

## ISRS Experts: The Samarkand summit lays a new architecture of cooperation in the OTS space



The Samarkand summit lays a new architecture of cooperation in the OTS space. This conclusion was reached in an analytical article submitted to the “Dunyo” IA by Akramjon Nematov, First Deputy Director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Sarvar Kamolov, Chief research fellow.

On 11 November, an important international event took place in Samarkand – the first summit of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), formed instead of the Turkic Council, under the motto «A new era of Turkic civilization: towards common progress and prosperity».

The event brought together the leaders of all members of the association, as well as the heads of the Secretariat and various structures of the Organization (TURKSOY, TURKPA, the International Turkic Academy, the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation).

The Samarkand meeting of the leaders of the Turkic countries made it possible to discuss in detail both projects to strengthen economic, investment, transport, energy and technological ties, and to resolve urgent issues of institutionalizing the activities of the OTS.

Without any doubt, the transformation of this association and the enrichment of its agenda was greatly facilitated by the active position of Uzbekistan to strengthen comprehensive ties with the Turkic states and the practical initiatives of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev within the Organization.

For such a short period of participation in the OTS, Tashkent put forward 30 specific proposals aimed at further developing multilateral cooperation within the Organization. Today more than 20 of them have already been implemented.

In recent years, trade and investment relations between Uzbekistan and the countries of OTS have been

deepening and developing.

Thus, over the past 5 years, the trade turnover of Uzbekistan with the countries of the Organization has grown 2,4 times from 4 to 9,4 billion dollars – exports increased 1,8 times from 2,2 to 3,9 billion dollars, and imports – 3 times from 1,8 to 5,5 billion dollars.

Moreover, between 2017 and 2021 OTS countries invested 2,7 billion dollars in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the economy of Uzbekistan. In 2021, about 1,2 billion dollars of FDI and loans from Turkic countries were attracted to Uzbekistan.

Today, among the enterprises operating in our country with foreign capital, almost one third were created with the participation of the countries of OTS, including the capital of Turkiye (2094 units), Kazakhstan (1184), Kyrgyzstan (294), Azerbaijan (248), Turkmenistan (168) and Hungary (about 20).

It should be noted that during the Samarkand summit, the OTS countries actually began to improve the activities of the organization, expand and strengthen the conceptual and practical foundations of the existing architecture of cooperation within the framework of the association, as well as establish more systematic cooperation in priority areas.

This is confirmed by the adoption by the leaders of the OTS countries of the «Organization of Turkic States Strategy for 2022-2026» and the Samarkand Declaration, as well as more than 10 documents on further strengthening multilateral cooperation and reforming the activities of an international structure with a new integration agenda.

In this context, it is important to emphasize that in the near future the OTS space has opportunity to become one of the key economic, transit, production and logistics, high-tech and cultural regions of the world, capable of promoting its vision on major regional and global issues.

Now the Organization of Turkic States is becoming an increasingly attractive association. The proof of this is that today 15 countries of the world have already declared their interest in joining the organization as full members or observers.

The OTS as a new format of multilateral interaction acquires new opportunities for cooperation, which allows providing the political and economic basis of the Organization and gathering its members around common interests and projects.

In this context, all member states of OTS stand for the consistent deepening of multilateral cooperation in the following priority areas outlined in the Organization's Strategy for 2022-2026.

Strengthening trade and economic relations is of priority importance in the interaction of the Turkic countries. OTS has significant: human resources – more than 170,7 million people; economic opportunities – 13th place in the world in terms of GDP – the total GDP of the OTS countries in 2021 amounted to about 1,4 trillion dollars, and at purchasing power parity – about 4,5 trillion dollars; trade relations – in 2021 the total foreign trade turnover of the OTS countries amounted to 974,4 billion dollars, and the volume of domestic trade between them was 47,7 billion dollars; industrial potential – the growth rate of industry in the Turkic countries last year averaged 8-12%, and the share of industry in the structure of GDP was about 24%.

