

**OPENING REMARKS**  
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**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ROMANIA**

**Your Excellencies,**

**Dear participants,**

I would like to warmly welcome all participants from the region, European and Euro-Atlantic community, regional and international organizations at the first high-level meeting of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership, an event that we hope to determine a significant step forward in the process of consolidating a stable, democratic and prosperous Black Sea Region.

Allow me to open our debate today with very few remarks, sharing with you our expectations from this process:

- On one side, our meeting today intends to put the basis of **a political project for a new strategic identity** of our region, project open to all decision-makers, opinion leaders and key stake-holders from the region and from the larger European and Euro-Atlantic community. New global, European and regional challenges require a new sense of solidarity and action. Such a new project cannot be built without an open and frank dialogue. We are making today an important step forward but there are many challenges ahead that we can not cope with if not constructively engaging all significant regional and extra-regional actors. As this process will go ahead, an **“Identity Charter for the Black Sea region”** should emerge, defining our shared values and interests and our common priorities for action. Putting the Black Sea back on the map is a challenge in itself.
- On the other side, it has a very pragmatic operational design. In the main areas of common interest identified so far (good-governance, sustainable development, crisis management) governmental and non-governmental representatives come together to: **define** the issues of common interest; **assess** existing instruments, **evaluate** national and regional capacities; **prioritize** key issues and **identify** critical requirements; **prepare** for the future in a pro-active manner, **set new policies** for the region. I am confident that our discussions will lead to the future drafting of a set **of regional “policy papers”** that could help decision-makers from the region, European and Euro-Atlantic community, international and regional organizations to improve their policies for the region. We should all work to define a new vision for the Black Sea region, that reflects new realities and create better conditions for its development.

While our objectives are quite ambitious, we start this process with very realistic expectations. We fully understand **the structural difficulties** of treating the Black Sea region as a geopolitical complex and the hurdles in the development of a common and coherent strategy for the region. Only all together we may succeed in our endeavors. **The benefits** of having a shared understanding of the critical issues, a coherent agenda for the region and, in general, better structured inter-action and dialogue make the efforts to stay and work together worthwhile. Thus, we want to continue this process and show that it can bring concrete and positive results to all countries in the region, without diverting resources, political will and attention from already established cooperation initiatives, like BSEC.

When Romania presented this initiative, many questions arose about what it brings new to our region, where there are many other organizations and initiatives for cooperation. In more practical terms, the projects proposed under the umbrella of the Forum are open to all relevant actors, in a variable geometry. They can be agreed and put in practice by either all or just by some of the regional countries, involving external partners, both governmental and non-governmental. The driving principle is for the project to bring a contribution to the advancement of prosperity, stability and security in the region, in a cooperative and as inclusive as possible logic.

We would like to invite all countries from the region to take “the torch” of the Black Sea Forum forward. The initiative is open to all key stakeholders interested by the stability and prosperity of the region, be they governments, opinion leaders, private companies.

As the process is born in Bucharest, Romania will continue to nourish it and plead for its advancement. We are sure that we are not alone in this undertaking. Those present here are a living proof thereto. We are all part of the process. The inter-dependency of nowadays world has brought all of you here, not Romania who is just the host. We are not attending a conference today, we are starting digging the foundations of a solid construction. Therefore, today’s event is only a starting point. The hard work is just to come.

Wishing you fruitful discussions today, I open the floor for the interventions of high representatives of the European and Euro-Atlantic community, as well as international organizations.