Nations with transparent and accountable governments also make the most effective partners in addressing all issues of regional concern.

All four of these areas offer potential for greater cooperation among your nations – yet some obstacles remain. The "frozen conflicts" are a source of tension among nations of this region.

The peaceful resolution of these disputes through negotiations will clearly help smooth the path for regional cooperation on other issues, yet these two goals also reinforce each other. A renewed focus on regional cooperation may help resolve some of these "frozen conflicts" – as all parties recognize that they share common interests, and can work together to enhance security, prosperity, and freedom.

The United States supports your efforts to explore additional ways to cooperate more effectively. The American people understand that secure borders in the Black Sea Region enhance their own security, because they impede the global trade in weapons, dangerous technologies, and human beings. The American people recognize that greater prosperity in the Black Sea Region will create greater economic opportunity for all nations, and the American people know that as the nations of the Black Sea increasingly respect the rights and dignity of their own people, they will become stronger anchors of stability and democracy in this critical part of the world.

To help make this vision a reality, today I am pleased to announce that the United States intends to participate in and contribute to a new public-private partnership called The Black Sea Trust. The Trust would fund programs across the region to strengthen cross-border cooperation, civic participation, democratic governance, and the rule of law. The Trust would empower individuals and civic groups who seek to rebuild trust in public institutions affirm the value of citizen participation in the democratic process, strengthen key civic

institutions such as independent media, and foster regional ties among the public, private, and non-profit sectors. In partnership with the German Marshall Fund, the Romanian Government and other donors, the US Government intends to make a significant financial contribution this year to the initiative.

The Black Sea Trust seeks to build on the momentum that your nations have created for regional cooperation. This is a very exciting time in the history of this region, and I look forward to hearing your ideas on how best to realize its promise.

Thank you.