

# The Termez Dialogue on Connectivity between Central and South Asia



**Термезский диалог по взаимосвязанности  
между Центральной и Южной Азией**

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# **THE CONCEPT**

## **of the Termez Dialogue on Connectivity between Central and South Asia**

### **I. THE RELEVANCE OF THE DIALOGUE**

Uzbekistan pursues an open and proactive foreign policy aimed at strengthening constructive relations with foreign countries, enhancing mutually beneficial multilateral cooperation, and intensifying economic interaction.

The main objective of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is to make a contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security, sustainable development, and economic prosperity.

To achieve these objectives, Uzbekistan, in its foreign policy strategy, prioritizes deepening engagement with South Asia. This aims to transform the extensive Eurasian region into a zone of stability and sustainable development.

Today, there is a growing and increasingly critical need to strengthen connectivity between Central and South Asia. This is driven by the fact that amidst global crises, multilateral cooperation, open and constructive dialogue based on respect and the equal participation of all parties, serve as key pillars for ensuring stability and sustainable development. Expanding interregional ties creates the necessary conditions for finding mutually acceptable solutions to common challenges.

The commonality of challenges and threats further underlines the necessity for deeper interaction between Central and South Asia. Both regions face a multitude of threats, notably terrorism, extremism, illegal drug trafficking, organized crime, climate change, and socio-economic issues (*unemployment and inflation, etc.*).

Afghanistan's interest in full integration into regional connectivity, including with Central Asia, presents a historic opportunity to strengthen connectivity between the two regions. The involvement of Afghanistan in regional ties is a key condition for the reintegration of the country into the global community and the achievement of its' long-term stability.

The country is gradually transforming into a sustainably developing state, striving to live in peace and harmony with its neighbors. Furthermore, the emerging opportunities and prospects for trade and economic ties between the regions underscore the need to advance connectivity. Today, the Central Asian and South Asian countries represent some of the fastest-growing markets.

Overall, these factors underline the necessity to revive connectivity, which can be a core factor of development of these countries, create favorable conditions for the progressive improvement of people's well-being, and foster a space of interregional cooperation free from conflicts and socio-economic upheavals. This, in turn, will create a win-win situation for all countries in the region, becoming a key to ensuring stability, sustainable development, and economic prosperity for the two macro-regions of Eurasia.

Moreover, strengthening connectivity between Central and South Asia will contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In this context, along with the logical continuation of efforts to strengthen inter-regional ties, the **Termez Dialogue on Connectivity between Central and South Asia** is being established.

**All objective prerequisites exist for the implementation of this idea:**

*1. The desire of the countries of Central and South Asia to reaffirm their historical and civilizational community.*

The regions share a historical and civilizational commonality, have repeatedly been part of common state formations, as well as a unified political, economic, and cultural-humanitarian space.

On the vast Central and South Asia territory, where Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam originated and flourished, various migration routes intersected, unique ethno-cultural communities developed, and the diverse and incredibly rich culture of the East along with distinct political and legal traditions were formed.

It was here that the Harappan civilization, the Greco-Bactrian and Kushan kingdoms, the Turkic Khaganate, Khorasan and Transoxiana (Mawarannahr), and the states of the Ghaznavids, Timurids, and Baburids emerged, leaving a deep imprint on human history.

For centuries, ties between the two regions were cemented by numerous migration flows, intensive trade exchanges, the rapid dissemination of scientific ideas, and cultural intermingling. Along the Silk Road and the Indo-Gangetic routes, knowledge and scientific achievements, as well as cultural and spiritual values, were widely spread.

The above circumstances contributed to the establishment of dialogue between peoples and civilizations. The above circumstances contributed to the establishment of dialogue between peoples and civilizations. The historical and civilizational community of Central and South Asia provides a solid foundation for the formation of a unified architecture of friendship and good neighborliness.

***2. Political consolidation, the achieved high level of trust, and joint initiatives in the region are creating unique opportunities to build an architecture of inter-regional connectivity.***

In relatively short period Central Asia has completely reversed the perception of itself in a positive light. In previous years, experts were prone to consider Central Asia as the "Eurasian Balkans," owing to relations among the countries that were full of unresolved issues and sharp contradictions, including border and transnational water disputes.

However, at present, thanks to the political will of Central Asian leaders, the region has transformed into a space of trust, good neighborliness, and mutually beneficial cooperation. The region has become more resilient and stable, independently overcoming emerging challenges and threats, and has embarked on a trajectory of progressive development, transforming into a center of economic and investment activity.

