

Cooperation Vector - Asia

Asia is now the most important area for the Republic of Belarus to develop its trade and economic cooperation. Thus, in 2020 alone, Belarusian exports to the countries of this continent amounted to about two billion dollars. Nevertheless, there are still many opportunities to promote Belarusian economic interests in this area. In order to successfully promote them, it was necessary to continue systematic and consistent work, developing mutual interest and initiating new formats of contacts. As a result, Asian countries retained their role as growth points for Belarus's foreign policy and foreign trade activities in 2021. Implementation of the policy of reorientation of our country's trade and economic cooperation toward the countries of the far arc allowed to increase Belarusian exports to that region by nearly 15 percent in 2021, to 2.4 billion dollars compared to 2.1 billion dollars in 2020. At the same time, active interaction with many countries of the Asian continent is also observed in 2022. How is this happening in practice right now? What problems do Belarusian exporters have to face when developing Asian markets? This study is about that.



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Cover image: www.ingimage.com

This book is a translation from the original published under ISBN 978-620-4-74793-4.

Publisher:

Scientia Scripts

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Dodo Books Indian Ocean Ltd. and OmniScriptum S.R.L Publishing group

Str. Armeneasca 28/1, office 1, Chisinau MD-2012, Republic of Moldova, Europe

Printed at: see last page

ISBN: 978-620-5-42974-7

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Prospects for effective cooperation

In June 2021, a Belarusian-Asian forum was held, which was attended by representatives of embassies of those Asian states in Russia and Belarus that do not have their diplomatic missions in Minsk and where there are no Belarusian foreign missions. In particular, the participants included heads of diplomatic missions and other diplomats from Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, Thailand, Afghanistan, Laos, and the Philippines. The attention of the Belarusian side to the Asian region is quite understandable. After all, "there are no political problems on the bilateral agenda here, and the approaches to major international issues are quite similar. This creates a good basis for the development of trade and economic cooperation as the main area for bilateral cooperation"¹.

Suffice it to say that in 2020, the volume of Belarusian exports to the countries of this continent was about two billion dollars. And this, of course, is not the limit. "It is obvious that the Asian market still remains underutilized by exporters from Belarus in terms of promotion of many types of their products there, including those manufactured by mechanical engineering, electronic and petrochemical industries"². The experience of this interaction in recent years shows that there are still many opportunities to promote Belarusian trade and economic interests in the Asian direction. In order to use them successfully, it is necessary to continue systematic and consistent work, developing mutual interest and initiating new forms of contacts, as it is actually happening in the development of partnerships with a number of Asian countries.

In particular, the Republic of Belarus has already reached a strategic partnership with **the People's Republic of China**. In the language of figures, it

1 Cooperation with the countries of the Asian region has been and remains one of the priorities of Belarus' foreign policy - Borysievich [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/sotrudnichestvo-so-stranami-aziatskogo-regiona-bylo-i-ostaetsja-odnim-iz-prioritetov-vneshnej-politiki-445159-2021/>

2 Zalesky, B. Belarus - Asia: Vector of Partnership. Chronicle of mutually beneficial cooperation / B. Zalesky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2018. - C. 5.

looks as follows. In 2020, the volume of Belarusian-Chinese trade has shown significant growth - more than 10 percent. Even higher dynamics of development of this partnership are characteristic for 2021. "From January to April of this year, total imports and exports of goods between the countries amounted to \$1.25 billion, an increase of 58 percent compared to the same period last year. China became the second largest trade partner of Belarus."³ .

A number of projects that have already been successfully implemented and are still being implemented by the Belarusian side can also be seen in a number of other Asian countries. For example, in early June 2021, Minsk Tractor Works and the Indian company Erisha Agritech Private Limited signed a cooperation agreement, which determined that "the Indian partner will purchase at least 200 BELARUS tractors by the end of 2021. In addition, the parties intend to organize the localization and assembly of tractors under the joint brand DARSH BELARUS in **India**"⁴ , and then to supply them to other countries of the continent - Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal.

Another country of interest in this context in Asia is **Mongolia**. In June 2021, it became known that the Belarusian Development Bank will finance the export of Belarus tractors and agricultural equipment produced by Minsk Tractor Works OJSC for four and a half million euros - to the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry of Mongolia. And this will be the third individual credit line under the general Belarusian-Mongolian intergovernmental export credit agreement concluded in April 2019, aimed at expanding the geography of Belarusian export supplies and strengthening foreign economic and trade relations between specific enterprises. It should be reminded that under this agreement, the Development Bank has already "financed supplies of fire-

3 Political interaction between Belarus and China is continuously strengthening - Xie Xiaoyun [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/politicheskoe-vzaimodoverie-belarusi-i-kitaja-nepreryvno-ukrepljaetsja-se-sjajun-446045-2021/>

4 MTZ signed an agreement on the supply and assembly of tractors in India [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-podpisal-soglasenie-o-sotrudnichestve-s-indijskoj-kompaniej-444577-2021/>

fighting equipment produced by Pozhsnab LLC to the National Emergency Management Agency of Mongolia, as well as machinery sold by MAZ OJSC, the management company of Belavtomaz Holding, to the Road and Transport Development Center under the Ministry of Road and Transport Development of Mongolia"⁵ . These facts show that Belarusian industrial enterprises today consider the Asian region as one of the key ones for increasing their export supplies. And they see huge potential in it, "because its member countries are showing very good economic growth"⁶ , which makes Belarusian products in demand in this market. And such exporters as BelAZ, BMZ, MAZ, MTZ, Amkodor and Integral have good opportunities for expanding supplies here.

Today, the Asian region looks even more promising for Belarusian food exports, which have grown 13(!) times in the last five years. In 2020, it amounted to \$356 million. During the four months of 2021 Belarus shipped foodstuffs for \$167 million to 37 Asian countries, "which is 60% more than last year. A wide range of dairy and meat products, sugar, flax fiber, rapeseed oil..."⁷ . It is obvious that both geography and assortment of these supplies will only expand, as evidenced by the interest of the participants of the Belarusian-Asian Forum in the proposals of Belarusian producers voiced in their presentations at the event. In addition, in 2021, the engagement of the Belarusian side with a number of other Asian countries - Iran, Pakistan, South Korea, and Oman - became much more active.

As for **Iran**, in April 2021, it became known about the intention of the Belarusian Gomel Region to resume and develop cooperation with the Iranian

5 The Development Bank will provide an export loan for the supply of Belarusian agricultural machinery to Mongolia [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bank-razvitiya-predostavit-eksportnyj-kredit-na-postavku-belorusskoj-selhoztehniki-v-mongoliju-445880-2021/>.

6 Pivovarov, E. The Ministry of Industry of Belarus considers the Asian region as one of the key regions for product supplies / E. Pivovarov // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/minprom-belarusi-rassmatrivaet-aziatskij-region-kak-odin-iz-kljuchevyh-dlja-postavok-produktsii-445212-2021/>

7 Pivovarov, E. Supplies of Belarusian food products to Asian countries for 5 years increased 13 times / E. Pivovarov // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/postavki-belorusskogo-prodovolstvija-v-strany-azii-za-5-let-vyrosli-v-13-raz-445207-2021/>

province of Mazandaran, the document on trade, economic, scientific, technical, and cultural cooperation with which was signed back in 2009, but the plans therein were never implemented. At that time, when signing the memorandum on cooperation, the parties noted good prospects in the organization of exports of agricultural products, metal and agricultural machinery from the Belarusian region. Iranian exporters planned to establish permanent supplies of citrus and other southern fruits to the Gomel market. "In addition, there are large deposits of solid fuels in Mazandaran province, in the development of which the economic entities of the Gomel region could take part"⁸.

Among the projects, which the Belarusian region and the Iranian province intend to return to now, the parties name "production of copper rod in Rechitsa District, development of the chalk deposit in Vetka District, mining of rocks in Lelchitsa District"⁹. Besides, the Belarusian side offered to supply machine tools, timber, cardboard, cellulose, confectionary products, as well as gas-engine harvesters to the Iranian market. Noting the great potential in the interaction between the two regions, the Iranian side complemented the possible areas of partnership in such areas as oil production, chemical industry, industry. Concrete steps to implement all these proposals will be discussed during the webinar to be held in the near future.

The actualization of partnership ties between the Gomel region and Mazandaran province shows that Belarus and Iran, having survived the coronavirus pandemic, are beginning to return bilateral cooperation to a growth trajectory. As a reminder, the 14th meeting of the Joint Belarusian-Iranian Commission on Economic Cooperation was held in January 2018, which resulted in the signing of the Roadmap for the Development of Cooperation

8 Sidorchik, V. Gomel region and Iranian Mazandaran province will sign a memorandum of cooperation / V. Sidorchik // [Electronic resource]. - 2009. - URL: <http://cenadm.gov.by/ru/region/view/gomelskaja-oblast-i-iranskaja-provintsija-mazandaran-podpishut-memorandum-o-sotrudnichestve-1957/>

9 Gomel Region and Mazandaran Province of Iran will resume trade and economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/gomelskaja-oblast-i-iranskaja-provintsija-mazandaran-vozobnovjat-torgovo-ekonomicheskoe-sotrudnichestvo-439208-2021/>

between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Iran for 2018-2020. It talked about the development of bilateral cooperation "in various fields of politics, investments, trade, industry, transport, agriculture, health, education, science, technology and energy"¹⁰, and also contained the intention to increase the Belarusian-Iranian trade turnover to \$500 million. However, American sanctions, which blocked bilateral cooperation between Minsk and Tehran in a number of important areas, became a serious obstacle to the development of economic cooperation between Belarus and Iran. But "despite the restrictions, the trade turnover between Belarus and Iran amounted to \$24.7 million in 2020"¹¹. Tires, wood products, newsprint, and bearings made up the bulk of Belarusian exports to the Iranian market.

Currently, the parties are preparing for the 15th meeting of the joint commission, where they intend to develop a roadmap for trade and economic cooperation in order to give an additional impetus to the relationship. The high interest of the parties in such partnership development can be judged by the composition of the participants in the Belarusian-Iranian business forum, which was held in Minsk in July 2019 under the auspices of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture. At that time, Iranian companies interested in cooperating "in the areas of banking, production of medical and pharmaceutical products, gas equipment, parts and equipment for refrigerators, agricultural machinery, construction materials and construction equipment, petrochemical and oil refining industry, production and supply of food and spices, textile

10 Belarus and Iran have developed a roadmap for cooperation for 2018-2020 [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-iran-razrabotali-dorozhnuju-kartu-sotrudnichestva-na-2018-2020-gody-285761-2018/>

11 Trade and economic relations [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://iran.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/economic/

industry (supply of Persian carpets)" took part in negotiations with the Belarusian business circles.¹²

Cooperation between the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE) and the Iranian Commodity Exchange (ITB) may also become one of the promising areas for economic cooperation between the two countries. The two sides agreed to actualize their partnership back in October 2019, because "the use of the exchange mechanism will reduce commercial risks and simplify the search for business partners for Belarusian and Iranian business entities"¹³. Iranian businessmen are interested in using the BUTB platform to promote products of ferrous and nonferrous metallurgy, textiles, nuts and dried fruits to Belarus. Belarusian companies are interested in the exchange platform for the export of lumber, wood slabs, and petrochemical products to Iran.

Another promising resource for expanding Belarusian-Iranian trade and economic cooperation is the Interim Agreement leading to the formation of a free trade zone between the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and Iran, which entered into force in October 2019. This document established a list of goods for which exporters of EEU countries, including Belarus, received preferences in the Iranian market. It "includes meat and fat-and-oil products, certain types of confectionery and chocolate, electronic and mechanical equipment, as well as metals and cosmetics"¹⁴. So the sides have great opportunities for solving the tasks set for activation of trade and economic relations. It is necessary to use them.

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is one of the states in South Asia, in relations with which the Republic of Belarus has created the necessary legal and infrastructure framework over the past five years to strengthen and develop

12 Belarusian-Iranian business forum to be held on July 24 in Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belorusko-iranskij-biznes-forum-projdet-24-ijulja-v-minske-355013-2019/>

13 BUTB and the Iranian Commodity Exchange intend to intensify cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-i-iranskaja-tovarnaja-birzha-namereny-aktivizirovat-sotrudnichestvo-364553-2019/>

14 Zalessky, B. The Potential of Multi-vectorism. Chronicle of international cooperation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2020. - C. 7.

bilateral interaction aimed at the full-scale implementation of the existing potential of partnership relations. We recall that in 2015, the Islamabad Declaration of Belarus-Pakistan Cooperation was adopted at the highest level, "in which the parties consolidated the basic principles of political dialogue."¹⁵ . At the same time, a bilateral cooperation roadmap for 2015-2020 was signed to make a gradual transition from simple trade to more advanced forms of cooperative interaction. Joint efforts to create a legal and contractual framework for Belarusian-Pakistani cooperation resulted in 77 memorandums of understanding and agreements signed by early 2021. Many agreements are currently under development."¹⁶ . For example, an amended intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in industrial and scientific-technical cooperation.

