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Tajikistan-European Union relations going forward

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Les Fonds Baillet Latour « Union européenne-Russie » et « Union européenne-Chine » ont été créées dans les années 2000 au sein de l'UCL grâce au Fonds InBev-Baillet Latour. Elles ont pour objectif de stimuler l'étude des relations entre l'Union Européenne, la Russie et la Chine. Les Chaires constituent un pôle de recherche et d'enseignement dont l'objectif est de renforcer l'expertise sur l'action extérieure de l'UE, de promouvoir la connaissance de la Chine et de la Russie comme acteurs internationaux et d'étendre la recherche sur les grandes puissances, en particulier les BRICS. Exerçant leurs activités au sein de la Faculté des sciences économiques, sociales, politiques et de communication et de l'Institut de sciences politiques Louvain-Europe, les Chaires collaborent régulièrement avec leurs homologues de la KULeuven.



Les recherches du CECRI sont menées au sein de l'Institut de Science politique Louvain-Europe (ISPOLE) de l'Université catholique de Louvain. Elles portent sur la géopolitique, la politique étrangère et l'étude des modes de prévention ou de résolution des crises et des conflits.

L'analyse des éléments déclencheurs des conflits et des instruments de leur gestion - sanctions et incitants économiques commémoyens de politique étrangère; crises et interventions humanitaires; rôle de la mémoire dans un processus de réconciliation, par exemple - est combinée à l'étude empirique de différends internationaux et de processus de paix spécifiques.

One of the achievements of the Republic of Tajikistan (the RT) in the years since independence is to have adopted a sovereign approach to foreign relations based on an open-door policy. In his address to the Supreme Assembly of the Republic of Tajikistan, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, emphasised that “The essence and objectives of the open-door policy, which has helped to increase the number of countries with which we maintain friendly relations, will remain the same to strengthen cooperation between Tajikistan and all the countries of the world.”¹ The farsighted, balanced, constructive and pragmatic foreign policy of the RT makes it possible to diversify foreign political and economic relations and thus attain the strategic objectives of ensuring food security, energy independence and the development of transport and communication connections.

Cooperation between the RT and the European Union (EU) is of particular importance in the republic’s external relations.² Despite the short history of interaction between the RT and the EU, relations between the two can be characterised in terms of the stable dynamics of positive development, and, in recent years, have seen extensive practical content. It is gratifying to see that the members of the academic community of both the RT and the EU have taken note of this trend.

1. EXPERT VIEWS ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE RT AND THE EU

Recently, various aspects of cooperation between the RT and the EU have been the subject of research by both Tajik and European academics. Although they lack a comprehensive and



integrated approach, the authors of academic publications are making efforts worthy of support to analyse different aspects of EU-RT cooperation. First, two works by the Tajik researchers B.T. Nazirov and J.T. Hamidov are worthy of note.³ The former researched the international legal framework of cooperation between the RT and the EU and carried out an in-depth analysis of the existing international legal instruments regulating cooperation and partnership between the RT and the EU. Hamidov set himself the task of researching the principal objectives and theoretical and methodological problems of the relationship between the RT and the EU. The author explored and summarised the issues related to the establishment of bilateral ties and the peculiar nature of their development, while identifying specific areas of cooperation and partnership perspectives.

It should also be noted that, while cooperation between the RT and the EU only really began to “flourish” in the period after 2010, two scholarly works (and several other publications)⁴ were published in academic circles in 2011. In our view, the attempt by D.A. Umerov⁵ and S.A. Solikhodjaev⁶ to identify the general and special aspects of current RT-EU relations is of interest in this context. In particular, the authors of these articles analyse bilateral cooperation in the framework of the EU’s New Strategy for Central Asia for the 2007-2013 period, as well as their cooperation on security issues, countering international terrorism, religious extremism, and illicit drug trafficking.

