



Second EU-Central Asia Economic Forum 18-19 May 2023 – Almaty, Kazakhstan

Thursday 18 May 2023 – Business session

13.00-14.00 **Registration**

14.00-14.20 **Opening**

- Mr Erbolat Dosaev, Mayor of Almaty
- Mr Roman Vassilenko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan
- Ms Terhi Hakala, EU Special Representative for Central Asia
- Ms Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director, International Trade Centre (ITC)

14.20-15.40 **Session I: Trading along EU-Central Asia routes: a business perspective**

The session will set the scene for the business discussions, starting with a macro-level approach to the existing challenges and opportunities linked to the EU-Central Asia trade routes. The panellists will share their views on practical challenges faced by companies and highlight business and governments' priorities to unlock the regions' trade potential and facilitate trade links between the EU and Central Asia.

The discussion will revolve around key themes that will be further explored in sessions II and III: the challenges of multimodal transport and the need for innovation and IT to reduce the time to trade and to upgrade the infrastructure along EU-CA trade routes; the soft infrastructure required to support trade along new routes; railway transport routes as a green alternative to trucks; the importance of a transparent and predictable trade environment for EU business to export to Central Asia; and harmonisation of standards and certification requirements in line with international requirements.

The interventions of the panellists will be structured in several rounds of questions-answers steered by the moderator and will be followed by Q&A from the audience.

Moderator: Ms Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director of the International Trade Centre (ITC)

Panel:

Implemented by:

- Mr Kęstutis Jankauskas, Ambassador of the European Union to Kazakhstan
- Mr Kairat Balykbayev, Vice-Minister of Trade and Integration, Kazakhstan
- Ms Leila Batyrbekova, Chair of the Europe and Central Asia Transport and Trade Association
- Mr Abdulla Khashimov, Advisor to the Minister of Investments, Industry and Trade, Uzbekistan
- Mr Mikayel Tovmasyan, EUROBAK Board Member and Managing Director of Pernod Ricard, Kazakhstan

15.40-16.10 Coffee Break

16.10-17.30 **Session II: Smart trade – Reengineering business operations along EU-CA corridors**

Following the overarching discussion of challenges and opportunities identified by businesses engaged in EU-Central Asia trade, this session will zoom in on key solutions aimed at stimulating trade growth, building a business-supportive trade ecosystem, and facilitating business operations along the EU-Central Asia trade corridors. The session will start with the presentation of the regional **“Info Trade Central Asia Gateway”** – an online platform that will provide the business community with a door-to-door view of cross-border formalities along Central Asia corridors and continue with a panel discussion of G2G and B2B cooperation for improved procedural efficiency along the EU-Central Asia trade corridors, focused on building smart, green, and inclusive borders.

Moderator: Mr Pierre Bonthonneau, Head of Trade Facilitation Unit, ITC

Panel:

- Mr Iskender Asylkulov, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economy and Commerce, Kyrgyz Republic
- Mr Nurlan Kulbatyrov, Deputy General Director of JSC “QazTrade” Centre for Trade Policy and Development, Kazakhstan
- Ms Larisa Kislyakova, Head of the Central Asia Transport and Logistics Partnership
- Ms Hannah Nguyen, Director-Digital Ecosystems, Digital Standards Initiative, International Chamber of Commerce
- Mr Siddique Khan, President & CEO Globalink, Logistics Group

17.30-18.45 **Session III: Let's get to business: private sector-led solutions for B2B connectivity**
In this session, participants will discuss cutting-edge digital solutions implemented in Central Asia and in the EU to stimulate business connections and increase economic ties between the two regions, such as eCommerce hubs; e-learning opportunities for businesses; digitalisation of B2B trade documents, etc. The session will include:

- Presentation of a European B2B marketplace that facilitates trade between EU and Central Asian businesses. With a focus on the textile industry, review of obstacles to trade with the EU for Central Asian textile businesses and presentation of the B2B marketplace FourSource.
- Launch of the Central Asia Trade Academies. This part will present how Universities, Government agencies and private businesses from Central Asia join forces to help private sector trade regionally and towards the EU through innovative methods, such as virtual learning spaces. The session will include testimonies from the business community and/or University rectors and/or Head of Government agencies.

