

BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “ULAANBAATAR DIALOGUE” ON NORTHEAST ASIAN SECURITY



Mongolia's National Security Concept and Foreign Policy Concept state that maintaining friendly relations with Russia and China is a top foreign policy priority. Accordingly, Mongolia aims to engage in balanced relations with these countries and develop broad-based cooperation as good neighbors. The policies also stipulate the expansion of partnerships and cooperation with Western countries, including the United States, South Korea, India, Türkiye, Japan, and the European Union, within the framework of the “Third neighbor” policy. Additionally, it emphasizes developing friendly bilateral relations with other Asian countries, participating in multilateral initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region, and supporting policies and activities aimed at strengthening strategic stability and enhancing security cooperation in East Asia, Northeast Asia, and Central Asia. Hence, the “Ulaanbaatar Dialogue” is a significant demonstration of Mongolia's commitment to contributing to regional stability as part of its policy to ensure national security through political and diplomatic actions.

The Institute for Strategic Studies of the National Security Council of Mongolia, in collaboration with the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, organized an international academic conference in April 2008 on the theme “*The Future of Central and Northeast Asian Security: Ulaanbaatar – New Helsinki*”. This conference effectively marked the beginning of what would later evolve into the “Ulaanbaatar Dialogue”. Initially, the focus was on engaging regional countries - especially Japan, South Korea, and North Korea - to provide a platform for them to express their positions, and hold bilateral meetings. The conference brought together many distinguished guests from both domestic and international backgrounds. More than 70 experts and researchers from Mongolia participated, along with members of Parliament, government officials, and representatives from relevant organizations. Additionally, over 40 experts and representatives from international organizations across 23 countries, including Russia, China, South Korea, USA, Germany, and France, were present, along with ambassadors and embassy staff based in Mongolia.

Building on Mongolia's balanced relations with regional countries, the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian security was formally proposed in 2013. The following year in 2014, it was officially launched as a platform for international dialogue among regional stakeholders and has since been jointly organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Institute for Strategic Studies. With full support of successive government leaders, the

Ulaanbaatar Dialogue has evolved into a prominent event, drawing interest not only from the region but also from international organizations and partner countries. In this era of escalating geopolitical competition and great power rivalries, where foreign policy space for other countries is shrinking, it is crucial for Mongolia to host internationally inclusive events to strengthen our position and reputation on the global stage. By expanding the scope of the conference to reflect Mongolia's geo-strategic role as a bridge between Central Asia and Northeast Asia, and by highlighting the country's contributions to global and regional stability, participation has steadily increased. Each year, a growing number of organizations and experts participate, further solidifying the conference as a structured dialogue mechanism dedicated to promoting peace and security in the region.

The "Ulaanbaatar Dialogue" consists of five main sessions, each addressing key topics of interest. The first session brings together researchers from Northeast Asia and other countries to discuss regional security challenges and opportunities. The second session, focuses on building trust within the region. Additionally, sessions three to five address pressing issues such as regional economic cooperation, energy, youth engagement, and climate change. Within this framework, the Institute for Strategic Studies and Mongolia's research institutes have a valuable opportunity to organize bilateral meetings with participating foreign research organizations, institutes, and scholars, fostering academic exchange and collaboration. These meetings facilitate the exchange of insights and information on specific issues, helping to effectively communicate Mongolia's government policies and activities to the international community. Additionally, they provide a platform for researchers to discuss and explore solutions to challenges that cannot be addressed at the political level. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for organizing the track-one meeting within the Dialogue, which brings together senior officials from the foreign ministries of participating countries, as well as heads of delegations from international organizations.

This initiative has been further supported by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which became a co-organizer. Additionally, since 2019 the United Nations Department of Political Affairs has co-organized the "Regional Youth Forum" emphasizing the importance of youth involvement in regional security discussions. Initially, the US Asia Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of Germany, and the Open Society Institute provided financial support for the conference. However, since 2022, Mongolia started organizing the conference independently. While Golomt Bank has recently joined as a national partner, providing financial support, starting this year, both the Ulaanbaatar City Administration and the Ulaanbaatar Hotel have agreed to cooperate on the dialogue.

Overall, the "Ulaanbaatar Dialogue" aims to showcase Mongolia's neutral and peaceful foreign policy, which has garnered attention from the international community and experts. The conference will explore opportunities and conditions for Mongolia to become a center of regional cooperation. Furthermore, the dialogue will also address the security challenges facing Central Asia and the NEA region, evaluate the effectiveness of the security dialogue mechanism, and ultimately determine the role and position Mongolia can play in promoting regional cooperation.

In this context, our scholars seek to theoretically define and articulate the practical significance of Ulaanbaatar's potential to become a new arena for dialogue and cooperation, similar to a "New Helsinki" for Central and Northeast Asia. Building on this vision, the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue will take place annually in Ulaanbaatar every June and will no longer be limited to the countries of Northeast Asia. It will actively engage major international organizations such as the UN and the European Union, along with Mongolia's "third neighbor" countries. By broadening its scope and participation, this initiative has the potential to serve as a bridge between the Central and Northeast Asia, fostering greater regional connectivity and cooperation.

Dates of the international conference "Ulaanbaatar Dialogue":

- First meeting: June 17, 2014
- Second meeting: June 25-26, 2015
- Third meeting: June 16-17, 2016
- Fourth meeting: June 15-16, 2017
- Fifth meeting: June 14-15, 2018
- Sixth meeting: June 5-6, 2019
- Seventh meeting: June 23-24, 2022
- Eighth meeting: June 15-16, 2023
- Ninth meeting: June 6-7, 2024
- Tenth meeting: June 5-6, 2025 (planned)