

Joint Communiqué of the 19th European Union-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting, 23 October 2023, Luxembourg

1. On 23 October 2023, the Foreign Ministers of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan and of the European Union's (EU) Member States, as well as the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission and the European Commissioner for International Partnerships ('Participants') held their 19th EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting in Luxembourg.
2. On this occasion, the EU and the five Central Asian countries confirmed their joint commitment to continue their strategic partnership. Participants reaffirmed their political willingness to further strengthening their partnership based on shared values and mutual interests, as exemplified by the meetings of the Heads of State of Central Asia and the President of the European Council on 27 October 2022, in Astana, Kazakhstan and on 2 June 2023, in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan. Participants reiterated their commitment to work together for peace, security, and sustainable development, in full respect for international law, including the UN Charter. The EU strongly supported efforts aimed at restoration of sovereign equality of all Member States including Central Asian countries within the International Atomic Energy Agency. The EU commend the efforts of the Central Asian countries on creation of a new atmosphere of good neighbourliness, mutual understanding and trust in the region. In this respect, the EU welcomes the strengthened regional cooperation through the holding of Consultative Meetings of Central Asian leaders, including the recent Fifth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 14 September 2023. The EU welcomed the advances with the Treaty on Friendship, Good-Neighbourliness, and Cooperation for Development of Central Asia in the 21st Century signed during the 4th Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia held in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, 21 July 2022.
3. The Foreign Ministers of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan welcomed the EU's continued commitment to the Central Asia region's stability and prosperity, including its comprehensive approach through Global Gateway, multilateral financial assistance, Team Europe Initiatives and individual engagement of EU Member States and European financial institutions. Participants emphasised the continued relevance of the EU Strategy on Central Asia (2019), which prioritises resilience, prosperity, and regional cooperation for the region's future development. Participants stressed the significance of Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreements for advancing bilateral relations between the EU and its Member States and Central Asian countries.
4. In this spirit, Participants jointly endorsed the Joint Roadmap for Deepening Ties between the EU and Central Asia, signifying a major milestone in their relations. The Roadmap outlines a comprehensive and ambitious framework for enhanced cooperation, fostering a stronger and more dynamic partnership for prosperity and sustainability. It encompasses various key areas, including inter-regional political dialogue and cooperation, enhancing trade and economic ties, engaging on energy, climate neutral economy and connectivity, addressing common security challenges, and strengthening people-to-people contacts and mobility. The Roadmap proposes concrete actions in these areas, and serves as a strategic blueprint, paving the way for deeper engagement, closer dialogue, and continued progress in addressing common challenges and seizing new opportunities for the benefit of both the EU and Central Asian countries.
5. Participants restated the importance of maintaining peace and security globally and regionally, and reconfirmed the obligation of all States to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force and the need for peaceful resolutions of disputes through diplomatic means, as well as for building trust and good neighbourly relations. Participants highlighted the need for continued global cooperation to minimise the global consequences of the current geopolitical context, including in particular the threat to food security, including through facilitation of food and agricultural exports. The Participants welcomed the resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly and initiated by Turkmenistan on the proclamation of Central Asia as a Zone of Peace, Trust and Cooperation, and the current year of 2023 as the Year of Dialogue as a Guarantee of Peace, which are aimed at developing a culture of peace, solidarity and dialogue in relations among all States.
6. The EU informed about the eleven packages of restrictive measures it has adopted so far and stressed the importance of results-oriented dialogue and cooperation in the context of EU's sanctions regimes. The EU underlined the importance of the prevention of sanctions circumvention, and Participants agreed to continue their engagement in this respect.
7. Participants expressed their continuing commitment to uphold the UN Charter and the fundamental principles of international law, on which the enhancement of EU-Central Asia relations is based, in particular the respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states including within the framework of all international and regional fora. The participants emphasised on the need to uphold the principles of the OSCE. They underlined that respect for international humanitarian law and a peaceful resolution of conflicts without the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is indispensable. On security, Participants also welcomed the results of the 10th EU-Central Asia High-Level Political and Security Dialogue, held in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 13 June 2023. Participants stressed the importance of the international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture for global peace and security and highlighted their support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).
8. Participants reiterated the importance of progressing on the rule of law, democracy, good governance, gender equality and universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. Participants discussed the importance of guaranteeing media freedom, freedom of expression, assembly and association and labour rights, free and fair elections and non-discrimination in all its aspects, including to ensure the full enjoyment of women and girls of their human rights, freedom of religion and belief and the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. The Participants recalled the importance of protecting the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as well as media freedoms. They also exchanged on the need for protection from disinformation, fake news and hate speech, including hatred against all groups and nationalities. The partners recalled the importance to ensure that national legislation, policies and actions for freedom

