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Proposal For Making Pre-Trial Mediation Mandatory In Uzbekistan: A Pragmatic Innovation To Reduce Bureaucracy, Deter Corruption, And Create New Work Opportunities

Toshmatova Visolakhon Ikrom kizi

Doctor of Philosophy in Law (PhD), Lecturer of the Department, "International Law and Public Law Disciplines", University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Uzbekistan

Rasulov Saidbek Saidalo ugli

2nd course student, University of world economy and diplomacy, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article argues that Uzbekistan could introduce mandatory pre-trial mediation for selected civil, family, labor, and low-value commercial disputes. The Law "On Mediation" (2018, effective 2019) provides a strong base, but its voluntary design limits impact. Drawing on deeper analysis of three systems like Italy's Legislative Decree 28/2010, Turkey's pre-suit mediation in labor and commercial disputes, and Canada Rule 24.1, this article shows how mandatory mediation can reduce court backlogs, shortens time to resolution, lowers costs, and diminishes corruption risks. It explains why these outcomes are especially valuable in Uzbekistan's current justice environment and proposes a phased, locally adapted model. Two innovations are developed in detail: first is integrating mahalla institutions into a certified community mediation tier, and second is building a one-stop digital mediation portal linked to "my.gov" services. The article closes with a concrete legislative and institutional roadmap, risk analysis, and evaluation metrics.

Keywords: Mediation; Mandatory mediation; Uzbekistan; Turkey; Ontario; Italy; Pre-trial procedure; Judicial reform; ADR; Court efficiency; Bureaucracy reduction; Anti-corruption; Access to justice; Labor disputes; Mahalla; my.gov.

Introduction: Uzbekistan has already recognized mediation as a legitimate, legally protected method to resolve disputes. The Law "On Mediation" establishes core principles by mentioning confidentiality, voluntariness, equality of the parties, and mediator independence and allows both professional and non-professional mediators. Courts may suspend proceedings or limitation periods to allow mediation. Yet the system is still mostly voluntary. Many litigants and their lawyers go straight to court. As a result, potential benefits could be faster outcomes, lower costs, and reduced bureaucracy. Requiring parties in selected disputes to attempt mediation at least once before they can proceed to court. This is not a radical idea. Several countries moved from "voluntary only" to "mandatory first step" after real-world experience showed that voluntary systems alone do not change behavior at scale. In short, structured requirements, combined with avoidance of urgent or unsuitable cases, help parties toward early settlement while preserving the right to trial.

To keep the analysis focused and meaningful, the article looks closely at three jurisdictions that speak directly to Uzbekistan's needs: Italy, because it shows how a structured, category-based mandate can work in civil and commercial law, Turkey, because it shows how pre-suit mediation can be built into filing procedures at national scale in a legal culture not unlike Uzbekistan's, and Ontario, Canada because it shows how court-annexed mediation in large cities can measurably

reduce time and cost and improve user satisfaction.

Mediation is a confidential, facilitated negotiation. A neutral mediator helps parties explore interests, evaluate options, and build an agreement they can both accept. Unlike a judge or arbitrator, the mediator does not impose a decision. Mediation is flexible; it can address legal claims and practical interests like payment plans, delivery schedules and workplace arrangements that courts may not be able to order.

The procedure is clear. Mediation can be faster, cheaper, and less adversarial than litigation. It reduces the public and relational costs of a court fight and can preserve ongoing relationships between neighbors, employers and employees, suppliers and customers, or family members. It also reduces administrative load: fewer hearings to schedule, fewer filings to process, fewer routine decisions for judges.

However, a purely voluntary model has limits. Many parties will not try mediation for strategic reasons with hoping to “win” in court, cultural reasons can be also by viewing compromise as a weakness, or informational reasons by not understanding mediation or fearing it wastes time. Lawyers may be unfamiliar with structured negotiation or may prefer litigation fees. Without a policy handle, voluntary uptake often remains low and the justice system does not benefit.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic literature on mediation and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) has extensively examined the advantages of mediation in terms of efficiency, cost reduction, and access to justice. A significant body of scholarship emphasizes that mediation reduces court congestion, shortens dispute resolution timelines, and promotes consensual outcomes, particularly in civil and commercial disputes (Sciarretta, 2024; IBA, 2023). These studies generally frame mediation as a flexible, party-centered mechanism capable of addressing both legal claims and underlying interests more effectively than adversarial litigation.

