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**IV Consultative Meeting of the Central Asian Leaders**

**Overview**

On 21 July, the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, took part in the IV Consultative meeting of the heads of Central Asian states in Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyzstan), which was attended by the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The meeting focused on expanding five-sided cooperation to ensure sustainable economic growth of the Central Asian states.

The Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation for the Development of Central Asia in the 21st century was agreed upon and the procedure for its signing began.

**Key points from President Tokayev’s statement**

**On cooperation between Central Asian countries**

* The IV Consultative meeting demonstrates the solidarity of the Central Asian countries, the common desire to jointly confront new challenges and threats.
* Since the first Consultative Meeting in Kazakhstan in 2018, regional cooperation has been strengthening in all directions.
* The mutually beneficial trade and economic cooperation is expanding. The volume of intra-regional trade grew by 27 percent last year, exceeding 8 billion dollars.
* Over the last 5 years, Kazakhstan's trade turnover with other Central Asian countries has grown by 42 percent, reaching 6.3 billion dollars.
* Kazakhstan remains committed to the strategic course of comprehensive strengthening of regional cooperation and enhancing Central Asia's role in the global arena.
* The most important mission of Central Asia is to build bridges between the competing poles of global politics and economics.

**On strengthening cooperation in security and diplomacy**

* A mechanism of regular consultations of the Secretaries of the Security Councils should be launched to jointly work out solutions for preventing security threats.
* It is proposed that ministers of foreign affairs of Central Asian states should meet at least once every six months to develop coordinated approaches to key regional and international issues.
* Kazakhstan considers it possible to adopt a Concept of Cooperation of Central Asian States within the framework of multilateral formats.
* The Consultative Meetings of Central Asian Leaders could be attended by high-ranking representatives of other neighbouring states, such as Russia and China.

**On countering and preventing instability**

* The resolution of disputed border issues is possible only through peaceful means.
* Kazakhstan, as the only post-Soviet State that has completely delimited its border, is ready to provide all possible assistance in finding mutually acceptable solutions.
* It is proposed to create an expert platform to develop mutually acceptable approaches to border delimitation.

**On creating a solid economic foundation for multilateral cooperation**

* It is desirable to increase trade turnover between Kazakhstan and Central Asian states to 15 billion dollars.
* It would be practically useful to take effective measures to launch a network of cross-border trade and economic hubs that would serve as anchor points of the Common Goods Transmission System of Central Asian countries with the prospect of its further expansion.
* The International Centre for Industrial Cooperation "Central Asia" project is being implemented on the Kazakh-Uzbek border, and the Industrial Trade and Logistics Complex on the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border.
* There is an agreement with Tajikistan to create wholesale and distribution centres, while Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan plan to build a grain terminal.
* Kazakhstan proposes to organise joint product promotion at upcoming online exhibitions, including on the site of Alibaba.
* The Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) could become an effective platform for encouraging direct and portfolio investments into regional projects. AIFC Multipass has been developed to increase the region's investment appeal. It will provide AIFC partners with full access to the territories of member countries for business trips.

**On increasing the region's transport connectivity**

* The role of Central Asia in promoting and developing transcontinental trade is increasing rapidly in the new geopolitical realities.
* Kazakhstan is ready to participate in the construction of the Mazar-e-Sharif - Kabul - Peshawar railroad.
* The first container train from Kazakhstan to Turkey has been launched via Turkmenistan and Iran, which enables trains to cover over 6,000 kilometres in just 12 days.
* The Kazakhstani seaports of Aktau and Kuryk can provide access to the markets of the Middle East and Europe.
* The launch of the railway line "Darbaza (Uzbekistan) – Maktaaral (Kazakhstan)" will double the traffic capacity and reduce the time of cargo transportation by 1.5 times.
* Kazakhstan supports the construction of a new highway "Turkmenbashi - Garabogaz - border of Kazakhstan".
* There are plans to begin work on the reconstruction of the "Zhanaozen - border of Turkmenistan" road section from 2025.

**On tackling climate change and ensuring rational use of water resources**

* Kazakhstan proposes to establish a Central Asian project office for environmental protection and implementation of a coordinated policy on climate change in the region.
* Kazakhstan welcomes Kyrgyzstan's initiative to declare 2022 the International Year of Sustainable Mountain Development and Tajikistan's proposal to declare 2025 the International Year of the Preservation of Glaciers.
* The joint hydropower project in Kyrgyzstan, Kambarata HPS-1, will strengthen energy security of the Central Asian countries and improve conditions for the expansion of agricultural production.
* Countries should increase engagement within the framework of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.

**On expanding ties in cultural and humanitarian spheres**

* The Declaration on the Creation of a Common Central Asian Higher Education Area, signed last year, serves as the basis for expanding cooperation in science and education.
* Kazakhstan is ready to create branches of its leading universities and advanced schools in the states of Central Asia.
* A branch of the Kazakh National University named after Al-Farabi recently opened in Bishkek.
* It is proposed to establish close ties between the academies of sciences of Central Asian countries to jointly organise ethno-geographical and historical studies, and to publish scientific works.
* President Tokayev suggested creating a joint online platform for exchange of archive and research data that would promote deeper cooperation in the field of science.
* The President also proposed creating a region-wide TV channel or an online news site focused on life in Central Asia.
* The practice of annually electing the "cultural capital of Central Asia" should be launched to position the region as a unified cultural space.