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## ITALY RAISES THE BAR IN CENTRAL ASIA: WHAT TO EXPECT FROM GIORGIA MELONI'S VISIT

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*In recent years, Italy has emerged as one of the European countries most keen to maintain close relations with the countries of Central Asia. In mid-April, confirmation arrived that Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni would be travelling to the region this spring. The purpose of the trip is to visit Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and attend a summit in Astana with the presidents of the five countries.*

Melonis visit is scheduled for the end of May, although the exact dates are not yet known.

Italy was the first European country to involve the Central Asia region in a 1+5 summit. The first meeting was held in Rome in December 2019, and involved the then Italian Foreign Minister, Luigi Di Maio, and all Central Asian Foreign Ministers. This meeting took place a few months after Italy, the first and only EU country to take this step, signed a memorandum of understanding with China on the Belt & Road Initiative (in 2023, Rome decided to withdraw from the project).

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