



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2026)0174

EU-Uzbekistan Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (Resolution)

European Parliament non-legislative resolution of 20 May 2026 on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, of the other part (09190/2025 - C10-0280/2025 - 2024/0260M(NLE))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, of the other part (09190/2025),
- having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Articles 207(4), first subparagraph and 209(2), first subparagraph, in conjunction with Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a) and Article 218(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C10-0280/2025),
- having regard to the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, of the other part¹,
- having regard to the joint statement of 24 October 2025 on the occasion of the signing of the EU-Uzbekistan Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between the European Union and its Member States and the Republic of Uzbekistan,
- having regard to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 17 June 2019 on the new

¹ Not yet published in OJ.

strategy on Central Asia,

- having regard to the Joint Roadmap for Deepening Ties between the EU and Central Asia, adopted at the 19th EU-Central Asia Ministerial meeting in Luxembourg on 23 October 2023,
- having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 15 May 2019 entitled 'The EU and Central Asia: New Opportunities for a Stronger Partnership' (JOIN(2019)0009),
- having regard to the Joint Declaration following the first EU-Central Asia summit, held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on 4 April 2025,
- having regard to the memorandum of understanding on a strategic partnership on sustainable raw materials value chains between the European Union and the Republic of Uzbekistan, signed on 5 April 2024,
- having regard to the 2024-2026 Joint European Union/Council of Europe Support to Democratic Reforms, Human Rights Mechanisms and Rule of Law Principles programme, launched by the Venice Commission on 1 January 2024,
- having regard to the 12th High-Level Political and Security Dialogue between the EU and the countries of Central Asia, held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on 11 July 2025,
- having regard to the 21st meeting of the EU-Uzbekistan Sub-Committee on Justice and Home Affairs, Human Rights and Related Issues, held in Brussels on 24 June 2025,
- having regard to the 18th meeting of the EU-Uzbekistan Cooperation Council, held in Luxembourg on 21 October 2025,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2024 on the EU strategy on Central Asia²,
- having regard to its previous resolutions on Uzbekistan,
- having regard to its legislative resolution of 20 May 2026³ on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, of the other part,
- having regard to Rule 107(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

² OJ C, C/2024/5718, 17.10.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/5718/oj>.

³ Texts adopted, P10_TA(2026)0173.

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A10-0107/2026),
- A. whereas Uzbekistan occupies a key position in Central Asia, which the EU has recognised as a region of strategic importance in terms of security, connectivity, energy diversification, conflict resolution and the defence of the multilateral rules-based international order;
- B. whereas Uzbekistan is crucial for connecting trade routes between East Asia, South Asia and Europe;
- C. whereas the first EU-Central Asia summit, held on 4 April 2025 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, marked a significant political milestone and confirmed the mutual commitment to upgrading relations to a strategic partnership based on dialogue, cooperation and respect for international law;
- D. whereas the EU-Uzbekistan EPCA was signed on 24 October 2025 and enhances the existing EU-Uzbekistan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement of 1 July 1999;
- E. whereas the EPCA requires the European Parliament's consent for it to enter into force, and its implementation will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny;
- F. whereas the EPCA provides for cooperation in respect of, and mutual respect for, human rights and the rule of law;
- G. whereas this non-legislative resolution accompanies Parliament's consent to the conclusion of the EPCA and remains fully consistent with the objective of strengthening bilateral relations and supporting a long-term, constructive partnership between the EU and Uzbekistan;
- H. whereas Uzbekistan has benefited from unilateral and preferential access to the EU market through the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) since 2021, and its current status is valid until 2027; whereas Uzbekistan has acceded to 27 international conventions related to labour and human rights, environmental and climate protection, and good governance in order to benefit from this scheme;
- I. whereas the EU has allocated EUR 43 million for new bilateral programmes between 2025 and 2027, focusing on support for democratic governance and digital transformation, inclusive digital and green growth, and the development of a smart and eco-friendly agri-food sector; whereas Uzbekistan also benefits from a number of regional EU programmes and investments under the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+), Global Gateway's main financial tool;

