



## UZBEKISTAN IN THE ERA OF NEW REFORMS (2017-2024)

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**Annotation:** This article analyzes the main aspects of reforms implemented over the past seven years, as well as the fundamental ideas and priority directions of the "Uzbekistan-30" strategy. It examines the achievements made on the path to building a new Uzbekistan, the strategies developed to further enhance the socio-political, economic, and cultural-educational spheres, and the country's journey from true national revival to national progress.

**Keywords:** reform, priority directions, new Uzbekistan, achievements, strategy, foreign policy, dialogue with the people, rights and freedoms, public administration, women's role, economy, entrepreneurship.

In our country, it would be accurate to say that bold reforms aimed at further strengthening independence began in 2017. In other words, we have embarked on building a new Uzbekistan, laying a solid foundation for it, and accomplishing tasks in the socio-political, economic, spiritual, and educational spheres that would have taken several decades to complete. Uzbekistan, in the truest sense, has turned from national revival toward national progress, as reflected in the following:

**First**, the past four years have been a period of significant transformation in Uzbekistan's history. Despite the complex geopolitical processes occurring globally, the coronavirus pandemic, and the global economic crisis, Uzbekistan has actively pursued an open and pragmatic foreign policy. During this period, the foreign policy strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan was further refined. Multidimensional and mutually beneficial relations were expanded with countries such as Russia, China, the United States, Turkey, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Japan, India, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and others.

In 2020, our republic chaired the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and despite the pandemic, over 60 international events were successfully held, and nearly 70 documents were adopted. Global and regional initiatives proposed by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev from the high podium of the UN General Assembly garnered great interest and support from the international community.

**Second**, one of the priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy has been to strengthen good neighborly relations, friendship, and mutually beneficial cooperation with neighboring Central Asian countries. In recent years, relations with neighboring states have entered a new stage. Based on principles of mutual cooperation, a "new political atmosphere" has emerged in Central Asia in trade-economic, transport-communication, cultural-humanitarian areas, as well as issues of security and stability. Agreements on state border intersections were signed

by Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. Notably, these agreements are indefinite and cannot be denounced. Recently, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have reached agreements on 85% of their borders, resolving one of the long-standing issues. Cooperation in transport has expanded, direct flights with Tajikistan have resumed, trade turnover has increased, and cross-border relations have been strengthened.

**Third**, the nature and content of dialogue with the people have fundamentally improved. The principle that “the people should not serve government agencies; rather, government agencies should serve the people” has been implemented. The activities of the President's People's and Virtual Reception Offices have been established, and nearly 4.5 million appeals have been addressed to date. Practices of addressing citizens' issues door-to-door have been introduced in state agencies at all levels. Mobile receptions and meetings have been organized in the regions. Nearly 300 private and institutional online media outlets with large audiences have been established.

**Fourth**, human rights, dignity, and freedom of speech have been elevated to the level of true values. More than 4,600 individuals convicted of crimes and expressing remorse have been pardoned under decrees of the President of Uzbekistan. Systematic reforms to ensure the independence of the judiciary have resulted in acquittals for nearly 2,600 individuals. Cases of persecution for religious beliefs and views have been completely eliminated (the “blacklist” was abolished). The infamous “Jaslyk” prison colony, which for many years was a source of international criticism concerning human rights and torture, has been closed. Efforts to apply principles of humanity in the penal system continue, and 25 penal colonies have been gradually reduced in line with international standards.

For the first time, individuals serving prison sentences can have their punishment commuted and be transferred directly under probation supervision without being sent to a penal colony. As a result of this leniency, about 6,000 individuals currently serving sentences have been allowed to live with their families under the supervision of their local communities. Additionally, the authority to propose commutation or conditional release has been transferred from penal institutions to newly established humanitarian commissions.

**Fifth**, one of the actions taken to practically ensure human rights and freedoms was the introduction in 2019 of a procedure for directly granting citizenship of Uzbekistan to those who moved to the country before 1995. This provided the opportunity for more than 50,000 people to acquire citizenship. In the following years, this work continued with the establishment of a procedure for directly granting citizenship to stateless persons who arrived in Uzbekistan before 2005 and have been residing permanently in the country. This enabled another 20,000 people to become citizens of Uzbekistan. Additionally, a permanent procedure has been introduced to directly grant citizenship to stateless persons who have lived in Uzbekistan continuously for 15 years.

**Sixth**, strengthening the role and status of women in state and society management and ensuring gender equality have become one of the highest priorities of the ongoing reforms. Under the leadership of the Federation of Trade Unions, along with relevant agencies, banks, and local authorities, an in-depth study of the problems of over 6 million women was conducted through house-to-house visits. The newly established “Women’s Advisory Councils” in local communities actively contributed to these efforts. As a result of these studies, the real situation on the ground was revealed, leading to the creation of the “Women’s Notebook” initiative to address various socio-economic issues faced by women. Reforms

aimed at increasing women's participation in governance led to women constituting 30% of the national parliament. Additionally, the position of advisers on women's issues was introduced in regional, district, and city administrations.

