

# POLITICAL REFLECTION MAGAZINE

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# Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Uzbekistan

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## **I**ntroduction: The Great Silk Road and its legacy in Uzbekistan

The cultural heritage of a people is one of the essential components of its entire history, culture, and identity. In general, culture and cultural heritage functioning as a link between peoples and nations. It serves as the basis for harmony and peaceful coexistence.

For almost 30 years, the Republic of Uzbekistan has been a member of the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), whose primary goal is to ensure cooperation "between the Turkic peoples for the preservation, development, and transfer to future generations of common material and cultural monuments of the Turkic peoples." Uzbekistan highly appreciates TURKSOY's efforts to strengthen fraternal relations between the Turkic states and promote Turkic culture worldwide. It should be emphasized that the activities of TURKSOY open up great opportunities for the development of cooperation between member countries, cultural, art, and scholars.

The "cultural capital of the Turkic world" is an initiative of TURKSOY. Its aim is the annual selection of a city as the center of cultural life in the Turkic world to attract attention to its cultural development. Khiva, the Pearl of Uzbekistan, is one of the oldest cities in Central Asia. It is an open-air museum that has become the cultural capital of the Turkic world in 2020. Khiva is one of the most remote cities that remained whole on the Great Silk Road in Central Asia. During its heyday, Khorezm was the largest international trade centre and a key point on the Great Silk Road. Not only did trade caravans travel along the Great Silk Road, but also cultural achievements, spiritual values, and religious ideas spread along with. Besides, scientists, researchers, travellers, and even warriors had been walking along the caravan roads for centuries.

A particular long-term program, which includes proposals to revive historical heritage, was created jointly with UNESCO. In 1994, the Samarkand Declaration "On the Revival of the Great Silk Road" was adopted. This work began in 1994 when the 19 UNWTO member states adopted the Samarkand Declaration, which calls for "the fruitful revival of these legendary routes as one of the most culturally attractive tourist destinations in the world." Currently, the UNWTO Silk Road Program involves 33 member states working together to implement the Silk Road Action Plan. A comprehensive program document has

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been developed to ensure the joint efforts of the growth of sustainable tourism along the Silk Road.

According to Academician Edward Rtveladze, "the peoples of Central Asia have an outstanding role in the dissemination of alphabetic writing and world religions, as well as many cultural and technical achievements". The combination of factors allows us to say that the Great Silk Road is not just a caravan route but a multifunctional phenomenon unique in the history of Eurasia, the degree of influence and impact of which on many aspects of its existence was enormous. As the Silk Road developed, it became a tradition to send ambassadors to different countries and exchange gifts. The influence of Eastern culture on Western culture has increased, and vice versa." Trade caravans and the Great Silk Road united the countries, largely creating a single cultural community throughout this time. It has evolved into a commonwealth, a strong node of mutual understanding between peoples, and a vital means of inter-civilizational dialogue.

### **The Potential of Uzbekistan in the Field of Cultural Heritage**

To date, there are a total of 8,138 objects of material and intangible culture on the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Among them, there are 4,732 architectural monuments, 682 objects of monumental art, 580 places of pilgrimage, and others. In the preservation, restoration, rational use, and protection of these objects, the role of the joint efforts of Uzbekistan and UNESCO is great.

Thus, the UNESCO World Heritage List in Uzbekistan includes such sites as "Ichan-Kala" in Khiva in 1990, "Samarkand - the Crossroads of Cultures" in 2001, the historical center of Bukhara in 1993, and the historical center of Shakhrisabz in 2000, as well as the Chatkal biosphere (as a natural heritage).

The city of Bukhara was awarded the prize by the organization "Cities for Peace." The Quran of Usman and the collection of manuscripts of the Institute of Oriental Studies are included in the UNESCO register "Memory of the World". The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind includes Shashmakom, the cultural space of Baysun, Katta ashula, askia, pilaf, the national holiday of Navruz, atlas and adras production technologies. In 2019, the Uzbek national dance "Lazgi" was included in the Representative List of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Uzbekistan's cooperation with UNESCO also contributes to the preservation, development, and popularization of Uzbek musical culture. Thus, under the patronage of UNESCO, the International Festival "Shark taronalari" ("Melodies of the East") is held in Samarkand every two years. In September 2018, for the first time, the International Makom Art Forum was held in Shakhrisabz. In April 2019, the first "International Bakhshi Art Festival" was held under the auspices of UNESCO. In 2019, the international conference "Preservation of Tangible and Intangible Heritage: current problems and strategies for their

solution" was held in Samarkand under the auspices of UNESCO, and in 2021, the international forum "Central Asia at the Crossroads of World Civilizations" was held in Khiva. Within the framework of the latter, together with the UNESCO World Heritage Center, an "International Advisory Committee on Cultural Heritage in Uzbekistan" was established.

