

The people should not serve government institutions; government institutions should serve the people

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Abstract: The ongoing reforms aimed at involving the private sector in the execution of state functions play a significant role in ensuring the effectiveness of state authority and governance bodies.

In particular, as part of the Administrative Reforms Concept adopted in 2017 in the Republic of Uzbekistan, six priority directions for a comprehensive reform of the state management system were defined, and—based on a special “Roadmap”—the activities of more than 100 state and economic management bodies were scheduled for review. The material and technical provisions of local governments, along with the wage payment system for their employees, were revised, thereby ensuring the practical independence of local bodies in the formation and management of local budgets.

Keywords: Business, project, education, economic management, Cabinet of Ministers, socio-economic, extraterritorial principle.

Introduction: Furthermore, in 2017—and with the aim of effectively addressing the accumulated problems in the relevant sectors—agencies for housing and communal services, preschool education, and the Ministry of Foreign Trade; the State Committee for Tourism Development; and the National Agency for Project Management were established. The Cabinet of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the executive structure of the Government apparatus were revised and improved. While the functions and responsibilities of 18 ministries and agencies were enhanced and 24 state and economic management bodies and other organizations were restructured, in 2018, 93 state management bodies were reformed—with 77 ministries and agencies being reorganized, 7 abolished, and 9 newly established.

In 2019, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan issued the Decree on Priority Measures to Increase the Responsibility of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the Effective Implementation of Strategic Tasks for the Socio-Economic Development of the Country and the Resolution on the Introduction of a Qualitatively New System for Organizing the Work of the Government of Uzbekistan. In accordance with these documents, the

main directions for improving the efficiency of the Cabinet of Ministers were established. The practice of Deputy Prime Ministers simultaneously heading joint-stock companies, corporations, and other organizations with state participation was abolished, and their number was optimized.

As a result of administrative reforms in the governance system, the number of districts (cities) increased from 193 in 2016 to 207 in 2021. Today, within the structure of the Cabinet of Ministers, there are 24 ministries, 9 state committees, 4 state inspections, 14 agencies, 5 committees, 6 centers, 2 central institutions, 4 inspections, 9 associations, 10 banks, 23 companies, 6 unions, 1 fund, and more than 10 other organizations, with over 100 subordinate institutions operating under them.

One of the key structural reforms in the sector was the establishment of the State Services Agency under the Ministry of Justice and its regional branches on December 12, 2017. As a result, 205 State Services Centers were launched across the country, with over 100 branches in remote areas. Additionally, 157 types of state services became available regardless of the citizen’s place of residence, based on the extraterritorial principle. This reform significantly

reduced the number of required documents and the service processing time, while also improving the quality and efficiency of public services.

In 2017, more than 120,000 state services were provided to entrepreneurs. Today, over 26 million requests from individuals and legal entities for state services have been processed. More than 110 legislative acts related to the provision of state services have been developed, and over 70 services have been simplified. Additionally, around 80 administrative regulations governing state services have been adopted. As a result, the number of required documents was reduced from 167 to 79, and the service processing time was shortened from 499 days to 271 days. Furthermore, 254 state services are now accessible through the my.gov.uz portal.

At the same time, procedures for registering business entities, requirements for authorized capital, and regulations regarding enterprises with foreign investment participation have been optimized.

As a result of these efforts, Uzbekistan ranked 8th among 190 countries in the World Bank's "Doing Business" ranking in the "business registration" indicator.

A new stage was introduced in the training and recruitment of public service personnel. To separate state governance from economic functions and enhance the efficiency of public service, the Agency for the Development of Public Service under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan was established by Presidential Decree on October 3, 2019.

In the field of public administration, effective cooperation between state and civil society organizations has been established as a means to foster a free civil society. The President's Public and Virtual Reception Offices, civil society institutions, non-governmental non-profit organizations, public oversight institutions, and public councils under government agencies play a crucial role in this process.

Since 2017, the Public Reception Offices and Virtual Reception Offices of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, operating in all regions, have facilitated direct communication with the population, enabling the prompt resolution of local issues, elimination of shortcomings, and protection of the rights and interests of individuals and legal entities.

For example, in 2017 alone, more than 1.4 million appeals were received from individuals and legal entities through the Virtual and Public Reception Offices. Since 2019, the President's Public Reception Offices have transitioned to an active system of identifying and resolving issues through door-to-door

visits. In 2020, nearly 1.2 million appeals were submitted to the President's Virtual and Public Reception Offices. As a result of reports and information submitted by the President's Public Reception Offices, 752 officials who failed to properly address citizens' appeals were held accountable.

The Public Reception Offices have been granted the authority to examine the activities of state bodies, submit proposals, and recommend disciplinary measures up to the dismissal of officials found guilty of legal violations.

As part of the Action Strategy, Uzbekistan has been implementing consistent measures to ensure freedom of speech and information, as well as to establish the institutional and legal foundations for the development of the information and mass communication sector.

In particular, systematic efforts have been made to:

- Improve the interaction between press services of state bodies and other organizations with the public and mass media.
- Enhance state support mechanisms in the information sector.
- Accelerate the development of the media market.
- Ensure transparency in the activities of state bodies and organizations.
- Establish a structured system for book and print media production.

In his Address to the Oliy Majlis on January 24, 2020, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev introduced the idea that "Society is the initiator of reforms", leading the government to see civil society institutions as partners in the reform process. This shift created greater opportunities for non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) to operate freely, while also driving legislative changes and new initiatives to strengthen their role in governance.