In particular, the EBRD already forecasts an increase in regional GDP this year to 6%, which is noticeably higher than the average indicators in other regions. Central Asia today is witnessing strong intra-regional dynamics – over the past few years, mutual trade has increased 4.5 times, the volume of mutual investments has doubled, and the number of joint ventures has increased fivefold.

Thus, Central Asia is no longer on the periphery of history but is becoming a vibrant region that is shaping its own strategic agenda. The high level of consolidation among the Central Asian states and their shared vision of interconnectedness processes open up new prospects for enhancing cooperation with South Asian countries.

These days, a strong consensus has formed in the Central Asian region regarding the deepening engagement with South Asia. This is reflected in the support for inter-regional economic and infrastructure projects such as CASA-1000, TAPI, the Trans-Afghan Corridor, as well as in the establishment of the "Central Asia + India" format. Following the 6th Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia in 2024, the Concept for the Development of Regional Cooperation "Central Asia-2040" was adopted. This demonstrates Central Asian countries' readiness to act jointly to ensure the sustainable development and prosperity of the region.

In this Concept, the parties stated their commitment to a political course that excludes bloc-based, ideologized, and confrontational approaches to addressing pressing issues of international and regional development.

The document also notes that political dialogue and the processes of interstate rapprochement in Central Asia are of an exclusively positive, open, and constructive nature.

Essentially, inter-regional projects are not only economically but also socially significant. Subsequently, they will have a multiplier effect on the entire macro-region of Central and South Asia.

The implementation of trans-regional projects will open up new prospects for the development of strong trade, economic, and investment ties, and will also create a foundation for integration processes across Eurasia.

The Central Asian experience in resolving acute regional problems, particularly the border issue between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, can serve as a "model" for normalizing relations between India and Pakistan, and Islamabad and Kabul.

### ***3. The countries of the regions demonstrate a desire to expand interregional connectivity.***

In July 2021, at the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the High-Level International Conference "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges and Opportunities" was held.

The event saw the participation of delegations from more than 40 countries and 30 international organizations, alongside over 200 leaders and experts from the world's leading analytical centers. As the outcome of the conference, the heads of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the countries of Central and South Asia adopted a joint statement, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive and consistent development of relations in all areas among Central Asian states.

The key role of Afghanistan as a bridge connecting Central and South Asia was also noted. The event was perceived by the world community and experts as a "starting point" for building interregional connectivity of Central Asia with South Asia.

In 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted a special resolution, "Strengthening Connectivity between Central and South Asia," developed at the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in collaboration with 40 countries. The resolution recognizes the importance of a comprehensive and progressive development of relations among Central and South Asia in areas of mutual interest.

Today, there is a growing need for the practical implementation of the goals and objectives of the aforementioned resolution. This is due to the fact that the world is experiencing an unprecedented deficit of trust and interstate dialogue; geopolitical confrontation is intensifying, bloc thinking is reviving, and the principles and norms of international law are abused. Such trends undermine the foundations of multilateral cooperation and complicate the resolution of acute global issues.

In these conditions, an important strategic task is to transform regions into a space of stability, sustainable development, and mutually beneficial cooperation. Strengthening regional connectivity will bring both economic and political dividends to all the countries involved.

This will open up new opportunities for enhancing trade and economic ties, and contribute to the creation of a vast market for goods and services, investments, and innovations. Moreover, the development of relations between regions will foster a space of interregional cooperation free from conflicts and socio-economic upheavals.

## **II. TERMEZ – A PLATFORM FOR STRENGTHENING INTERREGIONAL CONNECTIVITY**

Organizing the meeting in Termez is highly symbolic. Located at the crossroads of Central and South Asia, this ancient city has historically served as a nodal point for inter-regional connectivity.

For centuries, Termez has been a center for intercultural, intercivilizational, and religious dialogue. The traditions of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam originated and flourished here.

Termez was strategically located between ancient state formations such as the Greco-Bactrian and Kushan kingdoms. The city reached its zenith during the Timurid dynasty, transforming into a major trade, craft, and scientific-educational hub.

Due to its geographical location, Termez has firmly established its status as a transit hub. The ancient Northern Trade Route, which emerged long before the Silk Road and connected India and Central Asia, passed through Termez. The city performed crucial functions in safeguarding the main crossing over the Amu Darya, served numerous passing caravans, and became a significant center for regional trade.

