

## ISRS Director: Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan can act as drivers of interregional integration



On June 4 this year, a delegation from Uzbekistan led by Eldor Aripov, Director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (ISRS), took part in the second meeting of the Uzbekistan – Azerbaijan Expert Council on “Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan: Promising Areas for the Development of Mutually Beneficial Cooperation”, held in Baku.

The event was organized by ISRS and the Center of Analysis of International Relations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AIR Center) with the support of the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Azerbaijan.

The leadership and experts of the AIR Center, the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport, the State Agency for Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources, the STEM analytical center, and Baku State University represented the Azerbaijani side.

Officials from ISRS, the Center for Economic Research and Reforms, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, JSC Uzbekistan Railways, and IT Park Uzbekistan represented the Uzbek side.

The event’s primary focus was on discussing the current state and prospects of cooperation between Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan in key areas such as agro-industrial collaboration, green energy, digitalization, the transport sector, and education.



In his opening remarks, ISRS Director Eldor Aripov emphasized the high level of relations between Tashkent and Baku, describing them as “a model of cooperation between two friendly and brotherly nations”.

The expert noted that over the past three years, bilateral relations have rapidly reached the highest level of interstate partnership. “Such dynamics of cooperation in such a short period are a rare example in international practice”, stated the head of the Institute.

It was emphasized that these achievements were made possible thanks to the political determination and will of the leaders of both countries. “Regular contacts and the personal, trust-based relationship between the leaders have activated dialogue at all levels”, Mr. Aripov noted. For example, he cited data indicating more than 150 mutual delegation visits between the two countries since 2017.

The ISRS Director also focused on the dynamic development of economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. According to him, trade volume has increased eightfold over the past eight years, while the number of joint ventures has grown fivefold.

Analyzing the prospects for further rapprochement between Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, the expert pointed to similar transformation processes in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. “If in the past the countries of Central Asia were referred to as the ‘Eurasian Balkans’, alluding to unresolved disputes over water and land, today the region is increasingly consolidating, developing intra-regional integration ties, and gaining regional subjectivity”, the expert stated.

At the same time, he emphasized, “the situation is also changing in the South Caucasus, where we are witnessing active steps by countries to eliminate root causes that have long served as factors restraining regional development”.

Mr. Aripov noted that these conditions open new opportunities for expanding cooperation between Central Asia and the South Caucasus.



Highlighting Azerbaijan – Uzbekistan solidarity, AIR Center Chairman Farid Shafiyev emphasized the

historical support provided by Tashkent during a problematic period for Baku.

“Uzbekistan stood by Azerbaijan during its most challenging years”, the expert noted. According to him, Tashkent demonstrates its support not only in words but also through concrete actions. The construction and functioning of a school is a tangible contribution to Azerbaijan’s efforts to restore the liberated territories.

Expanding on this topic, Mr. Shafiyev stated that the cooperation between the two countries has long surpassed a bilateral framework. “This partnership has taken on strategic significance, influencing developments in Central Asia and the South Caucasus”, he said. According to the expert, the policy of the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, plays a key role in this process. “He is the driving force behind cooperation in our greater Caspian region”, the expert emphasized.

Touching upon multilateral cooperation, the AIR Center Chairman emphasized the active engagement between the two countries on international platforms. “Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan have developed a special relationship. They are the driving forces behind Turkic unity”, Mr. Shafiyev asserted. In this context, he also highlighted the close coordination between Tashkent and Baku within the framework of the Economic Cooperation Organization, whose upcoming summit will be held in Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, Mr. Shafiyev highly praised the qualitative changes occurring in Central Asia. “Today, integration processes in the region have gained new momentum. I would especially like to underline the personal contribution of the President of Uzbekistan”, he stated. Elaborating on his position, the CAMO director added that specific past conflicts in the region are now a matter of history. In all these developments, the role of the Uzbekistan Leader has been crucial.



Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Azerbaijan, Bakhrom Ashrafkhanov, expressed confidence that the multifaceted and fruitful cooperation between Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan rests on a strong foundation, enabling the two countries to confidently pursue the course of expanding mutually beneficial partnership.

“The cooperation in transport and logistics is gaining particular momentum”, the Ambassador noted. “Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan share a common goal of creating an extensive network of transport corridors, viewing this as a key factor for economic growth”. He concluded, “In this regard, the expansion of practical cooperation in the development of transport communications is becoming an increasingly high priority in the Uzbekistan – Azerbaijan agenda”.

During their stay in Baku, the ISRS leadership also met with Rovshan Muradov, Secretary General of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center. The sides discussed prospects for cooperation between the Institute and the Center.

Mr. Muradov acquainted the delegation with the activities of the Center, which focuses on preserving and promoting the creative legacy of the great poet Nizami Ganjavi. It was emphasized that his philosophy and ideas of harmony, justice, and respect for human dignity remain relevant and deserve deep reflection in



today's world.

Continuing the conversation, Mr. Muradov praised the growing role of Uzbekistan in Central Asia, noting that Tashkent is making a significant contribution to the region's transformational processes.



**Source**