Moderator: Ms Julia Kussidi, EUROBAK Executive Director

Panel:

- Mr Mustafin Sultan, Managing Director KazPost JSC, Kazakhstan (TBC)
- Mr Almaz Kadyraliev, Rector of the Kyrgyz Economic Research University
- Mr Jonas Wand, CEO & Co-founder, FourSource
- Ms Annabel Sykes, Senior Adviser on e-commerce, ITC
- Mr Denis Stepantsev, Managing Director, Digital Kazakhstan Association

18:45-18:55 **Closing Session**

- Mr Kęstutis Jankauskas, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Kazakhstan
- Ms Zhanar Aitzhanova, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to WTO and other international economic organizations

19.00-21.00 **Networking reception**

Friday 19 May 2023 – Second EU-Central Asia Economic Forum

08.00-09.15 **Registration and welcome coffee**

09.15-09.30 **Opening**

- Mr Alibek Kuantyrov, Minister of National Economy, Kazakhstan
- Ms Terhi Hakala, EU Special Representative for Central Asia

09.30-10.30 **Session I: Improving the Business Climate in Central Asia**

Ensuring legal certainty and improving the business climate will lead to, among other things, stronger private sector development, greater competitiveness and more investment. The five countries of Central Asia have long recognised the importance of fostering private sector-led growth to diversify their production structures and improve resilience to external shocks.

Central Asian countries have undertaken efforts to encourage private sector development, most notably by streamlining regulation, digitalising many government services, and improving regional exchange of information and cross-border co-operation. Nevertheless, challenges remain, including inconsistent regulatory standards, uneven implementation, legal uncertainty and a volatile international context, which all pose challenges to the region's transition to a private sector-driven growth.

Improving the business environment and the enabling policy dialogue more broadly is a major priority for the EU in the region, reflected in both its Global Gateway strategy and the European Union Strategy on Central Asia. This session will start with a presentation of the results of ongoing OECD work on business climate in the region, including two recent private-sector surveys conducted in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It will be followed by broader exchanges on policy actions needed to foster stronger private sector development in the region.

Moderator: Mr William Tompson, Head of the Eurasia Division, OECD

Panel:

- Mr Alibek Kuantyrov, Minister of National Economy, Kazakhstan
- Mr Peter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hungary
- Mr Alexis Vafeades, Minister of Transport, Communications and Works, Cyprus
- Mr Ilkhom Norkulov, Deputy Minister of Economy and Finance, Uzbekistan
- Mr Louis Skyner, Partner and Board Member of EUROUZ, Dentons
- Mr Zhalyn Zheenaliev, Deputy Director of the National Agency for Investment, Kyrgyz Republic

10.30-11.00 **Coffee break**

11:00-12:45

Session II: Driving the Green and Digital Transitions in Central Asia

The green and digital transitions are a way forward to attain resilient, sustainable and economic growth. Both have been recognised as priorities for Central Asia. Significant investments in clean energy and broadband infrastructure have taken place in recent years in the region, leading to increased use of renewable energies and greater digital coverage.

The green transition is increasingly urgent. Central Asia is highly vulnerable to climate change, with temperatures rising more rapidly than the global average. Central Asia also lags in digital connectivity. Further action is needed to mitigate climate change, manage natural resources sustainably, and tackle the digital divide. Within the framework of the Global Gateway, the Team Europe initiatives on Water-Energy-Climate Change and on Digital Connectivity were launched in 2022 to help Central Asia harness solar, wind and hydro energy and accelerate digitalisation. The session will discuss concrete actions to achieve the common goals of a greener and more digital future-proof development under the Global Gateway.