In 2015, Minsk and Islamabad created the basic institutional mechanism for bilateral trade and economic relations – a joint Belarusian-Pakistani commission for trade and economic cooperation, having organized five meetings to date. Within the framework of the joint commission, working groups in various fields, such as industry and agriculture, focus their attention on specific issues of bilateral cooperation. And in December 2020, the first meeting of the Belarusian-Pakistani working group for cooperation in healthcare and pharmaceuticals was held, where "possible areas of mutual cooperation in the export of medical and educational services were identified"¹⁷ and the prospects of further cooperation were outlined.

As for partnerships between the business communities of the two countries, they are structured within the framework of the Joint Belarusian-Pakistani Business Council, the first three meetings of which were held in

15 Zalessky, B. Belarus - Asia: Vector of Partnership. Chronicle of mutually beneficial cooperation / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2018. - C. 86.

16 Sajjad, H.H. How the pandemic affected the relations between Belarus and Pakistan / H.H. Sajjad // [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/kak-pandemija-povlijala-na-otnoshenija-belarusi-i-pakistana-7589/>

17 International cooperation. Meeting of the Joint Belarus-Pakistan Working Group on Cooperation in Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://belmapo.by/mezhdunarodnaya-sotrudnichestvo.-zasedanie-sovmestnoj-belorussko-pakistanskoj-rabochej-gruppyi-po-sotrudnichestvu-v-sfere-zdravooxraneniya-i-farmaczevtiki.html>

August 2015, in March 2016 and 2017. In April 2021, the parties held the fourth meeting of this council, which was attended by representatives of more than a hundred Belarusian and Pakistani companies. They discussed not only the development of bilateral trade, but also opportunities to increase investment cooperation, industrial cooperation, and the creation of joint companies and productions, noting among the priority areas of interaction industry, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, as well as education, information technology, and logistics. In addition, they considered "the possibility of doing business by Pakistani enterprises within the framework of the Industrial Park "Great Stone", the main directions of the new policy of automotive development in Pakistan and the existing in connection with it preferences for foreign companies, the prospects for urban electric transport in Pakistan, as well as the main areas of work of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry to promote business contacts"¹⁸.

The potential for expansion of Belarusian-Pakistani relations is evidenced by the figures. "In 2020, trade turnover between the countries was \$52.2 million, up 4% compared to 2019"¹⁹. At the same time, the surplus for the Belarusian side exceeded \$20 million. This was facilitated by deliveries from Belarus to Pakistan of such export items as "tractors and spare parts, trucks, potash fertilizers, synthetic filament harnesses and synthetic fibers, tires, machine tools, polycarboxylic acids (phthalic anhydride), newsprint, baby food (dry mix)"²⁰.

In 2021, the Belarusian side plans to only increase its exports to the Pakistani market, using a variety of tools to promote products from Belarus to Pakistan. One of them is participation in international exhibitions organized in that South Asian country. Specifically, "in October [2021], Belarusian

18 Online Meeting of the Belarus-Pakistan Business Council [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://grotpp.by/onlayn-zasedanie-belorussko-pakista-2/>

19 Belarus is interested in developing mutually beneficial cooperation with Pakistan - Karankevich [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-razvitiivzaimovygodnogo-sotrudnichestva-s-pakistanom-karankevich-436781-2021/>

20 Trade and economic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://pakistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/trade_and_economic_bilateral_relations/

companies are planning to take part in the industrial exhibition in Karachi.²¹ . Note that a year and a half ago, in September 2019, the national exposition of Belarus was organized at the largest exhibition event of the South Asian region - the International Engineering & Machinery Asia Exhibition (IEMA) in Lahore, Pakistan, where "such leading Belarusian companies as BelAZ, MAZ, MTZ, the Mogilev Metallurgical Plant, the Belneftekhim Concern organizations (Belshina, Naftan, Polotsk-Steklovolokno) presented their products"²² . Then, numerous visitors of this business forum could also get acquainted with the best Belarusian higher educational institutions and advanced scientific developments of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. The Belarusian State University alone demonstrated in Lahore "more than 20 scientific and technological developments in the field of instrumentation, new materials, metal optics, tribophatics"²³ , having signed a protocol of intent to develop academic, scientific and technological cooperation with the company Ali Power from Islamabad. It was not a bad experience of participation.

Speaking about the development of cooperation with **South Korea**, it should be recalled that in July 2021, the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Korea International Trade Association established a business cooperation council, putting into practice the agreements reached in December 2020, when the parties signed a cooperation agreement. Participants of this new platform for discussing business issues and strengthening economic, investment and scientific and technical cooperation are expected to include Belarusian and Korean companies with successful cooperation experience that "contribute to the expansion of bilateral business and economic relations, as well as enterprises

21 Ulakhovich: there are many opportunities to strengthen cooperation between Belarus and Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ulakhovich-dlja-ukreplenija-sotrudnichestva-mezhdu-belarusiju-i-pakistanom-est-mnogo-vozmozhnostej-429292-2021/>

22 The national exposition of Belarus opened at the IEMA exhibition in Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnaja-ekspozitsija-belarusi-otkrylas-na-vystavke-iema-v-pakistane-363543-2019/>

23 Results of BSU participation in the International Engineering & Machinery Asia Exhibition (IEMA) (Lahore, Islamic Republic of Pakistan) [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://research.bsu.by/2019/10/08/bsu-results-in-the-international-exhibition-international-engineering-machinery-asia-exhibition-iema/>

interested in implementing joint projects in the most promising areas"²⁴ . Judging by the composition of the inaugural session of the Belarus-Korea Business Cooperation Council, these include the Belarusian High Tech Park, the China-Belarus Industrial Park Great Stone, as well as over twenty more leading companies in electronics, machine tools, automotive industry, pharmaceuticals, and information technologies.

Recall that 2022 will mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Today, Minsk and Seoul seek to take concrete steps to intensify bilateral cooperation, as well as to "practically fill the cooperation within the framework of the New Northern Policy,"²⁵ , which is understood as a set of measures to intensify economic cooperation between the Republic of Korea and the states and integration associations of the Eurasian region, including the Eurasian Economic Union. Following this policy, the Korean side divides all the northern space into three main regions: the eastern - Siberia and the Far East, Mongolia, three northeastern provinces of China; the central - five Central Asian countries; the western - the western part of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. It is the western region that Seoul considers to be the most industrially developed and receptive to innovation. For this reason, they consider it "a kind of center of innovative industry in the northern direction of economic cooperation, important also for the creation of new composite materials and development of information technologies"²⁶ .

The Belarusian side is also generally interested in relations with its Korean partners, primarily in expanding industrial cooperation and establishing joint productions in a variety of areas. Not only in the machine-tool, automotive,

24 Belarus and the Republic of Korea set up a business cooperation council [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-respublika-koreja-sozdali-sovet-delovogo-sotrudnichestva-449731-2021/>

25 Belarus and the Republic of Korea discuss practical steps to enhance cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-respublika-koreja-obsudili-prakticheskie-shagi-po-aktivizatsii-sotrudnichestva-436200-2021/>

26 Pak, C.H. Programmatic approach / C.H. Pak // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: https://export.by/programme_approach

automotive components, electronics, and household appliances industries, but also in the production of tires, medical equipment, and agricultural machinery, as well as "in the financing and implementation of infrastructure projects in innovation, information and communication technologies, industry, and science and technology"²⁷. In this regard, one of the topical areas of interaction with Korean partners is as follows.

Since 2019, the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Belarus has been implementing a series of international cooperation projects regarding the creation of infrastructure for support and development of smart industry in our country. First, a set of works was carried out to assess the readiness of the digital transformation of the national economy, including its real sector. The result of the project was recommendations, which provide for the development of a strategy aimed at cooperation of large manufacturing companies with small and medium-sized businesses. New instruments of state support for the digital transformation of organizations in the real sector of the economy were also introduced. So, this work was carried out with the support of the knowledge exchange program with the Republic of Korea. More specifically, "starting in 2020, this program provides consulting support for the implementation of a pilot project for the digital transformation of a machine-building enterprise. It is planned that the results and recommendations obtained will be used to organize the digital transformation of machine-building enterprises throughout our country"²⁸. The seriousness of this interaction with the Korean partners is evidenced by the fact that in March 2021, a republican seminar-meeting on "Studying the experience of the Republic of Korea in digital transformation of the industrial sector of economy (mechanical engineering)" was held in Minsk;

27 Belarus is interested in expanding investment cooperation with the Republic of Korea [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-rasshirenii-investitsionnogo-sotrudnichestva-s-respublikoj-koreja-436524-2021/>

28 The experimental demonstration center in Brest Technopark is planned to be put into operation in 2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/opytno-demonstratsionnyj-tsentr-v-breestskom-tehnoparke-planiruetsja-vvesti-v-ekspluatatsiju-v-2022-godu-448204-2021/>

its participants included over 160 representatives of state bodies and organizations, the business community of Belarus, free economic zones, science and technology parks, scientific and educational sphere. Importantly, with the help of experts from the Republic of Korea, they considered the specific experience of the backbone Korean manufacturing companies - LG and Hyundai - in deploying the process of digital transformation in the machine-building sector of industry. After that, the Belarusian Ministry of Economy expressed confidence that "the results of the discussion of the Korean experience will become a solid basis for the deployment of projects in the field of digital development of organizations of the country's industrial complex and involvement of the SME sector engaged in the production sphere in this process.²⁹ . It should be assumed that the Belarusian-Korean Business Cooperation Council will make its contribution to the solution of all these issues now. After all, it has a very wide field of activity.

Oman is another Asian state with which interaction intensified in 2021. In August 2021, an online business forum "Belarus - Oman" was held. The attention of the Belarusian side to the intensification of business engagement with this Middle Eastern country can be explained by several reasons. First, it exports oil, oil products, and gas. And it always considers buying food and engineering products from its foreign partners. Second, Oman is interesting to Belarus because of its geographic location. Its port infrastructure allows Belarus to seriously consider exports to the entire Arabian Peninsula region. All of this makes Oman one of Belarus's promising trade, economic and investment partners in the Middle East.

However, in 2020 the trade turnover between the countries amounted to only USD 1.15 million with the share of Belarusian export of USD 850

²⁹ The Republic of Korea presented its experience in digital transformation of mechanical engineering in Minsk [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/respublika-koreja-predstavila-v-minske-svoj-opyt-tsifrovoj-transformatsii-mashinostroeniya-432451-2021/>

thousand, the basis of which "was formed by potash fertilizers and foodstuffs"³⁰. It is considerably inferior to the indicators that were observed in the Belarusian-Omanian trade almost ten years ago. We should remind that "the highest level of the trade turnover between Belarus and Oman was registered in 2012 - \$12 million"³¹. That is why the task of returning the volumes of trade and economic cooperation to the growth trajectory was one of the main ones for the participants of the business seminar, during which they discussed both the current state and prospects of the development of bilateral partnerships in industrial production, agriculture and food, the potential for investment cooperation and implementation of joint projects in the two countries, "as well as possibilities for holding a meeting of the Belarus-Oman Business Council"³².

The attention of the parties to the activities of the business council is explained by the fact that it is one of the most actively used tools for the development of trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. Belarus and Oman signed the agreement on its establishment back in 2010, but the first meeting of the Business Council did not take place until August 2015 in Minsk. The Omani side saw its task in coming to the Belarusian capital at that time as determining the most promising areas for expanding trade and economic cooperation here. "If we talk about Oman's investments in Belarus, the prospects are seen primarily in such areas as the heavy industry and the petrochemical complex"³³. A few months later, the partners from Oman were interested in investing in the development of Belarusian agriculture, real estate and ecotourism, and agreed with the Belarusian side to "jointly develop scientific and

30 Cooperation in trade and economic sphere [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://egypt.mfa.gov.by/ru/blr_oman/economical/

31 Ogneva, Yu. Koltovich: the visit of the business delegation from Oman will contribute to an increase in trade turnover / Yu. Ogneva // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/koltovich-vizit-biznes-delegatsii-iz-omana-posposobstvuet-uvlicheniju-tovarooborota-211012-2016/>

32 Belarus and Oman have significant potential for cooperation in various areas - Ulakhovich [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/mezhdu-belarusiju-i-omanom-est-znachitelnyj-potentsial-sotrudnichestva-v-razlichnyh-oblastjah-ulahovich-455263-2021/>

33 Ogneva, Y. Oman will study the possibility of participation in the Sino-Belarusian Industrial Park / Y. Ogneva // [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/oman-izuchit-vozmozhnosti-uchastija-v-kitajsko-belorusskom-industrialnom-parke-160157-2015/>

innovative projects, work out proposals and establish Belarusian assembly facilities in Oman"³⁴.

