

Central Asia - an exemplary model for a sustainably and steadily developing region



Turkmenistan hosted the third Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia, in which all leaders of the countries of the region took part.

The next Central Asian summit, held in the Avaza national tourist zone in an atmosphere of friendship and mutual respect, confirmed the strong political will of the heads of Central Asian states to comprehensively expand and deepen multilateral interstate cooperation in the interests of ensuring peace, stability and sustainable development in the region.

The leaders of the Central Asian countries have demonstrated a decisive determination to play a primary and key role in solving the most pressing problems of the region, which hinder the development of its rich economic and human potential, based on the principles of good neighborliness, mutual trust, equality, respect and consideration of each other's interests.

Moreover, this once again showed the relevance of the mechanism of consultative meetings, initiated by the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in 2017, as an effective platform for confidential and constructive discussion and coordinated solution of common problems of the countries of Central Asia.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that over a historically short period of time, Central Asia has turned into a single space for mutually beneficial cooperation with a dynamically developing trade, investment, and transport and communication potential.

In the countries of Central Asia, the implementation of industrial cooperation projects has begun, joint investment companies and funds are being created, interaction in the field of transport and transit is expanding, cross-border trade and cooperation between regions are developing.

Contacts in the area of cultural and humanitarian cooperation, "people's diplomacy", parliaments have significantly increased, as a result, friendship and good-neighborliness between our peoples are strengthening, the interest of the world community in partnership with the countries of Central Asia is growing.

In the difficult conditions of the pandemic and the resulting decline in economic activity, constant political dialogue at all levels, dynamics of cooperation and mutual trust allowed the countries of the region to show a high level of unity and solidarity. Mutual humanitarian assistance was provided, safe corridors were established for the movement of strategically important goods across state borders - food, medicine and medical supplies, energy resources.

Without a doubt, today we have reached a high level of consolidation. This creates the necessary prerequisites for building up the process of transformation of Central Asia into a stable, economically developed and prosperous region.

Already today, thanks to the established systematic dialogue and joint efforts of the heads of state of Central Asia, the region is perceived by the world community as a stable, reliable and predictable partner, a space for sustainable development. We managed to get rid of the label of "powder keg of Eurasia." On the contrary, today Central Asia is an exemplary model of a steadily and steadily developing region.

Of course, Shavkat Mirziyoyev plays an important role in the consolidation of the Central Asian countries. It is the President of Uzbekistan, having declared Central Asia a priority of our country's foreign policy in 2016, is making incredible efforts to build a multilateral dialogue as an important condition for constructively solving regional problems and creating a space of common prosperity. This meets the fundamental interests of the fraternal peoples of our countries, and today enjoys universal support in all the states of Central Asia.

I am convinced that the current Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia will make a significant contribution to the further strengthening of relations of friendship and mutual trust between our countries and peoples, and will become an important trigger for the deepening and expansion of regional cooperation.

This was confirmed by the extensive and substantive agenda of the meeting held in Avaza, the statements of the leaders of the Central Asian countries to strengthen relations on all issues of concern to our peoples. Almost all areas of cooperation between the countries were touched upon, the most pressing issues were raised, many initiatives were voiced that do not contradict, but, on the contrary, complement each other. This is evidenced by the Joint Statement, which was adopted at the end of the summit.

In this important political document, the Central Asian leaders firmly stated the importance of using the potential of countries in the interests of creating a space in the region for a secure, stable, broad and open partnership, and also stressed their commitment to resolve all pressing issues through political and diplomatic means on the basis of friendship, mutual respect and trust. and consideration of interests.

During the Consultative meeting, the President of Uzbekistan outlined his vision of solving the primary tasks of regional cooperation.

In particular, the need to identify new points of growth and development drivers for the long term was noted, it was proposed to take decisive measures to form a new model of economic cooperation in Central Asia based on the transition to a full-fledged free trade regime, the creation of long value chains through the development of industrial cooperation, innovation and digital technologies. An appeal was made to encourage direct business contacts between entrepreneurs and regions, as well as to hold investment and

economic forums on a regular basis. All this was initiated to be reflected in the Agreement on General Directions of Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation

The President of Uzbekistan also emphasized the relevance of expanding cooperation between the countries of the region in the transport and communication sphere, ensuring the effective functioning of existing and forming new transport corridors.

As the leader of Uzbekistan emphasized, an extensive and integrated transport system is capable of becoming a key transit hub on the Eurasian continent. In this regard, the President spoke for the fullest possible loading of the existing transport corridors and infrastructure, including the ports of the Caspian Sea, large cross-border logistics centers.

In addition, the broad possibilities of the Trans-Afghan corridor "Termez - Mazar-i-Sharif - Kabul - Peshawar", the road and railways "China - Kyrgyzstan - Uzbekistan" were noted.

The heads of state of Central Asia supported the initiatives of the leader of Uzbekistan to create a Regional Center for the Development of Transport and Communication Interconnection under the auspices of the UN, as well as a regional Conference on transport communications, the development of a Program and Agreement on the joint development of the transport system in Central Asia.

Special attention was paid to the creation of a common energy space. Significant progress has already been observed in this direction. Practical measures are being developed to launch the full-fledged operation of a single energy ring in Central Asia.

