

## Eldor Aripov: Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have achieved unprecedented results in bilateral cooperation



The Director of the Institute of Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (ISRS), Eldor Aripov, stated this in a welcoming speech at the conference on “Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan – deepening and expanding a comprehensive strategic partnership”, which took place on July 4 in Bishkek.



As the expert noted, in recent years, thanks to joint efforts, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have achieved unprecedented results in bilateral cooperation. In a short period, the countries achieved a complete transformation of relations.

As an example, Eldor Aripov cited the creation of more than 20 checkpoints on the Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan border, which is not the case with any of the Central Asian countries.

As a result, a record number of mutual trips was recorded in 2022 – 12.4 million people, which is ten times higher than in 2016 – 1.2 million people.

Moreover, from September 2023, citizens of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan were allowed to cross both

countries' borders upon presenting an ID card without a foreign passport, while cargo transit took only 8 minutes.

According to Eldor Aripov, "This is truly a breakthrough and unique experience that our countries have managed to accumulate".

"For many countries of the world, this is an example of the long journey that we have come from a situation full of contradictions to reaching the level of trusting partnership and cooperation", the ISRS representative emphasized.

The expert continued, noting that Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan today benefit from such cooperation.

This is reflected in the two countries' comprehensive openness to each other's business. In particular, the number of enterprises with Kyrgyz capital operating in Uzbekistan has increased eightfold since 2016 – from 50 to 370. Moreover, compared to 2022 alone, the volume of Kyrgyz investments in Uzbekistan has increased fivefold – from almost 11 to more than 50 million last year.

It was noted that a significant part of the investments is directed at producing products that saturate our common market, positively affecting consumer prices, and are exported to third countries.

"Using the competitive advantages and complementarity of the economies of our countries, it was possible to give a powerful impetus to trade and economic cooperation", the ISRS Director stated. He said, "At the end of 2023, our mutual trade turnover approached one billion dollars, almost 6 times more than in 2016".

According to Eldor Aripov, achieving such results became possible because contacts between the two countries have become systematic and regular, covering interaction at the intergovernmental, interparliamentary, interdepartmental, and interregional levels.

New institutional mechanisms and forms of economic interaction have been created.

At the same time, the interaction between the two countries in the implementation of transport and energy projects of regional importance is becoming strategically significant.

In this context, Eldor Aripov mainly focused on the historical significance of the signing of the Agreement on the construction of the China – Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan railway in June, as well as the Cooperation Agreement on the construction of Kambarata HPP-1.

The expert expressed confidence that "these agreements are designed to reform the transport and energy landscape of our region radically".

Discussing further prospects for the development of relations between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the ISRS Director emphasized the importance of the full implementation of the untapped potential of bilateral cooperation in the following areas:

1) deepening political dialogue; 2) enhancing trade, economic, and investment interaction; 3) strengthening cooperation in the development of transport and logistics connectivity; 4) cooperation in the water and energy sector; 5) intensifying cooperation on the transition to green development and digitalization; 6) cooperation in prevention and response to emergencies; 7) strengthening cultural and humanitarian ties.

"By developing these areas together, we will be able to use the full range of possibilities of our multifaceted cooperation", Mr. Eldor Aripov summarized.

The conference took place as part of the Uzbekistan delegation's working trip to Kyrgyzstan, which consisted of leaders and experts from leading analytical centers.

A meeting was also held between the ISRS Director and the Secretary of the Security Council of the Kyrgyz

Republic, Murat Imankulov, as well as a meeting of members of the delegation with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan entrepreneurs who are involved in trade and economic interaction between the two countries.

In addition, a meeting was held with the Kyrgyz expert community, where current issues and prospects for developing bilateral cooperation were discussed.



*Source*