Director of ISRS speaks about the goals and objectives of the CIS International Expert Forum on Information Security

Recently it became known that on 29 June 2021, the CIS International Expert Forum on Information Security Issues will be held. For details, we turned to the director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Eldor Aripov. The Forum is organized by the Institute jointly with the Ministry for the Development of Information Technologies and Communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the CIS Executive Committee.

Eldor Takhirovich, how did the idea of holding the Forum come about?

The initiative to hold this event was put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the summit of the heads of state of the Commonwealth in 2019, when Uzbekistan for the first time in its history took over the chairmanship of the CIS.

The forum was supposed to be held in 2020, during our chairmanship, in face-to-face format. However, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the event had to be postponed until the epidemiological situation in the Commonwealth countries improved.

The idea of holding the Forum was not spontaneous, but was based on a clear understanding of the processes taking place in the world associated with the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT) and their penetration into all spheres of life. These technologies provide enormous economic and social benefits, but at the same time they bring new vulnerabilities in the security system.

Threats in this area have also increased due to the coronavirus pandemic, when the restrictive measures introduced in the world accelerated the pace of digitalization of society, business and the state. In recent years, various cybersecurity challenges have significantly aggravated, and the number of crimes in the

information space has increased many times over. As a result, the public and private sectors are faced with an unprecedented increase in risks and threats, ranging from the spread of distorted information and counterfeit drugs to various forms of online fraud and hacker attacks. So, according to the World Economic Forum, in 2020 the losses of the world economy from cyber attacks amounted to US$2.5 trillion.

In this regard, taking into account the importance and scale of this topic, speaking at the meeting of the CIS heads of state in 2020, the Head of our state confirmed the holding of an International Expert Forum on this issue, stressing that the issues of ensuring security in the information sphere require new and extraordinary approaches.

What is the main goal of the Forum and what tasks will the participants of the event have to solve?

To begin with, I would like to note that the Forum will be held with the participation of high-level experts from the Commonwealth states. More than 50 representatives of the states of Central Asia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Russia and Moldova, including representatives of international organizations and leading analytical centers, heads of relevant ministries and departments, are expected to participate in the event.

Chairman of the Executive Committee - CIS Executive Secretary Sergei Lebedev, General Director of the Executive Committee of the CIS Regional Commonwealth in the field of communications Nurudin Mukhitdinov, head of the CIS Anti-Terrorist Center Andrey Novikov have already confirmed their participation.

Uzbekistan will be represented at the level of senior officials of the Presidential Administration, the Cabinet of Ministers, deputies of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, heads of ministries for the development of information technologies and communications, foreign affairs, economic development and poverty reduction, defense, internal affairs, as well as specialized departments - the General Prosecutor's Office, The State Customs Committee, the Central Bank, the State Inspection for Control in the Sphere of Informatization and Telecommunications, the Center for the Development of Information Technologies and Information Resources, the Cybersecurity Center of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Along with experts from the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, specialists from the Center for Economic Research and Reforms, the Information and Analytical Center for International Relations and the Development Strategy Center will take part in the event.

Regarding the goals and objectives of the Forum, I would like to emphasize that they are formulated in accordance with the key directions of the Concept for the further development of the CIS.

The agenda of the event includes discussion of such important issues as international cooperation in the field of information security in the context of the development of the digital economy; combating crimes using information and communication technologies; technical protection of information infrastructure facilities and investigation of cybercrimes; protection of human rights and freedoms in the information environment.

Based on this, the expert Forum organized by Uzbekistan is designed to become an important platform for exchanging views on the latest trends in the field of information security, agreeing a balanced and coordinated approach in developing optimal methods to counter current threats in the information space.

The results of the discussions will be reflected in the final document of the Forum, which is planned to be adopted at the end of the event. In it, we will include practical proposals and recommendations for the governments of the Commonwealth states on the effective implementation of innovative development strategies, including issues of ensuring information and cyber security, legal and organizational and technical support for the development of the digital economy, as well as training specialized specialists in this area.

Considering the importance of ensuring information security, what measures are being taken within the CIS in this direction?

The member states of the Commonwealth have a clear understanding that the issues of countering the threats and challenges of the global information society are becoming the main ones on the agenda of sustainable development of the modern world.

In turn, ensuring information security is one of the key factors in the economic and socio-political development of the state and society.

In this regard, the relevant provisions are included in the conceptual documents for the long-term development of the Commonwealth, which determine the priority vectors of interstate cooperation. In particular, within the framework of the CIS, a number of significant sectoral documents have been adopted, which serves as the foundation for consolidating efforts and increasing the productivity of cooperation between the member states in the field of information security. These are the "Agreement on Information Interaction of the CIS Member States in the Field of Digital Development of Society", "Strategy for Ensuring Information Security of the CIS Member States", "Agreement on Cooperation of the CIS Member States in the Field of Information Security".

In addition, during the presidency of Uzbekistan in the CIS in 2020, a Joint Statement of the Heads of State of the Commonwealth was adopted on cooperation in the field of international information security, which calls on the world community to focus on the inadmissibility of using modern ICT for purposes incompatible with the tasks of maintaining international peace and security. and stability.

At the same time, in the updated Concept for the Further Development of the CIS and the Strategy for Economic Development of the CIS for the Period up to 2030, deepening cooperation in the development of the digital economy and digital skills are identified as one of the most demanded areas of interaction. An important place is given to ensuring information security and combating crimes with the use of ICT.

What measures are being taken in this direction in Uzbekistan?

In the context of large-scale and comprehensive reforms in Uzbekistan, informatization processes are being actively carried out, promising projects are being implemented to introduce modern information and communication technologies and innovative methods into all spheres of life.

Within the framework of the "Digital Uzbekistan - 2030" Strategy, active steps are being taken to provide a legal framework for the transition to the digital economy. Institutional frameworks are quickly created in the form of appropriate structures and necessary procedures for the coordination, implementation, monitoring, control and evaluation of the measures taken.

Serious attention is paid to the education and training of highly qualified specialists in the field of the digital economy, as well as the population for the conditions of digitalization.

Along with the rapid development of digital technologies, their penetration into all spheres of life, one of the priority areas of state policy is countering information security threats and protecting national cyberspace.

The country is working to improve state information policy, information security, data protection from cyber attacks, and suppression of cybercrimes.

According to the Decree of the President of Uzbekistan "On the State Program for the Implementation of the Strategy of Action in Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021, it is planned to further improve the cyber security system and the foundations of the information policy of the state.

Thus, the issue of adopting the National Cybersecurity Strategy for 2020-2023, the draft Law "On

cybersecurity", the draft Concept of a unified information policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Under these conditions, the understanding of the importance of increasing protection in the information space both at the national and regional levels actualizes the need to consolidate efforts with international partners to find acceptable mechanisms for solving the problems of international information security.

The ubiquitous growth trend in cybercrimes, in turn, requires the CIS member states to develop comprehensive approaches to protecting cyberspace and ensuring information security. The transboundary nature of these threats dictates the need for a simultaneous solution of problems, provided that the efforts of the members of the international community, in particular our closest partners in the CIS, are united.

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