

Uzbekistan hosts first Peace Forum in Fergana, highlighting Central Asia's longstanding tradition of harmony



Fergana, 16 October

On 15 October the first international peace forum in Fergana, Uzbekistan, opened on Wednesday as peacemakers and top diplomats commended Central Asia's longstanding tradition of harmony which became a key driver of peacebuilding efforts in the ethnically diverse cross-border region of Fergana Valley.

Home to approximately 17 million people across Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the vast region of Fergana Valley has been hailed as the latest model of peacebuilding following decades of complex disagreements and tension. Political will from the three Central Asian governments also played a critical role in restoring peace and stability in Fergana Valley.

 Mr. Eldor Aripov, Director for Strategic and Regional Studies (ISRS) under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, said the March signing of the Declaration on Eternal Friendship and the Treaty on the Junction Point of State Borders in Khujand paved the way for a full return to the 'ancient' tradition of living in harmony.

He recalled the words of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, delivered at the 80th anniversary session of the UN General Assembly: "The era of closed borders, unresolved disputes, and conflicts in Central Asia is a thing of the past. Today, the process of forming a New Central Asia has begun."

"For decades, the Fergana Valley was perceived as a zone of complex contradictions. Today, it is becoming an example of how to overcome the historical legacy of mistrust through good neighborliness, openness, and shared creativity," Eldor Aripov noted.

"It is important to remember that, since ancient times, the Valley has been an open crossroads of caravans, ideas, languages, and cultures. For centuries, diverse peoples have lived here side by side – sharing the same land, the same water, and the same sun – and despite their differences, they have coexisted in peace. This very historical code of mutual understanding has always helped them restore balance and harmony," Mr. Aripov said in his opening remarks.

"It is essential to understand that Fergana is more than a valley – it is a mirror of Central Asia. If peace prevails here, it will radiate throughout the entire region," he added.

The ISRS hosted the event with the Center for Progressive Reforms, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Peacebuilding Hub.

Entitled "Fergana Valley: Uniting Efforts for Peace and Progress", the Forum is organized in partnership with the National Institute for Strategic Initiatives under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, and Institute of Studying of the Problems of Asian and European countries of the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan.

The UN, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the European Union (EU) also supported the event which drew approximately 300 peacemakers and conflict resolution experts from around the world.

 Governor of Fergana Region, Khayrullo Bozarov, stated that over the past nine years, cooperation between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan has reached an unprecedented level. Significant progress has been made in restoring transport links, opening borders, and enhancing interstate dialogue.

According to him, the successful model of regional cooperation developed in the Fergana Valley can serve as an example for fostering constructive relations among countries in other parts of Central Asia.

Similarly, government representatives of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Tajikistan also highlighted the long tradition of cooperation among the ethnically diverse communities in Fergana Valley where Silk Route traders once passed the area centuries ago.



Chairman of Tajikistan's Sughd Region, Rajabboy Ahmadzoda, emphasized that the Fergana Valley is not merely a geographical area, but a land rich in spiritual and cultural heritage that unites the peoples of the region.

He noted that Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan are connected not only by shared borders, but also by centuries-old historical and familial ties.

According to Ahmadzoda, it is the duty of the region's countries to transform the Fergana Valley into a space of stability, good neighborliness, and a shared future.



Authorized Representative of the President in Batken region emphasized the importance of a joint approach to addressing key issues related to security, water resources, trade, the environment, and culture.

He underscored that only through dialogue, partnership, and continuous mutual understanding can peace be established and strengthened in the region.

Head of the UN Regional Centre on preventive diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) Kaha Imnadze, European Union Special Representative for Central Asia Eduards Stiprais, Director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre Kate Fearon, Secretary-General of CICA Kairat Sarybay and Deputy Secretary-General of the SCO Sohail Khan also shared their remarks during the opening session.

Leading international peacebuilding institutions such as Berghof Foundation (Germany), the Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation (Finland), the PeaceNexus Foundation (Switzerland), and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) attended the Forum that discussed a wide range of cross-cutting issues ranging from economic opportunities to women's youth empowerment in the face of increased risks of climate crisis.

A center of Uzbekistan's famed textiles Ikat and silk production, the largely agricultural area of Fergana

Valley is also considered an important place for Uzbekistan's cultural artifacts. It is also one of the most fertile areas in Central Asia, producing significant crops such as wheat and fruits.

The second day of the Forum on Oct 16 will see the first observation of the "Yntymak Day" ("Day of Unity") which celebrates the unity in diversity spirit of communities in Fergana Valley.

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