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## TBILISI AND TASHKENT BET ON A CENTRAL CORRIDOR

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Vladimir Rozanskij

*Irakli Kobakhidze's visit to the Uzbek capital was an opportunity to strengthen cooperation projects between the two countries. The objective: to rapidly increase the volume of trade to one billion dollars.*

The Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Kobakhidze, recently visited Uzbekistan, where he met his counterpart Abdulla Aripov in Tashkent to discuss the development of the Middle Corridor for Eurasian transport, the project that could transform the economy of the entire Central Asian and Caucasian region. This is the Trans-Caspian international transport route, which runs from the border between China and Kazakhstan to Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and on to Europe, using rail and sea routes across the Caspian Sea for over 11,000 kilometres, with the potential to transport between 4.5 million and 27 million tonnes per year. The Corridor began operating in 2017, and in December 2022 Uzbekistan also joined it, to send goods to Europe.

Kobakhidze emphasised that his country is in a strategic position, connecting Europe and Asia, the West and the East, and therefore he intends to make the most of the possibilities that are opening up. In this sense, the partnership with Uzbekistan would be extremely useful and fruitful, even though the two countries are not directly neighbouring, but are parallel to each other on either side of the Caspian Sea.

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