

**Address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan
Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly**

**DISTINGUISHED MR. PRESIDENT!
DISTINGUISHED SECRETARY GENERAL!
HEADS OF DELEGATIONS!
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!**

Today's session of the United Nations General Assembly is taking place in the context of fundamental changes in the system of international relations.

There is a global crisis of confidence. Problems in the functioning of global security institutions and deviation from international law are increasing.

All this is causing a huge increase in tension.

The geopolitical contradictions are creating new obstacles to the free flow of trade, investment and innovation.

Even on issues that concern the fate of humanity as a whole, such as climate change, hunger and inequality, one can feel that mutual communication has been lost.

In such a complex situation, the idea of preserving the spirit of practical cooperation and interaction, placing common interests above existing conflicts and strengthening unity among countries is becoming more relevant than ever.

Last year we launched the "Samarkand Solidarity Initiative" aimed at common security and development.

Our main goal is:

- to comprehensively understand the responsibility for the present and future of our countries and peoples;
- to engage in a global dialogue all parties that are ready for open and constructive cooperation.

I am confident that holding a Summit of the Future next year at the initiative of the UN Secretary-General will serve to address the current

challenges of international and regional development, increase the influence and effectiveness of our Organization.

DEAR PARTICIPANTS OF THE ASSEMBLY!

We remain committed to continuing our policy of creating New Uzbekistan, which is a law-governed, secular, democratic and social state.

Our country is boldly pursuing the path of fundamental reforms aimed at strengthening the principles of democracy and justice, based on the noble idea of "in the name of human values and interests".

In April this year, for the first time in the history of Uzbekistan, a nationwide referendum was held on the renewed Constitution, which defines the priorities of national development.

More than 90 percent of the voters in the referendum supported this truly popular Constitution.

This has ensured that our reforms have become indeed irreversible.

In our Basic Law we have reaffirmed our commitment to the principles of equality of all citizens, human rights, freedom of speech and conscience, regardless of nationality, language and religion.

It is on this legal basis that we have adopted the Development Strategy "Uzbekistan – 2030".

This Strategy is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and we are fulfilling all commitments we have undertaken.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!

As an outcome of the ongoing reforms, the economy of Uzbekistan, despite the global challenges, is showing a steady growth.

Over the past six years, the gross domestic product has grown over 1.5 times.

Our main objective is to double this figure by 2030.

Another priority of our economic liberalization is to become a full member of the World Trade Organization in the near future.

Since 2017, poverty in our country has been halved thanks to the policies aimed at improving the living standards of our people.

We plan to reduce it to 7 percent by 2030.

We intend to increase by several times the scale of water supply, healthcare, education and other social services to population.

We support the UN Secretary-General's initiative Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection.

In order to share best practices within the framework of this initiative, we propose to hold in 2024 in our country the World Conference “Social Protection: the Path towards Development” under the auspices of the United Nations.

DEAR PARTICIPANTS OF THE SUMMIT!

In recent years, Uzbekistan achieved remarkable results in the protection of human rights.

Forced labor and child labor have been completely abolished in our country.

For a century, millions of people were forced to pick cotton in Uzbekistan.

The vast majority of the population - teachers and doctors, entrepreneurs, workers and employees, and, unfortunately, schoolchildren and university students - were mobilized to pick cotton every year from September to December.

As a result, boycotts of 'Uzbek cotton' were announced and the country was blacklisted for years.

Thanks to our strong will and determination, now it is all history. Our people have been completely liberated from cotton slavery.

The ban on forced labour is guaranteed in our renewed Constitution and the criminal liability for the involvement in forced labour has been introduced.

I believe that it is necessary to intensify the global fight against forced and child labor. Our experience shows that it is possible to put an end to this.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!

One of the Uzbekistan's strategic tasks is the development of human capital and the training of a creative young generation.

We believe that high quality education, accessible to all, is the most effective factor in eradicating poverty, improving public welfare and achieving sustainable economic growth.

