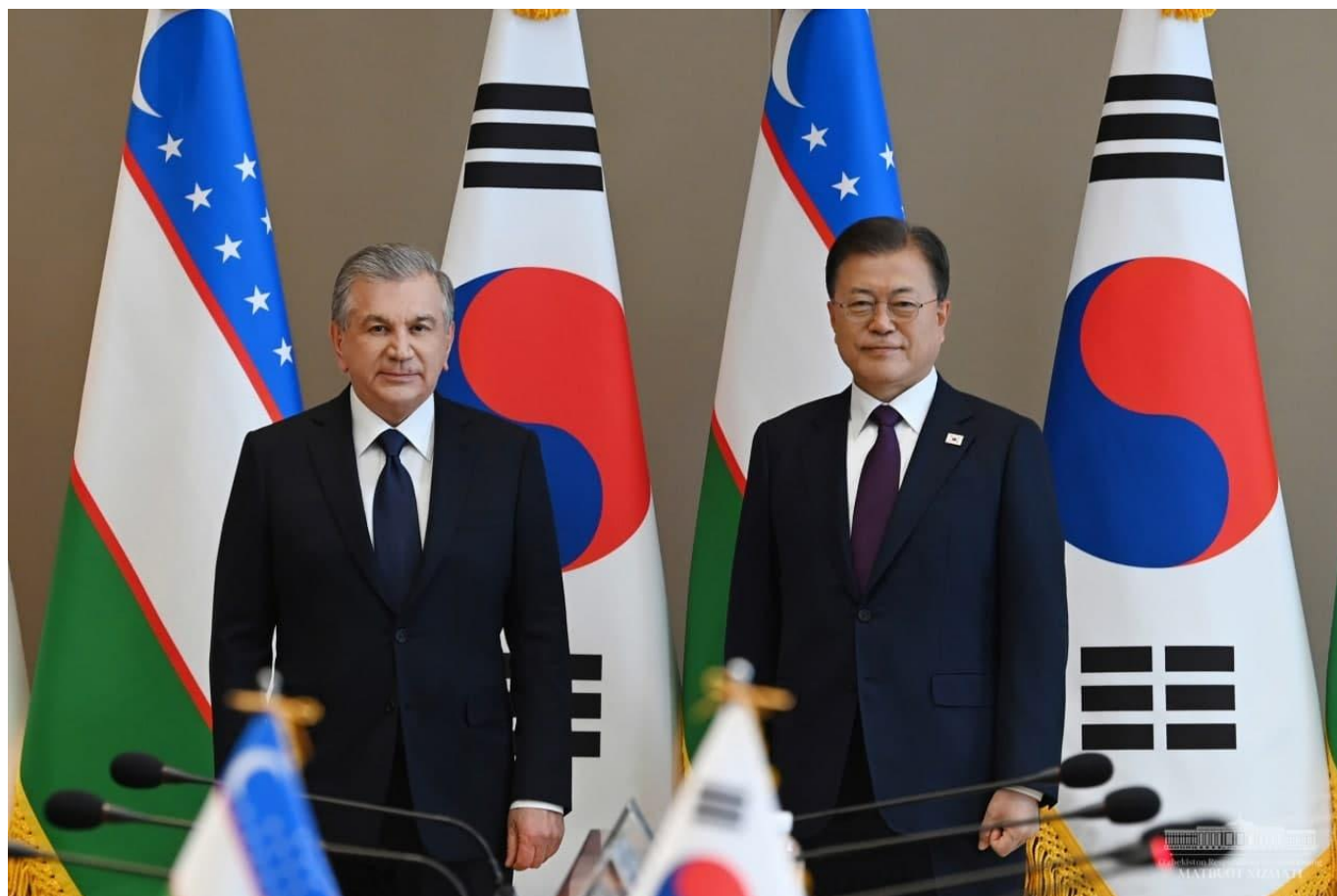


## Uzbekistan, Korea to take the special strategic partnership to the next level



On December 17, a solemn ceremony of the official meeting of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan took place at the Cheong Wa Dae residence of the President of the Republic of Korea, in the city of Seoul.

A guard of honor was lined up in honor of the distinguished guest and his spouse. The national anthems of the two countries were played. The solemn ceremony embodied the ancient history and bright modernity of the Land of the Morning Freshness.

The heads of state held talks with the participation of official delegations of the two countries.

President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in, welcoming the distinguished guest, emphasized that Seoul attaches great importance to further development of cooperation with Tashkent in the widest range of areas.

"I welcome the esteemed Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, my dear brother. Welcome to Seoul. I remember well our online meeting in January this year. This was my first summit, opening the year. Today we are meeting, spending the outgoing year in person. It is especially gratifying that it is with you that my diplomatic schedule for this year began and ends. Korea and Uzbekistan are special strategic partners. Together, various projects are being implemented in such areas as the production of agricultural equipment and electrical engineering, the power engineering industry and energy, as well as the construction of industrial enterprises. Several important documents will be signed during your visit. We are ready to join hands with Uzbekistan, in response to global climate change, to develop cooperation in such promising areas as the creation of smart cities, smart farms, ICT and manufacturing electric cars. In the coming year, we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. I hope that in the new year we will jointly create a new page of prosperity", President Moon Jae-in said.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, thanking for the invitation, emphasized that openness and mutual respect

are a solid foundation on which relations between the two countries have historically been built.