An agreement was reached between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on mutual supplies of electricity in the amount of up to 750 million kWh. A similar agreement exists between Bishkek and Nur-Sultan. Also, Tashkent, together with Dushanbe, plans to build two HPPs with a capacity of 320 MW on the Zarafshan River. Uzbekistan has shown its readiness to participate in the construction projects of the Kambar-Ata and Rogun hydroelectric power plants.

At the same time, the President of Uzbekistan proposed to continue efforts to expand mutually beneficial cooperation through the introduction of green energy and energy efficient technologies. It was proposed to intensify the activities of the Electricity Coordination Council of Central Asian countries, expanding its mandate and powers, as well as increasing the level of representation in this structure.

Uzbekistan is also trying to intensify cooperation in accelerating the "greening" of almost all sectors of the economy of the countries of the region so that the Central Asian states do not stay away from the process of transition to "green" development, can effectively adapt to the negative consequences of global warming.

For close coordination of joint efforts, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed to develop a regional program "Green Agenda" for Central Asia. "

Undoubtedly, the leaders of the countries did not ignore the issues of consolidating the efforts of the countries of the region to combat pandemics, which is currently exacerbating in our countries.

In this regard, the leaders stressed the importance of taking comprehensive measures to counter the spread of the coronavirus. It was proposed to launch a unified information system for the recognition of test results and vaccination certificates, expand the exchange of experience in the field of prevention, diagnosis and treatment of infectious diseases, training of medical workers, as well as establish scientific cooperation in the field of pharmacology and cooperation in the production of vital drugs.

Of course, the youth, which constitutes the absolute majority of the population of the countries of the region, took the central place in the President's report. In particular, the leader of Uzbekistan, noting the key role of youth in shaping the future of the region, strengthening trust and friendship between our countries, suggested holding the Central Asian Youth Forum on a regular and rotational basis. This,

undoubtedly, an important initiative will contribute to the creation of a platform for an interactive dialogue between representatives of the governments and youth of our countries, the search for innovative ideas for the further development of regional cooperation.

Moreover, the leader of Uzbekistan proposed to give an additional impetus to intraregional tourism as an important factor in bringing peoples closer together and increasing the incomes of the population. In particular, the head of our state proposed to start the practical implementation of the joint program "One tour - the whole region" covering the entire range of tourism products.

In addition, the President of Uzbekistan put forward a number of relevant proposals aimed at preserving and strengthening security and stability in Central Asia, achieving an early peace in Afghanistan, rational use of water and energy resources, expansion of cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

It is proposed to strengthen the involvement of the resources of "people's diplomacy" in the process of regional cooperation - institutions of civil society, the media sphere, parliaments. They expressed their readiness to hold a Regional Parliamentary Forum in Tashkent, and also supported the initiative of Uzbekistan to create a Cultural Dialogue Forum as a single platform for cultural and humanitarian exchange called "Central Asia: One Past and One Future."

The leaders of the Central Asian states also reached an agreement to intensify consolidated activities in the international arena on all issues of the regional and global agenda, to provide mutual support in promoting initiatives that are important for the stability and sustainable development of the region.

In particular, the heads of state supported the initiative of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan to declare 2025 the International Year for the Preservation of Glaciers and the creation of a glacier protection fund, declared their readiness to jointly promote the initiative of the President of Turkmenistan to develop a UN Strategy aimed at implementing measures for the development of low-carbon energy, as well as the creation, under the auspices of the UN, of an international road map for the development of hydrogen as one of the priority areas in the energy sector.

In order to consolidate international efforts to combat coronavirus, the leaders of the Central Asian countries expressed support for the idea of the President of Kazakhstan to create a Network of Regional Centers for Disease Control and Biosafety under the auspices of the UN, as well as the establishment of a special multilateral body under the auspices of the UN - the International Biological Safety Agency, accountable to the Council. UN Security.

Of course, the coordinated activities of the CA countries in the international arena will not only significantly strengthen the international subjectivity of the region, but will also make it possible to effectively promote and defend the interests of the region.

In general, it can be noted that the Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia was effective, important agreements were reached, long-term plans were outlined.

This was also facilitated by careful preparation for the summit, which was preceded by repeated meetings of expert groups and meetings of foreign ministers. The work was carried out on the basis of the Regulations adopted at the second Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia in November 2019 in Tashkent.

There is no doubt that this work will continue and will be result-oriented. During the meeting, the parties agreed to prepare a "Road Map" for the development of regional cooperation for 2022-2024. It is assumed that this document will take in itself all the initiatives put forward at the consultative meetings, will determine the mechanisms and timing of their implementation.

Moreover, in order to impart a systemic character to regional cooperation, the leaders of the Central Asian countries have planned to sign an agreement "On friendship, good-neighborliness and cooperation for the

development of Central Asia in the XXI century" at the next Consultative meeting.

Summing up, it can be stated that the current new political atmosphere in the region, the holding of the next Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia and the adoption of an agreed Joint Statement prove that the process of regional cooperation has become stable, progressive and, importantly, irreversible, and the rapprochement of peoples and countries Central Asia is an objective necessity.

**First Deputy Director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the
President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Akramjon Nematov**

Source