

CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM Spring 2019 Session Report

The Spring 2019 group of Fellows from Central Asia, the Caucasus, Afghanistan and Mongolia completed a six-week program of high-level meetings and research in Washington, D.C. from April 2 to May 10, 2019. The group included *Mr. Assadullah Zamir (Afghanistan)*, CEO and Partner of Sabzwar Agribusiness and Food Services and Founder of Abreshum Venture, the first Afghan venture capital firm focusing on social entrepreneurship and private sector development; *Mr. Fuad Karimov (Azerbaijan)*, Director of Professional Support Services LLC, the country's largest shared services center providing financial and taxation services; *Mr. Giorgi Arveladze (Georgia)*, Founder and Managing Partner of Ubique, a Tbilisi-based real estate development firm; *Ms. Mariam Lashki (Georgia)*, Deputy Chairperson at Georgia's Innovation and Technology Agency; *Dr. Almazbek Beishenaliev (Kyrgyzstan)*, Director of the Regional Institute of Central Asia in Bishkek; *Ms. Jenny Jenish kyzy (Kyrgyzstan)*, Chairperson of the Association of Social Entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan; *Mr. Olzhas Khudaibergenov (Kazakhstan)*, Founder and Senior Partner at the Center for Strategic Initiatives LLP, a management consulting firm; *Mr. Nurtas Janibekov (Kazakhstan)*, Adviser to the Governor of the Astana International Financial Centre; *Ms. Chimguundari Navaan-Yunden (Mongolia)*, Ambassador-at-Large and Director of the Investment Research Center at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia; *Ms. Nargis Esufbekova (Tajikistan)*, Head of Secretariat of the Development Coordination Council; *Ms. Maral Ilyasova (Turkmenistan)*, an appraisal expert in valuation of real estate, moveable property and business at the Appraisal Company "Turkmen Expert" ES; and *Mr. Bokhodir Ayupov (Uzbekistan)*, Consultant at the Technopark of Software Development and IT supporting the development of Uzbekistan's startup ecosystem.

The Fellows had an intensive schedule of group meetings with representatives of the U.S. government, business community, media, think tanks, academia and NGOs, as well as attended conferences and seminars at different institutions to better understand how opinion-making and policy-making work in Washington, D.C.



Fellows with Donald Rumsfeld, Foundation Chairman



Fellows with Secretary Elaine Chao, U.S. Secretary of Transportation

The Spring 2019 group met with U.S. Secretary of Transportation *Elaine Chao*; former Commander of U.S. European Command and NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe *Admiral James Stavridis*; former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff *General Peter Pace*; Deputy Assistant to the President and the U.S. National Security Council's Senior Director for South and Central Asia *Lisa Curtis*; former U.S. Ambassadors to the region *John Herbst*, *Richard Hoagland* and *Robert Cekuta*; former Ambassadors to the U.S. *Temuri Yakobashvili* (Georgia) and *Husain Haqqani* (Pakistan), as well as with members of the current Administration including representatives of the Department of State, Department of Defense, USAID, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, Open World Leadership Center, National War College and many others. The group was also hosted for receptions by the Embassies of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia in Washington, D.C.



Fellows during program travel to Chicago, Illinois

In addition, the group had the opportunity to meet with business leaders and representatives of the media, think tanks, non-profits and other organizations including former television news anchor for CNN, Fox News and NBC News *Greta Van Susteran*; President of the International Republican Institute *Daniel Twining*; Founder and President of digital agency and public relations firm Javelin *Keith Urbahn*; President and CEO of the National Venture Capital Association *Bobby Franklin*; Partner at Baker & McKenzie LLP and Chairman of the U.S.-Kyrgyzstan Business Council *Thomas Firestone*; Managing Director at The Carlyle Group *Francis Finelli*; President and CEO of the Business Roundtable *Josh Bolten*; President of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments *Dr. Tom Mahnken*; Founder and President of The Institute of World Politics *Dr. John Lenczowski*; Founder and Managing Director of Beacon Global Strategies LLC *Jeremy Bash*; Founding President of the Halifax International Security Forum *Peter van Praagh*; as well as leadership and staff at the Emerging Market Private Equity Association, American Foreign Policy Council, Hudson Institute, Atlantic Council, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Middle East Institute and more.



Fellows with Admiral James Stavridis, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander

Since the fall of 2011, the Fellowship Program has partnered with the Open World Leadership Center to organize local programs with host communities outside of Washington, D.C. to help demonstrate American democracy on the grassroots level, how business and government work on the local level, and how people are empowered to take responsibility for themselves and others in their community. This spring the Fellows traveled in two groups to *Austin, Texas* and *San Antonio, Texas*. The entire group then traveled to *Chicago, Illinois* where the program included meetings with leadership and representatives of the *Kaplan Institute for Innovation and Tech Entrepreneurship* and private investment firm *Tilia Holdings*, as well as a meeting with Founder and CEO of ConantLeadership and former CEO of Campbell Soup Company *Douglas Conant*; a tour of Chicago's Technology and Entrepreneurship Center *1871*; and a meeting with the Larry Levy Executive Director of the Kellogg Innovation and Entrepreneurship Initiative at Northwestern University *Linda Darragh*.