11:00-11.50

1. The Green Transition

Moderator:

Ms Alessandra Fidanza, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Environment, Italy

Panel:

- Mr Daler Juma, Minister of Energy and Water, Tajikistan
- Mr Mantas Adomenas, Deputy Foreign Minister, Lithuania
- Mr Léon Delvaux, Acting Director for Neighbouring Countries, Industry, Goods, Regulatory Cooperation and Public Procurement, Directorate-General for Trade, European Commission
- Ms Tatiana Proskuryakova, Regional Director for Central Asia, World Bank
- Ms Cécile Couprie, Regional Director for Eurasia, French Agency for Development AFD
- Ms Ainur Tumysheva, Investment Director, Svevind

11:50-12:45

2. The Digital Transition

Moderator:

Ms Elena Bychkova, Managing Director, Digital Kazakhstan Association

Panel:

- Mr Malik Olzhabekov, Vice-Minister of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry, Kazakhstan
- Ms Myriam Ferran, Deputy Director General, Directorate General for International Partnerships, European Commission

- Mr Märt Volmer, Undersecretary for Global Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estonia
- Mr Azamat Burzhuev, Chief of Digital Development, Department of the Presidential Administration, Kyrgyz Republic
- Mr Oleg Pekos, First Deputy Minister of Digital Technologies, Uzbekistan
- Mr Timur Sarsenov, Senior Sales Manager, SES
- Mr Arman Kuzetov, Senior Country Officer, Nokia

13.00-14.15 **Lunch**

14:15-14:30 **Transfer from Lunch to Meeting Hall**

14.30-16.00 **High-Level Roundtable – Strengthening EU-Central Asia Trade and Economic Relations**

Co-operation between the European Union and Central Asia has substantially increased in political importance, potential and ambition in recent years.

The EU is the main trading partner of the five Central Asian countries combined, accounting for 23.6% of their foreign trade in 2021. Trade flows continued to grow in 2022. The EU is also the biggest investor in Central Asia, as more than 40% of the foreign direct investment in the region originates from EU Member States.

This session brings together Prime Ministers or other top-level representatives from the governments of the five Central Asian countries and Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis from the European Commission, including the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Participants will discuss the framework conducive to strengthening trade and investment relations and how to unlock the potential of this region by accelerating structural reforms, creating an attractive business environment and investment climate, and integrating the region in a wider global economy, especially in view of current global/geopolitical challenges.

These strategic partners will discuss the state of play and the ways forward in terms of the policies, programmes, and investments needed to develop a more integrated and interconnected regional market.

Moderator: Ms Terhi Hakala, EU Special Representative for Central Asia

- Mr Alikhan Smailov, Prime Minister, Kazakhstan
- Mr Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive Vice-President, European Commission
- Mr Akylbek Zhaparov, Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, Kyrgyz Republic
- Mr Kokhir Rasulzoda, Prime Minister, Tajikistan
- Mr Jamshid Khodjaev, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Investments, Industry and Trade, Uzbekistan
- Mr Serdar Jorayev, Minister of Finance and Economy, Turkmenistan
- Ms Teresa Czerwińska, Vice-President, European Investment Bank
- Ms Odile Renaud-Basso, President, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

16.00-16.30 **Coffee break**

16:30-18:30 **Session III: Enhancing Trade and Transport Connectivity between the EU and Central Asia**

As trade flows continue to grow while recent geopolitical events have disrupted traditional transport corridors, trade routes need to be diversified. Stakeholders will exchange ideas about how to address current bottlenecks and further develop intra-regional and EU-Central Asia connectivity, building on the key findings of the EU-financed Study of Sustainable Transport Corridors between Europe and Central Asia, which the EBRD will present.

Moderator: Mr Peteris Ustubs, Director for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Directorate General for International Partnerships, European Commission

Panel:

Presentation on the key findings of the EU-financed Study on Sustainable Transport Corridors by Ms Idil Bilgic-Alpaslan, Associate Director, Governance, EBRD

- Mr Almaz Idyrysov, Vice-Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development, Kazakhstan
- Mr Janis Vitenbergs, Minister of Transport, Latvia
- Ms Maja Bakran, Acting Director General for Mobility and Transport, European Commission
- Mr Iulian Fota, Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs, Romania
- Mr. Zdenko Lucić, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Croatia
- Ms Nina Vaskunlahti, Under-Secretary of State for International Trade, Finland
- Mr Christoph Denk, Managing Director, EBRD
- Ms Tabea Klang, Managing Director for Sales, Deutsche Bahn Cargo Eurasia

18.30-20.30 **Reception**