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Prospects for the Development of Tourism in Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is an important component of Uzbekistan's economy. It is one of the few industries in the country that generates income in dollars. Therefore, the government continues to do everything possible to further develop the tourism sector and attract more tourists from all over the world.

Keywords: tourism development, potential of domestic tourism, investment projects in the tourism sector.

Introduction. The events taking place in the global economy in recent years have had a negative impact on the tourism sector. In 2020, due to restrictions related to the pandemic, the volume of tourism services at the global level decreased by 75% and, according to forecasts, the number of international tourists will reach pre-pandemic levels only by 2024. About how the situation in tourism in Uzbekistan is developing at present and in the future.

In Uzbekistan, as a result of measures taken to stabilize the industry and further develop tourism, this sector was able to quickly restore its previous level. Thus, if in 2021 the number of local tourists was 4.6 million people, then as of January-December 2022, 11.4 million local residents had already traveled around the country.

If, within the framework of the state program for 2022 for the implementation of the Development Strategy in the year of ensuring human interests and regional development, it was planned to increase the number of local tourists to 8.2 million by the end of 2022 due to the potential of domestic tourism, then the results achieved at the end of 2022 turned out to be 3.2 million more than the planned number.

In 2022, more than 5.2 million foreign tourists visited Uzbekistan (in 2017 - 2.69 million). This is 2.9 times more than in 2021 (1.8 million) and 2.5 million more than the planned (2.7 million) for 2022. In January-December 2022, the volume of exports of tourism services exceeded 1.61 billion US dollars. This figure in 2021 was equal to 296.4 million dollars, and in 2019 - 951 million dollars, in 2017 - 1.55 billion dollars.

The stay of guests who came to our country increased to an average of 4-5 days, and their spending - to \$ 305. And in 2019, this figure averaged 3 days and \$ 195, respectively. Over the past 3 years, the number of hotel rooms has increased 3 times and reached almost 125 thousand. In 2017, this figure was 37 thousand.

These figures are the result of the great attention paid to the development of tourism in Uzbekistan.

In particular, measures were taken to widely introduce the infrastructure of "barrier-free tourism" in the main tourist cities of the republic, our country was completely open to foreign travel, all restrictions on travel were lifted.

In particular, the issuance of visas to tourists was radically liberalized, queues and unnecessary checks at airports were eliminated, "green corridors" and favorable conditions at train stations were created, an electronic registration system for guests was established, and all conditions for their free movement were created. Restrictions on currency exchange were lifted.

In the development of domestic tourism, special attention is paid to the organization of systematic trips of the population. The rates of social tax and turnover tax for tourism enterprises are set at 1 percent, the rates of land tax and property tax are reduced by 90 percent.

In 2022, it was planned to allocate funds in the amount of 21.6 trillion soums for all investment projects in the tourism sector, and also to implement 727 projects and create 22,901 new jobs by the end of the year. Over the 11 months of last year, 683 projects worth 16.6 trillion soums were implemented and 15,066 new jobs were created.

Analysis and results.

A positive result was observed in the organization of tourism services in 135 mahallas in 28 districts (cities) of the republic. In particular, the activities of 1841 tourist facilities were established, including 36 hotels, 60 hostels, 512 guest houses, 174 yurts, 190 handicraft centers, 37 mountain tourism zones and 37 beach tourism zones, 5 desert tourism points, 376 restaurants and cafes, 164 transport service enterprises, 14 hunting tourism facilities and 95 pilgrimage tourism facilities, and the provision of 141 related tourism services.

As a result, last year more than 270 thousand jobs were created in the tourism and related services sector (the annual plan is 200 thousand), the number of accommodation facilities exceeded 1700, with 85.7 thousand beds, the total number of family hotels was 3180, and the number of beds was 22618. At the same time, 750 family guest houses (6880 beds) were created, bringing their total number to 3200. Last year, 284 new tourism organizations and travel agents were established, and their total number reached 1782.

A total of 884 sanitary and hygienic points have been built and repaired in the republic at tourist sites, gas stations for all types of vehicles, roadsides and in densely populated areas. The level of provision of 4,009 gas stations with sanitary and hygienic points in the country has reached 96.9% (3,885 gas stations are provided with sanitary and hygienic points).

