

State News Agency of Turkmenistan (TDH)

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES OF MODERN WORLD

Turkmenistan's modern foreign policy priorities

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov held the press conference on the results of the visit to New York where the Turkmen leader had taken part in the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly and conducted a series of the bilateral meetings and political consultations with the leaders of the states and world business elite.

The political observers of the foreign news agencies and periodical press and the Turkmen journalists – the editors-in-chief of the newspapers and journals, the heads of the TV and radio channels, the students of the Faculty of Journalism of the Institute of International Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan and Magtymguly Turkmen State University took part in the press conference, which was held at numerous requests.

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**Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear journalists,**

I am very glad to meet with the representatives of Turkmen and foreign mass media. A pleasant occasion for our meeting today are the results of the visit of the government delegation of Turkmenistan to the United States of America, New York city where we took part in the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

In the address to the session of the United Nations General Assembly I stated our country's views on the important foreign policy issues.

Turkmenistan's views were the focus of discussion during numerous bilateral talks with the leaders of the states and the heads of the authoritative international organisations.

The utmost eventfulness of the programme of the visit to the United States of America did not let us respond to even one third of the requests for the meetings and talks, which had been submitted to the secretariat of the Turkmen delegation by the participants of the 64th session of the UN General Assembly.

Of course, we are pleased with worldwide interest in Turkmenistan, its approaches to the foreign policy issues and achievements in the economic and social spheres.

Dear journalists,

I believe that I will be able to satisfy the profound interest shown in our country.

I am ready to answer your questions about the results of the participation of the government delegation of Turkmenistan in the 64th session of the UN General Assembly.

We are welcome to ask your questions!

Vepa Nazarov (Watan news programme, Turkmen TV):

- First of all, let me congratulate you on the success of Turkmenistan's mission to the regular session of the UN General Assembly. The attention paid by the Assembly participants to your speech testifies to the steady growth of Turkmenistan's prestige among world community. Today the country actively generates the new political models to address the complicated issues regulating international relations. Please, share your vision of development of the modern political processes and Turkmenistan's contemporary role in world community.

- I think I will not discover America if I say about a particular discrepancy of the existing trends in development of a global political situation. Towards the end of the first decade of the contemporary age, the world, for the most part, lives with the political canons and stereotypes, which were established after World War II and developed during the 'cold war'.

The burden of the obsolete political notions and motivations is apparent for many. If one thinks for a moment the theme of global financial crisis dominating in the news worldwide can be regarded as a vivid illustration of the need to reform the existing system of global collaboration in the changing world. The leaders of many states, the international organisations urgently seek for the mechanisms for achieving stability of the system of international political and economic relations. This trend became apparent at the 64th session of the UN General Assembly.

When considering the situation from the historical point of view we can highlight the evident trends, which are intrinsic of our time only. The world around us is changing rapidly. The transformations – political, technological, scientific, social and others, which took many centuries, takes only a decade nowadays. It is important not only to keep abreast of ongoing changes but also to find strength to overcome inertia of the obsolete political stereotypes. What is much more important is to have an error-free political prevision, the ability to foresee correctly the trends in development of world community and respond promptly to modern challenges.

Turkmenistan has gained sovereignty as an independent member of world community quite recently. However, the specificity of the contemporary global situation is formed so that the fate of the planet depends not only on the will of the traditional political heavyweights. Today every country can and must find the areas for concerting efforts in common aspiration for universal values, building harmonious relationships among different states and nations. I believe that Turkmenistan will be able to keep with the advanced pace of development of the global political thought.

As for the priority task set to world community – aspiration for global security Turkmenistan builds its approaches to this problem aiming its efforts to achieve stability in Central Asia and the Caspian region.

Let's take for example an urgent problem mankind faces today such as achievement of civil peace and stability in neighbouring Afghanistan. A number of the representatives of world community presented without prior arrangement a military model for resolving the inter-Afghan conflict. This protracted approach has not led to peace and cohesion on the long-suffering land of Afghanistan.

