

## Eldor Aripov: “Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan need to focus on uniting common potentials with access to new economic opportunities”



This opinion was shared by Eldor Aripov, the Director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (ISRS), who addressed the first meeting of the Uzbekistan – Kazakhstan Expert Council on August 2 in Astana.

The event, organized by ISRS jointly with the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, was attended by the leadership, representatives of ministries and agencies, and experts and analytical circles of the two countries.

According to Eldor Aripov, “the current meeting has special symbolism. It is taking place on the eve of the state visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Kazakhstan, as well as the sixth meeting of the heads of state of Central Asia.

The expert noted, “At present, thanks to the will of the two leaders, a high level of political trust has developed between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. It guarantees the consistent strengthening of bilateral relations, independent of any political situation”.

According to the ISRS representative, trade and economic cooperation are key to bilateral relations. “Kazakhstan is invariably among our three largest partners. Over the past seven years alone, trade turnover between our countries has more than doubled, reaching \$4.4 billion by the end of 2023,” Eldor Aripov emphasized.

Investment cooperation also demonstrates high growth rates. Since 2017, the volume of investments from Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan has increased 23 times – from \$10 million to \$230 million in 2023. At the same time, the number of enterprises with Kazakh capital in Uzbekistan is increasing. Compared to 2016, their number has increased almost fivefold, exceeding the mark of a thousand enterprises.

The ISRS Director believes that to further increase the existing positive dynamics of bilateral interaction, “it is necessary to focus not on preserving and increasing one’s competitive advantages, but on uniting common potentials with access to new economic opportunities”. According to the expert, “Such a win-win strategy in our highly interconnected region will be the most advantageous”.

To this end, Eldor Aripov called for focusing on the following issues.

First, the expert outlined the importance of strengthening political trust based on the principles enshrined in the treaty on allied relations.

According to the ISRS Director, continuing and further expanding regular political dialogue at all levels will play an important role.

“Close interaction and support for each other within the framework of multilateral platforms, as well as joint promotion of the initiatives put forward, are in demand. Mutual consultations are essential, as well as the practice of synchronizing watches before major international events with the participation of the two countries. In this regard, the Expert Council can make a great contribution”, the expert emphasized.

Second, according to Eldor Aripov, it is essential to implement the idea of forming a shared space for industrial and technological development based on the complementarity of the economies of the two countries.

The expert believes that it should be based not only on the addition of competitive advantages, the creation of new jobs, and our technological potential but also on the substitution of expensive imports and joint entry into the markets of third countries.

“We have all the conditions for this: many up-and-coming projects in animal husbandry, cotton growing and processing, greenhouse construction, automobile production, and household appliances. All this can contribute to the common treasury of joint economic development”, the ISRS Director expressed confidence.

Moreover, the expert emphasized the importance of involving small and medium-sized businesses in implementing joint projects and establishing public-private partnerships.

Third, according to the ISRS Director, creating a barrier-free environment for the movement of goods, services, labor, and capital seems relevant.

“The benefits of this are obvious. Consumer prices will decrease, and supply chains will appear at a short distance, which will protect us from turbulence in the world markets. We have proposals for combining master plans for developing regions in the two countries’ border areas. I am convinced that if we examine how our capabilities can complement each other, new economic growth points will open up”, Eldor Aripov concluded.



**Storage**