



## ENLARGEMENT OF THE TURKIC COUNCIL: OPPORTUNITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

Since its establishment, the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (Turkic Council) has played an important role in developing political, socio-cultural, trade and economic cooperation among the Turkic speaking countries. As it is known, the Turkic Council was established by the Nakhchivan Agreement, which was signed in October 2009 at the Summit of the Heads of the Turkic Speaking states launched in 1992. The council currently consists of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey as its founding member states, as well as the observer member, Hungary. On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its establishment, the Turkic Council has entered into a process of expansion and empowerment after Uzbekistan decided to join the organization in 2019. There have also been several other significant developments between the existing and potential member states. For instance, in May 2019, the Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established within the Turkic Council, and in September 2019, the European Representative Office of the Turkic Council was opened in Hungary. Moreover, in certain areas, opportunities for cooperation emerged with Turkmenistan, which participated in some of the previous summits (in 2014 and 2015) as a guest of honor. As a result, Turkmenistan is expected to become an observer state in the Council in 2019. This process of enlargement is of paramount importance both for the Turkic integration process and for increasing the regional and global importance of the Turkic Council.

It should be emphasized that the decision of the brotherly country of Uzbekistan to join the Turkic Council is an important historical event for the integration of the Turkic world. It is clear that the positive results of the change and transformation process, which started with Shavkat Mirziyoyev's accession to power in Uzbekistan, had a significant effect on the forthcoming membership of Uzbekistan in the Turkic Council. Accelerating reforms in the political, social, commercial-economic and diplomatic fields after 2016, Uzbekistan has taken important steps to strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation in particular with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan. Within Uzbekistan's opening process, the Turkey-Uzbekistan relations have gained momentum, which had a positive impact on Uzbekistan's membership in the Turkic Council. As it is known, President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan brought up this issue during his visit to Uzbekistan in November 2016. The issue has been formally discussed subsequently in October 2017, during President Mirziyoyev's visit to Turkey, and again, in April 2018, during President Erdogan's visit to Uzbekistan. As a result of the negotiations, Uzbekistan participated as a special guest in the 6<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Turkic Council held on September 3, 2018, in Kyrgyzstan. The issue of Uzbekistan's

membership was further clarified on June 18-19, 2019, during the first working visit of Secretary General of the Turkic Council Baghdad Amreyev to Uzbekistan. As a result, on September 14, 2019, the Senate of the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of Uzbekistan officially ratified the Nakhchivan Agreement, the founding document of the Turkic Council. On September 16, 2019, Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a law on the ratification of the agreement. Uzbekistan's membership process is expected to be completed at the 7<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Turkic Council, which will be held on October 15, 2019, in Baku. The membership of the brotherly country of Uzbekistan was welcomed by the whole Turkic world.

The Turkic Council membership of Uzbekistan, the most populous country in Central Asia, will contribute significantly to the deepening of political, commercial-economic, scientific, social, cultural and touristic mutual cooperation among the member states. It is observed that cooperation between Uzbekistan and the Turkic Council members has increased since Uzbekistan's adoption of the positive approach to the organization. From this point of view, we can say that trade and economic relations between Uzbekistan and the current members of the Turkic Council have increased. For example, the mutual trade volume between Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan, which was \$2 billion in 2017, increased by 40.8% and reached \$2.8 billion in 2018. During January-July 2019, this figure amounted to \$1.6 billion and increased by 11.1% compared to the same period of 2018. These figures show that Kazakhstan became the third largest trading partner of Uzbekistan. Moreover, taking into account the agreement on the establishment of the Central Asia International Center for Trade and Economic Cooperation signed between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in 2019, it can be predicted that trade and economic cooperation between the two countries will increase further in the coming period. As for Turkey, the Turkey-Uzbekistan trade volume was \$1.504 billion in 2017 and showed a 25% increase compared to the previous year. The upward trend continued in 2018 when the mutual trade reached \$1.748 billion, a 16% increase over the previous year. The trade volume between Turkey and Uzbekistan in the first half of 2019 reached \$1.188 billion, increasing by 26.8% compared to the same period of the previous year, and it is expected to grow further. In this case, Turkey became the fourth largest trade partner of Uzbekistan after Kazakhstan. Similarly, it can be seen that Uzbekistan's trade and economic relations with other Turkic Council members and Hungary have increased.

The Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry established under the Turkic Council will provide new opportunities for the development of multilateral trade-economic and investment cooperation within the

framework of the Turkic Council. The chamber is expected to contribute to the improvement of trade and investment conditions among the members, the simplification of customs and transit procedures, free movement of goods, capital and services, and the streamlining of financial and banking transactions. The Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established at a time of increased global and regional geopolitical competition, economic sanctions and the escalation of trade wars. From this perspective, the organization is important for the acceleration of economic integration among the Turkic speaking countries. Trade and economic relations of the Turkic Council members with large economic potential are expected to increase further in the coming period due to their special geographical position on the Silk Road route between East and West and abundant underground resources.

The September 19, 2019 opening of the Turkic Council's Representative Office in Hungary, which is an observer state in the Turkic Council and a member of the European Union (EU) is another important issue, and it needs to be emphasized that the Council will go beyond the regional and cultural geography and gain a global dimension. Undoubtedly, the Turkic Council's office in Hungary will contribute to the further development of relations of the Turkic Council member countries and Hungary, as well as to closer cooperation with the EU countries and institutions. This process will also reflect positively on the efforts of the Turkic Council to obtain an observer status at the UN General Assembly in the coming period.

In conclusion, Uzbekistan's upcoming membership in the Turkic Council, the opening of the European Representative Office in Hungary, as well as the establishment of the Turkic Chamber of Commerce and Industry can be considered as major developments for the Turkic world's integration in the fields of economy, trade, and transportation. Moreover, the significant changes in the political attitude of Turkmenistan as an observer state, which is not currently an official member of the Turkic Council due to its neutral stance, is one of these positive developments. When we look at these developments in terms of the institutional development of the Turkic Council, as well as its enlargement and internationalization, it can be said that the importance of the Turkic Council in the EU, UN and other global platforms will increase soon. In the context of the Turkic Council's expansion, we should mention here that it would be meaningful to develop cooperation opportunities with the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, as well as such subjects of the Russian Federation as the Altai Republic, the Republic of Bashkortostan, the Republic of Khakassia, the Sakha Republic, the Republic of Tatarstan, and the Tuva Republic, albeit at different levels.

Written by Omirbek Hanayi,  
Eurasian Research Institute, Kazakhstan

## Politics, Foreign Affairs, and Security

- President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev addressed the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development under the aegis of the UN General Assembly. The president noted that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provided the humankind with a clear roadmap for a better future. According to Tokayev, the economic, social and environmental policies pursued in Kazakhstan are in full compliance with the objectives of the SDGs (Akorda, 26.09.2019).
- The fourth meeting of speakers of the Eurasian countries' parliaments dedicated to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nursultan Nazarbayev's Eurasian integration initiative was held in Nur-Sultan. Parliamentarians discussed ways of ensuring safe and stable development across the Eurasian space and agreed to coordinate their work for enhancing interstate cooperation (Kazinform, 24.09.2019).
- The apparatus of the Security Council under the President of Uzbekistan and the secretariat of the National Security Council of India held consultations in Tashkent. The parties discussed issues of security, stability and sustainable development in Central and South Asia in the context of the current situation in Afghanistan, as well as prospects of expanding bilateral cooperation (UzDaily, 25.09.2019).
- As part of the fourth meeting of speakers of the Eurasian countries' parliaments, Kyrgyzstan's Jogorku Kenesh Speaker Dastanbek Dzhumabekov met with Chairman of Tajikistan's Majlisi Oli Shukurdzhon Zukhurov. After discussing bilateral border issues, the parties agreed that the delimitation of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border would allow the two states to focus on enhancing mutual cooperation across a wide range of areas (Kabar, 23.09.2019).
- Speaking at the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, Foreign Minister of Belarus Vladimir Makei called on the UN member states to adopt a declaration on the non-deployment of medium- and shorter-range missiles in Europe. In addition, Minsk encouraged the global community to take measures for ensuring international information security (Belarus24, 27.09.2019).
- Speaking at the session of the Halk Maslahaty (People's Council), the country's highest representative body, President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov proposed a transition to a bicameral parliamentary system. According to Berdimuhamedov, this will allow for representing the interests of all sectors of the Turkmen society (Trend, 26.09.2019).
- Uzbekistan's Defense Minister Bakhodir Kurbonov travelled to Tajikistan for the first official visit of an Uzbek Defense Minister to this country in 28 years. In Dushanbe, Kurbonov met with his Tajik counterpart Sherali Mirzo and visited the aviation department of the Tajik Military Institute. Earlier in Tashkent, the security councils of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan signed a memorandum of cooperation on combating terrorism and extremism (Tashkent Times, 27.09.2019).