Unlike their Tajik counterparts, European experts have devoted limited attention to the analysis of the partnership between the RT and the EU. Edited by Alexander Varkovich, the book “European Union and Central Asia” is a notable work in the field.⁷ It deals with the EU policy towards five Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in the light of the EU Strategy in Central Asia. The author focuses on the overall strategic directions of the Strategy and, in particular, on an analysis of the concrete political obligations and issues, exploring the extent to which they are adequately developed and implemented in a manner capable of contributing to the strengthening of regional security and stability.

It is worth mentioning that this is not the first attempt by European analysts to elucidate current and future EU policy in Central Asia. In 2008, a compilation of academic articles edited by Neil Melvin

under the title “Engaging Central Asia. The European Union’s New Strategy in the Heart of Eurasia” was published.⁸ Our attention was drawn to the article in this compilation by Matteo Fumagalli – “Tajikistan and the EU: From Post-Conflict Reconstruction to Critical Engagement”. The article deals with the EU Strategy for Central Asia for the 2007-2013 period, which identifies security and stability as key strategic interests in the region. It stresses the important role of the EU’s Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) and the Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP). Furthermore, it focuses on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between Tajikistan and the EU and outlines the country’s perspectives for economic development and social and political modernisation.

In our view, while acknowledging BOMCA and CADAP as key elements of the EU partnership with Central Asian countries in the interests of regional security, the author should also have emphasised the special geographical position of Tajikistan and the country’s role in countering terrorism, extremism and illicit drug trafficking in the region. In this context, the work would have been enhanced by a comparative analysis of the funds allocated by the European Union for the abovementioned Programmes in Central Asia.

An analysis of the publications by the expert community leads to the following conclusion: a more in-depth study is required of the cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the European Union – which is gaining momentum – one which, on the basis of an elucidation of the partnership experience, makes it possible to determine new vectors of interaction.

2. THE FORMATIVE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RT AND THE EU

After gaining independence, establishing and enhancing cooperation with other States, as well as with international organisations (including the European Union), became of particular relevance for the Republic of Tajikistan. The formation and development of the international legal



personality of the Republic of Tajikistan was followed by its recognition by international community, as well as by international organisations, in particular the EU.

The European Community's (EC) decision to recognise the Republic of Tajikistan on 16 January 1992 launched the establishment of official relations between the EC and the RT. This resulted in the Agreement between the RT and the EC on trade in textile products on 16 July 1993, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the RT, the EC and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) on 11 October 2004, the Interim Agreement between the EC, the EAEC, and the RT on trade and trade issues in 2004, the EU Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia for 2007-2013, and Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) on 2 August 1991 among others. These and other bilateral instruments established a solid legal and contractual basis for relations between the RT and the EU over the years.

The process of building an international legal framework for cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the European Union came in several stages:

- The initial stage – the Agreement on Trade, Commercial and Economic Cooperation between the USSR and the European Community from 1989 included Tajikistan as a Soviet Republic engaged in the process of implementing cooperation with the EU. Later, on the basis of acts adopted in the framework of the CIS and in agreement with the EC, Tajikistan joined the abovementioned treaty, thus entering into contractual legal relations with the EU as an independent subject of international law;
- Establishment of a contractual legal mechanism of cooperation between Tajikistan and the EU – the PCA between Tajikistan and the EU of 2004, which currently serves as the legal basis defining the entire spectrum of bilateral cooperation between the two parties. The principles and objectives of cooperation between Tajikistan and the EU, which are in accordance with the norms of international law, were laid down in the Agreement. In addition, special principles creating certain trade and policy regimes between them, in particular the regime of non-discrimination and that of most-favoured nation, were agreed upon.

The international legal instruments which act as the foundation for cooperation between the RT

and the EU can be divided into the following groups on the basis of such criteria as the subject-matter of the regulation and the degree to which they are binding.

The first group comprises legally binding instruments, which regulate both cooperation in general as well as in specific spheres (PCA). The relevant bodies of interaction between the parties, which will be considered below, were established on the basis of these instruments.

The second group of official instruments of cooperation between the RT and the EU consists of acts of a political and declaratory nature (EU Strategy for Central Asian countries). Although these acts do not have a direct regulatory impact, they often contribute to the implementation of contractual norms.