In September 2016, for the first time, a representative delegation of more than 40 major businessmen from Oman came to Minsk from Oman to participate in the second meeting of the Belarusian-Omani Business Council, whose scope of activities and interests included "investments, banking, construction, food and agriculture, industrial production, mining, insurance, financial consulting, transportation services, retail trade, hotel business and tourism"³⁵. One of the main topics of this forum was "Investment in agricultural production in Belarus in order to increase the production here and supply both the Gulf and the Eurasian Economic Union markets"³⁶. There was also a discussion about the possibility of creating a joint venture in Oman for sales, assembly production and after-sales service of Amkodor machinery.

In October 2017, Belarus participated for the first time in Oman's largest food industry and hospitality exhibition, Food and Hospitality. The interest in it was fueled by the fact that food production remains a problem in this country, as in the entire Middle East. Up to half of Oman's imports come from consumer goods and food. "Currently, Oman is particularly interested in supplying poultry, chicken eggs and dairy products: skim and whole milk powder, animal butter, dried milk whey, and cheese."³⁷. Finally, the third meeting of the Belarus-Oman Business Council was held in Minsk in April 2019. At it, participants considered opportunities for bilateral business interaction and prospects for implementing investment projects "in the areas of logistics, oil and gas industry, development

34 Omani business shows interest in investing in the agro-industrial complex of Belarus, the real estate sector, eco-tourism [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/biznes-omana-projavljaet-interes-k-investirovaniju-v-apk-belarusi-sektor-nedvizhimosti-ekologicheskogo-166686-2015/>

35 More than 40 major businessmen from Oman will visit Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/bolee-40-krupnyh-biznesmenov-omana-posetjat-belarus-210359-2016/>

36 Omani businessmen plan to invest in the production of agricultural products in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/omanskije-biznesmeny-planirujut-investirovat-v-proizvodstvo-selhozproduktov-v-belarusi-210859-2016/>

37 Belarusian products will be presented at the international exhibition in Oman [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-produkty-budut-predstavleny-na-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-v-omane-266188-2017/>

of security and safety systems, tourism, organization of exhibitions and fairs, business events..."³⁸ . In addition, the Omani delegation included "an enterprise that is interested in the development of innovative technologies and the IT-sphere"³⁹ .

All this shows that the parties have considerable potential for the development of business cooperation, which today should be capitalized in specific projects. We must assume that this is what the fourth meeting of the business council, which the parties plan to hold in 2021, will focus on.

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38 A meeting of the Belarusian-Omani Business Cooperation Council will be held in Minsk on April 10 [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/zasedanie-belorussko-omanskogo-soveta-delovogo-sotrudnichestva-proidet-v-minske-10-aprelja-342835-2019/>

39 Lisatovich, T. Belarus is interested in the arrival of Omani business - Koltovich / T. Lisatovich // [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-prihode-v-stranubiznesa-omana-koltovich-343395-2019/>

There are opportunities for interaction, We need to use them

Asia is now the most important area for the Republic of Belarus to develop its trade and economic cooperation. Thus, in 2020 alone, Belarusian exports to the countries of this continent amounted to about two billion dollars. Nevertheless, there are still many opportunities in this direction to promote Belarusian economic interests. "In order to use them successfully, it is necessary to continue systematic and consistent work, developing mutual interest and initiating new formats of contacts, as it is happening in the development of partnerships with a number of Asian countries,"⁴⁰ , including **Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia.**

In this context, we remind you that in October 2021 the fifth meeting of the Belarus-Pakistan Business Council was held, which was attended by representatives of more than 60 companies from this South Asian country, representing such sectors of the economy as the chemical industry, pharmaceuticals, textiles, food production, construction, transport, logistics and tourism. Representatives of almost one hundred enterprises and companies took part in the meeting from the Belarusian side. Such composition of the business council participants eloquently demonstrated that "relations between Belarus and Pakistan are currently at a high level, especially in trade, investment and industry"⁴¹ . This is largely facilitated by the very extensive legal and contractual framework, which already includes more than 80 agreements. Another "about 20 agreements / memorandums of understanding are in the final

40 Zalessky, B. The goal is stable growth. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 66.

41 Pakistan is interested in strengthening economic cooperation with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pakistan-zainteresovan-v-ukreplenii-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-s-belarusiju-462939-2021/>.

stage of negotiations"⁴² . Formed mechanisms of partnership implementation in the form of commissions and working groups, as well as the existing system of interregional cooperation are also active.

As for the Business Council, its fourth meeting in the online format was held by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in April 2021. There the parties "discussed not only the development of bilateral trade, but also possibilities to increase investment cooperation, industrial cooperation, creation of joint companies and productions, mentioning industry, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, as well as education, information technologies and logistics among the priority directions of cooperation"⁴³ . At the fifth meeting of the council, the Belarusian side made the key areas of cooperation with its Pakistani partners more specific, noting among them "the increase in the volume of mutual sales of traditional products, the establishment of joint productions of Belarusian equipment in Pakistan, as well as joint productions of surgical instruments and leather goods in Belarus. The creation of joint clusters for the production of the medicines in demand is promising; it can take place both in Belarus and in Pakistan."⁴⁴ . In addition, the issues of attracting Pakistani capital to implement projects for modernization of Belarusian textile industry enterprises, development of joint production of agricultural products, implementation of joint projects in the scientific and technical sphere with access to the production cycle are topical now. The project to create a university of applied technologies in Pakistan is also relevant, in order to reach a qualitatively new level of professional and technical training of Pakistani specialists using Belarusian educational technologies.

42 Khan, S.H. About business plans, tractor deliveries and master class on van painting / S.H. Khan // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/posol-pakistana-o-biznes-planah-postavkah-traktorov-i-master-klasse-po-rosipisi-furgonov-7887//>

43 Zalessky, B.L. Key task - realization of cooperation potential / B.L. Zalessky // Materials for XVII International Scientific Practical Conference, Novinata za nadredali nauk - 2021, 17 - 25 May 2021: Sofia. "Byal GRAD-BG". - C. 19.

44 Borysievich: relations between Belarus and Pakistan acquire strategic character [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/borisevich-otnoshenija-belarusi-i-pakistana-priobretajut-strategicheskij-harakter-462932-2021/>

If we take into account the priority of cooperation in agriculture, we note that in 2020 about three hundred units of Belarusian agricultural equipment - tractors and combines - were sold to Pakistan. In 2021, Minsk and Islamabad intend to increase this figure to three thousand units. At the fifth meeting of the business council the idea of setting up an assembly facility for Belarusian tractors on Pakistani soil was discussed. "We are talking about assembling 10 thousand tractors a year in Pakistan, this project is now in the works and preliminary documents have been signed"⁴⁵.

Another promising area for Belarusian-Pakistani business cooperation is the development of exchange trade, which can give new impetus to the development of bilateral trade and economic relations. In particular, the Pakistani side sees significant potential here, "primarily in such areas as agriculture, woodworking, metallurgy and petrochemicals"⁴⁶. The thing is that, according to both sides, the trade turnover between Belarus and Pakistan is still small - a little over \$50 million for 2020. A significant potential for its growth through the exchange mechanism lies in the fact that "Pakistan is one of the world's largest exporters of rice, wheat and other crops"⁴⁷. The textile industry is also developed there. The Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE) is ready to save Pakistani companies from most of the problems connected with entering the Belarusian market and to minimize their possible risks. Besides, Belarusian exporters from Pakistan could use the Belarusian exchange platform to supply their goods to the European Union, where the BUCE has accredited about four thousand members. In turn, Belarusian

45 Belarus and Pakistan are considering the possibility of establishing assembly production of Belarusian tractors [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-pakistan-rassmatrivajut-vozmozhnost-sozdaniya-sborochnogo-proizvodstva-belorusskih-tractorov-462934-2021/>

46 Pakistan is ready to trade with Belarus through the BUTB platform [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/pakistan-gotov-torgovat-s-belarusju-cherez-ploschadku-butb-462927-2021/>

47 BUTB opens broad prospects for the development of mutual trade between Belarus and Pakistan - Ambassador [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/butb-otkryvaet-shirokie-perspektivy-dlja-razvitiya-vzaimnoj-torgovli-belarusi-i-pakistana-posol-453692-2021/>

companies could successfully export chemical and petrochemical products to the Pakistani market, which are traditionally in high demand there.

It should be reminded that for eight months of 2021 the trade turnover between Belarus and Pakistan exceeded \$53 million. At the same time, "export of Belarusian goods amounted to \$44.3 million..."⁴⁸, and the trade surplus for the Belarusian side exceeded \$35 million. The dynamics of these indices prove that the growth potential has not been exhausted yet. Opportunities for the expansion of trade and economic cooperation are quite diverse, and the plans for their implementation are concrete and realistic.

As for the **United Arab Emirates** (UAE), Belarus's trade and economic relations with this state located in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region have been developing particularly intensively in recent years. "Belarus is steadily increasing its supplies of goods and services to the UAE <...>. The main Belarusian export items are petrochemical products, wood processing products, food products and various types of equipment. In the service sector, computer and transportation services are actively exported"⁴⁹. The dynamics of development of these bilateral ties is eloquently illustrated by the fact that "trade turnover for the last five years has tripled, investments since 2011 have increased more than tenfold"⁵⁰.

A good example of the expansion of bilateral Belarusian-Emirati cooperation in the investment sector in recent years is "the largest construction and real estate project, which is being implemented in Minsk under the patronage of the founder of the world-renowned Emaar company"⁵¹. Let us

48 Trade and economic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://pakistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/trade_and_economic_bilateral_relations/
49 Golovchenko: Belarus is interested in expanding cooperation with the UAE in trade and investment [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/golovchenko-belarus-zainteresovana-v-rasshirenii-sotrudnichestva-s-oae-v-sfere-torgovli-i-investitsij-470873-2021/>

50 Chervjakov: National Day of Belarus at Expo 2020 will allow to show the capabilities of enterprises [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/chervjakov-natsionalnyj-den-belarusi-na-ekspo-2020-pozvolit-pokazat-vozmozhnosti-predpriyatij-470830-2021/>

51 Roman Golovchenko: At the EXPO we are working on cooperation with the countries of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10068>

remind you that Minsk City Executive Committee has signed a contract with the Emirati company Riverside Development Holdings Limited for the construction of the object "Experimental multifunctional complex "North shore", which will be located within the boundaries of Minsk ring road - Pobediteley avenue - Orlovskaya street - Tniak water reservoir. The cost of the project is four billion dollars. There will be built "residential houses with all the necessary engineering and transport infrastructure, social facilities and public amenities with the total area of more than 6 million square meters. The National Exhibition Center, the Institute of Artificial Intelligence and the Minsk International Trade Center will also be built"⁵².

Among other Belarusian regions successfully developing mutually beneficial relations with partners from the UAE is Brest Region. "Last year [2021] the foreign trade turnover between the Brest region and the UAE increased 1.5 times and exceeded \$5 million. It is a small amount against the background of \$3 billion of exports in the region as a whole. But the market is promising..."⁵³. The high interest of Brest region enterprises in the Emirati market is proven by the fact that CEOs and leading specialists of nearly ten major companies of the region are expected to participate in the "EXPO 2020" events in Dubai in January 2022. They include Santa Bremor JV LLC, Barkhim OJSC, 1AK-GROUP, ST&M Group of Companies, Kobrin Butter and Cheese Plant, Brest Meat-Packing Plant, Brestmyasomolprom Concern, Brest Scientific and Technological Park and Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park. As a result, they signed contracts worth \$18 million at the world exhibition. This includes four contracts with residents from the UAE for eight million dollars. "In particular, contracts for the supply to the Arab market of dried milk, dried ice

52 Construction of the exhibition center in the Severnyy Bereg complex in Minsk is scheduled to begin this year [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/stroitelstvo-vystavochnogo-tsentra-v-komplekse-severnyj-bereg-v-minske-planirujut-nachat-v-etom-godu-470841-2021/>

53 Foreign trade turnover between the Brest region and the UAE increased 1.5 times [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/vneshnetorgovyj-oborot-mezhdu-brestskoj-oblastju-i-oae-vyros-v-15-raza-479871-2022/>

cream <...>. Santa Bremor and ST&M Group will increase sales of products. "Barkhim" signed an agreement with a Dubai company to promote its products in the UAE market"⁵⁴.

The topic of attracting foreign investments into innovative projects of Brest region was not left aside at the exhibition in Dubai. Thus, about two dozen Arab companies - logistics, investment, food distributors, trade in raw materials, working in the petrochemical industry - were able to learn in detail about the offers of the free economic zone "Brest", including the production of chargers for electric cars and ultrasound machines. Brest Scientific and Technological Park being the largest innovation center and the main incubator of small business in the region demonstrated the project of SmartBrest smart city at EXPO-2020 demonstrating not only advanced technologies and solutions which are already available and work in Brest but also something that may interest major investors. In particular, they were speaking about the territory of innovative development, which "can be developed into the present factory quarter, limited by Moskovskaya, Pionerskaya and Y. Kupala Streets". Kupala Street. The area of the area is about 120 hectares. There are industrial buildings on it which are not used"⁵⁵. Potential investors are offered to create here enterprises with clean production in such areas as IT, artificial intelligence, robotics, automation, electronics, quantum computing. The attention with which this smart city project was greeted by the presentation participants allows us to hope that SmartBrest will be able to find interested investors not only in the UAE, but also in other countries.

