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The Renewed Constitution of Uzbekistan ensures The Accountability of Public Officials and Social Protection



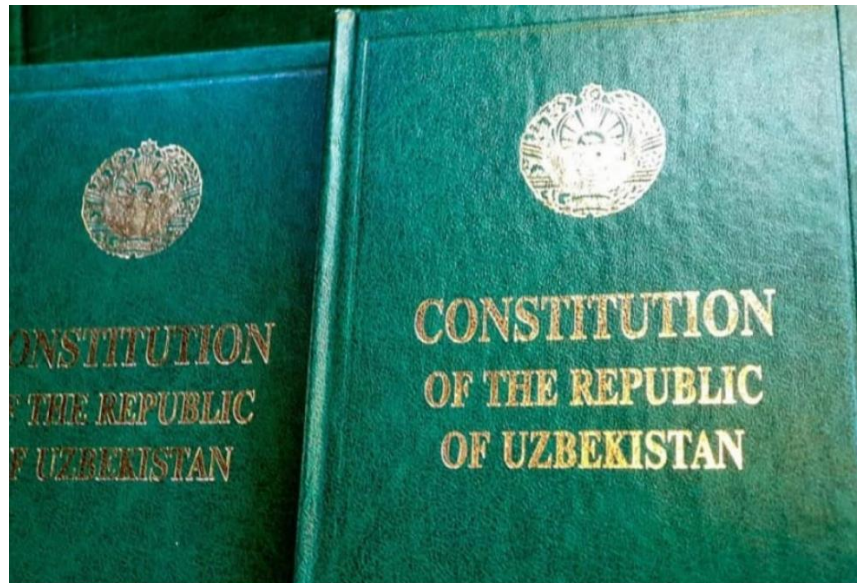
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Published on 5th May 2023

Uzbekistan has recently held a referendum on adopting the new version of the Constitution by nationwide voting. An important political event attracted millions of Uzbek citizens, which resulted in the participation of 84.51 per cent of the population who had the right to vote.

According to official data released by Central Election Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the new version of the Constitution was supported by 90.21% of votes.

Both local and international observers observed the whole process. A total of 383 international observers, in particular, 184 individuals from international organisations and 199 international observers



from 45 countries, directly observed the preparation and holding of the referendum. They expressed their opinions about the activeness of the population, the organisation of the entire process and, very importantly, the New Constitution of Uzbekistan.

Here we would like to provide some grounds for updating the Constitution.

Firstly, the constitutional reforms underway in the country are significant in that they are aimed at enshrining the principle of "**person - society - state**" as a constitutional norm. This is an important principle considering the overall change of accountability of the state bodies in front of the population. Implementation of the principle into practice should serve to change the longtime paradigm. One of the core principles followed here is "Public bodies should serve the people, not the people to the public bodies."

Secondly, ensuring the irreversibility of reforms is one of the main goals of constitutional reforms. Because building a people-friendly state, and ensuring human rights, interests, and dignity, require creating a new constitutional and legal space to guarantee further reforms in the country.

One should note that almost all previous amendments and additions to the Constitution were mainly related to public administration and administrative reforms. At the same time, more than half of the norms included in the new Constitution aim to strengthen **the guarantees and mechanisms for protecting human rights and freedoms**.



