

GENDER EQUALITY OF WOMEN IN UZBEKISTAN

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Annotation: *The issues of achieving gender equality, ensuring the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of women, and strengthening their role in public and State life have an undeniable impact on the implementation of public policy. National legislation in the field of women's rights protection is based on guarantees of gender equality defined by international legal documents. The Basic Law of the country contains an article defining the equality of women and men (art. 56). Moreover, the Constitution establishes the obligation of the State to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in managing the affairs of society and the State, as well as in other spheres of public and State life.*

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Over the past five years, more than two dozen legislative acts have been adopted in this area, including 2 laws, 6 decrees and resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and 17 government resolutions. In accordance with the national Sustainable Development Goals, a Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in Uzbekistan until 2030 has been developed and adopted, aimed at ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the social, economic and political spheres. Gender equality issues are closely intertwined with the processes of political transformation taking place in the country, thanks to which women are increasingly participating in political processes as members of Parliament, members of political parties and civil servants, holding senior positions. The proportion of women among members of Parliament and local authorities is gradually increasing.

The indicator of the quantitative growth of women's representation at almost all levels of political governance has secured Uzbekistan a place among the top 50

countries out of 190. The national electoral legislation has established a 40% quota for women when nominating candidates for deputies from political parties. The development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026, approved by the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, included goals and objectives to support women and further increase their activity in society. Strengthening the support system for women, ensuring their rights and legitimate interests, increasing women's social, economic, and political activity, and ensuring gender equality are identified as goal 25 in the Uzbekistan 2030 Strategy. Within the framework of the established tasks, measures are envisaged to increase the socio-political activity of women, and to continue implementing reforms to support them. In addition, in order to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals for the period up to 2030, Uzbekistan has identified priorities aimed at ensuring gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

According to the goals, by 2030, it is necessary to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere, ensure gender equality, full and effective participation of women and equal opportunities for them to lead at all levels of decision-making in political, legal, socio-economic and cultural life. In addition, the SDGs provide for the fullest implementation of the principles of gender equality in the process of adopting government programs at various levels of government. Fundamental measures have been taken in this direction, including those of a legal nature, indicating Uzbekistan's firm intention to follow international treaties providing for the legal, social and economic protection of women from any form of discrimination and harassment. Gender-oriented laws have been adopted, including the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for women and Men", which provides for norms and regulations that establish guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the field of public service.

Thus, article 16 of the said law guarantees the creation of conditions for the participation of persons of different sexes in government by ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the field of public service. Direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of gender is not allowed when applying for public service and during its passage. At the same time, it is allowed to apply temporary special measures to ensure the implementation of gender policy in the civil service, providing for the establishment of a quota system for the replacement of positions by employees of the same sex. The quota is introduced as a temporary measure and may be abolished as a balanced representation of women and men in government bodies is achieved. Thus, in public institutions in which the state share exceeds 50 percent of the authorized capital, the position of one of the deputy heads should be held by a woman. Currently, more than 2,000 women hold senior positions at various levels of government. According to the Law "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men", when forming a personnel reserve for the positions of heads of state bodies, it is necessary to respect the equality of women and men. At the same time, the responsibility to ensure equality in the admission of women and men to public service in accordance with their abilities and professional training is assigned to the heads of State bodies and relevant officials. The obligation to ensure equal rights in access to public service is implemented by ensuring equal access for women and men to competitions for public service positions (art. 17 of the law). The personnel services of state bodies are responsible for providing the competition commissions not only with information about the education and professional training of persons participating in the competition, but also with data on the ratio of the number of working women and men in relevant civil service positions.

Similar information is provided by the personnel services of government agencies when addressing issues of certification and promotion of civil servants in order to take measures to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

Separate guarantees of equal rights and opportunities are provided for by law in the exercise of electoral rights, which are expressed in granting equal rights to elect and be elected to representative bodies of government, as well as in the formation of election commissions at all levels, which must maintain quantitative parity. These same issues, due to their great importance in the formation of women leaders in Uzbekistan, are provided for in another strategic document of our country — the Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality in the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030. The adopted strategy, along with positive developments and achievements in the field of gender equality, reflects existing problems and ways to solve these problems. Ensuring the realization of equal electoral rights and ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the field of public service are among the first priorities of the strategy. It should be noted that the gender strategy of Uzbekistan contains special indicators, with the help of which it offers directions and ways to solve existing problems in achieving gender equality. The adopted gender strategy was highly appreciated by international experts, and it was noted that as a result of the implementation of this strategy, more women leaders will appear in Uzbekistan, stable socio-economic development will be ensured, new opportunities will be created, especially for girls - current and future leaders, their potential will be realized, and a healthy lifestyle culture will be formed in society.

National legislation on gender equality is an important framework for ensuring women's rights and political participation in the region, in accordance with the requirements of international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In Uzbekistan, legislative measures to prohibit discrimination against women have been established in a wide variety of areas, especially education and employment. For example, special quotas have been allocated in the field of education for higher education under a grant, which annually enrolls 2,000 girls and women from low-income families in higher education

institutions. The same quotas are set for the continuation of women's doctoral studies. Based on the recommendation of the Family and Women's Committee, 500 women with more than five years of professional experience enroll in universities under a contract. 200 billion soums are allocated annually from the State Budget for the education of girls and women in the magistracy in order to compensate for the contract amounts. Starting from the 2023/2024 academic year, all girls studying under contract at colleges and technical schools in the fields of construction, transport, utilities and services have been transferred to a grant. Thanks to these measures, the proportion of girls in higher education institutions has increased to 49 percent today. For comparison, in 2017, this figure was 37 percent. Along with education, the world of work is of great importance in women's lives. The guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in labor relations provided by the law and the Labor Code relate to almost all aspects of labor activity.

At the same time, labor legislation has imposed a number of obligations aimed at ensuring:

- equal opportunities for women and men in employment;
 - equal wages (remuneration) for women and men for equal work and an equal approach to assessing the quality of work of women and men; equal opportunities for career advancement, retraining and advanced training;
 - equality of rights of women and men upon termination of an employment contract;
 - implementation and development of the practice of social protection and family support, accessible to women and men with children, creation of favorable working conditions for pregnant and lactating women;
 - safe working conditions that ensure the preservation of vital activity and health of women and men, including the preservation of reproductive function;
 - prevention of unacceptable treatment leading to the humiliation of persons in labor relations or the creation of discriminatory working conditions;

– Equal conditions for women and men to combine work, participation in public life with family responsibilities, including through the creation and expansion of a network of childcare facilities that provide opportunities to work. Thus, the number of pre-school education organizations has tripled since 2017, bringing their total number to over 18,000. These measures have made it possible to increase the pre-school enrollment rate from 27 percent in 2016 to more than 60 in 2022. It is expected that in 2024, the pre-school enrollment rate will increase to 76 percent. At the same time, thanks to the introduction of a system of assistance to poor families, the latter are exempt from paying for the maintenance of children in kindergartens. Thus, the transition to fundamentally new gender approaches in the system of democratic governance has made it possible to counteract gender stereotypes, helping to change society's attitude towards women's participation in the political and social life of the country.

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