
EUROPEAN UNION AND TAJIKISTAN HOLD COOPERATION COMMITTEE MEETING

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The European Union and Tajikistan held their seventh Cooperation Committee meeting on June 7, hosted by the Tajik Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the Delegation of the European Union to Tajikistan said.

The Cooperation Committee, as well as the Sub-Committee on Development Cooperation that was held on June 6, took place in a particularly intensive period of exchanges between the EU and Tajikistan, with several recent high-level visits including that of President of the European Council Donald Tusk and Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service Pedro Serrano in May 2019. As well as against the backdrop of the new EU Strategy for Central Asia, that will be presented by High Representative Federica Mogherini to Central Asian Foreign Ministers in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan on July 7.

The Cooperation Committee reaffirmed the joint commitment of the EU and of Tajikistan to strengthen relations in the framework of the EU-Tajikistan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA).

The Cooperation Committee reiterated the importance of addressing external and domestic security challenges, in Tajikistan and the region. It was agreed to continue to cooperate closely on these issues. The EU welcomed the constructive collaboration with Tajikistan on the joint organisation of the International conference on countering terrorism and its financing through illicit drug trafficking and organized crime, on 16-17 May, in Dushanbe. The EU and Tajikistan also agreed to continue cooperating jointly on supporting an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process.

The EU and the Republic of Tajikistan also exchanged views on the new EU Strategy for Central Asia. The EU side underlined that the new Strategy will aim to provide a platform for guiding the development of region-to-region relations in a way that brings mutual, tangible and long-term benefits. The new Strategy aims to forge a strong, modern and non-exclusive partnership with the countries of Central Asia so that the region develops as a more resilient, prosperous and closely interconnected economic and political space.

In this context the EU recalled that principles of democracy and human rights form the essential element of the EU partnership with Tajikistan and will continue to feature prominently in the new EU Strategy for Central Asia.

The European Union underlined the importance of promotion of fundamental freedoms, including

the freedom of expression and regular access to social media. The EU encouraged the Tajik government to create an enabling environment for civil society organisations and to agree to a greater degree of involvement of CSO's in the law-making process. The EU called upon Tajikistan to review the case of jailed lawyer Buzurgmehr Yorov, in line with the recent opinion of the UN Working Group on arbitrary detention. The EU commended the Tajik government for its commitment to establish mechanisms to eliminate torture and ill-treatment of detainees, and encouraged Tajikistan to move forward with the implementation of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations, including concerning the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.

The EU welcomed Tajikistan's steps towards becoming a GSP+ beneficiary, which would enable more than 6600 items from Tajikistan to be exported to the EU without tariff. In this regard it was noted that further improvements in the rule of law, the business climate will also help attracting more European business and enhancing Tajikistan's international reputation.

The Cooperation Committee discussed the significant efforts of Tajik authorities to address current economic and financial difficulties, as well as the EU's support in this context. The EU reaffirmed its commitment to continue development cooperation with Tajikistan, including in the vital sectors of rural development, health and education aiming at economic growth, private sector development and social stability, as well as technical assistance to the implementation of the National Development Strategy of Tajikistan.

The Cooperation Committee meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Luc Devigne, Deputy Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia at the European External Action Service and Mr. Zavqi Zavqizoda, First Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan.

The next Cooperation Committee meeting is due to take place in 2020 in Brussels.

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