

# Uzbekistan UN Common Country Assessment: 2023 Update

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## Introduction

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The current update to the UN Common Country Assessment (CCA) provides a brief overview of key political and socio-economic events in 2023, with potential impact on Uzbekistan's path to sustainable development.

The global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021, and the eruption of the Russia-Ukraine war in February 2022 warranted substantial updates to the original CCA from 2019. 2023 was rich in political events that will shape the country's development trajectory up until 2030 and beyond, such as the national referendum for the adoption of the new Constitution, the snap presidential elections, and the new national development strategy until 2030.

## Political Context development

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In late December 2022, the President of Uzbekistan launched a **large-scale administrative reform** to improve government efficiency by streamlining government bodies and merging key ministries. The reform entailed a reorganization of local government bodies, reduction of executive positions by up to 30% and enhancing effectiveness and public accountability, as well as new functions and capacities in the Presidential Administration.<sup>1</sup> By mid-2023, however, it became clear that the administrative reform has not proven viable with the initial ambitious plan to streamline and merge government bodies facing challenges, leading to several reversals and restructuring within a short period. The delinking of tax and customs administration functions and reshuffling of key positions suggest difficulties in maintaining the intended structure and potential struggles in achieving the desired efficiency and effectiveness in governance reform. This has had an impact in UN operations across the three UNSDCF Results Groups on People and Prosperity, Planet, as well as Peace.

In 2023, Uzbekistan adopted a **new Constitution** following a national referendum on constitutional amendments held on 30 April 2023, which introduced several rights and norms including 1) legality (including commitments to international law and integration into international law obligations and norms); 2) social and environmental protection; and 3) individual rights protection (particularly in criminal proceedings) as well as several SDG entry points, such as, for example, on SDG16 and related changes in expanded human rights, government accountability, access to information, separation of powers, etc.

The new Constitution entailed substantial reorganization of state power, particularly affecting the legislative, presidential, and judicial branches, alongside local government administration. It included inter alia a reduction in the Senate's size, increased legislative oversight, expanded presidential powers including extended terms<sup>2</sup> and greater appointment authority, and judicial reforms to allow citizen appeals to the Constitutional Court and implement term limits for court chairs. Local government saw a clearer separation of powers, potentially impacting Senate representation. In December 2023, the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a constitutional law providing for a transition from a majoritarian to a majoritarian-proportional electoral system in the country.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://kun.uz/en/news/2022/12/24/local-government-bodies-to-be-reformed-by-april-1-2023>

<sup>2</sup> The adoption of the new Constitution and the extension of presidential terms from 5 to 7 years could enable the incumbent president to run for new terms in the office

Following the referendum, a **snap presidential election** took place on July 9 at the initiative of President Mirziyoyev who cited the need for a new mandate to address global challenges and further domestic reforms.<sup>3</sup> Having faced little competition from the other three candidates running from other parties, who essentially supported the incumbent's reform agenda, President Mirziyoyev was re-elected with 87.1% votes to serve a 7-year term in line with the new Constitution.

Soon after his inauguration for the next term in July 2023, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev initiated the development of the new national development strategy until 2030. Formulated based on public discussions and approved on 12 September 2023, the **"Uzbekistan-2030" Strategy** represents a comprehensive development plan, with 100 main targets across five priority areas:

- creation of education, healthcare and social protection systems that fully meet the needs of the population and international standards
- joining the ranks of upper-middle-income countries through a stable economic growth
- ensuring favourable environmental conditions for the population
- creation of a just and modern state serving the people
- ensuring the sovereignty and security of the country.

To elevate Uzbekistan to the ranks of **upper-middle-income country** will entail a growth of the GDP to USD160 billion and increasing per capita income to USD4,000, enhancing investment attractiveness, accelerating structural reforms, including in the economy, the banking system, developing the securities market, fostering competition across various industries, improving governance, and democratic institutions, as well as fighting corruption.

Among other, in the social dimension, the Strategy aims at **halving poverty** and increasing access to preschool and higher education. In transitioning to a **"green economy"**, the strategy envisions increasing renewable energy consumption to 40 per cent, developing the "green certificates" market, adopting environmentally friendly public transport, enhancing energy efficiency, and digitizing energy resource accounting. The implementation of the Uzbekistan 2030 Strategy is prioritized by all government bodies, with high-level accountability lines on its implementation. Substantial investments of USD250 billion are envisaged by 2030 to implement the Strategy, of which USD110 billion is to be mobilized from external (foreign) sources and another USD40 billion from public-private partnerships (PPPs).

While the Strategy does not include an explicit reference to the national SDGs, its priorities and goals largely correspond to the SDGs and, if implemented, will significantly contribute to their attainment.

