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Sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Letter dated 27 February 2020 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you information on the measures taken by the Government of Uzbekistan towards the practical implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 19 (a).

(Signed) Rovshan **Alimov**
Minister Counsellor
Chargé d'affaires a.i.



Annex to the letter dated 27 February 2020 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Systematic measures taken by the Government of Uzbekistan to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

The Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan continues to take practical steps to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The year 2019 was declared the Year of Active Investments and Social Development in Uzbekistan. Investment has increased significantly over the past year. Foreign direct investment amounted to \$4.2 billion, which is \$3.1 billion, or 3.7 times, more than in 2018. Investment accounted for 37 per cent of gross domestic product.

Uzbekistan received its first international credit rating and successfully issued bonds worth \$1 billion on the global financial market. For the first time in 10 years, the country's position in the country risk classification of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has improved.

Profound structural reforms are under way in the following sectors in Uzbekistan: energy, oil and gas, geology, transport, road construction, agriculture and water resources, drinking water supply, heating supply and several other sectors. Programmes aimed at modernization and increasing competitiveness are being implemented in 12 leading industries. The economy consequently grew at a rate of 5.6 per cent last year.

As a result of the reforms, 93,000 new business entities were established in 2019, which is almost twice as many as in 2018. In the Doing Business rankings of the World Bank, Uzbekistan moved up seven places, was ranked eighth out of 190 countries for the "Starting a business" indicator and was included in the list of most improved economies.

Uzbekistan has introduced a visa-free regime for citizens of 86 States and a simplified visa regime for citizens of 57 States. As a result, 6.7 million foreign tourists visited Uzbekistan last year, which is 4.7 million, or 3.3 times, more than in 2016.

In 2019, 5,722 public, private and family-run kindergartens were established. As a result, the preschool enrolment rate increased from 38 to 52 per cent in just one year. Four residential schools and three creative schools, which are entirely new types of school, were opened. In addition, 19 new higher education institutions were established, including nine branches of well-known foreign universities. Staff training has been provided in cooperation with leading foreign universities through 141 joint educational programmes.

A procedure for the full payment of pensions to working pensioners has been introduced. Benefits for vulnerable and low-income groups in need of social support have been doubled.

In the health-care system, alongside public health-care facilities, the private sector is also developing rapidly. Following an increase from 50 to 126 types of medical services available and the provision of a number of incentives, 634 private medical institutions were established last year.

More than 116 billion sum has been allocated to 5,000 low-income families in need of better housing, to cover the down payments to buy a house with a mortgage; some of these families include women with disabilities.

The year 2020 has been declared the Year of Science, Education and the Digital Economy in Uzbekistan.

There are plans to bring the preschool enrolment rate up to 60 per cent this year. To that end, 1.8 trillion sum will be allocated from the budget. For the first time in Uzbekistan, a scheme will be implemented to prepare children for school from the age of 6 years. For that purpose, 130 billion sum is being allocated from the budget. Private preschools will also participate in the process. In 2020, 1.7 trillion sum will be allocated from the budget to build 36 new schools and carry out extensive repairs at 211 schools. There are also plans to establish 55 private schools, bringing the total number to 141. In preparation for the forthcoming implementation of the Programme for International Student Assessment in Uzbekistan in 2021, 348 general education schools will be selected and more than 6,000 teachers will receive refresher training.

An entirely new vocational education system is being introduced in the current school year. To ensure that the qualifications of staff meet the requirements of the international labour market, there are plans to develop a national qualifications framework that will make it possible to train staff in 9,000 areas of specialization.

An information technology park with modern infrastructure is currently being built in Tashkent. Such parks will also be built in Nukus, Bukhara, Namangan, Samarkand, Gulistan and Urgench. The “One Million Coders” project was launched in cooperation with foreign partners with the aim of producing highly qualified information technology specialists. Today more than 7,000 health-care facilities, preschools and schools have high-speed Internet access, and in two years that number will have increased by 12,000. The Digital Uzbekistan 2030 programme is being developed.

This year, investments of \$23 billion will be used to commission 206 new large production facilities.

Over the next three years, 9.8 trillion sum will be earmarked for road construction, 4.6 trillion sum for the installation of water supply networks, 18.2 trillion sum for the construction of electricity networks and 1.2 trillion sum for gas supply. This is a much more substantial amount of funding than was provided over the last 10 years. Nevertheless, 10 times more funding is needed to create modern infrastructure and upgrade existing systems.

In 2020, there are plans to install water-saving technologies on almost 44,000 hectares of land, which is four times more than last year. At the same time, water facilities management and water control and accounting processes need to be automated.

One of the most important tasks for 2020 is to increase the number of tourists visiting the country to 7.5 million. As is well known, several reputable foreign publications have named Uzbekistan as one of the top countries to visit in 2020.

There are more than 8,200 cultural heritage sites in Uzbekistan, but only 500 of them are tourist destinations. Measures are planned to bring the number of pilgrimage and traditional tourist destinations up to 800.

With the aim of providing social support to low-income citizens, about 1 trillion sum in subsidies will be allocated from the budget for 16,000 families in need in urban areas to cover their down payments to buy a house and their mortgage interest payments.

Most of the residents of the regions of Uzbekistan, especially villages, do not have sufficient sources of income. There are poor people in Uzbekistan, as there are in all countries. According to various estimates, they make up 12 to 15 per cent of the population, or 4 to 5 million people. There are plans to develop a poverty reduction

programme jointly with the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and other international organizations. In addition, on the basis of an analysis of international standards, a new methodology is being developed that includes a definition of poverty and criteria and methods for assessing it.

To provide State medical institutions and the public with medicines and medical devices, 1.5 trillion sum will be allocated, which is 1.3 times more than last year.

In 2020, 100 billion sum in soft loans will be allocated to 5,500 women for the implementation of business projects. In addition, the State is reimbursing 1,576 women for down payments on new housing. Under the Five Initiatives programme, short-term professional training courses will be held at women's entrepreneurship centres.

Young people will be given particular attention. The Youth Union of Uzbekistan will develop the Youth of Uzbekistan 2025 framework and determine practical measures to promote the spiritual and physical development of the younger generation.

Discussions are under way on how to solve the problem of the 50,000 people who have lived in Uzbekistan for many years but have never been granted citizenship. People who arrived in the country before 1995 and have been living there since then will automatically be granted citizenship.

Ensuring the rule of law, effectively combating corruption, improving institutional capacity and building strong democratic institutions will remain the main priorities of reform. At the same time, practical cooperation will be established between the Parliament, the Government and civil society institutions with a view to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and regular parliamentary and public consultations on the issue will be held.

The Government of Uzbekistan will pay more attention to the issues of protecting the environment and improving the environmental situation in the country. Large-scale work will continue to mitigate the Aral Sea tragedy, to expand the afforestation of the dried seabed and to create "green belts" around the cities of Nukus, Urgench and Khiva.

Other important tasks will be the improvement of environmental controls in industry, a review of the environmental audit procedure and the enhancement of private audit activities in this field.

The Republic of Uzbekistan will continue to intensify multilateral cooperation within the United Nations and other respected international bodies. To strengthen international cooperation in addressing the Aral Sea problem, Uzbekistan has high hopes for the multi-partner human security trust fund for the Aral Sea region under the auspices of the United Nations.

In addition, Uzbekistan will campaign to be elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period 2021–2023, and to promote an international convention on the rights of young people at the United Nations.

Overall, the systematic implementation of the objectives identified by the Government of Uzbekistan will contribute to the achievement of the Goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development while improving public welfare and addressing the pressing socioeconomic challenges facing the country.