Abiding by the principles of good neighbourliness and mutual readiness to help, Turkmenistan offers its (demilitarized) approaches to addressing Afghanistan's problems and contradictions. We will continue to help our southern neighbour to construct social facilities, supply electric power, provide humanitarian aid and we hope that our contribution to improving the quality of life of the Afghani people will turn out to be much more effective for revival of the country than any coercive solutions.

Let's touch upon another regional problem – an access to water resources. This is a quite urgent problem for the Central Asian states.

Today Tajikistan where the major sources of drinking water of the post Soviet countries of Central Asia start faces an acute shortage of electric power and sees the solutions to this problem in construction of new hydraulic power stations that could have an adverse impact on the common volume of water discharge. Turkmenistan urged the countries of the region – Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan to take a participatory approach to this problem – joint financing the solution to Tajikistan's energy problem to keep the volume of water discharge unchanged. We involve the specialists of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia in Ashgabat in monitoring the activities and we believe that the further use of the existing techniques and the United Nations legal mechanisms (including the arbitral bodies) will allow bringing the situation up to the level of making mutually acceptable decisions.

I provided only two examples that can seem particular in the everyday practice of global political processes. Though, in my opinion this is a concrete contribution of a particular country to the global processes of harmonizing relationships.

Conflicts and contradictions of these processes are most often dictated by the subjectivity of the approaches to their solutions. The criterion for objectivity can be achieved only through involving the authoritative international organisations, first of all the relevant agencies of the United Nations Organisation, in addressing complicated problems.

In most cases only this way leads to achievement of an appropriate result.

Mihail Pereplesnin (Turkmenistan Magazine – Russia):

– Dear Mr. President, how far do you think the potential of the United Nations Organisation meets requirements of the changing world? The debates

about the fading effectiveness of the UN, the need to reform the organisation are not occasional, aren't they?

- Indeed, these debates have been conducted for a long time. There are enough moderate as well as radical proposals. We have no doubts that despite the transformations taking place in the world the lofty humanistic ideals of the United Nations must remain the moral and legal foundations of the world order. The reforms of the UN's work can be contemplated only through them. We are for reforming the United Nations to consolidate it further, increase the effectiveness of its work, and extend the role and functions of the community of nations as the guarantor of global peace and stability.

From the first years of its independence Turkmenistan pursues foreign policy seeking to enlist support of world community through using the whole spectrum of the political tools of the UN structures. Such was the procedure of gaining international recognition of the status of neutrality of our country. Such was the opening of the abovementioned Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia under the aegis of the United Nations in Ashgabat. These two examples can be quite illustrative of the possible ways to enhance the potential of the United Nations Organisation.

The Regional Centre – the first, experimental structure of the United Nations of this kind when the UN experts work not in the hub office with the thick window glass panes but in immediate proximity to the ongoing events, have an opportunity to study and promptly respond to a situation. Is not it a new technique for the effective activity of the think tank of global community?

The second example. Collective and unanimous recognition of Turkmenistan as the country with the status of permanent neutrality from the UN member states almost fourteen years ago became an unprecedented step in world practice. The experience accumulated by our country over the past years in leading an effective international dialogue on a basis of the status of permanent neutrality evidence the extraordinary effectiveness of applying the model like it in world practice. The clear conclusion inevitably comes to mind: the more countries: the more countries follow the lead of Turkmenistan and express the willingness to gain the status of permanent neutrality the more peacefully and safer we will feel in this world.

Turkmenistan stands ready to share its rich political experience with each member of world community so that the UN's methodology applied once will be spread on the planet as wide as possible.

I think those, who make bold to assert that the effectiveness of the United Nations decreases, pursue the momentary selfish political ends and is unable to see the vast potential of a creative approach to enlivening the activity of the UN agencies.

Today Turkmenistan actively seeks to eliminate the problem of reliable energy transit. I think global efforts of such kind would be less effective without the UN's organizational support and being secured by its high international authority.