Uzbekistan has improved in global transparency rankings and actively participates in international platforms on anti-corruption. President Mirziyoyev has committed to developing and implementing a National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2030, which will focus on transparency, accountability, and strengthening legal and institutional mechanisms. The strategy will include supporting regional and global anti-corruption projects, enhancing the capacity of the Anti-Corruption Agency, raising a generation educated in integrity, and recognizing the role of media in combating corruption.

## **Uzbekistan's progress on SDG implementation**

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In July 2023, Uzbekistan presented its 2<sup>nd</sup> Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the country's progress on SDGs.<sup>4</sup> Key achievements included economic growth despite global crises, increased

<sup>3</sup> <https://kun.uz/ru/news/2023/05/08/mirziyoyev-obyasnil-prichiny-provedeniya-dosrochnyx-vyborov-v-uzbekistane>

<sup>4</sup> <https://hlpf.un.org/countries/uzbekistan/voluntary-national-reviews-2023>

educational coverage, healthcare improvements, and efforts in gender equality and social inclusion. The country also focused on environmental sustainability, committing to substantial emissions reductions and transitioning to a green economy and highlighted remaining challenges in **addressing demographic growth and continuing structural reforms across economic, administrative, social, and environmental dimensions**<sup>5</sup>.

The National Commitments on SDG Transformation<sup>6</sup> encompass four key areas: Economic Reforms, Human Capital, Gender Equality, and Green Transition and are basically closely aligned with the Uzbekistan 2030 Strategy.

According to the UNDP global “Integrated Insights” report, Uzbekistan is on track to achieve 50 (30%) of the national SDG targets<sup>7</sup>.

## Human Rights and Gender Equality

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During his visit to Uzbekistan in March 2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Volker Türk raised the need to address gender gaps, the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, conducive environment for civil society participation in the reform process, media freedom, need for a transparent and independent review of the events of July 2022 in Nukus based on fair trial standards, among other topics.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the High Commissioner noted the need for decriminalization of same-sex relations in alignment with international human rights standards, and confirmed the readiness to support the country in revising legislation that criminalizes HIV transmission in all circumstances.

After a long campaign from women rights activists, human rights defenders and the international community including the UN, Uzbekistan criminalized domestic violence in April 2023, also including economic and psychological violence and expanding the protection for women and children by amending criminal and administrative codes, and establishing legal accountability for sexual violence and harassment.

On 21 December 2023, the President of Uzbekistan issued a decree to promote women's empowerment and economic participation<sup>9</sup>. The decree mandates that the share of women in management positions in government-owned enterprises must reach 30% by 2030. Additionally, it expands the category of individuals eligible for social protection to include victims of domestic violence, ensuring their access to job placement services and potential training programs. Other measures include training unemployed women in home-based businesses & crafts (funded by government), supporting female entrepreneurs with rent subsidies for traditional clothing businesses and introducing special family judges/courts to handle family disputes. Exceeding the global average of 26.7 per cent, Uzbekistan demonstrates progress in women's political participation with 34.5 per cent female Members of the Parliament.<sup>10</sup> However, achieving the 50/50 target enshrined in the Agreed Conclusions of the CSW 65th session requires further action.<sup>11</sup> The low representation of women in the Cabinet of Ministers (4.8 per cent), which is significantly below the global average of 22.8 per cent, highlights an area needing significant improvement.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2023/VNR%202023%20Uzbekistan%20Report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/national-commitments-leadorg-list?leadorg=UZBEKISTAN>

<sup>7</sup> [Uzbekistan - UZB \(undp.org\)](https://undp.org/uzbekistan-uzb)

<sup>8</sup> <https://uzbekistan.un.org/en/223263-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-t%C3%BCrk-concludes-his-official-visit-uzbekistan>

<sup>9</sup> <https://lex.uz/uz/docs/6704838>

<sup>10</sup> [https://api.data.ipu.org/parliament/uz?chamber\\_id=13480](https://api.data.ipu.org/parliament/uz?chamber_id=13480)

<sup>11</sup> [ODS HOME PAGE \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/ods/home)

Strengthening mechanisms like quotas and robust data collection systems (including for SDG5.5) is crucial to track progress towards gender balance in elected positions.

Uzbekistan's commitment to the Action Coalition of Generation Equality Forum<sup>12</sup> on technology and innovation, presents a positive step. This action, coupled with increased financial contributions, addresses the concerning gender digital divide, where women lag behind men in digital skills by 24 per cent. Empowering women through digital literacy enhances their employability and contributes to closing the gender gap.