- J. whereas under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, economic and political reforms have been undertaken that have led to a gradual improvement in the country, despite the fact that efforts still need to be made;
- K. whereas assessments by independent international organisations and comparative democracy research indicate that Uzbekistan does not meet the standards of a democratic system of governance;
- L. whereas Uzbekistan continues to be characterised by restrictions on political pluralism, the absence of genuinely free and fair elections, limited political participation, weak institutional checks and balances, and constraints on fundamental rights and freedoms;
- M. whereas the Uzbek authorities are also increasingly using forms of transnational repression, in particular exploiting international cooperation mechanisms to pursue bloggers and activists based abroad on politically motivated charges; whereas the Government uses both Interpol notices and requests through the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, with a rising number of individuals being forcibly returned from Turkey and CIS countries in recent years;
- N. whereas Uzbekistan is the EU's second-largest trading partner in Central Asia, with the total value of trade between Uzbekistan and the EU at almost EUR 4.8 billion in 2024; whereas the EU is Uzbekistan's third-largest trading partner: in 2024, 10,4 % of trade was with the EU and 7,2 % of exports went to the EU;
- O. whereas independent non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Uzbekistan face barriers to registration, with their applications routinely rejected on arbitrary grounds; whereas NGOs are also subject to excessive restrictions on their operations and funding; whereas acquiring government approval for receiving foreign grants is a taxing and overly burdensome process, often resulting in refusals or significant delays;
- P. whereas concerns persist regarding the protection of workers' rights in Uzbekistan, including inadequate enforcement of labour legislation, limited freedom of association, insufficient occupational health and safety standards, low wages, and a lack of effective mechanisms for collective bargaining;
- Q. whereas President Mirziyoyev has reviewed Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Concept to enhance global engagement, including with Europe, emphasising stronger economic, investment, education and labour mobility ties;
- R. whereas President Mirziyoyev has instructed a revision of Uzbekistan's Defence Doctrine and National Security Concept to ensure that the country maintains its neutral status, expands

multilateral diplomacy and modernises its armed forces in the light of evolving global security threats;

- S. whereas, according to recent statements by Russian state-affiliated media, Central Asia ‘belongs to Russia’, and they refer to possible military operations in the region; whereas these statements have caused strong public reactions in Central Asia, including in Uzbekistan, and reflect a pattern of imperial and revisionist rhetoric that undermines the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states in the region;
- T. whereas since Russia’s illegal war of aggression against Ukraine began, Central Asian countries have gradually distanced themselves from Russia; whereas it is of critical geopolitical importance that the EU deepens its ties with this region; whereas Uzbekistan has abstained in the voting on the UN resolutions on Ukraine;
- U. whereas since 2023, Uzbekistan has taken notable legislative steps to address domestic violence; whereas these efforts include the recognition of violence against women as a criminal offence rather than as a private family matter; whereas despite these legal reforms, there remain significant gaps in enforcement, meaning many cases of domestic violence still do not result in accountability for the perpetrator; whereas support for victims is also still lacking; whereas in May 2025, UN Women opened an office in Tashkent as a next step in the ongoing collaboration between UN Women and the Government of Uzbekistan;
- V. whereas consensual same-sex sexual conduct between men is criminalised in Uzbekistan under Article 120 of the criminal code, punishable by up to three years in prison; whereas this criminalisation leaves LGBTIQ+ people exposed to harassment, threats and abuse without protection;
- W. whereas Uzbekistan is experiencing the immediate impact of climate change as temperatures have risen there by nearly three times the global average over recent decades; whereas these changes also include frequent droughts, including six dry years recorded between 2019 and 2024, as well as more frequent occurrences of natural disasters, which have resulted in average losses of USD 92 million every year;

EU-Uzbekistan relations

1. Welcomes the conclusion of the EU-Uzbekistan EPCA, which establishes a new, modern and ambitious framework for deepening bilateral relations; reiterates that the agreement puts a strong emphasis on shared values, democracy and the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, which constitute an integral part of the EPCA and are to be advanced through its institutional framework and regular political dialogue, and through sustainable

development; underlines that the EPCA supports Uzbekistan's reform agenda by opening new horizons for collaboration, including on cybersecurity and border security;