When it comes to relations between the Republic of Belarus and **the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**, we should remember that in 2022 it will be a

54 Contracts worth \$18 million were signed by Brest region enterprises at the exhibition in Dubai [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kontrakty-na-18-mln-zakljuchili-predpriyatija-brestskoj-oblasti-na-vystavke-v-dubae-481397-2022/>

55 Brest Technopark presents a smart city project at an exhibition in Dubai [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/brestskij-tehnopark-prezentuet-proekt-umnogo-goroda-na-vystavke-v-dubae-480835-2022/>

quarter of a century since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. True, their level, of course, is still far from what it could be. But the fact is that in January 2022 the sides expressed a mutual desire to deepen and develop contacts and intensify the dialogue. Minsk proceeds from the fact that "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a recognized leader in the Arab world, and Belarus is interested in developing relations in all areas"⁵⁶. Today, the parties consider several vectors of joint work to be top priorities: first, it is necessary to substantially expand the contractual and legal framework of the relationship; second, partnership ties in the economic sphere require significant activation, because the parties "have a serious potential in trade and economic cooperation"⁵⁷.

⁵⁸As for the legal and contractual framework of Belarusian-Saudi relations, today it consists of the General Agreement, intergovernmental agreements on avoidance of double taxation and mutual protection of investments, on cooperation in science and technology, interagency memoranda in sports, education, on cooperation between the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the King Abdulaziz Science and Technology City, as well as "the agreement on cooperation between the BelCCI and the Council of the CCI of KSA, the Memorandum of Understanding on

Speaking about the need to step up Belarus-Saudi trade and economic cooperation, we note that back in December 2020, the two sides agreed to "work on the next meeting of the joint intergovernmental committee."⁵⁹. The fact is that the first two meetings of this committee were held in 2015 and 2016 in Riyadh

56 Andreichenko: Belarus is interested in deepening and developing contacts with Saudi Arabia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/andreichenko-belarus-zainteresovana-uglubljat-i-razvivat-kontakty-s-saudovskoj-araviej-480335-2022/>

57 Kochanova: Belarus attaches great importance to friendly relations with Saudi Arabia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/kochanova-belarus-pridaet-bolshoe-znachenie-druzheskim-otnoshenijam-s-saudovskoj-araviej-480404-2022>

58 Political cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: https://uae.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/KSA/politics/

59 Belarus and Saudi Arabia will work on holding a meeting of the joint intergovernmental committee [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-saudovskaja-aravija-prorabotajut-provedenie-zasedanija-sovmestnogo-mezhpravkomiteta-420253-2020/>

and Minsk, respectively. At the first one, the parties agreed to establish a Belarusian-Saudi business council to become a platform for fruitful interaction between representatives of business circles of the two countries. At the same time, "a contract was signed for the supply of soil mixes from the Belarusian company EridGrow Production"⁶⁰. The second session of the intergovernmental committee considered a wide range of cooperation issues in economics, trade, investment, industry, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, water resources, higher education, science and technology and business communities of both countries. The Belarusian-Saudi business forum and contact and cooperative exchange took place on the platform of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. 18 Saudi and more than 70 Belarusian companies and organizations took part in the forum. At that time, "Belarus was supplying 37 commodity items to Saudi Arabia, including machinery and complex technical equipment"⁶¹. At the forum, the Saudi partners were offered a much broader range of machinery products, including special machinery, as well as high-tech goods in the field of instrument engineering. For its part, the Saudi side expressed its "interest in cooperation with Belarusian companies in the areas of information and communication technologies, real estate, security, agriculture, and engineering"⁶².

One of the most promising areas for stepping up trade and economic cooperation is an increase in food supplies from Belarus to the Saudi market. Suffice it to say that "the export of Belarusian food products and agricultural raw materials to Saudi Arabia grew 3.1 times in 2020 compared to 2019 and amounted to \$6.2 million. Belarus supplied skimmed milk powder, whey, jams,

60 Belarus and Saudi Arabia agree to create a joint business council [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-saudovskaja-aravija-dogovorilis-o-sozdanii-sovmestnogo-delovogo-soveta-2523-2015>

61 Kiseleva, O. Belarus intends to seriously expand the range of products on the market of Saudi Arabia / O. Kiseleva // [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-namerena-serjezno-rasshirit-assortiment-produktsii-na-rynke-saudovskoj-aravii-193602-2016/>

62 Belarus-Saudi Arabia Business Forum [Electronic resource]. - 2016. - URL: <https://www.cci.by/о-palate/novosti/biznes-forum-belarus-saudovskaya-araviya/#>

fruit puree, and eggs to Saudi Arabia. In January-March 2021, the exports amounted to \$1.7 million (24.3% growth)."⁶³ . Now the Belarusian manufacturers plan to continue cooperation with the Saudi Food and Drug Agency on the accreditation for the right to supply their products. First of all, we are talking about such dairy products as butter, cheeses, skimmed and whole milk powder, and in the future about meat products - beef and poultry meat produced in accordance with the Halal requirements.

It should be noted that the market of this Persian Gulf country is already being successfully developed by a number of Belarusian exporters. For example, in July 2021, the first batch of concentrated milk was sent to Saudi Arabia by the Rogachev Dairy Processing Plant. "This happened due to the contract with one of the leaders in this country in distribution, which covers retail chains, stores, restaurants and cafes"⁶⁴ . Another interesting example in this row is the Polotsk Dairy Plant, which more than doubled the volume of its exports in 2021, the geography of which is already 22 countries. "There are also plans to ship dried milk to Saudi Arabia in the near future"⁶⁵ .

All these facts indicate that the parties have a certain reserve for the successful development of mutually beneficial relations in the post-Soviet period, the starting point for which may well become 2022. There are many proposals, directions and initiatives from both sides.

63 Belarus is interested in increasing food supplies to Saudi Arabia - Krupko [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-zainteresovana-v-narashivanii-postavok-prodovolstvija-v-saudovskuju-araviju-krupko-441447-2021/>.

64 Zalesky, B.L. Export of food and agricultural products: growth of supplies and expansion of geography / B.L. Zalesky // Materials for XVII international scientific practical conference, Scientific potential for light - 2021, 17 - 25 Septemvri 2021: Sofia. "Byal GRAD-BG". - C. 5.

65 Polotsk Dairy Plant more than doubled its exports in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/bolee-chem-v-dva-raza-velichil-eksport-v-2021-godu-polotskij-molochnyj-kombinat-479923-2022>

Growth points produce results

In 2021, the countries of Asia retained their role as points of growth in the foreign policy and foreign trade activities of Belarus. The implementation of the course towards the reorientation of our republic's trade and economic cooperation towards the countries of the far arc "allowed to increase Belarusian exports to this region to USD 2.4 billion in 2021 (114.3% compared to USD 2.1 billion in 2020"⁶⁶ . At the same time, active interaction with many countries of the Asian continent is also observed in 2022. These include Vietnam, India, and Syria.

The year 2022 marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belarus and **Vietnam**. This Southeast Asian country is among those with which Belarus is developing large-scale interaction in all areas of bilateral cooperation, and "diversification of trade and deepening of economic cooperation with them is an important prerequisite for the growth of the export-oriented Belarusian economy"⁶⁷ . This is evidenced, in particular, by the fact that in 2021, in order to expand its diplomatic presence in the financial and industrial centers of the Asian continent, the Belarusian government decided to open a consulate general in the Vietnamese city of Ho Chi Minh City.

Recall also that in 2021 the trade turnover between the two countries exceeded 200 million dollars. "Belarus exported potash fertilizers, livestock products, instrumentation products, medicines and cosmetics"⁶⁸ . As for the development of industrial cooperation in the province of Hung Yen "key Belarusian-Vietnamese projects are being implemented, including the assembly production of MAZ trucks (JV Maz-Asia LLC) and production of dairy products

66 Review of the results of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus and the activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/c0b615e3c82db7a8.html>

67 Zalessky, B. Journalism of Regional Communities. Theory and practice / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG, 2013. - C. 99-100.

68 Ambassador of Vietnam sees potential for doubling trade turnover with Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/posol-vjetnama-vidit-potentsial-dlja-udvoenija-tovarooborota-s-belarusiju-493021-2022/>.

from Belarusian raw materials (Au Viet Milk)"⁶⁹ . The entry into force in 2021 of "an additional protocol to the agreement on industrial assembly with Vietnam, which creates favorable conditions for localization and development of the assembly production of JSC MAZ"⁷⁰ became important in this connection. The Belarusian tractors to work in Vietnam's rice fields and the quarry equipment of the Belarusian Automobile Plant are under development. In addition, Vietnam is interested in organizing the production of firefighting equipment and protective clothing for firefighting services using Belarusian technologies. Specifically, in April 2022, the two sides have already discussed "practical steps for cooperation in organizing joint production of Belarusian special-purpose machinery and equipment for Vietnamese firefighters in Vietnam."⁷¹ .

Food supplies from Belarus are another area of Belarus-Vietnam cooperation that, judging by all appearances, will become much more active in 2022. Back in 2020, after all the stages of approval and certification, Belarus started full-scale work on deliveries of Belarusian dairy products to Vietnam. Now a similar work is underway to certify meat products from Belarus - pork and beef - in the Vietnamese market. And there is every reason to believe that 2022 will become a kind of "growth point" in the development of this type of Belarusian supplies.

The collective stand of the concern "Belgospischeprom" at the 31st international exhibition Vietnan Expo - one of the largest in this region of the Asian continent, held in April 2022 and attended by over 350 companies from 16 countries, including Russia, China, USA, Japan, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia,

69 Belarus and Vietnam discussed the prospects for the development of joint ventures [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-vjetnam-obsudili-perspektivy-razvitiya-sovmestnyh-predpriyatij-478965-2022/>

70 Review of the results of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus and the activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2021 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://mfa.gov.by/publication/reports/c0b615e3c82db7a8.html>

71 Belarus and Vietnam are working on the possibility of joint production of equipment for firefighting services [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-vjetnam-prorabatyvajut-vozmozhnost-sovmestnogo-proizvodstva-ekipirovki-dlja-pozharnyh-sluzhb-494398-2022/>

Cuba, can be seen what export from Belarus to this South-East Asian country will be in the near future. The following 13 enterprises of the Concern "presented their products in Hanoi: Krinitza, Belsolod, Spartak, Minskkrystall, Minsk Sparkling Wine Factory, Slodych, Kommunarka, Krasny Pospelik, Mashpischeprod, Lidapischekontserty, Malorit canned food and vegetable processing plant, Minsk Margarine Plant and Pinsk Winery"⁷² . And not just presented. For example, Belsolod OJSC even signed a contract to supply light malt with Trust & Future Viet Nam Joint Stock Company.

An important detail: at this exhibition, the Belarusian national exposition received the "Special Guest" status, which "implies central placement in the exhibition hall, active advertising and information support and large-scale congress events, including the Belarusian-Vietnamese business forum"⁷³ , the goal of which was to find business partners and conclude export contracts. This status was very convenient for the scientific and technical section of the Belarusian exposition, where more than a hundred innovative developments in the field of high-tech equipment were presented. About 30 of them fell to the share of the Belarusian State University - food additives, pharmaceuticals and technological equipment. Among them - "antitumor drugs Cisplacel, Prospidelong, Temodex, aimed at counteracting malignant tumors of the head, neck, stomach cancer, and a medical unit of general hyperthermia Ptich-M for the treatment of cancerous diseases of internal organs"⁷⁴ . An innovative series of biopreparations for the treatment and prevention of diseases of farm animals also attracted the attention of visitors to the exhibition. Finally, another exhibition novelty of BSU specialists is Smart Windows. This invention, which

72 Enterprises of "Belgospischeprom" presented their products at the exhibition in Vietnam [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/predpriyatija-belgospischeproma-predstavili-produktsiju-na-vystavke-vo-vjetname-495887-2022/>

73 The national exposition of Belarus will be presented at the Vietnam Expo in April [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/natsionalnaja-ekspozitsija-belarusi-budet-predstavlena-na-vietnam-expo-v-aprele-485336-2022/>

74 About 30 scientific and technical developments will present BSU at the International Exhibition VietnamExpo-2022 [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/okolo-30-nauchno-tehnicheskikh-razrabotok-predstavit-bgu-na-mezhdunarodnoj-vystavke-vietnamexpo-2022-495450-2022/>

has no analogues in the former Soviet Union, protects the room from sunlight, the penetration of ultraviolet radiation and partially blocks the infrared, which allows you to do without curtains and blinds. So, in the field of scientific and technical and innovative developments, the Belarusian side has something to offer to its Vietnamese partners, which, no doubt, will be reflected in new contracts.

