

## ISRS director took part in the 4th Culture and Strategies Forum on the Korean Peninsula and the North



On October 7, the 4th Culture and Strategies Forum on the Korean Peninsula and the North was held in Seoul, organized by the Korean Center for International Area Studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (CIAS).

The event was attended by the heads of diplomatic missions of Central Asian countries, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkiye accredited in the Republic of Korea, as well as representatives of international organizations and the media. For the first time, directors of strategic research institutes of Central Asian countries were invited to the Forum.

Director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (ISRS) Eldor Aripov spoke at a session entitled: "Strategic Dialogue between the Republic of Korea and the Countries of Central Asia."

In his speech, Eldor Aripov stated that the observed sustainable dynamics of economic development in Central Asia, coupled with regional consolidation, opening of borders, growing population and proximity to centers of geopolitical activity increases the geostrategic importance of the region. The new Central Asia is becoming a "point of attraction" for world powers and leading states, including South Korea.

"Over the past 7 years, the total GDP of Central Asian countries has grown by 6.3%, intraregional trade has increased by 4.4 times, and the volume of mutual investments has grown almost 2 times," the expert stated.

In turn, highly appreciating Korea's relations with the countries of Central Asia, ISRS director particularly emphasized that they are based on a strong foundation, have stood the test of time and are comprehensive in nature.



According to him, Seoul makes a huge contribution to the modernization of the economies of Central Asian states. Thanks to Korean investments, the automotive, chemical, metallurgical, oil and gas, information and communications and many other industries have received a dynamic impetus for development.

Eldor Aripov noted with satisfaction that since the establishment of diplomatic relations, trade turnover between the CA countries and South Korea has grown 600 times: from \$15 million in 1992 to more than \$10 billion in 2023, and the total accumulated Korean investments in the region have exceeded \$18 billion.

At the same time, he pointed out, Seoul, which was one of the first countries to establish the CA + Republic of Korea format in 2007, continues to make a significant contribution to the sustainable development and implementation of important socio-economic projects in the region.

Also, according to the ISRS director, the new cooperation initiative "K-Silk ROAD", presented during the recent visit of the South Korean leader to Central Asia, is a clear demonstration of Seoul's commitment to building up long-term cooperation with the region. "South Korea's decision to hold the first summit of leaders in the "Central Asia-Republic of Korea" format in Seoul in 2025 will give a great impetus to further deepening our cooperation," the expert emphasized.

At the same time, speaking about the current level of co-operation between Central Asia and the Republic of Korea, E.Aripov said that "the achieved level of cooperation is impressive, but absolutely does not reflect the huge potential that our countries have accumulated".

In this regard, in order to significantly strengthen multilateral cooperation, the expert believes it would be appropriate to develop specific proposals in the following areas.

Firstly, in his opinion, the development of industrial cooperation based on the transfer of South Korean experience and technology, as well as the use of the enormous production and resource potential of the

Central Asian countries, is becoming especially relevant.

Secondly, according to E.Aripov, another important area is the development of sustainable and safe supply chains. Considering Korea's ambitious and long-term goals to achieve global leadership in the development of strategic technologies by 2030, Central Asian countries can act as reliable partners in creating routes in the field of critical rare earth elements.

Thirdly, the expert believes, this is increasing environmental sustainability and adaptation to climate change. An important role in these issues can be played by attracting the rich experience and investments of South Korea for the development of renewable energy sources, the introduction of modern water-saving and environmentally friendly technologies.

Fourthly, the director of the Institute is convinced that the supporting structure of cooperation should be the development of human capital. According to him, the educational sphere should become the "anchor" area of cooperation, which will allow for increasing interaction in training personnel based on the best advanced practices and standards of South Korea.

Fifthly, he noted, the priority is to expand cooperation in the field of labor migration. Against the backdrop of the growing demographic crisis in South Korea, Central Asia can act as an important supplier of labor resources, given its increasing population growth and high level of education.

Sixthly, the expert concluded, strengthening cultural and humanitarian ties is important in deepening interaction. An invaluable asset in this regard is the large Korean diaspora, which is a "connecting bridge" and a reliable foundation for the special nature of relations between Korea and the Central Asian countries. In this context, ISRS director proposed launching the practice of holding an annual Network of the Korean Diaspora in Central Asia Forum with the active assistance of national Korean cultural centers in the countries of the region. According to him, this will contribute to both preserving the national identity of Koreans living in our region and further strengthening the bonds of friendship, good neighborliness, cohesion and mutual understanding between our peoples.

"I am absolutely confident that we will be able to work purposefully and successfully with our Korean partners in all these areas," concluded Eldor Aripov.

*This Forum was launched in 2021 to promote cooperation between the Republic of Korea and countries located in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula (Central Asia, the Caucasus countries, Eastern Europe). In 2021-2022, the forums were held in Seoul, in 2023 - in Tashkent in cooperation with ISRS.*