**Uzbekistan in UNHRC**

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President of Uzbekistan addressed the three day high level segment of the 46th Session United Nations Human Right Council. In his historic speech, President shared policy perspectives and priority areas of Uzbekistan during its membership in the Council especially about the focus on the functions of democracy and human rights in the country. His speech has also set the stage for the entire conversation for the ongoing session of the Council in Geneva. It is important to remember that for the first time in the history, Uzbekistan became the member of the UN Human Rights Council for the period of 2021-2023 after gaining the votes and confidence of 169 countries from across the globe in this important body of the UN. This was a welcome step towards building the image of the country along with the acknowledgment of the Uzbekistan’s long struggle for achieving democracy, equal rights and plurality for all. This was also a recognition that Uzbekistan is in true sense moving towards a grand historic and extraordinary path of the development at all levels that is making the country unique in the region. Apart from this high level segment, there are other important sessions are happening at the same in the council. The sessions will continue from February 22 till 23 March 2021. The Council is the inter-governmental structure of the UN consisting of 47 states, responsible for the promotion and protection of the human rights across the world. It is also important to note that the members of the council are elected for the three year terms by a majority vote of delegates to the General Assembly by direct secret ballot. This year the session of the Human Rights Council is held online due to COVID-19 related restrictions.

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The 46th Session of the UNHRC is happening at a momentous occasion wherein the world is coming out of the fear of the COVID-19 with its resetting mode to adjust towards the new normality of life. COVID-19 has brought along variant levels of challenges including the rise of the pandemic of inequality and concerns of human rights. This is also an important session where United States has officially “re-engaged” in the session after a three year break. USA announced its decision of reengagement with the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) on 8 February 2021 especially after the elections of the new President Joe Biden and Kamal Harris with an end of Trump era in White House. During the opening of the Session, Speeches were made by the António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, Michelle Bachelet, and High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighting the importance of the body and human rights at the global scale, challenges of the COVID-19, and state of the rule of law in the world. For Uzbekistan this is an important and historic occasion too. Along with Uzbekistan, China, Nepal and Pakistan were also elected as members of the Council for the next three years. The election of Uzbekistan is affirmation to its key priority areas as a state policy of Uzbekistan. This is also an important recognition and trust on the leadership of President Mirziyoyev for the broad support that the international community has on the country. With growing political stability and steady development of the democratic system including the reforms for the protection and promotion of human rights according to the UN Charter, Uzbekistan is meeting the modern standards. It is also important to note that with presence of Uzbekistan at the UN Human Rights Council, the country is playing its effective role in improving the efficiency of the UN body through its own activities and other important contributions at this forum.

President Mirziyoyev made outstanding and historic speech at this important global body and set the tone and stage for further discussion on the forum. This was a comprehensive speech by the President setting not only the tone of the forum but also projected the important steps that Uzbekistan is taking in promoting the state of human rights in the country and at the national, regional and global scale. In his address President shared policy priorities including focusing on to ensure the human rights and freedoms as the central focus in Uzbekistan’s reform process. Another important priority is gender equality wherein Uzbek government is organizing Women Leaders’ Dialogue of Central Asian states and a Regional Women’s Business Forum in Uzbekistan. President also highlighted the importance given to the people with special needs and there is a new law on the rights of the persons with disabilities has also been enforced recently while the country will ratify the UN Convention on Rights of the Persons with Disabilities. Uzbekistan has also proposed to establish regional Council on the rights of persons with disabilities. Youth is an important priority area that Uzbekistan as more than half of the population is young wherein special attention has been given to them. President of Uzbekistan highlighted about Uzbekistan’s support to the International Labor Organization and World Bank in eradication of forced child labor in the country. As this year is the international year of the elimination of the child labor, Uzbekistan is currently in process to adopt the law on the Children’s Ombudsman. On the forum, President Mirziyoyev also proposed to host a Global Forum in collaboration with the UN High Commissioner Office on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Human Rights Education and Training. As a result of the visionary and outstanding leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan is making histories at the international system and outshining many countries in the region.

Uzbekistan is coming out stronger from its past and building a bright and new future for the country hence standing out in the region as a torch bearer of international human rights conventions and laws. Few years ago, this was a distant dream however now under the leadership of President Mirziyoyev, the country is even now ready to contribute towards the entire mechanism of the ensuring human rights in the Asian Region through hosting a permanent platform – Samarkand Forum. The Forum is proposed to highlight the importance of the conversation on human rights in the Asian region and also to help address the challenges at the same time. Uzbekistan has managed to eradicate all the challenges of the human rights and the country has joined more than 80 international conventions and protocols are important steps towards the direction. In June last year, Uzbekistan adopted National Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Human Rights. This important strategy was a huge step toward implementing of the human rights laws and conventions on the country.

Consistency is the key towards progress in Uzbekistan’s overall reforms, development and progress in socio-economic and political spheres. Without this constant change and innovation and with wisdom including foresightedness through adoption of new norms according the requirements, progress is inevitable in any country. With eyes on the future, Uzbekistan is changing the shape of its future and playing its constructive role in overall national, regional and global development agenda.

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