A distinct strand of the literature focuses on the transition from voluntary to mandatory mediation. Empirical analyses of the Italian model introduced under Legislative Decree No. 28/2010 demonstrate that mandatory initial mediation sessions can substantially increase settlement rates and reduce judicial caseloads, without undermining access to courts (Sciarretta, 2024; Mediators Beyond Borders International, 2017). Scholars highlight that the effectiveness of the Italian system lies not in coercion, but in procedural design: limited timelines, targeted categories of disputes, and judicial cost incentives linked to party behavior. Similar conclusions are drawn in analyses of Turkey’s pre-trial mediation regime in labor and commercial disputes, where mandatory mediation certificates function as a procedural prerequisite to filing a claim, resulting in high settlement rates and significant reductions in court backlogs (Wolters Kluwer, 2020; IALL, 2023).

In the Canadian context, particularly under Ontario’s Rule 24.1, research evaluates court-annexed mandatory mediation as a case-management tool rather than a pre-suit filter. Evaluation reports indicate measurable improvements in resolution time, litigation costs, and party satisfaction, even where disputes do not fully settle (Association of the Bar of the City of New York, 1999). The literature underscores that early structured negotiation improves information exchange and narrows issues for trial, thereby enhancing overall judicial efficiency.

Despite the growing consensus on the institutional benefits of mandatory mediation, existing scholarship remains largely context-specific. Most studies examine mediation reforms within highly developed judicial systems or focus on a single jurisdiction. There is comparatively limited research on how mandatory mediation can be adapted to transitional legal systems characterized by high caseload pressure, administrative constraints, and heightened corruption risks. Moreover, the role of culturally embedded dispute resolution institutions and digital governance platforms in supporting mandatory mediation has received insufficient analytical attention.

This article contributes to the literature by addressing these gaps through a comparative and context-sensitive analysis of mandatory mediation models and their applicability to Uzbekistan. By synthesizing international secondary sources with empirical system-level data and qualitative insights from judicial practice, the study advances a hybrid reform model that integrates mandatory pre-trial mediation with local institutional structures and digital infrastructure.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative doctrinal and comparative research methodology based primarily on secondary sources. The analysis draws on academic articles, policy reports, legislative texts, and institutional evaluations concerning mandatory mediation in Italy, Turkey, and Canada. These jurisdictions were selected due to their documented experience with compulsory mediation mechanisms and their relevance for assessing institutional design, enforcement models, and systemic effects on judicial workload.

In addition to secondary sources, the study incorporates qualitative empirical insight obtained through a semi-structured expert interview with a

judge of a civil court in Uzbekistan. The interview was conducted to contextualize statistical data on judicial caseloads and to capture practitioner-level perspectives on the feasibility and practical implications of mandatory mediation. The interview was used as a supplementary interpretive source rather than as a standalone empirical dataset and serves to triangulate doctrinal analysis with observed judicial practice.

Statistical data on court caseloads and mediation usage were analyzed descriptively to illustrate systemic pressure points and to support normative reform proposals. The methodological approach is exploratory and policy-oriented, aiming to evaluate the transferability of international mediation models to Uzbekistan's legal system rather than to produce generalizable empirical findings.

Judicial systems exist to deliver fair and timely justice. In practice, rising caseloads and complex procedures can delay results and weaken public trust. Citizens face high legal costs and uncertainty; businesses face cash-flow risks; courts face growing backlogs. In such an environment, even honest officials struggle to move files quickly, and slow processes can create room for informal payments and other forms of corruption.

Italy

Italy introduced mediation as part of civil justice reform through Legislative Decree 28/2010 . Empirical studies indicate that in categories where mediation was established as a procedural precondition, mediation filings increased severalfold, while settlement rates among cases that proceeded beyond the initial session ranged between approximately 40 and 50 percent. The core idea is simple: for certain categories of disputes, parties must attempt mediation before they can file a lawsuit. The list has evolved, but it typically includes areas where early settlement is likely and court congestion is high, for example, house and neighborhood disputes, inheritance and division of property, banking and insurance matters, medical liability, and certain commercial claims. A party files a mediation request with an accredited provider. An initial session is scheduled quickly. Parties and their lawyers attend, receive structured information about mediation, and decide whether to proceed. If they continue, the mediator conducts confidential sessions, joint or separate, to explore settlement options. If they do not continue, or if no settlement is reached within a short timeframe, a formal report is issued, and the case may go to court. Judges can account for unreasonable refusal to mediate when awarding costs. Then, requiring an initial session normalized mediation. Lawyers became familiar with the process and learned to use it strategically for clients. Settlement rates in the covered categories rose. Even when cases did not settle fully, issues were narrowed, documents exchanged, and realistic expectations formed with shortened court time. Courts saw fewer filings and less procedural churn on routine disputes. The public gradually came to see mediation not as a threat to justice but as a practical first step.

