

The Saudi newspaper "Arab News" about the upcoming summit "Central Asia - Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf" in Samarkand



Saudi Arabia's leading English newspaper, "Arab News", published a joint article by Eldor Aripov, Director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and Abdulaziz Sager, Director of the Gulf Research Center, under the title "Central Asia and the GCC: From Historical Ties to Strategic Partnership."

The article presents a comprehensive analysis of the dynamically developing relations between Central Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC), and outlines the prospects for a strategic partnership between the two regions.

"The turning point in this process was the first historic summit of the heads of state of the GCC and Central Asian countries, held on July 19, 2023 in Jeddah, which laid the foundation for long-term strategic cooperation," the authors state.

The second summit of this dialogue is planned to be held in May 2025 in Samarkand. The choice of Samarkand as the venue for the summit "underlines the historical role of the city as a crossroads of civilizations and symbolizes the revival of traditional ties between the regions."

The economic opportunities of the Central Asian and GCC countries, complemented by deepening political dialogue, mutual interest in cultural and historical ties and advantageous geostrategic location, enhance the strategic importance of this partnership format," the article notes.

The authors emphasize that the total volume of GCC countries investments in Central Asia has demonstrated steady growth in recent years, having increased almost threefold since 2022.

Significant successes, as analysts note, have been achieved in the tourism sector: Central Asia is becoming an attractive pole of attraction for tourists from the GCC countries. For example, in 2023, more than 8.3 thousand tourists from the GCC region visited Uzbekistan, and in 2024, 12 thousand (an increase

of 44.5% compared to 2023). The largest increase was from the KSA (71%) and the UAE (51%).

The authors also pay special attention to promising areas of cooperation, the potential of which has yet to be revealed: expansion of trade through multilateral agreements, implementation of transport projects (including the Trans-Afghan Corridor), attracting investment in infrastructure and high technology, development of the agro-industrial complex, as well as digital transformation.

Another important area, according to the heads of leading analytical centers, is strengthening scientific and intellectual interaction. "Research institutes and analytical centers of the two regions should play a special role in determining priority areas for the development of relations," the authors are convinced.

In this regard, it is planned to hold in the near future in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) the First Central Asia –the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Think Tank Forum on the topic: "Strengthening Strategic Partnership: From Historical Ties to Comprehensive Cooperation", in which the leading "think tanks" of the two regions have expressed a desire to participate.

The organizers of the first interregional forum are the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the leading Saudi research center "Gulf Research Center".

"In general, cooperation between Central Asia and the GCC countries opens up real strategic prospects. The unifying principle is not only the cultural and historical proximity, but also the complementary nature of the economies," conclude Eldor Aripov and Abdulaziz Sager.