

“Participation in international organizations helps to advance the international agenda of Tajikistan, including the implementation of regional and global initiatives that are also in demand internally,” expert Farrukh Salimov analyzes the policy of Tajikistan in international organizations, especially for CABAR.asia.

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#)

The international role of any country is determined by its involvement and active position in solving regional and global problems, which is implemented within the framework of the country's participation in international organizations. The official website of the President of Tajikistan lists 30 international and regional organizations operating in the country, as well as 46 non-governmental international organizations that are registered with the Ministry of Justice of the republic.[\[1\]](#)



The 2019 Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and the High-Level International Conference on Combating Terrorism and its Sources of Funding are examples of such involvement in Dushanbe.

In 2019, Tajikistan chaired a number of regional organizations and their structures, including the CICA, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and the Forum for Security Cooperation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In 2020, Tajikistan begins its chairmanship in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan, and takes over chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

A number of significant international events are planned, including in 2020 a high-level International Conference on the implementation of the 4th global initiative of Tajikistan – the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, the 5500th anniversary of ancient Sarazm and the 700th anniversary of the great Tajik poet Kamoli Khujandi (with the support of UNESCO), as well as in 2021 summits and conferences under

the chairmanship of the Republic of Tajikistan in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, SCO and CSTO.

It should be noted that the Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Tajikistan, adopted in 2015, pays significant attention to the country's participation in international structures, whereby "Tajikistan intends to contribute to strengthening security, stability, cooperation and constructive international dialogue and use the capabilities of these organizations to ensure sustainable development of the country ".[\[2\]](#)

The main stages and features of the participation of the Republic of Tajikistan in international organizations

The implementation of the foreign policy strategy, as well as the country's participation in international organizations, was influenced not only by internal political factors (which are undoubtedly fundamental), but also by the regional and global situation. In order to understand the dynamics and vectors of changes in the role, place, and significance of international organizations in the foreign policy of the Republic of Tajikistan, one should consider them in the context of the stages within which there were changes in the country's interaction with international organizations:

I. 1991-2001 - the stage of the Republic of Tajikistan joining the authoritative and influential organizations of the world. *The domestic agenda* required legitimation, consolidation of sovereignty, confirmation of the status of subjectivity in the international system, an early resolution of the civil war and post-conflict reconstruction. The *regional agenda* promoted active participation in the formation of regional integration structures and security systems in connection with the neighborhood with unstable Afghanistan. Tajikistan has become not only a member of regional and global international organizations, but also itself acted as the creator of such structures. During this period, the country joined the CIS, became a member of the UN, was among the signatories of the Collective Security Treaty, became a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, IMF, OSCE, Shanghai Five, and then the SCO.

Already in 1993, 12 international organizations, including the UN, OSCE, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, in 1994, 8 international organizations, in 1995 two organizations and in 1996 two more organizations founded their own representations and began to operate in the Republic of Tajikistan ".[\[3\]](#) Tajikistan became a member of such regional structures as OCAC (1994), CAEC (1998).

Features of the participation of the Republic of Tajikistan in international organizations at this stage were as follows:

- joining the most authoritative and recognized international organizations and thereby ensuring official recognition and confirmation of the status of a sovereign state in the system of international relations;
- settlement of internal conflict and achievement of peace and national consent (UN, OSCE, CIS);
- participation in the process of creating a regional security architecture (CSTO, Shanghai Five);
- participation in the formation of regional integration structures (OCAC, CAEC);
- solution of interstate problems inherited from the USSR, including border problems (the Shanghai Five);
- post-conflict reconstruction of the country.

II. 2001-2015 - the stage of completing entry into the main international organizations and promoting their own agenda in international relations (regional and global). The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent policies of the United States and its allies, influenced not only the configuration and balance of forces in Central Asia, but also the activities of international organizations and Tajikistan's participation in them. These processes led to the transformation of the CAES into the CACO (2002-2005), which was then absorbed by the EurAsEC (2005-2014), the Shanghai Five (transformed into the SCO in June 2001), the Collective Security Treaty (in October 2002, the CST Organization Charter was adopted), in which Tajikistan acted not only as an active participant, but also as a founder.

