

Historic Central Asia-EU Summit to open new pathways for cooperation, says Uzbekistan President



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In an exclusive interview with Euronews, Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev discussed the upcoming Central Asia-EU summit in Samarkand, which will be the first to bring together the leaders of the five Central Asian nations and the European Union. This summit is viewed as a historic event, set against a backdrop of global geopolitical instability, economic risks, and climate

challenges. The discussions will focus on strengthening economic ties, with trade between Central Asia and the EU having quadrupled in the past seven years.

President Mirziyoyev emphasized the deep historical connections and shared interests between the regions, stressing that the cooperation format between Central Asia and the EU is unique in its scale and institutional depth. With the EU being the world's largest integration association, this summit is expected to open new avenues for trade, investment, sustainable development, and security collaboration.

Symbolic Value of Samarkand

The choice of Samarkand as the summit's location carries significant symbolic meaning.

Historically, Samarkand has been a center for trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. President Mirziyoyev highlighted its historical importance, noting how it was once a meeting point for European and Asian rulers. This tradition of cross-cultural dialogue continues as Samarkand reemerges as a hub for international cooperation in addressing contemporary challenges.

Central Asia's Transformation

Over recent years, Central Asia has undergone a profound transformation, with countries in the region fostering stronger political ties and focusing on mutual respect and shared interests. The creation of border trade zones and joint investment funds, as well as major infrastructure

projects, have positioned Central Asia as an increasingly important player in global trade and connectivity.

Under Uzbekistan's leadership in the Central Asian Five, the focus will be on regional security, economic integration, and environmental sustainability. President Mirziyoyev expressed confidence that these efforts will lead to a prosperous and stable future for the region.

Strengthening Economic Relations with the EU

The interview also touched on the economic reforms in Uzbekistan, which have contributed to a growing partnership with the European Union. Initiatives like the liberalization of the foreign exchange market and the reduction of tax burdens have created a favorable business environment. In 2024, Uzbekistan's trade turnover with EU countries reached \$6.4 billion, reflecting positive growth.

Looking ahead, Uzbekistan plans to further deepen economic ties through the signing of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) with the EU, while also advocating for the development of key transport corridors, including the Trans-Caspian route. These initiatives are expected to foster more efficient trade and logistics, benefiting both regions.

Renewable Energy Collaboration

Given Central Asia's vast energy reserves and renewable energy potential, President Mirziyoyev

underscored the region's role in Europe's energy future. He outlined ongoing projects aimed at establishing a Green Strategic Corridor for renewable energy through the Caspian and Black Seas to Europe. Uzbekistan's efforts in expanding solar and wind power capacity, as well as fostering collaboration on green technologies, align with the EU's goals for decarbonization.

Security Cooperation and Afghanistan

The summit will also address common security concerns, including terrorism, extremism, and transnational crime. President Mirziyoyev highlighted Uzbekistan's proactive stance in promoting regional stability, particularly through its engagement with Afghanistan. Uzbekistan's pragmatic approach aims to integrate Afghanistan into regional infrastructure projects, offering opportunities for long-term development.

Conclusion

As Central Asia and the EU move toward deeper collaboration, the upcoming summit represents a pivotal moment in reshaping the geopolitical landscape. With a focus on security, sustainable development, and economic growth, the Central Asia-EU partnership promises to be a cornerstone for prosperity in the region. President Mirziyoyev expressed optimism that, through joint efforts, Central Asia could emerge as a key global player in the coming years.