

Aspects of the Construction Project on the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline Discussed in Brussels



Recently the delegation of Turkmenistan visited Brussels and conducted meetings with Mr. Maros Shefchovich, Vice-President of the European Commission for the Energy Union and with representatives of the Directorate-General for Energy of the European Commission.

During the negotiations, matters of cooperation between Turkmenistan and the EU in the energy sector, modernization of the legal framework of the partnership and implementation of the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline construction project were discussed. In addition, the topics of further improvement of the principles of the Caspian Development Corporation, the continuation of the negotiations of the working group on the implementation of this energy project, including economic, environmental and commercial issues were touched upon.

From the EU's perspective, the EU showed great interest in the construction of the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline and the supply of Turkmen natural gas to the European market. The EU negotiators expressed their willingness to assist in attracting investment in the implementation of this major energy project.

Thanks to the adoption of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, a necessary legal framework has been created for laying a gas pipeline across the Caspian Sea. The Trans-Caspian gas pipeline project envisages a supply of the Turkmen energy carrier to the European market in the amount of 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually for at least 30 years with its transfer on the Turkmen coast of the Caspian Sea.

The Road will be mastered by walking

How many debates were broken around the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline (TCG), how many “arguments” were brought against the implementation of this project, how many academia and civil society fought to prove the necessity or, on the contrary, the impossibility of its construction. The project became at times an apple of discord, then, on the contrary, the center of attraction for the countries of the region.

The European Union was also interested in the implementation of the TCG project, seeking to maximize the diversification of gas supplies to the Old World. In 2011, Brussels approved the mandate to start negotiations with Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan on the construction of a TCG, which became one of the EU’s energy priorities even before the commissioning of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and South-Caucasian Gas Pipeline (SCP) of the Baku-Tbilisi pipeline –Erzurum. The main value of the TCG for Europe is to supply Turkmen and then Uzbek and Kazakh gas to the European market as part of an ambitious project called “the Southern Gas Corridor”.

And finally, on 12 August 2018, in the Kazakhstani city of Aktau, the five-sided Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea was signed, which allows Turkmenistan to lay the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline, having agreed only with Azerbaijan. The enshrining in the convention of a clause on the sufficiency of such bilateral agreements, which Ashgabat insisted on for more than twenty years, opens the way for foreign investment in the TCG. Its route through the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus to Europe will allow Turkmen gas to enter the European energy market. According to Victoria Rodionova, an expert on Central Asia living in Sweden, “now the investment climate of Turkmenistan will shine with new colors for international companies”.

This was confirmed by the working visit of the delegation of Turkmenistan to Brussels, headed by Mr. Rashid MEREDOV, Deputy Prime Minister, who met with officials of the EU institutions. In particular, a meeting was held with Mr. Maros Shefchovich, Vice-President of the European Commission for the Energy Union, during which they discussed issues of enhancing cooperation between Turkmenistan and the EU in the energy sector in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation between the EU and Turkmenistan, signed in 2008. The head of the Turkmen delegation noted that the EU continues to be an important partner of Turkmenistan and outlined our country's position on interest in continuing to discuss joint energy projects for the laying of the Turkmen natural gas towards the European direction.

Representatives of the EU expressed their willingness to help attract investment in the implementation of this important energy project, which not only meets the national objectives of Turkmenistan, but also aims to strengthen the energy security of the continent.

At the end of the meeting, in the interests of fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation in the fuel and energy sphere, the parties agreed to continue this dialogue on a systematic basis, both at bilateral and multilateral levels.

Thus, the efforts of Turkmenistan, albeit slowly, but surely, to lay the gas pipeline to Europe, which is beneficial to all, are beginning to acquire clear outlines. As they say, the road will be mastered by walking.

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