of opinion and expression are in line with their international obligations. Participants stressed the importance of further promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making. They reiterated the need to cooperate on new opportunities for the youth in Central Asia, encompassing improved access to education for all and decent jobs. In addition, Participants emphasised the importance of facilitating the meaningful participation of civil society in decision-making. These are key elements for strengthening the resilience of the Central Asian region and are of crucial importance for EU cooperation with its partners around the world. Participants welcomed the 25th anniversary of the Declaration on Human Right Defenders (HRDs). Following the 4th EU-Central Asia Civil Society Forum held on the 10 March 2023, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, the Participants looked forward to the 5th edition of the event, to be held in 2024. They welcomed the continuation of existing dialogues and organisation of joint high-level events. Participants look forward to the visit of the Dialogue of Women Leaders of Central Asia in Brussels (13-15 November 2023) co-organised by the UNRCCA, based in Ashgabat, and the EU Special Representative for Central Asia to share experiences with the EU institutions and civil society on the implementation of the global “Women, Peace and Security” agenda.

9. Participants commended the results of the second “EU-Central Asia Economic Forum” which took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 18-19 May 2023, and emphasised the strategic importance, relevance and intensity of deepened economic relations. The platform provided an opportunity for high-level policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders from both regions to come together and discuss pressing economic issues, identify common interests, and explore avenues for mutual growth and development. Through knowledge sharing, networking and partnership-building, the forum facilitated the exchange of expertise and best practices, paving the way for enhanced trade, investment, and economic integration. In this regard, Participants highlighted the geostrategic role of trade, and investment for sustainable development, and agreed to reinforce sustainable supply chains and strengthen cooperation on investment and critical raw materials. Participants noted that enhancing democratization, human rights and rule of law has a direct positive effect on the trust in the trade and investment climate in the region.
10. Participants stressed the need to intensify cooperation on sustainable connectivity between the EU and Central Asia in the areas of trade, transport, energy, digital and people-to-people contacts, building on the projects announced at the EU-Central Asia Connectivity Conference, held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on 18 November 2022. Continuing this work, as part of the EU’s Global Gateway Initiative, the European Commission conducted a Study on sustainable transport connections between Europe and Central Asia, which was implemented by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and published on 30 June 2023. In order to follow up concretely on the list of soft and hard infrastructure projects identified in the study, the European Commission is preparing for an Investors Forum on 29-30 January 2024 in Brussels, Belgium, gathering public and private investors interested in enhancing sustainable transport connectivity between the two regions. Participants also welcomed the Team Europe Initiative on Digital Connectivity launched in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in November 2022, which will also enhance Central Asian businesses and citizens’ access to a secure internet through trusted satellite connectivity. The participants welcomed the proposal on holding an expert meeting in transport area from state agencies and private transport logistical companies in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, in the coming months. The EU welcomed the signing of the Agreement on Interconnectivity of the Land Transport in Central Asia, during the Fifth Consultative Meeting of the Central Asian Heads of State on 14 September 2023 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.
