

## Eldor Aripov attends the 10th meeting of analytical centers of the OTS countries



On September 26, 2024, the Uzbekistan delegation led by the Director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies (ISRS) Eldor Aripov attended the tenth meeting of analytical centers of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) “Turkic World – One World”.

The expert meeting, organized by the National Institute for Strategic Initiatives under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, brought together prominent representatives of leading think tanks from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Türkiye, Hungary, the OTS and ADB.

The event’s agenda included the prospects for developing multifaceted cooperation within the OTS in the political, economic, scientific, innovative, cultural, and humanitarian spheres.



Addressing the forum, the ISRS Director Eldor Aripov focused on the positive results achieved in recent years in the Organization of Turkic States format.

According to the expert, over the last 4 years alone, the combined GDP of the association’s participants has increased by 20% (\$1.6 trillion), while foreign direct investment has grown by 22%. At the same time, the importance of the OTS space as a promising land bridge between the East and the West is growing. Trans-Caspian transport and communications projects (the “Middle Corridor”) are being implemented, allowing cargo transit diversification from China to Europe and back.

The expert continued, noting that positive dynamics have also been achieved bilaterally. In particular, Uzbekistan has raised the status of its relations with all OTS countries to the level of strategic relations with Turkmenistan and Hungary, comprehensive strategic partnership with Türkiye and Kyrgyzstan, and alliance with Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan.

Moreover, trade and economic exchanges are also actively developing. Over the past seven years, Uzbekistan's foreign trade with the OTS participants has grown almost threefold. In 2023, this figure reached \$10 billion (an increase of 4.6%).

At the same time, the number of foreign enterprises with capital from Turkic countries operating in Uzbekistan is growing, the number of which has increased by 50%.

"In 2017-2022, the OTS countries invested more than \$4 billion in our country's economy, which is 8% of the total volume of foreign investment for the specified period", the expert emphasized.

According to Eldor Aripov, all of the above indicators demonstrate the growing importance of the OTS format for ensuring Uzbekistan's sustainable development.

At the same time, the ISRS Director called for further enhancing the political and economic component of cooperation. He noted the need for the speedy implementation of several strategic initiatives of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

According to the expert, it is important to coordinate joint efforts on the world stage, guided by unified approaches to several international issues. For these purposes, the need for the speedy adoption of the Charter of the Turkic World was emphasized, in which the call for political solidarity within the Organization runs like a red thread.

In his speech, Eldor Aripov focused on the importance of ensuring sustainable peace in Afghanistan, noting that the stability of the OTS countries depends on the development of the situation in this country.

In this context, the importance of maintaining steady attention to the situation in this country and the inadmissibility of its fading into the background against the backdrop of other challenges was emphasized. "Based on the results of the last meeting of the heads of the foreign policy departments of our countries, it is gratifying to note that we are very close to developing common approaches regarding the Afghan issue", the ISRS Director summarized.

Regarding the prospects for the development of the OTS, Eldor Aripov pointed out that several factors hinder the growth of trade and economic cooperation between the Organization's member countries.

"An analysis of the last 10 years shows that the total foreign trade turnover of the OTS is growing mainly due to imports, which are increasing 2 times faster than exports and today account for more than 50% of the OTS's foreign trade. At the same time, a significant part of the imports comes from third countries", the expert noted.

According to the ISRS representative, this trend indicates the need to develop economic cooperation and increase domestic trade, which today accounts for only 6% of the total foreign trade turnover.

In this regard, Eldor Aripov emphasized the importance of organizing the Research Center for Trade Cooperation of the Turkic States, expressing confidence that this institute will allow for the joint implementation of specific measures aimed at eliminating barriers in trade, the widespread introduction of new mechanisms for increasing export and import volumes, and the development of e-commerce platforms.

Special attention was paid to implementing joint economic projects and strengthening the organization's financial mechanisms.

In this vein, the expert emphasized the timeliness of the start of the OTS Investment Fund in Istanbul this year and the importance of the early launch of the Development Bank of the Organization, initiated by the President of Uzbekistan.

According to Eldor Aripov, "These new institutions will further strengthen the financial potential of the Association".

In conclusion, the ISRS Director pointed out the relevance of Expert Meetings in deepening the partnership.

He called for further enhancing the practical impact of information and analytical support for the activities of the supreme bodies of the OTS and increasing the number of joint information and analytical publications.

The Meeting of Official Foreign Policy Research Centers of the Member States and Observers of the OTS was established in 2015 in accordance with the provisions of the Nakhchivan Agreement on the Establishment of the Turkic Council of 2009. Since 2019, representatives of the Uzbekistan expert community have been taking part in the work of this format. At the same time, the ISRS organized the 8th meeting of analytical centers of the OTS in 2022 in Tashkent.

#### **Source**