Uzbekistan is undergoing complex demographic changes, including rising fertility rates (from 2.4 in 2017 to 3.3 in 2021), declining contraceptive use (from 65 percent in 2006 to 59 percent in 2021), and increasing rates of teenage pregnancies<sup>13</sup>, early marriages<sup>14</sup>, and unmet needs for birth spacing<sup>15</sup>. These trends negatively impact women's labour force participation and economic empowerment. Studies show that each additional child reduces female labour force participation by 10-15% amongst women aged 25-39.<sup>16</sup> According to the Ombudsman Office, a new draft law "On the Authorized Person of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Human Rights (Ombudsman)" was submitted to the Parliament and passed the first reading. However, the latest version of the draft law is not available yet for the international review to ensure it provides for compliance with the Paris Principles. On October 10, the Lower Chamber of the Parliament elected Surayo Rakhmonova as a new Children's Ombudsman of Uzbekistan.

Significant progress was made in 2023 in addressing statelessness. 4,993 stateless persons were recognized as citizens, reducing the total number of registered stateless individuals from 27,389 at the beginning of the year to 22,496 by year's end. Additionally, authorities started preparing a first draft law on asylum – a critical step towards establishing a national asylum system and an opportunity to align the country's policies with international standards of refugee protection.

Uzbekistan's human rights record was examined by the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group for the fourth time on 8 November 2023. While Uzbekistan's report highlighted areas of progress such as numerous legislative reforms, concerns were raised by other countries and NGOs regarding issues such as the treatment of human rights defenders, freedom of expression, the rights of LGBT and people with HIV. The Human Rights Council will adopt the UPR outcomes in March 2024. In December 2023, Uzbekistan submitted its 6th periodic report to the Committee against Torture and announced five human rights pledges at the Human Rights 75 – High-Level Event. Those relate to support and protection of youth rights, advancement of women's rights, preventing torture and ratification of OPCAT, holding information campaigns on human rights as part of the human rights education programme, and the adoption and implementation of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://techforgenerationequality.org/about/>

<sup>13</sup> Teenage pregnancies (15-19) have risen from 24,371 cases in 2017 to 46,261 in 2022 (State Statistics Agency, 2023).

<sup>14</sup> Share of marriages involving women aged 18-19 has increased from 20 percent in 2017 to 33 percent of all marriages in 2022 (State Statistics Agency, 2023).

<sup>15</sup> Unmet need for birth spacing has risen to 16 percent amongst women aged 25-29 in 2022 (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2021-2022).

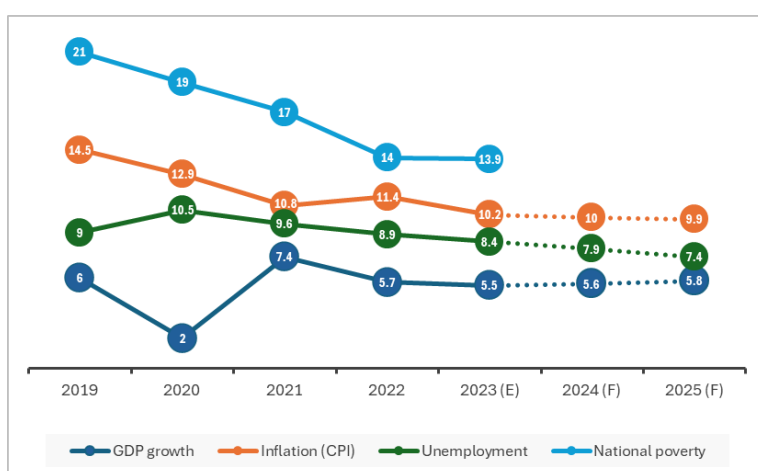
<sup>16</sup> Closing the deadly gap between what we know and what we do: Investing in women's reproductive health (The World Bank, 2013).

## Socio-Economic Developments

Uzbekistan's macroeconomic position and outlook are generally stable despite the regional conflicts and the repercussions of the Western sanctions on Russia. The economy is expected to grow by 5.5% in 2023, with similar growth projections for 2024 and 2025.<sup>17</sup> Inflation has slightly slowed down in 2023 and according to official data will be at around 9 per cent at the end of the year (compared to 12 per cent in 2022). IFIs project a slightly higher inflation at 10 per cent and are unoptimistic about the Central Bank's ability to bring it down to the 5 per cent target by 2025 (see Annex II). The Uzbek soum also sped up its devaluation against the USD in 2023. By mid-December, the national currency had devalued by 9.4 per cent against the US dollar (since 1 January 2023) whereas in 2022 it only devalued by 3.71 per cent.

