

RESULTS OF THE BLACKSEAFOR YOUNG OFFICERS SYMPOSIUM ISTANBUL/ 7-8 APRIL 2011

We, young Officers from the navies of Black Sea Littoral States, gathered in Istanbul on 7 April 2011 and conducted a symposium as part of the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Agreement on the Establishment of the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR).

Our discussions during the symposium were centered on the theme of **“Today and Future of the Maritime Security in the Black Sea”** with two sub-topics: **Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA)** and **Maritime Security Operations (MSO) and Tools**.

Reaffirming the ever-increasing importance of the Black Sea especially in the energy and security domains, we reiterated the invaluable and indispensable contribution of cooperative MSA and MSO efforts in the Black Sea.

We reviewed the efforts of the littoral states in enhancing their own capabilities for an improved Maritime Situational Awareness. Considering the size and the harsh nature of the Black Sea, we believe that it would be a challenge to continuously compile the whole recognized maritime picture without the collaboration with and contribution of all littoral states.

Taking also into account the inherent link between maritime situational awareness and maritime security operations, each of which complements or supports the other, we believe that the current MSO initiative in the Black Sea, i.e., the Operation Black Sea Harmony (OBSH), is already contributing and may contribute more to the MSA in the Black Sea to the benefit of all littoral states.

We also think that creating a practical and constructive interaction between OBSH and the BLACKSEAFOR could serve as an additional tool in further improving the MSA and MSO in the Black Sea.

After reviewing already existing mechanisms and initiatives, we came to the conclusion that littoral states have enough of capacity to ensure incessant MSA and to conduct efficient MSO in the Black Sea, yet there is still room for improvement particularly in terms of creating a better synergy with the full contribution of all Black Sea countries.

In addition to our valuable exchange of ideas at our symposium, we also enjoyed a warm atmosphere of friendship, which, we believe, is as important as the matters we discussed.

As such, we would like to see that these kinds of gatherings among the young officers of the navies of the Black Sea Littoral States recur in the future, preferably hosted by each Black Sea state on a rotational basis.

Being aware of the fact that it is the BLACKSEAFOR flag, which brought us together in this occasion, we also would like to express our gratitude to all our authorities who envisioned and embodied this initiative, which has become a trademark of the Black Sea and which we are proud to have become a part of.