It is important to note that the existing bilateral legal instruments between the Republic of Tajikistan and the European Union are characterised by subject-matter diversity and are aimed at regulating bilateral relations in various spheres – economic, political, cultural, social, environmental, humanitarian, etc.

The “Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Tajikistan and the European Union” of 18 October 18, 2004 is one such example. The Agreement constitutes the legal basis of EU-Tajikistan relations – it identifies the bodies and mechanisms for and spheres of bilateral cooperation. The uniqueness of this instrument lies in the fact that Tajikistan has no comparable agreements with any other States or international organisations. The Agreement establishes the legal regimes for commercial exchanges and company registration in each other’s territory. It also entrenches the principles of non-discrimination against each other’s citizens, wage earners, and economic entities. The Agreement makes it an obligation for Tajikistan to bring its legislation more closely into line with the EU law.

It is noteworthy that the EU Strategy for Central Asian countries for 2007-2013 is not binding for third countries from a legal point of view, but it acts as a framework for the implementation of bilateral or multilateral agreements (for example, the PCAs between the EU and certain Central Asian countries). Although the Strategy is in essence only a declaration of intent, it has a great political significance, since it reflects the elevated political and legal status of the European Union.

An analysis of the fundamental instruments of the EU (EU Strategy for Partnership with



the Central Asian countries; Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS); the Programme of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO); Disaster Preparedness Programme (DIPECHO) for Central Asia; Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA); Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP); "Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia" Programme (TRACECA)) prompts the conclusion that they are international legal acts generally covering cooperation between the EU and Tajikistan and constituting the foundation for cooperation between the EU and the States of the region.

An important step in putting into effect cooperation between the RT and the EU was the adoption of the PCA (11 October 2004), which entered into force on 1 January 2010 after its ratification by all Member States of the EU. Since then, the following principal institutions for bilateral cooperation have been officially established: the Cooperation Council, the Cooperation Committee and the Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Committee. With it a qualitatively new, active and more productive period of development of political, trade and economic, investment and humanitarian ties between the Republic of Tajikistan and the European Union began.

3. KEY MECHANISMS FOR STABLE RT-EU RELATIONS

HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE

The period following the formal entry into force of the PCA between the Republic of Tajikistan and the European Union on 1 January 2010 saw an intensive development of bilateral dialogue at the highest political level covering the whole spectrum of political, economic, trade, investment and humanitarian matters, as well as issues in the areas of security and financial and technical support.

President E. Rahmon's official visit to the headquarters of the European Parliament (EP) in Strasbourg on 5-6 June 2011 launched Tajik-European contacts at the highest level. During the visit, President E. Rahmon met with the President of the EP, Jerzy Buzek, and the heads of the EP's committees. During his conversation with Tajik President, Jerzy Buzek noted that "Tajikistan, situated in the heart of the Asian continent and bordering with Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan,

has a strategic significance in the region and the European Union is interested in the development of relations with Tajikistan.”⁹

On 9-12 April 2013, President E. Rahmon visited the EU institutions once again. During the visit, the Tajik President met top EU officials:

- High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton
- President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy
- President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso
- Commissioner responsible for development, Andris Piebalgs
- President of the EP, Martin Schulz

Those meetings covered a wide range of matters concerning cooperation between Tajikistan and the European Union. Great satisfaction was expressed with regard to cooperation at the highest level between Tajikistan and the EU institutions (including the EP), the effective performance of the Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, and implementation of the EU Strategy for cooperation with the Central Asian countries for 2007-2013. After meeting with President Rahmon, the President of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, said that “We have discussed the economic situation in the country as well. In this respect, I have congratulated the President for the recent accession to the World Trade Organisation, an important milestone greatly supported by the European Union. I strongly believe that it will serve as a major engine for the country and the region’s economic development and reform.”¹⁰

After a bilateral meeting, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Ashton expressed the EU’s strong support for “Tajikistan in dealing with regional security challenges including those linked to Afghanistan.”¹¹ The President of the EP, Martin Schulz, expressed interest in enhancing cooperation in the economic and energy spheres. It was stressed that “energy production and utilisation of hydro resources” were among the key themes of the meeting.¹²