Bahar Muhyeva (Turkmenistan TV Channel):

– Does it mean that Turkmenistan singles out the idea of reliable energy transit as a foreign policy priority particularly because economic advancement of the country depends to a larger extent on stability of natural gas exports?

- I would rather view this situation in wider sense. Indeed, Turkmenistan – one of largest hydrocarbon exporters in the world, and this its status will not weakened with the lapse of time because we have the proved reserves of hydrocarbon resources that will be sufficient for active export over dozens of years. Aren't the largest consumers – China, Russia, and Western Europe be less interested in stability of gas exports?

An impact of feverish fluctuations of raw materials markets and in world oil prices eventually on world economy is not accidental. By the way, in the near future gas market will be of not less importance for the planet than oil exports.

Reliable energy transit is not a sphere of the mercenary ends of a particular country but global challenge. Furthermore, it is an integral part of the system of global security. For example, military security cannot be considered in isolation from the political, economic, anthropogenic, ecological and other aspects of the problem. Along with it, the existing international system of energy exports and imports remains a quite vulnerable link of world economy: there is no the universally recognized framework for legal liability for breaking the agreements on the guarantees of uninterrupted transit of energy. Therefore, we have the right and must view the vulnerability of this link as a threat to global security.

It should be noted that we meet the real understanding of our stand on this issue by a majority of world community. It was before during the international consultations at various levels, it was in New York – during the session of the UN General Assembly and the bilateral talks with the leaders of the states. Today urging all the interested countries to make a final decision we reaffirm our readiness to contribute to developing and drafting the future global international legal document on reliable transit of energy.

Orazdurdy Hojanazarov (Altyn Asyr: Turkmenistan TV Channel);

- In your address to the UN General Assembly, you, dear Mr. President, said that “you firmly believe that the fewer weapons is in the world, the more sustainable and peaceful its development will be, the more confidence and understanding will be among different countries and nations”. We believe that this you're thought drew a wide response in the hearts of peoples across the world. Also, you promoted Turkmenistan as the venue for an international conference on disarmament in Central Asia and the Caspian region. How urgent is this problem for the region?

- For anyone, who is even scarcely familiarized with the contemporary geopolitics, is aware of the fact that our region is really oversaturated with weapons of all types and components of their production. An abundance of the military bases of different countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia did not make the lives of the peoples of the region more peaceful.

Turkmenistan insists that the obvious need to discuss the measures and tools of regional security at the representative international forum has boiled up.

By promoting Ashgabat as the venue for this conference we want to spotlight the readiness of our country to provide overall support for the disarmament processes in the region. A very important step was made three years ago to achieve this goal when all the Central Asian states signed the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Semipalatinsk. This process requires smooth continuation. The less weapons of any kind remain in the region and across the world, the more sustainable the processes of economic advancement and mutually advantageous international cooperation will be.

Husein Er (TRT Broadcasting Company, Turkey):

– Doesn't that you have said discord with your recent order to strengthen the technical base of the Turkmen navy on the Caspian Sea?

- The term “Turkmen navy”, alas, is not entirely correct. As you may remember when the military fleet was divided in the former USSR, all the fighting ships of the Caspian fleet went to the ports of their registration –Baku and Astrakhan. Turkmenistan received only two or three patrol boats. Thus, the term “Turkmen Navy” has not been used for a long time because of the absence of the fleet as it is. There is and can be no question of large-scale build-up of naval forces.

As you know, the five countries with the outlet to the Caspian Sea are involved in the negotiations on the problems of delimitation of the maritime boundaries, conservation of marine biological resources and creation of a weapon-free zone on the Caspian Sea. This process is not easy, however it consistently moves forward. I think we all are on the right track and will be able to turn the Caspian Sea into the sea of peace and cohesion.

Aleksandr Vershinin (Associated Press Agency, USA):

- Going on with the Caspian Sea Basin what is your opinion about the existing controversies between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan related to the zones of jurisdiction in the water area?

- Indeed, these controversies have existed for a quite long period of time. It is said that the major controversies arise around the claims of the parties to the disputed oil fields of the central part of the offshore area, where Azerbaijan has started to actively develop hydrocarbon deposits already.