New challenges and threats, such as the economic crisis of 2008, interethnic conflicts in the region, territorial and border disputes, the activation of terrorist organizations in neighboring countries (including the Middle East, associated with the emergence and functioning of IS) have set new tasks for Tajikistan's foreign policy , the solution of which was only possible on a collective basis: the formation of a regional security architecture, the acceleration of regional integration processes, the involvement of international organizations in solving economic, environmental and social problems. In such conditions, Tajikistan adopted the first Concept of Foreign Policy (2002), which announced an "open door" policy and the principle of equidistance from all centers of power. This policy was aimed primarily at smoothing out the consequences of a confrontational choice between the leading actors of the international system, as well as at achieving the economic goals of the state, namely the development of economic relations with all interested partners and attracting foreign investment into the country's economy. The culmination of this policy can

be considered the membership of the Republic of Tajikistan in the WTO.

Another important area of Tajikistan's participation in international organizations is the implementation of its international initiatives with the support of these organizations. Tajikistan has become a country-initiator of water initiatives on a global scale. As it is known, during this period, the world community (UN) supported 3 initiatives of the Tajik side, including: 2003 - International Year of Clean Water, 2005-2015 - International Decade of Action "Water for Life", 2013 - International Year of Cooperation in the field of water. The most important events in the participation of the Republic of Tajikistan in international structures during this period were the chairmanship in the CIS (December 2011), the SCO (2014) and the election of Tajikistan as a member of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (2013-2016) and much more.

Tajikistan came up with initiatives on other problems of regional and global scale, which were supported by the world community. Including, the creation of peace and security in Afghanistan through the restoration of the economy and social sphere, the creation of the International Fund for the Protection of Glaciers, the announcement of 2012 as the International Year of Water Diplomacy, the international fight against drugs, terrorism, etc.[\[4\]](#)

The peculiarities of the interaction of the Republic of Tajikistan with international organizations at this stage were as follows:

- completion of the process of post-conflict reconstruction of the country;
- solving economic problems and attracting foreign investment;
- achieving the "three strategic goals" of the country (breaking the communication deadlock, food and energy security);
- the formation of a new security architecture in the region associated with the growth of terrorist activity in the region and the world;
- regional economic integration;
- confirmation of the role of the Republic of Tajikistan in initiating global and regional problems (water initiatives, including water diplomacy, international fight against terrorism and extremism, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan);

III. 2015-present. It can be characterized as a **stage of mature attitude towards international organizations and the embodiment of the strategic interests of the state**. In 2015, the Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Tajikistan was adopted, which was the beginning of the formalization of a new stage in the foreign policy of the Republic of

Tajikistan. By this time, the legal regulations (Laws and Statutory Instruments) in the field of foreign policy regulation had already been fully formed, the main vectors, priorities, goals and objectives of Tajikistan's foreign policy were outlined. The country has launched a number of national strategies, including the National Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030, in which the long-term goal is "to improve the living standards of the country's population based on sustainable economic development."

Within the framework of cooperation with international organizations, such tasks were also set - developing relationships, coordinating joint activities to achieve the statutory goals and objectives of organizations, moving from providing social and humanitarian assistance to promoting economic development. In addition, during his message to the country's parliament, Emomali Rahmon in December 2019 outlined the fourth strategic goal - accelerated industrialization, the implementation of which is impossible without the assistance of partners, including international organizations.

The external factors that influenced the dynamics of relations of the Republic of Tajikistan with the states of the world and international organizations became the events in Ukraine, and the subsequent imposition of sanctions against one of the main economic partners of the country - Russia (2014), the activities of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (2014-2019), the formation of the EAEU (2015), the election of Trump and the new US policy in the world and the Central Asia region in particular (2016), the Chinese project "Belt and Road Initiative" (2013), change of political leadership in neighboring Uzbekistan, the new EU strategy in Central Asia (2019), the military-political situation in neighboring Afghanistan and others. Each of these events had an impact on the priority of certain organizations for the Republic of Tajikistan.

Surely, the COVID-19 pandemic makes its own adjustments to the plans for holding international events but does not significantly affect the dynamics of relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and international organizations. The above-mentioned shows that Tajikistan is an active subject of international relations and a significant participant in international organizations.

Features of participation and interaction of the Republic of Tajikistan with international organizations in this period are characterized by:

- active regional and global activities in promoting international initiatives (including water initiatives, the fight against international terrorism, peacebuilding in Afghanistan, etc.);
- strengthening the regional security system;

- participation in the processes of regional integration;
- obtaining support from partners and international organizations for solving domestic (socio-economic, environmental) and regional (water and energy) problems.

Analysis of participation in international organizations

A review of the stages and features of Tajikistan's participation in international organizations that we have conditionally designated has shown that the country has gradually increased its cooperation with international structures. If at the initial stage the main goals were the recognition of the subjectivity and sovereignty of the country, the resolution of the internal conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, then at the next stages one can observe the pragmatic use by the state of the potential and capabilities of these organizations to solve internal and external problems using their status, tools, capabilities and potential.