The President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy in turn noted that “the EU cooperates productively with Tajikistan towards the fulfilment of many social projects. The EU will continue to promote the implementation of its new strategy for Central Asian countries and of its agreement on cooperation with these countries.” He supported Tajikistan’s position in “ensuring the democratisation



of society”.¹³ After meeting E. Rahmon, the Commissioner responsible for development, Andris Piebalgs, taking account of Tajikistan’s strategic location and its key role in Central Asia, expressed the readiness and interest of the Commission in supporting the country. Piebalgs emphasised that he would spare no effort to ensure practical implementation of the agreements reached in the course of a number of meetings at the highest level between Tajikistan and the EU over those few days.¹⁴

Under the chairmanship of the MEP Struan Stevenson, the “New Investment Opportunities in Tajikistan’s Energy Sector” forum was held within the framework of the visit of 11 April 2013. President Rahmon outlined the investment opportunities in the economy of Tajikistan and the favourable political and legal conditions for entrepreneurs and investors. Detailed information was also provided concerning major investment opportunities in various sectors of the Tajik economy, including hydropower, oil and gas, manufacturing, mining and the processing of mineral resources, the production and processing of agricultural products, etc.

The General Secretary of the Energy Charter, Urban Rusnák, the President of the company Tethys Petroleum, David Robson, and the First Vice-President of the company Total, Michael Borrell, expressed their support for further development of cooperation and investment opportunities in the energy sector of Tajikistan and emphasised the value of the region’s development.¹⁵

It is also worth noting the intensification of visits by high-ranking Brussels-based officials to Tajikistan. Over the period in question, Tajikistan was visited by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, the EU Special Representative for Central Asia, top officials of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Investment Bank (EIB). This is a clear indication of the EU’s genuine interest in expanding and deepening bilateral relations in the political, economic, trade, investment, financial, banking and humanitarian fields. EU leaders constantly emphasise the fact that Tajikistan is a reliable partner in strengthening regional security and countering terrorism, extremism, illicit drug trafficking and contemporary threats and challenges in Central Asia.

THE EU-TAJIKISTAN COOPERATION COUNCIL

In 2010, in order to give effect to the PCA between Tajikistan and the EU and to address the issues of bilateral cooperation in a timely fashion, the EU-Tajik Cooperation Council was established at foreign ministry level.

To date, four rounds of meetings of the EU-Tajik Cooperation Council have been held. The first three took place in Brussels (13 October 2010, 27 February 2012 and 1 October 2013). The latest meeting of the Council was held in Luxembourg on 20 October 2014. At that meeting, both sides exchanged views on a wide range of bilateral and international matters of mutual interest, and in particular a range of topics related to the current state and development of EU-Tajik relations in the fields of the economy, energy, culture, education, as well as effective implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia and the programmes implemented within the framework of that Strategy. A joint statement greeting the European Commission's decision on the adoption of a multi-annual indicative programme within the framework of the new strategy of the EU for Central Asia totalling €251 million was signed at the end of this fourth meeting of the EU-Tajikistan Cooperation Council.¹⁶ Under this programme, €1 billion has been allocated for the Central Asian countries: 60% has been allocated to bilateral projects and 40% to regional projects, to be implemented in Tajikistan. Therefore, out of the abovementioned total grant aid for Central Asia, approximately 1/3 will be target towards social and economic development in Tajikistan. It is worth underlining that, within the framework of the previous Strategy for 2007-2013, €66 million was allocated to Tajikistan. These figures highlight the EU's growing commitment to Tajikistan.¹⁷

THE EU-TAJIKISTAN COOPERATION COMMITTEE

The EU-Tajikistan Cooperation Committee was set up in 2011 to strengthen and develop mutually beneficial cooperation in economic and trade spheres, as well as to attract EU investment and new technology into Tajik economy. During the period under review, four meetings of the Cooperation Committee were held (16 March 2011 in Dushanbe, 6 November 2012 in Brussels, 18 June 2014



in Dushanbe and 10 June 2015 in Brussels). At the Cooperation Committee's meetings, the issues discussed related to social and economic development, water and energy matters, trade and economic reforms and implementation of a multi-annual indicative programme in the education, healthcare and rural development sectors.

