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COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY OF CHINA



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22nd Heads of State Meeting in Uzbekistan: Prospects for Regional Cooperation and Future Trajectory



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Published on 8th September 2022

Uzbekistan took over the chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in September 2021. Since then, dynamic leadership has been working tirelessly to integrate countries and tackle common issues with a holistic approach. It has been evident that Uzbekistan has emerged as a major stakeholder and regional partner due to the exceptional policies of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. The new initiatives and robust reforms introduced by the President have gained him a strong place in the political realm.



The 22nd Heads of State meeting will be held at Samarkand, Uzbekistan on 15-16 September 2022. The Uzbek administration is leaving no stone unturned to make this Summit a successful event of the year. This event holds additional significance because it will be the first in person SCO Summit after the one in Bishkek in June 2019. The previous summits were held in Russia and Tajikistan, in virtual and hybrid formats respectively. President Xi Jinping and Putin are expected to attend the SCO summit in-person. Thus, President Mirziyoyev has been monitoring all arrangements on his own and ensuring that all security and precautionary measures are being taken properly vis-à-vis the Covid-19 pandemic.



In recent years, the geo-economic and geopolitical importance of Uzbekistan has increased manifold for three reasons. First, the effective policies and new constitutional reforms being proposed by President Mirziyoyev are significantly contributing to fostering peace. His unique conduct of statecraft,

diplomacy and leadership practices have made him the most popular statesman. Under his tenure, the country has been experiencing prosperity and grand socio-economic transformation. Second, the narrative of ‘Reinvigorating Central-South Asian Regional Connectivity’ by President Shavkat has attained appreciation by the world. Both regions have a cultural and religious affinity. Thus, there is huge potential to enhance regional interlinkages in various fields at the multilateral level. Third, Uzbekistan is one of the three Central Asian countries that share a border with Afghanistan. The Uzbek administration has played a vital role in the Afghanistan peace process and economic development. As a major stakeholder, Uzbekistan got economic credit as it is the largest electricity supplier in Afghanistan.

In recent years, the country has also successfully hosted many international conferences and summits with the inclusion of high-level dignitaries from around the world to resolve the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and encourage wider regional cooperation. In this



aspect, the new infrastructure project, i.e., the 573km trans-Afghan railway project, connecting Termez- Kabul-Peshawar, will be crucial for improving regional trade and connectivity.

Uzbekistan's Global Diplomatic Recognition:

With the Chairmanship of SCO, the Uzbek leadership has outlined priority tasks to be discussed in the upcoming summit. These include efforts to raise the potential and authority of the organization, ensure peace and stability in the region, reduce poverty, development of intraregional trade, take measures to eliminate trade barriers, align technical regulations and digitalize customs procedures. This SCO agenda and efforts by President Mirziyoyev have enhanced the country's global diplomatic recognition and soft power projection. Uzbekistan will expand the organization's potential by including new prospects, i.e., creating robust mechanisms for technological advancement, regional cooperation, economic expansion, trade & commerce, and academic excellence during its chairmanship. In addition to that, the reinforcement of cooperation in the health area will remain a pressing goal in this pandemic era. Uzbekistan prioritizes reinvigorating regional connectivity and strengthening economic and security alliances. Therefore, the open foreign policy approach along with socioeconomic progress in multiple sectors will allow all regional states to build a holistic approach to counter common challenges with a shared forward looking spirit and synergy.

Furthermore, regional connectivity via Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) would pave the way for supranational regulatory systems and a flexible model of future



alignments. Provided the multifarious nature of integration in implementing different initiatives, the most substantial contours of SCO are harmonizing national interest based on negotiations, political coordination, mutually acceptable solutions to the problems, enhancing people-to-people contacts, promoting inclusive economic development, and taking solid steps for collective activities.

Future Trajectory: A Landmark Success of SCO under Uzbek Chairmanship

With courage and determination, Uzbekistan has succeeded in blazing a new trail from the unknown to the realms of emancipation and development. All its endeavors have advanced the cause of openness in the country with innovation. As the core of the leadership, President Shavkat has developed new plans with logic and kept pace with the trends of the times, constantly adjusting strategies and policies in accordance with changing circumstances and needs of the people. Thus, the 22nd SCO Heads of State summit will usher into a new era of interregional harmony and cooperation vis-à-vis implementing potential projects and initiatives.