2. Calls for the full implementation of the essential elements of the EPCA, such as respect for democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law; underlines the importance of Parliament's close involvement in monitoring the implementation of all parts of the EPCA; calls for an effective evaluation within three years by both parties to the agreement of the implementation of its essential elements, with clear human rights benchmarks and timeframes; calls on the Commission to present to Parliament the outcome of such evaluations;
3. Stresses that Parliament's consent to the EPCA constitutes a strategic investment in the EU-Uzbekistan partnership and should be understood as a tool to foster long-term engagement, stability and cooperation, contributing to the EU's broader strategy in Central Asia and to balanced international alignment;
4. Commends the long-standing and strategic relationship between the EU and Uzbekistan, as well as the increasing cooperation and exchanges in various formats; reiterates the EU's commitment to working together with the country, and with the EU's partners in Central Asia, to ensure peace, security, democracy, stability, prosperity, human rights protection, media freedom and sustainable development;
5. Commends the significant improvement in the national business environment, as well as the continued influx of foreign investment; notes that there are still challenges in ensuring the legal protection of companies through regulatory frameworks and business environments; calls on the Uzbek Government to guarantee transparency and reliability regarding timely developments, resource estimations, reliable export routes, and payments;
6. Stresses that Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, is of strategic importance to the EU in areas such as security, energy diversification and critical raw materials, transport and digital connectivity; welcomes the EU-Central Asia Summit, held in April 2025 in Samarkand, as a strategic turning point, which elevated regional engagement from technical cooperation to a high-level political partnership; considers that the 2019 new strategy on Central Asia should be updated to reflect the enhanced importance of the region and to adapt to current geopolitical challenges;
7. Welcomes the first Central Asia-EU Parliamentary Cooperation Forum, held in Samarkand on 30 and 31 March 2026, as a significant step in deepening parliamentary diplomacy and democratic dialogue between the EU and Central Asia;

8. Calls for the implementation of the reform agenda under the Uzbekistan 2030 strategy to be continued, in particular as regards the strengthening of the rule of law, human rights and good governance; stresses the importance of public consultation in Uzbekistan's reform process; regrets, however, that Uzbekistan's human rights record has worsened in some areas since the start of the negotiations on the EPCA; calls on the authorities to improve the environment for human rights, civil society and the media;
9. Underlines the importance of implementing the recommendations made by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, following their election observation missions; stresses the need to foster a more dynamic, diverse and competitive political environment in Uzbekistan that would better reflect the views of its citizens and give them a genuine choice in elections; calls for the inclusion of independent and opposition candidates in future parliamentary elections, so that the basic requirements for democracy are met; welcomes the progress made towards gender parity in Uzbek politics, and encourages Uzbekistan to continue to make efforts to attract and support women politicians; calls for respect for freedom of expression and media freedom during elections;

Regional cooperation and global challenges

10. Underlines that the EPCA paves the way for enhanced cooperation in foreign and security policy, with a focus on regional stability and international cooperation, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, conflict prevention and crisis management;
11. Welcomes the upgrade of relations between the EU and Central Asia to the level of a strategic partnership; calls for the momentum of this progress to be maintained by implementing the Joint Roadmap for Deepening Ties between the EU and Central Asia; appreciates the constructive role of Uzbekistan in fostering regional cooperation;
12. Underlines that the leaders of the EU and the Central Asian states have committed to cooperate for peace, security and democracy, and to fully respect international law, including the UN Charter and the fundamental principles of respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, within their internationally recognised borders; looks forward to seeing strong, concrete efforts in pursuit of these objectives;
13. Reiterates that the leaders of the EU and Central Asian states have agreed on the importance of achieving, as soon as possible, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter; regrets, nevertheless, that Uzbekistan has not condemned Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has abstained from voting on several UN resolutions on the matter and

has increased its political, economic and energy cooperation with Russia, while not engaging sufficiently with Ukraine; notes, nevertheless, that Uzbekistan does not recognise the annexation of Ukrainian territories by Russia; commends the Uzbek support for Ukrainian children affected by the war and calls for more thorough support and engagement in international efforts in this regard; acknowledges Uzbekistan's significant policy changes aimed at prioritising a more open and outward-oriented foreign policy, in particular through the diversification of its traditional relations beyond Russia to include new important trade ties with the EU;