In this context, the adoption of the «Trade Facilitation Strategy of the Organization of Turkic States » during the Samarkand Summit will give impetus to the dynamic development of economic ties between the Turkic countries.

For these purposes, it is planned to widely use the potential of such existing and new OTS institutions as the Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Turkic Investment Fund, as well as the creation of «Turkic trading houses» in different cities of the OTS countries on the principles of public-private partnership. This opens up additional opportunities for the business community of the Turkic countries to

promote national products and support their entry into new markets.

In the near future, it is planned to strengthen trade relations through the intensification of electronic commerce, as well as the signing of agreements on free trade in services.

In this context, the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan to establish within the framework of the OTS «Space of new economic opportunities» fully meets the goals and objectives set for the Organization to ensure the free promotion of trade, investment and services.

A special place in the relations between the OTS countries is occupied by the development of transport and logistics links, which play a strategic role in the intensification of trade exchanges.

As part of the creation of an interregional branched transport and communication system in the OTS space, during the first summit of the Organization, «Transport Connectivity Program» was adopted and a number of agreements were signed on the formation of simplified customs corridors and international combined cargo transportation.

All these decisions are aimed, on the one hand, at improving transport and transit communications between the Turkic states in order to harmonize regional transport policy and technical standards related to cargo transportation, on the other hand, to identify factors that slow down the cross-border flow of goods and formulate the foundations of a mutually beneficial tariff policy in this direction.

In the near future, it is planned to stimulate innovations in customs operations in the OTS space through the use of modern digital tools («e-TIR», «e-Permit» and «e-CMR»), as well as the liberalization of transit passes and simplification of administrative procedures.

The development of transit corridors and the implementation of joint projects to create a logistics infrastructure is one of the strategic components of interaction in the region. In this vein, the joint development of the Trans-Caspian transport corridor connected with the «Baku-Tbilisi-Kars» railway line is taken into account.

At the same time, the construction of the railway "China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan" and its elimination with other promising transport projects on the surface of the OTS in transferring a large contribution to the restoration of the overland route from China to Europe, which passed through the territory of the Turkic countries and contributed to the development of mutual trade, cultural and spiritual exchange between peoples.

Broad prospects also open up with the creation of the Trans-Afghan Corridor, which will provide an entirely new route to the markets of South Asia with a combined population of 1,9 billion people and GDP of 3,5 trillion doll.

Thanks to the integrated transport system, the OTS countries have a unique opportunity to enter the markets of neighboring regions (Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, Africa), which in the future allows us to turn our region, connecting the strategic routes of Eurasia, into a key transport and logistics link in the global production and marketing chains.

Moreover, the countries of the Turkic world attach special importance to interaction in sphere of energy. The OTS Working group on energy will study the possibilities of cooperation between the countries of the association in this area.

It is planned to diversify interregional energy routes and improve energy ties between the Turkic countries, promote the exchange of experience in improving energy efficiency and the introduction of advanced technologies, as well as energy security issues.

Special attention will be paid to the modernization and construction of generating facilities in the OTS states, as well as to increasing the share of renewable energy sources in electricity generation to ensure

universal access to clean energy.

The integration of the power grid systems of the Turkic countries to meet growing demand is also an important area of cooperation in the energy sector. At the same time, the prospects for energy cooperation can be marked by the deepening of scientific ties in the field of energy system management and regulation of the processes of export and import of electricity.

At this stage, the consolidation of efforts of the Turkic countries in the field of digitalization and high technologies is relevant and in demand.

In this regard, it is planned to create various promising cooperation mechanisms for the development of ICT infrastructure, improving the quality of the e-government system and promoting digitalization in the OTS space.

For a more effective solution of the main scientific and technological problems, it is planned to create a network of centers of excellence in the field of artificial intelligence by combining leading research centers; the structure of engineering and technology centers on the basis of existing special institutions in the OTS states; Center of Modern Technoparks of Organization.

