



**THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN
TO THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM
MISSIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND NATO**

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**INFORMATION DIGEST OF
PRESS OF UZBEKISTAN # 248**

December 16, 2015

PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN IN THE SCO IN 2015-2016.....	2
Rustam Azimov: «Uzbekistan is not ready to consider proposals to establish a free trade zone within the framework of the SCO»	2
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION.....	4
KOICA – Uzbekistan: Successful Interaction	4
GREEN TECHNOLOGIES	5
Wealth Underfoot	5
ECOLOGY	6
Back to Native Mountains	6

PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN IN THE SCO IN 2015-2016

Rustam Azimov: «Uzbekistan is not ready to consider proposals to establish a free trade zone within the framework of the SCO»

Today the city of Zhengzhou (China) hosted a regular meeting of Council of Heads of Government of Shanghai Cooperation Organization. We are presenting you the main part of the speech of the First Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Rustam Azimov at a meeting in an expanded format. The representative of our country, supporting the assessment of SCO's activity, which in a relatively short period has become authoritative and influential international organization, stated the following:

Together, member states of the Organization continue their work to maintain stability in the region, ensuring sustainable economic development, the expansion of cooperation in trade, investment, humanitarian, transport and communications spheres.

The Republic of Uzbekistan, which currently is chairing the SCO, intends to strictly adhere to and abide by the principles of continuity and consistent development of multifaceted collaboration that meets the interests of all Member States of the Organization.

In this regard, the Uzbek side attaches great importance to strict observance of the principle of consensus in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which has been enshrined by the wise decision of the heads of our states in the creation of the SCO.

Dear participants of the meeting,

Today the world has faced with the next phase of the global financial and economic crisis that began in 2008. We all have seen a sharp fall in prices for the majority of world commodity and raw materials markets, demand reduction and decline in economic growth in all regions of the world. As a result of reduced volumes of trade and investment, capital outflow has increased, protectionist attempts of some countries and regional organizations have intensified.

The crisis in varying degrees affects all countries, therefore, it is particularly important to develop well thought-out national agenda to counter its effects, and most importantly - to conduct large-scale structural reforms, modernization, diversification and competitiveness of the economy in the long term.

In these difficult conditions, based on the Uzbek model of reforms developed by President Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan's economy shows stability and sustainable growth.

GDP growth rates for the past 11 years total more than 8 percent annually. The country has achieved sound macroeconomic position, which is characterized by low inflation level, stably functioning banking and financial system, stable triple surplus of state budget, balance of trade and balance of payments, increasing foreign exchange reserves, low external debt at level of 18% of GDP and zero internal state debt.

The policy of structural reforms is the fundamental basis for ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan. First of all, this is a radical reform of the education system, which has created the preconditions for sustainable growth and full potential of our country on the basis of large-scale modernization of all sectors of the economy, infrastructure and social sector.

It has made possible to create new, high-tech industries and complexes that have become real engines of economic growth. They produce globally competitive products with high added value on the basis of deep processing of rich natural resources of our country.

At the same time we realize that this is only the initial stages of our progress. We still have a very large and long way to build a modern, competitive economy, which occupies a worthy place among developed countries.

This year, the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov approved the "Program of further reform, structural transformation and diversification of the economy in 2015-2019", consisting of seven strategic programs, which lay a solid foundation for sustainable economic development of Uzbekistan in the coming years.

These programs are aimed at radical improvement of the business environment, large-scale privatization of state property, expansion of the private sector and reducing government's share in the economy to the strategically and economically reasonable size, reform of the corporate governance system based on international standards, further modernization and diversification of the industrial and agricultural production, as well as development of modern infrastructure.

As part of the reform program, Uzbekistan over the next five years provides for the implementation of more than 900 investment projects on creation of new high-tech industries and a radical modernization of existing enterprises of petrochemical, chemical, electric power, engineering, automotive, electrical, textile, pharmaceutical and other industries, as well as more than 300 projects for the construction and reconstruction of engineering communications and road infrastructure, totaling more than 60 billion US dollars.

Dear participants of the meeting!

In the difficult situation that has emerged today in the global economy, the task of further cooperation on the implementation of coherent and mutually beneficial projects in the fields of economy, investment and transport communications is especially relevant for the sustainable socio-economic development of the SCO member states, achievement of practical results.

We stand for further development of trade-economic ties, expanding mutual deliveries of industrial products, which is demanded in the SCO markets, forming a favourable environment to promote mutual trade and other activities in this area.

In this regard, we attach great importance to the effective implementation of the "Program of cooperation between the customs services of the SCO member states for 2016-2021" that is being adopted today.

However, in the context of the previously statements made, I would like to emphasize once again that the Republic of Uzbekistan is not ready to consider proposals on the elaboration of issue of creation of free trade zone within the Organization. Moreover, this cooperation trend is not provided by the SCO Development Strategy until 2025, which was approved by the Heads of State at the Ufa summit in July 2015.

We look forward to a radical development of investment cooperation between our countries, the implementation of mutually beneficial projects and programs in priority sectors and areas of cooperation, especially in the high-tech sector. We believe that we have a huge potential in this area that is mastered to a small extent.