In this respect, our country has gained considerable experience in recent years - the education system is undergoing radical transformations.

In the last six years, the coverage of pre-school education has increased from 21% to 70%, and that of higher education from 9% to 38%.

By 2030, we will create conditions for every child to have access to preschool education and for half of secondary school graduates to obtain higher education.

DEAR HEADS OF DELEGATIONS!

In recent years, Central Asia has embarked on a path of good neighborliness, stability, joint partnership and progress.

Thanks to our joint efforts, Uzbekistan has managed to address problems of state borders, transport corridors and water use with all its neighbors.

Mutual trade between the countries of the region has grown by more than two and a half times and the number of joint ventures has increased five-fold.

Our region has become a promising center for economic development, transport and communications bridge connecting East and West, North and South. This has led to a growing interest in our country.

Central Asia's openness to the world is becoming the main condition for ensuring the region's security and stable development.

It is safe to say that our people unite around a growing sense of regional identity, and this sense is growing even stronger.

It is not only our history that is common, but also our future and our vital interests that are shared.

Expanding our regional cooperation is and will be our only choice.

I am convinced that with the support of the international community, Central Asia will continue on the path of unity.

In this regard, transforming Central Asia into a peaceful and prosperous region-will henceforth remain a priority goal of Uzbekistan's foreign policy!

DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS!

In Central Asia, where almost half of the population belongs to the younger generation, the issues of youth and creating opportunities for realizing their potential have an utmost importance.

In order to strengthen cooperation in this sphere, the countries of our region have recently signed an Agreement on the Common Dimension of the Youth Policy.

We are currently interested in establishing effective cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized structures, studying best practices and achievements of other regions.

In this regard, I propose to establish a Working Group at the United Nations to support the youth development in Central Asia.

As part of this, it is expedient to develop the programme Central Asia's Youth Agenda - 2030.

DEAR HEADS OF DELEGATIONS!

The active participation of women in society and state management is an urgent issue today.

The noblest goal of our national policy is to ensure family stability, legal protection and peaceful life for women.

In addition, we are carrying out systemic work to achieve equality between men and women.

For example, last year, 49% of university enrolments accounted for girls.

For the first time, women's share in the public administration reached 35%.

A special law has been passed to protect women and minors from domestic violence.

We are interested in further expansion of cooperation with UN Women.

As a joint initiative, we propose to hold the Asian Women Forum in Uzbekistan next year to discuss the issues of fulfilling the creative potential of women and exchange experience.

DEAR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!

Currently, the world is facing a critical environmental situation.

The triple planetary crisis - crises of the climate change, the loss of biodiversity and the environmental contamination are worsening.

In such challenging conditions, while Central Asia continues to grapple with the Aral Sea tragedy, the region is becoming one of the most vulnerable parts of the world in the face of climate change.

Uzbekistan is doing its best to mitigate the consequences of the Aral Sea tragedy, which remains a global problem.

In recent years, 1.7 million hectares of green areas with drought-tolerant plants had been created on the dried up bed of the Aral Sea.

The support of the international community is essential for us to continue these efforts.

Over the next thirty years, the air temperature in our region has increased by one and a half degrees. This is more than twice the global average warming.

As a result, nearly one third of the total area of glaciers in the region has melted.

If this tendency continues, the flow of the two major rivers in our region (*Amu Darya and Syr Darya*) may decrease by 15% in the next twenty years.

It is expected that per capita water supply will decrease by 25% and agricultural yields - by 40%.

Unless we take timely and effective measures, the consequences of these problems will seriously undermine our region's socioeconomic stability.

Given this context, we support the establishment of the position of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Water Resources.

We are in favor of attracting and introducing the state-of-art technologies in the process of establishing a Water Saving Technologies Platform in Central Asia, using the United Nations Water mechanism.

We are building up a systematic cooperation as part of the Green Development Program adopted by the counties of the region.

