

## HUMANITARIAN COOPERATION BETWEEN UZBEKISTAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES

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**Abstract:** in the article for the last years following the prioritization of the development of friendly and mutually beneficial relations with the neighboring Central Asian states as the main priority of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy and also thanks to measures and initiatives in this priority direction, political dialogue and mutual trust have been strengthened in the region. Consultative meetings of the Heads of Central Asian States was established, the exchange of mutual official visits at various levels were intensified and transport links between countries and cities were restored. Moreover, solutions were found to such complex issues as water use, delimitation and demarcation of state borders, border crossing, and the use of transport communications at the regional level.

**Keywords:** Humanitarian cooperation, Uzbekistan, Central Asia, education, healthcare, migration, cultural exchange, regional development.

**Introduction.** Humanitarian cooperation has become a vital component of regional diplomacy and development in Central Asia. Uzbekistan, due to its central location and proactive foreign policy under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, plays a pivotal role in promoting peace, stability, and shared development among its neighbors. Humanitarian efforts encompass education, healthcare, cultural exchange, disaster response, and migration issues. The revival of regional connectivity since 2017 has marked a new chapter in cooperative relations among Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

**Methods.** This article employs a qualitative research methodology based on content analysis of official documents, regional cooperation agreements, and international organization reports. It also draws from statistical data, scholarly articles, and media publications to examine the scope and impact of humanitarian cooperation. Comparative analysis is used to highlight bilateral and multilateral frameworks and their effectiveness in fostering cooperation.

**Results.** Education and Academic Mobility: Uzbekistan has signed agreements with regional universities and launched programs like "Central Asian Academic Dialogue." Scholarships and student exchange programs have significantly increased.

Noteworthy that today the exchange of high-level official visits of Uzbekistan with neighbouring countries becomes regular, and the number and scope of bilateral and multilateral agreements signed in their framework are also expanding. In particular, during the past period, Uzbekistan established a strategic partnership with neighbouring Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan (2017) and Tajikistan (2018). In December 2022 Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan signed the treaty on allied relations.

On top of that, it has been signed the multilateral “Agreement on Friendship, Neighborliness, and Cooperation for Development of Central Asia in the 21st Century” within the framework of the fourth Consultative meeting of the Heads of Central Asian States on July 7, 2022 held in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyz Republic.

Achieving such kind of important bilateral and multilateral agreements and treaties with neighbouring countries is the result of Uzbekistan’s peaceful, pragmatic and active diplomacy. These also took the regional foreign policy of Uzbekistan to a new stage, which in turn became one of the important strategic steps in ensuring peace and stability in Central Asia.

Moreover, signing of these documents is an example of the development of friendship and cooperation between Central Asia states, at a time when the lack of communication and trust is increasing at the global.

**Healthcare Collaboration:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, Uzbekistan and neighboring countries exchanged medical expertise and humanitarian aid. Collaborative vaccination campaigns and training for health professionals were conducted.

**Cultural and Historical Exchange:** Joint celebrations of Navruz, establishment of cultural centers, and exchange of artists and writers have enhanced mutual understanding.

**Disaster Risk Reduction:** Agreements for joint monitoring of natural hazards, especially water-related risks, and coordinated responses have improved resilience.

**Migration and Labor Policy:** Bilateral discussions led to the legalization and protection of migrant workers' rights, especially between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan/Russia.

**Discussion.** Humanitarian cooperation in Central Asia, led in part by Uzbekistan, contributes to soft power and builds societal resilience. Educational and cultural exchanges foster regional identity and interethnic harmony. Healthcare cooperation, particularly post-pandemic, showcases the need for stronger institutional links. However, challenges remain in standardizing legal frameworks, ensuring equitable funding, and overcoming political divergences. The increasing role of regional organizations like the SCO and international bodies like UNDP supports these efforts. Future initiatives should include joint research hubs, digital education platforms, and region-wide health networks.

**Conclusion.** Uzbekistan's role in advancing humanitarian cooperation in Central Asia is indispensable. Through sustained regional dialogue and practical initiatives, the countries of the region can build a more interconnected, educated, and resilient society. Continued investment in people-to-people ties will further deepen mutual trust and collective progress.

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