11. Participants highlighted that the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution pose a global and existential threat, particularly affecting the most vulnerable, increasing poverty and inequality and affecting stability. They underlined that the climate crisis requires immediate, urgent, accelerated action and strengthened ambition. In view of the upcoming COP28 in Dubai, the EU stressed the importance for all parties to present as soon as possible their new or updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) with stronger, more ambitious, and absolute economy wide emission reduction targets, underpinned by concrete policies and measures to implement them, including as soon as possible Adaptation Communications and to present or update their long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies towards reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. The EU also expressed understanding of the importance of a just transition and, in accordance with the spirit of the Paris Agreement, its readiness to support the countries of Central Asia. The Participants acknowledged and encouraged further progress of Central Asian countries and the EU in the implementation of their NDCs and in their regions transition towards climate-neutral economy, including through accelerating the deployment of safe and sustainable low-carbon technologies such as renewable energy and the improvement of energy efficiency, as well as promoting green finance for green projects, aiming for climate neutrality. In this regard, the EU invited the concerned Central Asian countries to join the Global Methane Pledge. Participants underlined the importance of cooperation in the field of sustainable raw materials climate neutral economy to boost the green and digital transformation of the EU’s and Central Asia’s economies. They also welcomed the announced Regional Climate Summit in Kazakhstan in 2026 under UN auspices.
12. The Participants stressed the need to strengthen regional cooperation in Central Asia as an effective and desirable way of tackling climate, water-energy and environmental challenges and recognised the importance of further action in stepping up and promoting such cooperation including through sharing knowledge and experience in sustainable water management and fostering political dialogues. within the region and between the EU and Central Asia They welcomed the work of the EU-Central Asia Platform on Environment and Water Cooperation, the EU-CA Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (WGECC), the recently completed European Union-Central Asia Water, Environment and Climate Change Cooperation project, which helped strengthen the policy dialogue on sustainable development within the region and facilitated cooperation with the EU on environment and climate change, as well as the outcome of the 7th High Level EU-Central Asia Conference on Water and Environment Cooperation held in Rome on 23-24 February 2023. Participants welcomed the Team Europe Initiative on Water, Energy and Climate Change launched in Samarkand in November 2022 and noted the importance of the continuation of support in the field of energy, water and climate change and opportunities it presents for enhanced EU-Central Asia cooperation. Participants welcomed UN General Assembly Resolution 77/158 declaring 2025 the International Year of Glaciers’ Preservation and, proclaiming 21 March of each year the World Day for Glaciers, to be observed starting in 2025 and Participants took note of the initiative on the Establishment of a Trust Fund on Glaciers initiated by the Republic of Tajikistan. Taking note of the importance of adopted Resolution 77 UNGA “Sustainable Mountain Development, jointly initiated by Kyrgyzstan and Italy, Participants agreed to facilitate such development, including through participation in, the “five year of action for the development of mountain regions 2023-2027” declared by this resolution.
13. Participants acknowledged the need for enhancing interconnectivity of the regional power system and continued efforts to boost energy efficiency as well as the importance of research cooperation and policy dialogue, especially in those areas that are most relevant for regional development, including water issues, climate change and environmental protection. Participants highlighted the need for addressing the interconnected water and climate nexus in a strong and holistic manner. Participants stressed the need to implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted at the 15th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15), in December 2022. Participants congratulated both Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands on a successful UN Water Conference in March 2023 which underpinned international efforts in the context of the UN Decade for Water and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and water-related SDGs. In this regard participants also welcomed the UNGA resolution in follow-up to the UN 2023 Water Conference, which harnesses the political momentum created by the conference and offers a path forward in shaping the future of Water-Action at the UN. Participants pledged to fulfil their voluntary commitments

presented in the context of the UN Water Conference 2023. The participants underlined considerable perspectives of cooperation in implementing joint projects for the integrated water resources management, via the introduction of water-saving technologies, as well as donor projects for climate change combating, mitigation and resilience, including in but not limited to the framework of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS).