Speaking about **India**, we should first of all recall that April 2022 also marked the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belarus and this South Asian country. Minsk views the development of cooperation with India as "one of the priorities of Belarus's foreign policy in Asia. Today, India is a powerful modern state with a developed economy, a large market, and serious scientific and industrial potential"⁷⁵. The existing experience of diplomatic relations in both multilateral and bilateral formats shows that "India is one of Belarus's partner countries in Asia, with which large-scale engagement is developing in all areas of cooperation"⁷⁶.

By developing cooperation on the principles of equality, trust and respect, the parties were able to achieve an annual trade turnover of more than half a billion dollars in 2019-2021. But "as in any relationship, there are areas that are not fully developed. It especially concerns trade and economic relations"⁷⁷. That is why it is possible to call the year 2022 the time for identifying new areas of development in cooperation between Belarus and India. Belarusian regions are very active in this process.

For example, **the Grodno region** plans to significantly strengthen cooperation with India in pharmaceuticals, high-tech and education. In this

75 Andreichenko: relations between Belarus and India are developing on the principles of equality, trust and respect [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/andreichenko-otnoshenija-belarusi-i-indii-razvivajutsja-na-printsipah-ravenstva-doverija-i-uvazhenija-479047-2022/>

76 Zalesky, B. International Relations and Media. A View from Belarus / B. Zalesky. - Palmarium Academic Publishing, 2014. - C. 452.

77 Kochanova: India is a long-standing friend and reliable partner for Belarus in Asia [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/kochanova-indija-dlja-belarusi-davnij-drug-i-nadezhnyj-partner-v-azii-482540-2022/>

regard, the project to build a pharmaceutical plant in Skidel with Indian capital has great potential. The enterprise is built. Now <...> it is important to jointly bring it to sustainable operation, ensure the expansion of the product range and realize its export potential"⁷⁸. As for interaction in the field of education, 150 Indian citizens are studying at Grodno State Medical University this academic year alone. They are also studying at Yanka Kupala State University of Grodno. And their number, judging by all appearances, will continue to increase. In the near future, new joint projects in pharmaceuticals, chemical industry, production of agricultural machinery and food products, including dairy products, will not go unnoticed.

In the Gomel Region, the main points of growth in cooperation with India should be innovative technologies, the IT sphere and medicine. Experience shows that interaction between the Belarusian southeastern region and Indian partners has been growing in recent years. "Since 2018, the growth rate of trade turnover has more than doubled. In 2021, the figure was 508.4%. Such products of Gomel region's industrial sector as pulp, timber, electric current control equipment, stone products are in demand in India"⁷⁹. In 2022 the parties put into practice the issue of resuming the production of Gomel harvesters for Indian agriculture. A separate topic is the partnership in the educational sphere, which already has its own history. The fact is that the first Indian graduate graduated from Gomel State Medical University (GSMU) in 2005. Since then, only 178 representatives of India have graduated from the university. In 2022 there will be 51 more graduates. A total of 290 students from that South Asian country are currently enrolled at the MSMU. In the near future, the Gomel State University named after Francysk Skaryna plans to be more actively involved in this cooperation.

78 Pharmaceuticals, IT-sector and education: Grodno region increases cooperation with India [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/farmatsevtika-it-sfera-i-obrazovanie-grodnenskaja-oblast-naraschivaet-sotrudnichestvo-s-indiej-485022-2022/>

79 Innovative technologies, IT and medicine: India and the Gomel region are ready to develop new areas [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/innovatsionnye-tehnologii-it-i-meditcina-indija-i-gomelskaja-oblast-gotovy-razvivat-novye-sfery-492016-2022>

Mogilev region also plans to expand the areas of cooperation with India in the near future. Among the promising areas are agriculture, education, textile industry and innovative technologies. In 2021 the trade turnover between the parties amounted to almost six million dollars. The basis of supplies from the Belarusian region was technical carbon, newsprint and timber, and from India - complex synthetic threads, medicines, footwear parts, parts for internal combustion engines. And there is every reason to believe that this list of mutual supplies will only expand. For example, the Tekhnolit ChNPP is successfully cooperating with the Indian market and specializes in production of parts and spare parts for various equipment. It receives from India "blanks that are processed on the high-precision equipment and then sent to other countries. More than 30 countries have been exported <...>. In addition, discussions have already started about supplying Technolit's finished products to the Indian market"⁸⁰. Another interesting example of cooperation in the field of innovative technologies is Energitechgrin LLC operating in Mogilev with Indian capital, registered in August 2021. "The main area of activity is environmentally friendly innovations. Here they are engaged in recovery (regeneration) of all types of batteries used in road, rail and river transport, special machinery, industry and communication, wind turbines and solar batteries"⁸¹. The FEZ "Mogilev" is also significantly intensifying its cooperation with India, which in March 2022 at the World Expo 2020 in Dubai signed agreements with two companies from this country on the implementation of investment projects on the basis of FEZ.

80 Strakhar: Mogilev Technolit shows its efficiency in difficult conditions [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/strahar-mogilevskij-tehnolit-v-neprostyh-uslovijah-pokazyvaet-svoju-effektivnost-493160-2022>

81 Agriculture, Textile Industry: Indian Ambassador on the Need for Greater Cooperation [Electronic Resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/amp/regions/view/selskoe-hozjajstvo-tekstilnaja-promyshlennost-posol-indii-o-neobhodimosti-rasshirenija-sotrudnichestva-492918-2022>

All these facts testify to the fact that the Indian direction of cooperation is becoming more and more in demand for Belarusian regions. And significant prospects for foreign economic activity are opening up for them there.

As for **Syria**, it will be 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Belarus and Syria in August 2023. All this time, political engagement with this country has been characterized by a high level and regularity of interstate contacts, convergence in the approaches of Minsk and Damascus to most international problems, and mutual support in international organizations. In the economic sphere, cooperation between the two countries has been developing on its own sustainable trajectory, including deliveries of hundreds of Belarusian trucks to the Syrian market and thorough elaboration of a project for the assembly of Belarusian automotive equipment. Due to the complication of the domestic situation in Syria in 2011, these plans had to be put on hold. However, even at the most difficult time for Damascus, the Belarusian side expressed its confidence in Syria's successful exit from the crisis and its interest in further development and strengthening of bilateral relations in all spheres.

The highest level of Belarus-Syria interaction was registered in 2008, when the volume of bilateral trade amounted to \$85.5 million. Five years later, due to the well-known events in that country, this figure dropped almost tenfold to \$8.9 million. But 2014 already showed the dynamics of the beginning of overcoming the crisis in Syria, which awakened hopes in Minsk to restore the previously existing level of bilateral cooperation. This immediately manifested itself in the rapid growth of Belarusian exports to Syria to \$32.2 million, while the total turnover amounted to \$33.8 million. Belarusian semi-finished non-alloy steel products, instrumentation, pharmaceuticals, and liquid crystal devices found their niche in the Syrian market. Amid the apparent revival of trade and economic ties in 2015, Minsk and Damascus began to actively search for new areas of cooperation in order to "not only restore the previous level of trade

turnover in the best years, but to surpass it many times over"⁸² . The two countries decided to adhere to the principle of mutual complementarity, whereby Belarus produces products that Syrians are interested in, and Syria has a number of goods that Belarusians are interested in.

It should be recalled that when the security situation in the central regions of Syria and around Damascus began to stabilize in 2014-2015, the government of this country immediately expressed interest "in developing trade and investment cooperation, in renewing and expanding cooperative ties with countries that have not stopped political, economic and other support in the most difficult moments of trials <...>"⁸³ . Belarus was one of those countries, which had already seen significant opportunities to intensify interaction with its Syrian partners across the full range of bilateral relations, which were based on a dozen and a half treaty documents. Among them are the agreements on trade, economic and technical cooperation; on promotion and mutual protection of investments; on avoidance of double taxation; on military-technical cooperation; on cooperation in the sphere of education, science and culture; on air communication; on scientific and technical cooperation; on international automobile transportation of passengers and cargoes. There are also agreements on bank payments, agro-industrial complex, veterinary, quarantine and plant protection.

Today, Minsk is well aware of the tasks facing the Syrian government to restore the country's infrastructure and economy and find the resources to finance the most important projects for the state, and in this regard sees two directions for further development of bilateral Belarusian-Syrian engagement. First, it is necessary to organize framework or umbrella agreements at the level of the governments, to determine the basic schemes for the organization of joint work.

82 Materials of the press conference on the results of the visit of Belarusian Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makiej to Syria (February 9, 2015, Damascus) [Electronic resource]. - 2015. URL: http://mfa.gov.by/press/news_mfa/b49e0d253459ccba.html.

83 The project to create an assembly facility for Belarusian vehicles in Syria is resumed [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/vozobnovlena-prorabotka-proekta-sozdaniya-v-sirii-sborochnogo-proizvodstva-belorusskoj-avtotehniki-155561-2015/>

The second level is the level of business, which should build mutually beneficial and safe schemes for their implementation on the basis of these agreements"⁸⁴.

It should be noted that the Belarusian-Syrian trade turnover increased by more than 40 percent in the first 11 months of 2021, and exports from Belarus - nearly 45 percent. The bulk of the Belarusian supplies consisted of medicines, condensed and dried cream, and whey. The Belarusian side expressed confidence that it could meet most of Syria's needs not only for these commodity items, but also for engineering products, passenger, agricultural, freight, construction equipment, as well as "in the construction of high-quality and comfortable housing."⁸⁵ The fact is that today in this country, work is unfolding to restore industry, agriculture, construction, services. Suffice it to say that 115 projects are being implemented here "to recreate water and electricity supply systems, transport infrastructure, the oil and gas industry, telecommunications. The total cost of works is estimated at \$540 billion. In this regard, the country needs a wide range of materials, services and technologies"⁸⁶.

To attract the attention of the wider international community to the solution of these issues, the Rebuild Syria International Industrial Exhibition was organized in Damascus in September 2021, bringing together 190 companies from 25 countries, including Russia, China, India and Cuba. It included ten thematic sections: "Construction technologies and building materials"; "Finishing and decorative products"; "Kitchens, bathrooms, plumbing, water supply technologies"; "Air conditioning, heating, lighting, power generation and electrical engineering"; "Oil and gas"; "Ecology and infrastructure management"; "Insurance and banking"; "Communication systems"; "Information technology and software"; "Food and drinks".

84 Roman Golovchenko: Belarus can meet most of Syria's needs in mechanical engineering products [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/10143>

85 Belarus and Syria Interested in Cooperation in Construction [Electronic resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/politics/view/belarus-i-sirija-zainteresovany-sotrudnicat-v-stroitelnoj-sfere-481516-2022/>

86 Belarusian companies will take part in the largest industrial exhibition in Syria [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/beloruskie-kompanii-primut-uchastie-v-krupnejšej-promyshlennoj-vystavke-v-sirii-458048-2021/>

For the first time at this exhibition, held since 2015, an exposition of Belarusian manufacturers Made in Belarus was organized, in which a number of domestic companies presented their products. For example, Minsk Tractor Plant, which currently has more than two thousand machines working in the fields of Syria, demonstrated new tractor models adapted to work in a hot climate. Minsk Motor Plant showed a line of modern diesel engines and spare parts for them, and Minsk Automobile Plant demonstrated the capabilities of its products. Brest Electrotechnical Plant presented equipment for railway automatics, telemechanics and communications, which turned out to fully meet the requirements of the Syrian market, as "the Syrian railway infrastructure was designed according to the Soviet standards. Today Syria's railway communication system is 80% destroyed, so its restoration has become an important task for the government."⁸⁷.

Another participant of the Belarusian exposition, the European Agrarian Agency Spetsstroy, aroused considerable interest on the Syrian side by the fact that it specializes in construction of buildings and structures, including multi-storey buildings, performs their dismantling and demolition, sorting and recycling construction waste, as well as building dairy and cattle farms. Belagro Bel', a group of companies supplying agricultural complexes of various manufacturers, took part in this business forum in a remote format, which did not prevent it from conducting business negotiations with potential partners.

In general, representatives of the Belarusian side at this international exhibition forum were able to discuss with representatives of the Syrian business community a wide range of issues on cooperation "in the field of water treatment plants, construction work in Syria, supply of agricultural equipment"⁸⁸, in the field of breeding in cattle breeding and creation of dairy farms, as well as

87 Sluka: Syria today needs modern achievements of the Belarusian economy [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sluka-sirija-segodnja-nuzhdaetsja-v-sovremennyh-dostizhenijah-belorusskoj-ekonomiki-462466-2021/>

88 Syria will study the experience of building dairy farms in Belarus [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/sirija-izuchit-opyt-stroitelstva-molochno-tovarnyh-ferm-v-belarusi-462158-2021/>

promising ways to promote export of Belarusian goods and services to the Syrian market. All these facts indicate that the participation of Belarusian business entities at the Rebuild Syria industrial exhibition was another concrete step towards the development of the Syrian market both in the field of mechanical engineering and tractor construction, as well as in the field of housing, industrial and road construction.