Of significant concern for macroeconomic stability is the record-level fiscal deficit resulting from increased government spending, subsidies (especially for energy) and generous tax benefits. Although subsidies and tax benefits are gradually being phased out (i.e., in transportation and the energy sectors), the fiscal deficit may exceed 5 per cent of GDP in 2023. The deficit is forecast to decrease to 3.6 per cent in 2025, which is still higher than the IMF-recommended 3 per cent ceiling. Persistent large fiscal deficits can cast a shadow on sustainable development by, among other, reducing critical investments (e.g., in social sectors), accumulating debt and hindering economic growth, with potential social discontent. For example, the amounts for social benefits to support poor people, and the share of public health budget in GDP seem to be declining in the 2024 budget.<sup>18</sup>

Due to the devaluation of the Russian rouble in 2023, remittances dropped sharply to USD8.4 billion in the first nine months of the year, which is 1/3 contraction compared to the same period last year.



The reduced flow of remittances is expected to result in a **significant deceleration of the poverty reduction rate** which was rather significant in 2022 – WB projects that poverty will reduce by 0.1 per cent in 2023 compared to 3 per cent in 2022 (SDG1). That is, if about 1 million people were lifted out poverty in 2022, only **33 thousand people are estimated to be lifted from poverty this year (30 times less)**<sup>19</sup>.

While Uzbekistan's economic outlook for 2024 is positive, the IMF warns of both external and domestic risks. The main external concerns are slowdowns in major trading partners like China and Russia, and potential worsening in global financial conditions. Domestically, the IMF highlights potential liabilities arising from state-owned entities and public-private partnerships as risk factors to watch<sup>20</sup>. The tightening of the West's secondary sanctions emanating from the Russia-Ukraine

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2023/10/10/world-economic-outlook-october-2023>

<sup>18</sup> <https://openbudget.uz/api/v2/info/file/fcd09effa11433f5ffd31bcc73167fe0>.

<sup>19</sup> Annex II provides more data on Uzbekistan's macroeconomic outlook.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/12/21/pr23472-uzbekistan-imf-staff-concludes-staff-visit>

might also have implications for some large firms and sectors of the economy in Uzbekistan, with possible repercussions for trade, jobs, and even UN programmes and projects<sup>21</sup>.

In June 2023, the National Agency for Social Protection (NASP) was established under the President of Uzbekistan<sup>22</sup>. The NASP aims to address the fragmentation and gaps in the social protection functions previously scattered among several ministries and agencies. The establishment of the NASP, long advocated for by the UN, marks a significant step towards a more efficient and integrated **social protection system**.

In December 2023, the OECD released the results of the PISA 2022 assessment, in which Uzbekistan participated for the first time. The country ranked **significantly below average** in mathematics (72nd out of 88 countries), reading (80th), and science (80th). A smaller proportion of students in Uzbekistan, than on average across OECD countries, were top performers (Level 5 or 6) in at least one subject. At the same time a smaller proportion of students than on average across OECD countries achieved a minimum level of proficiency (Level 2 or higher) in all three subjects. Over 80% students did not meet Level 2 proficiency, which under PISA assessment relates to minimum level of proficiency in terms of required competencies across science, language and mathematics. This is well below OECD average of learning achievements.<sup>23</sup> Boys outperformed girls in mathematics by 6 score points, while girls outperformed boys in reading by 22 score points in Uzbekistan. The share of low performers is smaller among boys (78%) than among girls (83%) in mathematics; in reading, however, the share is smaller among girls (84% of girls and 88% of boys scored below Level 2 in reading). Uzbekistan is one of the countries where the relationship between learning performance and socio-economics status (ESCS) is the weakest. The country has one the smallest share of teachers fully certified by the appropriate authority, compared to other countries and economies participating in PISA 2018. (24.6 %, rank 74/75 , 2022).<sup>24</sup>

These results highlight **critical areas for improvement** in Uzbekistan's education system, improving student learning through data-driven planning for resource allocation in education. These reforms should be built on Uzbekistan's strength in Education which are inclusive school system- high attainment rate as well as equity- low impact of socio-economic background on performance.

In April 2023, the Government unveiled the **Partnership Compact for Education Reform 2023-26**, which was developed in collaboration with GPE, UNICEF, and other national and international partners. The Compact serves as Uzbekistan's roadmap for transforming its education system and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all. The development partners committed to alignment and mobilization of over USD600 million in the education sector in line with the Partnership Compact defined priorities in the next three years.

The Ministry of Health is developing a **Public Health-2030 Strategy**. The draft strategy's main goal is to tackle the primary causes of early death to boost life expectancy, with an emphasis on primary health care (PHC) and a focus on enhancing the quality and management of healthcare services, encouraging a healthy lifestyle, and achieving full digitalization of the healthcare system. It also

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<sup>21</sup> For example, firms engaged in the construction (e.g., cement and metallic construction materials, electronics, computers and others) that participate in UN-funded programmes and projects, may fall under the sanctions, disrupting the delivery.