14. Participants welcomed cooperation in education, vocational training and skills development, as a key factor in ensuring the sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development of Central Asia. They commit to work more closely together to fully utilise the possibilities offered by the international dimension of the Erasmus+ programme to enhance this cooperation. They underlined the key role that science, technology and innovation play in accelerating economic diversification and transformation, improving productivity and competitiveness, as well as enabling the integration of countries of Central Asia in the global economy. Participants recognised the value of international research and innovation cooperation between their two regions, and called for joint engagement in promoting the scientific collaboration and funding opportunities existing under the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon Europe.
15. Participants reiterated the vital role of official statistics, adhering to international methodologies, norms, and standards, in enabling evidence-based decision-making and fostering societal trust. Since reliable statistics are instrumental in efficient policy-making. Participants called for further cooperation in improvement and development of official statistics.
16. Participants expressed shared deep concern about the dire humanitarian, economic and human rights crisis in Afghanistan. In order to ensure sustainable peace, they called for the promotion and respect of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens of Afghanistan in particular of women and girls, as well as children and persons belonging to ethnic and religious groups and minorities. Participants called for full and equal access to education conforming to international standards and participation in public life of women and girls in Afghanistan, including in humanitarian work. Participants also called for the establishment of an inclusive and representative government based on a credible, inclusive political process with participation of all citizens of Afghanistan, including women, and persons belonging to ethnic and religious groups and minorities in this regard. Participants stressed the importance of preventing the territory of Afghanistan from being used as a base for hosting, financing or exporting violent extremism and terrorism to other countries. Participants underlined the necessity to explore joint cooperation in humanitarian and basic needs and livelihoods support to the people of Afghanistan in accordance with international law. In this regard, the Participants also stressed the significance of the educational projects for women of Afghanistan at universities of Central Asian states and the importance of further support of such programs by donor states and organizations. Participants acknowledged the need for strengthening cooperation on preventing the unsafe and irregular movements of people and countering migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. They stressed the usefulness of the regular exchange between the EU's and the Central Asian Special Envoys and Representatives on the situation in Afghanistan. The Participants noted importance of the outcome of the meeting of the EU and Central Asia Special Representatives and Envoys for Afghanistan held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on 25-26 May 2023. The Participants reaffirmed their support to the work of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan, as well as UNRCCA based in Ashgabat. Participants emphasised the need to expand cooperation aimed at strengthening the management of Central Asian countries state borders with Afghanistan, and emphasised the importance of the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) and Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP) programmes to support taking necessary measures to counter the movement of terrorists, drug and weapons trafficking and other transnational organised crime. The EU, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan noted the opportunity offered by the "Dushanbe Process on Countering Terrorism and its Financing" to promote initiatives for combating terrorism and its sources of financing, paying special attention to ensuring international and regional security.
17. Participants looked forward to intensifying EU-Central Asia cooperation in security and border management, including through the use of BOMCA 10, as well as in the joint fight against terrorism and terrorism financing, violent extremism, money laundering, transnational organised crime and corruption, trafficking in human beings, migrant smuggling, trafficking of small arms and light weapons, drug trafficking (including demand-reduction aspects) and cybersecurity and disinformation, acting in accordance with commitments on universal human rights and the rule of law. Participants acknowledged the potential for increasing collaboration in sharing best practices in reintegration and rehabilitation of returnees from conflict zones.
18. Participants welcomed the announcement of the first EU – Central Asia Summit, scheduled to take place during the second quarter of 2024 in Uzbekistan.
19. Participants expressed their deep appreciation to the EU for hosting the meeting and agreed to reconvene in 2024. Turkmenistan proposed to hold the next Ministerial meeting in Turkmenistan.

- [Joint Roadmap for Deepening Ties between the EU and Central Asia](#)



Family photo of the 19th European Union-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting

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