Turkey

Another example, Turkey introduced a stronger form of mandatory mediation. Since 2018, labor disputes must go through mediation before a lawsuit can be filed; since 2019, many commercial disputes too. The system is integrated into filing: the claimant must present a mediation attendance certificate with the statement of claim. Without it, the court will not accept the case. So, parties apply to a mediation office. A mediator is appointed quickly, usually within days. The mediation must occur within a short statutory window. Many disputes settle in one or two meetings. If no agreement is reached, the mediator issues a certificate; the claimant attaches it to the lawsuit; the case proceeds. Courts treat the certificate as a prerequisite, not a suggestion. Over time, settlement rates reported by Turkish authorities exceeded 60% in some periods for labor disputes. Hundreds of thousands of cases were resolved at the mediation stage, dramatically reducing court congestion. Because the requirement is tight and procedural with no certificate, no filing, it changed behavior system-wide. Lawyers built mediation into their workflow. Parties learned that early, confidential negotiation could lead to fast, enforceable outcomes.

Canada

Ontario's Rule 24.1 requires mediation in most civil actions in Toronto, Ottawa, and Windsor early in the case process. The model is court-annexed rather than pre-suit. After pleadings are exchanged, parties must schedule a mediation with a mediator from an approved roster. The rule sets deadlines for mediation. The session is not merely informational; it is a real negotiation, usually with counsel. If parties settle, the agreement is recorded and the case ends. If not, the case continues, but often with narrowed issues and improved disclosure. Courts monitor compliance; failure to mediate can affect costs or scheduling. Then, evaluations show meaningful rates of full settlement (around two in five cases), faster overall resolution, and high user satisfaction. Even non-settled cases consume less court time because the parties clarify facts and legal issues earlier. Empirical evidence from Canada further substantiates the argument for expanded use of mediation in civil justice systems. A meta analytic review conducted by the Department of Justice Canada

reveals that the average claim value in mediated cases was approximately CAD 74,070.50, with average mediator fees around CAD 859.90 per case. Moreover, the interval from referral to the first mediation session averaged 4.9 months, indicating a measurable procedural timeline in case processing. Importantly, cases processed through mediation demonstrated a 29 % improvement in perceived cost savings compared with non mediation counterparts, and an average actual cost reduction of CAD 16,220 per case in the mediation group. These quantitative outcomes underscore mediation's capacity to deliver both time and cost efficiencies, providing empirical support for policy reforms aimed at integrating mediation more systematically into pre trial dispute resolution frameworks.

Italy's experience shows that the key to successful mandatory mediation is not blind compulsion but intelligent design: carefully choosing categories of disputes, beginning with an initial session, keeping timelines short, and linking costs to the parties' conduct, so that the right to trial is preserved but the automatic rush to court is avoided. In a different way, Turkey demonstrates how a pre-suit prerequisite can be applied nationwide and enforced administratively, proving effective in systems suffering from heavy court congestion, where mediation capacity can be scaled, and where a clear timetable fits the legal culture. Ontario, meanwhile, illustrates how mandatory mediation can be woven directly into court processes in major urban centers, producing measurable efficiencies in speed, cost, and satisfaction while safeguarding trial rights. Together, these examples highlight that mandatory mediation is not a one-size-fits-all formula but a flexible tool: the lesson for reformers is to combine Italy's targeting, Turkey's pre-filing discipline, and Ontario's procedural integration into a hybrid model that reduces congestion, lowers costs, and strengthens public trust without compromising justice.

Uzbek Courts

Uzbek courts carry heavy caseloads. Many matters are routine: workplace claims that could be settled with payment plans; neighbor and family disputes where communication failed; small business debts where parties disagree about terms, quality, or timing. These cases create disproportionate administrative work by filing, serving, scheduling, and processing even when the legal issues are not complex. The result is delay for everyone, including serious cases that truly require judicial attention. For citizens and companies, time is money. A slow court case drains savings, blocks cash-flow, and damages relationships. Mediation typically takes a few sessions. Lower lawyer hours and fewer court fees reduce financial barriers to justice. Faster outcomes reduce stress. When people see disputes resolved quickly and fairly, confidence in the justice system rises. That trust supports voluntary compliance, lowers enforcement costs, and strengthens the social contract. Where processes are slow and contacts with officials are frequent, risks increase. Mandatory mediation reduces exposure points by diverting many cases away from the full bureaucratic path. Confidential, time-boxed negotiation replaces serial filings, adjournments, and administrative discretion. The fewer the gates to pass, the fewer the gatekeepers, and the lower the incentives for improper payments.

