

Bridging Diplomacy and Sustainability: A Conversation with Halima Rahmatova

In a globalized yet ecologically strained world, the intersection of international relations and sustainable development has become a critical frontier for the next generation of policy leaders. Among them is Halima Rahmatova, an accomplished communication strategist and international relations expert specializing in public advocacy, media engagement, and corporate sustainability.

During an EPIS interview conducted by Alperen Çelik, Rahmatova reflected on her trajectory from a self-directed student in Uzbekistan to an aspiring sustainability professional and master's candidate in Geneva. Throughout the discussion, she illuminated the stark realities of international student life, the fragmentation of regional environmental policies, and the crucial necessity of youth integration in global policymaking.

From Uzbekistan to Global Capitals: A Journey of Self-Study

Rahmatova's path into international affairs began with a standard educational background in Uzbekistan, devoid of private schooling or elite extracurricular privileges. "I long thought it was a limit for me," she recalled, noting that she initially lacked the early structural advantages of more privileged peers aiming for prestigious global institutions. To overcome these boundaries, she turned to independent self-study, utilizing her laptop and mobile phone to master English and deepen her understanding of global politics.

This early discipline fostered her core belief that standard academic curricula and rigid exams are inherently limited in their ability to truly broaden a student's vision. Her self-taught foundations eventually propelled her to South Korea, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations and Affairs from the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. Living in Korea for four years provided deep international exposure, teaching her to navigate complex social implications and strict hierarchical structures within East Asian corporate and organizational cultures.

Grounding Sustainability in Practical Action

While completing her undergraduate studies, a sustainable development course led by a professor with a background at COICA (the Korean International Cooperation Agency) reshaped Rahmatova's career trajectory. Inspired by the prospect of helping developing communities solve deeply rooted social and educational challenges, she

chose to narrow her academic lens. This structural pivot led her to Western Europe, where she is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Innovation, Human Development and Sustainability at the University of Geneva.

Rahmatova deliberately selected a program focused heavily on corporate sustainability, sustainable production, and practical execution over dense theoretical frameworks. Her academic work involves analyzing how active corporations can systematically reduce their environmental footprints while maintaining long-term economic stability. This practical application extends directly to her professional experience, including a role as student coordinator at the SDG Solution Space—where she successfully managed international stakeholder outreach for global summer school collaborations—and her work analyzing enterprise metrics using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at the 4IP Group.

Central Asian Climate Crises and Regional Strategy

A driving factor behind Rahmatova's specialization is the immediate environmental degradation confronting her home region of Central Asia, particularly severe water shortages and agricultural inefficiencies. "Each summer would get hotter and hotter and less green compared to my childhood," she observed, noting that the visible destruction of biodiversity and resources motivated her to focus her upcoming master's thesis on corporate sustainability in Central Asia.

While acknowledging that Central Asian governments are becoming more receptive to environmental activists and consulting firms, Rahmatova critiques the current landscape as highly fragmented. She argues that segregated, isolated environmental projects significantly dilute operational efficiency, advocating instead for a singular, unified national strategy. Furthermore, she highlights the critical intervention of multilateral bodies like the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which actively work to bridge local knowledge gaps by introducing modern agricultural technologies to build a more responsible regional economy.

The Power of Audacity and the Reality of Youth Leadership

A recurring theme throughout the discussion was the structural friction between young climate advocates and older, established decision-makers. Rahmatova emphasizes that the youth are fundamentally more concerned with long-term ecological consequences because they will directly inherit the outcomes of current policy choices. She warns that ignoring the perspective of younger generations creates a dangerous political disconnect, which can drive frustrated communities toward public unrest and protests when traditional democratic avenues remain closed.

When asked what advice she would offer to aspiring students aiming to work within international systems like the United Nations, Rahmatova emphasized a single attribute: audacity. "Everything starts from audacity," she stated, tracing her own milestones—from securing research opportunities to entering competitive global networks—back to a simple willingness to step forward, be brave, and ask difficult questions.

Yet, she remains deeply candid about the hidden tolls of a global trajectory, open-heartedly discussing the severe mental and emotional burdens of solitude, burnout, and intense homesickness that international students frequently face. Ultimately, Rahmatova believes that while international environments test personal resilience, maintaining intrinsic hope and a distinct regional purpose is what allows young leaders to consistently step forward and impact a rapidly changing world.