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Security challenges in the Black Sea region

The Black Sea is a critical strategic corridor between East and West. It provides transit routes for a variety of commodities, both legal and illegal, and include energy, counterfeit goods, drugs, human beings as well as weapons of mass destruction (WMD) material as there are a large number of unsecured radiological sources in the region. This sort of illegal activity presents serious security challenges to the region and creates significant security threats for the rest of the world.

The main security challenges facing the Black Sea were the subject of a workshop held at Oxford University, United Kingdom, from 12 to 14 June 2006, The workshop was co-directed by Ambassador Tedo Japaridze, from Georgia, Secretary General of the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), and Dr. W. Duncan Wood, from the US, Research Director for the Institute for Applied Science. It provided a forum for high level discussions among representatives from 14 NATO, Partner and other countries, as well as key international and regional organisations, including the UN, the BSEC, and the South-East European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) Regional Centre for Combating Trans-Border Crime.

Recommendations that emerged from the workshop include:

- The need to encourage policy-makers to consider the Black Sea area as a specific region requiring a comprehensive policy in order to address a common set of political, economic and security challenges;
- Establishing a virtual clearing-house for Black Sea issues to enhance cooperation in the region and provide a forum for public and private sector input into key regional security challenges;
- Developing opportunities for academics and policy-makers from the West to work at BSEC, in order to enhance understanding of the region and increase BSEC capabilities;
- Promoting implementation in the Black Sea region of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources; and
- Encouraging states in the region to make use of IAEA training programmes on physical protection of radioactive material.

The workshop also resulted in significant funds being secured for Black Sea counter-trafficking cooperation activities. Counter-trafficking funds were made available by the US government to develop Joint Interagency Task Force capabilities in the Black Sea region, as has been done in other regions. These funds are to be used by participating countries to provide additional operational capabilities to coordinate and support regional interdiction efforts.

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