International organizations act not only as international platforms for discussing and resolving certain issues of the internal and external agenda, but also are one of the most important actors providing economic, financial, humanitarian, investment and grant assistance to the country.

When preparing this analysis, it turned out that there are almost no separate works (including studies, articles, reports, etc.) on Tajikistan's participation in international organizations, both in domestic and foreign literature. Moreover, there is a lack of information on the official websites of state ministries and departments in this matter. The existing information on these sites is limited to general, reference information about the organization, its goals and objectives, and sometimes a brief summary of the history of relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and a certain organization. The same applies to dissertation research; there are also no works of a critical or comparative nature of the participation of the Republic of Tajikistan in international organizations. In this regard, it seems difficult to find statistical information on the total amount of funds invested in the republic by international organizations at certain stages of the formation of relations between them.

Some information can be obtained from press releases of some organizations. For example, the United States Agency for International Development USAID has stated that, over 26 years, it has committed \$ 1.8 billion to programs that support Tajikistan's security, democratic institutions, social sector, and economic growth.

In 2015, the ex-director of the Aga Khan Foundation, Yodgor Fayzov, noted that the annual

investment of this structure in Tajikistan amounts to 60-70 million USD.[5] ADB since 1998 has mobilized to Tajikistan 1.8 billion USD. United States, including in the form of grants 1.1 billion USD.[6] A cursory analysis of the World Bank Group’s activities in Tajikistan shows that its active portfolio includes 17 projects. The portfolio’s net liabilities amount to 683 million USD.[7] Tajikistan’s main creditors in 2019 include the World Bank (325.7 million USD), the Asian Development Bank (259.1 million USD) and the Islamic Development Bank (134.9 million USD).[8]

International financial institutions / organizations are also involved in public investment projects:[9]