In recent years, the workload of civil courts in the Republic of Uzbekistan has reached a scale that can no longer be addressed without structural reform. In 2023, a total of 943,892 civil cases were registered nationwide, while by 2024 this number had increased sharply to 1,609,532 cases. Of these, 1,545,225 cases were examined at the court of first instance, whereas only 46,766 cases proceeded to the appellate level. This distribution indicates that the overwhelming majority of disputes are resolved at the initial stage of judicial review. Importantly, a significant portion of these cases, by their nature, do not require full adversarial litigation and could have been effectively resolved at the pre-trial stage, including through mediation. When translated into daily figures, civil courts are required to process approximately 5,200 cases per working day, placing extraordinary pressure on judges, court staff, and the administrative infrastructure of the judiciary. A comparable pattern can be observed in the economic courts. In 2024, these courts reviewed 194,418 cases, which corresponds to an average of approximately 630 cases per working day. Against this background, only 3,337 disputes were resolved through mediation during the same period. This stark imbalance between the volume of judicial proceedings and the minimal use of mediation mechanisms highlights the limited practical impact of the current voluntary mediation framework. Despite the legal availability of mediation, it remains peripheral to dispute resolution practice, while courts continue to absorb a large number of routine and settlement-prone cases. This mismatch underscores that a purely voluntary model is insufficient to redirect dispute flows at a systemic level and reinforces the need for a structured pre-trial mediation requirement capable of filtering suitable cases before they enter the judicial pipeline.

An interviewed judge from Uzbekistan's civil court emphasized the urgency of introducing mandatory mediation, noting that a single judge currently handles nearly 40 cases per day. Many of these disputes, she explained, could be resolved through dialogue rather

than full litigation. Such an overwhelming caseload forces judges to devote substantial time to relatively straightforward matters, leaving fewer resources for complex cases that require deeper judicial analysis. According to the judge, more than 60 percent of disputes could potentially be settled before reaching the courtroom, thereby allowing the judiciary to focus on cases of greater legal and economic significance. The judge also highlighted several structural weaknesses within the current system. Court secretaries, who frequently work part-time and receive limited compensation, are responsible for crucial tasks related to document preparation and case processing. These conditions create vulnerabilities in which minor acts of corruption, such as accelerating the processing of documents, can occur. She noted that diverting routine conflicts to mediation would alleviate these administrative pressures, reduce corruption risks, and strengthen overall institutional integrity. In this perspective, mandatory mediation serves not only as a tool for increasing efficiency but also as a mechanism for enhancing the transparency and reliability of the judicial system.

Mandatory mediation stimulates a service ecosystem: training, accreditation, case-management, and digital platforms. Mediators need not be only lawyers, but also psychologists, HR specialists, social workers, and business professionals can add valuable skills. Universities can build clinics and courses, regional centers can expand access outside Tashkent. Each component creates jobs and raises professional standards.

Proposals

Finally, proposals for introducing mandatory mediation in Uzbekistan should begin with the most common and socially sensitive categories of disputes, where early settlement is both realistic and highly beneficial. Labor disputes, particularly those involving wages, termination, or working conditions, are prime candidates, since they frequently involve recurring issues that lend themselves to rapid and fair compromise. Family disputes, such as those concerning maintenance, property division, or parenting plans, should also be included, although with careful safeguards. Cases involving domestic violence or urgent protective orders must be explicitly exempt to protect vulnerable parties. In the commercial sphere, low-value disputes between small and medium enterprises such as disagreements over supply contracts, invoices, service quality, or delivery timelines are another logical starting point, since these conflicts often drain resources disproportionate to the sums at stake. Likewise, neighborhood and property-use disputes, including boundary disagreements, shared space conflicts, or condominium association issues, could be integrated into pilot urban programs, where the density of such cases is greatest.

