

## Tashkent and Moscow - time-tested friends, strategic partners and allies



Expanding multifaceted interaction with the Russian Federation is one of the most important strategic directions of Uzbekistan's foreign policy. These days, the countries mark the 29th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Today we can confidently state that Tashkent and Moscow are time-tested friends, strategic partners and allies.

In recent years, a qualitatively new stage in the development of Uzbek-Russian relations has been reached, the intensity of which is growing every year, which is facilitated by an active political dialogue at the highest and high levels, which has made it possible to significantly expand bilateral ties in a short time. Since 2016, our Presidents have held more than 10 meetings, while by the end of 2020 alone, about 100 bilateral Uzbek-Russian intergovernmental contacts have been carried out.

Regular contacts between our leaders, who set the general tone for interstate relations, open up new horizons for cooperation. Every year, new especially significant agreements are reached, contributing to the expansion of interstate and interregional ties.

In this regard, the first meeting of the Joint Commission at the level of the heads of government of the two countries, held in May 2019 in Urgench on the personal initiative of the leaders of Uzbekistan and Russia, is especially important. The new dialogue platform is designed to exercise comprehensive control over the implementation of the bilateral agreements reached in the political, economic, cultural, humanitarian, scientific and technical and other spheres. By filling bilateral interaction with high-quality practical content, this format has given a powerful impetus to the development of full-scale cooperation.

An unshakable foundation for long-term and mutually beneficial relations has become a solid legal base,

numbering more than 330 documents. The most important of them are the Treaty on Strategic Partnership, the Treaty on Allied Relations, and the Declaration on Deepening Strategic Partnership.

The inter-parliamentary dialogue is making a worthy contribution to the development and strengthening of bilateral relations. Successful interaction of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation contributes to the further development and deepening of Uzbek-Russian all-round cooperation, including within the framework of authoritative international parliamentary structures.

The visits to Uzbekistan of the Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation V. Volodin and the Chairman of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation V. Matvienko, which took place in September - October 2019, brought inter-parliamentary relations to a qualitatively new level. The signed historic Agreement on inter-chamber parliamentary cooperation made it possible to create an effective mechanism for interaction between the specialized committees of the lower chambers of parliaments to counter modern challenges and threats, exchange experience, and consultations on international issues of mutual interest.

An important step in expanding the format and range of areas of inter-parliamentary partnership was the signing of the Memorandum on control in the field of labor migration, initiated by the Uzbek side, during a visit to Moscow in April 2021 by the Chairman of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan Tanzila Narbaeva. The document is aimed at organizing cooperation in the field of migration, formulating proposals for the convergence of the laws of the two states and improving the legal framework in the field of migration regulation. Thus, the parliamentarians of Uzbekistan and Russia have joined forces to identify urgent problems in the field of labor migration and develop measures to solve them.

Expansion of inter-parliamentary ties between the two countries, exchange of experience in the field of rule-making, parliamentary control contribute to the establishment of a favorable climate in interstate relations, strengthening mutual trust, forming a legal basis for cooperation and further interaction in trade, economic, investment, cultural, humanitarian and other spheres.

Mutually beneficial trade, economic and investment ties remain a significant aspect. The steps taken by both countries to deepen cooperation have raised bilateral trade relations to a new level. This is evidenced by the high status that Russia occupies today as a key trade and economic partner and the main investor in the economy of Uzbekistan.

Thanks to joint efforts in 2020, it was possible to minimize the impact of the pandemic on Uzbek-Russian interaction. As a result, trade turnover at the end of 2020 remained at the level of US\$5.64 billion, which is almost 2 times more than in 2016 (US\$3.8 billion). In many ways, this was achieved thanks to the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to create a "green corridor", which made it possible to accelerate the movement of food products between Uzbekistan and Russia.

At the same time, the total volume of attracted Russian investments reached about US\$10 billion. The number of enterprises with the participation of Russian capital in Uzbekistan has doubled over the past three years - from 915 to 2 thousand. More than 240 Russian enterprises started operating in 2020 alone. In turn, about 600 enterprises have been created in Russia by residents of Uzbekistan.

Tashkent and Moscow continue to actively interact in joint projects in the field of energy, transport, communications, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, production of building materials, textile and food industries. The most significant area of the Uzbek-Russian cooperation is the expansion of cooperation ties in the industrial sector, which will have a positive impact on the trade activity of Uzbek producers in world markets.

Today, the leading companies of the two countries, Uzavtosanoat and Rostec State Corporation, are successfully implementing a number of projects aimed at assembling KAMAZ trucks and exporting its

components. In addition, over the past three years, Uzavtosanoat has arranged the supply of component parts to the conveyor of the GAZ group, UAZ and P AvtoVAZ worth about US\$7 million. At the same time, the launch of the Tashkent Metallurgical Plant in 2020 with financial support from the Russian Federation brought a new dynamic in the interaction of the two countries in the industrial sphere.

The first international exhibition "Innoprom-2021: Big Industrial Week in Uzbekistan", held by the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Russia on April 5-7, 2021 in Tashkent, also had a success. More than 1.1 thousand enterprises from 20 countries of the world have become its participants. On the sidelines of INNOPROM, partners from Uzbekistan and Russia signed 21 agreements worth US\$128 million and agreed to implement 33 projects involving Russian investments worth US\$2.2 billion.

