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Central Asian FM's Meeting Focuses on Security, Cooperation



Upcoming Caspian Sea Meeting Vital to Sea's, Region's Future



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Central Asian Foreign Ministers meeting in Kyrgyzstan

Central Asian FM's Meeting Focuses on Security, Cooperation

Central Asian foreign ministers discussed regional security and cooperation July 21 in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Kairat Abdrakhmanov as well as the foreign ministers of Kyrgyzstan Erlan Abdyldayev, Tajikistan Sirodzhiddin Mukhriddin, Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov and Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Berdyniyaz Myatiev attended.

Abdrakhmanov highlighted Central Asia's opportunity to lead on nuclear non-proliferation.

"Central Asia is a zone free of nuclear weapons, and our region has the opportunity to take the lead on this issue. We need to intensify cooperation between all the world's nuclear weapon-free zones," said Abdrakhmanov, adding Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiative to hold the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones Summit was aimed at securing Central Asia's role as nucleus of cooperation between nuclear weapon-free zones.

He also noted that the ministers' meeting served as a practical implementation of the first protocol reached at the March 2018 Central Asian heads of state meeting in Astana.

Abdrakhmanov also supported Turkmenistan as chair of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the only heads-of-state-level institutional dialogue platform in Central Asia.

The gathering also discussed transnational threats and praised participants' cooperation with and efforts toward stabilising Afghanistan. Abdrakhmanov said the Regional Conference "Women Empowerment in Afghanistan" in Astana in September will be important and offered to organise a high-level Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe meeting on Afghanistan in 2019.

The ministers also praised the processes for international legal registration of state borders between Central Asian countries and the intensification of interregional and cross-border cooperation.

They urged an increase in regional cooperation to combat international terrorism and extremism, illicit drug trafficking, transnational organised crime and other regional security issues, including within international and regional organisations.

The ministers also called for strengthening regional trade and economic ties and noted that improving transit infrastructure will bring more freight traffic through the region.

The ministers also discussed the need to establish long-term water resources cooperation that considers the needs of all countries in the region.

They also pledged continued cooperation on education, culture, art, science, tourism and other sectors.

The foreign ministers said they hold similar positions on regional issues and that foreign ministerial meetings promote cooperation. They called for regular inter-ministerial consultations and expert meetings to prepare for the Central Asian high-level consultation meeting on the eve of Nauryz in 2019 in Uzbekistan.

The ministers adopted a joint statement affirming they discussed regional cooperation, security issues, borders, transport and transit communications, use of water and energy resources, trade-economic and cultural-humanitarian cooperation, including interaction of Central Asian countries within international organisations.

They also stressed the importance of the upcoming March 2019 regular consultation meeting of the heads of state of Central Asia in Tashkent.

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Fifth Caspian summit is to take place in Aktau (Kazakhstan) on Aug.12

Upcoming Caspian Sea Meeting Vital to Sea's, Region's Future

Given the instability and divisions across our world today, it is hardly surprising little international attention has been paid to the challenges of the Caspian Sea or the fifth summit next month between the countries which border it. After all, it might be the world's largest inland water body, but few could point to it on a map without difficulty.

An editorial in The Astana Times recently noted this lack of attention to the meeting of the leaders of the five Caspian Sea nations in Aktau does not make it any less important. The meeting will significantly impact the future of this huge water body and the wider region by agreeing for the first time on a legal basis to resolve differences and encourage cooperation.

Not long ago, the need for such a legal basis was not so vital. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Iran was the only other country bordering the Caspian, so finding solutions to potential issues was relatively straightforward. But now there are five with Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan joining Russia and Iran as sovereign territories who have a say in how the Caspian is managed.

It is easy to see where there might be differences. For land-locked nations, such as Kazakhstan, the Caspian is a vital transport route. As a self-contained water body without ocean access, any pollutants flowing into it from rivers and industrial operations are trapped with potentially damaging impacts on the entire eco-system and health of local citizens.

The stakes are higher still because of the vast oil and gas reserves under the sea bed. The Caspian Sea basin contains some of the world's biggest fields although harnessing their potential has required tremendous engineering ingenuity. But with such wealth, there is always a risk of tensions and environmental damage.

The potential for damage is not restricted to oil spills or chemical pollution. It might seem fanciful to believe the survival of such a huge water body – approximately the size of Japan and containing approximately 40 percent of all the world's lake water – might be threatened, but the same would once have been said of the Aral Sea, which has shrunk to a fraction of its former size within two generations.

The Caspian Sea has regularly expanded and shrunk over many centuries, but there is evidence that higher temperatures caused by climate change have reduced its depth over the last two decades. If this continues, vision and cooperation to counter this threat will be needed as it will to overcome other shared challenges, such as agreeing on access and usage, tackling pollution and harnessing resources fairly and sustainably.

Removing the barriers to these goals has not been easy, particularly without consensus on the legal status of the Caspian itself. Some countries argued that the international rules governing seas and oceans did not automatically apply to an inland lake. Each, too, had its own national interests to protect with divisions over boundaries, mineral resources, demilitarisation and security.

