

Kazakhstan and the states of Central Asian region

Developing bilateral and multilateral economic, political, cultural and humanitarian relations with close neighbours in the region of the Central Asia plays a key role in ensuring stability and security in Central Asian region and creating conditions for mutually beneficial cooperation.

Developing relations (bilateral and multilateral) with the countries of Central Asian region, including such countries as the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, is a strategic foreign policy priority for the Republic of Kazakhstan. Astana proceeds from the fact that the regional countries are bound not only by economic interests but the common fates of the peoples, who are in a good sense doomed to live together in close friendship.

At a meeting of the heads of states of the CACO (the Central Asian Cooperation Organization) in Bishkek on 9 and 10 January 1997 Central Asia's first trilateral Treaty of Eternal Friendship was signed by the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan. Article three of this treaty stipulates that "the parties will offer to one another all-round support, especially in the issue of preventing threats to independence and sovereignty and territorial integrity".

Kazakhstan provides sizeable economic and humanitarian aid to neighbouring countries because this helps contributes to their stability, and, as a result, security in the region as a whole. For example, Kazakhstan's investment in the four other Central Asian countries exceeded \$1 billion in 2008, including \$628.2 million that was placed in the Kyrgyz economy and \$200.8 million in the Uzbek economy.

An important way of eliminating conventional and unconventional threats to Central Asian countries is regional integration. The Kazakh president's initiative to set up a Union of Central Asian States is still a topical issue. The initial stage of this project envisages the creation of a favorable business climate in the entire territory of the region.

This may be achieved by the conclusion of intergovernmental and interstate agreements to remove protectionist barriers to imports, exports, investment and labour, on the one hand, and joint projects important to the entire region, on the other.

The next stage may involve the creation of regional consortia – food, water and energy and transport and telecommunications.