Another important aspect in the context of this topic is information relations between Belarus and Syria, which are based on the provisions of the agreement of March 11, 1998, as well as the Agreement of November 12, 2007 on cooperation between the National State Television and Radio Company of Belarus and the General Organization of Television and Radio Broadcasting of Syria and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Belarusian Telegraph Agency and the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) of November 27, 2008. These documents note "the importance of objective information support of interstate cooperation. The role of mass media in strengthening mutual understanding between the countries and the peoples is especially emphasized."⁸⁹ . After all, the thematic range of Belarusian-Syrian cooperation should actively expand today. This includes cooperation in the electric power sector; resumption of supplies of Belarusian automotive equipment to the Syrian market; establishment of assembly facilities of Minsk Automobile Plant in Syria; expansion of regional cooperation; supply of Belarusian construction equipment for the needs of public works associated with the reconstruction of Syria. Finally, cooperation in science and technology, in the framework of which "Belarusian and Syrian scientific institutions signed seven "pilot" contracts for joint R&D works"⁹⁰ . In this regard, the task of journalists is to comprehensively reflect these trends in the media sphere.

89 Cooperation between Belarus and Syria in the Information Sphere [Electronic Resource]. - 2015. - URL: <http://mininform.gov.by/special/ru/news-ru/view/sotrudnichestvo-belarusi-i-sirii-v-informatsionnoj-sfere-275/>

90 Cooperation in science, education, culture [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: http://syria.mfa.gov.by/ru/bilateral_relations/cooperation/ec5318cc4fb8b9c5.html

Industrial park development and regional cooperation

Directive No. 9 "On the Development of Bilateral Relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China," adopted in December 2021, lists the expansion of trade, economic, financial, and investment cooperation and expansion of interregional ties among the priority tasks until 2025. As part of the declared course to raise the status of Belarusian-Chinese relations to the level of iron brotherhood, exemplary all-round strategic cooperation and all-weather partnership, the activities of the China-Belarus Industrial Park Great Stone, one of the main objectives of which is to ensure effective activities of its residents, attract new ones, actively develop innovation activities, startups, cluster cooperation, and involve Belarusian enterprises in the pro At the same time, a specific goal is set: "To ensure the number of park residents by 2025 is not less than 170 companies..."⁹¹

It should be noted that a number of specific measures to achieve this objective were taken at the Great Stone back in 2021. In particular, for three quarters of this year, residents of the industrial park have increased investment in fixed assets by more than a third. At the same time, "the volume of industrial production grew by more than 2.5 times to Br222.6 million. <Export of resident products and services grew by more than 16% and is carried out in 20 countries of the world"⁹². An important detail: if "by the end of 2020 [in the park] there were 68 companies from 14 countries registered"⁹³, then by mid-November 2021 there were 81 companies from 15 countries. The work to expand Great Stone continues even further.

91 Presidential Directive No. 9 "On the Development of Bilateral Relations between the Republic of Belarus and the People's Republic of China". - Minsk. 2021. - C. 6.

92 In the "Great Stone" for 9 months more than a third increased investment in fixed assets [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/v-velikom-kamne-za-9-mesjatsev-bolee-chem-na-tret-uvlechilis-investitsii-v-osnovnoj-kapital-470611-2021/>

93 Zalessky, B. With the purpose of sustainable development. Collection of articles / B. Zalessky. - LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2021. - C. 13.

For example, in October, the Belarusian-Latvian company SMD By LLC was registered here, which "plans to create high-tech production of electronic products (boards) of small and medium series"⁹⁴, which are widely used in telecommunications, medicine, automotive industry, instrument making, for their supplies to the Eurasian Economic Union countries. In November, the list of residents of the industrial park was supplemented by several more business entities. One of them is Rufais LLC. Investment project of the new resident is associated with production and application of the latest materials made of polymers in construction. The innovative approach here consists in the fact that "the composite material is the company's own development, differs from the analogs with higher operational properties. It has the wide sphere of application including the production of roofing and other elements of buildings and constructions"⁹⁵, which gives the good grounds to hope for the realization of this product not only on the domestic market but also in Russia and in the countries of the European Union.

Among the new residents is also Belarusian LLC "InKata", which was previously registered in "Great Stone" as an investor to build facilities to support subjects of innovation activities of the industrial park. "The project will provide design, prototyping and technical documentation services, as well as provide jobs and equipment"⁹⁶. Another Great Stone resident in November is the China-Belarus Center for Innovative Bioengineering Technologies LLC, which intends to work closely with the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. "The company will produce reagents for diagnosing coronavirus and some other

94 The new resident of Great Stone will produce electronic boards [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-elektronnye-platy-465743-2021/>

95 The new resident of the "Great Stone" will produce composite materials [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-kompozitnye-materialy-469205-2021/>

96 LLC "InKata" became a resident of "Great Stone". [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/ooo-inkata-stalo-rezidentom-velikogo-kamnja-471320-2021/>

diseases, as well as for food safety diagnostics,"⁹⁷ , which is expected to be exported to the countries of the Eurasian Economic and European Union, as well as to China.

In the first half of December, the industrial park registered a new subject of innovative activity - Needle Med LLC, which is going to implement in the Great Stone a project to create a perfect simulator for practicing practical manual skills by employees of various specialties - surgeons, tattoo artists, medical students. Interestingly, this project was created in 2019 by a group of students. "His idea is to create a simulator, as close as possible to real human tissues, to prepare specialists for practice"⁹⁸ . Thanks to the opportunities that the industrial park offers to innovators, the development of young specialists, we must assume, will find wide application in real life. In the second half of December, Great Stone registered another resident - LLC "Scientific and Technical Company UAV Tianyu Changyin (MSC)," the founder of which is one of China's leading enterprises in the development and production of intelligent unmanned systems - "Beijing Scientific and Technical Company UAV Tianyu Changyin. The purpose of this investment project in the industrial park is "to create a high-tech production of universal logistics systems of unmanned aerial vehicles and equipment for them"⁹⁹ .

Speaking about the development of cluster cooperation in the Great Stone, it should be recalled that back in June 2021 the Republic of Belarus adopted a decree that improves the legal regulation aimed at improving the investment climate in the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone". In particular, this document provides for: 1) making the park administration more independent

97 The new resident of Great Stone will produce reagents for diagnosing diseases [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-budet-proizvodit-reagenty-dlja-dagnostiki-zabolevanij-471849-2021/>

98 Great Stone's new company will create simulators to practice chiropractic skills in surgery [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/tech/view/novaja-kompanija-velikogo-kamnja-budet-sozdavat-trenazhery-dlja-otrabotki-manualnyh-navykov-v-hirurgii-474239-2021/>

99 A new resident of Great Stone will start producing unmanned aerial vehicles [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-nachnet-proizvodit-bespilotnye-letatelnye-apparaty-476043-2021/>

by transferring additional powers from local authorities in terms of administrative procedures; 2) expanding the types of activities of the industrial park; 3) supporting start-ups; 4) creating preferential conditions for large investment projects with investments of more than 50 million dollars.

Among the new areas of Great Stone's activities should be mentioned, first of all, the creation and development of productions in the areas of biopharmaceuticals, medical products and medical services. A very attractive innovation in this regard are special conditions for the development of medical activities on the territory of the park, where it will be possible to provide medical services with the use of medicines, medical equipment and products, treatment methods of foreign countries without mandatory registration in Belarus and without the need to obtain a license for medical services. The terms will be significantly shortened for manufacturers and the procedures for registration and re-registration of medicines and medical devices, as well as for clinical trials, will be simplified. In other words, all these changes "open up great opportunities for the development of a medical and pharmaceutical cluster in the park, and primarily in the field of traditional Chinese medicine"¹⁰⁰.

The focus on the development of Belarusian-Chinese cooperation in the field of medicine in the context of the fight against the coronavirus epidemic is very timely. After all, Chinese traditional medicine "has unique advantages in the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of diseases. <...> It not only has a good therapeutic effect on mild COVID-19, but also has obvious advantages in treating critically ill patients, thanks to which the mortality rate in severe cases has dropped from 21% to 5%"¹⁰¹. Using the "Great Stone" platform to realize

100 Koroteev K. Support for start-ups, preferences for investors, simplification of land relations - about the innovations of the decree to develop the park "Great Stone" / K. Koroteev // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/comments/view/podderzhka-startapov-preferentsii-investoram-uproschenie-zemelnyh-otnoshenij-koroteev-o-novatsijah-ukaza-po-7805/>

101 Xiaoyun, S. Belarus and China: growth of business cooperation and interaction in the production of drugs in the treatment of coronavirus / S. Xiaoyun // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/interview/view/belarus-i-kitaj-rost-delovogo-sotrudnichestva-i-vzaimodejstvie-v-vypuske-lekarstv-pri-lechenii-koronavirusa-7873/>

the existing potential of Belarusian-Chinese cooperation in the field of health care can give a serious positive result in terms of preventing new "waves" of the coronavirus epidemic.

Recall that in the industrial park "Great Stone" there are 12 residents operating in the medical area. "These are companies from Belarus, China, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Russia, and the USA"¹⁰². An important component of the medical cluster being created here will be the company "Novoera Biotech," which became a resident of the industrial park in March 2021. Its founders include Jingtai Institute of Culture and Economy, Xishanqingxue Chinese Medicine Clinic LLC (Beijing) and Xishanqingxue Pharmaceutical Technology Company LLC (Beijing). The new resident will implement a project related to Chinese traditional medicine. "Medicines, supplements, which are planned to produce, are based on environmentally friendly natural material. They will be in demand not only to help in the treatment of coronavirus, but also in the treatment of colds, flu, asthma"¹⁰³. In particular, the production of Linlan Yiqing, a drug aimed at effective treatment of coronavirus infection, will be organized. It was assumed that at the first stage, the produced drugs, the production of which was planned to start in 2021, would be exported to Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and India.

In March 2021, plans were also announced to create the Eurasian Center for Traditional Chinese Medicine at Great Stone, which will provide medical services to the industrial park's residents and its Chinese and foreign employees, as well as interact with research institutions, healthcare institutions of Belarus and neighboring countries to exchange experience in traditional Chinese medicine. In May 2021, a memorandum of cooperation was signed by the

102 Center for Expertise and Testing in Health Care and Great Stone Park have agreed to cooperate [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/tsentr-ekspertiz-i-ispytanij-v-zdravooohranenii-i-park-velikij-kamen-dogovorilis-o-sotrudnichestve-441421-2021/>

103 New Great Stone resident starts Chinese medicine project [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyj-rezident-velikogo-kamnja-nachinaet-proekt-v-sfere-kitajskoj-meditiny-433283-2021/>

Industrial Park Development Company and the Center for Expertise and Testing in Healthcare RUE. And in July, Great Stone signed an agreement to establish a Sino-Belarusian zone for advanced cooperation and an international park for traditional Chinese medicine and healthcare, which imply a new model of interaction between Belarus and China in the above area.

All these facts testify to the active steps to deploy in the industrial park "an extensive cluster, which will gather the developments in the field of Chinese medicine. <...> It is expected that a medical center for diagnostic services will appear in the future. This area is already in the works"¹⁰⁴. Besides, the development of medical tourism is also provided here, for which a kind of medical village will be built near the Volmyanskoye reservoir - the clinics and various medical institutions in the field of rehabilitation. Let us also remind you that in the complex of measures on development of national innovation system in Belarus for 2021-2025 the Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park "Great Stone" is determined "as a platform for organization of innovative productions"¹⁰⁵. Judging by the above facts, this site is developing quite successfully, confidently and dynamically in the current five-year period.

Turning to the task of expanding interregional ties, which is one of the priorities in the development of Belarusian-Chinese relations, we can note the successful experience of such Belarusian regions as Minsk and the Gomel Region. Speaking of the Belarusian capital, suffice it to say that "in January-May this [2021] year, trade turnover between Minsk and China totaled \$730.6 million, while last year it was \$613.8 million during the same period."¹⁰⁶. The main exporters are RUE Bellesexport, Best Meat Company, Meat and Dairy

104 Kryzhevich, I. Two new residents of Great Stone will be engaged in the development of artificial intelligence and development of equipment for data processing and storage / I. Kryzhevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.sb.by/articles/zvanyy-biznes.html>

105 Measures for the development of the national innovation system until 2025 are defined [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/opredeleny-meroprijatija-po-razvitiyu-natsionalnoj-innovatsionnoj-sistemy-do-2025-goda-475735-2021>

106 Kukharev and the Ambassador of China discussed cooperation between Minsk and cities of China [Electronic resource] - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/kuharev-i-posol-kitaja-obsudili-sotrudnichestvo-minska-s-gorodami-kr-453612-2021/>

Company, Mobiora, and Integral-UKH. The basis of Minsk supplies to China consisted of timber, meat and edible by-products of poultry, milk and condensed cream, rapeseed oil, electronic integrated circuits and micro assemblies, tanned or dressed fur skins, measuring or control devices, collections and collectibles in zoology, equipment for measuring or monitoring electrical quantities, finished media for recording sound. The activation of ties between the Belarusian capital and Chinese twin cities, of which Minsk has four - Changchun (1992), Shenzhen (2014), Beijing (2016), and Shanghai (2019) - seems important in terms of consolidating this trend in the future.