<sup>22</sup> <https://ihma.uz/en/agency-category/national-agency-of-social-protection-under-the-president-of-the-republic-of-uzbekistan/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/publication/pisa-2022-results/country-notes/uzbekistan-2bb94bf1/>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

aims to overhaul the health financing system to guarantee universal healthcare access, financial protection for the public, and fair resource distribution.

Two unfortunate and tragic incidents (the iodine supplementation of "Antistrumin" beyond the recommended dose which resulted in the poisoning of children<sup>25</sup>, and the tragic deaths of at least 65 children resulting from consumption of a cough syrup manufactured by the Indian Marion Biotech) highlighted critical issues in the country's healthcare system in drug safety, corruption, regulatory oversight, and public health communication.<sup>26</sup>

Building on the "Digital Uzbekistan-2030" strategy, in September 2023 President Mirziyoyev launched a **2023-2024 Roadmap to elevate the country's position in the UN E-Government Development Index**.<sup>27</sup> This initiative prioritizes boosting Telecom market competition to stimulate innovation and affordability, integrating AI, big data, IoT, and blockchain into government, social, and economic spheres for enhanced efficiency and accessibility, as well as expanding broadband reach and use to bridge the digital divide.

## Climate Change and Environment Protection

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Article 49 of Uzbekistan's new Constitution grants citizens the right to not only a healthy environment but also reliable information about its condition. This signifies a crucial link between human rights and environmental protection, paving the way for increased public participation in sustainable development. Furthermore, after a ten-year pause, Uzbekistan is reinstating the practice of regular environmental reporting through a **new National State of Environment Report (NSoER)**. This report aligns with the principles of the UNECE Aarhus Convention, emphasizing free access to information for the public. To ensure maximum transparency and understanding, the NSoER will be launched on 13 February 2024, followed by a comprehensive public portal equipped with user-friendly summaries for non-technical audiences.

Uzbekistan's heavy reliance on natural gas continued to pose risks to its **energy security**, compounded by a depleting gas production and growing net imports (SDG7). To address its growing needs in energy, in 2023 Uzbekistan began importing Russian gas via a pipeline through Kazakhstan. At the same time, subsidies for gas, oil, and electricity **reached record levels and amounted to almost 1/3 of the GDP** in 2022 according to the International Energy Agency.<sup>28</sup> The long-awaited energy tariff reform was announced in September 2023 with steps to adjust tariffs to full cost recovery levels by 2026.<sup>29</sup> (SDG7)

In October 2023, Uzbekistan successfully placed Eurobonds valued at US\$660 million and unveiled its inaugural green sovereign Eurobonds worth UZ\$4.25 trillion on the London Stock Exchange. The proceeds from these green bonds are expected to finance environmentally focused projects, such as the implementation of water-saving technologies, the expansion of railway and metro

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<sup>25</sup> <https://daryo.uz/ru/2023/11/15/minzdrav-prokomentiroval-otrvlenie-detejantistruminom>

<sup>26</sup> <https://kun.uz/en/news/2023/08/10/65-children-died-within-the-scope-of-dok-1-maks-drug-case-in-uzbekistan>

<sup>27</sup> <https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/6653>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.iea.org/topics/energy-subsidies>

<sup>29</sup> <https://kun.uz/ru/news/2023/09/09/obnarodovan-proyekt-dokumenta-o-liberalizatsiyu-tarifov-na-energonositeli>



transportation systems, sanitation initiatives for populated areas, and the establishment of protective forests to combat wind erosion and water body siltation.<sup>30</sup>

The [Uzbekistan Country Climate and Development Report](#) by World Bank (November 2023) warns that climate change could shrink Uzbekistan's economy by 10% by 2050, but significant investments in decarbonization and adaptation offer a positive path forward. While achieving net-zero emissions by 2060 will require an additional \$79 billion, primarily from the private sector, the benefits including cleaner air, improved health, and economic growth outweigh the costs.<sup>31</sup>

**Air pollution** - an intrinsically linked and important factor of climate change, induced by the rapid economic growth, increased use of fossil fuels and construction – has been gaining a notable attention of the public and authorities in Uzbekistan. In 2022, the average PM2.5 concentration in Uzbekistan was 6.7 times the WHO annual air quality guideline value.<sup>32</sup> Uzbekistan also ranked 20th among the most polluted countries based on annual average PM2.5 concentration from 2018-2022.<sup>33</sup> 18% of deaths from stroke and ischemic heart disease in the country are estimated to be caused by air pollution.<sup>34</sup> **The annual costs of the damage to health from ambient PM2.5 pollution** in Uzbekistan, disproportionately borne by women, children, and vulnerable groups, have been estimated to be as high as **6.5 percent of the GDP**.<sup>35</sup>

To address these challenges, Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change developed a road map for the implementation of immediate measures aimed at improving air quality in Tashkent City, including a significant expansion of the existing air quality monitoring network and its complementing with a network of low-cost sensors to inform the public with real-time information on air quality, and additional enforcement measures targeting the most polluting sectors and industries.

