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Uzbekistan's initiatives in the framework of the united nations and its role in global politics: a 2016–2025 analysis

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Abstract: The article analyzes the initiatives of the Republic of Uzbekistan within the framework of the United Nations and its role in global politics from 2016 to 2025. It thoroughly examines the main directions of cooperation with the United Nations, priority principles, promising projects, achievements in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, and significant reforms in the field of human rights. Additionally, the article discusses the increasing role of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the international arena, its transformation into a significant participant in global politics, and the prospects for the continuation of this trend.

Keywords: UN, SDGs, roadmap, national strategies, human rights, development programs, UN resolutions.

Introduction: In recent years, the international presence and political influence of the Republic of Uzbekistan have grown severalfold. Undoubtedly, Uzbekistan's cooperation with the United Nations and its global-scale initiatives have played a significant role in this process. In particular, joint efforts with the UN in areas such as security, combating modern threats and challenges, achieving stability in Afghanistan and revitalizing its economy, addressing environmental issues, promoting socio-economic development, protecting human rights, developing tourism, and supporting youth demonstrate Uzbekistan's commitment to universal values and principles concerning human rights, socio-economic progress, labor, and global cooperation.

At the same time, respect for these principles and the aspiration for joint development are reflected in Uzbekistan's "Action Strategy," "Development Strategy," and the "Uzbekistan–2030" Strategy, which

align with the UN Development Program and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Looking at Uzbekistan's initiatives and activities within the framework of the United Nations over the past decade (2016–2025), we can observe a number of notable achievements. These include, among others, the introduction of more than 10 resolutions within the UN framework and, for the first time in its history, Uzbekistan's election as a member of the UN Human Rights Council.

Uzbekistan's activities and proactive stance within the framework of the United Nations have a significant impact on its position and standing in global politics. From this perspective, analyzing Uzbekistan's recent activities within the UN helps to identify the key components behind the growth of its role in global politics, assess the impact of this cooperation on the country's development, and determine the areas in which collaborative efforts should be directed in the future.

Literature Review

Recent reports prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Uzbekistan, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), and the World Health Organization's Uzbekistan Country Office (WHO Uzbekistan) provide a comprehensive analysis of cooperation between Uzbekistan and the UN in recent years. These reports primarily focus on the main areas of collaboration—education, healthcare, human rights, gender equality, environmental protection, climate change, and tourism—presenting information on large-scale projects, social programs, and practical outcomes.

In addition, they highlight the current challenges hindering the implementation of these programs, propose solutions, and outline the areas that should receive greater attention in the future.

Jahongir Jumanov and Abbosbek Nabiyev, in their scholarly works, emphasize Uzbekistan's active participation in addressing global issues within the framework of the United Nations General Assembly over many years, with particular attention to ensuring peace and stability, resolving environmental issues, and achieving socio-economic development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach, with the primary focus placed on Uzbekistan's cooperative activities within the UN and the initiatives it has put forward. The data were collected from secondary sources, including analytical reports, scholarly articles, official government documents, and

materials from international organizations. In addition, content analysis was used to examine the substance of official statements and initiatives.

RESULTS

Examining the period from March 2, 1992, when the Republic of Uzbekistan became a member of the United Nations, up to the present, this timeframe can be conditionally divided into two phases: the relatively stable period of 1992–2016, and the phase of active cooperation that began in 2017 and continues to this day. This shift is largely attributed to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's participation in the general debates of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly in September 2017, which marked the beginning of a new era of effective and mutually beneficial dialogue between Uzbekistan and the organization [1].

In particular, the period from 2016 to 2025 has witnessed significant achievements in Uzbekistan's education, healthcare, socio-humanitarian, human rights, and economic sectors through its collaborative relations with the UN. It is well known that Uzbekistan prioritizes cooperation with the United Nations as one of the key directions of its foreign policy. This is also evident in the country's efforts to strengthen cooperation with the Central Asian states and establish close relations with the UN in ensuring stability in the region.

Recognizing the organization's vital role in maintaining global peace and security, Uzbekistan actively participates in addressing international issues and supports the United Nations' initiatives concerning Central Asia. In particular, the country contributes to Afghanistan's sustainable development while taking a firm stance against terrorism and extremism [2]. Uzbekistan's active involvement in this area has contributed to its recognition on the international stage and the enhancement of its political image.