Today, Termez is undergoing a phase of modernization and is once again reclaiming its role as a connecting bridge between Central and South Asia, becoming the southern gateway of Uzbekistan. Infrastructure is being developed, which creates favorable conditions for strengthening connectivity between Central and South Asia. Furthermore, Termez and its surrounding area have consistently been sources of generation and transmission of values such as tolerance, humanism, peacefulness, and hospitality, which continue to enrich intercultural ties and facilitate intercivilizational dialogue.

Given the focus on Termez's modern infrastructure and its humanitarian role, here's the English translation:

Specifically, in 2024, the Ayrton International Trade Center was opened in Termez, covering an area of 36 hectares. Citizens of Pakistan and Afghanistan can stay within the Center's territory visa-free for 15 days.

It houses production facilities, shops, restaurants, hotels, clinics, and professional development centers. This project is of significant importance for the development of trade and the export of industrial and consumer goods produced by entrepreneurs from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other countries.

In turn, the Termez Cargo Center International Multifunctional Transport and Logistics Hub plays a crucial intermediary role, facilitating the delivery of international humanitarian aid not only to Afghanistan but also to Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan. Since 2021, 144,000 tons of humanitarian aid have been sent to Afghanistan through this hub, including food (flour, grain), medicines, tents, solar lamps, and other essential goods.

The centuries-old heritage of Termez creates the prerequisites for uniting the region's efforts on the path to forming a unified, interconnected space, which, we firmly believe, will unlock entirely new strategic opportunities for development and prosperity for all of us.

### **III. EXPECTED RESULTS**

- establishment of a space of interregional cooperation and partnership between Central and South Asia, mitigating conflicts and socio-economic upheavals, and fostering an increase in the standard of living and well-being through the development of a vast, interconnected market for goods, services, investment, innovation, and technology;

- enhanced historically close and friendly ties, trust and good-neighborliness, alongside comprehensive dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation between the peoples and states of Central and South Asia serving as a crucial factor in ensuring security, stability, and sustainable development;

- consolidated efforts in combating common challenges and threats to stability and security, with effective coordination of measures to counter terrorism, extremism, and transregional crime, including in cyberspace;

- creation of a developed, inclusive, and secure infrastructure encompassing sustainable trade, economic, investment, transport, logistics, information, communication and energy links, acting as the primary driver for the further development of the vast Central and South Asia;

– establishment of cooperation to prevent the negative consequences of climate change, overcome environmental challenges and natural disasters, ensure food security, and stimulating “green” development;

– revival and development of ancient, historical, and cultural ties between the peoples of Central and South Asia, alongside the expansion of cultural, humanitarian, scientific, and educational exchanges, and the realization of the tourism potential of the region;

– establishment of lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan by strengthening its role as a key link in the practical interconnectedness of Central and South Asia, facilitating the restoration and development of the Afghan economy and its integration into regional processes.

#### **IV. DIALOGUE FORMAT**

The Termez Dialogue on Connectivity between Central and South Asia will be a regular forum focusing on three key areas:

*1)* strengthening political dialogue. Parliamentarians, diplomats, and other high-ranking political figures will participate in it;

*2)* expansion of economic ties. The format will bring together representatives from the private sector, customs and tax authorities, central and commercial banks, and transport departments;

*3)* deepening cultural and humanitarian relations. This direction will encompass meetings of historians, archaeologists, and cultural experts from across Central and South Asia;

A key mechanism for promoting connectivity between Central and South Asia on these issues will be the holding of regular expert dialogues.

#### **V. ORGANIZERS OF THE DIALOGUE**

The organizers of the first meeting of the Termez Dialogue are the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The Forum is attended by representatives from foreign ministries, chambers of commerce and industry, business circles of Central and South Asian countries, heads and specialists of international and regional organizations, and experts from leading think tanks.

The event program is as follows:

**Day 1. May 19, 2025** – Familiarization with infrastructure designed to strengthen the connectivity of Central and South Asia and support the Afghan economy, including the Termez International Trade Center and the Termez-Cargo Center International Multifunctional Transport and Logistics Hub.

**Day 2. May 20, 2025** – Termez Dialogue on Connectivity between Central and South Asia.

**First session:** “Comprehensive Dialogue and Multilateral Cooperation for Security, Stability, and Sustainable Development.”