Such a partnership completely meets our interest and is aimed at preventing threats related to climate change.

In this context, I believe that the introduction of the Central Asian Climate Dialogue would be expedient.

We put forward an initiative to adopt a UN General Assembly Resolution “Central Asia Facing Global Climate Threats: Solidarity for Common Prosperity”.

We propose to discuss its substance at the International Climate Forum to be held in Samarkand next year.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize that adapting the main sectors of Uzbekistan's economy to climate change, achieving carbon neutrality and drastically increasing the share of green energy remains a strategic task for us.

DEAR PARTICIPANTS OF THE ASSEMBLY!

We need to strengthen our joint efforts in preventing the spread of the scourge of extremism and radicalization of youth.

Last March in Tashkent, the Joint Plan of Action for the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia was adopted.

As part of our National Strategy on Countering Extremism and Terrorism, we are placing a particular emphasis on this matter.

This includes helping people affected by extremist ideas to return to a normal life and their reintegration into society.

We have gained unique experience in this regard. We have conducted the humanitarian operation “Mehr” (*‘Benevolence’*) five times.

As part of that operation, we have repatriated to our country more than 530 citizens, primarily women and children, from conflict zones in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

They have all received medical, psychological, social assistance and other support.

In June this year, here, at the United Nations Headquarters, the international community learned the stories from people repatriated to our country and embarked on a new life.

In order to continue ongoing actions in this direction and promote a permanent exchange of experience, we have taken specific measures to establish the Regional Experts Council on systemic work with persons repatriated from combat zones under the auspices of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Office.

United Nations member states must be more unified and work together to combat common threats such as international terrorism.

I would like to emphasize another important matter.

We believe that the recent manifestations of religious intolerance and islamophobia that have taken place in some countries are unacceptable.

In order to promote globally the ideas of religious tolerance and cooperation, we propose to establish in Uzbekistan the International Centre for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation under the auspices of UNESCO.

We take great pride that our country is a Homeland of profound scholars and thinkers, such as Al-Khorazmi, Al-Biruni, Ibn Sina (*Avicenna*), Imam Bukhari, Mirzo Ulugbek, and Alisher Navoiy, who made incomparable contributions to the development of science and shown Islam to be a religion of knowledge and peace.

In order to study the rich heritage of these great scholars and to reveal to the world the true humane essence of Islam, we propose to organize in

Uzbekistan next year the International Conference "Islam: a religion of peace and kindness".

ESTEEMED PARTICIPANTS OF THE SESSION!

The developments in Afghanistan directly impact international security.

The country is facing a new situation that demands a unique approach to resolving the Afghan issue.

Leaving Afghanistan again alone with its own problems would be a grave mistake.

Ignoring, isolating, and imposing sanctions only exacerbates the hardships faced by the ordinary Afghan people.

We believe that humanitarian aid to the Afghan people should not be reduced.

We call for the development of appropriate mechanisms to utilize Afghanistan's frozen international assets to address the acute social problems in that country.

We need an open, peaceful and sustainable Afghanistan that is actively engaged in regional cooperation initiatives and is ready for mutually beneficial partnerships with its neighbours and other countries.

Standing here, at this high rostrum, I urge the international community to come together in resolving the issue of Afghanistan.

I believe it is essential that under the leadership of the United Nations, we jointly develop a flexible and constructive approach to the Afghan issue.

DEAR PRESIDENT!

DEAR PARTICIPANTS OF THE ASSEMBLY!

In this turning point of history, we must all consider what planet we leave to the future generations.

Only through shared aspirations and collective action can we achieve lasting peace and prosperity.

Now more than ever, we need mutual trust, unity and a spirit of cooperation.

Concluding my statement, I would like to reiterate that Uzbekistan, in this path, always remains committed to strengthening deep and long-term cooperation with United Nations structures and with all countries.

Thank you for your attention.