14. Emphasises that the circumvention of sanctions is contributing to the continuation of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine; calls on the Uzbek authorities to increase efforts to prevent the circumvention of sanctions, in particular the re-export of common high-priority items; calls on the Uzbek authorities to continue their technical cooperation with the EU, including their engagement with the EU's Sanctions Envoy on this matter, in order to achieve tangible results;
15. Notes that Uzbekistan has gradually been improving its customs control, in particular with regards to products that are subject to EU sanctions; calls, nevertheless, on the Uzbek authorities to continue to enhance compliance with EU sanctions and fight against circumventions of sanctions against the Russian regime, and to refrain from any action that could directly or indirectly contribute to Russia's military capabilities, including through the supply, facilitation or transit of dual-use goods and advanced technologies;
16. Commends Uzbekistan's leadership role in initiating consultative meetings with neighbouring countries and supporting regional integration among the five Central Asia republics, which has significantly deepened cross-border cooperation;
17. Commends both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on improving regional cooperation and integration; welcomes the comprehensive agreement reached by both countries in 2023 to demarcate their borders as an important step in overcoming unresolved border disputes;
18. Recognises the key diplomatic role played by the authorities of Uzbekistan in contributing to the peaceful resolution of the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border dispute, including through high-level political dialogue; welcomes the country's participation in trilateral negotiations and its support for the signing of a historic tripoint border agreement alongside Kyrgyz and Tajik leaders;
19. Welcomes Uzbekistan's strategic objective to promote enhanced regional connectivity, including through the development of cross-border logistical, transport, and infrastructure integration initiatives across the wider region; underlines the importance of the Trans-

Caspian Transport Corridor in boosting connectivity between the EU and Central Asia;

20. Highlights the importance of enhanced regional and transregional connectivity as a key pillar of the EU-Central Asia strategic partnership; commends Uzbekistan's active participation in the discussions on the cross-regional connectivity agenda, which will foster long-term shared economic opportunities; welcomes efforts to strengthen sustainable, resilient and mutually beneficial transport, energy and digital connectivity linking Central Asia with Europe, in line with the outcomes of the first EU-Central Asia Summit held in Samarkand, and underlines the strategic role of Uzbekistan as a regional hub for connectivity and cooperation; welcomes the EU-funded Global Gateway initiative's contribution to digital transformation, specifically its support for the expansion of secure internet access across the region;
21. Welcomes the first meeting of the Team Europe Initiative Steering Committee on Water, Energy and Climate Change, bringing together Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, held in Tashkent in November 2025, to enhance regional cooperation under the EU's Global Gateway framework; calls for the EU and Uzbekistan to further step up their collaboration in the fight against climate change, as Uzbekistan is experiencing the challenges of rising temperatures, droughts and natural disasters; calls, in particular, for increased efforts by the EU to support enhanced regional coordination on water and energy management in Uzbekistan in the context of climate change;
22. Regrets the fact that foreign information and manipulation interference (FIMI) represents a growing risk for Uzbekistan, driven by its geopolitical relevance, rising social media usage, lacking media literacy, large migrant population, and foreign-influenced information space; calls on Uzbekistan and other Central Asian partners to continue strengthening their resilience against FIMI, including disinformation campaigns aimed at weakening regional stability and their partnerships with the EU; calls on the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS), through its delegations, to enhance their programmes and activities related to the fight against disinformation;
23. Recognises the important role that Uzbekistan plays in Afghanistan, in particular regarding humanitarian aid, energy supply and the development of transport connectivity, while the humanitarian and human rights situation, in particular the rights of women and girls, in Afghanistan remains grave; invites Uzbekistan to use its contacts within Afghanistan to seek genuine progress, which would pave the way for increased engagement by the international community; reiterates its outrage at the Taliban's treatment of women as less than secondary citizens and calls on the EEAS to cooperate with