Changchun, the administrative center of Jilin Province, located in the northeast of China, where science, automobile and optical engineering are developed and where about eight million people live, is a special place in this list of twin cities. In May 2022 it will be 30 years since the Agreement on establishment of twinning relations between Changchun and the Belarusian capital was signed. In 2010 a Belarusian-Chinese technopark was opened in the hi-tech production zone of this Chinese city in order to become a platform for working on joint projects and further promotion of the products not only in the market of China but also in the neighboring countries. Its basis was formed by about 15 companies that were part of the zone and had long-standing stable relations with Belarusian scientific and innovation enterprises. At that time, among the joint projects planned in the technopark was "creation of an enterprise to produce medical laser equipment, an agreement on creation of a joint venture to produce high-precision electric motors. In the first stage about 30 hectares of land were allocated to the project for the construction of office and production facilities, in the future another 30 hectares may be allocated"¹⁰⁷. Speaking more specifically, the technopark is divided into six functional zones: Research and Development Center, Project Incubator, Museum as well as three

¹⁰⁷ Polezhai, T. Belarusian-Chinese Technopark opened in Changchun / T. Polezhai // [Electronic resource]. - 2010. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/president/view/belorusko-kitajskij-tehnopark-otkrylsja-v-gorode-chanchun-134192-2010>

complexes - international cooperation, regional interaction and service. In addition, there are plans to create an art gallery, a bookstore, an exhibition hall, and a concert hall on its territory. But the main thing is that here "the development is based, among other things, on a fund of 80 Belarusian projects"¹⁰⁸.

Today, "a complex of technopark buildings has already been built there, and currently one of the topical issues is to fill it with joint high-tech projects"¹⁰⁹. And it has already received its first three residents: The Sino-Belarusian Center of researches and developments of precision medical equipment of BNTU Technopark "Polytechnic" and the Belarusian-Chinese Technopark in Changchun; the Belarusian-Chinese Center of joint development and application of carbon-carbon composite materials between JSC "SvetlogorskHimvolokno" and the company "Jilin Lenke"; Belarusian-Chinese center for the development of functional berry crops between the Central Botanical Garden of the National Academy of Sciences, Polesski Zhuraviny LLC and the Northeast Institute of Geography and Agricultural Ecology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. To support this growing dynamics of bilateral cooperation, the Belarusian and Chinese sides set the task "to focus on improving the conditions for mutually beneficial cooperation, expanding and deepening contacts, including among young people"¹¹⁰. And today, the main thematic areas of the technopark already include such areas as "photoelectronics, laser technology, new materials, construction and energy, agricultural technology and biotechnology, informatics"¹¹¹.

108 The China-Belarus Technopark is being built in Changchun [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://primgazeta.ru/news/v-chanchune-stroyat-kitajsko-belorusskij-tehnopark-08-07-2019-05-00-12>

109 Technopark in Changchun will make a significant contribution to the development of relations between Belarus and China - Shumilin [Electronic resource]. - 2020. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/tehnopark-v-chanchune-vneset-suschestvennyj-vklad-v-razvitiye-otnoshenij-belarusi-i-kitaja-shumilin-405335-2020/>

110 About 300 applications were submitted to the Sino-Belarusian Youth Innovation Projects Contest [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/okolo-300-zajavok-podano-na-kitajsko-belorusskij-molodezhnyj-konkurs-innovatsionnyh-proektov-442132-2021/>

111 Belarus-China Science and Technology Park in Changchun [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <http://changchun.park.bntu.by/about-technology-park/>

The Belarusian-Chinese technology park in Changchun is not the only area of interaction between Minsk and this twin city. Back in June 2014, the parties agreed to develop business cooperation, for which they planned to hold business forums. "During such events, businessmen will have an opportunity to agree on the implementation of specific projects. In addition, the forums will further strengthen the economic basis of our cooperation."¹¹² . In June 2017, in order to expand twinning relations, the Minsk City Executive Committee and the Changchun People's Government adopted an agreement to establish cooperation in tourism and the development of cultural relations. And within the framework of the bilateral business forum that took place in the Chinese city, "memorandums of cooperation with Chinese partners were signed by Kommunarka Joint Stock Company, Minskhhlebprom PMC, Zapadnaya Wholesale Base PMC, Belryba OJSC, Minotel OJSC"¹¹³ . So, the opportunities for expanding cooperation between the two twin cities are, undoubtedly, very extensive. It is only necessary to use them without losing time, and with mutual benefit.

As for Gomel Region, it has already signed documents on bilateral cooperation with four Chinese regions - the Inner Mongolia (2011) and Xinjiang Uygur (2016) autonomous regions, Sichuan (2015) and Jiangsu (2016) provinces. Naming Sichuan Province in this list, we note that in April 2021, the parties raised the level of their friendly relations by signing an "agreement on the establishment of twinning relations, which provides for increased cooperation in the economic, social and cultural spheres"¹¹⁴ .

¹¹² Minsk and Changchun, China, plan to develop business cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minsk-i-kitajskij-chanchun-planirujut-razvivat-biznes-sotrudnichestvo-47498-2014/>

¹¹³ Minsk and Chinese Changchun signed an agreement on cooperation in tourism and culture [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/minsk-i-kitajskij-chanchun-podpisali-soglashenie-o-sotrudnichestve-v-sfere-turizma-i-kultury-250871-2017/>

¹¹⁴ Zalesky, B.L. Gomel Region: Chinese Vector of Partnership / B.L. Zalesky // *Materialy XVIII Mezinarodni vedecko-prakticka conference "Efektivni nastroje modernich ved - 2021"*. Volume 5: Prague. Publishing House "Education and Science". - C. 16.

Such a variety of partnership and twinning ties could not but have an impact on the overall interaction of the Gomel region with China. Suffice it to say that over the past three years supplies from this Belarusian region to the Chinese market have grown 20(!) times. And "exports of Gomel enterprises to China in January-November of last year [2021] exceeded \$100 million. The main export items to China are wood pulp, timber, wool, meat and dairy products and confectionery products"¹¹⁵. The region does not consider this level to be the limit, as they see a serious potential in increasing supplies of beef, meat and edible by-products of poultry, whole milk products, milk, condensed and dried cream and dried whey to this East Asian country. For this purpose 16 enterprises of the region have already been accredited in Celestial Empire: 6 meat processing, 7 milk processing, 2 distillery and one confectionery. And in the Belarusian region itself, three enterprises with Chinese capital have already been registered - for the production of electricity by hydroelectric power plants, concrete and engaged in restaurant activities.

An important detail: Gomel Region continues to actively expand ties with Chinese regions in 2022. In January, they held a roundtable on multifunctional cooperation with Hebei province, whose business entities have been cooperating with Gomel partners in terms of production cooperation for quite a long time. In particular, back in September 2015, the Chongqing Zongshen-Homel Agricultural Machinery Enterprise LLC was established in Hebei Province to assemble bob harvesting combines, forage harvesters, and grain harvesters. The investor on the Belarusian side was Gomselmash OJSC, and the investor on the Chinese side was Zongshen Industrial Corporation LLC. This cooperation project enabled the Belarusian manufacturer to strengthen and expand its presence in the Chinese market. "In 2016, the amount of deliveries of machine

¹¹⁵ Gomel Region Increased Exports to China 20 Times in Three Years [Electronic Resource]. - 2022. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomelskaja-oblast-za-tri-goda-uvelichila-eksport-v-kitaj-v-20-raz-481090-2022/>

parts to the PRC was about \$2.6 million. In 2017. - 10 million U.S. dollars. In 2018. - 7 million USD. USD"¹¹⁶ .

As a follow-up to this project, in March 2017, the construction of a new plant to produce combine harvesters for corn, grain and rapeseed was launched in Weixian County, Hebei Province, by the Chongqing Zongshen-Homel Agricultural Machinery Industry JV. And at the same time, "the first contracts were signed with agricultural companies from Hebei and Heilongjiang provinces for the purchase of combines produced by Belarus and China."¹¹⁷ . And in June 2019, a new contract was signed to supply another batch of forage harvester sets to China for more than a million and a half dollars. And by mid-2019, "the company had produced 500 harvesters"¹¹⁸ .

The logical continuation of these partnerships was the adoption in October 2019 by the cities of Gomel and Handan of a memorandum of intent to establish twinning relations in order to promote mutually beneficial cooperation. In particular, for the Gomel side in this context, the topic of increasing exports of food products, such as beef, was very relevant. It was also said that "on a partnership basis the parties should develop industrial cooperation, in particular, Gomselmash and Hebei enterprise of agricultural machinery Zongshen - Gomel. There are prospects for the implementation of joint ideas in tourism, culture and education"¹¹⁹ .

In this regard, it should be said that the twinning ties between the cities of the Gomel region and Chinese partners quite organically complement the whole complex of interregional cooperation of this Belarusian region with China. At

116 Interregional relations between Belarus and China: state, problems and prospects for development / T.S. Vertinskaya [et al.] - Minsk: Belaruskaya nauk, 2020. - C. 221-222.

117 Grishkevich, A. A new Belarusian-Chinese combine plant began to be built in Hebei Province / A. Grishkevich // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/novyy-belorussko-kitajskij-zavod-po-proizvodstvu-kombajnov-nachali-stroit-v-provintsii-hebej-237889-2017>

118 Gomselmash will supply machine sets of forage harvesters to China for more than \$1.5 million. [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://export.by/news/gomselmash-postavit-v-kitay-mashinokomplekti-kormouborochnih-kombaynov-na-summu-bolee-15-mln-doll>

119 Gomel and China's Handan intend to develop twinning ties [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/regions/view/gomel-i-kitajskij-handan-namereny-razvivat-pobratimskie-svjazi-366580-2019/>

the beginning of 2022, seven bilateral documents were signed between the administrative and territorial units of the Gomel region and China. The eighth was the agreement signed in January 2022 to establish twinning relations between Svetlogorsk district and Baoding city, located in Hebei province and having more than ten million inhabitants. This document "provides for the development of mutually beneficial cooperation in various spheres - economic, trade and humanitarian"¹²⁰. The parties certainly have the necessary potential to develop effective cooperation. Let us hope that the next step in the development of the Chinese vector of foreign economic relations of Gomel region will be the establishment of twinning relations with Hebei province.

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120 Svetlogorsk District and Baoding of China signed an agreement on twinning relations [Electronic resource]. - 2021. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/svetlogorskij-rajon-i-kitajskij-baodin-podpisali-soglashenie-o-pobratimskih-otnoshenijah-481071-2022/>

Fill cooperation with concrete projects

In April 2019, the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of information. The appearance of this document means that the topic of Belarusian-Afghan cooperation in topical areas of bilateral cooperation will have to find adequate media coverage in the Belarusian media in the near future. In the meantime, international journalists, who are directly related to this thematic block, will have to take into account a number of specific features of the development of partnership ties between the two countries in their work.

In this regard, we recall that back in July 2015, official Minsk drew attention to the fact that "Afghanistan is not such a distant country for us, and we can intensify our cooperation in the near future."¹²¹ . There were several prerequisites for this. First, there has been an intensive process of stabilization and normalization of relations between different political and ethno-religious groups in this country in recent years. Second, one cannot deny the role of the Afghan territory in terms of transit, especially between the north and the south, where there are large states with huge and diverse reserves of raw materials.

In August 2017, the head of the executive power of Afghanistan A. Abdullah paid an official visit to the Republic of Belarus. Abdullah, which, according to the sides, opened a new page in the cooperation between the two countries. In Minsk, the attitude towards this Asian country is based on the fact that "Afghanistan needs certain economic, military and political support today due to the processes that are taking place there."¹²² . Declaring its openness to the dialogue on the development of bilateral cooperation with Kabul, the Belarusian

121 Meeting with the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-prezidentom-islamskoj-respubliki-afganistan-ashrafom-gani-axmadzaem-11749/

122 Meeting with Representative of the President of Afghanistan Mohammad Shaker Kargar [Electronic resource]. - 2015. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-predstavitelem-prezidenta-afganistana-moxammadom-shakerom-kargarom-11609/

side emphasized "the need to consolidate the Afghan society, national reconciliation and territorial integrity of the country"¹²³ . Apparently, positive changes in this respect are already taking place on the Afghan soil, if at the meeting of Abdullah with the head of the Belarusian state the consolidated opinion of the two sides voiced that "Belarus and Afghanistan should move from wishes and talks to building up concrete cooperation"¹²⁴ . Moreover, in recent years, the parties have managed not only to expand the legal framework of bilateral relations, but also to strengthen partnerships in industry, agriculture, and pharmaceuticals, as evidenced by the figures: "The trade turnover, which in the first half of 2017 grew by 34.3% to \$12.5 million, is showing good dynamics"¹²⁵ .

