

**MAIN FORMS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN
AND THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

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Abstract: As we all know, since the first days of independence, unprecedented reforms have been implemented in all spheres of life in our country. In particular, changes in economic, social, and cultural spheres have pleased all our citizens. At the core of all these reforms lies the protection of human rights and freedoms. These reforms have not overlooked persons with disabilities either. Numerous regulatory legal acts continue to be adopted in our country to support them. This article examines the cooperation between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the main forms of that cooperation, and the activities of the Committee. Specifically, it highlights the procedure for submitting periodic reports by States Parties within the framework of the Convention, the process of reviewing these reports by the Committee, and the practice of issuing concluding observations. Moreover, the role and importance of alternative reports submitted by civil society, particularly organizations of persons with disabilities, are analyzed. This article provides detailed information about the bilateral relations between Uzbekistan and the Committee, as well as the initial impressions of this cooperation. It also presents important data regarding Uzbekistan's international relations with other global actors in this field.

Keywords: Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Convention, periodic report, concluding observations, civil society.

Before addressing the main topic, it is important to draw attention to several aspects, such as the relationship and interconnectedness of the Committee with the countries that have ratified the Convention. From this perspective, ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities constitutes one of the priority directions of state policy. International legal instruments, particularly the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the activities of the Committee operating under it, play a crucial role in coordinating initiatives and reforms in this field. Such cooperation contributes to strengthening the legal status of persons with disabilities, ensuring their full participation in all spheres of social life, and creating conditions for their development on the basis of equal opportunities.

The submission of periodic reports by States Parties, the active participation of civil society, and the mechanism for individual complaints increase the transparency and effectiveness of this system. Additionally, the general comments and recommendations issued by the Committee serve as an important source of international experience in ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities in practice. Thus, the reforms aim not only to strengthen the legal framework but also to uphold human dignity and promote social justice.

In recent years, large-scale reforms have been implemented in Uzbekistan to strengthen the social protection of persons with disabilities. Not only have numerous normative legal acts been adopted at the national level, but effective cooperation with international organizations has also been established. In particular, collaboration with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is of great significance in ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities in Uzbekistan.

The Committee operates within the framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2008. It monitors the implementation of obligations undertaken by States Parties and provides recommendations. Uzbekistan signed this Convention in 2009, initiated the integration of its requirements into national legislation, and expressed its intention to ratify it.

Regarding forms of cooperation, Uzbekistan and the Committee maintain continuous dialogue through periodic reports. The Government of Uzbekistan provides information on the situation of persons with disabilities, implemented measures, and future plans. In turn, the Committee issues proposals and recommendations and monitors their incorporation into national legislation and policymaking.

Through cooperation with the UN Committee, Uzbekistan is creating favorable conditions for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in education, healthcare, employment, social protection, and cultural life. In addition, this dialogue helps to consider the views of civil society, disability organizations, and other stakeholders.

With the onset of the Third Renaissance in 2016, the attitude toward individuals requiring care and attention has fundamentally changed and taken on a new form. Serious reforms have also been carried out in the field of legislation. The adoption of the Law “On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” in 2020 created a legal foundation aligned with international standards. This law guarantees the participation of persons with disabilities in political, social, and cultural life. Currently, practical regulations are being developed and implemented on the basis of this law.

Uzbekistan also pays special attention to studying foreign experience. For example, local models are being developed based on the integration practices of persons with disabilities in countries such as Germany, Japan, and South Korea. This helps combine international experience with national needs to achieve effective results.

With the efforts and initiatives of the President, persons with disabilities have been able to reintegrate into real life. Thanks to strict policies aimed at increasing employment opportunities, they now have equal and fair working conditions.

To summarize, Uzbekistan’s cooperation with the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an important mechanism for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring their equal participation in society. As a result of this cooperation, inclusive policies have been strengthened, and reforms aimed at improving the quality of life for persons with disabilities continue to be implemented.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities serves as an international legal foundation for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. States Parties, including Uzbekistan, are obligated to implement all provisions of the Convention. One of the main mechanisms in this process is the submission of periodic reports. After ratification, States must submit their initial report within two years, followed by subsequent reports every four years.

These reports include information on the measures taken to implement the Convention, achievements, challenges, and future plans. Uzbekistan has fully complied with this requirement and submitted its initial and subsequent reports to the Committee. When reviewing the reports,

the Committee takes into account not only official information but also alternative (shadow) reports submitted by civil society organizations, disability associations, and human rights groups. These reports often provide a more critical and realistic picture of the situation.

Sometimes foreign journalists visiting Uzbekistan present the real situation and shortcomings they personally observed to experts. Tourists visiting Uzbekistan also publish their daily observations on social media, which reach millions of viewers. Such content can include footage of persons with disabilities and the conditions created—or not created—for them. These materials may also be used by the Committee's experts in preparing their assessments.

After analyzing all information, the Committee issues concluding observations, which identify shortcomings in legislation, policy, and practice and include recommendations for improvement. These recommendations often serve as a catalyst for national reforms.

Uzbekistan has recently undertaken major international initiatives aimed at protecting human rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities. The cooperation with the Committee plays a key role in this process. Preparations for ratification began during 2017–2020 under presidential decrees and national strategies intended to improve the system of supporting persons with disabilities.

Uzbekistan ratified the Convention on 7 June 2021. This historic step ensured equal rights for persons with disabilities, especially women and children, guaranteeing access to education, healthcare, employment, and adequate living conditions. The Committee, after reviewing Uzbekistan's initial report, recognized many positive developments while also providing recommendations for further improvement.

Uzbekistan's cooperation with the Committee shows that the country values openness and constructive dialogue. Civil society, disability organizations, and independent experts actively participated in the preparation of reports, contributing to transparency.

Uzbekistan is also cooperating with other international organizations, such as the European Union, UNESCO, UNICEF, and others, in projects aimed at protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. These projects involve legislative reform, capacity building, and adapting infrastructure.

A new joint program between the UN and the Government of Uzbekistan has been launched, focusing on the following priority areas:

- Strengthening disability integration within national planning, budgeting, and monitoring mechanisms;
- Enhancing policy and legislation while engaging coordinating structures and disability organizations;
- Supporting social inclusion, preventing violence and ill-treatment, and improving age-related services.

The program's budget of USD 600,000 is a promising investment, as it directly contributes to improving the lives of many families.

There are hundreds of non-governmental organizations in Uzbekistan working to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, including the Society of Persons with Disabilities, the Society

of the Blind, and the Society of the Deaf. These organizations play an active role in the ratification and implementation of the Convention.

Following ratification, several positive developments have taken place: home-based education has become more accessible for children with disabilities, urban infrastructure has improved, tactile pathways and audio traffic signals have been installed, and elevators and ramps have been adapted in public places.

According to Article 35 of the Convention, each State Party must submit its initial report within two years after the Convention enters into force for that State, followed by subsequent periodic reports every four years. Reports must be transparent, accurate, and prepared in consultation with disability organizations.

Uzbekistan submitted its initial report in 2023, covering 2021–2023, which included statistical data, legislative references, national action plans, implementation strategies, and information on government agencies and social funds. Currently, nearly 100 normative legal acts regulate relations in the field of protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in Uzbekistan.

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