

# Uzbekistan and the EU – promising partners



**On September 24, a videoconference was held on “Policy of good neighborliness and mutually beneficial cooperation in Central Asia: Prospects for cooperation between Uzbekistan and the EU”. The event was organized by ISRS and Latvian Institute of International Affairs.**

The participants of the dialogue exchanged views on the current state and prospects for development of Uzbekistan – Latvia relations, regional cooperation in Central Asia and interaction with the EU in achieving sustainable development of the region.

First Deputy Director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, A. Nematov, noted that thanks to the new proactive and open foreign policy course of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the policy of economic modernization and democratic reforms, relations with both the European Union and with individual European countries reached a qualitatively new level of dynamic development. According to A. Nematov, Latvia, being a long-term and reliable partner of Uzbekistan, plays an important role in building mutually beneficial relations with the EU.

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Uzbekistan to Latvia K. Sultanov emphasized that today an active political dialogue is being maintained between the countries, inter-parliamentary relations are developing, mutually beneficial cooperation in trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres is enhancing. The diplomat noted a significant increase in trade turnover from \$295 million in 2017 to \$374 million in 2019, that is, by 22%.

According to the Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Latvia, due to objective reasons related to the pandemic, in the first half of 2020, the trade turnover underwent a slight decrease. In this regard, K. Sultanov called for uniting joint efforts and development of effective solutions to overcome the negative consequences of the coronavirus crisis, to intensify trade and economic cooperation in the new conditions.

The achievement of such goals, A. Nematov noted, will be facilitated by the full disclosure of the potential of Uzbekistan – European cooperation in transport and transit traffic. The importance of filling with practical content the EU Strategy on Interconnection of Europe and Asia was emphasized. It was proposed to jointly promote regional projects and programs designed to strengthen the role of Central Asia as a connecting bridge between Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

In this context, the participants of the dialogue welcomed the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, forwarded at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, to establish a Regional Centre for the Development of Transport and Communications. It was noted that its implementation will increase the efficiency of transport and transit interaction in Central Asia, which, with its rich human and resource potential, can satisfy the demand for alternative chains of production and supply of competitive goods to world markets.

Director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Andris Sprūds, emphasized that the transport sector is one of the most promising areas of bilateral cooperation. According to him, due to its strategic location, Uzbekistan can provide EU countries with transport corridors to the markets of South Asia and the Middle East, while Latvian ports serve as the northern gates of Europe. In this regard, the Latvian expert noted the importance of the earliest implementation of the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan to develop regional connectivity, as a necessary condition for increasing the competitiveness of existing transport corridors and wider use of the existing transit potential of Eurasia.

The virtual meeting allowed the participants of the event to exchange views and develop common visions of prospects for further development of mutually beneficial Uzbekistan – European cooperation in security,

trade, transport, green economy, digitalization and education.

**Source**