In determining the most promising areas for Belarus-Afghanistan cooperation, it is important to take into account a number of factors. Firstly, the main sector of the Afghan economy is agriculture, which accounts for about one third of the gross product. It employs more than 80% of the able-bodied population. The main problem of the agricultural sector is its dependence on weather conditions, largely due to the lack of long-term storage of harvested crops. And for this reason, much of the foreign investment in Afghanistan is associated with construction and infrastructure projects. And the main imports are petroleum products, food, machinery and equipment, metals and consumer goods. India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Russia and the United States of America are among the countries that supply goods to the Afghan market more than others. At the same time, the main transit of goods to this country occurs through Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Secondly, Afghanistan is rich in minerals, so joint

123 President of Belarus accepted the credentials [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/search_ru/getExtendedResults/?query=&search_type=type_all_words&group=0&from_day=12&from_month=12&from_year=2014&to_day=12&to_month=12&to_year=2014&search_type=sort_desc&search_ok.x=33&search_ok.y=4&search_mode=&search_node=news&search_node_id=374&search_title_name=events

124 Talks with Afghanistan's Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/vstrecha-s-glavoj-ispolnitelnoj-vlasti-afganistana-abdulloy-abdulloy-16855/

125 Meeting with Afghanistan's Chief Executive [Electronic Resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.government.by/ru/content/7438>

development of these fields can be a very effective vector of cooperation. Third, Afghanistan is already implementing large-scale infrastructure projects to build power lines, gas pipelines and hydroelectric power plants, which Belarus could take part in, provided that the forms and mechanisms of its connection to them are specified. Fourthly, Afghanistan needs quality food products and a general rise in agriculture based on modern technologies, which Belarus has and can share.

Taking into account all of these arguments, the parties came to the conclusion that the most promising areas of interaction at this stage of the development of bilateral Belarus-Afghanistan relations are machinery and machine tools, petrochemistry and oil refining, agriculture and military-technical cooperation, healthcare and personnel training. An efficient mechanism for realization of the outlined prospects must be a joint committee on trade and economic cooperation, the decision to establish which was made during the visit of the Afghan Prime Minister to Minsk. A roadmap for cooperation, which will be signed by Minsk and Kabul, will become a conceptual reference point for both the governments and business communities of Belarus and Afghanistan.

Undoubtedly, these agreements provided new impetus to the current and potential participants in the Belarusian-Afghan interaction. Today, "four entities of the MTZ distribution network operate in Afghanistan - Jawad Afghan Limited, Herat Keshawarz co.ltd, Sayed Jamal Co. Ltd.", "Silk Road International LLC/Barakat Company Ltd"¹²⁶. Since 1956, Minsk tractor plant has shipped more than 20 thousand machines to the country, and it intends to expand the model range of the vehicles supplied. Tractors designed for various agricultural works and transport auxiliary operations are already arriving in Afghanistan. According to the results of 2017, it was planned "to ship 525 tractors, about 300 tractors have already been shipped. Last year 470 units were shipped"¹²⁷.

126 Afghanistan [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://export.by/afghanistan>

127 Sergeeva, V. MTZ intends to expand the model range of tractors supplied to Afghanistan / V. Sergeeva // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/mtz-nameren-rasshirit-modelnyj-riad-postavljaemyh-v-afganistan-tractorov-261724-2017/>

Amkodor holding, which unites 29 enterprises producing machinery for agro-industrial, road-building, housing and communal, timber, industrial and logistic complexes and aimed at developing relations with the countries of the far arc, which includes Afghanistan, has started working on its options for entering the Afghan market. The first option involves the assistance of a dealer of the Belarusian manufacturer in Tajikistan. The second option is through sales of assembly equipment in Uzbekistan. After all, "currently five models of Amkodor machinery are produced in Tashkent. Annual expansion of the model range is planned. The production has already received 44 units of machinery in the form of complete units, of which ready-made machines are assembled"¹²⁸. The next milestone, which should be reflected in the roadmap of cooperation between Belarus and Afghanistan under development, should be the establishment of joint agricultural and industrial production facilities, as well as expansion of cooperation in mining, road construction, and organization of supplies of agricultural products.

There is much to suggest that over the past nearly four years Belarus and Afghanistan have done a lot to bring their positions closer in terms of organizing bilateral cooperation across the entire spectrum of interstate relations. This led to the first meeting of the joint Afghanistan-Belarus trade and economic cooperation committee in Kabul in April 2019, which the parties described as "historically significant." When creating this committee in August 2017, Minsk and Kabul expressed the hope that the new structure "will become an effective mechanism for the development of trade, economic and humanitarian ties between the two countries."¹²⁹. Moreover, the emergence of this new format for the coordination of Belarusian-Afghan interaction occurred against the backdrop of very positive trends in the development of bilateral ties. Thus, if in 2017 the

¹²⁸ Sergeeva, V. "Amkodor" is working out options to enter the market of Afghanistan / V. Sergeeva // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <http://www.belta.by/economics/view/amkodor-prorabatyvaet-varianty-vyhoda-na-rynok-afganistana-261728-2017/>

¹²⁹ Belarus and Afghanistan create a joint committee on trade and economic cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/economics/view/belarus-i-afganistan-sozdajut-sovmestnyj-komitet-po-torgovomu-i-ekonomicheskomu-sotrudnichestvu-261871-2017/>

volume of mutual trade between the two countries increased by 12 percent and amounted to almost \$30 million with the share of Belarusian export - \$28.7 million, then "the trade turnover between Belarus and Afghanistan in 2018 compared to the previous year increased by 31% to \$38.7 million. The surplus reached \$38.1 million. The basis of the Belarusian export was oil products, tractors and tractor trucks, bars and aluminum profiles"¹³⁰ .

During the first meeting of the joint committee, the Afghan side noted that Belarus is an important trade partner of Afghanistan, cooperation with which is significant not only in trade but also in industrial cooperation. In this regard, a proposal to form joint working groups to expand bilateral cooperation was voiced. The meetings between representatives of the Belarusian enterprises - Minsk Motor Plant, Tractor Plant, Automobile Plant, Belshina - with the business community of Afghanistan in the "business to business" format have allowed to identify the needs of partners, their commercial interests, and identify the prospects of cooperation. In particular, Minsk Motor Plant, which business proposals have attracted the attention of such companies as Javed Afghan group, Sayed Jamal Ltd Co, Herat Keshawars Co. Ltd. The fact is that "the market of Afghanistan is characterized by a high interest in the supply of diesel generator sets, four-cylinder engines to the secondary market for the re-equipment of the operating tractors produced by MTZ, <...> as well as spare parts"¹³¹ . That's why Minsk Motor Plant in order to enter the Afghan market on a large scale intends to conduct here the exclusive pricing policy, taking into account socio-political and economic situation in the region. All of these facts suggest that now is the moment when Minsk and Kabul should decide on the most important areas for further cooperation in order to adopt an effective cooperation roadmap and take concrete steps to expand the legal and contractual framework of Belarusian-Afghan cooperation.

130 Belarus and Afghanistan sign agreement on military-technical cooperation, information and culture [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <https://www.belta.by/society/view/belarus-i-afghanistan-podpisali-soglasenie-v-sfere-voenno-tehnicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-informatsii-i-342905-2019/>

131 Korsak, O. Mutual interest / O. Korsak // Motorbuilder. - 2019. - 12 apr. - C. 2.

In particular, in Kabul in April 2019, in addition to the above-mentioned agreement on cooperation in the field of information, two more agreements were signed: "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on military and technical cooperation; Agreement between the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on cooperation in the cultural sphere"¹³² .¹³³ These documents added to the list of previously adopted bilateral agreements, among which we can recall the agreement on cooperation in healthcare, which entered into force in May 2014, under which the parties intend to cooperate in such areas as modernization and promotion of investment projects in healthcare; medical education and training of medical personnel; circulation of medicines, medical products and medical equipment; exchange of experience in the development of information management systems.

Interesting cooperation between Belarus and Afghanistan is also possible in the framework of the upcoming trilateral Belarus-Tajikistan-Afghanistan cooperation, which was launched by the first International Business Forum of the three countries, which was held in July 2017 in Tajikistan's capital. Representatives of such leading machine-building holdings as Minsk and Belarusian Automobile Plant, Amkodor, Gomselmash, Belarusian Optical and Mechanical Association, as well as MinskInterkaps, Pozhsnab and Minsk Soft Drinks Plant took part on the Belarusian side. "There were representatives of more than 60 companies in the Afghan delegation"¹³⁴ . More than twenty

132 On the results of the 1st meeting of the Belarus-Afghanistan Committee on Trade and Economic Cooperation [Electronic resource]. - 2019. - URL: <http://tajikistan.mfa.gov.by/ru/embassy/news/c3a35780b1447cdf.html>

133 Agreement between the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Belarus and the Ministry of Health of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on Cooperation in Healthcare, Education, Medical Science and Medical Assistance to Citizens of the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan [Electronic resource]. - 2014. - URL: <http://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=101400053&p1=1>

134 Zaitsev, Y. Dushanbe hosted the first International Business Forum "Belarus - Tajikistan - Afghanistan" / Y. Zaitsev // [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: <https://findirector.by/news/v-dushanbe-proshel-pervyy-mezhdunarodnyy-biznesforum-belarustadjikistanafganistan/>

documents were signed as a result of this forum, including contracts. Belarusian participants held talks with representatives of Afghan companies interested in developing cooperation in the fields of metalworking, textile industry, agriculture, food industry, chemical industry, construction, energy, mechanical engineering, medicine, transport and logistics. It was also agreed to sign an agreement on cooperation between the chambers of commerce and industry of Belarus and Afghanistan in order to effectively assist "organizations and entrepreneurs in the development and deepening of all forms of foreign economic activity, <...> to assist in the opening of joint ventures"¹³⁵. Besides, the parties have agreed to support each other in holding business-forums, exhibitions, fairs, seminars, conferences and other business events, provide regular exchange of commercial offers, lists of potential partners interested in cooperation, information on congress and exhibition events in Belarus and Afghanistan, assist in opening of information centers, and take all necessary measures to ensure efficiency and development of business relations. The second Belarus-Tajikistan-Afghanistan International Business Forum was held in Dushanbe in May 2018. Twenty Afghan companies took part in it. The Belarusian pharmaceutical industry was widely represented and "talks were held with the largest Tajik and Afghan pharmaceutical companies."¹³⁶

In September 2018, during his visit to the tractor assembly plant in the Tajik city of Hissar, the Belarusian head of state was shown "a new large workshop where they have already started assembling tractors for delivery to Afghanistan"¹³⁷ and they talked about signing the first contract with the Afghan side for the delivery of assembled tractors "in the so-called tropical version. The

135 Agreement on cooperation between the BelCCI and the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry [Electronic resource]. - 2017. - URL: https://www.cci.by/ru/content/2017_news_237

136 The Belarusian pharmaceutical industry was presented at the international business forum in Tajikistan [Electronic resource]. - 2018. - URL: <https://www.belarus.by/ru/business/business-news/farmotrasl-belarusi-prezentovana-na-mezhdunarodnom-biznes-forume-v-tadzhikistane-i-79570.html>

137 A visit to a tractor assembly facility in Gissar [Electronic mode]. - 2018. - URL: http://president.gov.by/ru/news_ru/view/poseschenie-sborochnogo-proizvodstva-tractornoj-texniki-v-gorode-gissar-19592/

Afghans have asked to resume production of these models for their market"¹³⁸ . Interestingly, Belarus has not produced such agricultural machines for a decade and a half. Nevertheless, in Tajikistan their production has been resumed. It was planned that the tractors assembled in Gissar in tropical version "will go to Afghanistan on their own way"¹³⁹ . Let us note that the Afghan side would like not only the return of the Belarusian tractors to its market, the need for which is estimated at thousands of units. "There is an acute need for spare parts and maintenance, because the country lacks its own specialists"¹⁴⁰ . This is why the educational sphere can also become a very promising area of Belarusian-Afghan cooperation in the near future.

The prospect of implementing Belarusian-Afghan projects in conjunction with another Central Asian country - Uzbekistan - is quite real, as the head of the Belarusian state said during his official visit to Tashkent in September 2018: "The Afghan market does not need supercombines or sophisticated tractors, they need simple machines"¹⁴¹ . And the Belarusian side expressed its willingness to assemble such equipment on Uzbek soil in order to further sell it in Afghanistan.

As we can see, Belarus not only hopes for "further successful development of Belarusian-Afghan cooperation and filling it with concrete joint projects in trade, economic and other spheres of interaction"¹⁴² , but also makes concrete steps towards their effective implementation for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries.

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