I should remind that throughout the negotiation process Turkmenistan upheld the fundamental position that until the legal norms the zones of jurisdiction was not established, development in the disputed territories is illegal.

Today Turkmenistan prefers solving the legal problem than disputing about the ownership of the particular geographical areas. Until we arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement on the location of the median line of the sea in the geographical coordinates, it is impossible to promote further political and economic development of the region, to address the urgent problems of conservation of biological resources of the Caspian Sea, shipping, the zones of jurisdiction of the littoral countries.

Standing steadfast to the chosen priority of a complex approach to the problem, we have recently suggested the arbitration way to settle controversies. I gave instructions to the relevant departments to draft and submit the necessary documents to international arbitration for consideration.

We declared in advance our readiness to accept any of its decision. Thus, Turkmenistan clearly designated its goodwill to eliminate misunderstanding among the littoral countries, to create the zone of non-confrontational development of international political and economic cooperation on the Caspian Sea.

Touching upon the real steps taken by our country to create the most favourable conditions for mutually advantageous partnership in the Caspian Sea Basin, I cannot help providing the work launched on the eastern seashore nearby Turkmenbashi town to create Avaza international tourism zone as an illustrative example. This grandiose project on the seaside resort with diversified sport, recreation and entertainment infrastructure has attracted dozens of the companies from all over the world, who appreciate its investment attractiveness.

For the past years that passed since the first presentation of the idea of Avaza seaside resort six hotels had sprung up on the seashore and received thousands of guests during this year's holiday season. This is only the beginning. In a few years when hotels and health-improving centres increase in number we will be able to receive hundreds of thousands of guests in Avaza.

We see Avaza in the near future as not only a full-fledged recreation area for citizens of Turkmenistan but also the centre of useful and pleasant contacts among the peoples of all the littoral states as well as the international base for diversified development of tourism and transport infrastructure. In fact, the model of Avaza will suit the future image of the Caspian region as an area of peaceful and mutually enriching contacts among tourists and businessmen of all the coastal states.

Vladimir Gubanov (Neytralny Turkmenistan Newspaper):

- The curious fact became known in the lobbies of the UN General Assembly: five hundred copies of the text of your speech were not enough to meet the demand and the secretariat of the Turkmen delegation had to print out three hundred more copies to distribute among all those willing. What is the reason for such intense interest in your country?

- I should confess that I was pleasantly surprised by the abundance of the signs of sincere interest that literally fell upon on the Turkmen delegation. We received many proposals on bilateral meetings with the leaders of the states, the authoritative international organisations, the top managers of the world's largest companies. The extraordinary richness of the programme of the visit to New York did not allow honouring even one tenth of all the requests. I had the time to meet and talk with those who had appointed the meetings in advance.

At the same time I apprehend this fact with the feeling of pride for my country, which tirelessly demonstrates openness to fruitful international cooperation and meets the greater understanding of its positive aspirations from world community. The leaders of the states and the international organisations view Turkmenistan as a dependable political partner and businessmen strive for the Turkmen market being aware of the high rates of our economic progress, reliability of the national legal framework and stainless reputation in our financial responsibility. The meetings, which we had to postpone in New York, will certainly take place in the near future in the most favourable atmosphere. We do not neglect any of our contacts that promise fruitful partnership.

Igor Sasin (Frans-Press Agency, France):

– During your meetings and talks with the representatives of the world political and business elite in the United States many political observers focused on pragmatism of Turkmenistan's foreign policy strategy. It is said, that most your decisions, dear Mr. President, have the task-oriented and thought-out economic implication. How far are these assumptions true?

- Undoubtedly, they are true. It cannot be otherwise. There is the strategic policy of economic, social and spiritual revival of the country, fulfilment of our major task formulated as “a state for the people” supported by the people. The rest are only the means to achieve this goal. Accordingly, all the foreign policy aspirations of the state, eventually, if not directly but indirectly, are subject to our ultimate goal.

