

# Afghanistan at the center of strengthening transregional connectivity



September 4-7 this year ISRS organized a working visit of a research group of the German Berghof Foundation to Uzbekistan.

Within its framework, meetings were held with the Special Representative of the President of Uzbekistan for Afghanistan Ismatulla Irgashev, as well as specialists from the ministries of investment, industry and trade, energy, transport, and experts from the International Institute of Central Asia. An Uzbek-German scientific and practical seminar was held at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy.

In addition, a trip to the city of Termez was organized for German experts to familiarize themselves with the infrastructure and practical measures taken by Uzbekistan to promote the socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan and the involvement of this country in regional economic ties.

In particular, German specialists visited the international transport and logistics hub Termez Cargo Center, located in close proximity to the Afghan border.

The total area of the Center is 40.7 hectares, on its territory there are 4 covered warehouses of 6 thousand square meters each, one of which is equipped with 14 refrigerated chambers.

The peculiarity of this hub is that it occupies a unique geographical position - it is located at the junction between Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

It fulfills an important intermediary mission, facilitating the delivery of international humanitarian aid not only to Afghanistan, but also to Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan.

For example, over two years, through this hub, the World Food Program, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Affairs delivered more than 1 thousand tons of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, including food (flour, grain), medicines, tents, solar lamps and other essential goods.

In addition, German experts got acquainted with the activities of the Educational Center for Afghan citizens, created on the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in 2018. This educational institution is the only institution in the world that provides training exclusively for Afghans in both higher and secondary specialized areas, vocational education. During its activities, a total of 535 Afghan citizens were trained, of which 220 were women.

It is important to note that at the Center, along with the training program for Afghan citizens, clubs in sewing and hairdressing, carpet weaving, modeling, handicrafts, sculpture and other popular professions are also organized. The institution actively supports international relations and cooperation with donor countries and foreign organizations, such as UNDP, EU, Germany, Slovakia, India.

At the same time, the German specialists were presented the project of construction of an international shopping center with the area of 26 hectares. In total, 4 thousand retail outlets will be available in it. Today the construction of production and logistics zone, medical center, restaurant, hotel is 80% completed in the complex.

The Fund's experts also familiarized themselves with the work of the Termez-Hairaton checkpoint equipped with new advanced technologies of customs and border control.

The created conditions at the checkpoint contribute to increasing the capacity of border and law enforcement services to detect illegal facts, as well as the capacity and quality service of persons crossing the border.

Within the framework of the visit of German experts, a presentation of the construction of the Termez-Mazar-e-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railroad and the Surkhan-Puli-Khumri power transmission line was also organized at the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade on September 5 this year.

German experts emphasized that the implementation of these projects will help transform Afghanistan into a connecting bridge between Central and South Asia and strengthen interregional interconnectedness.

In addition, a meeting was held with the Special Representative of the President of Uzbekistan for Afghanistan I. Irgashev. A thorough exchange of views took place regarding the current situation in Afghanistan, issues of providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people, and consolidating the efforts of the world community in restoring the economy of this country.

During the stay of European representatives in Tashkent, at the site of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy ISRS, together with the Berghof Foundation, a scientific and practical seminar was organized with the participation of experts from leading analytical centers of Uzbekistan, such as the High School of Strategic Analysis and Forecasting, the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, the Institute advanced international research.

Speaking at the event, ISRS First Deputy Director Akramjon Neymatov noted that establishing lasting peace and ensuring stability in Afghanistan is an integral part of Uzbekistan's foreign policy strategy.

According to him, it is difficult to achieve stable and sustainable interregional development and regional interconnectivity without peace in this country. In this regard, Nematov believes that today, more than ever, it is important to unite the efforts of the entire international community in strengthening peace and stability in Afghanistan, supporting its economic development and well-being.

Representatives of the Berghof Foundation also held a meeting with experts from the International Institute of Central Asia. During the talks, the German side emphasized that since 2016 Uzbekistan has been taking concrete and significant steps to strengthen cooperation in Central Asia and consolidate the

region. Thanks to this, today the CA countries resolve all regional issues through dialog and speak with a unified voice on the world stage.

In general, the Uzbek and German experts agreed that today attention to Afghanistan cannot be reduced, and it is necessary to unite the efforts of the international community in normalizing the situation in this country.

The Berghof Foundation experts emphasized that Tashkent and Berlin share a common vision and similar approaches to establishing lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Berghof Foundation is one of the most authoritative foundations of the Federal Republic of Germany, established in 1971 with headquarters in Berlin to study the problems of peace and conflicts, has offices in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and the Caucasus. Since 2013 it has been researching the Afghan issue, working closely with the German Foreign Ministry and the EU Commission. The Director General is Andrew Gilmore, who served as Assistant UN Secretary General from 2016-2019.