

## Cooperation with leading think tanks of Mongolia is expanding



On September 18, 2024, a delegation of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies (ISRS), led by Deputy Director Bakhtiyor Mustafayev, took part in the first international Blue Sky Forum on Central Asia, organized by the National Institute for Security Studies of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar.

The forum brought together experts from leading think tanks of Central Asian countries and Mongolia. The participants included representatives of the Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of Kazakhstan, the National Institute of Strategic Initiatives under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Center for Strategic Research under the President of Tajikistan. Mongolia was represented by specialists from the Institute for Strategic Studies and the Fiscal Stability Council.



The main agenda of the forum was dedicated to the prospects for developing cooperation between the countries of Central Asia and Mongolia in the political, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres.

B. Mustafayev made a report on the issues of interaction between the countries of Central Asia and Mongolia in countering climate challenges.

As the expert emphasized, today Central Asia and Mongolia face similar challenges in the field of climate change. In this regard, they presented ideas for possible cooperation in this area.

Firstly, according to the expert, in order to rationally use water resources, it is proposed to establish an exchange of practices for the introduction of water-saving technologies.

Uzbekistan has introduced water-saving technologies on an area of 1 million hectares out of more than 4 million hectares of irrigated land. As a result of the developed approaches, 2 billion cubic meters of water were saved, which is equivalent to the annual consumption of an entire region of Uzbekistan. Thanks to active measures in this direction, today the country already ranks 7th in the world in terms of the area of implemented water-saving technologies after Israel, the USA, the Russian Federation, Spain, Brazil and Italy.

Secondly, according to B. Mustafayev, it is necessary to develop a Joint Research Program to Combat Desertification.

In five Central Asian countries, with a total area of approximately 400 million hectares, more than 20% of the land is subject to degradation. In Central Asia, a third of the region's residents are already suffering from desertification. The Central Asian states are trying to solve this problem both within the framework of regional cooperation and at the sites of international organizations.

Thus, in 2023, the first ever UN meeting on desertification, land degradation and drought was held in Samarkand, where the problem of dust and sand storms was raised. Uzbekistan has successful experience in combating desertification at the bottom of the Aral Sea. In recent years, saxaul and other desert plants have been planted on the dried seabed on an area of 1.7 million hectares, and the area of green spaces has been increased by 2 million hectares.

Thirdly, according to the Deputy Director of the Institute, it is important to increase joint cooperation in the development of renewable energy sources through the development of "green" technologies.

Mongolia and the Central Asian countries have similar targets in the promotion of "green" energy and have enormous potential for solar and wind energy. In addition, the Central Asian region has large reserves of rare earth metals, the demand for which is steadily increasing in countries actively lobbying for the "green agenda".

In this context, the expert cited research data from the Center for Energy Research of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs that Central Asia will become a major global supplier of certain critical materials for environmentally friendly energy technologies in the future.

Taking these factors into account, the expert concluded, there are prospects for establishing cooperation in the construction of solar power plants and the production of important components for the development of renewable energy sources.

At the end of the forum, the Mongolian side expressed high interest in establishing and deepening cooperation with the Central Asian countries. The need to strengthen trust and expand interaction at all levels was noted, including through active expansion of contacts at the level of experts, diplomats, and academics.

The National Institute for Security Studies was established in 2018 and studies global and regional political and socio-economic trends, traditional and non-traditional challenges and threats affecting Mongolia's national security.