



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF UZBEKISTAN TO THE OSCE

**Statement by Ambassador Abat Fayzullaev,  
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the OSCE,  
at the 1325<sup>th</sup> OSCE Permanent Council Meeting  
July 22, 2021**

*«High-level International Conference “Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges and Opportunities» (Tashkent, 15-16 July, 2021)»*

Mr. Chair,

On July 15-16, 2021 Uzbekistan hosted the high-level International Conference “Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges and Opportunities” on the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The conference was attended by the President of Afghanistan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the ministers of foreign affairs of all Central and South Asian countries, high-level delegations of 44 countries including foreign ministers of Russia, China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and others, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the leadership of 30 international organizations, representatives of research institutions, think tanks and media. In total, almost 600 people participated in this international event.

The Conference provided a unique opportunity for an open discussion strengthening regional connectivity aimed at further deepening economic cooperation in Central Asia, with access to South Asia, which has historically been closely linked to Central Asian region in economic, social, cultural, and civilizational dimensions.

The agenda included a comprehensive exchange of views and joint proposals for enhancing cooperation in trade, investment, transport, energy and innovation, green technologies, implementing specific projects and cooperation programs, expanding interaction in tourism, education, healthcare, science, and culture, ensuring the stability and security of the two regions.

In his opening remarks, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized the common history of the two regions, the importance of mutual trust, and consideration of national interests.

The President of Uzbekistan put forward some important initiatives and priority areas aimed at achieving these goals.

**First**, the priority task is to create favorable conditions for the enhancement of trade and investments. We proposed to hold an annual interregional forum on developing the economic agenda, deepening cooperation and investment ties between the countries of our regions.

**Second**, the establishment of modern, efficient, and safe transport and logistics infrastructure in Central and South Asia. In this regard, the Termez – Mazar-i-Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar railway is to become a key element of the entire connectivity architecture of our regions. The project has already received wide support, including from leading international financial institutions. The construction of this railway will make it possible to fully realize the transit potential of the two regions, form the shortest route to open seas, and significantly reduce the time and costs for the transportation of goods.

**Third**, the development of specific measures to implement digital connectivity in trade, transit, and border crossing, adopting a Joint Action Strategy.

**Fourth**, to seek joint solutions ensuring food security in two regions the President proposed to hold a meeting of regional agriculture ministers under the auspices of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization to develop a joint program of measures.

**Another** step is to strengthen security and stability, fight against terrorism, extremism, and transnational crime, including in cyberspace. We are ready to organize the regional experts' dialogue on the sidelines of another International Conference to be held in Tashkent in November this year and dedicated to the 10th anniversary of Joint efforts to implement the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia.

**Sixth**, the importance of environmental protection and the development of a green economy. Today our main common problems are water scarcity, air, and environmental pollution, soil degradation and desertification, and of course drying up of the Aral Sea.

**Seventh**, full realization of the unique tourism potential of Central and South Asia. At the World Tourism Organization, Uzbekistan proposed to develop a Program for Central and South Asia, to promote our common historical and cultural heritage.

**Eighth**, enhancing scientific, cultural, and humanitarian exchanges with the wide involvement of young people, which makes up the majority of our regions' population. Uzbekistan proposed to hold an international forum on the historical heritage of Central and South Asia in Termez under the

auspices of UNESCO and also to create a permanent Youth Council of the countries of Central and South Asia.

**Ninth**, cooperation in science, technology, and innovation. We believe it is important to encourage joint researches, scientific and educational internships, exchange programs.

And finally, on the eve of the Conference on July 15th, a new International Institute for Central Asia was opened in Tashkent. On the basis of this Institute, we propose to create a permanent working group of experts to advise on the ways to promote connectivity between Central and South Asia as well as in the wider Eurasian area as an important factor in stable and sustainable development.

Following the conference, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Central and South Asian States adopted a Joint Statement on the Development of Regional Connectivity. Distinguished ministers encouraged cooperation in the development of the transit and logistics potential of two regions through expansion of the transport and communication infrastructure under international agreements and conventions, and the formation of new international transport corridors that open commercially feasible and secure routes to seaports.

Mr. Chair,

The International Conference served as a good opportunity and platform for official delegations to hold meetings in different formats.

We would like to point out the establishment of a new quadrilateral platform for consultations between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States, and Uzbekistan, aimed at supporting the Afghan peace process and post-conflict settlement and enhancing regional connectivity. The delegations of the four mentioned countries agreed that long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan is crucial for regional connectivity and expressed the common opinion that peace and regional ties mutually strengthen each other.

On the margins of the Conference Tashkent hosted the Fourth Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Central Asian countries and Russia. In their joint statement ministers mentioned that in the context of the new geopolitical reality in the region caused by the escalation of hostilities in Afghanistan, it is necessary to continue looking for opportunities to stabilize the military-political situation and establish peace in Afghanistan. High-level delegates called on all parties involved in the conflict to refrain from the use of force and destabilizing actions to ensure favorable conditions for the advancement of the peace process.

We also organized the meeting of the C5+1 dialogue format between Central Asian countries and the United States. Distinguished participants affirmed their commitment to enhance engagement through our regional

diplomatic platform and seek opportunities to strengthen connectivity between the Central and South Asian regions via trade, transport, and energy links.

In general, let me stress that the practical implementation of Uzbekistan's initiatives on interconnectivity and the outcomes of the high-level International Conference can create a new economic reality in two regions at once, forming the most favorable ground and all necessary conditions for the inclusive economic development of Central and South Asian states as well as provide good opportunities for the wider OSCE region in economic co-operation and transport communication.

I thank you.