**Seventh**, to continue supporting entrepreneurship financially, preferential loans amounting to 6 trillion soums were allocated within the framework of family entrepreneurship programs in 2021. Moreover, the government, in cooperation with the World Bank, allocated an additional \$100 million to expand rural entrepreneurship development programs. Practical measures have also been implemented to promote women's entrepreneurship. Currently, nearly 130,000 entrepreneurial entities are managed by women. In 2020, the Family and Women Support Fund allocated a total of 52 billion soums for the small business projects of over 2,500 women.

**Eighth**, one of the priorities in developing and liberalizing the economy is the modernization and rapid advancement of agriculture. Significant measures have been implemented in this regard, including the allocation of 100 trillion soums—four times more than in 2016—for the development of food production, horticulture, and all branches of agriculture. Strategies for the development of agriculture and water management for the next decade (2020–2030) have been adopted and are being consistently implemented. In 2020, 91,000 hectares of land were reclaimed for use, and water-saving technologies were introduced in 133,000 hectares of land, double the area covered in 2019.

In conclusion, all these efforts represent recognition of the comprehensive reforms being undertaken in Uzbekistan. The country continues to confidently implement the principle of "For the dignity of the individual," following the chosen path of independence and development. The achievements of the independence era serve as practical proof of the goal declared by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev: "We will build a great future for Uzbekistan together with our noble and brave people."

In the words of President Mirziyoyev: "Today, Uzbekistan is entering a new, elevated stage of its development. Our main and priority goal is to transition from national revival to national prosperity. We understand that this great goal can only be achieved through living in harmony and cooperation with the world, building an open democratic society, and further promoting respect for national and universal values in our lives."

To realize the will of our people to create a free, prosperous, and powerful New Uzbekistan, provide every citizen with opportunities to fulfill their potential, nurture a healthy, knowledgeable, and spiritually developed generation, form a robust economy that is an integral part of global production, and ensure justice, the rule of law, security, and stability, the "Uzbekistan — 2030" strategy was adopted. This strategy was developed based on the experiences gained during its implementation and the outcomes of public discussions (Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-158, dated September 11, 2023).

The "Uzbekistan — 2030" strategy is built on the following key ideas: achieving inclusion among countries with an above-average income through sustainable economic growth; creating education, healthcare, and social protection systems that fully meet the needs of the population and international standards; providing favorable environmental conditions; building a fair and modern state in service of the people; and ensuring the sovereignty and security of the country.

The strategy includes five priority areas and encompasses 100 goals. The first direction, titled "Creating favorable conditions for each individual to realize their potential," includes the

following key performance indicators: increasing the average life expectancy to 78 years; resolving 79% of primary healthcare needs at the initial level; achieving 100% coverage in preschool education; implementing 50 educational programs with foreign universities ranked among the top 500, along with a "dual degree" system; and reducing poverty by half by 2026.

The second priority area, "Ensuring the well-being of the population through sustainable economic growth," includes the following key indicators: increasing GDP to \$160 billion and GDP per capita to \$4,000; increasing the share of high-value-added industrial products by 2.5 times and technological products to 32%; raising the share of the private sector in the economy to 85%; doubling labor productivity in the industrial sector; constructing over 1 million affordable housing units; and increasing exports to \$45 billion.

The third priority area, "Saving water resources and protecting the environment," includes indicators such as increasing water use efficiency by 25%; expanding greenery to cover 30% of the country's territory; raising the share of renewable energy in the economy to 40%; and increasing the recycling rate of solid household waste to 65%.

The fourth priority area, "Ensuring the rule of law and organizing state governance in service of the people," outlines indicators such as fully implementing the "habeas corpus" institution; launching the neighborhood budget system; reducing regulatory burdens on the economy by 30%; establishing a system to resolve all local issues in a "one-step" manner; transitioning all public services to electronic formats; and raising the country's ranking in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index by 50 positions.

The fifth priority area, "Continuing efforts to transform the country into a secure and peace-loving state," includes goals such as pursuing an open, pragmatic, and active foreign policy based on national interests; strengthening good-neighborly and strategic partnership relations in Central Asia; ensuring the country's defense capabilities at a high level; maintaining constant communication with compatriots abroad; and achieving membership in the World Trade Organization.

In conclusion, the implementation of the "Uzbekistan — 2030" strategy and achieving its targeted indicators have been established as the top priority for all state bodies and organizations. The assignment of personal responsibility to their leaders highlights the importance of this strategy and its role as a significant step forward in the path of reforms undertaken so far.

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