The relevance of this session is driven by the fact that the contemporary system of international relations is undergoing a profound crisis and transformation. Today, crisis tendencies in the international arena are worsening, mistrust and confrontation are growing, and turbulence is being observed in the global economy.

Emerging new challenges and threats, along with growing conflicts in various regions worldwide, impact the security and sustainable development of Central and South Asia.

Consequently, there is a need to rethink the future cooperation between Central and South Asian countries, to develop joint measures for countering common challenges and threats to security and stability, and to leverage existing opportunities to ensure sustainable development and prosperity of the two macro-regions.

The session will discuss strengthening dialogue and cooperation to consolidating efforts in combating common challenges and threats to security, achieving sustainable development, and enhancing the role of international organizations in fostering the connectivity of Central and South Asia.

The session is expected to be attended by:

*1)* Representatives of the foreign ministries of Central and South Asian countries;

*2)* Heads and specialists of international organizations (UN, UNAMA, UNRCCA, UNHCR, UNDP, OSCE, IOM);

*3)* Representatives of regional organizations (CIS, ECO, SCO, CICA).

**Session 2:** “The Role of the Private Sector and Financial Institutions in Strengthening Connectivity and Ensuring Economic Growth.”

This session is crucial because the private sector serves as the primary driver of economic growth and stability. Expanding ties among business circles will foster greater interregional connectivity across various sectors, including economics, information technology, and innovation.

Active engagement of financial institutions in this process will facilitate the implementation of socio-economic projects aimed at strengthening transregional connectivity between Central and South Asia. Therefore, this session will explore the role and prospects for the involvement of banks and the private sector in supporting programs and projects focused on developing trade, economic, investment, transport, logistics, and energy ties between the states of Central and South Asia.

The session is expected to be attended by:

*1) Representatives of chambers of commerce and industry and the private sector of Central and South Asian countries;*

*2) Representatives of commercial banks from Central and South Asian countries;*

Within this session, the presentation of the Regional Platform for Supporting Interaction of Private Sector Entities in Central and South Asian Countries is planned.

**Day 3. May 21, 2025 – Expert Dialogue on Regional Connectivity.**

The heads and experts of leading analytical centers from Central Asian countries and South Asian countries, as well as from South Caucasus, Europe, the Asia-Pacific region, and the Middle East, USA, Russia will participate.

Notably, experts from authoritative think tanks as the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) of the United Kingdom, Central Asia - Caucasus Institute of the United States, the Finnish Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, the German Berghof Foundation, the Indian Council of World Affairs, the Indian Observer Research Foundation, the Pakistani Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, the Institute of Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences will be represented.

The expert dialogue will focus on discussing the expansion of connectivity between Central and South Asia, and the integration of Afghanistan into regional ties.

The **final outcome** will include the preparation of a Communique reflecting the call for the implementation of the goals and objectives outlined in the special resolution “Strengthening the Connectivity between Central and South Asia.”

**Working languages:** Russian, English, and Dari.

## **VI. INITIATIVES FOR FURTHER STRENGTHENING COOPERATION BETWEEN CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA**

The following areas stand out as priority directions for cooperation between Central and South Asia:

### **1. Maintaining a regular political dialogue at the highest and high levels.**

Today, amidst crisis tendencies stemming from geopolitical confrontation, a deficit of trust, and trade and technological rivalries, strengthening cooperation is becoming a necessary and objective process. The absence of dialogue hinders the resolution of common problems facing countries and negatively impacts stability and sustainable development.

In this regard, it is important to establish the practice of holding regular summits between heads of state, foreign ministers, and parliamentarians to seek mutually acceptable solutions to pressing issues on the bilateral and regional agenda.

This will contribute to overcoming confrontational paradigms, strengthening trust and cooperation between countries, and opening new opportunities for unlocking their political, economic, and cultural-civilizational potential.

### **2. Consolidating efforts in the fight against common challenges and threats to stability and security.**

Amidst the exacerbation of global confrontation and the rise of conflicts in various regions, the issue of ensuring security takes on particular relevance. At the same time, security is indivisible, common, and equal.

In this regard, the importance of developing unified, coordinated approaches to ensuring peace in Central and South Asia, countering terrorism, extremism, transnational crime, including in cyberspace, and improving mechanisms and forms of cooperation in this area is growing.

In this context, it is proposed to establish a forum on security issues, which could become a platform for consolidating the efforts of Central and South Asian states in preventing challenges and threats.

