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CPMR AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN EU MEMBERS, CANDIDATE AND POTENTIAL CANDIDATE COUNTRIES

The General Assembly of the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission (BBSRC) met in Edirne (TR) on 13 June 2014 at the invitation of **Dr Ayhan Özkan**, BBSRC President, Deputy Governor of Edirne Valiligi (TR) and in the presence of **Dursun Ali Şahin**, Governor of Edirne, **Dr. F.H. Burak Erdenir**, Deputy Undersecretary, Ministry for EU Affairs of Turkey and **Eleni Marianou** Secretary General of the CPMR.

During the event, the Balkan and Black Sea Regional Authorities agreed to develop their partnerships, both in cooperating better with each other and in enriching their relationship with the European Union institutions and the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).

Furthermore, delegates called for a close cooperation with the Managing Authorities and the European Neighbourhood Instrument programmes and supported the development of macro-regional strategies such as the Eastern Partnership, the Black Sea Synergy, the Danube and the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy.

“Regions can be sources of peace and development, therefore their cooperation can be a fundamental tool for the stabilisation of some countries. We invite the European Institutions to recognise the challenges of this area and reconsider allocations that may help overcome our structural handicaps,” stated **Dr Ayhan Özkan**, while chairing the General Assembly.

Eleni Marianou, Secretary General of the CPMR, highlighted that the new EU instruments for 2014-2020 offer many possibilities for the Balkan and Black Sea Regions (including the 7 CPMR Turkish Provinces) to encourage development through interregional projects. *“We ask our states to help us overcome the obstacles that impede regional cooperation in the area”*, said **Eleni Marianou**, welcoming *“the expertise of the BBSRC and the CPMR and their role as a bridge for best practices exchange between EU members, candidate and potential candidate countries”*.

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