

# An international round table on Afghanistan was held in Termez



On September 11-12 this year, the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, together with the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation, held the international roundtable on the topic of "Central Asia and Afghanistan: A Vision for a Common Future".

The event was attended by leading experts from Uzbekistan, Central Asian countries, Afghanistan and Germany in the field of international relations, security, economics and religion (more than 20 people).

The Central Asian states were represented by experts from strategic institutes and leading research centers. From the German side, specialists from the leading Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Berghof and the Institute for Security Police at the Kiel University took part in.

As part of the event, the participants were familiarized with the infrastructure and practical measures taken by Uzbekistan, designed to facilitate the socio-economic recovery of Afghanistan and the involvement of this country in regional ties. In particular, the guests visited the border trade zone - the International Trade Center "Termez" with an area of 37 hectares 500 meters from the border with Afghanistan.

The opening ceremony of the International Trade Center "Termez" took place on August 29 this year. It was attended by the Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Deputy Ministers of Economy of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as Acting Prime Minister of Afghanistan Abdul Ghani Baradar.

The border trade zone is designed to create a favorable business environment, simplify transport, logistics and administrative procedures. Thus, a 15-day visa-free regime has been introduced for visitors on its territory. The trading platform houses 3 thousand retail outlets.

A visit to the International Transport and Logistics Hub "Termez Cargo Center", located in close proximity to the border between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan - less than 2 km away, was also organized for the

guests of the event. The daily capacity of the hub is 1 thousand tons. The peculiarity of this hub is that it occupies a unique geographical position – it is located at the junction between Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

International organizations, in particular, the World Food Program, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees use the Cargo Center as a channel for delivering humanitarian supplies to Afghanistan. Since 2021, 144 thousand tons of humanitarian aid have been sent to Afghanistan through this hub, including food (flour, grain), medicines, tents, solar lamps and other essential goods.

The experts also got acquainted with the activities of the Educational Center for Afghan Citizens, created on the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in 2018. This educational institution is the only institution in the world that provides training exclusively for Afghans in both higher and secondary specialized and vocational education. During its operation, about 700 Afghan citizens have been trained, of which more than 200 are girls. Today, the Center offers three- and six-month courses for Afghan citizens in sewing and hairdressing, carpet weaving, modeling, handicrafts, sculpture and other professions. The institution actively supports international relations and cooperation with donor countries and foreign organizations such as UNDP, the EU, Germany, Slovakia, and India.

The event guests also got acquainted with the work of the Termez-Hairatan checkpoint, equipped with new advanced customs and border control technologies.

The foreign participants highly appreciated Uzbekistan's efforts to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan, and its effective contribution to the implementation of programs for its socio-economic recovery. It was noted that the unique infrastructure projects implemented in Termez will create the preconditions for the revival of the Afghan economy, putting Afghanistan on the path of peaceful development, and returning the country's historical role as a link between Central and South Asia. In addition, the participants of the event visited the Hakim at-Termezi mausoleum and the archaeological museum to get acquainted with the rich historical and cultural heritage of Termez. Due to the common history, culture and language, Termez was and remains a point of contact between Central and South Asia.

At the same time, during the round table held on September 12 of this year, special attention was focused on consolidating the efforts of the international community to achieve lasting peace and restore the economy of Afghanistan.

In particular, opening the event, the first deputy director of the ISRS Akramjon Nematov stated that "today, more than ever, it is important to unite the efforts of the entire world community in strengthening peace and stability in Afghanistan, supporting its development and well-being." According to him, "the isolation of this country cannot be allowed, as this can aggravate the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, create fertile ground for various destructive processes." "A peaceful and integrated Afghanistan into the world community is the key to a common future in the region, stable and sustainable interregional development," Akramjon Nematov is convinced.

In turn, the experts also noted the importance of promoting the development of the Afghan economy and developing unified coordinated approaches to Afghanistan.

In this context, it was especially emphasized that Central Asia currently plays a key role in the socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan and the integration of this country into regional ties. In general, the participants of the round table agreed that today it is impossible to reduce attention to the situation in Afghanistan, to leave it alone with its problems. At the same time, the interests of the Afghan people should be exclusively at the center of all international efforts.