This will contribute to the formation and strengthening of the architecture of inter-regional security and the ensuring of stability and sustainable development.

### **3. Creating favorable conditions for the development of trade and economic ties between the states of South and Central Asia.**

The two regions represent a dynamically growing market. The combined population of Central and South Asian countries exceeds 2 billion people, accounting for over 25% of the world's population. According to estimates by the International Monetary Fund, the total GDP of South Asia reached \$4.9 trillion.

However, significant untapped potential remains between Central and South Asia. Specifically, trade turnover between the two regions exceeded \$5 billion in 2024. At the same time, the total external trade of South Asian states in 2024 amounted to \$1.4 trillion, and that of Central Asia to \$253 billion.

Under these conditions, the development and implementation of effective measures to deepen cooperation, ensure the free movement of investments, goods, and services, and simplify customs procedures for the unhindered movement of goods and people become particularly relevant.

A practical contribution to addressing these issues would be the regular holding of an inter-regional economic forum between the countries of Central and South Asia. This platform would serve as a unique space for identifying new growth points and drivers in the economy and trade, which will unlock the full potential of both regions.

In the future, the deepening of trade and economic relations between Central and South Asia will open opportunities for reaching a multilateral agreement on economic cooperation. This will contribute to the creation of new jobs, joint ventures, the production of value-added goods, the realization of potential, and the ensuring of sustainable growth of the economies of Central and South Asian states.

Overall, the development of economic ties will form the basis for broader mutually beneficial trans-regional connectivity and create favorable conditions for the formation of a common space based on equality and respect for interests.

### **4. Establishing a common transport connectivity architecture between Central and South Asia.**

The development of trade ties is directly dependent on the creation of modern transport infrastructure. To date, the transport and logistics routes connecting Central and South Asia are not fully developed, and the existing infrastructure does not allow for the expansion of international transportation.

This significantly hinders the development of trade and economic ties between the regions.

In this regard, it is necessary to create a multi-modal transport and logistics architecture of connectivity between Central and South Asia as a key factor in accelerating economic growth and realizing the export, transit, and investment potential of the two regions. The formation of a unified transport artery between the countries of Central and South Asia will open convenient, sustainable, commercially viable, accessible, and safe routes to markets, creating a powerful platform for achieving the economic development of Central and South Asian countries.

An important element of the entire architecture of transport and transit connectivity in Central and South Asia is the Trans-Afghan Corridor. The Trans-Afghan Corridor has strategic importance not only for the countries of Central Asia but also for South Asia, providing the countries of the region with the shortest access to the ports of the Indian Ocean and connecting South Asia with the markets of Central Asia, Russia, China, and Europe.

Furthermore, the implementation of this project will become a powerful driver of sustainable development in Central and South Asia, consolidate consensus within Afghanistan and in the region on strengthening peace and stability in the country. Its implementation will reduce the time and cost of freight transport by 30-40%.

#### **5. Expanding cooperation in the implementation of digital technologies in such areas as international trade, customs regulation, transport, banking and finance, healthcare, education, science, and culture.**

Today, Central and South Asia have a low level of digital connectivity, which is due to a number of reasons, including problems with access to the Internet, especially in rural and remote areas, insufficient development of digital infrastructure, high cost and low quality of Internet services, low level of digital literacy, lack of harmonization of the regulatory framework.

In this regard, the development of a joint Strategy for Digital Connectivity between Central and South Asia is of great importance. The adoption of this document will create significant opportunities for stimulating trade and investment, improving access to education and healthcare, strengthening regional cooperation and increasing competitiveness on the global stage.

Coordination of efforts of Central and South Asian countries to implement the digital economy comprehensively will help improve digitalization procedures across all spheres of life. Moreover, this will advance the implementation of the SDG initiative to ensure safe access to the Internet for the population and will open up greater opportunities for obtaining education and medical services.

Overall, deepening digital connectivity between Central and South Asia will bring significant economic and social benefits to both regions, create a solid foundation for expanding trade, economic, energy, and transport links, and enhance the regions' competitiveness on the global stage.

## **6. Joint search for ways to ensure food security in the vast macro-region of Eurasia.**

The observed crises in global politics and economics lead to disruptions in the supply system of agricultural products, as well as to an increase in their prices. The situation is aggravated by global climate change, a reduction in investment in the agricultural and food sectors, and demographic growth in the states of Central and South Asia.