### ***The Legal Basis for Uzbekistan's Cultural Heritage Protection***

To date, the Republic of Uzbekistan has ratified many UNESCO conventions in the field of culture, including the 1972 Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1993, the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, the 1970 Convention on Measures aimed at Prohibiting and Preventing the Illegal Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property in 1996, the 2003 Convention on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2008, and 2019 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005.

Following these international treaties, special laws and regulations have been adopted in the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as a national system for the protection of cultural heritage.

- The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Objects", enacted on August 30, 2001;
- The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Protection and Use of Archaeological Heritage Objects", enacted on October 13, 2009;
- The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Museums" of September 12, 2008;
- The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the archival case" dated June 15, 2010;
- The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Import and Export of Cultural values" of August 29, 1998;
- The Law "On Cultural Activities and Cultural Organizations" of 2021.

According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 06/19/2021 No. PP-5150 "On measures to organize the activities of the Cultural Heritage Agency under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as the innovative development of the sphere" under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Cultural Heritage Agency has been established, which is a specially authorized state management body in the field of material cultural heritage, museums, archaeology, export and import of cultural values. Decisions taken by him within his competence are mandatory for execution by state and economic management bodies, local executive authorities, other organizations and their officials, as well as citizens.

Active efforts have been made to enhance cultural and legal literacy in the field of cultural heritage protection among employees of local authorities. So, with the support of the Senate of the Republic of Uzbekistan and UNESCO, it is planned to open a research center for the study and modernization of the safeguarding of the Republic of Uzbekistan's rich cultural heritage, as well as a Laboratory for intercultural diversity and cultural dialogue, at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy. This center's commitments will include the emergence of new regulatory and legal acts which are in touch with contemporary best practices; the implementation of training programs to educate and improve the level of knowledge in the field of cultural heritage protection for representatives of local authorities, as well as, in general, to increase the level of literacy and public awareness of citizens; and informing the general public about the importance of cultural heritage and the existing problems in this area (holding seminars, training based on the UWED, publishing brochures, collections, media materials).

### **Khiva Process**

Hosting the International Forum "Central Asia at the Crossroads of World Civilizations" in Khiva in September 2021 was a landmark event and an impetus for cultural cooperation both between the TURKSOY member countries and with other foreign partners. As a result, an international declaration was adopted, that voiced the main theses and global issues discussed at the meetings of the forum, in particular, the launch of the Khiva Process as a political dialogue in cooperation with UNESCO. UNESCO plans to gather representatives of the region's decision-making bodies on various topics related to climate change, sustainable development of the region, as well as the contribution of the rich cultural heritage of Central Asia to the development of human civilization. The 38th meeting of the TURKSOY Permanent Council was held within the framework of the forum.

At the 212th session of the UNESCO Executive Board in October 2021, the project "Khiva Process: Promotion of International Cooperation in Central Asia" was adopted. That is the first document for Uzbekistan approved by the UNESCO governing body. UNESCO has fully supported Uzbekistan's initiative to create the Khiva Process platform.

*Despite its regional nature, the document was supported by 23 states, including Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Gabon, Germany, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Italy, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Mexico, UAE, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ethiopia. These countries reported their full readiness, along with other states, to establish effective cooperation with Uzbekistan to fulfil the tasks set by the Khiva process in the coming years. Uzbekistan, with the assistance of supporters of this initiative, has begun work to promote the resolution of the same name that will be considered and*



*approved at the 41st session of the UNESCO General Conference on November 9–24 in Paris.*

Thus, the Khiva process is a new platform for political dialogue and cooperation that will regularly cooperate with local and regional stakeholders to find solutions to the problems of Central Asia and will also serve as a mechanism for mobilizing the strengths of the region and finding concrete actions where countries and the region can take steps to support each other, and will also regularly gather representatives of the region's decision-making bodies on various topics to ensure the sustainability of the results and recommendations of the International Khiva Forum "Central Asia at the Crossroads of World Civilizations".

### **Conclusion**

In this regard, we believe that it is advisable today to strengthen the multilateral cooperation within TURKSOY in the following areas:

- further strengthening of cultural and humanitarian ties between the participants of TURKSOY;
- the implementation of the Khiva Process project is a primary platform for political and cultural dialogue in the Central Asian region;
- in the protection and popularization of the cultural heritage of both Uzbekistan and all member states of TURKSOY;
- in creating digital catalogues and media repositories (cultural heritage objects) available to a wide range of users of the global Internet, which will contribute to the dissemination of knowledge about the Turkic culture and Turkic heritage;
- exchange of experience and best practices in the field of protection of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Turkic peoples.



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