

Joint Declaration by Heads of State of Central Asia and the Federal Chancellor of Germany

On 29 September 2023, Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz welcomed the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Zhaparov, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, the Chairman of the People's Council of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, and the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Berlin for the first meeting of Heads of State of Central Asia and the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Olaf Scholz.

In an open and constructive exchange, the Leaders honoured the development of relations between the Central Asian states and Germany over the past three decades since the establishment of diplomatic relations.

They emphasized the diverse and multi-faceted bilateral cooperation, as well as the German-Central Asian cooperation within the framework of the European Union (EU) and multilateral formats. The Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen further the German-Central Asian partnership based on shared values and mutual respect and interests and to continue the high-level dialogue.

The Chancellor expressed his support for the efforts of the Central Asian states to further develop regional cooperation aimed at ensuring prosperity, peace, security and stability, sustainable development and good neighbourly relations among the states in the region.

The Chancellor appreciated the results of the Fifth Consultative Meeting of Central Asian Heads of State, which took place in Dushanbe on September 14 and welcomed next planned meeting in Kazakhstan.

The Leaders welcomed the intensification of relations between the Central Asian countries and the EU. They underlined the importance of the EU Strategy for Central Asia with its focus on resilience, prosperity and regional cooperation.

The Leaders underlined the importance of combating illicit trafficking of drugs and their precursors and will consider the possibility of deepening cooperation in these fields.

The Leaders welcomed joint activities and projects in multilateral fora, in particular those of the United Nations (UN) and UN agencies. They also welcomed the engagement of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in the region and recalled Germany's financial support to regional projects in all three dimensions of the OSCE, notably in the fields of border management, prevention of violent extremism, climate and security as well as women's empowerment.

The Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to work together for peace, security, democracy, the rule of law and sustainable development in full respect of international law. The Leaders expressed their continuing commitment to uphold the UN Charter, in particular the principles of respect for the independence, state sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, the non-use of force or threat of its use, and the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

The Leaders underlined that a peaceful resolution of conflicts, crisis management efforts, diplomacy and constructive dialogue are essential.

As with regard to any conflict, the Leaders expressed support for a just and durable peace based on respect for international law, principles of the United Nations Charter, territorial integrity, and sovereignty as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Leaders stressed the important role of nuclear-weapon-free zones as unique regional mechanisms for building of trust among neighbours, promoting peace and cooperation and strengthening the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In this context, the Leaders recalled the establishment in 2006 of the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia – the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the northern hemisphere.

The Leaders support efforts aimed at restoration of sovereign equality of member states in the IAEA and inclusion of states in regional groups of the IAEA.

Midway through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Leaders reaffirmed their shared commitment to work towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, they underlined the importance of further cooperation to strengthen the rule of law, democracy, good governance, gender equality, universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, as outlined in the framework of the 2019 EU Strategy for Central Asia.

The Leaders emphasized the significance of close exchanges on sanctions regimes, including dialogue with the EU, and of further efforts to prevent the evasion of sanctions.

The Leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment to the development of Afghanistan as a secure, peaceful, stable and prosperous country that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghanistan citizens, in particular women, girls and ethnic groups. They acknowledged the efforts of the international community, to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghanistan people in a principled manner and in accordance with international law and universally recognised norms and principles. The Leaders stressed the significance of the various EU-UNDP projects and special education programmes in the region, and the importance of financial support of these programmes by donor states and organizations.

They underlined the importance of an inclusive and representative government with the active participation of all ethnic, confessional and political groups, of respect and protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghanistan citizens as well as the restoration of the economy in achieving a lasting peace in Afghanistan.

The Leaders of the countries of Central Asia shared views on the process of the socio-economic and political reform efforts in their countries. The Chancellor informed about ongoing and initiated reforms in Germany to adapt to the new geopolitical realities with a particular focus on the areas of defence, energy, as well as energy security, and migration. The Chancellor reiterated Germany's readiness to support the reforms in Central Asia through institutional capacity building, exchange of experts and projects.

The Leaders confirmed their interest in further expanding cooperation in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, combating human trafficking and further supporting civil society. The Leaders recalled the importance of women's rights and independent media.

The Leaders stressed the importance of further developing bilateral trade and investment cooperation between Germany and the Central Asian states. They agreed to support such activities, where appropriate and applicable, through government instruments such as export credits and investment guarantees subject to the instruments' conditions. The Leaders underlined the significance of creating a favourable business environment, with particular emphasis on the rule of law, human rights, property rights and an independent judiciary. The Leaders welcomed the Business Round Table organised by the Eastern Committee of the German Economy in Berlin which took place back-to-back to the Leaders meeting, and agreed that increased exchange of business representatives and delegations create new opportunities for the economies and help foster mutually beneficial economic relations.