To achieve it is impossible until Turkmenistan positions itself as a dependable member of global community, who is ready to comply with the universally accepted norms and values. The reputation Turkmenistan has earned in recent years as a dependable and predictable partner in global cooperation and a country abiding by its international commitments arouses interest and confidence among foreign partners – both existing and potential.

Those, who closely follow the international news in, are aware well of the grandiose changes taking place in Turkmenistan. To imagine this process is impossible without a reliable economic partnership with the world top producers of goods and technologies. Today most reputable companies from around the world, who know about the stability of the national economy and attractiveness of the investment climate, put much effort to get to the Turkmen market.

We are responsive to many proposals and carefully select the best of what is offered today by global manufacturing and technological practice. Addressing the issues of international business cooperation we keep away from the political conjuncture: we don't conclude the disadvantageous economic agreements in exchange for the political dividends. In this regard I am ready to agree to the term "maximum pragmatism of the foreign policy aspirations".

Metin Koshger (Ihlas Habarlar Agency, Turkey):

- The recent practice has shown that Turkmenistan displays increased interest in not only trade and economic cooperation. How can your country's interest in such 'noncommercial' fields as science, culture, education, sport be explained?

- Development of culture, reforms of the education and scientific systems are the priorities of national development. The education reform launched in our country provides for its contribution in wide international cooperation, scientific, educational and cultural exchange. In this activity Turkmenistan attaches primary significance to cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

We highly appreciate UNESCO's assistance in preserving and popularizing the rich cultural and historical heritage of Turkmenistan and the unique natural sites of our country. To date three cultural and historical monuments located on the territory of Turkmenistan: Ancient Merv, Kunya Urgench and Nisa are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. We submitted the proposals on the inscription of the cultural and historical site – the ancient settlement Missiryan-Dehistan, six unique natural sites – the State Reserves – Badkhyz, Syunt-Hasardag, Repetek, Amu Darya, Khazar and the unique natural monuments – the Plateau of Dinosaurs and onyx caves in the Koytentag Mountain.

Turkmenistan intends to continue to develop and expand cooperation with UNESCO through the National Commission as well.

In this context Turkmenistan considers an opportunity to join the relevant UNESCO conventions.

Moreover, Turkmenistan actively develops and maintains the large-scale programmes of humanitarian cooperation covering a wide range of the issues of education, culture, science, sports with almost all foreign partners.

It will take more than one hour to enumerate all the aspects and trends in this activity. The recent brightest events include the Silk Way-2009 Rally – the enthralling off-road racing of the Dakar series along the route Kazan-Ashgabat initiated by Turkmenistan and supported by the leaders of Russia and Kazakhstan.

These competitions that will be held on a regular basis in future ranks among the brightest event in the sports calendar of the three countries-organizers and in world motor sport. The successful finish of the car racing was viewed as the sportsmen's victory as well as the triumph uniting different people with the ideas of global humanitarian cooperation.

Merdan Gazakbaev (Galkynys Newspaper):

- The news agencies of the American city of Trenton – the capital of New Jersey reported the curious fact: September 24 was announced there the Day of President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. We would like to heartily congratulate you on this remarkable event and could you, please, share your impressions of this precedent?

- I regard this event as recognition of Turkmenistan's prestige that has increased worldwide in recent years, as evidence of the greater understanding and approval our foreign policy meets all over the world.

Kakageldy Charyyardurdyev (Press Secretary of the President of Turkmenistan):

– Dear Mr. President, I would like to heartily congratulate you on the historic and deeply substantial speech at the 64th UN General Assembly. It drew a wide response in world community, international mass media that illustrates the increasing interest in Turkmenistan. That is proved by this press conference. I would like to thank you for the opportunity of a meeting and wish good health, long life, further accomplishments.

In conclusion the Turkmen leader thanked the journalists for the participation and interesting questions and wished good health and every success in their work for the benefit of numerous readers, TV and radio audience.

The President expressed belief that such meetings would be organized in future to discuss important issues.