

PAPER

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND UZBEKISTAN: NATIONAL POLICY AND STRATEGIC APPROACHES TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

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Abstract

This article analyzes the participation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in international environmental conventions, as well as its national policy and strategic approaches aimed at ensuring environmental security. It highlights the institutional and practical aspects of implementing international commitments in areas such as combating desertification, preserving biodiversity, protecting the ozone layer, and managing waste, alongside national strategies, state programs, and reforms.

Key words: Uzbekistan, desertification, biodiversity, environmental security, international conventions, Montreal Protocol, Basel Convention, ozone, waste, sustainable development

Introduction

From the first years of independence, Uzbekistan has embarked on a path of close cooperation with the international community in environmental protection. The country has joined a number of international conventions and environmental agreements and has formed its national policy in the areas of rational use of natural resources, conservation of biodiversity, combating desertification and drought, waste management, and protection of the ozone layer. This article analyzes some aspects of the initiatives, legal and

institutional framework, international cooperation, and practical results of the Republic of Uzbekistan in these areas.

Literature Review

The literature on international environmental relations reflects the state policy of Uzbekistan in ensuring environmental sustainability, especially the issues of international cooperation in this regard. In particular, the scientific works of G.Abdullaeva, B.Alikhonov, N.Ikramova, T.Tillyaev, R.Tursunova, S.Davletov and others also reflect

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issues related to the implementation of global conventions on environmental protection. For example, S.Davletov's scientific article covers important aspects of state policy on ecology and environmental protection at a new stage of the country's development [1].

Methodology

The application of the principle of objectivity in research allows to minimize the impact of subjective views on the results of the research in the interpretation and assessment of evidence. From this point of view, the theoretical methodological foundations of the research were formed by the principles of historicity, scientificity and objectivity, which constitute the dialectical foundations of scientific knowledge, and historical-comparative, systematization, problem-chronological and interdisciplinary approaches, as well as statistical research methods were used.

Analysis and results

Ratification and accession to international legal instruments in the field of environmental protection and development is an important factor in Uzbekistan's fulfillment of its obligations to the international community. The development of international cooperation in this area, in addition to bringing political and economic benefits to the country, also contributes to the improvement of international relations in resolving transboundary problems.

Participation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in international environmental conventions, on the one hand, contributes to the country's integration into the global environmental process, and on the other hand, Uzbekistan becomes an equal member of the world community, gaining the right to receive technical and financial assistance from developed countries, the introduction of new modern technologies in production, and the development of non-traditional types of energy.

The Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought, adopted by the UN in 1994, is an important international document that provides for combating the problems leading to a decrease in soil fertility throughout the world. It states that climate change and human-induced degradation processes

are considered one of the global environmental threats. The Republic of Uzbekistan joined the Convention on August 31, 1995 and became one of the countries that ratified it [2]. By this step, the country demonstrated its desire to protect its areas at high risk of desertification, mitigate the negative effects of drought and transition to sustainable land management. In 1999, in order to implement its obligations under the Convention, Uzbekistan developed the "National Action Program to Combat Desertification". It identified priority areas for limiting and halting land degradation and improving the living conditions of the population in dry zones [3].

Since 2006, with the support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other international organizations, regional projects on sustainable land management have been implemented in the countries of Central Asia. As part of this initiative, Uzbek specialists have begun to study desertification processes and their impact on the environment on the basis of international grants and projects. In order to prevent desertification, the country is implementing a number of environmental measures, such as reforestation, expansion of protected forests, planting saxaul and other deciduous plants in arid lands. In particular, major practical work is being carried out to stabilize the Aral Sea region, a new desert of 5.5 million hectares that arose as a result of the Aral Sea tragedy. Currently, 31.4 million hectares of Uzbekistan's territory consists of naturally saline lands, prone to sand drifts, dust storms and harmsels. On February 22, 2019, the Presidential Decree "On measures to increase the effectiveness of combating desertification and drought in Uzbekistan" was adopted [4]. This resolution institutionally strengthened anti-desertification reforms, improved state programs for the restoration of degraded lands and international cooperation formats.

The fact that more than 80 percent of the country's territory consists of desert and semi-desert areas, arid climatic conditions and the susceptibility of soils to salinization have made solving this problem a key condition for sustainable development for Uzbekistan. Therefore, the tasks of reducing the level of desertification and land degradation, restoring land fertility, and stabilizing

the lives of the population in arid zones by 2030 have been clearly defined.

Based on the “Forestry Development Strategy until 2030”, adopted on October 6, 2020, the practice of leasing land included in the forest fund but not covered by forest for a period of 49 years was introduced [5]. This method serves to restore forests, effectively replenish and protect forest lands.

Recently, Uzbekistan has been improving work on combating desertification and drought. The “Green Space” national project, implemented at the initiative of our President, provides for the planting of millions of trees and shrubs, the creation of forest areas, and the restoration of degraded lands. This initiative is aimed at improving the main landscape, as well as creating a basis for climate protection, adaptation to climate change, preserving biodiversity, and creating a healthy environment for the population [6].

