

The message from the roof of the world

**by Mr. Hamrokhon Zarifi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Tajikistan**

The Republic of Tajikistan attaches great importance to the development and extension of relations with the European Union. Relations with the EU are among priority directions of the foreign policy of our country.

The official visits of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan H.E. Emomali Rahmon to Brussels and several European countries in February 2009 have confirmed the adherence of the Republic of Tajikistan to comprehensive development of partnership and cooperation with the EU.

The President of Tajikistan H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon submitted the package of the priority projects of regional significance to the leadership of the European Commission. We hope that the European Commission after thorough consideration of these projects will make a positive decision.

Tajikistan believes that the implementation of the EU Strategy will contribute to the integration process in Central Asia and will improve the bilateral relations between countries in the region. The Strategy covers the most significant and important trends and areas of cooperation between Central Asian countries and the European Union.

Bilaterally, an EU-Tajikistan relation is governed by the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which was signed in late 2004 and expected to enhance bilateral relations and heighten the EU profile in Tajikistan, as it sets out the parameters for increased political dialogue and cooperation and aims to promote bilateral trade and investments. It provides a comprehensive and ambitious framework for joint EU-Tajikistan work, in all key areas of reform.

The first meeting of the Cooperation Council was held on December 13th, 2010 in Brussels. The Co-operation Council provided a good opportunity to review recent economic and social reforms in Tajikistan.

Cooperation between Tajikistan and the EU has been actively and intensively developed during the last years. Tajikistan is pursuing a closer relationship with the European Union, targeting its co-operation, to facilitate economic transition, promoting inclusive, sustainable human and economic development.

Tajikistan is interested in maximum use of the bilateral economic cooperation potential with the EU, attraction of European investments to the development of priority areas of the country's economy, in particular hydropower, transport and communications, industry and agriculture.

In relations with the EU the Republic of Tajikistan proceeds from the need to cover the most important trends and areas of interaction, including the process of democratization, rule of law, border management, combating drug trafficking, transport and energy, particularly renewable energy, water management, environmental protection, education, trade and investment, support of Tajikistan's accession to WTO.

The economic cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the EU needs to be elevated to the level of political relations.

Tajikistan also receives regional and thematic assistance in areas like border management and drug control (BOMCA/CADAP), education (TEMPUS, Erasmus Mundus), water / environment, human rights and democracy (EIDHR), non-State actors (NSA) and SME development (CA-Invest), and disaster preparedness (DIP-ECHO).

Tajikistan first among the Central Asian countries signed the framework Agreement on cooperation with the European

Investment Bank. We hope that after its entry into force (1st December 2009), the EIB will be actively involved in investment of projects in Tajikistan, particularly in the hydropower sector.

The good example is the reconstruction project of Kayrakum Hydropower station. It is planning to be started during 2010 by the European Investment Bank in cooperation with the EBRD and the European Commission.

Since the adoption of the *European Union and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership* in June 2007, bilateral relations between the EU and Tajikistan have intensified in a number of fields. One particular area is that of human rights, where the EU and Tajikistan entered into an enhanced dialogue in October 2008. The EU-Tajikistan human rights dialogue offers a platform for discussion on questions of mutual interest, and serves to enhance cooperation on human rights.

Under current circumstances, gaining energy independence and releasing the country from communication isolation is a vital necessity for Tajikistan. For these purposes the EU assistance is important in conducting feasibility study on hydropower and communication projects in Tajikistan.

There 64 km³ of water stock out of an aggregate volume of 115 km³ of the Aral Sea basin generates in Tajikistan. In addition, Tajikistan has abundant unexhausted sources of hydro-energy ranking the 8th in the world on total amount and the 2nd on specific volumes. Total hydropower potential of the country is estimated at 527 billion kWt\hours of electricity per year.

Nature, picturesque and skyscraping mountains, as well as unique landscape in Tajikistan remind of a small Switzerland in Central Asia. Wild nature, high mountains, fresh spring water and ancient historic sights make Tajikistan attractive for tourists.

We are confident that today more than ever before the vitalization of the activity of the European Union in Central Asia for solution of issues related to the process of further achievement of stability and sustainable economic development of the region is important.

Only with common consolidated efforts of the European Union and the countries of the region we would be able to solve those problems and challenges which our governments and the people face today. The Republic of Tajikistan, on its turn, is always open for effective and constructive cooperation, both with the European Union, as well as with other countries.