To make the system workable and efficient, Uzbekistan could adopt a rule of “one mandatory session” as a baseline. For labor and low-value commercial claims, mediation should be required before a lawsuit can even be filed, following the Turkish model of pre-suit mediation. For family and neighborhood disputes, policymakers might initially choose a lighter version, modeled on Ontario’s experience, where mediation is required immediately after filing but before the first court hearing. This preserves the right to judicial determination but creates a structured opportunity for compromise at the very outset. The procedure itself must be clearly defined: the first mediation session should be completed within thirty days from the time notice is given, with only limited extensions possible by mutual consent. Attendance should be compulsory for the parties themselves or their representatives with real decision-making authority and legal counsel should participate where retained. At the end of the session, regardless of the outcome, a formal Mediation Attendance Certificate would be issued, confirming either a full settlement, a partial agreement, or simply that no settlement was reached. Such a model keeps the requirement light but real: citizens retain their right to litigate, but only after giving good-faith settlement a genuine chance

In order to ensure that mediation is accessible and affordable for all citizens, financial and structural measures must be taken. A fair first-session fee policy could operate on a sliding scale, with government subsidies available for low-income parties, while fee caps would apply to standard cases to prevent excessive costs. To extend mediation beyond the limits of major cities, remote access through video mediation should become the default option, making it possible for rural populations to participate without travel burdens. Integration with legal aid budgets is equally important, allowing mediation to be covered just as litigation would be, and court-adjacent centers could host duty mediators to assist walk-ins, ensuring that citizens without prior knowledge of the system are not excluded. These measures combine affordability with inclusivity, creating a system that is both accessible and trusted.

At the same time, judicial powers and incentives must be carefully designed to make mediation a meaningful step rather than a formality. Judges should retain the authority to refer cases back to mediation if early pleadings suggest that settlement is feasible, while cost consequences can be imposed on parties who refuse to mediate without reasonable grounds or who attend in

bad faith. This introduces accountability into the process, discouraging box-ticking compliance and rewarding genuine engagement. Just as importantly, the enforceability of mediated agreements must be guaranteed: once approved through proper procedural safeguards, such agreements should carry the same legal force as court judgments, giving parties confidence that their compromises will hold.

Nevertheless, a system of mandatory mediation cannot operate without exemptions and safeguards. Urgent cases requiring interim relief or protective orders must move directly to court to avoid harm, and mediators must be empowered to screen for power imbalances and coercion, particularly in sensitive contexts like family disputes. Parties should have the right to request termination of mediation where fairness or safety is at risk, ensuring that the process remains voluntary in spirit, even if mandatory in form. Furthermore, disputes involving significant questions of public importance should remain within the courts, and criminal matters must be excluded altogether, with the limited exception of related civil claims where mediation may still serve a useful role. These carve-outs maintain the legitimacy and ethical grounding of the system.

For Uzbekistan, the implementation of mandatory mediation would best follow a phased approach, beginning with a pilot program of 12 to 18 months in Tashkent City and selected regions with both urban and rural populations. This first phase would target specific categories such as labor disputes, low-value commercial claims, and selected family and neighborhood cases. Infrastructure development would be critical: a roster of certified mediators should be established, training accelerated in priority districts, and “Mediation Desks” set up in courthouses and local administrations to assist citizens in filing notices and scheduling sessions. A one-stop digital portal integrated with e-government services could simplify access and transparency, while data collection during this pilot phase would measure settlement rates, costs, timeframes, and user satisfaction. Based on these results, the second phase would expand both categories and geography, professionalizing the practice through national accreditation standards, codes of ethics, continuing education, and independent quality-review mechanisms. Finally, in its institutionalized phase, mediation would be embedded into Uzbekistan’s civil, family, and economic procedure codes, supported by judicial training, stable funding, and nationwide public awareness campaigns.

Of course, several risks must be anticipated and addressed if the system is to succeed. One challenge is uneven access to mediators outside major cities, which could delay sessions and undermine trust. This can be resolved through remote video mediation as the default option, supplemented by traveling mediator panels and incentives for professionals to train and serve in regional areas. Another risk lies in the quality and neutrality of mediators: poorly trained or biased practitioners could erode confidence. The answer here lies in strict national accreditation standards, ethics codes, regular audits, and sanctions for breaches. Cost burdens on low-income citizens also require attention, as even modest fees can discourage participation; solutions include government-funded first sessions for those eligible, fee caps, and legal aid vouchers. A further difficulty is the possibility of coercion or power imbalances, especially in family disputes, where one party might pressure the other into an unfair settlement. This risk must be countered by mandatory screening, the right to terminate mediation for fairness concerns, and mediator training in ethics and power-balance techniques. Finally, there is the issue of superficial compliance, where parties appear only to satisfy the requirement without genuine engagement. Requiring short position statements, encouraging document exchange, and permitting mediators to flag bad-faith behavior in limited ways can help, while courts can link cost orders to party conduct. Even lawyers may resist mandatory mediation out of concern for lost income or unfamiliarity, but this too can be managed through continuing education programs, evidence showing how resolved cases free time for more complex litigation, and pilot metrics that demonstrate real client benefits. A central strength of Uzbekistan’s mediation reform can be the deliberate blending of tradition with technology, ensuring that reforms are not imported as abstract foreign models but rooted in the country’s unique social fabric while also aligned with global best practices. In this regard, two complementary innovations, Mahalla-Integrated Community Mediation and a One-Stop Digital Mediation Portal offer both local legitimacy and modern efficiency.