In 2010, the EU launched the Investment Facility for Central Asia (IFCA). The objective of this facility is to assist Central Asian countries in addressing issues related to the funding of key infrastructure, mainly in the fields of energy, climate change and its impact on environment, the social sector and the development and promotion of the activities of the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises. IFCA is a financial mechanism based on a combination of grants provided in accordance with the EU's Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and loans provided by European financial institutions to encourage government-beneficiaries and state agencies to make major investments.¹⁸

BILATERAL PROJECTS (EU PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED ONLY WITHIN THE TERRITORY OF TAJIKISTAN)

Overall, as of 1 October 1 2015, the EU is involved in implementing 66 projects totalling €95,097,400 in the territory of the RT. These projects cover all sectors of the Tajik economy. Special attention has been given to financial support for the State budget, economic and social development, the private sector, the health sector, hydro energy and the rule of law.¹⁹

REGIONAL PROJECTS (EU PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION)

It is worth emphasising that the majority of EU regional projects are being implemented in the territory of the Republic of Tajikistan. Overall, as of 1 October 2015, 55 EU projects totalling €103,151,742 are under way. Most projects concern the fields of education, hydroenergy, the rule of law, economic and social development, strengthening the inviolability of borders (BOMCA), countering illicit drug trafficking (CADAP) and environmental protection.¹⁹

In 2003, the European Commission, within the framework of the agreement signed with the UNDP, began to put into effect the BOMCA programme for implementation of modern methods of border management at the regional level in Central Asia. Within the framework of the BOMCA programme, training centres for border agencies and border crossing points were built or re-equipped, the professional capacity of managers and the staff of training centres was enhanced, and regional and national courses in “Training the trainers” were held. In 2011, the 8th phase of the BOMCA programme was launched. In 2012, a dog training centre for the Presidential Drug Control Agency was built.²⁰

At the same time, given Tajikistan’s key regional role in countering terrorism, extremism and illicit drug trafficking, and the fact that it has the longest border with Afghanistan in Central Asia, the EU needs to increase substantially the financial and technical support to the RT in these fields, as well as to provide material and technical support in enhancing Tajik-Afghan border security within the framework of the BOMCA and CADAP programmes.

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Tajikistan-EU cooperation in the field of education takes place within the framework of the Erasmus Mundus and TEMPUS programmes. In the previous year, the European Commission began to implement a new project known as “Erasmus +” within the framework of the EU programme for Education, Training, Youth and Support for 2014-2020. The budget for this project for Central Asian countries is €8.68 million.

It is also worth noting that the roll-out of the TEMPUS project in Tajikistan has continued within the framework of common projects of European universities and partner countries in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East. From 2004 to 2012, 35 projects totalling €8.27 million were financed through this programme. Currently, 21 projects are being implemented based on 22 Tajik universities with the participation of non-academic institutions and the Ministry of Education



and Science of the RT. It is important to note that the number of Tajik higher education institutions participating in European educational projects has increased more than five times (in 2009, only two higher education institutions were participating) over the last five years (2010-2015). The number of Tajik undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students in the universities of the EU has also increased more than 20 times (from only 18 students in 2009 to more than 400 in the period from 2010 to 2015). Obviously, Tajik higher education institutions must cooperate more actively on a bilateral basis with their European counterparts to receive fixed quotas for Tajik citizens to study at European universities. Meanwhile, the EU should address the issue of the allocation of respective quotas for Tajik citizens to study in European higher education institutions.

