March 9, 2023

**Joint Statement on the C5+1 Ministerial in Astana**

The text of the following statement was released by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan and the U.S. Secretary of State on the occasion of the C5+1 Ministerial in Astana, Kazakhstan on February 28.

On February 28, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan and the U.S. Secretary of State met in Astana, Kazakhstan under the auspices of the C5+1 regional diplomatic platform.

U.S. Secretary of State Blinken emphasized the United States’ solidarity with the peoples and governments of Central Asia. The Governments acknowledged that a peaceful and prosperous Central Asia requires a sustained commitment to the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all countries through upholding the UN Charter and its principles.

The participants underscored the importance of C5+1 collaboration to deliver regional solutions to global challenges. They affirmed their commitment to increased engagement through the C5+1 regional diplomatic platform. They commended the coordination efforts of the C5+1 Secretariat. Through Working Groups on Economy, Energy and Environment, and Security, the C5+1 will continue to support ongoing regional activities and explore new opportunities for greater collaboration.

Economic Cooperation:

In support of C5+1 economic objectives, the participants:

* Emphasized that Central Asia’s economic security remains a C5+1 strategic priority;
* Discussed how to mitigate the negative consequences of recent international developments, especially in the areas of energy and food prices, debt management, and employment rates, in a manner that enhances inclusive economic growth;
* Underscored their commitment to collectively work on mitigating unintended impacts of sanctions on C5+1 economies;
* Addressed how to strengthen regional and external economic connections, including expanding opportunities for trade through the USAID Trade Central Asia program;
* Looked forward to the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meeting on March 17 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan;
* Highlighted new U.S. government-funded C5+1 economic resilience in Central Asia programming;
* Recognized the importance of strengthening trade, transport, and communication links; and
* Considered a C5+1 business forum.

Energy and Environment Cooperation:

In support of C5+1 energy and environment objectives, the participants:

* Addressed shared C5+1 objectives, such as exchange of experience on integrated management of water resources and food security;
* Expressed readiness for cooperation in the field of introducing water-saving technologies and improving skills of water specialists;
* Reiterated the critical need to advance their collective and country commitments to address the climate crisis;
* Reaffirmed the significant potential for more regional collaboration in areas such as increasing the use of renewable energy and methane abatement;
* Commended ongoing C5+1 energy programs, including USAID’s Power Central Asia, which is supporting the C5 governments’ national and regional priorities in energy security through national market liberalization reform, clean energy development, and methane mitigation;
* Recognized USAID Regional Water and Vulnerable Environment Activity (WAVE), which assesses, develops, and evaluates strategies that address the shared vulnerabilities at the nexus of Central Asia’s water, energy, and food sectors to climate change, and the importance of environmental and social safeguard measures to increase resilience to climate change;
* Welcomed the Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Climate Change, to be held on March 10, 2023, in Ashgabat;
* Stressed the negative consequences of Aral Sea desiccation and noted the importance of increasing cooperation for the area's ecological restoration, including through the UN;
* Expressed readiness to actively support projects to improve the climate resilience of vulnerable sectors and the transition to a low-carbon and “green” economy;
* Considered efforts toward sustainable mountain development; in this regard, noted the UNGA Resolution 77/172 "Sustainable Mountain Development" proclaiming the period 2023–2027 as Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions in order to enhance the awareness of the international community of the problems of mountain countries and to give new impetus to the international community’s efforts to address the challenges and problems of mountain countries (based on OP30 of A/RES/77/122);
* Discussed opportunities for the next C5+1 Climate Ministerial and Energy and Environment Working Group meeting; and
* Looked forward to working together to achieve results of the UN Conference on Water, co-hosted by Tajikistan, on March 22-24, 2023 in New York.

Security Cooperation:

In support of C5+1 security objectives, the participants:

* Recognized the importance of strengthened C5+1 diplomatic engagement in support of Central Asia’s security;
* Discussed how to ensure a safe and secure future for the populations of Central Asia in the context of evolving global crises;
* Reiterated their commitment to counterterrorism cooperation;
* Highlighted C5+1 programs in support of regional border security, safe migration, and countering terrorism and narcotics;
* Re-emphasized the importance of maintaining peace and security, as well as resolving disputes through diplomatic means;
* Welcomed the declaration by the UN of 2023 as the International Year of Dialogue as a Guarantee of Peace;
* Looked forward to the upcoming debates at the 77th session of the UN General Assembly on the Zone of Peace, Trust, and Cooperation of Central Asia in line with UNGA resolution 76/299; and,
* Welcomed the kickoff of the C5+1 Regional Border Security Program, which began in Almaty, Kazakhstan on February 6.

The C5+1 participants also recognized the importance of regional solutions that reinforce their commitment to human rights. They highlighted the importance of scaling up women’s economic empowerment efforts across the region.
They recognized that the C5+1 Women and Girls Empowered (WAGE) program has convened women’s government and business leaders from all five Central Asian countries to promote women’s economic security in the region.  They welcomed the U.S.-Central Asian Trade and Investment Framework (TIFA), which facilitates a regional, public-private dialogue in support of women’s economic empowerment in Central Asia. As it was noted, through these and additional projects, such as the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs, U.S. government efforts enhance Central Asian women entrepreneurs’ and artisans’ inclusion in the formal economy and promote access to international and regional markets.