Step by step, progress has been made with Kazakhstan playing a major part in the process. It was in Almaty more than 20 years ago that the first steps were taken to find common ground over the Caspian's legal status. This has been followed by important measures in which Kazakhstan had a detailed involvement on the protection of the marine environment, bolstering security and the creation of a plan for emergency cooperation in the event of environmental or security emergencies.

Kazakhstan is party to 17 international treaties covering the Caspian Sea, nearly half of which have been agreed between all five countries. But an agreement on the sea's legal status, which should be signed in Aktau in a fortnight, will finally provide the basis for disputes to be settled quickly and enhance cooperation. It may not receive global attention today but, given the importance of the region and the role the Caspian Sea plays within it, historians in the future may reach a different conclusion about its long-term significance.

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In Focus: Foreign Policy Priorities

Strengthening UN & Int'l Security



Kazakhstan to present in 2019 first national review on implementation of UN Sustainable Development Goals

Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Ashikbayev participated in the recent High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the United Nations and in a side event on strengthening cooperation in Central Asia through the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Ashikbayev reaffirmed Kazakhstan's commitment to implementing the SDGs at the national and international levels and noted the importance of sustainable development to security. Kazakhstan plans to produce the first voluntary national report on the implementation of 17 SDGs in 2019.

"It is important to preserve the achievements already made at the national level in the implementation of the SDGs and, after the completion of the first cycle of national voluntary reviews, to continue their implementation through regional interaction among the countries of Central Asia," he said.

The deputy foreign minister also invited UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary Di Carlo to a Sept. 5 international conference in Astana on the empowerment of women in Afghanistan.

At the meeting with UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Liu Zhenmin, the focus was a new impetus to regional cooperation among Central Asian countries and Afghanistan with the participation of UN structures.

The SDGs, officially known as the "Transformation of Our World: An Agenda for Sustainable Development for the period to 2030," are a set of goals for international cooperation that replaced the Millennium Development Goals at the end of 2015. These goals are to be reached between 2015 to 2030. The final document contains 17 global goals and 169 related tasks. www.mfa.gov.kz

Welcoming Investments



Contracts signed with foreign investors in 2018 total more than \$17 billion

According to the Ministry of Investments and Development, investment agreements on 69 projects totaling \$17.1 billion have been reached between Kazakhstan and foreign companies since the beginning of 2018.

China accounts for most of the agreements with 12 projects totaling \$8.4 billion. Nine agreements have been signed with Turkish investors totaling \$1.2 billion and eight projects with United Kingdom investors totaling \$3.1 billion. Agreements have also been reached for six projects with French investors totaling \$425 million.

Other agreements include six projects with U.S. investors totaling \$172 million, five projects with German investors totaling \$300 million

and five projects with UAE investors totaling \$1.4 billion. Agreements for three projects totaling \$325 million were also signed with Russian investors. Agreements with other countries total 15 projects for \$1.9 billion.

Most of the investments are in the mining and metallurgy, chemical and agro-industrial sectors. Other sectors include tourism, retail and biotechnology.

Projects in the Almaty region attracted the most investment with the least amount of investment going to the Akmola region. www.liter.kz

Culture & Identity Modernisation



Astana Opera presents open-air performance in Borovoye

Astana Opera performers presented "Birzhan-Sara" July 14 in Borovoye. It was the first open-air event dedicated to the capital's 20th anniversary. The Astana Opera directors believed the forest acoustics would bring new life to the performance.

The choice of Borovoye was meant to make the production more authentic and showcase the Kazakh countryside. The production included elements of Borovoye's natural setting as well as original elements of the theater performance, including a waterfall and dramatic pictures.

The performance included a multidimensional interpretation of the characters' images. Viewers got to know the story of Birzhan and Sara, a love that did not find a place on Earth. The opera traditionally ends with the death of the protagonist, but the directors decided to show the audience that the love sacrificed was not in vain.

International competition laureate Meir Baines played the part of Birzhan, while Kazakh Honoured Artist and State Premium Laureate Maira Mukhamedkyzy performed the part of Sara.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who is an avid opera lover, attended the performance. www.astanatimes.com



Also In The News...



- **Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev**

- Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke July 23 about bilateral cooperation issues, as well as the regional and international agenda. They also considered the upcoming meeting schedule, including the Aug. 12 session within the Fifth Caspian Summit in Aktau.