Currently, more than 9,200 non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) operate in Uzbekistan. Thanks to the established legal framework, the free and sustainable development of NGOs in the country has significantly accelerated. For instance, as of January 1, 1991, there were only 95 NGOs in the republic, which increased to 2,585 by 2000, 8,417 by 2016, and today, the number has reached nearly 9,200.

The steady growth of NGOs has been directly influenced by the implementation of various measures aimed at enhancing their effectiveness. In particular, over 200 regulatory and legal documents have been adopted in this area, including nearly 20 in the past five years, creating the necessary institutional framework

to support NGOs comprehensively. This demonstrates that all organizational and legal mechanisms for the expansion of NGO activities in Uzbekistan have been developed and are being consistently strengthened. The progressive growth of NGOs in Uzbekistan each year further confirms this trend.

Additionally, as a result of reforms in this sector, the Public Chamber under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan was established to represent NGO interests and act as a bridge between the state and civil society. Moreover, to introduce new and effective means of public dialogue, public councils have been formed under state bodies.

As a result, NGOs have taken an active role in ensuring transparency and openness in society, as well as in strengthening public oversight over government activities.

Notably, efforts to improve public administration have continued systematically. In 2021, designated as the "Year of Supporting Youth and Strengthening Public Health," the State Program outlined several priority tasks in this direction. Specifically, during the first half of 2021, the following measures were planned for implementation:

As part of the State Program, several key tasks were outlined for implementation, including:

- Strengthening cooperation between the chambers of the Oliy Majlis and state governance and local government bodies in the field of law-making and law enforcement.
- Hosting an international forum in Bukhara on the theme "Global Interparliamentary Cooperation in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals".
- Fundamentally improving the activities of state governance bodies.
- Reforming the operations of mid- and lower-level administrative bodies.
- Enhancing the effectiveness of local executive and representative bodies.
- Establishing an effective and transparent system for recruiting, training, and evaluating civil servants.
- Introducing a new system for monitoring the implementation of presidential decrees and assignments.
- Developing a comprehensive system to increase the role of women in society and public administration.
- Eliminating bureaucratic barriers for citizens and entrepreneurs in their interactions with government agencies.

- Developing a gender equality strategy for Uzbekistan until 2030.

State Administration Reforms and Digital Transformation

Specifically, in Section 4 of the State Program, a number of measures were defined to radically improve the efficiency of government bodies, including:

- Eliminating redundant institutions, functions, bureaucratic obstacles, and excessive meetings in state governance.
- Expanding the use of digital technologies to optimize work processes.
- Optimizing the number of government employees by up to 15%, ensuring strict compliance with labor laws.
- Implementing a system that enables ministries to plan their activities at the district, city, village, and mahalla levels.

As part of the implementation of these tasks, on April 3, 2021, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan signed a Decree on the Optimization of the Structure and Staffing Levels of State Power and Administration Bodies.

Under the Presidential Decree, by May 1, 2021, the following structural optimizations were mandated:

- Reducing the number of management personnel in 52 state governance and administration bodies, including their departmental and regional branches, by up to 15%.
- Cutting 40 out of 106 deputy positions in 26 ministries and agencies.
- Eliminating at least one deputy position in the governing bodies of state-owned enterprises where the state holds 50% or more of shares.
- Reducing the number of management personnel in state-owned enterprises by 10%.

Further Governance Reforms

Due to timely reforms, several key provisions outlined in the State Program for the first half of 2021 were successfully implemented.

Notably, on March 23, 2021, the Presidential Decree on Additional Measures to Create More Convenient Conditions for Citizens and Entrepreneurs in Accessing Public Services and Reducing Bureaucratic Barriers was adopted. This decree ensured the implementation of Clause 10 of the State Program for the "Year of Supporting Youth and Strengthening Public Health", aimed at significantly reducing bureaucratic obstacles in interactions between citizens, businesses, and government agencies.

On March 5, 2021, the Presidential Resolution on Supporting Women and Enhancing Their Active Participation in Society introduced a new stage in ensuring women's rights and interests. This resolution set forth a comprehensive framework to further empower women and improve their role in public life and governance.

Establishment of the Republican Women's Public Council

The Republican Women's Public Council has been established to increase the social and political activity of women. The council's main responsibilities include:

- Promoting awareness among the population about the essence and significance of reforms aimed at supporting women.
- Helping women gain education and professional skills.
- Providing comprehensive assistance in securing decent employment opportunities.
- Supporting women's entrepreneurship.
- Identifying talented young women and guiding their potential in the right direction.
- Improving the quality of medical and social services provided to women, especially in rural areas.
- Enhancing efforts to promote a healthy lifestyle among women.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, within the framework of the Action Strategy, a significant part of the major reforms aimed at improving state and public administration has focused on:

- Strengthening mechanisms of people's governance.
- Ensuring the independence of government branches.
- Enhancing the role of Parliament.
- Improving the public service system.
- Ensuring transparency in local self-government bodies.
- Providing legal support and incentives for non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs).

The ongoing reforms in these areas aim to increase public satisfaction and contribute to Uzbekistan's broader recognition on the international stage. This reflects the correctness and effectiveness of the new phase of reforms, as well as the pragmatic domestic and foreign policies being pursued in the country.

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