THE NEED FOR UPDATING THE CONSTITUTION

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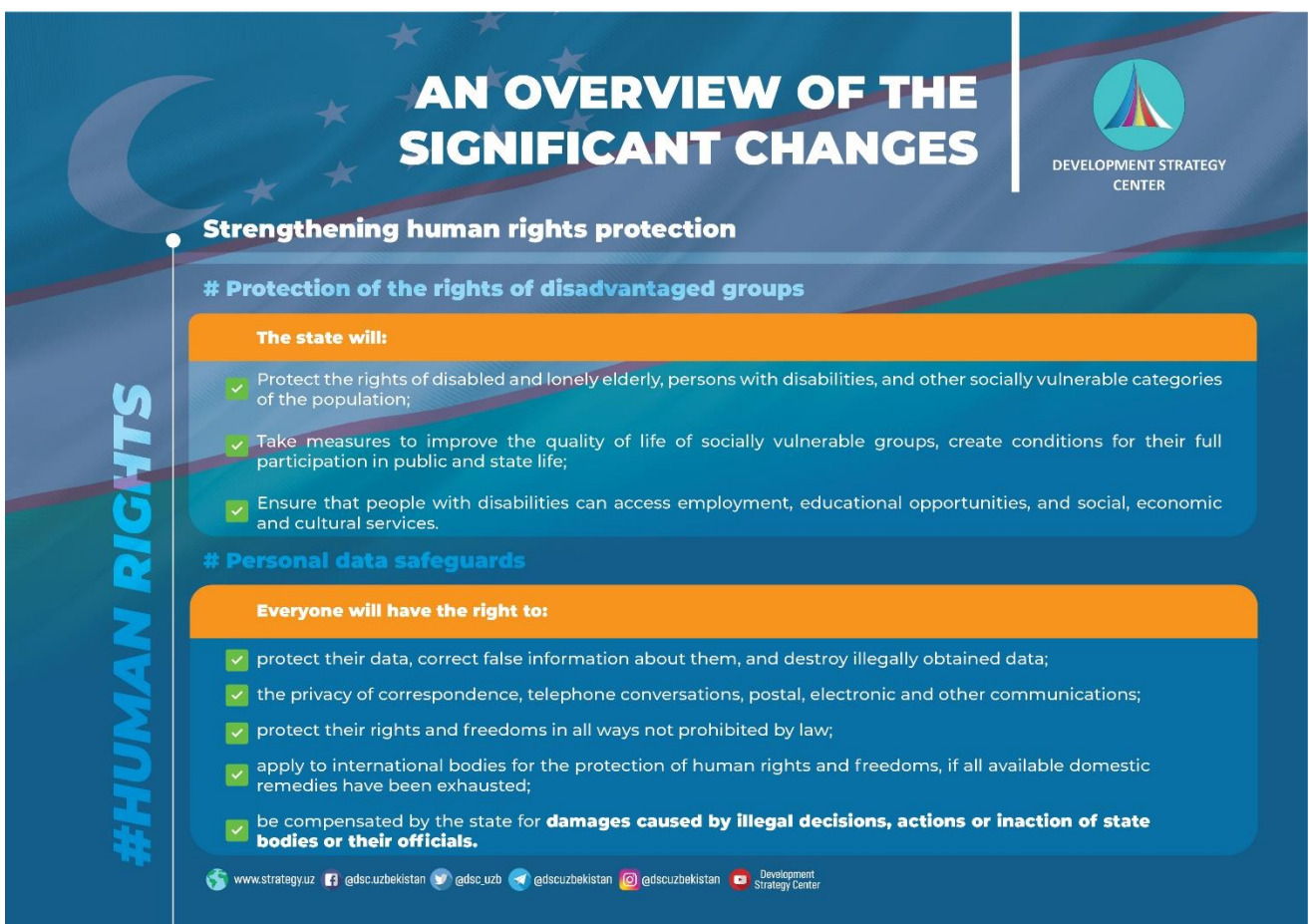
#PURPOSE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

-  The top priority of the entire constitutional reform process involves strengthening the guarantees that protect the rights and freedoms of all citizens from birth.
-  The reforms will become the most important additions and updates to Uzbekistan's Constitution since its initial ratification in 1992.
-  Almost all previous constitutional amendments are related to governmental and parliamentary matters.
-  These reforms will establish Uzbekistan as **a sovereign, democratic, legal, social and secular state with a republican form of state**.

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In particular, if we touch on the most important of them, the **concept of the social state** is being introduced in the newly revised Constitution. Such a state model is aimed at the fair

distribution of material wealth per the principles of social justice to achieve decent living standards for every citizen, reduce social inequalities, and help people in need. To implement this concept into practice, Uzbekistan has already launched several important initiatives which need further constitutional guarantees. For example, poverty reduction was defined as the most priority policy of the state, payment of full pension amount to all working pensioners was resumed, and the activity of "Monocenters" was established. Additionally, the systems of the "Iron Register", "Women's Register", and "Youth Register" were implemented to create a list of the most vulnerable people who are in need and organise social protection more systematically.



AN OVERVIEW OF THE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

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#HUMAN RIGHTS

Strengthening human rights protection

Protection of the rights of disadvantaged groups

The state will:

- ✓ Protect the rights of disabled and lonely elderly, persons with disabilities, and other socially vulnerable categories of the population;
- ✓ Take measures to improve the quality of life of socially vulnerable groups, create conditions for their full participation in public and state life;
- ✓ Ensure that people with disabilities can access employment, educational opportunities, and social, economic and cultural services.

Personal data safeguards

Everyone will have the right to:

- ✓ protect their data, correct false information about them, and destroy illegally obtained data;
- ✓ the privacy of correspondence, telephone conversations, postal, electronic and other communications;
- ✓ protect their rights and freedoms in all ways not prohibited by law;
- ✓ apply to international bodies for the protection of human rights and freedoms, if all available domestic remedies have been exhausted;
- ✓ be compensated by the state for **damages caused by illegal decisions, actions or inaction of state bodies or their officials.**

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Moreover, the number of higher education institutions has more than doubled. As such, the coverage rate with higher education increased from 9 per cent to 40 per cent within the last six years. Private medical organisations have increased from 3,800 to 6,500.

In this regard, the newly revised Constitution includes several articles based on social justice and solidarity.

For example, norms such as **pension amount, allowances and other types of social assistance defined by the Law cannot exceed the officially designated minimum consumption expenditures. No one can be deprived of housing without a court decision.**

In addition, the Basic Law stipulates that the state should create conditions for the **full use of social, economic and cultural facilities and services by persons with disabilities**, assist them in their employment and education, and provide them with the opportunity to obtain the necessary information without hindrance.