It is noteworthy that currently, within the framework of European education projects, the republic's higher education institutions have established beneficial scientific and educational relations with 159 education institutions, including 65 universities in 18 EU Member States and 94 universities in partner states (in Central Asia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation and Belarus).²¹

THE TAJIK-EU HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE

The human rights dialogue between the RT and the EU is meant as a means of exchanging views and discussing current issues of human rights compliance. During the period in question, seven meetings (23 September 2009 in Dushanbe, 15 November 2010 in Dushanbe, 25 October 2011 in Dushanbe, 6 August 2013 in Dushanbe, 17 June 2014 in Dushanbe and 11 June 2015 in Brussels) were held. During the course of the dialogue, the parties addressed human rights issues, respect for the freedom of speech and freedom of religious belief in Tajikistan and the improvement of citizens' access to legal aid, especially in penal facilities. Issues related to women's and children's rights were also addressed during the meetings. At the same time, the parties review and resolve issues related to the provision of practical aid to the Republic of Tajikistan in the areas discussed.

THE EU-TAJIKISTAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE

The EU-Tajikistan Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Committee was established to enhance multilateral cooperation between Tajikistan and the EU via parliamentary mechanisms, as well as for the purpose of the development of parliamentary democracy.

The meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Committee are held alternately in the capitals of Tajikistan and the EU. The first meeting of the Committee took place in Brussels on 15-16 March 2011, the second in Dushanbe on 3-5 May 2012 and the third one in Brussels on 11 July 2013.

During the meetings, the parties discussed international and regional matters, in particular the issues of countering illicit drug trafficking, terrorism and corruption, as well as the situation in Afghanistan and border security. Special significance is attached to the question of developing mechanisms for the EU to assist Tajikistan in attaining its priority strategic objectives: namely, achieving energy independence, food security and overcoming its communications isolation.

It should be noted that the Tajikistan-European Parliament Friendship Group, consisting of more than 30 MEPs, was established in the EP to promote the national interests of the RT.

On 28 January 2014, in the EP building, a conference on “Water and Energy as Instruments of Peacekeeping” was held under the chairmanship of the MEPs Struan Stevenson, the head of the inter-parliamentary group for climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development, and Christine Gutierrez, the head of the European Parliamentary Group for water issues. Before the conference’s two panels the First Deputy Minister of Energy and Water Resources of the RT, Sulton Rahimov, made a presentation on Tajikistan’s hydroenergy potential and State policy in this area.

Special attention is given to the intercultural dialogue between the RT and the EU. On 17 March 2015, at the initiative of the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Tajikistan to the European Union, in cooperation with the Delegation of the EU Parliament for relations with Central Asian countries, the Tajikistan-EP Friendship Group, and with the direct support of the EP’s President, Martin Schulz, a gala reception was held to mark the International Day of Nowruz in the EP building, which



helped to raise Tajikistan's international profile with the EU and to develop intercultural dialogue. At the initiative of the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Tajikistan to the European Union, the International Day of Nowruz will be celebrated annually in the EP building with the participation of MEPs.

MEETINGS OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE EU AND CENTRAL ASIA

Four meetings of foreign ministers of the EU and Central Asian countries were held from 2010 until 2013. At the plenary meetings, key initiatives and future perspectives for EU-Central Asia cooperation were discussed, as well as issues related to security and regional cooperation. It should be emphasised that Tajikistan uses this format to put forward ideas for enhancing regional cooperation in trade, the economy, investment, water and energy, transport and humanitarian matters, as well as for close cooperation to achieve solid regional security and joint efforts in countering contemporary challenges and threats. During the ministerial meetings, questions relating to the state of and prospects for development of multilateral ties between the RT and the EU are debated in depth on a bilateral basis.

HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON SECURITY BETWEEN THE EU AND CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

In 2013, in view of situation in Afghanistan, the EU launched a new project for dialogue on security issues in Central Asia on the level of Deputy Foreign Ministers. The first meeting under the high-level dialogue of the EU and Central Asian countries on security was held in Brussels on 13 June 2013. The second meeting took place in Dushanbe on 10-11 March 2015. At these meetings, the following issues were discussed:

- Countering illicit drug trafficking, terrorism and extremism;
- Prevention of chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear threats in the Central Asian region;
- Countering radicalisation and the phenomenon of foreign fighters;

- Migration policies and future challenges, including the reintegration of economic migrants;
- Attainment of the EU Strategy for Central Asia in the field of security;
- Addressing the situation in Afghanistan and providing assistance to the Afghan government in ensuring peace and stability and the development of regional cooperation;
- Supporting stability in Afghanistan via external cooperation for peace.

