

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY OF UZBEK AND AFGHAN PEOPLES

Uzbekistan's further steps towards Afghanistan are connected with the initiation of the international conference on Afghanistan by the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev "Peace Process, Security Cooperation and Regional Connectivity" in Tashkent, which was the beginning of work on the implementation of the provisions of the events.

Speaking at the forum, Shavkat Mirziyoyev spoke about the need to involve Afghanistan in the system of trade, economic, transport, communication, cultural and humanitarian relations with neighboring countries, the development of principles for a peaceful settlement and the achievement of international consensus on them.

Condemning terrorism, fanaticism, extremism, radicalism, drug business and violence, the President of Uzbekistan paid special attention to the issues of education, the problems of young people, providing young people with universal access to quality education and creating the necessary conditions for self-realization. Solving the problem in Afghanistan is necessary not by force, but by political and humanitarian ones. In this context, the statement on support for education in neighboring Afghanistan looks logical and consistent.

Ignorance, he said, breeds violence. The President also noted the need to understand the humanistic essence of Islam. A new important initiative was his proposal to create an Education Facilitation Fund in Afghanistan. He noted that peace in Afghanistan will open up new opportunities for all states of the Eurasian continent[1].

In this context, the process has to be filled with tools of cultural diplomacy. As the people of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, as the president said, have developed in the same cultural and civilizational space for thousands of years. Cultural, humanitarian and social components are of fundamental importance both for regional cooperation and the peace process in Afghanistan.

According to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the people's diplomacy, simple human communication is a way to strengthen mutual understanding and stability and it is designed to ensure direct contacts between ordinary people and popularize the cultural wealth of each country[2].

In this context, the creation of “Uzbekistan-Afghanistan” friendship society has become a historical event in relations between the two states. Although close trade and economic, cultural cooperation between the peoples of Afghanistan and Uzbekistan has existed for a long time and has a thousand-year history. However, such a “popular” platform, which promotes the development of relations between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan on the basis of rapprochement of historical and cultural, material values, represents the peoples of the two countries is being created for the first time. The chairman of the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan Friendship Society, the rector of the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies Abdurahim Mannonov said: “The opening of the Uzbek-Afghan friendship society has become a historic event. Until now, the history of the two countries has not been a community that helps establish relations with Afghanistan. The opened society was directly implemented by the initiatives of the head of our state Shavkat Miromonovich. Our society has set a number of goals, namely, to take part in historic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in various fields since 2017. As you know, the relationship between the two countries dates back to ancient history. When there are no borders between us, hundreds of our great scholars have already found shelter in the land of Afghanistan, and our society has been planning a great deal of work to ease their memories. At the same time, we will try to contribute to the good work of our Afghan friends by studying and propagating the heritage of our descendants and providing economic, cultural and educational assistance to the Afghan people. Today, more than a hundred Afghan students are studying at the universities in Termez. Members of our

friendship society are going to visit Termez and meet with Afghan students in the near future, and I think that this will bring our nations closer to each other”[3].

The society is moving in the following directions. The first direction is to promote the development of relations between the peoples of the two countries in such areas as enlightenment, education and science. In these areas, both nations have high potential. For example, this year in the Termez district, at the initiative of the President of our country, an educational center was organized to train Afghan citizens at the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which is a clear confirmation of the long friendly relations between our states. This educational institution is important for training, taking into account the needs of the Afghan side, qualified specialists with secondary special and higher education in the socio-economic, transport and communication and other areas.

As is known, joint restoration, repair and improvement of final resting places Abu Rayhan Beruni, Alisher Navoi, Zahiriddin Muhammad Bobur, Boborahim Mashrab and other great scientists and thinkers that are a symbol of our common cultural and spiritual heritage. And main tasks of friendship society “Uzbekistan-Afghanistan” are to research deeper heritage of our ancestors.

The second direction is connected with rendering assistance to cooperation in the cultural, humanitarian, scientific and educational spheres, which also occupies an important place. The organization also aims to constantly exchange views on international, scientific and cultural issues between governmental and non-governmental organizations. An important

task is to attract the civilian sector, which in turn facilitates the implementation of joint international projects aimed at increasing the activity of the population. It also contributes to the strengthening of relations between government organizations, business and business structures. It should be noted that the representatives of Afghanistan are actively participating in various international scientific, practical and cultural events held in our country. In particular, Afghan artists regularly participate in the “Sharq taronalari” international music festival.

The third direction includes the formation and strengthening of the image of states within countries. To this end, a database will be created on Uzbekistan, its achievements in state-building and the reforms being carried out. This will be an important incentive for understanding the nature and direction of the reforms being carried out and the modernization of various spheres of society. This is confirmed by the meeting of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Mohammad Ashraf Ghani in 2017 with the faculty and students of Bukhara State University. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani was awarded a diploma on conferring the title of an honorary doctor of Bukhara State University. “I dreamed of visiting Bukhara, which played an important role in the development of world science and Islamic civilization. I want to sincerely thank the distinguished President Shavkat Mirziyoyev for such an opportunity. The land of Uzbekistan has raised many great thinkers, including Imam Bukhari and Imam Termizi. The young people who study here are brought up by worthy ancestral personalities” said President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani[4].

The fourth direction is the strengthening and further development of the cultural sphere. Everyone knows that the two nations have a big craving for acquaintance with works, works of representatives of art,

culture, theatre, cinema. We will not hide, the absence of a long-term exchange in this area has created a certain gap. For example, we know about the existence of famous schools of maqom in Afghanistan and other types of art or about the works of craftsmen, artisans only through third sources or historical books. Meanwhile, today, the need for this is observed not only in our country, but also in Afghanistan. In this regard, the Foundation will organize joint festivals, fairs, exhibitions, including photo exhibitions.

The fifth area is the provision of assistance to Afghans, their association in various sectors. An important area is together with governmental and other interested organizations, assistance in strengthening humanitarian, scientific, technical, cultural relations, and also partnership relations between cities and regions of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. For example, a delegation led by the Deputy Director of the IRA Academy of Sciences M. Afzali took part in an international scientific-practical conference dedicated to great historical figures and scholars (May 5–16, 2014, city of Samarkand). On March 12–15, 2016, the delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan headed by the chairman of the International Fund named after Babur Z. Mashrabov visited the city of Herat, improved the territory of the Alisher Navoi mausoleum and restored the mausoleum of Kamoliddin Behzod.

Thus, in the context of globalization, the formation and development of bilateral relations using cultural diplomacy opens up new opportunities for strengthening relations between the two countries. On the other hand, cultural diplomacy creates conditions for the formation and growth of trust between the parties and forms a positive image of the state. A large role in this is given to society. Since the development of society is open, we encourage our citizens and Afghan friends to actively participate in their lives.