



中國傳媒大學  
COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITY OF CHINA



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人類命運共同體研究院



## “Central Asia plus” Format of Multilateral Cooperation and Uzbekistan’s Regional Policy



Mr. Farrukh Khakimov, Head of Department,  
Development Strategy Center, Uzbekistan

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“Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy adopted on September 11, 2023 specifies a hundred goals to be realized over the next seven years, prioritizing social protection, good governance, further economic liberalization, protection of sovereignty and security, continuation



**“UZBEKISTAN – 2030”**

of an open, pragmatic and active foreign policy based on national interests of the country.

The fifth priority direction of the “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy, titled “Consistent continuation of the policy based on the principle of a safe and peace-loving state,” covers goals from 90 to 100, which include among others establishing full-scale strategic relationships and alliances in Central Asia, as well as extending multidimensional beneficial cooperation with longstanding partners.

The Strategy, in particular, by raising practical cooperation in the Central Asian region to a qualitatively new level (Goal – 91) prioritizes strengthening close cooperation with neighbouring countries in various areas; deepening multifaceted strategic partnership and alliance relations; achieving free movement of citizens, goods, services and capital; creating a common tourist space in the region; developing mutually beneficial relations with Afghanistan and promoting its economic recovery.

In turn, the State program and targeted indicators for 2023-2024 to be implemented in the framework of the “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy have defined the country’s active and regular participation in summits within the “Central Asia plus” multilateral cooperation format.

Diplomatic dialogue “Central Asia plus”, also known “C5+1” platform is format of multilateral cooperation, encompassing the five Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, denoted as “C5”) and an external partner country (“1”), which was launched by Japan in 2004, followed by South Korea in 2007, and later on by other partners of the region.

Notably, ministerial “Central Asia plus” meetings have progressed to “summit” – presidential level, with China, India, the European Union, Russia, the United States, and the latest Germany in 2023, demonstrating the importance and preference of negotiations within the “C5+1” framework for Central Asian states to discuss regional issues with major external powers.



Indeed, “Central Asia plus” dialogues at presidential or ministerial levels have become a platform for multilateral discussion of regional concerns and strengthening cooperation between Central Asian countries and their strategic partners. The platform has also evolved into an effective multi-vector foreign policy mechanism for Central Asian states.

The overview of “Central Asia plus” summits in 2023 demonstrate that the diplomatic platform at the summit level has become even more popular and frequent with major international partners of the Central Asian states. For instance, in May 2023, the five Central Asian presidents met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Xian. During the “C5+China” summit,



Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled a Grand Development Plan that aimed to provide the country with alternative routes for the transportation of raw materials, food products, and other items via a network of trade corridors. Beijing also stated its commitment to regional security and its willingness to assist Central Asian efforts to combat terrorism.

On June 3, 2023 Central Asian states hold a high-level meeting in Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyzstan) with Charles Michel, President of the European Council. Discussions at the “C5+EU” meeting were focused on cooperation in business, commerce, technology transfer, investments, and digital connectivity.

Furthermore, all five Central Asian presidents attended the “C5+Gulf Cooperation Council” summit in Saudi Arabia in July 2023, which was also an example of diversification of international partners in the current geopolitical situation.

Most notably, “C5+US” was also organized on September 19, 2023 at the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, with US President Joe Biden. The summit in New York demonstrated how the United States acknowledged and supported the cooperative efforts made by the Central Asian states to realize the region’s potential in order to maintain stability and sustainable growth and to establish mutually beneficial collaboration.

On September 29, in Berlin Central Asian leaders met with Chancellor, Olaf Scholz for the first time in the format of “C5+Germany”. During the constructive exchange of opinions, the leaders of the countries highlighted the development of relations between the Central Asian states and Germany over the past three decades since the establishment of diplomatic relations. It was emphasized the role of not only the diverse and multifaceted bilateral cooperation but

also the interaction between Germany and Central Asian states within the framework of the European Union's regional policy.

In general, "Central Asia plus" is serving as an effective mechanism of cooperation for Central Asian states and their international partners to address common challenges and promote economic, investment, security, humanitarian, and regional cooperation.

It should be noted that holding summits in "Central Asia plus" format was a consequence of the successful regional policy of Uzbekistan, which brought regional interaction between

Central Asian states to a new level. Uzbekistan is particularly dedicated to strengthen and develop friendly ties with neighboring states, on the basis of collaboration, mutual support, peace, and



harmony. President Mirziyoyev's proactive and pragmatic regional agenda have generated a positive diplomatic atmosphere among Central Asian countries. Consequently, the frequency of official visits at different levels was increased, and Consultative meetings of the heads of Central Asian states were launched. In addition, solutions were found for complicated issues including the water, state borders, transport communications and others. These long-standing disagreements had been a substantial impediment to Central Asian states increasing regional cooperation.



Relatively short period of time Uzbekistan has achieved impressive results in strengthening bilateral relations with every Central Asian state since 2017. Specifically, Uzbekistan has established strategic partnerships with neighboring Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan (2017), and Tajikistan (2018). In 2022 Uzbekistan strengthened its strategic partnership with Turkmenistan and established allied relations with Tajikistan. In December 2022, treaties on allied relations and the demarcation of the Kazakh-Uzbek state border were also signed in Uzbekistan's capital. In addition, in January 2023, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan signed a declaration on comprehensive strategic partnership and completed the 1,400 km border delimitation process, a historic achievement credited to Uzbek diplomacy.

The peaceful, pragmatic, and active diplomacy of Uzbekistan has resulted in such important bilateral and multilateral agreements and treaties with neighboring countries.

Independent Uzbekistan, like other states in the Central Asian region, carries out mutually beneficial cooperation with foreign partners based on their own national interest.

While all Central Asian states benefit from relation in trade, economic, investment and other spheres with all external partners, they also prioritize diversified economic relations and promote close regional cooperation without reliance on any external power therefore countries of the region are not interested in taking sides in favor of any major power. Central Asia must maintain a balanced and friendly relationship with them, rather than choosing between. Increasing regional solidarity and coordination is essential for success in this direction. Central Asia now has a better chance than ever to work together. In this context, deepening the regional collaboration is the crucial factor in enhancing the importance of Central Asia and addressing economic and security challenges for the region's benefit. Therefore, Uzbekistan has been also actively promoting the development of regional cooperation in the spheres of security, trade,





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energy, transportation, and culture through “Central Asia plus” dialogue platforms, and has proposed and undertaken a number of international initiatives on security, development, and interregional cooperation in Central Asia.