



LEGAL REFORMS IN UZBEKISTAN: ADVANCING RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN DIGNITY

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Abstract

This article analyzes the substance, key directions, and practical significance of the legal reforms implemented in Uzbekistan in recent years. It examines the revised Constitution, the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026, and the Uzbekistan – 2030 Strategy as the principal legal foundations for consolidating the rule of law, safeguarding human rights and freedoms, reforming the judicial and legal system, and enhancing the quality of legislation. The article also addresses improvements in the law-making process, the systematization of normative legal acts, the strengthening of anti-corruption mechanisms, and the development of open, transparent, and effective public administration through the digitalization of public services. The reforms discussed are assessed as an interconnected, mutually reinforcing process of legal modernization.

Keywords: Legal reforms, rule of law, human dignity, rule-of-law state, revised Constitution, judicial and legal system, law-making, normative legal acts, systematization of legislation, anti-corruption, conflict of interest, public services, e-government, digitalization, openness and transparency.

Introduction

In recent years, Uzbekistan has been implementing wide-ranging reforms aimed at building a rule-of-law state and a just society. The primary objectives of these reforms are to renew state and public life on the basis of democratic principles, to reliably protect human rights and freedoms, to enhance the effectiveness of public administration, and to ensure the rule of law.





The legal foundation of these reforms rests, above all, on the **revised Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan**, the **Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026** approved by Presidential Decree No. PF-60 of 28 January 2022, and the **Uzbekistan – 2030 Strategy** approved by Presidential Decree No. PF-21 of 16 February 2026. These strategic documents set the priority directions for consolidating the rule-of-law state, forming open and people-centred public administration, improving the judicial and legal system, and raising the quality of legislation.

At the heart of the legal reforms lies the principle “**person – society – state.**” The revised Constitution entrenches human rights and freedoms as the supreme value, and further strengthens guarantees of social justice and the rule of law, just governance, the inviolability of private property, and judicial protection. This has created an essential legal basis for reviewing all sectoral legislation through the principles of human dignity, the rule of law, justice, and openness. In particular, the strengthened constitutional obligations of the state to ensure human rights signals that the legal reforms have entered a qualitatively new stage. The activities of state bodies are now measured primarily by their ability to guarantee the rights and legitimate interests of citizens, provide quality public services, and respond to petitions in a timely and well-reasoned manner.

I. Judicial and Legal System Reform

This constitutional approach is most clearly reflected in the reform of the judicial and legal system. Judicial and legal reform is one of the most critical directions in building a rule-of-law state. Amendments introduced to the **Law on “Courts”**, the Code of Administrative Judicial Procedure, the Code of Civil Procedure, the Code of Economic Procedure, and the Code of Criminal Procedure serve to strengthen judicial independence, broaden citizens' right of access to courts, and enhance the effectiveness of challenging decisions of state bodies.

The development of **administrative courts** is of particular significance in ensuring legality and justice in relations between citizens and state bodies. Through administrative courts, citizens and business entities have gained the ability to challenge decisions, actions, or omissions of state bodies. This contributes to increasing the accountability of state bodies and to ensuring the lawfulness and reasonableness of administrative decisions.





II. Law-Making and Systematization of Legislation

Alongside judicial and legal reforms, broad-scale work is being carried out in the field of law-making to raise the quality of legislation and to ensure the clarity, consistency, and transparency of legal norms. In particular, the **Law on “Normative legal acts”** and the **Law on “Anti-Corruption Expert Review of Normative legal acts and Their Drafts”** serve to establish unified approaches in the processes of developing, assessing, reviewing, and adopting normative legal acts.

Through these laws, the requirements of consistency, openness, public participation, and legal soundness in the preparation of draft normative legal acts are being entrenched. In particular, public discussion of drafts, anti-corruption expert review, identification and elimination of corruption risk factors, and regulatory impact assessment are becoming integral components of the law-making process.

At the same time, the growing volume of the existing legislative base may create certain difficulties in law enforcement practice. It should be noted that the National Database of Legislation currently contains **more than 26,000 normative legal acts**. Such a large volume of legislation complicates the use of legal instruments by citizens, business entities, and other interested parties. This situation necessitates ensuring the coherence, integrity, and harmony of norms across normative legal acts; eliminating repetitions, conflicts, and legal gaps; and, by repealing obsolete norms, forming a compact, comprehensible, and directly applicable body of legislation.