"I am very glad to meet you. Thank you for your invitation to beautiful Korea on a state visit and your traditionally warm welcome. The weather is cold now, but the soul of our Korean brothers is very warm. Being here, surrounded by friends, we feel at home. We treat your country and the Korean people in a special way. We have a similar mentality, traditions and moral values. The implementation of your New Policy made it possible to strengthen the country's leading positions in high technologies, digitalization, innovative and green development, to reveal the enormous intellectual potential of the talented Korean people", the President of Uzbekistan said.

Our countries have been strategic partners for 15 years. The friendship and political will of Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Moon Jae-in have become powerful incentives to give new dynamics to cooperation between Uzbekistan and Korea.

This is the fourth meeting of the heads of state. In October 2017, Shavkat Mirziyoyev paid his first state visit to the Republic of Korea. In April 2019, President Moon Jae-in paid a return visit to Uzbekistan, within the framework of which a Joint Declaration on a Special Strategic Partnership was adopted. Several new initiatives to further strengthen ties were announced by the leaders during the online summit in January 2021.

This visit to Korea is a logical continuation of intensive dialogue.

The Leader of Uzbekistan emphasized that today the very time requires us to reconsider the priorities of practical partnership in the long term. Cooperation between the two countries must fully respond to the modern challenges of the global economy.

The Republic of Korea is one of the key trade and economic partners of Uzbekistan. The trade turnover and the number of joint ventures have almost doubled in recent years. Despite the pandemic, multifaceted relations continue to develop dynamically.

Uzbekistan and Korea have made significant progress in concluding a Free Trade Agreement. At the meeting, confidence was expressed that with its signing next year, it will be possible to increase and balance the indicators of trade.

The volume of Korean investments in the economy of Uzbekistan exceeds \$7 billion. This year, \$320 million were spent, which is 20 percent more than in 2020. The capital works for the implementation of joint projects in the chemical, petrochemical, textile and construction industry, agriculture.

The effectiveness of long-term cooperation with Korea Eximbank, as well as the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF), deserves special attention. For example, financing through this fund alone has been increased to \$1 billion. Solid funds are allocated for the implementation of new projects in Uzbekistan until 2023.

The fruitful partnership with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) is also enhanced.

The President of Uzbekistan identified three main areas of the next agenda: green development, digitalization and strengthening of the social protection system. All promising joint projects, programs and action plans are proposed to be considered through the prism of these main priorities.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized that by bringing together the human capital and natural resources of Uzbekistan with the advanced technologies and knowledge of the Republic of Korea, it is possible to create a good basis for the development of production of products in demand on the world market. In this regard, the President of Uzbekistan proposed to create, with the assistance of the EDPF, an Uzbekistan - Korean cluster for the production of semiconductors and electronics in Tashkent region. Scientific and educational institutions, research and development centers in the field of advanced technologies will be located on its territory.

The parties expressed their mutual intention to encourage and develop in every possible way the activities of the Textile Technopark and the Center for Agricultural Engineering, jointly created in Uzbekistan.

The achievements of Korea in the development of the digital economy, artificial intelligence, smart cities, outsourcing, a new generation of communications and Internet technologies are of practical interest for Uzbekistan.

Our countries have made significant progress in healthcare, preschool and higher education. Since last year, the Multidisciplinary Children's Clinic has been operating in Tashkent, which is the first joint large project in the field of medicine.

The Korean model of education is one of the best in the world. That is why Uzbekistan has completely reformed the preschool education system based on the advanced experience and knowledge of partners from Korea.

The President of Uzbekistan emphasized the importance of developing innovative cooperation between universities and proposed creating a permanent platform for their regular dialogue, holding the Forum of rectors of universities of the two countries next year.

It was noted that one of the locomotives of the economic growth in the post-pandemic period could be the tourism industry. Uzbekistan will support the participation of Korean companies in projects for the construction of hotels and infrastructure.

Next year, our countries will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and the 85th anniversary of the ethnic Koreans living in Uzbekistan.

The Leader of Uzbekistan proposed to declare 2022 the Year of Mutual Exchanges between Uzbekistan and the Republic of Korea, to implement a project on organizing a Museum of Korean History, as well as a library at the House of Korean Culture and Art in Tashkent.

Views were exchanged on the issues of the global and regional agenda.

Uzbekistan and Korea have similar positions on many issues. Countries support each other in the international arena. The Republic of Korea supported the election of Uzbekistan as a member of the UN Human Rights Council, as well as in favor of the candidacy of Samarkand as the venue for the 25th Session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization in 2023. In turn, Uzbekistan supports Korea's intention to become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2024-2025.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev highly appreciated the growing role of the "Republic of Korea – Central Asia" Forum in contributing to the sustainable development of our region.

The Leader of Uzbekistan proposed to introduce new effective mechanisms of dialogue at the level of parliaments and governments to promote promising projects and programs of mutually beneficial cooperation.

The state visit of the President of Uzbekistan to the Republic of Korea became a historic event in terms of the significance of the decisions made and the agreements reached. It laid a solid foundation for bringing the special strategic partnership to an even higher level.







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