

Dr. Ninnat Olanvoravuth is invited by the Chairman of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan to represent Thailand as an international observer in a nationwide referendum on amendments to the Constitution of Uzbekistan on 30 April 2023.

### **Uzbekistan is preparing to hold a referendum on the new Constitution.**

The Senate of the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Uzbekistan at a plenary session (March 14, 2023) approved a resolution on a referendum on the draft law on the Constitution in a new version on April 30, 2023. This means that on April 30, Uzbek citizens will vote on the most significant additions and updates to the country's Constitution in over thirty years.

The new Constitution is designed to change the principle of “state — society — human” to “human— society — state”, that is, "put the interests of man above all."

The public, political parties, public organizations, representatives of expert and scientific circles, and intellectuals actively participated in the project's development; in short, the project became a people's Constitution literally.

During the preparation of the draft Constitutional Law, more than 400 international documents and constitutions of about 190 countries were thoroughly analyzed, international experts and specialists highly appreciated the project as a document embodying all generally recognized norms of international law.

The extent of the reforms can be measured in numbers: in the proposed new Constitution, the number of articles has increased from the current 128 to 155, and norms – from 275 to 434. Accordingly, 65 per cent of the text of the Basic Law has been updated based on people's proposals, the number of specific norms on human rights and freedoms has increased three and a half times, and based on this, there is every reason to adopt the draft as a new version of the Constitution.

The Constitution stipulates that the State will undertake several new obligations to reduce poverty, provide employment and protect against unemployment. Generally, the norms containing the state's social obligations are tripled.

For the first time, the State is obligated to take measures to improve the quality of life of socially needy categories of the population, to create conditions for the full participation of people with disabilities in society and the state, and the realization of their rights.

The State undertakes to create conditions for the full use of socio-economic and cultural facilities and services by people with disabilities to assist them in finding employment and obtaining education, which is a vivid expression of the welfare State principle.

The norms on granting academic freedom to higher education institutions, the right to receive free higher education at the expense of the state on a competitive basis, and the support of non-governmental educational organizations create an opportunity for the younger generation to improve their lives, achieve their dreams, find their place in life and develop their personality by mastering their specializations.

It should be noted that over the past six years, the number of universities in Uzbekistan has increased from 77 to 210, enrollment in them has increased five times, the number of students has increased by 1 million, and the coverage of higher education has increased from 9% to 38%. The number of state grants has also doubled to 40,000, of which gifts for obtaining a master's degree – 5 times.

Bringing the issue of youth to the level of a separate chapter in the Constitution indicates that youth policy is a priority in New Uzbekistan. More than 18 million of the population are young people. By 2040 this figure will reach 25 million.

The updated Constitution aims to create a strong parliament, a compact and responsible Government, and an independent and fair judicial system to build a State that serves the people.

In addition, the joint powers of the chambers of the Parliament are being strengthened, and the Constitution separately establishes the institution of parliamentary investigation, which is a basic form of parliamentary control.

To strengthen the influence, place and role of the Parliament in society, some powers of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan are transferred to the Parliament. The powers of the Legislative Chamber and the Senate are also significantly expanded; in particular, the absolute powers of the Legislative Chamber are increased from the current 5 to 12, and the Senate – from 14 to 18.

The Constitution provides for granting “mahalla” (local community) independent decision-making powers to solve problems and create organizational and financial opportunities for local autonomy.

By the draft of the new Constitution, the powers to consider and approve the candidacy of the Prime Minister are proposed to be transferred to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Legislative Chamber. Before submitting the candidacy of the Prime Minister to the lower house of Parliament, the procedure is introduced according to which the President holds consultations with all factions of political parties. After approval by the Legislative Chamber, the President appoints the Prime Minister.

All this aimed to increase human capital and accountability, transparency, the efficiency of decision-making by the state authorities and their effectiveness.

3 April 2023