Uzbekistan, EU experts discuss preparation of the UN General Assembly draft special resolution

A webinar has been held on "Introduction of environmental technologies and innovations in the Aral Sea region within the framework of implementation of the new EU Strategy for Central Asia: Cooperation between Uzbekistan and Belgium".

The virtual conference was organized by the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (ISRS), the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS) and the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the Kingdom of Belgium.

The event, dedicated to strengthening Uzbekistan – European cooperation in the implementation of environmental technologies and innovations in the Aral Sea region, brought together representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Ecological Party of Uzbekistan, the Scientific-Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC), the International Innovation Center for the Aral Sea Basin under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Addressing the conference, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Uzbekistan to the Benelux countries **Dilyor Khakimov** noted that mitigating the consequences of the environmental crisis of the Aral Sea is an important condition for sustainable development of Central Asia.

Uzbekistan, together with European partners, within the framework of implementation of the new EU Strategy for Central Asia, is actively working in this direction.

The diplomat emphasized that the announcement of the Aral Sea region as a zone of environmental innovations and technologies, initiated by the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, will give a powerful impetus to further strengthening interaction between Uzbekistan and the European Union in maintaining environmental stability, economic and water cooperation in Central Asia.

This initiative of Uzbekistan's President, as noted by the ISRS Deputy Director **Sanjar Valiyev**, is also intended to mobilize the great potential of international organizations, states and public groups to find a joint solution to pressing problems in the Aral Sea region.

ISRS representative emphasized that taking into account the experience and rich tools of European climate diplomacy, Uzbekistan considers the European Union as a key partner in implementation of these plans, along with partners from the CIS and Asian countries. At the same time, Uzbekistan takes into account that the European Union, defining ambitious goals for achieving climate neutrality by 2050, is turning into one of the global centers for promoting environmental innovations and technologies.

S. Valiyev suggested concentrating on joint efforts to form a technologically advanced innovation zone in the Aral Sea region. In particular, Uzbekistan is interested in enhancing collaboration on transition to a low-carbon economy, providing EU technologies and experience in renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, sharing experience in sustainable management of natural resources, protection of biodiversity and ecotourism.

Supporting this idea, the CEO of the European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS), **Axel Goethals**, noted that the EIAS welcomes the intention of Tashkent to find new innovative and high-tech solutions to minimize negative consequences in the Aral Sea region in accordance with the green economy concepts. Thus, improvements are made to the livelihoods of the population of the entire region. The significant contribution of Uzbekistan made within the framework of implementation of various projects and programs in the Aral Sea zone deserves attention.

Head of the Agency of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, **Vadim Sokolov**, stated that the latest initiatives of Uzbekistan are aimed at implementation of projects for stable provision of the South Aral Sea with water resources, creation of protected natural areas in the Aral Sea region.

He noted that Uzbekistan, in addition to contributing to the IFAS and supporting the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund, initiated a number of state programs to eliminate the consequences of the Aral Sea tragedy, identified 10 priorities for the development of Karakalpakstan.

The expert also noted that conditions are being created for joint actions of the Aral Sea basin countries, aimed at converting the zone of the environmental crisis associated with the drying up of the Aral Sea into a zone of socio-economic development.

According to the UNECE consultant, **Cornelis Braams,** measures taken by Uzbekistan in this direction in the future will help to increase the energy efficiency of economic sectors, develop the use of renewable energy sources, mitigate the effects of climate change, as well as improve the efficiency of natural resources use.

The expert emphasized that the EU is ready to fully support the negotiations on the adoption of a special UN Resolution on the Aral Sea region, both on a bilateral basis – with Uzbekistan, and with all Central Asian countries.

Deputy Director of the ICWC Scientific Information Center, **Dinara Ziganshina,** believes that the most important condition for environmental stabilization in the Aral Sea region, along with the introduction of environmental technologies and innovations, is the development of interaction between the Central Asian states on long-term basin planning and water conservation. The expert noted that it is important to pay close attention to conduction of strategic interdisciplinary research and to ensure sustainable funding for science at the national and regional levels. In this case, science can provide a decision-making process and serve as a bridge for building trust, as well as lasting peace and stability in the region.

In general, the virtual meeting, held in a constructive atmosphere, allowed the participants of the webinar to prioritize cooperation, as well as discuss the mechanisms for preparing UN General Assembly draft resolutions and their promotion with European Union partners.

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