

New model of relations between Uzbekistan and Kuwait



In recent years, as part of Uzbekistan's active foreign policy, special attention has been paid to developing ties with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. The number of reliable partners of Uzbekistan in this region is increasing.

An example of this can be seen in the outcomes of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's first official visit to Kuwait on February 17-18. This visit demonstrated that Uzbekistan has acquired a new reliable partner among the states of the Persian Gulf, as evidenced by the atmosphere of sincerity and mutual trust that prevailed at the high-level meeting and by the scale of the agreements signed.

Based on an analysis of the political and economic dialogue results, several important conclusions can be drawn regarding the future prospects of relations between Uzbekistan and Kuwait.

First, the first bilateral meetings between the heads of state of Uzbekistan and Kuwait took place on the eve of the second high-level summit within the framework of the "Central Asia – Gulf Cooperation Council" Dialogue Summit, which is scheduled to be held in Uzbekistan in 2025.

It should be noted that this year, Kuwait is chairing the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. In turn, Uzbekistan will chair the next consultative meeting of the leaders of the Central Asian countries.

From this point of view, both countries play a key role in enhancing regional cooperation.

High-level political dialogue between Uzbekistan and Kuwait aims to develop bilateral and multifaceted relations with the Persian Gulf countries. Bilateral cooperation serves Uzbekistan's domestic economic interests, while the regional dialogue platform aligns with its foreign policy objectives.

This, in turn, demonstrates the political unity of the Central Asian states, that is, the ability to make joint and mutually beneficial decisions on behalf of the region, as well as contributing to the formation of a cooperation model with both traditional and new partners that fully meets the interests of all Central Asian countries.

Implementing such tasks will open opportunities to ensure inclusive economic development and long-term political stability in Central Asia. In this sense, the member countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf may be worthy partners.

Specifically, it is expected that the joint economic opportunities of the Persian Gulf countries will provide a greater impetus to the further development of Central Asia.

Second, the promising cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kuwait aligns with the large-scale priority goals of both countries, such as ensuring global stability and consistent development on the international stage. Similar views on the foreign policy agenda are another essential factor in strengthening cooperation between the two nations.

In this regard, during the negotiations, the heads of state exchanged views on current issues of the regional and international agenda and agreed to develop a comprehensive partnership. The parties also stressed the importance of continuing mutual support within influential international structures such as the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Third, economic cooperation is becoming increasingly significant in the relations between the two countries. It is worth noting that the Uzbekistan – Kuwait Business Forum was organized on the eve of the high-level meetings. In addition, the President of Uzbekistan held meetings with the leaders of several major Kuwaiti companies, such as Gulf Care General Trading, Kamco Invest, Kuwait Investment Company, Al Imtiaz Investment Group, Action Group Holdings, and Agility Logistics.

All of the above demonstrates that dialogue among business circles is of no less importance to the parties than political dialogue. After all, both countries view the development of private entrepreneurship as a driver of the national economy.

Further development of relations should primarily benefit the peoples of Uzbekistan and Kuwait. The abovementioned principle is central to Uzbekistan and Kuwait's newly formed cooperation model.

The first visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Kuwait proved highly effective in expanding the economic structure of the relationship.

Several priority areas of the new Uzbekistan – Kuwait relationship model can be identified, emphasizing the essential agreements reached and their prospects.

Trade Cooperation

The parties intend to increase the volume of mutual trade. Kuwait may become a new primary market for Uzbekistan's national products. The Arab side imports products worth, on average, \$50 billion per year. This opens up new opportunities for Uzbekistan's producers, which is why Uzbekistan has agreed to open its own trade house in Kuwait. The goal is to familiarize potential buyers in Kuwait with Uzbekistan's national products, increase the recognition of national brands, and strengthen their positions in the market.

New Stage of Investment Cooperation

Kuwait is considered a country with significant investment opportunities, so Uzbekistan is interested in collaborating with the Arab side in investments. It is no coincidence that special attention was paid at the recent meeting to expanding the project portfolio under the new cooperation program with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development. In addition, plans were announced to create a bilateral Investment Platform. The package of signed agreements in the economic sphere amounted to nearly \$5 billion.

Tourism

Almost half of Kuwait's annual service imports are dedicated to tourism. Kuwaiti tourists spend over \$10 billion abroad. Thanks to its rich cultural heritage and status as one of the historical centers of Eastern science and Islamic culture, Uzbekistan can become one of the important tourist destinations for Kuwaiti tourists. The Tourism Activities Program for 2025-2027, signed during bilateral negotiations, will significantly increase the flow of Arab tourists to Uzbekistan.

Industrial Cooperation

During the bilateral meeting, an agreement on industrial cooperation was signed, and joint plans for creating the Entrepreneurs' Council were announced. Such a development of relations is beneficial for both parties. Already, joint ventures will allow for an increase in the production capacity of both countries and create new jobs. In addition, industrial cooperation will expand Uzbekistan's and Kuwait's opportunities for entering third-country markets.

Most importantly, cooperation is also developing in an innovative direction. An example of this is the signing of an agreement for the construction of smart cities. In this sphere, Uzbekistan can utilize Kuwait's extensive experience.

Both countries are already experiencing a phase of accelerated urbanization, which is considered an integral part of a period of profound transformation, meaning that the urban population is rapidly increasing. Thus, cooperation in building smart cities will enable Uzbekistan to develop urban infrastructure by integrating modern technologies.

Moreover, the two sides have extensive opportunities for developing cooperation in culture, education, and technology. This contributes to elevating economic and social relations to a new level.

In short, high-level meetings between the two countries' leaders enable Uzbekistan and Kuwait to establish an entirely new mutually beneficial cooperation model. The new phase in the relationship between Uzbekistan and Kuwait lays the foundation for expanding interaction within the framework of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and Central Asia.

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