

Ivailo KALFIN, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria

As prepared

**Statement by H.E. Mr Ivailo Kalfin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria
at the Summit of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership
Bucharest, 5 June 2006**

***Dear President Basescu,
Dear Presidents, Prime-Ministers and Ministers of the Countries of The Black Sea Region,
Dear Participants in the Forum for Dialogue and Partnership!***

Allow me first of all to convey to you the greetings of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria H. E. Georgi Parvanov as well as his wishes for the success of the Forum. I would also like to thank the Romanian hosts for the excellent conditions they have created for our deliberations as well as for their warm hospitality.

The Bulgarian delegation appreciates the Romanian foreign policy initiative that aims to establish a framework for discussion on the perspectives for development of the Black Sea region and for solving the existing problems there. Bulgaria greatly values the personal role of President Basescu in this endeavor.

We believe that today's forum is an important element of the process of identifying our common priorities aiming to build a peaceful and stable region which has a key economic significance.

Today's agenda is bolded by two key words: dialogue and partnership. The dialogue among the countries of the region will allow the establishment of a fruitful political and economic co-operation. The common European values and standards, the shared interests and the jointly developed vision for security, collaboration and prosperity of our citizens should be the basis of this dialogue. It is good that we have taken certain steps in this direction. The Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation plays a constructive role by including all countries of the region in its activities. The Organization shows signs of political maturity by widening the scope of its action. The process of establishment of working level contacts between the BSEC and the EU is encouraging. BSEC has at its disposal a suitable financial instrument – the Black Sea Bank for Development and Cooperation.

The already existing regional military-technical options such as BLACKSEAFOR are at a certain development stage.

Recently the Black Sea Euro Region was established in Constanța.

Partnership opens the doors for wider regional collaboration in the Black sea area and for overcoming the remnants of isolation. The European Union and NATO are natural partners of the

region. There are opportunities for a new kind of profound co-operation with the EU and NATO, which is going to contribute both to the reinforcement of democratic values and the rule of law as well as to the strengthening of regional stability in general. The launch of the European Neighborhood Policy in 2004 and the publication of the EC Strategy Paper in May 2004 were important steps in that direction. The reinforced interaction between the EU and the projects TRACECA and INNOGATE will have a positive effect.

The inclusion of a paragraph dedicated to the Black Sea security to the Communiqué of the 2004 Istanbul Summit of NATO and the membership of Bulgaria and Romania as well Turkey and Greece in the Alliance indicate that in fact the Black Sea region is already a part of NATO's zone of responsibility.

Bulgaria sees its role in the Black Sea region exactly in the realm of dialogue and partnership. We clearly realize our responsibilities as a NATO member and in the context of our forthcoming membership in the EU. We take part in the common efforts to formulate the most appropriate decisions related to the future of the region. We take the necessary steps to share our experience in European and Euro-Atlantic integration and to help the development of democratic reforms and the inclination of the countries in the region along this route. The basis of this partnership are the Memoranda for co-operation in the field of European and Euro-Atlantic integration signed with Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Armenia. The good thing is that all these documents envisage the implementation of concrete projects and I am convinced that they will be useful for our partners.

We are working for the development of economic relations with the countries of the region both on a bilateral and on a multilateral basis. Bulgaria considers itself as a potential European gateway for the energy supplies from the Black Sea basin and the Caspian Sea and we take part in the common efforts towards the construction of the trans-continental transport corridors.

Being conscious about the fact that the Bulgarian external border is already an external border of NATO and the EU, we take due measures in combating organized crime, terrorism and traffic of drugs, people and weapons.

We are very much involved in the regional cooperation according to our political and economic resources and with the clear understanding that this is the way to achieve confidence-building, increase of trade and investments and to find effective means for settlement of trans-border problems.

As OSCE Chairman in 2004 Bulgaria gained experience and expertise in the search of solutions to the "frozen conflicts" in the region.

Taking into account the dynamics and the variety of different cultures that have been co-existing in the region for centuries we would dedicate particular efforts to develop the cultural

dialogue.

Looking towards the future we think that co-operation in the region should be based on a network of principles, the most important of which are: avoiding the establishment of new structures and duplication of activities, support of existing initiatives and organizations, strengthening of democratic processes and reinforcement of democratic and market reforms. A model for collaboration in the Black Sea region could be the so called Northern Dimension within the EU, which includes a network of regional initiatives with the strong support of the Union and its Commission.

At the end, let me remind you of the ancient Greek legend about the Argonauts. Passing through a multitude of dangers and obstacles in the ancient Black Sea they kept on going towards their cherished goal – the Golden Fleece. Our movement ahead resembles the path of the Argonauts. I believe our goal – the transformation of the Black Sea region into a peaceful, secure and prosperous area, is worth our maximum efforts to overcome the present difficulties and differences.

Thank you for your attention!