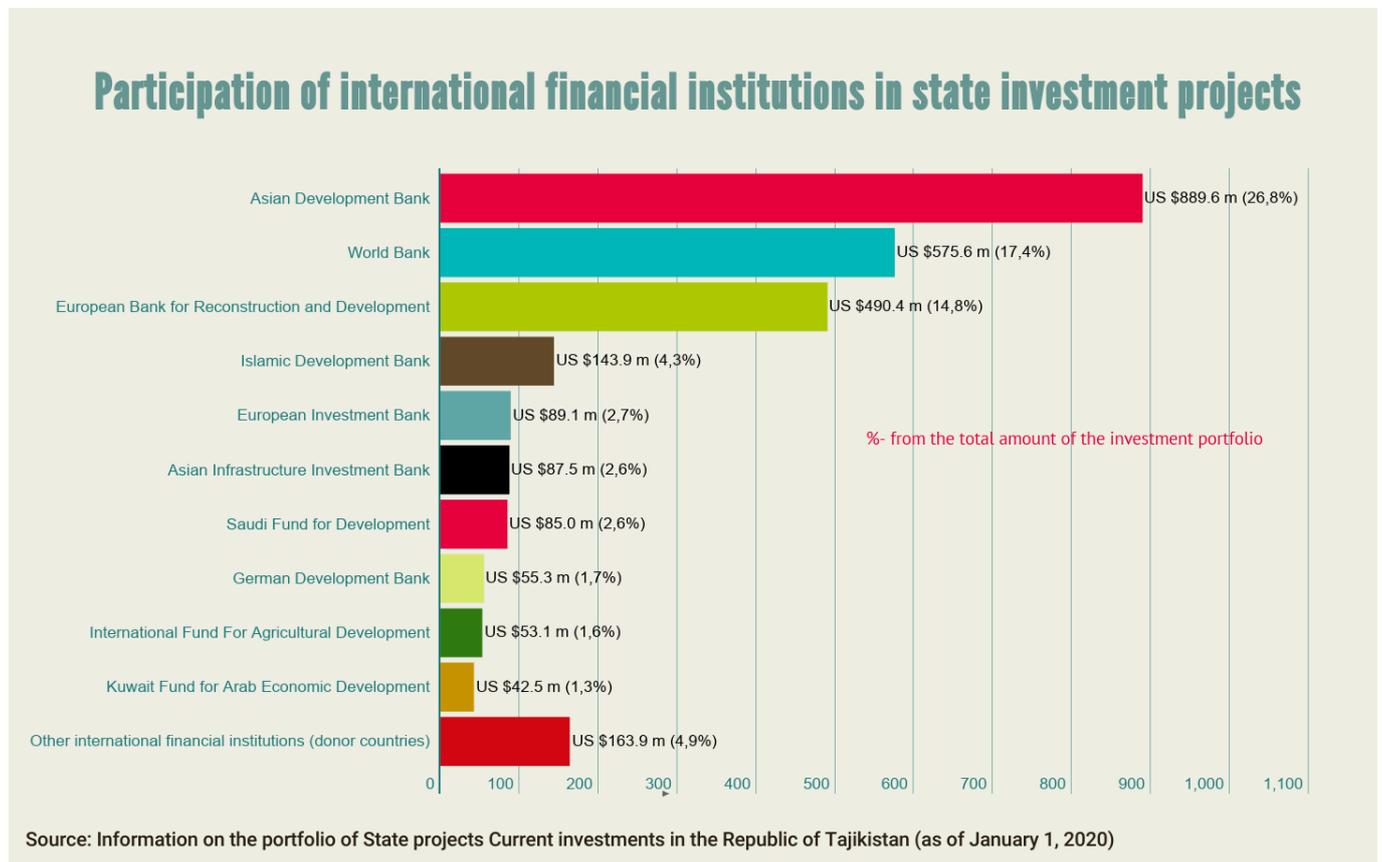


Chart by Adinai Kurmanbekova, CABAR.asia Intern

The analysis helped to identify three models of participation of the Republic of Tajikistan in international organizations:

- **Effective interaction model.**

Tajikistan effectively interacts with the UN and its specialized structures, the CIS, SCO,

CSTO, and international financial organizations. For example, participation in UNESCO activities “allowed the country to initiate and promote various projects in the field of culture, science and education, making a significant contribution to the protection and popularization of the world cultural and natural heritage ... At the initiative of our country “Shashmakom”, “Falak”, the national style of dresses “Chakan”, the national dish “Oshi Palav”, the holiday “Navruz” were included in the world list of tangible and intangible cultural heritage (*material and immaterial patrimony*) “. [10] It is difficult to argue with the thesis that a successful performance at one international platform (especially with regard to the UN and its specialized agencies) will not have a positive effect on other platforms. Given the rich historical and cultural heritage of the Tajik people, the participation of the Republic of Tajikistan in UNESCO will become more active. The same applies to the membership of the Republic of Tajikistan with the CSTO, SCO, CIS, interaction with financial institutions such as the EBRD, WB, IDB, ADB and others.

- **Model of pragmatic approach.**

A pragmatic approach is expressed in the fact that the country is guided by national interests, and their protection will be a priority in relations with international actors, despite their status and history of cooperation. This can be seen on the example of the interaction of Tajikistan with the OSCE. As early as February 19, 1994, Tajikistan became a full member of the OSCE. At the same time, the OSCE Office in Tajikistan began its activities. 5 field offices were opened: Garm, Khujand, Kulyab, Kurgan-Tyube and Shaartuz. The participation of the Republic of Tajikistan in the OSCE and the role of this organization in solving problems of a military-political, economic-ecological, humanitarian nature was significant. Everything changed when in 2016 the OSCE Human Dimension Meeting was held in Warsaw, in which representatives of the Islamic Renaissance Party and Group 24, banned and declared terrorist in Tajikistan, took part. [11] The attitude of the authorities towards the OSCE Office in Tajikistan has undergone changes, as a result of which “since July 2017, the status of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan was downgraded to the OSCE Program Office, and since the new status did not provide for field offices, they were closed in Garm, Khujand, Kurgan-Tyube and Shaartuz “. [12]

Another example is the possible membership of the Republic of Tajikistan in the EAEU. The question of the country's entry into this integration association has been on the agenda since its formation, especially since Tajikistan was a member of the EurAsEC, which was the predecessor of the EAEU. This topic requires a separate analysis, and in this regard, this question will not be discussed in this work. Let us just note that despite all-round pressure, discussions, work of various governmental and interstate commissions, Tajikistan is still only theoretically considering its membership in this organization.

- **Formal participation model.**

Membership and participation in international organizations is a voluntary choice of the state itself. In practice, membership in some organizations may be dictated by image goals or the status of the latter, and it is not necessary that participation brings other "dividends". The analysis shows that this model can be applied to almost any organization that Tajikistan is a member of, and which at certain stages may simply not be in demand in the country's foreign policy.

Benefits and prospects of participation in international organizations

The analysis showed several advantages of the participation of the Republic of Tajikistan in international organizations.