- Nazarbayev phoned Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev on his birthday July 24, wishing him good health, prosperity and new successes. The leaders noted the developing cooperation between the countries, as well as expanding ties in Central Asia. www.akorda.kz

- **Thousands commemorate Denis Ten at memorial services worldwide**

Thousands of people attended the July 21 funeral services in Almaty of late Kazakh figure skating medallist Denis Ten. The services were held two days after he was fatally stabbed in Almaty at age 25. Ten's 2013 World Championships silver medal and 2014 Sochi Olympics bronze medal were the first for Kazakhstan in figure skating. Ten died from the stab wounds in a hospital following a confrontation with car thieves in downtown Almaty July 19. Two men have been arrested in connection with the stabbing and one suspect has confessed to the crime. The ceremony took place at Almaty's Baluan Sholak Sports Palace, which was where the 17-year-old Ten won 2011 Asian Winter Games gold and silver medals. The 5,000-seat sports complex was at full capacity during the funeral services, and thousands more waited outside the facility to pay their respects at Ten's open casket. Kazakh Minister of Culture and Sport Arystanbek Muhamediuly opened the ceremony by expressing President Nursultan Nazarbayev's condolences to Ten's parents. "Kazakhstan and the entire world are mourning today," said Muhamediuly. "We have lost a person who wanted to make the world a kinder and better place." Almaty residents held back tears during the moment of silence and when placing flowers at the foot of his casket and the table displaying his medals. They held banners reading "Forgive us, we couldn't save you" and listened to "She Won't Be Mine," an original song written and recorded by Ten. Memorial services also took place in Taraz, Shymkent, Karaganda, Atyrau, Aktau and Pavlodar. Kazakh embassies in the Czech Republic, Russia, Latvia, Japan and Korea welcomed the public to lay flowers at Ten's portrait in front of their buildings. People weathered extreme heat to fill out eight books of condolences with their heartfelt messages at the Kazakh embassy in Tokyo. www.astanatimes.com

- **Foreign Minister meets with TurkPA and Turkic Academy leaders**

Kazakh Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov met with Turkic-speaking Countries (TurkPA) Parliamentary Assembly Secretary-General Altynbek Mamayusupov and International Turkic Academy President Darkhan Kydyrali in preparation for the sixth Cooperation Council for Turkic Speaking Countries (CCTSC) summit scheduled for September. "The President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev attaches great importance to the issues of Turkic cooperation, which is entering a new stage of its development. TurkPA is one of the pillars of Turkic integration and in recent years has become an internationally recognised institution of parliamentary diplomacy of Turkic-speaking countries," said Abdrakhmanov. He added there is a need for TurkPA to cooperate with international organisations, such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) parliamentary assemblies. Mamayusupov talked about TurkPA's current activities and plans to celebrate the organisation's 10th anniversary. He spoke about preparations for the assembly's plenary session jubilee scheduled for this fall in Turkey. "The secretariat of the organisation is actively working to harmonise the legislation of TurkPA member states, which should contribute to further Turkic integration. Kazakhstan is the initiator of the promotion of the ideas of our peoples' rapprochement and, in this context, Astana is rightly considered the pride of the Turkic world," he said. Abdrakhmanov and Kydyrali discussed expanding research in Turkology and general Turkic history and the need to institutionalise the academy. www.mfa.gov.kz

- **Kazakh National Guard Chief Command Delegation visits Turkey**

The Kazakh National Guard Chief Command Delegation, headed by Commander-in-Chief Lieutenant-General Ruslan Zhaksylykov, discussed bilateral cooperation July 15-18 in Turkey. The Turkish side expressed its willingness to supply clothing, weapons, ammunition

and special means samples to the Kazakh National Guard. The guests visited the AVS, Gazi Fishk and Nurol Technologies military-industrial complexes and gendarmerie headquarters operational centre, where it viewed possible ways to protect the state border using reconnaissance and unmanned strike aerial vehicles, as well as mobile systems for recognising identities and vehicles integrated into a single information space. Turkish servicemen also organised an exhibit in the criminal centre of special operations support equipment, where the Kazakh delegation was intrigued by special engineering equipment, robots and mine explosive products. One of the important moments in the negotiations was resolving questions on military education and specialists' professional development and as a result, the number of Kazakh cadets trained at the gendarmerie school will be increased to eight per year. An agreement was reached to continue training graduates of Turkish military educational institutions sent from the Kazakh National Guard to Turkish academies. The number of courses conducted with specialists (snipers, explosives, divers and others) will be increased for special purposes based on Turkish educational institutions. During the meeting with the Turkish Minister of Internal Affairs and Gendarmerie Commander-in-Chief, the Kazakh side asked to join its national guard with the Association of Gendarmerie and Police Forces of Europe and the Mediterranean (FIEP). The move would allow guardsmen to study the special unit tactics of association members, conduct drills on their training and material resources and increase the units' material and technical equipment. www.inform.kz

- **Central Asia, US discuss economy and ecology**

Representatives of Central Asian countries and the U.S. participated in economic and ecology working groups as part of C5+1. The American economic delegation was led by Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Manisha Singh; the environmental delegation was headed by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Henry Enscher. The groups discussed developing transport corridors, increasing business competitiveness, alternative energy sources, adapting to climate change and promising areas for further cooperation. They considered ways to ensure energy security and efficient use of energy resources and the possibility of developing the Central Asian electricity market. Tourism will also be included on the C5+1 agenda. The parties agreed to strengthen measures to boost cooperation on economic issues and renewable energy sources. www.mfa.gov.kz