It should be noted that the European Union places particular importance on the vision and stance of Tajikistan on the matters discussed, taking into account the republic's geographical position and its key role in countering new challenges and threats, as well as the potential of Tajikistan in helping achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan.

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN AND THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK

For the last five years, the development of cooperation with such key European financial and investment institutions as the EIB and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has been given a strong impetus. The EIB, which is the European Union's bank, founded in 1958 based on the Rome Treaty on establishment of the European Community, contributes to integration, balanced development and the economic and social cohesion of the EU Member States by means of concrete investments. In Central Asia, the EIB supports the EU policy to diversify energy resources, focusing its lending on energy supply and energy transmission projects and the protection of environment. In February 2009, the EIB began investing in the Republic of Tajikistan.

On 11 February 2009, the President of the RT, E. Rahmon, and the President of the EIB, Philippe Maystadt, signed a framework agreement, which laid the foundations for the future regulation of EIB funding in Tajikistan. The Republic of Tajikistan was one of the first Central Asian countries with which the EIB signed a framework agreement. The President of the EIB, Philippe Maystadt, commented at the time: "the Framework Agreement between the Republic of Tajikistan and the EIB opens the way for EIB financing of projects in Tajikistan. The focus will be on the financing of major energy projects of common interest both to Tajikistan and the European Union. We look forward to



developing EIB's activities in the country in a close cooperation with the European Commission, the EBRD and other IFIs operating in Tajikistan."²²

During President Rahmon's official visit to the headquarters of the EIB in Luxembourg on 10 June 2011, the first loan agreement was signed between the EIB President and the Minister of Finance of the RT, Safarali Najmuddinov. The EIB President welcomed the fact that "EIB funds will be supporting this flagship project that will contribute to the renovation of the electricity network, the reduction of distribution losses and the promotion of the economically sustainable development of the energy sector in the Republic of Tajikistan."²³ This was the first EIB loan to Tajikistan, providing for the financing of the installation of electricity meters with auxiliary equipment for satisfying demand and the energy grid, the reduction of distribution losses and improved energy efficiency in the Sughd Region of the country. The project is a good example of cooperation between partner International Financial Institutions, since it was financed by the EIB and the EBRD (€7 million each), along with grant support from the Investment Facility of the European Commission for Central Asia totalling €7 million.

On 11 April 2013, within the framework of President Rahmon's official visit to the EU institutions in Brussels, the Vice-President of the EIB, Wilhelm Molterer, and the Chairman of the State Committee for Investments and Management of State Property of the RT, Davlatali Saidov, signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which must be seen as an important step in the deepening of cooperation between Tajikistan and the EIB. Molterer said that "This Memorandum of Understanding will help to promote the cooperation between the EIB and the Republic of Tajikistan focused on project financing, so benefiting both the EU and Tajikistan. Priority sectors for EIB financing are renewable energy sources including hydropower generation, energy efficiency and agricultural infrastructure in the context of the broader objective of climate change mitigation and the adaptation and development of social and economic infrastructure."²⁴ The Memorandum envisages close cooperation between the EIB and EBRD in conducting an expert assessment on the economic feasibility of the Kayrakkum HPP rehabilitation project.

In December 2013, the Minister of Finance of the RT, Qurbonov Abdusalom, formally asked the EIB's President, Werner Hoyer, for the bank's financial assistance in the implementation of the energy trade development project CASA-1000 (Central Asia-South Asia). On 16 June 2014, the EIB's Board of Directors approved €70 million for the CASA-1000 project. The EIB's Vice-President said "The EIB loan will help improve the reliability and capacity of vital energy infrastructure needed for improving the quality of life of Tajik citizens and for further economic development in the region. The new energy infrastructure will foster electricity trade with neighbouring countries and make it possible to attract foreign investors due to safer energy supplies."²⁵

The EIB is also considering two new financial operations for the coming years: 1) rehabilitation of the Kayrakkum HPP – Phase II and 2) framework credit for the development of agriculture and value chains for the development of rural areas based on the funds available for Central Asia during the course of the financial mandate for 2014-2020.

