



HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN KOREA AND THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This article analyzes the history of the formation and development of diplomatic, political, economic, and cultural relations between the Republic of Korea and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The main areas of cooperation between the two countries during the years of independence, trade and economic ties, investment projects and cooperation in the field of education will be covered. The current state and prospects of bilateral relations, which have been elevated to the level of strategic partnership, will also be scientifically evaluated.

Keywords: Republic of Korea, Republic of Uzbekistan, diplomatic relations, strategic partnership, economic cooperation, investment, trade relations, cultural exchange, educational cooperation, international relations, Korean diaspora, Central Asia.

In today's complex situation, world peace, security, and stability depend on the strengthening of mutual trust, solidarity, and friendly ties between states and nations. Only the positive development of socio-political, cultural-economic relations can lead humanity, which has already grown accustomed to living in a global environment and integrated conditions, out of today's critical situation. Under the leadership of President Islam Karimov, our country, which emerged on the world stage as an independent state in 1991, is boldly and resolutely moving forward along this path, pursuing a policy based on the principles of equality, friendship, and solidarity. Until now, our country has repeatedly declared its commitment to resolving any conflicts, contradictions, and crises through peaceful means based on universal human criteria and international legal norms, and this position is consistently defended.

After gaining independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan became an equal member of the world community. In the field of foreign policy, independent Uzbekistan emphasizes close cooperation with all countries of the rapidly developing world, including the Republic of Korea. The Republic of Korea was one of the first to recognize the independence of Uzbekistan, that is, at the end of 1991, diplomatic relations were established on January 29, 1992. Over the past 30 years, 17 high-level meetings have been held between the heads of state of both sides. During each of these meetings, the parties reached important agreements on the development of political, trade, economic, cultural, and humanitarian ties. In order to further strengthen relations between Uzbekistan and the Republic of Korea, a Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership was signed in 2006.

When it comes to the political relations between the two countries, it is first necessary to emphasize the sincere friendship between the heads of state. This friendship began during the years when South Korean President Lee Myung-bak was the mayor of Seoul. In 2008, after winning the presidential election and assuming the post of head of state, Lee Myung-bak invited the leader of Uzbekistan as a high-ranking guest to the inauguration ceremony. In May 2009, the leaders of Uzbekistan and South Korea met in Tashkent. Each meeting of the heads of state further strengthened the ties between the two countries. Over the past four years, relations

between Uzbekistan and South Korea have reached a qualitatively new level, based on a rich and meaningful political dialogue between the leaders of the two countries. Uzbekistan and South Korea are geographically distant from each other, but they are close in spirit and share common goals on the path to peace and development. It is known from history that our countries have exchanged visits since the time of the Great Silk Road. A vivid example of this can be seen in the murals preserved in the Afrosiyob Museum in Samarkand, which depict the reception ceremony by the ruler of Samarkand in the mid-7th century of an ancient Korean ambassador from Joseon. Our countries are reliable, time-tested strategic partners. As a result of contacts at the highest level and common aspirations, cooperation between our countries is consistently developing in all areas. The state visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the Republic of Korea on November 22-25, 2017, raised bilateral relations to a qualitatively new level. On April 18, 2019, the President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in paid a state visit to Uzbekistan. During this visit, a Joint Declaration on a Special Strategic Partnership between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Korea was signed, important agreements were reached, and contracts worth more than \$12 billion were signed. They cover sectors such as energy, oil and gas, chemical, mining, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, textile and light industry, transport and logistics, infrastructure, ICT, and digital medicine. In particular, the agreement on transferring the "Angren" economic zone to the management of the "Incheon" free economic zone and establishing the production of popular medicines deserves attention.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the results of high-level meetings held over the past four years, the results of cooperation in new areas, and contacts within international organizations.

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The Republic of Korea was one of the first to recognize Uzbekistan's independence in late 1991, and diplomatic relations were established on January 29, 1992. Over the past 29 years, 17 high-level meetings have been held between the heads of state of both sides. During each of these meetings, the parties reached important agreements on the development of political, trade, economic, cultural, and humanitarian ties.

