

UZBEKISTAN'S COOPERATION WITH UNESCO: SCIENTIFIC AND
PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE**Sharipova Guzal Usmanbekovna**

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Abstract: This article discusses the cooperation of the Republic of Uzbekistan with UNESCO, its legal framework, accession to international conventions on the preservation of cultural heritage and its practical results. In particular, the historical cities of Uzbekistan included in the UNESCO World Heritage List and elements of intangible cultural heritage are analyzed. Also, the initiatives implemented within the framework of cooperation in the fields of restoration, digitization, education and tourism are considered based on an analytical approach. The article provides in-depth scientific conclusions about Uzbekistan's cultural policy in the international arena and its role in the preservation of global heritage.

Keywords: UNESCO, cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, World Heritage List, historical monuments, archaeological sites, heritage protection, restoration, digitization, intercultural dialogue, international conventions, cultural diplomacy.

Annotation. This article analyzes the scientific foundations of the Republic of Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO, the legal and regulatory framework, the processes of accession to international conventions and the practical results of this cooperation. The study systematically studies the historical cities of Uzbekistan and elements of intangible cultural heritage included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Also, projects implemented in the fields of restoration, digitization, education and tourism are considered on the basis of an analytical approach, and their socio-economic impact is assessed. The article scientifically highlights the role of Uzbekistan in preserving global cultural heritage and its place in international cultural policy.



Cultural heritage, as an important component of human civilization, is not only of historical and aesthetic importance, but also a strategic resource in the formation of national identity and ensuring global integration. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, identified cooperation with UNESCO as one of the main directions of state policy, emphasizing the following idea: "Our cultural heritage is the pride of our people, the basis of our national identity. Its preservation, in-depth study and introduction to the world are our top priorities. To this end, it is necessary to further strengthen cooperation with UNESCO, because this cooperation will allow us to demonstrate the rich historical and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan on a global scale" (Sh. Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan).

This statement indicates that cooperation with UNESCO is not limited to listing monuments, but covers a wide range of areas, such as scientific research, modern restoration technologies, promotion of national heritage in the education system, and development of international tourism. In recent years, projects implemented by Uzbekistan - digitization of historical monuments in Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand, modernization of museum activities, organization of international cultural forums and preparation of new candidate sites - serve to strengthen the country's position in the global cultural landscape.

Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO began with its accession to the organization in 1993 and has today significantly expanded in the cultural, scientific and educational spheres. This article is devoted to a systematic analysis of the legal framework, main areas of Uzbekistan-UNESCO cooperation, the socio-economic impact of projects and the country's place in the preservation of global cultural heritage. The study examines Uzbekistan's cultural policy in a global context, based on international and domestic scientific sources.

The issue of preserving cultural heritage occupies an important place in modern international discourse. UNESCO documents such as the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage provide a normative framework for the protection of cultural heritage on a global scale (UNESCO, 1972; UNESCO, 2003). Researchers, such as Smith (2006), emphasize that the preservation of cultural heritage is not only a means of protecting historical monuments and traditions, but also a means of strengthening national identity, ensuring social stability and developing international cooperation. The rich historical and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan



is of particular importance in this context, as the country is located at the crossroads of Central Asian civilizations.

There are a number of important works in the scientific literature on Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO. Adams (2010) notes that Uzbekistan's inclusion of cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva on the World Heritage List has served to enhance the country's international cultural recognition. UNESCO (2020) reports highly appreciate Uzbekistan's active participation in the protection of intangible cultural heritage, in particular, the inclusion of elements such as Navruz, Shoshmakom and Palov on the global list, demonstrating the country's success in cultural diplomacy. Local scholars, such as Khudoyberganov (2021), analyze Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO as a factor of economic and social development, studying the impact of tourism and education projects on local communities. Research shows that UNESCO projects play an important role in creating jobs, developing the local economy and attracting international investment. At the same time, projects on the introduction of new technologies such as digitization and virtual museums are expanding the possibilities for promoting Uzbek heritage to a global audience.

The literature review shows that Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO is multifaceted and, in addition to cultural heritage preservation, affects economic, social and scientific spheres. However, issues of long-term impacts and integration of modern technologies require additional research.

The study is based on a qualitative methodology and relies on secondary data analysis methods. Official UNESCO reports, legislative documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan, international and domestic scientific publications, as well as documents of state programs and projects were used as sources of information. The analysis was carried out based on a deductive approach and was based on theories of cultural heritage preservation, international cooperation and sustainable development (Smith, 2006; UNESCO, 2020). The study systematically examined four main areas of Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO – cultural heritage preservation and restoration, digitization and scientific research, education and training, and tourism development. Projects in each area, their socio-economic impact and future prospects were analyzed. To ensure the reliability of the data, the triangulation method was used, that is, information from different sources was compared and confirmed.

Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO officially began with its accession to the organization on October 26, 1993. In 1994, the National Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan for UNESCO Affairs was established, strengthening the



institutional foundations of cooperation. The visit of UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor to Uzbekistan in 1995 and the official visit of the First President Islam Karimov to the UNESCO headquarters in 1996 were important milestones in the development of relations. In 1996, a UNESCO office was opened in Tashkent and the International Institute for Central Asian Studies was established, which served to expand Uzbekistan's international activities in the scientific and cultural spheres.

