

**SPEECH BY H.E. BAKHTIYOR SAIDOV, MINISTER OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF UZBEKISTAN, AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 79TH OF
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(25 September 2024)**

**Dear Mr. President,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, allow me to convey greetings and best wishes of peace and prosperity from the **President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoyev** to the United Nations leadership, heads of state, and delegations participating at the 79th Session of the General Assembly.

Let me also **express** my sincere gratitude for the **opportunity** to address this esteemed assembly.

I would like to thank the UN Secretary General Mr. António Guterres for his firm focus on Central Asia. This was once again **confirmed** by his recent visit to our region, which **laid a solid foundation** for further expanding cooperation with the United Nations.

Our debates are taking place at a time of escalating **global challenges**.

Wars and conflicts, triple planetary climate crisis, worsening of the world economy and technological gap are **affecting** all countries without exception.

We firmly believe that the United Nations **must remain** central in addressing the challenges of the 21st century.

Resolving global issues at the national level is crucial for maintaining stability and the well-being and prosperity of our people.

In this context, achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals** is very important.

The consistent implementation of the **SDGs** has been identified by the **President** of our country as the cornerstone of Uzbekistan's state policy.

Our "**Uzbekistan - 2030**" Development Strategy is **fully aligned** with SDGs.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has made **significant progress** in poverty reduction, improving public access to education, transitioning to a green economy, and promoting gender equality.

Our **GDP** has more than doubled, and the poverty rate has fallen almost 4 times in less than 10 years. We are taking solid steps to create jobs and improve the quality of human capital with the aim to reduce the unemployment rate from 11% to 7%.

Full-scale implementation of the SDGs is impossible without attracting investments and advanced technologies. Uzbekistan is actively pursuing these goals, leveraging our state resources and private sector.

However, many developing countries **face** challenges in accessing **global financial resources**.

We **share** the view to reform the international financial system to **establish a modern financial architecture**.

Humanity's future is closely linked to the development and application of **modern technologies**.

New scientific advancements **should bring** people and nations **closer together**, not separate them.

We proceed from the principle that access to technology is not a privilege, but a right for every person and every nation.

Digital technologies are especially crucial. We have adopted the "**Digital Uzbekistan - 2030**" Strategy. We are rapidly advancing our IT sector.

Yet, there is another side of the coin. Rise of the digital technologies presents new challenges, particularly concerning the **uncontrolled** use of **artificial intelligence**.

Based on this idea, at the previous session, Uzbekistan **supported** and **co-sponsored** UN General Assembly resolutions on utilizing safe

artificial intelligence for sustainable development and strengthening international cooperation.

We will continue to advocate for broad international collaboration to address these issues.

Last year was one of the **hottest** in the history of **meteorological** observations. We have witnessed **record-breaking heat** and **extreme cold** conditions worldwide.

This once again proves the growing urgency of the climate change problem.

Central Asia is among the most exposed and vulnerable regions of the world to **climate change**.

The air temperature in Central Asia is rising faster than the global average.

This creates a wide range of problems, which pose serious risks to **food** and **energy** security.

Thus, the level of water availability per capita in Central Asia has halved over the past few decades (*from 3,500 cubic meters to 1,630*).

The **Aral Sea disaster** continues to have an extremely negative impact on the ecosystems of all states in the region.

We **call on** the international donor community to **expand** projects in the Aral Sea region aimed at mitigating the devastating consequences of this disaster.

The Aral Sea became the first region in the world to be granted by the UN the status of a Zone of Environmental Innovation and Technology.

Our best experience **could benefit** other countries facing similar problems.

Central Asian countries are unified on **climate action**.

Last December, at the initiative of the **President of Uzbekistan**, the General Assembly by consensus adopted the resolution "Central Asia in the face of environmental problems: strengthening regional solidarity for sustainable development and prosperity."

We also **developed** a Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and **established** a Climate Council to create a national climate change program.

At the same time, we are aware of the need for broad international cooperation to effectively overcome these challenges.

In this regard, **we propose** to adopt the UN resolution "International Year of Land Restoration and Increasing Drought Resistance."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our updated **Constitution** sets ambitious goals for building a welfare state.

Uzbekistan is committed to enhancing social protection, improving service quality, and implementing international standards.