This issue has become acute in Central and South Asia, which are among the most densely populated regions.

At the same time, the countries have vast experience in the field of agricultural development. Central and South Asia occupy leading positions in the cultivation of wheat, vegetable oil, and fruit and vegetable products.

In this regard, it seems important to adopt a Cooperation Program between the countries of Central and South Asia in the field of food security. The document will be aimed at establishing interregional agro-industrial cooperation, developing "smart" agriculture, introducing water-saving technologies, creating high-yielding and impact-resistant varieties of agricultural crops, and improving livestock breeds.

To achieve these goals, it is necessary to organize joint educational and scientific programs, including exchanges between agricultural universities, and the establishment of online platforms between research institutes in these areas.

Cooperation in this area will help overcome humanitarian crises, especially by creating more resilient supply chains and generally ensuring food security.

## **7. Cooperation in the field of environmental protection and promotion of "green" development.**

Today, both regions face climate challenges. Common problems include water shortages, air and environmental pollution, soil degradation, and desertification.

According to the International Monetary Fund, the rate of "heating" in Central Asia exceeds global indicators by 2 times. Over the past 30 years, the temperature has increased by 1.5 degrees Celsius compared to the rest of the planet (0.7 degrees).

In turn, over the past two decades, more than half of all South Asians have been affected by one or more climate-related disasters.

In this regard, the establishment of a multilateral conference on environmental protection and green development becomes relevant.

This platform will facilitate the development of proposals and recommendations for mitigating the consequences of climate and environmental challenges.

### **8. Coordination of efforts to reveal the unique tourism potential of Central and South Asia.**

The countries of these regions have great potential in tourism, including a rich historical and cultural heritage. Both regions were repeatedly within the framework of common state associations. In addition, the regions mentioned were the center of inter-civilizational, intercultural and religious dialogue.

In this regard, it is proposed to adopt, within the framework of the World Tourism Organization, a Program for the formation of a single tourism space between Central and South Asia, which will aim to popularize the historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of the two regions.

This program will include the development of joint tourism brands, new accessible products and routes, tour packages, and educational materials to highlight the tourism potential of the two regions.

All the above measures will contribute to the formation of a single tourism space, attract investment, and will generally have a multiplier effect on the development of the economies of the countries of Central and South Asia.

### **9. Expansion of cultural and humanitarian exchanges as an important factor in strengthening friendship and trust.**

Strengthening the historical and cultural community between countries serves as a solid foundation for closer interaction between states.

In this regard, and also for the purpose of reviving historical and cultural ties, it is important to organize forums and conferences between historians and cultural scientists, and to implement joint programs in the fields of education, science, culture, and sports. The regular holding of an interregional conference on the “Historical and Cultural Heritage of Central and South Asia” could serve as one such platform.

## **10. Establishing close cooperation in the fields of science, technology, and innovation.**

Cooperation in science and education is the engine of progress for any country. Scientific cooperation in the context of digitalization and geopolitical instability will help maintain dialogue between academic circles.

At the same time, limited academic mobility and weak coordination between scientific communities significantly hinder the development of the potential of states in science, innovation, and technology.

In this regard, it is necessary to encourage joint research and innovation work, the organization of scientific and educational internships, experience exchange programs, the development of start-ups, and the holding of competitions in these areas.

The adoption of a joint program of academic and research exchanges under the auspices of UNESCO is becoming relevant. It is also necessary to launch an online platform between universities and research structures of the countries of Central and South Asia. This will contribute to the creation of a sustainable regional network of science diplomacy, the formation of a common agenda in the field of education and technology, and the emergence of a single scientific space.

The above steps will serve as a powerful tool for developing scientific diplomacy, which will allow for the establishment of interaction between the countries of the two regions.

## **11. Expanding interaction between the youth of the countries, representatives of civil society of Central and South Asia.**

The youth act as conductors of new ideas. At the same time, today Central and South Asia are among the “youngest” regions, where about 60% of the population is young people, an average age of about 28 years. This is a demographic dividend that can be used to benefit the prosperity of both regions.

In this regard, it is important to establish youth and civil society forums. This will fully utilize the potential of “people’s diplomacy” and will add depth, sustainability, and longevity to the process of interconnectedness.

In general, the intensification of cooperation between the countries of Central and South Asia in the above-mentioned areas will create a “win-win” situation, bringing both economic and political dividends.