## Economy, Finance, and Energy

- According to the World Bank's Doing Business report, Uzbekistan is among the top-20 countries that have implemented major reforms in the field of business facilitation. The report highlights such steps of the Uzbek government as the protection of minority investors, the simplification of the tax system, the introduction of contract enforcement measures, the facilitation of foreign trade, and the development of mediation (Kun, 28.09.2019).
- The Ankara Chamber of Commerce hosted a business forum entitled "Turkey-Ukraine economic relations and opportunities for bilateral cooperation". The parties discussed the prospects for expanding mutual trade after the signing of the bilateral free trade agreement. The current volume of trade between the two countries equals \$4 billion a year and is expected to reach \$10 billion in the long term (Ukrinform, 25.09.2019).
- The joint study conducted by the Otkritie Bank and the Rosgosstrakh insurance company has found that 59% of Russians do not have personal savings. Only 15% of respondents managed to increase their savings over the past five years. The researchers explain the situation by the shrinking of real disposable incomes that are in decline for six consecutive years, excluding 2018, when they barely increased by 0.1% (Kommersant, 24.09.2019).
- The fourth International Business Forum "Eurasian Week 2019" was held in Bishkek, bringing together more than 2,000 participants from 31 countries. The forum provided a platform for summarizing the achievements of the Eurasian Economic Union in the past five years, defining vectors of further development and developing direct business contacts (Eurasiancommission.org, 26.09.2019).
- More than 300 delegates from 20 countries participated in the third Renewable Energy Summit held in Nur-Sultan. The event's goal was to discuss current problems in using renewable energy sources and efficient solutions for building the green future. The participants adopted a resolution setting strategic directions for the development of renewable energy in Kazakhstan (Kazinform, 25.09.2019).
- Pakistan requested Tajikistan to amend the agreement on the CASA-1000 project to enable the two-way electricity trade. Under the existing deal, Pakistan is bound to import 1,000 MW of electricity per day from May to October. Under the proposed change, Pakistan will be able to export its surplus electricity to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan in winter (The News, 22.09.2019).
- In January-August 2019, Tajikistan received humanitarian assistance worth \$37.4 million from 51 countries. The volume of aid, which mainly included flour, vegetable oil, medicines and other products, exceeded 14 thousand tons. The largest donor countries included Russia (33.8%), China (29.2%), Switzerland (7.6%) and India (5.3%) (Avesta, 25.09.2019).

## Society and Culture

- An exhibition and a series of free master classes on making traditional Kyrgyz felt carpets took place at the Frunze Museum in Bishkek, in an effort to promote and preserve this traditional art of the Kyrgyz people. In 2012, the Kyrgyz culture of felt carpet production was included in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (Kabar, 26.09.2019).
- A photo exhibition in dedication to the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Mongolia and the European Union was held in Brussels. The exhibition displayed 35 photos under the themes of Mongolia-EU historic relations, untouched nature of Mongolia, animals, traditions and peacekeeping operations. Since 1990, the EU has implemented development programs and projects in Mongolia worth €163.6 million (Montsame, 27.09.2019).
- Directors of eight movie production companies from the five CIS countries and Georgia held a working meeting at Belarusfilm to present their companies' capabilities. The parties signed a new cooperation agreement aimed at technical exchange, joint ventures in movie production, and the promotion of movies abroad. All eight movie studios will present their films at the Friendship Cinema Week that will take place in October 2019 (Belarus24, 24.09.2019).
- Tashkent hosted the Uzbekistan-Italy Music and Friendship Festival, dedicated to the celebration of the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Uzbekistan. A group of Italian musicians from Naples took part in the event, including famous opera singer (soprano) Teresa Sparaco who conducted a series of master classes to teach students how to play traditional Neapolitan tunes on Uzbek musical instruments (UzDaily, 19.09.2019).
- Young Kazakhstani singer Daneliya Tuleshova was named the laureate of the Eurasian International Prize and received an award in the "Vocal" nomination. The 13-year-old singer became the first child awarded with this prize, which was established in 2013 by the Eurasian Creative Union in fields of Art, Literature, Science, Sport and Socially Significant Achievements (Kazinform, 27.09.2019).
- According to Moldova's presidential adviser on education, culture and research Corneliu Popovici, the country faces a serious demographic crisis. The data presented by the National Bureau of Statistics show that Moldova may lose one million citizens over the next 20 years, while its population size may fall to one million by 2050 (Moldpres, 24.09.2019).
- The Honorary Consulate of Kazakhstan officially opened in the Armenian city of Yeghegnadzor in the Vayots Dzor province. The consulate will provide legal aid to Kazakh citizens living in Armenia and promote bilateral trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian relations, as well as interactions between citizens of both countries (News.am, 23.09.2019).