Uzbekistan in assisting women fleeing Afghanistan;

24. Reiterates that, as part of the Joint Declaration following the first EU-Central Asia Summit, Uzbekistan is committed to the UN Security Council Resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984);

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law

25. Notes that the report of the Special Commission established by the Senate and the Legislative Chamber of the Uzbek Parliament (Oliy Majlis) following the July 2022 events in Karakalpakstan has been presented to the Uzbek Parliament, but has not been published; maintains its call to ensure accountability for the deaths and injuries resulting from the unjustified use of force by police against peaceful protesters in July 2022 and to publish the list of names of those killed and missing, as well as the victims of mass arbitrary detentions; urges Uzbekistan to strengthen the independence of the Ombudsman, guarantee independent and effective investigations into allegations of excessive use of force, torture and ill-treatment, initiate prosecutions and ensure accountability for perpetrators at all levels; calls on the Uzbek Government to improve transparency and remove barriers to on-the-ground research regarding the status of Karakalpakstan;
26. Reiterates its concern about the allegations of torture and ill treatment of activist and lawyer Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov, including the most recent allegations confirmed by his lawyer in January 2026 during a visit to the prison where he is being held; calls on the Uzbek authorities to look into the allegations and publish a report on the matter; notes that, in its opinion adopted at its session held from 11 to 15 November 2024, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) found that Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov was being arbitrarily detained and was suffering from violations of his rights; joins the call made by the UN WGAD for his immediate release; calls strongly for any further persecution of Karakalpak activists to cease and for the release of activists Rinat Utambetov and Zetkerbay Abdramanov; calls on the Uzbek authorities to ensure that detainees and prisoners are held in conditions consistent with respect for their human dignity, Uzbek law and international human rights law;
27. Reiterates that the governments of Central Asian countries should take concrete and sustained measures to improve the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including respect for freedom of religion and the rights of religious minorities, while addressing concerns regarding radicalisation and stigmatisation, and to strengthen democratic governance, ensure gender equality and the full enjoyment of women's rights, guarantee the rights and protection of LGBTIQ+ people, and uphold fair working conditions and workers' rights, in line with international standards and

commitments;

28. Takes note of Uzbekistan's national human rights strategy, adopted in 2020, with a successor strategy under development, which guides reforms, including the protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights; encourages the prompt implementation of the strategy and increased ambition in the successor strategy;
29. Calls on Uzbekistan to end the persecution of human rights defenders, journalists and activists and immediately and unconditionally release all those imprisoned for the peaceful exercise of their fundamental rights, and to establish a formal rehabilitation mechanism providing access to justice, expungement of criminal records and adequate compensation;
30. Calls for an end to the harassment and persecution of human rights activists; notes with concern that Sharifa Madrakhimova has been prevented from travelling abroad to accept an award in recognition of her human rights work in Uzbekistan by having her passport destroyed; recalls the imprisonment of Dildora Khakimova and Nargiz Keldiyorova, human rights activists from the Kashkadarya region in Uzbekistan, who, on 18 July 2024, were sentenced to six years and one month and six and a half years in prison, respectively, on dubious extortion charges after they criticised corruption in the education system in Kashkadarya; calls on the Uzbek Government to release them;
31. Urges the Uzbek authorities to guarantee the rehabilitation, protection and social reintegration of former political prisoners, including effective remedies for past abuses and safeguards against harassment and discrimination;
32. Recalls the UN Human Rights Committee's call on Uzbekistan to take robust measures to eradicate torture and ill treatment, and to ensure that all persons deprived of liberty have access to an independent and effective complaints mechanism;
33. Strongly regrets the use of punitive psychiatric detention to repress human rights activists and silence critical voices, and urges an end to this practice in the Uzbek legal system; regrets the extended, forced psychiatric detention of the blogger and activist Valijon Kalonov, about whom the UN WGAD issued an opinion finding that he had been 'arbitrarily detained' and urging the Uzbek Government 'to release him immediately and accord him an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations'; notes that another blogger, Shahida Salomova, is also being held in extended forced psychiatric detention on dubious legal grounds; calls on the Uzbek Government to release Kalonov and Salomova;
34. Welcomes the adoption in April 2023 of a new law amending Uzbekistan's criminal and administrative codes that offer better

protections for women and girls from abuse, as well as strengthened measures to address child abuse; calls on the Government of Uzbekistan to implement the law effectively and tackle the widespread problem of domestic and gender-based violence in Uzbekistan, as well as of impunity for perpetrators of violence;