Work on the systematization of legislative documents and the reduction of the regulatory burden reached a new stage with **Presidential Decree No. PF-6218 of 30 April 2021**. Within the framework of this Decree, the systematization of normative legal acts by branches of legislation was designated as a priority task.

At the same time, reducing the share of subordinate regulatory acts by developing directly applicable laws, and simplifying law enforcement practice by reducing the regulatory burden and excessive bureaucratic barriers, were defined as key directions of the systematization work. This approach serves not only to make the legislation more compact, but also to transform it into a comprehensible, stable, and convenient legal mechanism for the population and business entities.

The existing problems in legislative practice and the need to systematize legislative documents were also reflected in subsequent strategic documents. Specifically, **Goal 80 of the Uzbekistan – 2030 Strategy**, approved by Presidential Decree No. PF-21 of 16 February 2026, sets the task of expanding the practice of adopting directly applicable laws so that their share reaches at least 60 percent, and of reducing the regulatory burden by at least 30 percent through the optimization of legislative documents. These reforms are aimed at raising the quality of legislation by ensuring





the mutual harmony of legal norms, eliminating repetitions and contradictions, repealing outdated documents, streamlining legislation, and simplifying law enforcement practice.

III. Anti-Corruption Reforms

In the field of anti-corruption, systematic reforms aimed at strengthening institutional and legal foundations have also been implemented in recent years. One of the first important legal foundations of these reforms was the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. URQ-419 of 3 January 2017 "On Combating Corruption". This Law regulates relations in the field of anti-corruption and defines the core concepts of corruption, corruption-related offences, and conflicts of interest. It also entrenches the fundamental anti-corruption principles: legality; the priority of citizens' rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests; openness and transparency; consistency; cooperation between the state and civil society; the priority of preventive measures; and the inevitability of responsibility.

Through this Law, the main directions of state policy in anti-corruption were established: raising the legal awareness and legal culture of the population; forming a zero-tolerance attitude towards corruption in society; implementing preventive measures across all areas of state and public life; timely detection and suppression of corruption-related offences; and eliminating their consequences, causes, and conditions. The Law also defined the state bodies responsible for anti-corruption activities, their powers, and the participation of civil society institutions and citizens in this process.

For the purpose of further institutional strengthening of the anti-corruption system, **Presidential Decree No. PF-6013 of 29 June 2020** on additional measures to improve Uzbekistan's anti-corruption system was adopted. By this Decree, the **Anti-Corruption Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan** was established as the authorized state body responsible for forming and implementing state policy in the prevention of and fight against corruption, ensuring effective cooperation among state bodies, mass media, civil society institutions, and other non-governmental sector representatives, as well as conducting international cooperation in this field.

The establishment of the Agency elevated anti-corruption reforms to a new stage. In particular, the following tasks were set: systematic analysis of the corruption situation; identification of high-risk sectors; elimination of the causes and conditions of corruption-related offences; coordination of ministerial and departmental activities in this direction; introduction of internal anti-corruption control systems



— compliance control — in state bodies and organizations; and the formation of an anti-corruption monitoring and rating system.

As another important step in this direction, the **Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. URQ-860 of 8 August 2023 "On Anti-Corruption Expert Review of Normative legal acts and Their Drafts"** was adopted. This Law regulates relations concerning the identification of corruption risk factors in normative legal acts and their drafts, the development of recommendations to eliminate them, and the taking of appropriate measures. The Law defines the concepts of corruption risk factors, anti-corruption expert review, and checklists, and entrenches the principles of such review: legality, independence, objectivity, mandatory application, soundness, openness, and transparency.

The Law identifies the subjects conducting anti-corruption expert review: the Anti-Corruption Agency, the Ministry of Justice and its territorial subdivisions, the legal services of state bodies and organizations that develop draft normative legal acts, and the state bodies and organizations upon which the obligation to ensure implementation of the relevant normative legal acts has been placed. Through this, anti-corruption expert review was shaped not merely as a centralized legal oversight tool, but as a systematic preventive mechanism applicable at all stages of the law-making process.

