Black Sea regional policy approach

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This document comprises the first annual report from the Commission on the implementation of the Black Sea Synergy. It describes the progress achieved so far in implementing the tasks set by the 2007 Communication “Black Sea Synergy – a New Regional Cooperation Initiative”. It also renders account of the series of contacts and discussions with partners in the Black Sea region. These have led to the launch and endorsement of the Synergy as a collective endeavour and have produced a number of proposals. The Black Sea Synergy Initiative is complementary to the European Neighbourhood Policy, the enlargement policy for Turkey and the Strategic Partnership with the Russian Federation.

The 2007 Communication formulated concrete goals and tasks in sectors or thematic fields such as the environment, trade, maritime, energy, transport, employment and trade. The Commission has started implementing most of these tasks.

The report also highlights that experience of the first year has proven the validity of the principles contained in the 2007 Communication. The initiative’s main goal remains to invigorate action at regional level promoting stability and prosperity in the Black Sea area. It is a flexible, inclusive and transparent framework, based on the common interests of the EU and of all Black Sea states. The Commission welcomes the fact that Black Sea Synergy participants envisage continuing the present pragmatic and project-oriented approach. Consequently, work should proceed to accomplish the tasks set by the 2007 Communication and the Kyiv Joint Statement.

During the Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Kyiv and the months thereafter, EU Member States and Black Sea Synergy partners have made suggestions as to how the Black Sea Synergy cooperation process can be firmly rooted as a long-term endeavour. These proposals can provide new impetus to regional cooperation with partners to the east of the European Union. The Commission intends to explore and actively take them forward to promote more effective and ambitious action:

- **long-term, measurable objectives**in fields like transport, environment, energy or maritime safety should be set to spur more concerted action. These would require the support of all BSS members. In each case a lead country and/or organisation should be identified to ensure coordination of activities which might be undertaken at national or regional level to achieve the objectives set;
- to facilitate the realisation of projects, **sectoral partnerships** could be established to provide a framework for co-financing (including through the NIF) and a basis for the involvement of IFIs. These partnerships might bring together all or some of the Black Sea Synergy participants to cooperate on a series of projects. The successful experience of the Northern Dimensionprovides a useful example of how this could work;
- **the frequency of ministers’ meetings should reflect concrete needs**. Foreign ministers could meet as required to mark the major milestones of the process.

There have been a number of other proposals that also deserve further study:

- involvement of Belarus in some of the sectoral activities, related to the Synergy;
- creation of a Black Sea Civil Society Forum;
- strengthening of academic and student networks;
- establishment of an Institute of European Studies in the Black Sea Region.

The Commission stands ready to work with Member States and all stakeholders on these and other new ideas, strengthening Black Sea regional co-operation that:

- complement the bilateral, tailor-made cooperation we have with our partners under the ENP and other policies applying in the region;
- are inclusive, involve all Member States and Black Sea countries;
- provide added value.

To conclude, the initial results of the Black Sea Synergy reveal that the development of EU-supported Black Sea regional cooperation is a process taking place in a complex environment. Continued progress requires the consistent and active involvement of a growing number of actors, including both Member States and Black Sea partners. As in the first year, the Commission will be ready to contribute to this important work.