In this context, importance is given to the use of the full capacity of the Business Council and the SCO Interbank Association. We support the general view that it is important to present understandings on connecting these structures to the implementation of specific investment projects within the organization.

We consider development of transport communications, radical expansion of the huge transit potential of the countries of our region as strategic direction of our cooperation.

It is, above all, the development projects of efficient transport and transit corridors, creation of favorable conditions for increasing the volume of freight traffic, expansion of the network of railways and roads, air links, as well as the establishment of a modern level of appropriate infrastructure that will transform our region into an important global transit transport and logistics center.

I would like to emphasize that the implementation of concrete projects in the field of improving and upgrading efficient transport communications and infrastructure should be based on the principles of economic feasibility and reasonableness, taking into account the overall interests of states of the region.

In order to achieve real results for all the abovementioned directions, we consider important to develop and to adopt specific activities and "road maps" on ensuring the implementation of the "Strategy of development of the SCO until 2025", as well as in the

framework of processed new List of measures for the further development of project activities of SCO until 2021.

Speaking about the prospects of expanding the format of cooperation within our organization, Uzbekistan reaffirms support for accession of India and Pakistan to the SCO as full members.

We also support more active economic, investment, cultural and humanitarian cooperation with observer countries and partners, consolidation of cooperation and involvement of their huge economic potential in the sphere of joint activity within the SCO framework.

Dear participants of the meeting,

Delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan is confident that the results of today's meeting will be important for the further development and strengthening of mutually beneficial and multifaceted cooperation across the whole economic agenda of our Organization.

(Source: IA «Jahon»)

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

KOICA – Uzbekistan: Successful Interaction

The results of the outgoing year of 2015 are being summed up on the eve of the upcoming new year of 2016, when the representative office of the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) in Uzbekistan marks its anniversary.

The KOICA Office in Uzbekistan started its activities in 1995 to facilitate the provision of gratuitous assistance of Uzbekistan on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Korea. The major forms of technical assistance of the International Cooperation Agency include projects, programs on sending experts and volunteers, invitation of interns, provision of equipment and rendering assistance in emergency situations and supporting non-government organizations.

Uzbekistan and South Korea signed a program with KOICA for 2015-2017 in May 2015 within the framework of the visit paid by President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov to Seoul. Within three years KOICA will provide Uzbekistan with grants to the amount of about \$60 million for the organization of centers of professional training of personnel on technical specialities in Urgench and Kokand. Also planned is the implementation of a project on setting up an electronic library, which will unify 220 libraries into one Internet resource.

KOICA exerts its efforts on the realization of reforms in the fields of education, healthcare and state governance. About 100 specialists undergo internship in South Korea annually. An orientation course was held in August for 18 participants of the Agency's Masters' programs from among the officers of the ministries and departments.

Same month the Korean International Cooperation Agency sent a group of specialists to our country to conduct preliminary research into the feasibility study for construction of a new passenger terminal of the Tashkent International Airport. The work on the feasibility study is still in progress.

The key projects implemented by the agency include the construction of the Center for professional training in the city of Tashkent (2007-2010 – worth \$4 million); informatization of three central state archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2008-2009 – worth \$3 million); creation of the complex system of scientific-technical electronic library (2008-2010 – worth \$2 million); promotion the development of potential on monitoring the infectious diseases (2009-2010 – worth \$3 million); improvement of heat supply system in Khorezm region (2009-2010 – worth 3,5 million); improvement of water supply system of the city of Urgench (2009-2010 – worth \$1,5 million); elaboration and introduction of technology for cleaning the collector-drainage water for the purpose of its reuse (pilot project) (2009-2010 – worth \$650 thousand); sending volunteers: more than 50 volunteers have been already working in Uzbekistan in the following spheres: the Korean language, informatics, taekwondo, social insurance, etc.

The structure and modernization of teaching methods at two higher educational institutions of the country in the sphere of training professional translators and interpreters started in 2012 as part of two projects. In all, the Korean agency has spent \$1.3 million for these purposes. Its objective was to increase the potential of training translators and interpreters at the University of the World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED) and the Uzbek State University of World Languages (UzSUWL) and improve the system of computer testing at the UWED. The system based on the DOS was replaced with the multi-media web-system within the framework of the project, which facilitated raising the efficiency of administration and more accurate assessment of students' knowledge. The project also includes such components as fitting out modern simultaneous translation and conference hall cabins, and equipping laboratories with all the necessary means for raising the quality of trained specialists. Training of Uzbek specialists in Korea had a positive impact on the consolidation of translators' human resource potential. The Korean side has expressed confidence that the policy conducted by the University promotes its competitiveness and bringing up talented translators.

It has been planned within the framework of interaction between the Korean International Cooperation Agency and the UzSUWL to implement programs on the exchange of the faculty and students.

A project on planting the Uzbek-Korean forest of friendship with a total area of almost 0,5 ha for the purpose of improving the ecological environment and housing conditions of the local population within the landscaping the territories adjoining the Free Industrial Economic Zone has been in progress implemented jointly with the Administration of the Navoi region. A nursery for seedlings has been set up with use of modern Korean technologies and equipment.