One of the significant events was an agreement on bilateral cooperation between the Uzbek Texnopark LLC and the Russian Kuka, which will allow Texnopark LLC in the future to develop and supply equipment using industrial robotics throughout Central Asia.

It should be noted that the business missions of the two countries are intended to promote the growth of trade ties. A vivid evidence of this is the functioning of the Made in Uzbekistan business mission in the city of Kazan since December last year; an agreement on its opening was reached in September 2020 in Tashkent following a visit by Russian business circles headed by I. Shuvalov.

The partnership of Uzbekistan with the Russian Federation is also indicative in the field of maintaining regional and international security. Thus, Tashkent and Moscow are actively cooperating in strengthening peace and stability, in countering terrorism and extremism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking, new challenges and threats. The unity of positions of Uzbekistan and Russia is observed in the issue of maintaining and strengthening stability in Central Asia and the peaceful settlement of the situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Uzbek-Russian cultural and humanitarian cooperation is also making an important contribution to strengthening bilateral relations. The peoples of the two countries treat each other's culture, literature and art with special love and respect. A monument to the great Uzbek poet and thinker Alisher Navoi has been erected in Moscow. In Tashkent, the square where the monument to Pushkin is erected is one of the favorite places of residents and guests of the capital.

The factor of national diasporas plays a special role in the cultural and humanitarian sphere. The Uzbek community is one of the largest in Russia. The diplomatic mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Moscow and its consular offices, in close contact with the Uzbek regional national cultural centers, provide universal support to Uzbeks living in various regions of Russia.

With the support of the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Russia, the Sakhovat Help Center was organized, providing targeted assistance to Uzbeks and their families who find themselves in a difficult situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Russia. Since 2021, the diplomatic mission has launched a portal for labor migrants and employers, which allows our compatriots to get a job in Russia.

In turn, the Russian diaspora is also widely represented in Uzbekistan. For 25 years, the Russian Cultural Center has been successfully operating in the country, which is actively working to preserve the national cultures, language and traditions of the peoples of Russia living in Uzbekistan. Along with this, the representative office of Rossotrudnichestvo provides active support to the Russian diaspora, which annually holds more than 300 events in Uzbekistan.

In 2020, a country conference of organizations of Russian compatriots of the Republic of Uzbekistan was held in Tashkent to further consolidate the common efforts of the Russian, Bashkir, Tatar, Crimean Tatar national cultural centers in order to strengthen friendship and cooperation between Russia and Uzbekistan.

A high level of cooperation has been achieved in recent years in the healthcare sector. From 2017 to 2019,

more than 30 agreements were signed between the leading organizations in the field of healthcare, medical education and science of the two countries in such areas as neurosurgery, pediatrics, surgery, cardiology, and oncology.

In the fight against COVID-19, the parties did not share their efforts, but, on the contrary, rallied in the face of an unexpected threat, providing each other with all possible assistance. During the pandemic, the Government of Uzbekistan provided humanitarian support to the Russian side and sent five million personal protective equipment.

In turn, the Russian side sent its test systems and reagents to Uzbekistan for more than 200 thousand studies and more than 80 Russian specialists to exchange experience with Uzbek colleagues. In particular, in February of this year, the Russian Sputnik V vaccine, based on the results of the third stage of clinical trials, received certification in Uzbekistan and was approved for mass use.

Cooperation in the field of education and training of young personnel deserves special attention, the level of which was brought by the heads of state to a qualitatively new level in 2017.

In 2018, the I Russian-Uzbek educational forum "New personnel for a new economy" was organized with the participation of rectors of more than 130 universities of both countries. It resulted in the signing of 128 agreements between the leading educational institutions of Uzbekistan and Russia, providing specific "road maps" for the creation of branches, joint faculties and scientific and educational programs.

As a result of strengthening the legal framework, the presence of Russian education in Uzbekistan is significantly expanding. More than 700 cooperation agreements have been signed between educational institutions of the two countries.

Over the past 2 years, a breakthrough result of the efforts made was the opening in the republic of 9 branches of Russian universities and a representative office of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. In particular, branches of the Moscow Institute of Steel and Alloys (MISiS); National Research Nuclear University (MEPhI); Moscow Power Engineering Institute (MEI); Russian State University of Physical Culture, Sports, Youth and Tourism; Mendeleev Russian University of Chemical Technology; Astrakhan State Technical University; Russian State Pedagogical University. A.I. Herzen; St. Petersburg State University, as well as the first foreign branch of MGIMO operate in Uzbekistan.

The newly created educational institutions have become a quality addition to the three branches that have been operating in Uzbekistan for many years: the branch of the Moscow State University. M.V. Lomonosov (2006), PRUE. G.V. Plekhanov (2001), Russian State University of Oil and Gas named after V.I. I.M. Gubkina.

In general, today it can be stated with confidence that Tashkent and Moscow remain strategic allies that have made a significant path towards strengthening mutually beneficial multifaceted ties. The parties are firmly committed to the fulfillment of the outlined global goals, which is a serious prerequisite for identifying new areas of cooperation.

A reliable basis for this is the intensive large-scale work carried out in recent years by the leaders of Uzbekistan and Russia, Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Vladimir Putin, to develop and strengthen friendly good-neighborly relations that meet the national interests of the two countries.

Tashkent and Moscow, in the spirit of openness and trust with an eye to the future, will continue to build up comprehensive bilateral cooperation for the benefit of the peoples of the two states, in the interests of strengthening peace and stability in the entire region.

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**Source**