

ATHENS DECLARATION

of the Second General Assembly of the Black Sea Capitals' Association

We, the Governors, Prefects and Mayors of the Capitals of the Black Sea Countries, attending the 2nd General Assembly of the Black Sea Capitals' Association, held in Athens, on October 15th-16th, 2001, under the auspices of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, upon invitation of the Prefect of Athens

- **Reasserting** our common will to keep strengthening the cooperation between the capitals of our Countries towards progress, stability and peace in the Black Sea region, with a view to achieving the goals included in the Statute of the Black Sea Capitals' Association,
- **Reasserting** the considerations, conclusions and initiatives that must be undertaken and implemented especially in accordance with what is stipulated in the Declaration signed in Ankara on September 5th-6th, 2000,
- **Reiterating** our steadfast commitment to the principles of democratic society, pluralism, respect for human rights and the improvement of civil society,
- **Reasserting** our conviction that the Capitals of the eleven Countries can substantially contribute, in accordance with European structures and regulations, to the efforts towards the achievement of the objectives of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization,
- **Welcoming** and acknowledging the Declaration adopted on October 30th, 2000, by the 16th General Assembly of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, as a clear proof of PABSEC's constant support of the activities of the Black Sea Capital's Association,
- **Undertaking** the commitment to intensify our efforts, commensurate to the capabilities of the Capital - Cities Administration, assisting the Governments of our Countries in protecting - by all legal and appropriate means - the citizens of our Countries' Capitals, in matters of equality before the law, equal opportunities in all sectors and at all levels of social or other related activity, as provided for, defined and required by the European and International Organizations in which our countries are members and as enjoined by the principles and rules of every democratic, well-governed State,
- **Considering** that Capital - Cities Administrations in particular - on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity - are closer to citizens and that, especially in the present crucial conjuncture, they must pursue the constant improvement of the services offered to them,
- **Estimating** moreover that the role of Local Administrations - basic cells for the development of democracy and civil society - in the resolution of local problems is - and anyhow ought to be - decisive and determinative,
- **Declaring**, finally, our unshakeable belief in the inalienable, human and everlasting principles of peace and brotherhood of peoples, regardless of race, gender, religion, cultural or other feature, characteristic or particularity,

***In view of all the aforementioned,
We, with the present Declaration, agree on the following:***

A. INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

- 1. The Governors, Prefects and Mayors of the Black Sea Capitals decisively, unequivocally and emphatically condemn the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, against the United States of America. These attacks - beyond causing thousands of innocent victims - were also directed against mankind itself and against fundamental universal ideals and values, such as democracy, human rights and law and order.*
- 2. We similarly condemn any act of terrorist violence, regardless of where it may come from or against whom it is directed, considering that terrorist acts of any form and nature are against the world community and concern mankind as a whole.*
- 3. We strongly voice our protest, committing ourselves to assisting and supporting the efforts of our Countries' Governments, to the extent we are able to do so, in order to put an end to this scourge that threatens the very existence of mankind.*

B. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE BLACK SEA CAPITALS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ORGANIZED CRIME

- 4. The widespread upsurge of criminality - particularly in its most dangerous form, organized crime - represents, for the citizens of the whole world, a major threat against the improvement of democratic institutions and global security, especially in the region of the Black Sea Countries. At the same time, we are aware of the growing connection between terrorism and organized crime, drugs and arms trafficking, corruption, money laundering, antiquities trafficking, actions having a serious impact on the political, economic and social life of our Countries and mainly of our Capitals.*
- 5. We support the conclusion of the Agreement among the Governments of the PABSEC Members - Countries on cooperation in the fight against crime - particularly in its organized forms, a menace to our Governments' joint strategies against organized crime and terrorism - providing for cooperation mechanisms in terms of prevention, repression, disclosure and monitoring of terrorist activities, organized crime, trafficking of drugs and weapons, corruption, etc.*
- 6. At the same time, the Black Sea Capitals' Association supports any action undertaken by the National Parliaments and PABSEC towards the application of the appropriate legal framework for the fight against organized crime, in accordance with European and International standards.*

C. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE BLACK SEA CAPITALS IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING THE FIGHT AGAINST NATURAL DISASTERS

- 7. The ongoing degradation of the environment and the erratic use of natural resources have a negative impact on the overall development of the region's Countries. This is a priority for the Capitals of our Countries, where air, water, degradation of nature and ground pollution have reached an alarming level, jeopardizing the health of citizens and economic growth as a whole.*
- 8. Consequently, we are fully aware that one of our main responsibilities is to meet the demands for a decent and civilized life for our citizens and we are determined to develop the programs suitable to this end, taking certainly advantage of our cooperation.*

9. *The participants have expressed their gratitude to the Prefect of Athens for the excellent conditions provided for the General Assembly, as well as for the warm hospitality.*
10. *The next General Assembly will take place in the first half of May 2002 in Baku upon the invitation by the Mayor of Baku, Chairman – in - Office of the Black Sea Capitals' Association.*

The main item of the Agenda: Strengthening the role of the Local Authorities in improving the quality of life in the Capital – Cities.

Adopted by the 2nd General Assembly of the Black Sea Capital's Association, in Athens, on October 16th, 2001.