35. Acknowledges the positive steps taken by Uzbekistan to promote gender equality, while also noting the serious issues still to be addressed in this area; welcomes the opening of the Uzbekistan UN Women office in 2025, and calls on the Uzbek Government to leverage this investment by the international community in the rights and well-being of women in Uzbekistan;
36. Encourages the decriminalisation of consensual same-sex relations and the adoption of effective legal and policy measures in line with international human rights standards to protect LGBTIQ+ people from harassment, violence and discrimination, including by law enforcement authorities; observes with concern the legislative changes adopted in August 2025 concerning HIV testing for people returning from abroad that may lead to reinforcing stigma and contravening international employment standards;
37. Regrets that, despite some progress made with legislative reforms, significant barriers remain to the registration and operation of NGOs and civil society organisations in Uzbekistan, such as excessive registration requirements, administrative barriers and a lack of transparency and clarity in decision-making by the Uzbek Ministry of Justice; calls for further easing of restrictions and bureaucratic and legislative burdens to enable a wider range of NGO activities; demands that the Government of Uzbekistan allow independent human rights organisations, including international human rights groups, to register in the country and to carry out their activities without undue state interference, and calls for the development and adoption of an NGO Code, in line with international standards; notes that restrictions placed on local NGOs from receiving funding from abroad hinder the implementation of EU-funded projects in Uzbekistan;
38. Is concerned about the growing evidence that Uzbekistan has weaponised international and regional legal cooperation mechanisms for transnational repression against activists, journalists, human rights defenders and trial monitors; notes that this includes misuse of INTERPOL notices and diffusions, mutual legal assistance requests, and cooperation on anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism to pursue politically motivated extradition, detention or forcible return of individuals; calls on Uzbekistan to fully respect the principle of non-refoulement;
39. Urges Uzbekistan to respect and protect freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism, which are basic requirements for a

functioning democracy; calls for reforms of the legal framework governing media to incorporate international standards; notes with concern the classification of Uzbekistan as 'non-free' in the 2024 and 2025 editions of the Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index; notes with concern reported restrictions on freedom of expression, including targeted measures affecting online content; stresses the need to guarantee the safety and independence of journalists and media workers, to prevent harassment, censorship or arbitrary detention, and to promote a diverse and pluralistic media environment that allows for open public debate and access to accurate information; encourages the alignment of national media regulations with international human rights obligations;

40. Is concerned that the Uzbek Criminal Code contains articles pertaining to insult or slander of the President, including the offence of insulting the President online, and pertaining to defamation and insult, which have led to the prosecution and imprisonment of bloggers for their online comments; takes the view that this is a completely unjustified restriction on freedom of speech; calls for these articles to be repealed, fulfilling President Mirziyoyev's pledge in 2020 to decriminalise both charges, and for the Uzbek Criminal Code to be reviewed and aligned to international norms, with any persons imprisoned on these charges to be released;
41. Welcomes the important political reform process undertaken by the Government of Uzbekistan and the notable progress achieved in advancing market-oriented reforms since 2017, which have included the banning of extrajudicial courts and the installation of a more transparent system of checks and balances; reiterates the need to ensure transparent governance and anti-corruption safeguards, which are essential for democratic accountability and sustainable economic cooperation;
42. Recognises the positive developments regarding Uzbekistan's rule of law, noting that the 2025 World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index ranks Uzbekistan as among the small number of countries that saw its rule of law score increase; notes that challenges persist with regard to the effective consolidation of judicial independence;
43. Calls for ensuring the operational independence of anti-corruption bodies, including the establishment of public and accessible registers of beneficial ownership; stresses that major economic and state-owned enterprise reforms should be subject to transparency requirements and social impact assessments;
44. Commends legislative reforms which have, to a certain extent, updated criminal procedure norms and judicial frameworks to align more closely with internationally recognised standards, including new laws criminalising gender-based violence, the introduction of an investigating judge system and certain adjustments to powers

related to warrants and searches aiming to strengthen judicial independence in criminal justice, as well as projects with the United Nations Development Programme aiming to provide free legal assistance to citizens; calls for continued and increased action in this regard;