The Law also clearly defines the main corruption risk factors in normative legal acts and their drafts: factors related to the stability and legal conformity of norms; factors related to powers, rights, and obligations; factors related to administrative procedures; and factors related to supervisory and inspection activities. These are regarded as the principal categories from which corruption risks may arise. This approach makes it possible to eliminate vague norms, broad discretionary powers, excessive requirements, ungrounded exceptions, overlapping powers, and non-transparent administrative procedures in the development of legislative documents. The next important direction of anti-corruption reforms was the legal regulation of conflicts of interest. To this end, the **Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. URQ-931 of 5 June 2024 "On Conflict of Interest"** was adopted. This Law regulates relations connected with conflicts of interest and applies to state bodies, local self-governance bodies, state institutions, state unitary enterprises, state-targeted funds, and organizations in which the state share is 50 percent or more.

The Law clearly defines the concepts of conflict of interest, personal interest, related persons, and a dedicated structural unit. It also establishes the rights and obligations of employees of state bodies and other organizations in situations involving conflicts of interest; procedures for notifying about existing or potential conflicts of interest;





restrictions aimed at preventing conflicts of interest; and the functions of internal control and ethics commissions. This created a legal mechanism to prevent personal interest from influencing the performance of official duties by civil servants, to ensure impartiality in decision-making, and to reduce corruption risks.

IV. Digitalization of Public Services

The practical outcomes of the legal reforms are also clearly visible in the delivery of public services. The development of Public Service Centres, the Unified Interactive Public Services Portal, and the e-government system has simplified access to public services for the population and entrepreneurs.

One of the important legal foundations of reforms in this field is **Presidential Decree No. PF-5278 of 12 December 2017** "On Measures to Radically Reform the National System of Providing Public Services to the Population." On the basis of this document, a new system of public service delivery was established, and the practice of providing services to the population on a "single window" basis was widely introduced.

The **Law on "E-Government"** holds particular importance in the digitalization of public services. Under the Law, a request for an electronic public service submitted in the form of an electronic document is equated with a request submitted in paper form. This enables citizens to receive public services remotely, to strengthen electronic information exchange between state bodies, and to reduce the practice of demanding excessive documents from citizens.

Furthermore, **Presidential Decree No. PF-113 of 20 April 2022** "On Additional Measures to Simplify the Provision of Public Services, Reduce Bureaucratic Barriers, and Develop the National System of Public Service Delivery" defined the next stage of sectoral reforms. This document sets tasks aimed at eliminating bureaucracy, red tape, and other administrative barriers in public service delivery, simplifying service provision procedures, and increasing the share of electronic services.

Today, as a result of the reforms being implemented in the public services field, the process through which citizens and business entities interact with state bodies is being simplified step by step. Approaches such as providing services in electronic form, inter-agency electronic data exchange, and proactive service delivery are not only creating convenience for the population but also reducing corruption risks.

In general, reforms in the public services sector constitute one of the important directions aimed at modernizing public administration, increasing citizens' trust in the state, and ensuring openness and effectiveness in the activities of state bodies. In this process, the further digitalization of services, the reduction of bureaucratic





procedures, and the development of a convenient service-delivery system for the population will remain of vital importance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the legal reforms being implemented in Uzbekistan are oriented towards a single goal: ensuring the rule of law, upholding human dignity, transforming public administration into an open and accountable system, and raising the quality of legal regulation. The revised Constitution, the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan, the Uzbekistan – 2030 Strategy, and sectoral laws constitute the solid legal foundation of this process. Changes in the judicial and legal system serve to reliably protect citizens' rights; work in the fields of law-making and systematization of legislation serves to ensure the clarity and stability of legal norms; and anti-corruption reforms serve to strengthen openness, integrity, and accountability in the activities of state bodies. The digitalization of public services and the development of e-government are aimed at creating a convenient, transparent, and effective legal environment for citizens and business entities.

For this reason, these reforms should be assessed not as separate, isolated directions, but as an interconnected and mutually reinforcing, unified process of legal modernization. In the future, further improvement in legislative quality, enhancement of law enforcement practice, systematization of normative legal acts, elimination of corruption risks, and further digitalization of public services will remain key determinants of the sustainable development of New Uzbekistan, the assurance of human dignity, and the consolidation of the rule-of-law state.

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