Observations and projections indicate a concerning trend of **increasing heatwave frequency** and intensity in Uzbekistan. Studies suggest additional heatwave days in the future, with spatial variability across the country.<sup>36</sup> While data gaps exist, particularly in the north, recent years have witnessed extreme heat events exceeding 43°C.<sup>37</sup> These rising temperatures pose significant challenges, impacting the population's ability to adapt. Socio-economic factors like access to essential services and healthcare further influence vulnerabilities.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, the frequency of **sand and dust storms** (SDS) has increased in recent years in Uzbekistan and across Central Asia, posing risks to agriculture, energy, the environment, aviation, and human health. Dust settles over vast agricultural areas reaching 44% of Uzbekistan's territory. Causes of land degradation include soil salinization (47% of irrigated area), wind erosion (56% of all lands), irrigation erosion (7,603 km<sup>2</sup> of land), strong soil compaction and crust formation (>50% of the country's irrigated land), and low organic matter in soil. About 73% of pasturelands and hayfields

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<sup>30</sup> [Uzbekistan Issues First Ever Green Sovereign Eurobonds Worth 4.25 Trillion UZS on the London Stock Exchange | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](#)

<sup>31</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099111423124532881>

<sup>32</sup> [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/country-profiles/environmental-health/environmental-health-uzb-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=6c967ed9\\_5&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/country-profiles/environmental-health/environmental-health-uzb-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=6c967ed9_5&download=true)

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.igair.com/gb/world-most-polluted-countries>

<sup>34</sup> [https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/country-profiles/environmental-health/environmental-health-uzb-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=6c967ed9\\_5&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/country-profiles/environmental-health/environmental-health-uzb-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=6c967ed9_5&download=true)

<sup>35</sup> [Uzbekistan - Country Climate and Development Report \(worldbank.org\)](#)

<sup>36</sup> Kholmatov et al, 2020, USAID 2018

<sup>37</sup> CABAR. Asia, 2021; UzHydromet, 2022; Henderson et al., 2021

<sup>38</sup> Thompson et al., 2023

(16.4 million hectares) are subject to desertification and soil degradation due to unsustainable pasture grazing and climate change.

Addressing these issues requires strengthening data collection and understanding regional variations. Additionally, mitigating socio-economic inequalities is crucial for building resilience and ensuring equitable adaptation to this evolving climate risks.

## Cross-boundary perspectives

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On December 19, 2023, the UN General Assembly unanimously passed a resolution "**Central Asia in the face of environmental problems**: strengthening regional solidarity for sustainable development and prosperity." The resolution acknowledges climate change as a critical challenge affecting global sustainable development and emphasizes the need for regional cooperation in Central Asia, particularly in addressing the environmental issues of the Aral Sea region and promotes the "Green Agenda for Central Asia" program for sustainable development.

Water availability is expected to decrease by 29.4% by 2030 in the Amudarya basin due to the construction of the Qosh-Tepa canal in Afghanistan, and climate change. As a result, the land area under cultivation in the Amudarya basin may decrease by 18.9%. The estimated impact would be equal to 0.7% of GDP and about 250,000 jobs could be lost in crop production. The Kashkadarya, Bukhara, Khorerzm regions and Karakalpakstan will face the biggest impacts from the construction of the Qosh-Tepa canal and, to mitigate these impacts, the adoption of water saving technologies, water tariffs that reflect the scarcity<sup>39</sup>, and regional development plans that mitigate disparities in the economic impact have been suggested.

Ongoing security threats in Central Asia, fuelled by the situation in Afghanistan, remain a cause of concern. Drug flows remain persistent, including opiates, cannabinoids, synthetic drugs, and new psychoactive substances. While Afghanistan's 2022 opium ban led to a 95% cultivation drop, farmers now face a decision: follow the ban or return to poppy if prices rise without alternative income. This uncertainty impacts Uzbekistan and the region's drug situation. Meanwhile, surging methamphetamine trafficking presents additional security concerns.