Firstly, Tajikistan, as a small state, in order to realize its regional interests, is preferable to be in a multi-component structure. Secondly, the existing current threats and challenges to security require military-political cooperation with the states of the region, and the modern mechanism for the distribution of production and labor involves participation in regional organizations of an integration type. Thirdly, participation in international organizations makes it possible to attract additional resources to achieve goals and objectives in domestic and foreign policy. Fourthly, participation in international organizations helps to advance the international agenda of Tajikistan, including the implementation of regional and global initiatives, which are also in demand internally.

During the process of formation and strengthening of state sovereignty and international subjectivity, Tajikistan has gone a very long and difficult way of searching for the most pragmatic "formulas" for establishing relationships with international institutions. Of course, it is very difficult to expect and even more so to believe in the effectiveness of all those international organizations in which the country is a member, but as noted above, the types of motivation for participation were different:

1. participation in the organization enhances the country's image;
2. membership in international organizations contributes to the integration of the participating countries;
3. seeking international support as a way to legitimize activities in both domestic and foreign policy;
4. Solving / resolving problems / disputes - obtaining assistance from the international community in solving economic, political, socio-economic problems, border, territorial, transport and other problems.

According to the data for 2015, about 80 partners were involved in the process of providing external assistance to Tajikistan, including donor organizations, international and non-governmental organizations. According to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), from 1992 to 2017, the total volume of official development assistance to Tajikistan amounted to 5 billion 915 million USD.^[13]

From the foregoing, we can conclude that the Republic will actively participate in the activities of international organizations, using their capabilities and potential to address goals and objectives. The effectiveness of participation will entirely depend on the goals that the country has set for itself in the medium- and long-term periods.

This material has been prepared as part of the Giving Voice, Driving Change – from the Borderland to the Steppes Project. The opinions expressed in the article do not reflect the position of the editorial board or donor.

[1] International organizations in Tajikistan: reliable partners or “suspicious comrades”? // <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/29879836.html>

[2] Concept of foreign policy of the Republic of Tajikistan. Approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan dated January 27, 2015, No. 332 // <https://mfa.tj/ru/main/view/988/kontseptsiya-vneshnei-politiki-respubliki-tadzhikistan>

[3] Successful policy of the visionary leader of the nation. Article from the official website of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan // <https://medt.tj/ru/news/novosti-ministerstva-ekonomiki/1284-uspeshnaya-politika-dalnovidnogo-lidera-natsii>

[4] For more details see: A.V. Ignatov. International initiatives as a tool to enhance the foreign policy authority of the Republic of Tajikistan. KRSU Bulletin. 2015. Volume 15. No. 10. -S.150-154.

[5] International organizations in Tajikistan: reliable partners or “suspicious comrades”? // <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/29879836.html>

[6] Khursand Khurramov. Why International Aid Doesn't Eliminate Poverty in Tajikistan? // <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/30213372.html>

[7] The World Bank Supports Greater Opportunities for Vulnerable Communities in Tajikistan (Press Release, June 20, 2019) // <https://www.vsemirnyjbank.org/ru/news/press-release/2019/06/20/grant-program-to-help-increase-opportunities-for-tajikistans-vulnerable-communities>

[8] Tajikistan's external debt reached \$ 2.9 billion // <https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/>

[9] Information on the portfolio of public investment projects in the Republic of Tajikistan (as of January 1, 2020) <https://investcom.tj/ru/invest/vneshnjaja-pomosch/293-informacija-o-portfele-gosudarstvennyh-investicionnyh-proektov-v-respubliku-tadzhikistan.html>

[10] Salimov F.N. Cultural diplomacy of the Republic of Tajikistan: an underutilized resource of foreign policy // Tajikistan and Cultural Diplomacy in Central Asia & Eurasia. GCRF COMPASS Conference proceedings Tajik National University, December 2019. Editors: Prajakti Kalra and Eske van Gils (Kent, UK). Kent, GB. P.46-54.

<https://research.kent.ac.uk/gcrf-compass/wp-content/uploads/sites/169/2020/01/TNU-Conference-proceedings-2019-final-online.pdf>

[11] The delegation of Tajikistan leaves the OSCE meeting in Warsaw due to the presence of the non-systemic Tajik opposition // <https://www.fergananews.com/news/25373>

[12] International organizations in Tajikistan: reliable partners or "suspicious comrades"? // <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/29879836.html>

[13] Khursand Khurramov. Why International Aid Doesn't Eliminate Poverty in Tajikistan? // <https://rus.ozodi.org/a/30213372.html>



If you have found a spelling error, please, notify us by selecting that text and pressing *Ctrl+Enter*.