

Uzbekistan and Germany: 29 years of mutually beneficial cooperation



On 5 March 2021, an Uzbek-German videoconference, dedicated to the 29th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and Germany, was held.

The event was organized by the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan together with the representative office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Central Asia with the support of diplomatic missions of Uzbekistan and Germany. It was attended by Dilorom Fayzieva, Chairperson of the Legislative Chamber's Committee on International Affairs and Interparliamentary Relations, German Ambassador to Uzbekistan Gunther Overfeld, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Germany Nabijon Kasimov, deputies of the Oliy Majlis, experts from think tanks and educational institutions of the two countries, as well as representatives of German business circles.

The representative composition of the videoconference participants allowed for a thorough exchange of views on the current state and prospects for the development of long-term relations between Uzbekistan and Germany in various fields.

Opening the event, the first deputy director of the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Akramjon Nematov noted that exactly 29 years ago, on 6 March 1992, diplomatic relations were established between the two countries. Germany was among the first 20 states in the world to recognize the independence of Uzbekistan.

Speaking about the high level of trusting relations established in recent years between the countries, based on the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutually beneficial cooperation, the expert noted that Germany is considered by Uzbekistan as one of the most reliable and proven partners. It is important, as he pointed out, that Tashkent and Berlin share common approaches in addressing pressing issues of the regional and international agenda.

At the same time, A. Nematov noted with satisfaction that relations between the countries in recent years have reached a qualitatively new level of cooperation, acquired higher dynamics. A powerful impetus to this, he noted, was given by the agreements reached during the meetings of President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Federal President Frank Walter Steinmeier in 2019.³

At the same time, the representative of the ISMI emphasized, the policy of radical reforms in Uzbekistan and the constructive regional policy of Tashkent open up new horizons for cooperation with Germany. The expert sees significant prospects for cooperation in the field of the rule of law, security, the introduction of green technologies, industrial cooperation, increasing the energy efficiency of the economy, digitalization, vocational training and healthcare.

Emphasizing the importance of the event, the authorized representative of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation for Central Asia, Ronnie Heine, noted that this event will help not only outline the contours of Uzbek-German relations, but also give a qualitatively new dynamic to further strengthen relations.

In this context, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Germany Nabijon Kasimov noted that there is an unprecedented revival of cooperation between Uzbekistan and Germany. Today Germany is the largest trade partner of Uzbekistan in Europe.

In the past 3 years, the trade turnover between Uzbekistan and Germany has grown by almost 60%, and in terms of the growth rate of mutual trade, this is one of the highest indicators in the foreign trade statistics of Germany with the countries of Eastern Europe and the CIS.

Developing this topic, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Germany to the Republic of Uzbekistan Gunther Overfeld noted that 29 years of cooperation were filled with an exciting history, and despite all the difficulties, relations between Germany and Uzbekistan, going back to the distant past, have always been characterized by good and close ties. These relations received a significant impetus with the election of Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the post of President of Uzbekistan and the beginning of his reform policy. The diplomat called the existing excellent relations at the highest level, regular close exchange on issues of politics, economy and culture a feature of the new stage of Uzbek-German cooperation.

In turn, the deputy director of ISMI Sanjar Valiev, speaking about new opportunities for Uzbek-German interaction in the financial and investment spheres, noted that the bank privatization program announced in Uzbekistan could become "a good topic for negotiations" with financial institutions in Germany.

The ISMI representative also paid special attention to cooperation between Tashkent and Berlin in the field of education. In this regard, there is great potential, the implementation of which will be mutually beneficial for both countries. According to him, the widespread use of the video format of meetings, tested during the pandemic, can expand the conduct of interactive meetings, establish a dialogue between students and teachers of the two countries. In addition, S. Valiev believes it is necessary to strengthen cooperation in the field of school education.

Jurgen Klimke, a former deputy of the Bundestag from the Christian Democratic Union party, also pointed to the need for strengthening cooperation in these areas. According to him, the system of "dual" education, adopted in Germany in the field of professional training, is a suitable area for establishing cooperation between countries. According to him, the envisaged interaction in personnel training can become the basis for expanding humanitarian ties between the peoples of the two countries.

Appreciating the intensive course of reforms launched by Uzbekistan in 2017 to liberalize the economy, the regional director of the Eastern Committee of the German Economy in Central Asia Eduard Kinsbruner stressed that from the point of view of German companies, doing business in Uzbekistan is becoming more and more attractive. According to him, Uzbekistan at the present stage is a successful example of how the opening of the economy led to its growth. The rise in Uzbekistan's position in the Doing Business index, two-fold economic growth, an increase in FDI from 2% to 4% of GDP over the period of implementation of reforms are indicators that demonstrate the loyalty of the chosen path. At the same time, the expert pointed out, the rapid development of the private sector in Uzbekistan is today recognized as a positive development by such countries as the USA, Great Britain and, of course, Germany.

Jan Helfer, director of the Goethe Institute in Tashkent, notes that the EU's cultural support program can also be used to deepen cooperation, one of the requirements for participation in which is the preparation and presentation of a "roadmap" of agreed activities.

As a result of the event, the participants developed a number of practical recommendations for the further development of Uzbek-German relations in the political, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres.

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