

Kraków and Uzbekistan - an Opportunity for Cooperation

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Mayor of Kraków Aleksander Miszalski and Amirsait Agzamkhodjaev Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Poland discussed the possibilities for cooperation between Kraków and Uzbekistan during the ambassador's visit on 10 March 2025.

The meeting was also attended by Ms. Ewa Kołodziej, Polish MP from Katowice and an avid supporter of cooperation with Uzbekistan.

As priority areas for joint efforts, the Ambassador highlighted business, education, cultural promotion, and tourism. In recent years, Uzbekistan's economy has been developing dynamically, with key industries including machinery, textiles, metallurgy, and agriculture. The economic transformation and entrepreneurial growth initiated after the 2017 presidential elections have led to increased global investor interest in the region, including from Poland. The Uzbek market is also an attractive alternative to the closed Russian market. Moreover, Uzbekistan maintains friendly economic relations with its neighboring countries—Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan—making the entire region a compelling prospect for Polish investors. Uzbek businessmen are also highly interested in collaborating with Poland. As Ambassador Agzamkhodjaev emphasized, "Poland is Uzbekistan's gateway to the European Union, while Uzbekistan is Poland's gateway to Central Asia."

Regional partnerships play a crucial role in this cooperation, aligning with the Japanese economic model applied in Uzbekistan. Consequently, relations have already been established between the Podlaskie Voivodeship and the Uzbek region of Khorezm, as well as between Mazovia and the Tashkent region. Now, it is time for Małopolska and the Samarkand region to follow suit, with the cities of Kraków and Samarkand playing a key role in these relations. An economic mission planned for autumn, involving companies from Kraków and Małopolska, would serve as an excellent starting point for cooperation.

Mayor Miszalski expressed his openness to joint initiatives. Samarkand is a natural partner for Kraków, attracting 10 million tourists annually. The city's 40-day visa-free policy further facilitates this partnership. Tourism is also a driving force of the Uzbek economy. This sector of cooperation could be linked to historical ties—Samarkand was one of the places of exile for Poles after the November and January Uprisings. The city is home to cemeteries with numerous graves of Polish insurgents and soldiers from General Władysław Anders' Army. Notable Poles connected to Uzbekistan's history include Leon Barszczewski, a photographer, traveler, and researcher of Central Asian peoples who lived in Uzbekistan, as well as Anna German, a singer highly regarded and beloved by Uzbeks.

Regarding tourism cooperation, Mayor Miszalski emphasized the need for direct flights between Kraków and Samarkand or Tashkent. Currently, a direct connection exists between Warsaw and Tashkent, operating three times a week, but due to high demand, there is a need to increase the frequency to five flights per week. The Mayor expressed his willingness to engage in discussions with the President of LOT Polish Airlines on this matter, which was met with great appreciation from



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Ambassador Agzamkhodjaev.

Given the mutual potential and openness to collaboration, it is certainly worth continuing efforts that will result in specific projects, ultimately forming the foundation for establishing strong partnership relations.