## Conclusion

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Despite the challenges, Uzbekistan exhibited both stability and dynamism in 2023. Pivotal domestic events, including a new Constitution, Presidential elections, and a new national development strategy will potentially shape the country's sustainable development path towards 2030 and beyond. Though current external factors like regional conflicts and sanctions pose some risks, Uzbekistan seems well-positioned to continue its progress towards sustainable development.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.german-economic-team.com/en/newsletter/qush-tepa-canal-to-significantly-impact-uzbekistans-agriculture/>

# Annex I: National Commitments of Uzbekistan for Sustainable Development

(by 2030)

SDG SUMMIT 2023<sup>40</sup>

## 1. Economic reforms.

- Doubling the GDP to **160mln USD** and achieving upper-middle income country status (SDG -8);
- Increasing **labor productivity** and **energy efficiency** by **2 times** (SDG 7, 8);
- Attracting investments worth **250bln USD** over the next 7 years, including **110bln USD** of foreign investments and **30-40bln USD** under public-private partnerships (PPP) projects (SDG 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 17);
- Enhancing **urbanization by developing masterplans** focusing on green transition (SDG 6, 7, 11);
- Constructing of **1 million** apartments and **100 New Uzbekistan** estates residential districts for enhancing the access to affordable housing (SDG 1, 6, 7, 11, 13).

## 2. Human capital (*Leaving no one behind*)

- Developing the necessary infrastructure for the **full** coverage of preschool education and increasing the coverage of higher education to **50%** (SDG 4, 5);
- Providing **100%** preschools with **clean drinking water** and modern sanitary infrastructure (SDG 4, 6);
- **Twofold** reduction of maternal and under-five mortality rates (SDG 3, 5);
- Expanding the maternity places in perinatal care facilities by **35%** (SDG 3, 5, 8);
- Reducing the tuberculosis disease rate by **2 times** from the current **34 (per 100,000 population)** (SDG 3);
- Reduction of early mortality from cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes

and respiratory diseases by **2.5 times** (SDG 3);

- Increasing the share of financing healthcare system by **2 times** (SDG 3, 5);
- **Halving** the poverty rate till 2026 with sustained progress till 2030 (SDG 1, 2, 3, 4);
- Reducing youth unemployment from current **14%** to **11%** through consistent continuation of youth policy (SDG 1, 8, 10);

## 3. Gender equality

Continuing the policy of ensuring **gender equality** and increasing the share of women in management positions by **30%** as well as the higher-education degree by **50%** (SDG 3, 5 16);

## 4. Green Transition

- Creating a system of measurement, reporting, and verification (**MRV**) of all **greenhouse gas emissions** related to climate change with ongoing monitoring and determining the ways to reduce their emissions (SDG 7, 9, 13);
  - Bringing the country's forestation rate to **30%** (SDG 13, 15);
  - Implementing the first international **trade of reduced greenhouse gases** (SDG 7, 9, 13);
  - Covering **2,3 million** hectares of the **Aral Sea region area** with forests (SDG 8, 13, 15);
  - Increasing the collection and disposal of solid waste by **100%** as well as improving the recycling rates to **65 %** (SDG 13, 12).
- Raising the efficiency of water resources utilization by **25%**

<sup>40</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/national-commitments-sdg-transformation/22785>

## ANNEX II: Macroeconomic Outlook for Uzbekistan (Dec. 2023)

Agency	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 (E)	2024 (F)	2025 (F)
<b>Annual GDP growth rate (%)</b>							
Central Bank of Uzbekistan <sup>41</sup>	5.8	1.6	7.4	5.7	5.6-6.0	5.0-5.7	5.0-6.0
World Bank <sup>42</sup>	6.0	2.0	7.4	5.7	5.5	5.6	5.8
IMF <sup>43</sup>	6.0	2.0	7.4	5.7	5.5	5.5	5.5
EBRD <sup>44</sup>	5.7	1.9	7.4	5.7	6.5	6.5	
ADB <sup>45</sup>	5.6	1.6	7.4	5.7	5.5	5.5	
Fitch <sup>46</sup>					5.9	5.7	5.7
S&P Global Ratings <sup>47</sup>					5.6	5.0	5.0
<b>Inflation rate (Consumer Price Index, annual, %)</b>							
Central Bank of Uzbekistan	15.2	11.1	10.0	12.3	8.5-9.5	8.0-9.0	5.0
World Bank	14.5	12.9	10.8	11.4	10.2	10.0	9.9
IMF	14.5	12.9	10.0	12.1	10.2	10.0	10.4
Fitch					9.7	13.0	6.5
<b>Current Account Balance (% of GDP)</b>							
Central Bank of Uzbekistan	-6.0	-5.0	-7.0	-0.1			
World Bank	-5.7	-5.0	-7.0	-0.8	-4.1	-4.5	-4.6
IMF	-5.6	-5.0	-7.0	-0.8	-4.3	-4.6	-4.7
Fitch					-4.8	-4.7	-4.7
<b>Fiscal Balance (% of GDP)</b>							