45. Calls on Uzbekistan to protect lawyers from harassment, intimidation and criminal or disciplinary sanctions linked to their professional duties, and to ensure full respect for judicial independence and fair trial standards in line with international law;

Sectoral cooperation

46. Notes the positive impact of Uzbekistan's membership of GSP+ on increasing trade with the EU; reiterates the need for the full and effective implementation of the 27 UN and International Labour Organization conventions and compliance with reporting obligations, in line with Uzbekistan's commitments under the GSP+ scheme; calls on Uzbekistan to follow up on the recommendations made by the second GSP+ monitoring mission to Uzbekistan; stresses that this second GSP+ monitoring mission mostly took note of plans to combat corruption, to grant the right to strike, and to step up progress towards the full elimination of forced and child labour in the cotton harvest, among other remaining challenges; reiterates, therefore, that tangible and measurable progress on democratic reform and human rights must be a prerequisite for the country's continued access to EU trade preferences, and that such instruments should serve as leverage for reform;
47. Acknowledges the Uzbek Government's success in ending systematic and state-sponsored forced labour in recent years; notes that, according to independent monitors, the risk of forced labour persists, with continued state control over the cotton harvest; urges the Uzbek Government to recommit to reforming the agriculture sector and upholding agriculture workers' and farmers' rights to organise;
48. Notes Uzbekistan's parallel efforts to address emigration challenges by expanding domestic employment opportunities and focusing on improving skills development; recognises the commitment to creating conditions that reduce reliance on outward labour migration, while supporting the reintegration of returning migrants, primarily from Russia;
49. Welcomes the fact that Uzbekistan is in the final stages of its World Trade Organization (WTO) accession process and underscores the EU's support for Uzbekistan's WTO accession and the underlying economic reform process, as well as for a rules-based multilateral trading system with WTO at its core;
50. Welcomes the signing, on 5 April 2024, of the EU-Uzbekistan memorandum of understanding launching a strategic partnership on

critical raw materials; welcomes the EU-Central Asia declaration of intent on critical raw materials, endorsed at the first EU-Central Asia summit, which reflects the mutual interest in boosting cooperation on energy and the green transition; welcomes the introduction of an additional EUR 12 billion investment package during the EU-Central Asia Summit in Samarkand in 2025, with EUR 2.5 billion specifically earmarked for critical raw materials;

51. Reaffirms its commitment to the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement; calls for it to be ensured that climate cooperation with Uzbekistan supports a just transition globally and protects workers affected by decarbonisation; calls on the Commission to act in the spirit of the 'do no significant harm' principle in this regard;
52. Welcomes Uzbekistan's significant investments in renewable energy, focusing particularly on solar and wind power, thereby reducing the country's reliance on fossil-dependent energy sources; notes that the Uzbek mining sector still relies on coal-powered energy and that the extraction of critical raw materials using fossil fuels will undermine Uzbekistan's achievement of the sustainable development goals;
53. Underlines the participation of Uzbekistan in a number of EU regional programmes and its benefits from investments under the EFSD+;
54. Stresses the importance of integrating Uzbekistan more deeply into the EU's flagship connectivity initiatives, in particular the Global Gateway and the extension of the Trans-European Transport Network towards Central Asia;
55. Supports the strengthening of people-to-people contacts, student, academic, scientific, cultural and other professional exchanges, and mobility, notably in the fields of education, business and tourism; notes that the EPCA includes the possibility of negotiating a readmission agreement and an agreement on visa facilitation; invites both sides to take the steps necessary to meet the conditions for the launch of the negotiations;

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56. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission, the European External Action Service and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the Republic of Uzbekistan.