Against the backdrop of the observed food crises and the rise in food prices in the world, the Turkic countries intend to improve the coordination of joint measures in the field of ensuring food security.

At the same time, it is planned to increase cooperation in the agricultural and livestock sectors on the basis of complementarity and effective cooperation, create "green corridors" for the promotion of food products, expand the exchange of experience and knowledge through seminars, agricultural forums and joint research.

It should be noted that during his speech at the OTS summit, the President of Uzbekistan emphasized that the Turkic countries can provide both themselves and foreign markets with agricultural products - subject to deeper joint practical work. One of the steps in this area will be a multilateral agreement on the organization of an effective food supply system based on domestic and global needs.

The head of our country also recommended establishing cooperation with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN. This will contribute to the introduction of innovations, modern knowledge and technologies in this industry.

Deepening cultural and humanitarian ties is one of the key areas of interaction within the OTS. At the same time, attention is drawn to the need to promote the common Turkic identity as a source of cultural wealth in the unification of peoples.

The importance of promoting Turkic culture, values, traditions, arts and heritage throughout the world through the joint efforts of the OTS in cooperation with relevant international organizations is also emphasized. It is expected to achieve further harmonization of the national cultural, educational and youth policies of the participating countries.

In this regard, it is planned to expand the horizons of cooperation within the framework of the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY).

At the same time, it should be noted that Shavkat Mirziyoyev, having announced that Uzbekistan has become a full member of the TURKSOY, supported the proposal to hold the festival of culture of the Turkic people next year as part of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of this organization, and also proposed to publish the best works of Turkic literature in languages all OTS countries.

In addition, the announcement of 2023 as the "Year of the Rise of Turkic Civilization" at the initiative of the leader of our country will undoubtedly help strengthen the solidarity of peoples based on a common history, language, culture and traditions.

Another important area of cooperation between the OTS countries is the solution of issues in the field of ecology and environmental protection, primarily, improving the situation around the Aral Sea.

In this vein, the Turkic states advocate joining forces in the transition to a new, innovative and technological development model, including the introduction of "green", environmentally friendly, energy-saving and safe technologies, as well as the implementation of plans to mitigate the consequences of environmental crises for sustainable development.

This is the aim of the initiatives to form a permanent platform of experts and IT-specialists, as well as structures for the protection of the environment of the Turkic countries, headquartered in the Aral Sea region, the region most affected by the environmental catastrophe.

The expansion of cooperation in the field of education and science is also on the agenda of the OTS. In the future, the Turkic countries intend to consider the possibility of rapprochement of educational standards and university programs in order to form a single educational space in accordance with international standards and innovative teaching methods.

To establish close contacts between educational institutions, the focus will be on the implementation of various projects and exchange programs for students and teachers, establishing partnerships between schools, as well as creating joint scholarship programs.

The OTS countries will coordinate efforts to form a funding mechanism to support joint research and projects for the development of scientific and technical cooperation.

Thus, the Samarkand summit outlined the positions of the OTS as a full-fledged subject of international relations and became a kind of "starting point" in the process of further development of comprehensive cooperation between the Turkic states.

In this context, the holding of the first summit of the Organization of Turkic States becomes another confirmation that Uzbekistan is actively uniting the regional and international agenda, which is becoming more and more in demand in the current alarming situation in the world.

Moreover, a solid legal basis has been laid in Samarkand for further institutionalization of the OTS, increasing strategic mutual trust between the Turkic countries and expanding the range of multilateral interaction within the Organization.

In this regard, Uzbekistan, as the chairman of the OTS, intends to make serious efforts to implement such important documents as the Turkic world vision - 2040 and the Strategy of the Organization of Turkic States for 2022-2026. These measures stimulate the emergence of new cooperation initiatives, trans-regional projects, as well as opportunities for socio-economic growth for the inhabitants of the countries of the region.

In general, the productive results of the Samarkand summit clearly show that before our eyes the OTS is turning into the most important multilateral platform for open, mutually beneficial and inclusive cooperation, taking its rightful place in the world.

**Source**