For this purpose, we have established the Social Protection Agency. We plan to hold the World Conference on "Social Protection" in 2025. We invite all UN Member States to this important event.

Empowering **women** and **girls** is a key component of our state policy.

Uzbekistan has made **notable progress** in ensuring gender equality, ranking among the top five countries in this regard.

The Asian Women's Forum held in Samarkand in partnership with UN-Women has become a **crucial platform** for dialogue on gender policy issues.

We **propose** expanding this forum to a **Global Women's Forum** and adopting the UN resolution on enhancing the social, economic and political activities of Asian women.

Youth represents our common future.

In Uzbekistan, where over half of the population is under 30, effective youth policy is vital to build a New Uzbekistan.

We are a global leader in implementing the **UN Youth Strategy 2030**.

However, the rising **radicalization** and increased violence involving youth is alarming.

We must focus on fostering proper spiritual and moral education of young people to prevent their involvement in radical movements.

We **propose** enhanced cooperation in this direction based on the UN General Assembly resolution "Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance" adopted at the initiative of our President in 2018.

The global threat of **terrorism** requires **unified** international action.

In the fight against this evil, there should be no place for selective approaches and double standards.

The Central Asian states maintain close cooperation in ensuring regional security.

Together with the UN Counter-Terrorism Office we have successfully launched the Regional Expert Council in Central Asia on Rehabilitation and Reintegration.

We appreciate the UN's assistance in developing the National Strategy of Uzbekistan to Combat Drug Trafficking and Drug Abuse for 2024–2028.

As a State Party to the United Nations Convention against **Corruption**, Uzbekistan welcomes anti-corruption efforts.

We **support** enhancing the role of the UN in **fostering** international cooperation against corruption.

In December last year, together with the State of **Qatar** and support of the **UNODC**, we have hosted the High-level International Anti-Corruption Award ceremony in Tashkent.

In recent years, our country has become an active participant of all **UN processes**.

For the first time in our history, we have joined the UN Human Rights Committee, ECOSOC, and the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization.

In 2025, we will host the 43rd session of the **UNESCO** General Conference in Samarkand - an event that will be held outside of Paris for the first time since 1985.

We **invite** all UNESCO member states to actively participate in this event.

We have decided to run for the non-permanent membership of the **UN Security Council** for the 2035–2036 terms.

We **count** on your support of our candidacy.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Central Asia remains top priority in Uzbekistan's foreign policy.

The new political atmosphere in Central Asia allowed us to address many global issues **regionally**.

We will **continue to consolidate our efforts** to transform the region into a zone of lasting peace, good-neighborliness, stability, and dynamic development.

Our region remains one of the **least integrated** economies in the world in terms of its **transport** and **communication** networks.

Due to the geographical location of the Central Asia, the cost of transporting goods to the nearest seaports **can reach up to 50%** of the final value, which is four to five times higher than the global average.

Today, our region is firmly focused on connecting to major global markets and revitalizing the Great Silk Road. Uzbekistan is **taking strong steps** to establish effective **transport corridors** leading to international markets.

We are implementing an ambitious project to build the **Trans-Afghan railway**, which will provide access to global ports and have a positive effect on the economic development of our **vast region**.

The key to ensuring stability and sustainable development in our region lies in addressing the **Afghan problem**.

Afghanistan is an integral part of Central Asia.

Unfortunately, the international community has been unable to implement measures **capable of reversing** the challenging situation in this country.

Uzbekistan is pursuing a **pragmatic** policy towards Afghanistan.

We will continue to contribute to Afghanistan's economic reconstruction and the development of its transport and energy infrastructure.

We are ready to expand the Educational center for Afghan citizens in the Uzbek city of Termez into the **Global training center**.

Recently, we have established the **Termez International Trade Center**, designed to foster a favorable business environment and enhance logistics.

In order to achieve stability, **it is crucial** to uphold the UN's central role in resolving the Afghan issue and developing coordinated strategies to ensure sustainable development.

Your Excellencies,

In **conclusion**, I would like to once again emphasize that the challenges and threats we face today can only be addressed through comprehensive international efforts.

Uzbekistan remains committed to actively participating in shaping the agenda for multilateral cooperation, achieving common goals, and supporting measures to reinforce the central role of the United Nations.

Thank you for your attention.