4. WHAT IS THE CONFIDENCE IN THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN AND THE EUROPEAN UNION BASED ON?

The Republic of Tajikistan and the European Union see each other as reliable partners. What is this based on? What do Tajikistan and the European Union want from each other?

For Tajikistan, the following is important:

- Strengthening the foundations of statehood through the EU's comprehensive assistance;
- Receiving practical aid in training and retraining national cadres in all areas of State-building. In the last few years (2010-2015), the number of national cadres (staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Migration Service, Ministry of Health, Customs Administration, and Presidential Drug Control Agency) trained and retrained by the EU in European higher education institutions has increased more than 10 times;
- Assistance by Brussels in the implementation of social and economic objectives and creative



programmes for Tajikistan through the help of the financial and investment wherewithal of the EIB, the EBRD and the Investment Facility of the EU for Central Asia;

- Impartial assessment of and support for Tajikistan's water and energy policy addressing strategic objectives. At the same time, support for the republic's aspiration for closer cooperation with the other countries in the region in order to resolve the immediate social and economic issues via rational utilisation of water resources.

For the European Union, it is important that:

- Tajikistan develops and strengthens the foundations of democratic statehood with effective management;
- Tajikistan is a secular, democratic, stable, and steadily developing State;
- Tajikistan reinforces security along the border with Afghanistan and continues to be a reliable partner, acting as a shield in the region for countering terrorism, extremism and illicit drug trafficking, which could seriously threaten EU security;
- Tajikistan is one of the major players in establishing and fostering close multidimensional cooperation in the region.

The areas laid out in the article are, although not limited to, the key ones for mutually supportive and long-term cooperation between the RT and the EU.

Priority Areas for Future Cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the European Union

Based on the analysis and research carried out, the following priority areas for potential future cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the European Union have been identified:

- Comprehensive assistance in improving the population's well-being in the context of the Millennium Development Goals;
- Facilitation of effective public administration;
- Further enhancement of trade, economic, and investment ties, and facilitation of the implementation of economic reforms and creative programmes with the support of the EU's

- financial and investment institutions;
- Democratisation of society and improvement of mechanisms for human rights protection;
 - Support for Tajikistan as a Central Asian country on the frontline of efforts to counter terrorism, extremism and illicit drug trafficking, and in reinforcing Tajik-Afghan border security;
 - Further enhancement and deepening of cooperation in the fields of education, training and retraining of staff of Tajikistan's different ministries and agencies.
 - Facilitation of regional cooperation and enhancement of regional security.

Identifying the prospects for cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the European Union, as reflected in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Tajikistan of 27 January 2015, is fundamental in this context. "A positive breakthrough has occurred in the relationship between Tajikistan and the European Union since the beginning of the XXI century and this trend has gathered speed with every passing year. With a view to promoting the development of the major areas of the national economy, Tajikistan acknowledges the European Union as one of its most important economic partners and will continue to seek the expansion and deepening of the long-term sustainable cooperation with this influential interstate association on the basis of the principle of mutual benefit. This interaction in general will embrace all the European institutions, including the European Parliament, the Council of the Europe Union, the European Investment Bank and other organisations and agencies."²⁶

This paper analyses in detail the origins, dynamics and priorities of cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the European Union in the political, economic, investment, educational and humanitarian fields, as well as in countering terrorism and illicit drug trafficking, and in strengthening border security from 1 January 2010, the date of the formal entry into force of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, to the present. This period has been characterised by the dynamic development of cooperation between Tajikistan and the European Union. It gives justification for the concept of a reliable partnership between the Republic of Tajikistan and the European Union.



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