In the final weeks of their program, the Fellows made a presentation at a Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Forum on the topic of "CAMCA: An Investment Harbor."

The next group of Fellows will visit Washington, D.C. from October 1 to November 8, 2019. The participants of the Fellowship Program for the Fall 2019 session will be announced this September.



Fellows with Lisa Curtis, Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Director for South and Central Asia at the National Security Council

Assadullah Zamir: “The Fellowship was a great 6-week program that opened one’s mind to the way that Americans live, operate their country and government and make decisions. Of course, there is always more to learn, but the program offered a particularly good glimpse of how things work in D.C. Moreover, the program connects one to a network of highly capable and informed individuals, as well as relevant institutions that are engaged with issues of the CAMCA region and beyond.”

Fuad Karimov: “Participating in the Fellowship was an amazing opportunity to learn about American business and culture and the program struck a good balance of exposure to both social and entrepreneurial environments. A special highlight was our trips outside of Washington, D.C. that enabled us to experience American culture firsthand by being hosted by a local family.”



Fellows with Howard Tullman, Executive Director of the Ed Kaplan Family Institute for Innovation and Tech Entrepreneurship at Illinois Tech in Chicago



Fellows with retired General Peter Pace, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Dr. Almazbek Beishenaliev: *“This 6-week Fellowship Program was fruitful in networking and discovering new opportunities. I used this program as an opportunity to gain new ideas, perspectives and gather knowledge. As I reflect on the PhD thesis I wrote in 2017 titled, ‘The United States’ Place in the Foreign Policy of Central Asian Countries,’ I believe that there would be many new ideas and perspectives gained from this program that I hope to incorporate into my work. Overall, this Fellowship is the fusion of profound ideals and great generosity.”*

Chinguundari Navaan-Yunden: *“This Fellowship Program gave me the unique experience of immersing myself into the political life of Washington, D.C. and meeting so many interesting and intelligent minds in just 6 weeks. Through its extensive network of young regional leaders, shapers and thinkers, CAMCA is becoming a brand name. I feel fortunate to be part of this vibrant and candid family.”*

Nurtas Janibekov: *“This program is an excellent opportunity to understand the U.S. decision and policy-making processes through learning first-hand from officials who have been participating in these processes for decades. Our entire experience was perfectly organized and managed, and the time I spent during the program was an unforgettable experience. The most valuable and important asset of this program is becoming a part of the network of outstanding people from the CAMCA region.”*

Maral Ilyasova: *“Participating in this Fellowship made a tremendous impact in my life. I gained knowledge of U.S. policy-making in different spheres, built a strong business network and made lifelong friendships. I am very impressed with how well the program was organized, especially with the business meetings, which significantly opened new perspectives on regional integration and collaboration. I am happy to be a member of the CAMCA Network!”*



Fellows with Josh Bolten, President & CEO of the Business Roundtable

Nargis Esufbekova: *“The Fellowship is a good shift for mid-career professionals to take a pause from their everyday life and think of the larger socio-economic and political development of the world and particularly of their countries in the CAMCA region. The program gives Fellows the opportunity to see from a global vantage point and to enrich their knowledge and understanding of how U.S. economic and political establishments work, as well as how decisions are made. This program gave me opportunities to meet brilliant minds that I would have not met otherwise, who shared their practical wisdom on important issues with us young leaders. This six-week experience created friendships, personal connections and mutual trust that are the keys to shaping future intraregional cooperation - and prerequisites for successful cooperation. Personal contacts and friendships are crucial, even in business or politics! These were my main takeaways from participating in the program, which I will treasure throughout my life.”*



Fellows at the Afghan Embassy Reception in Washington, D.C.

Jenny Jenish kyzy: *“I learned of this program from the impressive network of alumni in my country, who all have made promising achievements in their careers and are inspiring leaders within our community. I am personally thankful for their nomination, as this is a network based not only on professional achievements, but a community of trust. Throughout our six weeks, we were exposed to opportunities to learn insights firsthand from top American researchers, politicians, economists and business people. Our experience was such a privilege! The program is also a unique opportunity to represent each of our countries and express our perspective from the CAMCA region in dialogue with the U.S. community. This communication and mutual learning certainly benefit our understanding of global development, as well as our regional cooperation. Moreover, we had a short host-family stay which was my first time living with an American family. This experience gave me insight into how U.S. national policies constructed in Washington, D.C. affect the daily life of people throughout the country. Most importantly, I'd like to highlight the incredible friendships I made with the other Fellows and how much I learned from everyone. Finally, we often critique the Western world for not knowing much about us and our region, however, I now also realize how little we know about our neighbors within our own region! The Fellowship Program has given me great incentive to keep exploring and learning from our neighbors. I would like to offer a special thanks to my Kyrgyz Fellows for their trust and to the Fellowship organizers for this incredible life experience!”*