<sup>41</sup> <https://cbu.uz/ru/publications/annual-report/>; [https://cbu.uz/ru/statistics/buletin/?arFilter\\_DATE\\_ACTIVE\\_FROM\\_1=&arFilter\\_DATE\\_ACTIVE\\_FROM\\_2=&arFilter\\_FF%5BSECTION\\_ID%5D=3664&year=2023&month=11&set\\_filter=&set\\_filter=Y](https://cbu.uz/ru/statistics/buletin/?arFilter_DATE_ACTIVE_FROM_1=&arFilter_DATE_ACTIVE_FROM_2=&arFilter_FF%5BSECTION_ID%5D=3664&year=2023&month=11&set_filter=&set_filter=Y;); [https://cbu.uz/ru/press\\_center/releases/](https://cbu.uz/ru/press_center/releases/); [Объем денежных переводов в Узбекистан из-за рубежа \(kursiv.media\)](https://kursiv.media/)

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uzbekistan/overview#economy>; <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/d5f32ef28464d01f195827b7e020a3e8-0500022021/related/mpo-uzb.pdf>; <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=UZ>; [Migration and Development Brief 39 | KNOMAD](https://www.knomad.org/)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/UZB>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.ebrd.com/where-we-are/uzbekistan/overview.html>; [transition-report-202223-uzbekistan%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.ebrd.com/where-we-are/uzbekistan/transition-report-202223-uzbekistan%20(1).pdf)

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.adb.org/countries/uzbekistan/data>; <https://www.adb.org/where-we-work/uzbekistan/economy>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.fitchratings.com/research/sovereigns/fitch-affirms-uzbekistan-at-bb-outlook-stable-25-08-2023>

<sup>47</sup> <https://disclosure.spglobal.com/ratings/en/regulatory/article/-/view/type/HTML/id/3097349>

Ministry of Economy and Finance of Uzbekistan <sup>48</sup>	-3.9	-4.4	-5.5	4.0	-5.7		
World Bank	-3.9	-4.4	-6.0	-4.1	-5.0	-4.0	-3.6
IMF	-3.8	-4.4	-6.2	-4.4	-3.4		
<b>Debt (% of GDP)</b>							
Ministry of Economy and Finance of Uzbekistan	29.7	39.0	38.0	36.4	36.8		
World Bank	37.5	37.4	36.6	34.9	36.0	36.6	34.6
IMF	28.5	37.4	36.6	34.9	35.1	34.8	33.9
Fitch					37.0	37.0	37.0
<b>International Reserves (USD, billion)</b>							
Central Bank of Uzbekistan	29.2	34.9	35.1	35.8	32.9		
Fitch			35.4	33.0	30.0		
<b>Remittances Inflow (USD, billion)</b>							
Central Bank of Uzbekistan	6.0	6.0	8.1	16.9	8.4 <sup>49</sup>		
World Bank	8.55	7.08	9.28	16.74	16.1		
Fitch				17.0	8.4		
<b>National Unemployment Rate (%)</b>							
Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan; Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction of Uzbekistan <sup>50</sup>	9.0	10.5	9.6	8.9	8.8 <sup>51</sup>		
IMF	9.0	10.5	9.6	8.9	8.4	7.9	7.4
<b>National Poverty Rate (%)</b>							
Statistics Agency of Uzbekistan; Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction of Uzbekistan			17.0	14.1	12.0		
World Bank	21.0	19.0	17.0	14.0	13.9		

<sup>48</sup>[https://api.mf.uz/media/document\\_files/Newsletter\\_17\\_Final\\_MF.pdf](https://api.mf.uz/media/document_files/Newsletter_17_Final_MF.pdf);  
[https://api.mf.uz/media/budget\\_activity\\_files/6\\_%D0%BE%D0%B9%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BA\\_%D0%B8%D0%B6%D1%80%D0%BE\\_nhZhwlK.pdf](https://api.mf.uz/media/budget_activity_files/6_%D0%BE%D0%B9%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BA_%D0%B8%D0%B6%D1%80%D0%BE_nhZhwlK.pdf); [https://api.mf.uz/media/document\\_files/State\\_debt\\_2022\\_ENG\\_bHBBgRd.pdf](https://api.mf.uz/media/document_files/State_debt_2022_ENG_bHBBgRd.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Estimated for Jan-Sep 2023

<sup>50</sup> <https://stat.uz/en/official-statistics/labor-market>;  
<https://data.egov.uz/eng/data/61025aa22a2e256d868e82ef>;  
[https://mehnat.uz/uploads/news\\_content/files/2023/07/26/4EBf5TIH40.pdf](https://mehnat.uz/uploads/news_content/files/2023/07/26/4EBf5TIH40.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Estimated as of November 2023