The first innovation, Mahalla-Integrated Community Mediation, draws directly from Uzbekistan’s long-standing tradition of the “mahalla” as a trusted institution of neighborhood governance and social trust. For centuries, disputes among families, neighbors, and local business partners have been resolved within mahallas through respected community figures whose authority derives not from formal law but from social legitimacy. Building a certified community mediation tier, therefore, not only acknowledges existing practices but strengthens them by giving them a formal procedural role within the justice system. To institutionalize this tier, carefully

designed certification programs would be required, selecting mahalla leaders and other respected community members for structured training in mediation techniques and ethics. Upon successful completion, these individuals could be accredited as community mediators for specific categories of disputes, particularly those involving family issues, neighborhood conflicts, and small property-use disagreements.

However, to safeguard fairness and prevent informal pressures from undermining neutrality, the scope of community mediation must be clearly defined. Community mediators should only handle low-risk, low-value disputes while referring cases involving violence, high-value claims, or complex legal rights to professional mediators or the courts. To guarantee impartiality, a strict ethical code must be adopted, requiring full disclosure of potential conflicts of interest and ensuring confidentiality of all proceedings. Oversight mechanisms, ideally organized through district-level mediation councils, would monitor quality, address complaints, and coordinate training needs. At the same time, pathways of cooperation between community and professional mediators should be established: community mediators could escalate unresolved matters to professional mediators, while professional mediators could consult community mediators for cultural or contextual understanding when parties consent. The potential benefits are significant. Because parties often feel more at ease with familiar and culturally respected figures, trust and voluntary participation would likely increase. Proximity and informality would reduce travel and scheduling burdens, while widespread community education in structured problem-solving could foster a culture of dialogue that reduces disputes before they escalate into legal battles.

The second innovation is the creation of a One-Stop Digital Mediation Portal directly linked to Uzbekistan's expanding my.gov infrastructure, formally known as the Unified Portal of Interactive State Services. Over the past decade, my.gov has developed into the country's flagship platform for digital governance, hosting more than 200 public services that range from property registration and tax reporting to business licensing, social protection benefits, and certain judicial procedures. By bringing together diverse services into a single entry point, my.gov has demonstrated how technology can minimize bureaucratic barriers, increase transparency, and reduce direct contact between citizens and officials thereby curbing opportunities for petty corruption. In this sense, mediation reform can be positioned as the next logical frontier in Uzbekistan's digital transformation. By embedding mediation within the already trusted and widely used my.gov ecosystem, the state would not only simplify access to justice but also normalize alternative dispute resolution (ADR) as a standard and respected pathway for resolving conflicts.

The architecture of this digital mediation system must closely follow the user-centered simplicity that has made my.gov successful. Currently, citizens can apply for identification documents, pay utility bills, and track service requests in real time through the portal. Extending this logic, users should also be able to initiate mediation cases with equal ease. A dedicated module within my.gov would allow individuals or businesses to submit a brief case description, select the appropriate dispute category, and upload supporting documents directly into the system. Automated case classification could then suggest suitable mediators based on the nature of the dispute whether commercial, family, labor, or community-level conflicts and generate a procedural timetable. This design would eliminate unnecessary discretion in case assignment, reducing the risks of favoritism or unequal treatment.

The inclusion of smart scheduling features would mark another leap forward. Once a mediation case is registered, the system could automatically generate timetables, synchronizing them with mediators' availability and notifying parties through SMS or email. Uzbekistan's success in using my.gov for reminders in areas such as tax payments and utility billing shows the effectiveness of such notifications in reducing delays. By replicating these mechanisms in the mediation context, the portal would ensure higher attendance rates, lower postponements, and faster resolutions. Importantly, the digital environment would also facilitate remote participation. Through integration of video-conferencing tools, rural citizens and individuals with limited mobility could attend sessions without incurring travel costs. This would promote inclusivity, ensuring that mediation is not a privilege of those in urban centers but a nationwide mechanism accessible to all citizens regardless of geography.