The natural ecosystems of Uzbekistan are divided into five main types: deserts and semi-deserts; foothills and lowlands; mountain ecosystems; riverine and coastal ecosystems; and wetlands. All three ecosystems are important for biodiversity. In the region, 91 species of animals are listed in the International Red Book, 324 species of plants and 184 species of animals are listed in the Red Book of Uzbekistan.

The Republic of Uzbekistan joined the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in 1995, and in 1998 the Cabinet of Ministers of the country approved a national strategy and action program in this direction [7]. On the basis of these documents, international and national cooperation mechanisms for biodiversity conservation have been widely established in Uzbekistan.

The relevant industry is supported by international organizations such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Wildlife Fund. In 2000–2006, the Nurota-Kyzylkum Biosphere Reserve was established by GEF and UNDP. , Uzbekistan, as a pilot country, conducted a test in the field of biodiversity management under the TACIS program.

Around 40 environmental cleanup measures were developed and implemented around the national strategy. These measures served to slow

down the degradation of land resources, limit desertification processes, and ensure the cleanup of natural resources. In 2015, the State Committee for Nature Protection of Uzbekistan (now the Ministry of Ecology) launched 14 regional programs, which were financed by foreign grants. These projects not only expanded the scope of activities, but also provided an impetus for strengthening international cooperation.

On June 11, 2019, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the “Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Uzbekistan for 2019–2028” [8]. This document covers issues such as the conservation of species of fauna and flora, protection of habitats, and coverage of citizens with environmental education.

The Convention on Biological Diversity recommends that countries increase the number of protected areas on land to at least 17 percent of the total national territory. In Uzbekistan, this figure is currently around 5 percent, and work in this area needs to be expanded in the future.

In 1998, Uzbekistan also joined the Bonn Convention, taking on obligations to protect migratory wild animal species. The country, in cooperation with UNEP, IUCN and a number of global funds, has been working to protect such rare species as the Bukhara deer, brown ibex, snow leopard, white crane and saiga. A special reserve for saigas has been established on the Ustyurt Plateau, and ornithological reserves have been created in Karakalpakstan, Bukhara and Jizzakh. Uzbekistan signed four memorandums of understanding on rare species in 1995–2006. Within the framework of these memorandums, regular reports are prepared on the protection, monitoring and habitat conservation of migratory birds and animals.

By the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On measures to improve the state management system in the field of protected natural areas” dated March 20, 2019, 5 protected natural areas were established. As a result of the work carried out, the total area of protected natural areas in the republic has been increased to 6.321 million hectares, which accounts for 14.08 percent of the country’s territory. Until 2017, this figure was about 5 percent [9].

The Ramsar Convention is of great importance in the protection of wetlands. In 2001, Uzbekistan

joined this convention and registered 3 areas as areas of international importance: Dengizkul (31,300 ha), the Aydar-Arnasay lake system (527,100 ha), and the Tudakul-Kuyimozar reservoirs (32,000 ha). Every year, about 4 million waterfowl pass through the territory of Uzbekistan, and about 10 lakes in the country are wintering and resting areas for them.

On May 18, 1993, the Republic of Uzbekistan joined the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol, accepting international obligations in this area. Over the years, ozone levels have been continuously monitored at the Uzhydromet center since 1994 [10]. In 2000, the “National Program for the Elimination of Ozone-Depleting Substances” was adopted by Resolution No. 20 of the Cabinet of Ministers. In 2006, Uzbekistan ratified the Montreal Protocol and its Beijing Amendments. In 2013–2018, Uzbekistan, together with Belarus, Tajikistan, and Ukraine, participated in the UNDP and GEF phase-out project on HFCs (hydrochlorofluorocarbons). During this period, the skills of customs authorities and refrigeration industry employees were improved, and investments were attracted. Uzbekistan is also actively participating in international legal instruments related to waste. In 1995, by a resolution of the Oliy Majlis, the country joined the Basel Convention. This convention regulates the transboundary movement of hazardous waste and its disposal. On this basis, a procedure for controlling the import and export of waste was established.

According to statistics, in 2017, 114.7 million tons of waste were generated in Uzbekistan, of which 41.6 million tons were toxic and non-recyclable, and 42.8 million tons were recyclable toxic waste. There are 296 landfills in the country, of which 221 are intended for solid household waste, 16 for industrial waste, 19 for special waste, and 23 for hazardous waste [11].

The adoption of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Ratification of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Stockholm, May 22, 2001)” in 2019 was another step in environmental protection. This convention applies only to substances that are not used in Uzbekistan, without negatively affecting the chemical industry and agriculture. These reforms and initiatives demonstrate that Uzbekistan is

effectively fulfilling its international obligations in ensuring sustainable development, environmental protection and ecological safety.

Conclusion

After independence, Uzbekistan has strengthened cooperation with the international environmental community, joined a number of international conventions on environmental protection and sustainable development, and has widely implemented practical measures within their framework. The country’s actions in the field of desertification, drought, biodiversity loss, ozone layer protection, and waste management are carried out in harmony with national strategies, state programs, and international projects.

The work carried out to protect ecosystems, conserve rare species, and restore degraded lands demonstrates the effective implementation of Uzbekistan’s environmental policy on a global scale. At the same time, issues that still await resolution in some areas – for example, increasing the share of protected areas in biodiversity conservation and developing waste management infrastructure – remain a priority for future reforms.

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