Also, introducing norms **to strengthen the guarantees of labour rights of citizens** is vital in ensuring that citizens' wages **are worthy of their labour**, as well as in raising the population's living standards and providing the principle of social justice in the country.

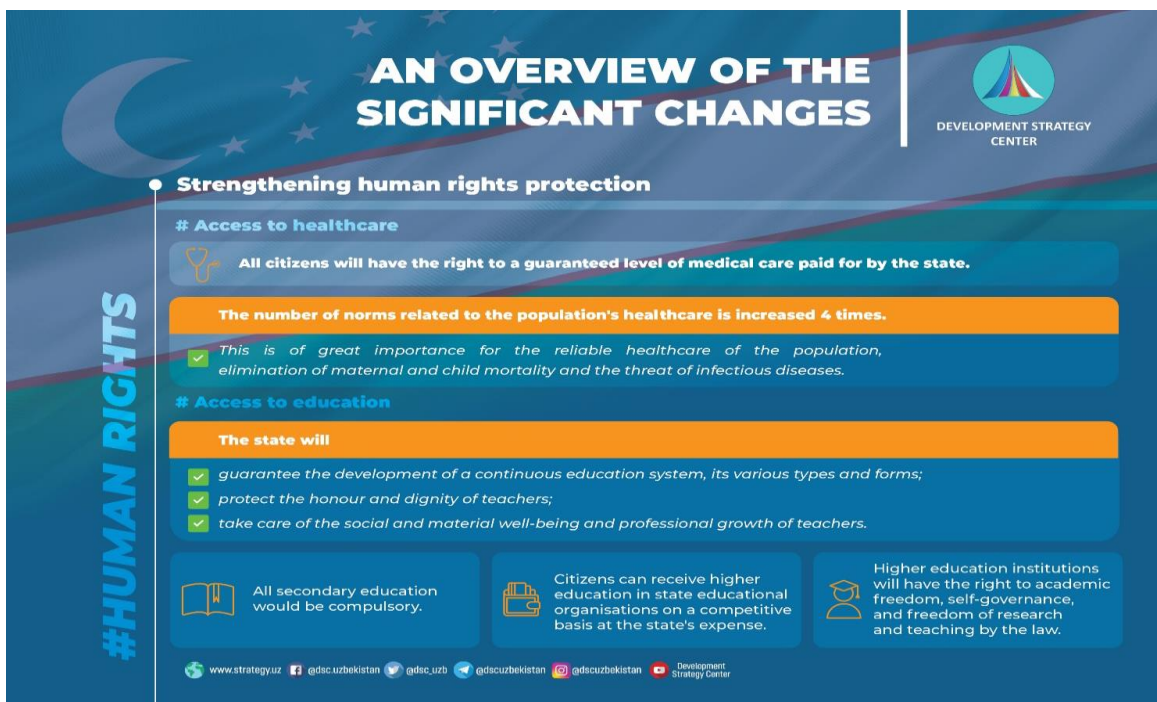
Very importantly, from now on, it will be **forbidden to refuse to hire women, fire them,**

and reduce their wages because they are pregnant or have a child. Prohibiting the discrimination of women's rights in the field of labour in our Basic Law is the basis for making changes and additions to the relevant laws aimed at implementing the constitutional norm.



Enshrining **the prohibition of forced labour** at the level of the Constitution serves as a legal basis for improving the working conditions of all workers and, most importantly, makes it possible to legalise informal labour relations. After all, many citizens working in informal labour relations are forced to work in conditions of exploitation without having paid time off. In this respect, these norms should improve Uzbekistan's image in international rankings.

Also, the Basic Law will contain the norms on **ensuring access to education, health care and cultural values**. Uzbekistan's citizens' right to receive the **guaranteed volume of medical care at the state's expense** is being strengthened. This norm is essential because the state **supports coverage** of its citizens with guaranteed **free medical care**, regardless of their financial status. This means the state does not stop caring for the population's health, especially in financial hardship.



AN OVERVIEW OF THE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

#HUMAN RIGHTS

Strengthening human rights protection

- # Access to healthcare**
 - All citizens will have the right to a guaranteed level of medical care paid for by the state.
 - The number of norms related to the population's healthcare is increased 4 times.
 - This is of great importance for the reliable healthcare of the population, elimination of maternal and child mortality and the threat of infectious diseases.
- # Access to education**
 - The state will
 - guarantee the development of a continuous education system, its various types and forms;
 - protect the honour and dignity of teachers;
 - take care of the social and material well-being and professional growth of teachers.
 - All secondary education would be compulsory.
 - Citizens can receive higher education in state educational organisations on a competitive basis at the state's expense.
 - Higher education institutions will have the right to academic freedom, self-governance, and freedom of research and teaching by the law.

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A separate article on the **status and place of the teacher** in society is being introduced. This will create an opportunity to strengthen the social position of more than 685 thousand



pedagogues working in the country, strengthen their state support and ensure their professional growth.

Overall, we believe changes to the new Constitution of Uzbekistan should further support the social well-being of persons and increase the accountability of state bodies.