Based on the analysis of the dynamics of tourist flows by foreign countries, new tourist routes were developed for tourists from more than 40 countries with high potential for outbound tourism. As part of the "Travel around Uzbekistan!" program, a special platform of the "Cashback" system was launched in September 2022 to reimburse part of the costs of domestic trips. An opportunity was created to obtain a license for tourism activities and qualification certificates for restoration masters through electronic government services.

It is already becoming generally recognized that Uzbekistan's potential in the tourism sector is enormous and the necessary conditions for its implementation have already been created. Prospective measures for the further development of this sector, which plays an important role in the country's economy, have also been identified.

The development strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026 sets the task of increasing the number of local tourists to more than 12 million per year and bringing the number of foreign tourists arriving in the republic to 9 million people per year. By 2026, it is planned to double the number of people employed in the tourism sector, bringing their number to 520 thousand. It should be taken into account that one job created in the tourism sector stimulates the creation of two additional jobs in related industries.

In 2023, according to forecasts, 7 million foreign tourists were to arrive in the country and 12

million domestic tourists were to be attracted, the export of tourism services will amount to 2 billion dollars. At the same time, 170 hotels, 58 hostels, 273 accommodation facilities will be created, and their total number will be 1944. In remote areas of our republic, 410 new family guest houses will be created. Thanks to this, residents of remote mountain and foothill areas will have the opportunity to organize self-employment and have a permanent source of income. It is also planned to establish the activities of 80 tourism enterprises, creating a total of 200 thousand jobs in the tourism sector and related industries.

It is also planned to reach an agreement with foreign airlines and launch at least 10 international flights per day to Samarkand and at least 1 flight per day to the Fergana Valley, Nukus, Urgench and Termez from Europe, Asia, America, Arab states and neighboring countries. In order to attract foreign airlines to operate regular flights, the 2nd international forum Uzbekistan Airports, Aviation & Logistics Forum will be organized in Samarkand.

As a result of the purchase of 12 Airbus A 320 aircraft and Airbus H 145 helicopters by Uzbekistan Airways, the number of flights to Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, Arab countries, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and neighboring republics with high potential for pilgrimage tourism will increase. The number of flights of the Hungarian airline Wizz Air, which started flying to Samarkand from Abu Dhabi, will be increased to at least 4 times a week from 2023, and measures will also be taken to launch flights to European countries such as Hungary, Romania, Italy and Cyprus.

Each region is developing a project to organize its own "tourist ring" to attract domestic and foreign tourists. At the same time, the best projects will be allocated up to 20 million dollars on a competitive basis. It was also planned to open a credit line for the development of tourism services in the amount of 100 million dollars and attract another 100 million dollars by the end of 2022 for lending in 2023.

The "Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026" provides for the creation of medical clusters in the Namangan, Fergana, Syrdarya, Kashkadarya, Navoi, Tashkent regions and the city of Tashkent, which in turn will serve the development of medical tourism.

In addition, the task of preparing and adopting a state program for the development of tourism infrastructure and cultural heritage sites, and the effective use of more than 8 thousand cultural heritage sites has been defined.

Conclusion:

In recent years, at the initiative of the President of our country, special attention has been paid to the development of tourism, and the necessary measures are being implemented to effectively use the existing opportunities and potential. It is worth noting that thanks to a correctly chosen strategy, tourism in Uzbekistan has become one of the "growth points" of the national economy, since due to the high multiplier effect on related industries, it serves to increase citizens' incomes and is an important factor in creating new jobs. It should be noted that on average 30% of income in the tourism sector goes to residents in the form of wages. Therefore, it is advisable for khokims of regions, districts and cities, together with entrepreneurs, to increase the number of tourist zones.

Uzbekistan is a country with great potential in the tourism sector. Taking advantage of the unique nature of our country and wonderful places for recreation, it is possible to open new tourist destinations and products. With the active involvement of world brands in this area, special attention can be paid to the development of pilgrimage, health and wellness, ecological, educational, ethnographic, gastronomic tourism and other areas of this industry.

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