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Statement
**on “Modern innovative approach in the fight against corruption -
the experience of Uzbekistan”**

*(2nd preparatory meeting of the 28th OSCE EEF June 15, 2020,
12:00-15:00h. UTC +5)*

by Mr. Sherzod Asadov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Uzbekistan

Dear Mr. Chairman,
Dear participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I express my sincere gratitude to the Albanian Chairmanship for the opportunity to address the Second preparatory meeting for the 28th OSCE Environmental and Economic Forum.

Giving the topic of our session, let me introduce the efforts undertaken by the Republic of Uzbekistan to combat corruption.

First, fight against corruption has been elevated in Uzbekistan to the rank of state policy.

The Action Strategy for further development of our country for 2017-2021 identifies such measures as: improvement of the organizational and legal mechanisms for combating corruption, increasing the effectiveness of anti-corruption, strengthening the legal culture of the population.

Moreover, we pay special attention to efficient interaction of the Government institutions with the civil society and mass-media.

The State Anti-Corruption Program for 2019-2020 has been adopted in order to increase the effectiveness of the anti-corruption system and create the most favorable business climate. It provides with development of draft laws “On State Financial Control”, “On State Internal Control and Internal Audit”, “On Amendments and Additions to the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan”, “On Public Procurement”, “On procedure to serve in prosecution authorities” and others.

In 2019, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed the Decree “On measures to further improve the anti-corruption system in the Republic of Uzbekistan” aimed at enhancing the anti-corruption measures, promoting a positive image of the country in the international arena.

We in Uzbekistan, as an experiment, introduce the step-by-step system for declaring property and income of a certain category of public servants, as well as the “Sphere without corruption” project in the fields of capital construction and higher education.

Second, at the current stage of the wide-scale transformations in Uzbekistan, we implement a number of systemic reforms, including administrative, judicial and legal, tax reforms, as well as improve the national system of public services.

The approval of the Concept of Administrative Reform by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been an important step in the fight against corruption.

In accordance with the Concept, the Agency for the Development of Civil Service under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been established. It is responsible for the implementation of a unified state policy in the field of personnel management and human resource development in the Government's agencies and institutions.

The existing Law on Administrative Procedures has significantly improved licensing and registration procedures, and it has de-bureaucratized the work of the state agencies.

Decrees of the President have radically reformed the system of public services, established Public Service Centers, introduced ICT and innovative solutions into the system.

Moreover, databases of government agencies and other organizations have been integrated into a single system of interagency electronic interaction, expanded the practice of providing public services through the Unified interactive public services portal.

Third, specific measures are being taken in Uzbekistan to minimize the interference of the state bodies in the activities of business entities, and they significantly limit checkups of entrepreneurs' activities.

We have adopted the Law on the "Commissioner for Protection of Rights and Legitimate Interests of Entrepreneurs under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan" (Business-ombudsman), and the functions of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan were significantly expanded.

The Law on Public Procurement has been adopted as a result of the fact that this sphere is most susceptible to all kinds of corruption risks. The main objectives of the law are to create an enabling environment for public procurement entities, as well as to combat corruption and other violations in this area.

The adoption of laws on parliamentary and public control enabled strengthening of the system of external monitoring over the activities of the state institutions and increases the responsibility of their officials.

In 2019, by the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the committees on combating corruption and judicial legal issues under the chambers of the Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan were established in order to strengthen parliamentary control in the field of combating corruption.

In 2019, the Open Budget information portal was launched to enable strengthening the efficiency of the public control over the budgetary expenditures and preventing corruption in this area in order to further increase the openness and transparency of the budget data, strengthen parliamentary and public control over the formation and spending of budgetary funds.

Fourth, judicial reform is being actively implemented taking into account the fact that counteraction to corruption is not possible without strengthening the true independence of the judiciary system and ensuring guarantees for reliable protection of the rights and freedoms of business entities.

In accordance with the structural changes in the judicial system, the Supreme Economic Court of Uzbekistan has been merged with the Supreme Court, which has become

the single highest institution of judicial power in civil, criminal, administrative and economic proceedings.

The adoption of the Law “On the High Judicial Council”, as well as over 10 acts of the President of Uzbekistan in the field of legal proceedings has contributed to improvement of the candidate selection system and the appointment of judges for the formation of a highly qualified judiciary.

The establishment of a single Supreme Court, the formation of administrative and economic courts, the High Judicial Council, the new body of the judicial community has significantly strengthened the guarantees of judicial protection of the rights of citizens, individuals and legal entities, as well as entrepreneurs from all forms of corruption.

Fifth, the legal upbringing of citizens in the spirit of respect for the law and intolerance to all its violations is a powerful lever in the fight against corruption.

In this respect, in 2019 a new National Program for Improving the Legal Culture in the Society was adopted and it is being actively implemented. It calls upon radical improvement of legal education, enlightenment in the country, promotion of legal knowledge in society, increase of political and legal culture, and legal awareness of citizens.

One of the important means to eradicate corruption is a public control. In February 2020, the President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in his Address to the Parliament proposed creating a Public Chamber to strengthen public control and establish a closer interaction between the state and society. This body will regularly learn the population’s opinion, set specific tasks for the government agencies to eradicate corruption.

In recent months, concrete steps have been taken to implement this task, taking into account international best practices. As a result, in the near future we expect to adopt the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the creation of the said body.

We are confident that this body will become an important tool for the further fight against corruption in all spheres of society in Uzbekistan.

Dear participants,

Uzbekistan pays a special attention to development of international cooperation in the field of combating corruption.

Our country has acceded to the UN Convention against Corruption and is the party to the OECD Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan. To date, four rounds of monitoring of the implementation of the OECD Recommendations have been carried out by Uzbekistan.

On this basis, Uzbekistan actively implements the standards of the Convention and systematically applies the recommendations of international organizations on combating corruption.

Thus, according to the monitoring results in the framework of the OECD Istanbul Action Plan, international experts noted that Uzbekistan has made progress on all 21 recommendations (full implemented - 3; implemented mainly - 8; implemented partially - 10).

Thanks to the efforts, which have been made in our country to combat corruption, Uzbekistan has improved by 12 points its position in the index of the Transparency International over the past three years.

At present, the Action Plan (Roadmap) has been developed and is being realized to implement recommendations based on the results of the 4th round of monitoring within the framework of the OECD Istanbul Action Plan.

A close collaboration is also developed with the OSCE Project Coordinator in Tashkent in the fight against corruption.

A number of OSCE projects are implemented in the country in this area, in particular, on improvement of open data for increasing transparency of government institutions and open data portal. In this respect, for instance, 200 IT specialists from central government institutions and local authorities have been trained with involvement of international experts. Annual khakatons (programmers marathons) are also organized among youth on development of programming products based on open data provided by the government institutions.

The work on promotion of business integrity and prevention of corruption in private sector is carried out. In this respect, in co-operation with the OSCE we plan to pilot the integration of principles of corporate governance and anti-monopoly compliance in 10 largest state-owned enterprises of the country. In the framework of this project, the dialogue between business and the government is established through regular meetings to discuss issues of prevention of corruption in business and promotion of business integrity in the country.

In addition, together with the OSCE we plan to establish a hot-line within the Chamber of Commerce to receive claims from the business on corruption.

In concluding, I wish all participants of today's meeting fruitful and successful work.

Thank you for your attention.