KOICA Vice-President Choi Sungho visited Uzbekistan last June with whose participation the KOICA Office jointly with the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade held an Uzbek-Korean symposium on cooperation for the purpose of development devoted to discussion of future strategies of socio-economic advancement of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

First Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov, Ambassador of South Korea to Uzbekistan Lee Wook-heon, Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Population Aziz Abdukhakimov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade Shavkat Tolaganov and other high-ranking officials participated in the symposium.

The participants discussed Korea's assistance along the implementation of socio-political reforms, socio-economic development of Uzbekistan, while in the course of discussions the experts presented their proposals on the elaboration of recommendations for the development of strategic partnership, reviewed KOICA activities in Uzbekistan and the strategy of socio-economic advancement of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

(Source: «Uzbekistan Today» newspaper)

GREEN TECHNOLOGIES

Wealth Underfoot

The agricultural sector of Uzbekistan intends to significantly increase electricity production through biogas plants in the coming years. To bring the plans to fruition, the government of Uzbekistan has provided the operators and producers of biogas plants with a range of tax and customs concessions.

The dynamically developing agriculture in Uzbekistan has been actively expanding its export capacity, and diversifying its activities. These efforts inevitably require the sustainable energy supply to the farms, which not just grow various crops, but establish progressive food enterprises. The introduction of alternative energy sources and, particularly the technology of biogas production, are seen as a promising solution.

Produced out of organic waste, biogas is a mixture that contains 50-70% of methane, a combustible gas that can be used for cooking, and generation of electricity and heat. The waste,

which is generated by the production of biogas, can be used in agriculture as a high-quality fertilizer.

More than 6,000 cattle farms in Uzbekistan keep over 650,000 heads of cattle and 21 million birds, and produce more than 6 million tons of organic waste annually. Unfortunately, only 0.4% of this amount, or 23,000 tons, is recycled per year.

However, the situation promises to change dramatically in the next few years owing to the benefits. For instance, from now and on, the commercial banks will allocate loans at preferential interest rates to the initiators of projects on the construction of biogas plants at agricultural enterprises.

Besides, the authorities are currently developing a procedure, which would allow processing the allocation of land and issuance of permits for construction and installation works at a 'single window' service.

Specialists have already embarked on the development of a specialized territorial targeted program on the construction of biogas plants in livestock and poultry farms. It is expected that the program will envisage preferences for domestic producers. In particular, they will be included in the localization program, and therefore get a broad list of benefits.

Meanwhile, there is some practical experience on running biogas plants. A biogas plant, producing 25 cubic meters of biogas per day and 300 tons of bio-fertilizers per year, was built under a pilot project at the Hope farm in Khavast district of Syrdarya region.

A 15 kW power generator provides an uninterrupted power supply. The farm has undergone great changes in five years of operation of the biogas plant. Bio-fertilizers have increased the yield of crops, which have considerably increased the farm's incomes and ensured an autonomous uninterrupted power supply.

According to experts, the measures on promotion of the construction of biogas plants would create conditions for the introduction of a model of energy-efficient and low-carbon development of agricultural economy, provide a stable power supply to livestock and poultry farms, address waste management issues, problems of soil oxidation, pollution of surface and ground water, and greenhouse gas emissions.

(Source: «Uzbekistan Today» newspaper)

ECOLOGY

Back to Native Mountains

Rare birds - the Saker Falcons – were unleashed in a solemn way in the foothills of western Tian-Shan Mountains. Representatives of mass media were invited to attend the ceremony.

Nature lovers of Uzbekistan held an event in the Kurama mountain range at an altitude of 1,100 meters above sea level – natural habitat for this species of birds. Last year they united into the 'Tugan Falconry Club' society to join their efforts to save the birds in distress.

A nursery was set up for these rare birds of prey through the efforts of enthusiasts for the purpose of their rehabilitation and preservation of their population. It was turned into the "second home" for the Red Book saker and peregrine falcons – victims withdrawn from poachers. Here the falcons are under round-the-clock observation and undergo rehabilitation and heal their injuries. Then the birds are released into their natural habitat. About fifty falcons have already acquired their freedom.

The event was not quite a regular one – this time there were young falcons hatched from eggs in the nursery among those released.

It's not easy for "re-settlers" to survive under the severe natural conditions; hence the most favorable season of the year was selected for their comeback to their habitual environment, which is the autumn-winter season in Uzbekistan – time for migrating of various populations of small and medium size birds through the territory of the Republic. It's them that will turn into the objects of falcons' hunting.

All birds unleashed from the nursery are ringed. If they fall into the hands of poachers or illegally attempted to export them abroad, they will be confiscated and surely brought back to their present owners.

Special attention in Uzbekistan is attached to protection of nature. Starting with this year this is done with consideration of specifics of regional programs elaborated in detail on the preservation of biodiversity and rehabilitation of its natural resources. An important role in this matter is played by nurseries for rare and endangered wildlife species. Seven new nurseries have been set up in the Republic since the beginning of the year. This work is being carried out with the broad involvement of the public.

(Source: «Uzbekistan Today» newspaper)

Reference to the source is a must in reproducing materials