Equally vital is the system's capacity for secure document management. At present, my.gov already allows users to upload and store sensitive documents such as property titles or business licenses, protected by e-signature authentication. Applying the same infrastructure, the mediation module should allow parties to securely exchange case-related materials, with encryption ensuring confidentiality. Standardized templates for settlement agreements could be made available, simplifying the drafting process and promoting consistency. For sensitive disputes such as family conflicts involving minors or domestic issues the portal could offer optional anonymization features,

protecting privacy while maintaining procedural integrity.

One of the most innovative aspects of integrating mediation into my.gov would be the automatic generation of Mediation Attendance Certificates. These digitally signed documents, produced at the conclusion of each session, could be immediately linked to the e-filing systems of the courts. This would close a significant procedural gap that currently undermines the enforceability of mediated outcomes. By giving these certificates legal recognition as prerequisites for filing lawsuits in specified categories, such as labor or small-value commercial disputes, the system would elevate mediation from an optional add-on to a mandatory first step in dispute resolution. This not only reduces the caseload of courts but also ensures that litigation is pursued only when genuine efforts at settlement have failed.

Financial transparency is another cornerstone that can be strengthened through integration with my.gov. The portal already supports secure digital payments for government fees, taxes, and utilities. Extending this functionality to mediation would allow users to view standardized fee schedules, make electronic payments, and receive digital receipts. Such a system would eliminate discretionary fee-setting by mediators, which can often fuel mistrust and perceptions of unfairness. Moreover, the state could introduce legal-aid vouchers distributed electronically through my.gov, enabling low-income parties to access mediation without financial barriers. By embedding financial processes in the existing digital infrastructure, the portal would promote both fairness and efficiency.

In addition to facilitating case management, the my.gov integration would generate valuable real-time data for policymakers. Just as the platform currently produces statistical reports on service delivery times and user satisfaction, the mediation module could compile anonymized information on settlement rates, average duration of cases, and regional variations in outcomes. These analytics would provide government institutions with the evidence base needed to refine laws, allocate resources, and target training for mediators. For example, if data showed that labor disputes in certain regions had low settlement rates, policymakers could respond with specialized training programs or targeted awareness campaigns. In this way, mediation reform would not be static but continuously adaptable, guided by empirical evidence.

Comparative experience from other countries further underscores the feasibility and benefits of such integration. In Singapore, the Community Justice and Tribunals System (CJTS) has successfully digitized mediation for small claims and employment disputes, allowing users to file cases, attend online hearings, and track outcomes without ever entering a physical courthouse. Similarly, Kazakhstan has begun experimenting with linking mediation services to its e-government portal, demonstrating the regional relevance of such reforms. By aligning its mediation reform with these global trends, Uzbekistan positions itself not as a follower but as a regional leader in digital justice innovation.

For these innovations to become reality, however, legislative and regulatory changes are indispensable. The Law “On Mediation” must be amended to explicitly authorize the integration of mediation into my.gov and to define the legal validity of digital Mediation Attendance Certificates. Additional provisions should codify the accreditation of mediators into two distinct tiers, community mediators operating at the mahalla level and professional mediators with advanced training, while requiring their registration on the portal’s roster system. Strict ethical standards, disclosure requirements, and confidentiality rules must be enshrined in law to protect users. Parallel amendments to the Civil, Family, and Economic Procedure Codes are also necessary, particularly to establish mediation as a mandatory prerequisite for filing lawsuits in designated categories. Judges must be empowered to direct cases into mediation at any stage, ensuring that the digital system complements rather than competes with the judiciary.

Ministerial regulations will play a central role in operationalizing this framework. They must set fee caps, define subsidies for disadvantaged groups, and approve standard forms to minimize administrative burdens. Regulations should also detail the technical requirements for e-signatures, remote sessions, and secure data storage, building upon my.gov’s existing digital infrastructure. Clear rules for the training and continuing education of mediators must be adopted, alongside robust complaint-handling procedures to maintain quality and public trust. By ensuring that both technical and procedural standards are codified, ministerial regulations would transform the mediation module from a theoretical innovation into a functioning component of Uzbekistan’s justice system.

