

Development of parliamentarism in Uzbekistan: results of the first term of office of the President of Uzbekistan Sh. M. Mirziyoyev

Four years ago, the **Action Strategy in the five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021** (the Action Strategy) was adopted. Today there is no doubt about its constructability, as evidenced by the results of the reforms successfully carried out under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

It is known that the formation of effective public administration is impossible without increasing the efficiency of the parliament. It should be noted the strategic motto voiced by the Head of State - **“we will not deviate from the path of democratic reforms”** - which demonstrates strong political will and a benchmark for a common understanding of the “effectiveness” of public administration, where democracy acts as a value, goal and means of achieving this goal. Taking this into account, the Action Strategy defines **“further strengthening of the role of parliament and political parties in deepening democratic reforms and modernization of the country”** as one of the priority areas for improving state and social construction.

Today, conclusions can be drawn regarding the results achieved by assessing how the effectiveness of the parliament's (Oliy Majlis) activities has increased.

In Uzbekistan, over the past four years, the powers and participation of the parliament in the implementation of reforms, in solving the most important socio-economic, political and legal problems have significantly broadened. It should be emphasized that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities of the Uzbek parliament in exercising its powers did not stop, on the contrary, it is intensified in compared to the previous years.

The material and technical, information and analytical support of parliamentarians has been improved.

The work of the information-analytical and legal services of the chambers of the parliament has qualitatively changed. New structures were created in the Secretary of the chambers of parliament, legal units were transformed into departments with an increase in the staff. A budget department has been created, which provides information and analytical support to deputies on the country's budget.

In order to improve the legal support of ongoing reforms, systematize the legislative framework, improve the quality of rule-making activities, introduce modern digital technologies and elements of "smart regulation" into this process, the **Concept for Improving Rule-Making Activities** was adopted.

The mechanisms for public and expert discussion of draft laws have been broadened. A procedure has been established according to which all drafts of legal acts are to be posted on the Unified Portal of Public Services for public discussion.

There has been improved the procedure for considering draft laws. A flexible form of voting has been established. By decision of the Legislative

Chamber, voting on a draft law can be held in chapters or sections, as well as on several articles at the same time.

As one of the significant achievements of 2020 can be noted the intensification of the parliament's work to study the compliance of draft laws with international treaties, as well as the introduction of a new practice of studying the compliance of draft laws with recommendations to improve Uzbekistan's position in international rankings.

Over the past four years, Uzbekistan has moved up 52 positions in the Index of Economic – Freedom of the Heritage Foundation, in the World Bank's Doing Business rankings – 18 positions, in the OECD Country Risk Classification rating Uzbekistan has risen from country risk group 6 – to group 5, in the international ranking of Open Data Inventory (ODIN) Uzbekistan took 44th place, having risen by 125 positions, in the Corruption Perceptions Index, the country has risen by 5 positions.

In order to strengthen the mechanisms of parliamentary control, the provisions of the Law "On Parliamentary Control" (2016) have been improved. Thus, the parliamentary control over the adoption and execution of the State budget has changed. For the first time in 2019, the State budget was adopted in the form of a law. The practice of reviewing the report of the Cabinet of Ministers on the progress of the implementation of the state program for the corresponding year has been introduced.

Today parliamentarians are actively using the mechanisms of parliamentary control (*for example, in 2020, the Legislative Chamber held 19 parliamentary hearings, nine parliamentary hour events, identified 14 parliamentary inquiries, 338 deputy inquiries*).

Parliamentary powers in addressing the tasks of the country's domestic and foreign policy have been broadened.

Taking into account the practice of democratic countries, in order to increase the responsibility of members of the government to parliamentarians who have received a mandate directly from the people, a procedure has been established for approval of members of the government by the lower house.

Today, the Legislative Chamber considers and approves, upon the proposal of the Prime Minister, candidates for members of the Cabinet of Ministers (the Government) for their subsequent approval by the President.

Candidacy for member of the Cabinet of Ministers is considered at a meeting of the Legislative Chamber after its preliminary consideration by the responsible committee, political factions and deputy groups. A candidate, when considering his candidacy in the Legislative Chamber, presents an action plan that provides for legal, economic, social, organizational and technical measures to achieve targets and tasks for the future.

Expanding the powers of the Legislative Chamber to consider candidacies of government members increases the responsibility of both parliamentarians and members of the Government for shaping the **country's internal policy**.

In order to improve the legal foundations of parliamentary powers in solving the **issues of country's foreign policy**, the Concept of Parliamentary Diplomacy was adopted. It is aimed at determining the priorities, strategic goals and principles of the Oliy Majlis in implementation of country's foreign policy and parliamentary diplomacy.

Despite the pandemic, the parliament's activities to develop cooperation with foreign parliamentarians have intensified. If in 2015-2019 there were 28 groups of cooperation with the legislative bodies of foreign countries, now their number reached 51.

New positions responsible for development of inter-parliamentary cooperation and parliamentary diplomacy have been created in the chambers of parliament.

In order to develop the interaction of ambassadors with the Senate and build up elements of parliamentary control, the practice of hearing reports from ambassadors of Uzbekistan to foreign countries has been established.

The measures taken, obviously, contributed to strengthening the powers of the chambers of parliament in solving the issues of internal and foreign policy of the country and development of inter-parliamentary cooperation.

It's worth to particularly note the active contribution of Uzbek parliamentarians in promoting, within the framework of the UN the important initiatives of Uzbekistan in the field of religious tolerance, regional security, protection of the rights of youth, strengthening the role of parliamentarians in ensuring human rights.

For example, the special resolution of the UN General Assembly "**Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance**", initiated by the President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev, was unanimously supported by the UN member states and adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 12, 2018.

Besides, one cannot fail to note the initiatives of Uzbekistan to develop a new stage of cooperation between the Central Asian states in order to strengthen good-neighbourliness, regional security and sustainable development of countries. Today, thanks to joint efforts, the level of political trust in the region has significantly increased. Currently, work is underway to create a friendship group of the parliaments of the Central Asian states, which is to serve as a forum for discussing and developing constructive proposals for development of the region.

During the period of COVID-19 pandemic, the communication of parliamentarians with voters through digital technologies, social networks, in particular, Telegram, Facebook and others has increased. In parallel, the "Electronic Parliament" has become more active. New websites have been launched in test mode to enhance dialogue with voters and discuss draft laws – oliymajlis.gov.uz, qonun.gov.uz, deputat.gov.uz. The practice of online broadcasting of sessions of the Senate and the Legislative Chamber has been introduced.

It should be noted that at the initiative of the head of state, the "Mening Fikrim" ("My Opinion") portal of collective appeals was launched in 2018. Citizens can use the portal to submit appeals on issues related to the life of society, legislation, etc.

The appeals that have received a sufficient number of supporting votes from the public are considered by the competent authorities - parliament, Cabinet of Ministers, local representative bodies.

Analysis of reforms in the field of strengthening the role of the Oliy Majlis in the system of state power allows us to draw a conclusion: the quality of lawmaking activities is increasing. The mechanisms of parliamentary control have been strengthened, the accountability of the executive to parliamentarians has improved, the degree of openness of the parliament has increased, and dialogue with the electorate is gaining momentum.

Summarizing the above, one may note that the tasks defined in the Action Strategy are being implemented in a timely manner and step by step. Progress has been made in strengthening the role and effectiveness of the Oliy Majlis. These positive results indicate the need to continue and support the initiated course of reforms.

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