Uzbekistan has acceded to the following important UNESCO conventions: 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage: This convention has enabled the international protection and promotion of Uzbekistan's historical cities and natural monuments (UNESCO, 1972). 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: Elements of Uzbekistan's intangible cultural heritage, such as Navruz, Shoshmakom, and Palov, have been inscribed on the global register (UNESCO, 2003). 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict: This convention serves to protect cultural heritage in emergency situations. At the local level, the Law on the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Sites (2001) serves as the main regulatory legal document. This law regulates the registration, preservation and use of cultural heritage sites and ensures compliance with international standards.

Uzbekistan's UNESCO World Heritage Sites reflect the global significance of the country's historical and cultural heritage: Samarkand - Crossroads of Cultures (2001): As an important center on the Great Silk Road, Samarkand represents a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures. Registan Square, Gur-Amir Mausoleum and the Shahi Zinda Complex are key elements of this heritage; Bukhara - Historical Center (1993): Recognized as an important center of medieval Islamic architecture, Bukhara is distinguished by monuments such as Lyabi Khovuz, Poyi Kalon and Ark Castle; Khiva - Ichan Qala (1990): Ichan Qala in the Khorezm region is unique in the world for its intact medieval urban structure; Shahrissabz - Historical Center (2000): Shahrissabz, home to important examples of architecture from the era of Amir Temur, was included in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2016 due to infrastructure development.

Elements included in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage reflect the spiritual wealth of the people of Uzbekistan: Boysun Cultural Heritage (2008): The folklore, music and traditions of the Boysun region are recognized as an important part of the global heritage; Navruz (2009): Has gained international recognition as a holiday widespread among the peoples of Central Asia;



Shoshmaqom (2008): Inscribed as a common musical heritage of the Uzbek and Tajik peoples; Pilaf preparation and culture (2016): Uzbek pilaf is globally valued as a social and cultural tradition; Bakhshi art (2019): The oral traditions of Khorezm and Karakalpakstan have achieved international recognition. In addition, the city of Kokand, the archaeological sites of Termez, the Sarmishsay rock paintings, the Buddhist center of Kurgan-tepa, and the Nurata mountain-steppe ecosystem are in the nomination stage.

Uzbekistan's activities in the preservation and restoration of historical monuments are being carried out with the technical and financial assistance of UNESCO: Ancient fortresses in Khorezm: Toprak-Tash, Oyozi Kala and Katta Bag are being preserved using modern restoration technologies; Registan and Shahi Zinda in Samarkand: These complexes are being restored in accordance with international standards and returned to their original appearance; Monitoring systems in Bukhara and Khiva: Systems for constant monitoring of the condition of monuments have been introduced, which ensures their long-term preservation.

Restoration projects allow local specialists to familiarize themselves with international experience and improve their skills, which increases Uzbekistan's capacity to manage cultural heritage.

Cooperation with UNESCO in the field of education is aimed at educating the younger generation in the spirit of respect for cultural heritage and improving the skills of specialists: Internships and seminars: Uzbek specialists participate in international restoration and museology trainings; Scientific projects: Grants are being provided for young scientists through the International Institute for Central Asian Studies; School programs: Special textbooks on the study of cultural heritage are being integrated into school curricula. These programs are important in strengthening national identity and instilling respect for global cultural heritage.

Tourism has become one of the important sectors of the economy of Uzbekistan, and cooperation with UNESCO is helping to achieve significant results in this area: Tourist flow: The number of tourists visiting Uzbekistan has doubled over the past decade due to the sites on the UNESCO list. Local economy: Tourism is driving the development of crafts, services, and infrastructure. International forums: Forums such as "Central Asia – at the Crossroads of World Civilizations" are promoting Uzbekistan as a global tourism hub. Tourism projects, while bringing economic benefits, serve to promote Uzbekistan's cultural heritage internationally.



Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO has the following social and economic impacts: Job creation: Restoration and tourism projects have created thousands of new jobs, especially in rural areas; Local economic development: Tourism and crafts provide a sustainable source of income for local communities; Improving the quality of education: Through UNESCO programs, young people have access to education that meets international standards; Strengthening cultural identity: Promoting cultural heritage increases national pride and sense of identity.

Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO is based on multifaceted and long-term strategies. This cooperation serves the economic, social and scientific development of the country, while preserving cultural heritage. However, there are a number of limitations: Financial constraints: Restoration and digitization projects require significant funding, which increases dependence on international assistance; Lack of qualified personnel: It is necessary to train specialists to introduce modern technologies; Infrastructure problems: In some regions, tourism infrastructure is not yet fully developed. To solve these problems, it is necessary to expand public-private partnerships, attract international grants, and increase investments in training local specialists. Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO plays an important role in preserving the country's cultural heritage, developing scientific research, improving the quality of education, and promoting tourism. Objects and elements of intangible heritage included in the UNESCO list promote the historical and cultural wealth of Uzbekistan on a global scale. In the future, expanding elements of intangible heritage, preserving ecological heritage, and fostering respect for historical heritage among young people will remain priority areas. Uzbekistan's international cultural policy is based on strengthening national identity and balancing global integration. Cooperation with UNESCO is an important component of this strategy, strengthening the country's position in the world community.

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