In recent years, several special resolutions initiated by Uzbekistan have been adopted by the UN General Assembly, including:

- “Strengthening Regional and International Cooperation to Ensure Peace, Stability and Sustainable Development in the Central Asian Region” (June 2018);
- “Education and Religious Tolerance” (December 2018);
- “Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Development in Central Asia” (December 2019);
- “Declaring the Aral Sea Region as a Zone of Environmental Innovations and Technologies” (May 2021);
- “Strengthening Connectivity between Central and South Asia” (July 2022);

- “Enhancing the Role of Parliaments in Accelerating the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals” (December 2022);
- “Readiness of Central Asian States to Act and Cooperate as a United Front in Effectively Addressing and Eliminating Drug-Related Problems” (June 2024) [3].

At the same time, within the framework of UN bodies—specifically the Human Rights Council—Uzbekistan initiated the resolution “The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Human Rights of Youth” (October 2021), as well as the resolution on the “Khiva Process” (November 2021), adopted at UNESCO following the International Cultural Forum “Central Asia at the Crossroads of World Civilizations” held in Khiva on September 14–16, 2021 [4].

Furthermore, in 2024, the Republic of Uzbekistan achieved a number of significant results in cooperation with the UN. One of the most notable achievements was the election of Uzbekistan’s representatives to the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) for the 2025–2028 term. In addition, Uzbek specialists were elected as Deputy Members of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization (ILO) for the 2024–2027 term and as members of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the 2024–2027 term—important milestones for Uzbekistan. These elections marked a significant step in strengthening the country’s international role and recognizing its efforts on the global stage [5].

In shaping development programs and strategies in areas such as education, healthcare, agriculture, the rule of law, gender equality, tourism, and the economy, Uzbekistan regularly exchanges views with UN structures in the country, as well as UN advisers and experts. The “Action Strategy,” the “Development Strategy,” and the “Uzbekistan–2030” Strategy were all adopted on the basis of this cooperation, and these strategies embody the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the principle of “Leaving No One Behind.”

Large-scale cooperation between the UN and its agencies in Uzbekistan on the development of socio-economic programs and measures in the country began in 2015. That same year, the Government of Uzbekistan committed itself to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2018, 16 national Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 125 corresponding targets were adopted. At the same time, an interagency Coordination Council was established to implement the national SDG roadmap, and a web portal (<http://nsdg.stat.uz>) containing data on around 100 indicators was launched, with data collection for the remaining 100 indicators still ongoing

[6].

Since then, cooperation with UN agencies has continued to integrate the SDGs into Uzbekistan’s national and regional development strategies and programs. Notably, the UN developed a dedicated document for the country “The Comprehensive Socio-Economic Development Concept of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030.” Uzbekistan’s long-term objective is to double per capita income by 2030 and become an upper-middle-income country. Achieving this goal requires the implementation of several domestic reforms, which importantly align with the SDGs.

Reforms in Uzbekistan are being carried out on the principle that “the interests of the individual come above all else,” which corresponds to the core principle of the 2030 Agenda “Leaving No One Behind.” Over the past years, significant achievements have been made in implementing the SDGs. According to the 2024 Sustainable Development Report, Uzbekistan scored 60.9 out of 100 for the effectiveness of its efforts in achieving the SDGs, ranking 81st among 167 countries. In particular, a large share of the targets set under Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and 13 (Climate Action) have been achieved [7]. Significant progress has also been made in other areas. For example:

SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- 88.6% of Uzbekistan’s rural population has access to alternative motor roads.
- High rates of internet usage (83.9%) and mobile broadband subscriptions (106.7 per 100 inhabitants) have been recorded.

SDG 15 – Life on Land

- Efforts to protect biodiversity through designated areas have been noted, with the average protected area in terrestrial regions of biodiversity importance reaching 20.5% in 2023 [8].