When discussing the political relations between the two countries, it is first necessary to emphasize the sincere friendship between the heads of state. This friendship began during the years when South Korean President Lee Myung-bak was the mayor of Seoul. In 2008, after winning the presidential election and assuming the post of head of state, Lee Myung-bak invited the leader of Uzbekistan as a high-ranking guest to the inauguration ceremony. In May 2009, the leaders of Uzbekistan and South Korea met in Tashkent. Each meeting of the heads of state further strengthened the ties between the two countries.

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The total volume of intergovernmental agreements and commercial contracts signed following mutual state visits in 2017 and 2019 amounted to \$22 billion. In 2019, relations between our countries were raised to the level of a "special strategic partnership."



On October 30, 2020, at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev participated in the Second International Forum of Northern Economic Cooperation, held in Seoul via videoconference.

In his speech, the head of our state emphasized that in the context of the difficult situation in the world and the global crisis, it is precisely such multilateral dialogue that creates opportunities for effectively countering new challenges and threats, ensuring stability, prosperity and sustainable development of our countries.

In this regard, Shavkat Mirziyoyev touched upon the most important aspects of international politics and prospects for regional cooperation.

It was proposed to continue joint work in key areas, including the development of effective vaccines and serums, systems for rapid and accurate diagnosis of diseases on the basis of a pharmaceutical cluster created jointly with Korean companies.

In addition, the importance of creating modern laboratories and modernizing border sanitary control points, training highly qualified doctors, organizing enterprises for the disposal of medical waste, and implementing an integrated system for monitoring and early forecasting the epidemiological situation in the region was noted.

The President of Uzbekistan emphasized that he considers the Republic of Korea as one of the key partners in bringing digital and "green" technologies to our country.

On January 28, 2021, President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev held a meeting with President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in via videoconference.

The heads of state emphasized the need to further strengthen the special strategic partnership and comprehensively expand cooperation in bilateral relations.

Current and prospective cooperation programs in higher, vocational, and preschool education, healthcare, digitalization, and the restoration of cultural heritage sites were reviewed.

It was announced that up to \$400 million in investments will be utilized this year as part of projects implemented with the participation of South Korean partners.

In addition, as a new area of cooperation between the two countries, 55 new projects worth more than \$3.4 billion will be implemented in high-tech industries, including energy, oil and gas, chemistry and petrochemistry, pharmaceuticals, processing industry, agriculture, infrastructure modernization, transport and logistics, tourism and many others.

To date, 14 rounds of political consultations have been held between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries (the last one was held on November 5, 2020, via videoconference). On April 17–18, 2018, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, Kang Kyung-hwa, paid an official visit to Uzbekistan. Since November 2007, the annual "Republic of Korea – Central Asia" Cooperation Forum has been operating. In November 2020, Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Kamilov participated in the 13th meeting of the Forum.

In cooperation within the framework of international organizations, the Republic of Uzbekistan has supported all initiatives of the Republic of Korea to date. In particular, it supported the candidates nominated to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2018–2021), ECOSOC (2016), the Human Rights Council (2013–2015 and 2016–2018), the Commission on International Law (2017–2021), the UN Commission on International Trade Law (2013–2019 and 2019–2025), the Council of the International Telecommunication Union (2010–2014, 2014–2018, and 2018–2022), the Director of the



Telecommunication Standardization Bureau of the Council of the International Telecommunication Union (2014), and membership in the Executive Board of the World Meteorological Organization (2011, 2015, 2019).

In turn, official Seoul also supported and co-authored two resolutions adopted in 2018 at the initiative of Uzbekistan within the framework of the UN General Assembly, namely "Strengthening Regional and International Cooperation to Ensure Peace, Stability, and Sustainable Development in the Central Asian Region" and "Education and Religious Tolerance." South Korea also supported Uzbekistan's candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council for 2021–2023.

Regarding the contractual and legal foundations of cooperation, 181 documents have been signed between the republics, including 4 interstate, 53 intergovernmental, 75 interdepartmental, and 49 other documents (international documents that do not have the status of an international treaty).

The Republic of Korea holds a leading position among Uzbekistan's trade partners in the Asia-Pacific region. In particular, in accordance with the trade agreement signed in 1992, a most-favored-nation preference regime has been established between the countries. The growth of trade and economic relations between the two countries from year to year is characterized by the fact that the relations between the parties have a solid "foundation".

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