In order to develop constructive dialogue and promote investment, the Leaders welcomed their respective business communities organising official visits and joint events, developing ties and support operating enterprises and implementing joint projects. This also includes further cooperation with regards to tourism and tourism development.

The Leaders agreed on the continued importance of connectivity between the EU and Central Asia, including the "Middle Corridor". The Leaders underlined their objective to strengthen energy security and develop alternative energy supply routes, to promote sustainable and secure digitalisation and digital sovereignty, to improve transport and transit connections and to move towards a green, sustainable, climate- and environment-friendly economy, agriculture, energy system and e-commerce. In this context, the Leaders highlighted and welcomed the EU Global Gateway as well as the Team Europe initiatives on water, energy and climate change and on digital connectivity and look forward to their accelerated implementation. The Chancellor underlined Germany's commitment to support these initiatives through national as well as EU contributions.

The Leaders confirmed their interest in developing the “Middle Corridor” and attracting financing for infrastructure projects under the Global Gateway initiative. The Leaders welcomed the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) final report on Sustainable transport connections between Europe and Central Asia identifying the Central Trans-Caspian Network as a sustainable transport network.

The Leaders expressed their interest in further exploring possibilities for mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of migration. Part of possible partnerships would include both legal migration and readmission cooperation.

The Chancellor noted that Germany welcomed the signing of a Joint Declaration of Intent with both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and look forward to cooperate in this field with other partners. In this context, the Chancellor noted that with the upcoming reform of the Skilled Workers Immigration Act, Germany will create more work opportunities and faster procedures.

The Leaders expressed readiness to further expand cooperation in the field of professional training and improvement of human capital.

The Leaders underlined the importance of combating climate change and taking measures to adapt to its effects, as provided by the German Green Central Asia Initiative, which represents the Joint German approach to climate adaptation in Central Asia. In order to develop best practices in close cooperation with their Central Asian partners, German ministries support the key topics with diverse projects in the sectors of water resources and climate risk management, energy, agriculture but also related vocational training, research and green economy. These regional programmes form Germany’s contribution to the Team Europe Initiative “Water, Energy, Climate Change” in Central Asia. The Leaders reiterated their interest in strengthening joint actions to fully and effectively implement the Paris commitments of the Parties.

The German Chancellor welcomed the adoption of the regional program “Green Agenda for Central Asia” aimed at developing joint approaches among countries for the efficient and rational use of resources and mitigating the effects of climate change, and expressed his readiness to support its practical implementation.

The Chancellor announced an initiative to set up a multi-donor, multi-partner partnership for Central Asia, in collaboration with the EBRD, which shall address regional environmental and climate topics, such as sustainable water and land use management, glaciers preservations and regional energy cooperation. By implementing regional and cross-border projects, this partnership could also contribute to the implementation of the connectivity strategy in Central Asia.

The Chancellor recalled the participation of Germany in the projects to improve the efficient and rational use of water resources, via the introduction of water-saving technologies, as well as donor projects for climate change combating, mitigation and resilience, including those within the framework of the International Fund for the Saving of the Aral Sea (IFAS).

The Leaders emphasized the need to intensify interaction between think tanks and civil society organizations, cultural and educational cooperation, including in the field of studying and preserving historical and cultural heritage, strengthening relationships in the field of higher education and science through academic and research exchanges, as well as opportunities for professional education.

The Leaders will continue to support the teaching of the German language in the respective educational institutions of the partner country, e.g. through programmes of the Goethe-Institute, Goethe German language centres and more than 50 PASCH (Schools: Partners for the Future) schools. A total of more than 500,000 school students learn German in the region.

The Leaders expressed their readiness to cooperate on innovation and technology, and the importance of investing in the development of human capital for the sake of overall development and implementation of joint innovative projects. The Leaders noted the importance of expanding cooperation on biological safety issues and preventing the spread of dangerous infectious diseases.

Building on the overall scope and depth of their relations, the Leaders of Germany and the five Central Asian States agreed to establish a Strategic Regional Partnership between Germany and Central Asia. They concurred to consolidate and upgrade the existing cooperation between Germany and the region, focusing on four areas:

- economy, energy and natural resources;
- regional cooperation and resilience;
- climate and environment;
- people to people contacts.

The Leaders strive to enhance existing formats and platforms and aim to introduce regular consultations in these areas on the level of Senior Government Officials.

The Heads of State of Central Asia expressed their appreciation to the Chancellor for organizing the meeting in Berlin. The Leaders agreed to promote further contacts and welcomed the proposal to organize the next meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia and the Federal Chancellor of Germany in Central Asia in 2024.