

Are we seeing a new national strategy on human rights emerging in Uzbekistan under President Mirziyoyev?

On June 22, 2020, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, signed a Decree on Approval of the National Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Human Rights. Much has been said about Uzbekistan's efforts to reform and modernize multiple aspects of society and economy since Mirziyoyev became president in 2016. Human rights are a core area of national reform, in this respect. It should be noted from the outset that discussions around this subject in Uzbekistan during the early years of the country's independence have not always focused on the most celebrated factors. That said, more recently, improvement of the human rights and freedoms mechanism led to large-scale reforms and the need for high-quality and timely implementation of the National Action Strategy on Five Priority Development Areas of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021. Are we seeing a new national strategy on human rights now emerge in Uzbekistan? In this short article, we take a look at the essence, meaning, goals and objectives of the human rights strategy in Uzbekistan today, within the context of the national reform process.

The National Action Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan was developed on the basis of a comprehensive study of topical issues of ensuring and protecting human rights, analysis of current legislation, regulatory enforcement and best foreign experience, as well as the results of a broad public debate, international and national consultations, taking into account the recommendations of international organizations, including the UN statutory bodies and treaty committees.

Today Uzbekistan, as an independent subject of international law, rose to a new stage of development in human rights cooperation. This is also evidenced by the fact that the country, being an active participant in international lawmaking, is confidently entering the world arena as an initiator of new international treaties.

The initiatives of a renewed Uzbekistan are supported at the UN level. The Republic of Uzbekistan has acceded to more than 80 international human rights instruments, including 6 basic treaties and 4 optional protocols of the United Nations, and on an ongoing basis submits national reports on implementation to the Human Rights Council and UN treaty bodies.

Uzbekistan's position on the protection of human rights is based on the UN Charter, the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international agreements arising from them. The approval of the National Strategy on Human Rights, based on the Vienna Declaration, by the Decree of

the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Action Program is an important stage in the ongoing legal reforms in the country and the implementation of institutional mechanisms for human rights.

Undoubtedly, the National Action Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Human Rights will become an effective instrument of a single policy in the human rights and freedoms provided for by the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan and international treaties ratified by our country.

As part of the implementation of the National Strategy, national legislation will be improved taking into account the priority areas of the country's social and economic development, universally recognized international standards and obligations of Uzbekistan on human rights, recommendations of the UN statutory bodies and treaty committees.

Undoubtedly, the key objectives of the Strategy will be to ensure the judicial independence to stop human rights violations, improve the work of the Prosecutor's Office and strengthen the powers of the system of fair judging, create enabling conditions for national human rights institutions, further develop the system for monitoring and evaluating the state policy in the field of human rights, increasing legal literacy and legal culture of the population, fostering a human rights culture in society.

Human rights policy will also be aimed at increasing the efficiency of openness and interaction of public authorities and administration, civil society institutions, the media and the private sector in protecting personal, political, economic, social and cultural human rights, as well as improving the practice of consultation with civil society institutions in the process of lawmaking.

The National Strategy also includes the measures to ensure the crime prevention, especially human trafficking, corruption, torture, organized and transnational crime, and the fight against these threats, ensuring fair trial and respect for human rights in places of detention, arrest and imprisonments.

Consistent steps will be taken to ensure protection of the rights of disabled people, disadvantaged population based on the principle of the UN Sustainable Development Goals «Leaving No One Behind», social support for people in need of special protection of the state and society, including non-citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, improving the quality of services provided to them.

The efforts to ensure freedom of conscience, speech, thought, the right to information, gender equality, equal access to quality education and medical services, non-discrimination, social integration of older people, further

improvement of law enforcement practice in protecting the rights of children, youth, women, individuals with disabilities and migrants will also continue.

Other National Strategy directions are also ensuring economic human rights, developing private ownership and public-private partnerships, improving the education quality and coverage at all stages, developing the recurrent education system, ensuring the inclusiveness and accessibility of the education system for all, improving the quality and targeting of human rights information and education, harmonization of interstate relations, cooperation with international organizations.

An ambitious goal has been set to ensure Uzbekistan's entry into the top 50 countries of the world in international ratings and indices in the field of human rights and freedoms in terms of the lawmaking quality, the government effectiveness, freedom of speech and information, combating crime and corruption, doing business, global competition, innovative development and others.

In addition to the National Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Human Rights, two more important documents such as the «Road Map» for its implementation and the Regulation on the interaction of state bodies of the Republic of Uzbekistan to consider communications and decisions of the UN statutory bodies and treaty committees on human rights were approved by Decree.

The primary responsibility for the National Strategy implementation and the «Road Map» is vested in the National Human Rights Center of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Under the procedure established by the Decree, the Center will conduct regular monitoring, submit proposals and recommendations to the relevant ministries and departments on the high-quality and timely implementation of the planned measures.

The adoption of a long-term strategy in the field of human rights is intended to serve the effective implementation of state policy, fostering respect for human rights and freedoms, and further strengthening of the country's authority in the international arena.

***The article was written the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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