

SPEECH

at the **5th** Meeting of the Working Party on the accession to WTO

*(June **21, 2022**, video message, duration up to **8** minutes)*

Dear Mr. Chairman, Ambassador **Lee Taeho**

Dear Deputy Director General **Xiangchen Zhang**

Dear members of the Working Party,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me an immense pleasure to participate at the **5th** **Working Party Meeting** on **Uzbekistan's** accession to the **World Trade Organization**.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express sincere gratitude to the **WTO Secretariat**, its **Accession Division** for the comprehensive assistance provided to **Uzbekistan** and for organizing today's event for the **first** time in almost **two** years.

Dear ladies and gentlemen!

For the last **five** years under the leadership of the **President of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Shavkat Mirziyoyev** our country has been undertaking large-scale political, social and economic reforms.

First. **Concrete** and **decisive** measures were implemented to introduce **market-based principles** in **Uzbekistan**. These reforms contributed to the creation of **favorable conditions** for foreign investors and local business community, including introduction of **free currency convertibility**, **removal of restrictions** on repatriation of profits and **reducing customs duties** on imported goods.

Second. For the **first time** since we achieved our independence **thirty** years ago, **poverty eradication** became one of the main priorities of our development programme.

Due to actions undertaken in this area, in the last few years more than **half a million** families were **lifted out** of poverty.

We set a **clear goal** to continue our **systemic work** and reduce the level of poverty in the country by at least **two times** by **2026**.

Third. Making **Uzbekistan** a free country governed by the **rule of law** and **justice**, as well as building an **independent** and **strong judiciary** system and **fight against corruption** are in our list of top priorities.

Two years ago, **Uzbekistan** adopted a **National Human Rights Strategy** and, for the **first time**, was elected as a member of the **United Nations Human Rights Council** (*October, 2020*). We will continue to build a country with a strong civil society.

Fourth. We have completely **eliminated forced labor.** This success was recognized not only by **foreign governments and Independent Labor Organisations** but also by “**Cotton Campaign**” coalition of **NGO’s** and **international brands.**

Dear participants!

Uzbekistan will continue its **irreversible development** along the path of reforms.

Earlier this year, we have adopted a **New Uzbekistan Development Strategy** covering period from **2022** to **2026**. It is notable that one of the main priorities of our new Strategy is accession of **Uzbekistan** to **WTO**.

For the last several years, we have undertaken **concrete measures** to accelerate our accession process. After a **15-year break**, despite all the challenges of the pandemic, we have successfully conducted the **fourth Working Party meeting** in **2020**.

Starting from the last year (*September-November, 2021*), we have **launched** bilateral negotiations with **WTO Member States** and already held consultations with more than **thirty-five** countries.

In order to further **intensify** interaction with the **WTO Secretariat**, a detailed **Road Map** for **2022** was adopted, which includes organization of a number of **Working Group meetings** and regular bilateral negotiations with more than **forty Member States**. We want to take practical steps towards our accession.

Dear colleagues!

It is important to note that our economic development, as well as accession process to **WTO** are currently **complicated** by a number of **external factors**, among which are negative consequences of **pandemic**, as well as new **geopolitical risks in the region**.

They cause more **supply chain disruptions** and increase the **cost of production** given the fact that **Uzbekistan** is one of only two double land-locked countries in the world.

In such a situation we want to rely on member countries' practical understanding of our position and hope for very substantive negotiations to be held during this **Working Party** meeting.

My country's **35 million** population, out of which more than **60 percent** are **young people**, wants to live in a country with an **open market economy** and **free trade**, which is fully integrated into world economic system.

Dear participants of Working Party meeting!

Today you can have open discussions with high-ranked members of the delegation from **Uzbekistan**, which includes more than **20** members of the Negotiations Group, **headed by** the chief negotiator, **Deputy Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade Mr. Badriddin Abidov.**

Our negotiation team is ready for **healthy compromises** and **constructive** work with both **WTO Secretariat** and **Member States** on all the issues that may be raised during discussions and negotiations.

Our negotiators have all the powers to **act, discuss** and **solve**. They have a very clear instruction from **Uzbek** government to make a significant progress along the path of our accession to **WTO**.

We are fully committed to even more intensify our efforts on accession and intend to organize the next **Working Party meeting** in the **second half of this year**. We hope for your support of our intentions.

In conclusion, I want to one more time thank **WTO Secretariat** and **Member states** representatives for cooperation, and wish all participants of today's **Working Party** meeting successful work and practical results.

Thank you for your attention!