The broader significance of integrating mediation into my.gov lies in its potential to reshape public perceptions of justice. For many citizens, my.gov is already synonymous with efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. By embedding mediation within this trusted ecosystem, the state ensures that dispute resolution becomes a natural part of everyday digital governance. This alignment would normalize mediation as a mainstream practice, reduce pressure on courts,

and deepen the culture of rule of law. Most importantly, it would demonstrate that justice, like other public services, can be delivered in a way that is user-friendly, transparent, and corruption-resistant.

The integration of mediation into Uzbekistan's my.gov platform represents more than a technical innovation; it is a transformative policy choice. By leveraging existing digital infrastructure, the government can make mediation universally accessible, procedurally efficient, and financially transparent. The resulting system would not only resolve disputes more effectively but also strengthen public trust in the fairness of the state, provide data for evidence-based policymaking, and align Uzbekistan with global best practices in digital justice. This reform, if fully realized, would mark a decisive step toward embedding alternative dispute resolution within the very architecture of Uzbekistan's e-government, ensuring that justice is not confined to courtrooms but is brought into the daily lives of citizens.

The credibility of mediation reform depends on rigorous evaluation through measurable outcomes. Core metrics should be tracked quarterly and published annually to ensure transparency and continuous improvement. These include the settlement rate by category and region, the average time to resolution, comparative costs for mediated versus litigated cases, the effect on court congestion, user satisfaction, enforcement outcomes, and integrity indicators such as complaints about improper payments or audit flags. The government should set ambitious but realistic targets for the first two years of implementation. These could include achieving settlement rates of 50–60% in labor and low-value commercial disputes in pilot regions, cutting the average time to resolution for mediated cases to 30 days or less, reducing new filings in covered categories by 30% in pilot courts, and achieving user satisfaction rates above 80%. At the same time, ethical integrity must be enforced with zero tolerance for breaches, ensuring that sanctions are clearly defined and applied consistently.

Any reform must also anticipate and address common objections. Critics may argue that mandatory mediation delays justice, but if sessions are scheduled early and completed within a 30-day window, the process actually accelerates resolution. Others may claim that it violates voluntariness, yet the obligation extends only to attempting mediation; parties retain full freedom to reject settlement and proceed to trial. Concerns about cost are also misplaced: a single mediation session is far less expensive than protracted litigation, and with fee caps, subsidies, and remote participation, the reform protects low-income citizens. Skeptics may argue that mediation cannot work outside urban areas, but the combined use of video mediation, traveling mediator panels, and the integration of mahalla-based mediators directly addresses access challenges. Lawyers, too, need not fear loss of work: mediation requires legal guidance for parties to understand their rights and risks, while efficient dispute resolution allows lawyers to focus on more complex cases.

Ultimately, the gains from a well-designed mediation system extend far beyond individual disputes. For citizens, the system promises faster answers, lower costs, and reduced stress. For SMEs, it provides mechanisms to protect cash flow, reduce unpaid debts, and preserve long-term business relationships. For workers and employers, mediation allows practical, interest-based solutions that keep people employed and businesses running. Courts benefit by being able to devote resources to serious cases rather than being clogged with routine disputes, while the state gains visible anti-corruption victories by eliminating points of discretion and demonstrating citizen-oriented justice. Moreover, mediation reform fosters broader societal benefits. By creating new roles for mediators, case managers, and digital platform engineers, it generates employment opportunities and stimulates innovation in legal education. Universities can establish new programs, clinics, and research hubs around mediation, creating a professional pipeline for young graduates. In this sense, mediation is not only a legal reform but also a tool for socio-economic development, civic education, and state modernization.

Mandatory pre-trial mediation is not an attack on the right to a day in court. It is a smart, fair filter that channels routine, solvable disputes into a faster, less costly, and less bureaucratic path, while preserving full access to judges when needed. Italy shows how category-based mandates normalize early settlement. Turkey shows how a pre-suit certificate can transform national practice and unclog courts. Ontario shows how court-annexed mediation improves timelines and satisfaction even in complex urban settings.

Uzbekistan can go further by making the reform its own. A certified mahalla mediation tier can ground the system in trusted community structures. A one-stop digital mediation portal can link the process to modern e-government services linked to my.gov, cutting paperwork and discretion while expanding access nationwide. With careful phasing, clear exemptions, strong ethics, training, and measurable targets, the reform can deliver faster justice, lower costs, fewer opportunities for corruption, and more professional opportunities for citizens.

The legal base is ready; the need is clear. With focused

legislation, practical implementation, and Uzbek-specific innovations, mandatory mediation can become a signature justice reform efficient, humane, and aligned with the country's values of fairness, transparency, and opportunity.

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