Since committing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda, Uzbekistan has also achieved significant progress in improving human rights protection and strengthening the rule of law. For example, the Asian Forum on Human Rights—the first of its kind in the Asian region since the establishment of the UN—was held in the city of Samarkand. At this forum, the Samarkand Declaration on Human Rights, endorsed as one of the key documents of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly, was adopted. The Parliament of Uzbekistan approved a “Roadmap” for implementing the “Spirit of Samarkand” in the field of human rights. These achievements later laid a strong foundation for Uzbekistan’s membership in the UN

Human Rights Council, and on October 13, 2020, Uzbekistan was elected to the Council for the first time in history for a three-year term (2021–2023) with a majority vote [9].

Currently, the Republic of Uzbekistan is a party to more than 80 international human rights instruments, including six core UN treaties and four optional protocols, and regularly submits national reports to the UN Human Rights Council and treaty bodies on their implementation. Since joining the Human Rights Council, Uzbekistan has launched a comprehensive national human rights strategy based on the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Council and treaty bodies. This National Human Rights Strategy includes fundamental objectives such as ensuring gender equality, freedom of speech and religion, and the development of civil society institutions. Since 2020, a number of practical results have been achieved within the framework of this strategy. These include the revision and alignment with international standards of more than 20 pieces of legislation in the field of human rights, reforms in the judicial and legal system—such as strengthening the independence of the courts and ensuring fair trials for citizens—and the expansion of social protection programs for persons with disabilities, children, and the elderly [10].

A significant foundation for further strengthening the National Human Rights Strategy from a legal standpoint was provided by the new edition of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which came into force on May 1, 2023. This updated Constitution contains a number of provisions that reinforce the core principles of the SDGs. Clearly, the new version reflects international principles, a commitment to human rights, and the values of the SDGs.

Deep cooperation and proactive engagement with the UN have not only led to significant achievements in Uzbekistan's domestic policy but have also enhanced the country's image as an active, peace-loving, and constructive participant in the international arena. Since 2016, Uzbekistan has been putting forward important initiatives within the framework of the United Nations, strengthening regional cooperation, and demonstrating a responsible approach to addressing global challenges.

Between 2016 and 2025, Uzbekistan's active participation and promotion of key initiatives within the UN have made it a responsible and engaged player in global politics. This is reflected in milestones such as the 2018 Samarkand Forum, membership in the Human Rights Council for the 2021–2023 term, and a meaningful contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Uzbekistan's rising role at both the regional and international levels has also been shaped by its status as a key actor in ensuring regional security and stability in Central Asia, promoting a peaceful resolution to the Afghan issue, advancing environmental diplomacy, and addressing the Aral Sea tragedy. An analysis of the 2016–2025 period shows that Uzbekistan has been a principal driver of stability and cooperation in the region. This stems from the fact that, since 2016, under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan has adopted a new foreign policy direction based on openness, pragmatism, and constructive cooperation, with the Central Asian region designated as the top priority in its external relations. As a result, in recent years, the majority of UN resolutions initiated by Uzbekistan have been related to the Central Asian region.

It is worth noting that, alongside numerous achievements in international cooperation, Uzbekistan also faces certain challenges and obstacles. First and foremost, the country is striving to maintain neutrality amid geopolitical rivalry between major powers, which requires a complex diplomatic approach and creates several obstacles in implementing sustainable development programs. Another serious challenge is the need for additional investment to finance the SDGs and environmental initiatives.

Nevertheless, despite these challenges, Uzbekistan is expected to further strengthen its position in global politics through its support for the green economy and global initiatives for transitioning to it, as well as through its leading role in deepening integration in Central Asia and ensuring regional security.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be stated that during the period of 2016–2025, the activities carried out by the Republic of Uzbekistan within the framework of the United Nations and on the international stage have not only strengthened its position in foreign policy but have also transformed it into an active and significant participant in global politics. In particular, membership in the UN Human Rights Council, the Samarkand Forum, initiatives on the Aral Sea issue, SDG bonds, and diplomacy regarding Afghanistan have enhanced the country's international standing.

Joint programs with the UN have contributed to significant achievements in key areas of domestic policy such as education, healthcare, law, the environment, and tourism. At the same time, cooperation on new promising projects and the implementation of the SDGs continues. Overall, Uzbekistan's active participation within the UN framework and its international initiatives indicate that its role at both the regional and global

levels will continue to grow.

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