

**THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TOURISM IN UZBEKISTAN (BASED ON THE YEARS 1993-1997)****Murodov Halim Salimovich,**

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the tourism policy pursued in Uzbekistan with the aim of creating conditions for the development of the international tourism industry, studying the experience of countries with developed tourism, as well as the measures of international cooperation with them. One of the main ways to promote Uzbek tourism in the world is international fairs and the importance of establishing cooperation relations.

**Keywords:** tourism, WTO, The Great Silk Road, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Meridian, intercontinental, Holiday Inn, Samarkand Declaration, McNulty Group, La Strada and Gallery, Hemingway.

**Introduction:** The process of Uzbekistan's accession to the World Tourism Organization and the development of international tourism relations was relaunched due to independence. On October 4, 1993, at the 10th Session held in Bali, Indonesia, Uzbekistan became a full member of the World Tourism Organization (WTO/UNWTO). During this major international event, Uzbekistan established cooperative relations with a number of Indonesian and Malaysian tourism companies. In particular, a contract on external advertising was signed with Malaysia's Fiset advertising and consulting company [1]. Plans for training modern specialists in tourism management at educational institutions in England, Spain, Turkey, and India were included in both national and international programs aimed at developing human resources in Uzbekistan's tourism sector. At this session, the WTO placed significant emphasis on the "Great Silk Road" project, which was expected to promote international cultural and economic cooperation through tourism. Reflecting Uzbekistan's growing participation in the global tourism business, the "Uzbektourism" National Company represented the country's interests in a number of WTO seminars. A year later, under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) and UNESCO, Uzbektourism organized in Tashkent the "Silk Road" International Seminar of the World Tourism Organization, establishing it as a regular event. During this period, the development of measures for hosting international tourism, cultural, and educational events in Uzbekistan gained special importance. As a result, the tourism sector achieved a sharp increase in revenues: in 1993, the total income amounted to 11.3 million soums, yielding 2.1 million soums in profit; whereas in 1994, the income reached 221.3 million soums, with 110.6 million soums in profit. As the experience of the Uzbektourism National Company grew, it recognized that international tourism was a key source of income, and that promotion of Uzbekistan's tourism potential abroad could be most effectively achieved through international fairs and exhibitions. In line with this understanding, Uzbekistan participated for the first time in the International Mediterranean Tourism Market (IMTM 1994) held in Tel Aviv, Israel, with the primary objective of establishing new partnerships and promoting the country's tourism opportunities on the global stage [2]:

a) One of the primary objectives of Uzbekistan's participation in the International Mediterranean Tourism Market (IMTM-1994) held in Tel Aviv, Israel, was to study the advanced experience of Israel's tourism industry.

b) Another major goal was to promote Uzbekistan's tourism potential—particularly the unique architectural monuments of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khiva, as well as samples of national handicrafts—and to establish cooperative relations with international travel organizations.

Participation in this exhibition also enabled Uzbek specialists to study the management and organizational practices of Israel's well-developed tourism sector. It was noted that in Israel there exist specialized tourism police units and hospitals serving tourists, which demonstrates the high level of state attention to this industry. The activities of Israel's Tourism Administration, including its licensing system and preferential treatment for tour companies, were also examined. Uzbek participants observed that hotels in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv were 90% fully booked, and that in six hotels not a single table was vacant during breakfast service—facts that drew considerable professional interest. Interestingly, while many Israelis expressed great admiration for the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, they were unaware that these cities are located in Uzbekistan [3]. The Uzbek delegation's exhibition attracted substantial interest from tourism representatives of Israel, South Africa, Tanzania, Congo, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Uruguay, Austria, and Russia, resulting in several bilateral agreements. Furthermore, in cooperation with Mediterranean tourism organizations, particularly Egypt, agreements were signed to send tourists to Uzbekistan via Israel and Turkey. As a result of participation in such global tourism events, the "Uzbektourism" National Company began implementing promising projects aimed at the comprehensive development of the national tourism sector. The "Silk Road" Project and International Conferences (1994–1995) On October 3, 1994, the World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) International Conference on the Silk Road opened at the Palace of Friendship of Peoples in Tashkent. The event concluded on October 6 in Samarkand, where the "Samarkand Declaration" was adopted by the participating countries. The reforms introduced by *Uzbektourism*—including the privatization of tourist organizations and the implementation of international standards—became key catalysts for modernization in Uzbekistan's tourism sector.

Between 1993 and 1995, the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan increased from 43,000 to 92,000, while revenues from international tourism grew from USD 34.4 million to USD 101.2 million. By 1995, tourism accounted for 9% of GDP and 67% of foreign-currency inflows [4]. From October 3 to 6, 1995, Uzbekistan hosted for the first time the "Travel Along the Great Silk Road" International Tourism Fair, designed not only to attract more foreign tourists but also to exchange experiences, establish joint ventures, and promote modern service standards across the tourism industry. Institutional Development and Policy Measures (1995–1997) In August 1995, *Uzbektourism* developed the "Expanded Program for the Development of Domestic Tourism and Tourist Services," which included 42 measures. Among them were:

- a) Expanding tourism products such as historical, pilgrimage, hunting, health, ecological, and sports tourism;
- b) Introducing medical insurance for tourists;
- c) Launching seasonal domestic air routes (Bukhara–Samarkand–Khiva/Urgench) and reducing airfare;
- d) Creating customs zones for tourists in airports and railway stations;
- e) Developing service infrastructure along highways;
- f) Establishing art and handicraft centers in tourist zones;
- g) Founding the "International Tourism Training and Production Center" to prepare qualified personnel;
- h) Publishing the "Silk Road" international tourism information newspaper;

Implementing a single national tourist visa system effective July 1, 1995 [5]. These measures contributed to creating a favorable environment for foreign cooperation and enhanced

Uzbekistan's image in the global tourism market. Expansion of International Cooperation (1995–1997). In October 1995, as a continuation of the UNWTO seminar, Tashkent hosted the First International Tourism Fair “Tourism Along the Silk Road,” with participation from over 100 companies representing 33 countries. The Second Fair (1996) gathered 150 companies from 100 countries, and the Third Fair (1997), held in Tashkent's Central Exhibition Hall, saw a significant expansion in geography and participation. Following the Government Resolution No. 210 (June 3, 1995) “On the Development of International Tourism Infrastructure,” *Uzbektourism* began promoting the Silk Road project internationally through participation in leading world tourism fairs in London and Berlin. At UNWTO seminars in Japan and Tehran, Uzbekistan was designated the geographical and coordinating center of the Silk Road project. At the 11th UNWTO General Assembly, Uzbekistan's representative was elected Deputy Chair of the European Commission, which included 35 European countries (all CIS states among them), and also became a member of the UNWTO Committee on Environmental Protection[6].

Diversification of Tourism and Human Capital Development (1996–1997). To rebuild the national tourism industry, *Uzbektourism* prioritized the creation of new tourism products and routes, including ethnographic, cultural, and adventure tourism. The “Silk Road” full-color publication, launched in accordance with the 1995 Government Resolution, played a key role in disseminating information about Uzbekistan's tourism potential. By 1997, *Uzbektourism* maintained active representative offices in the UK, UAE, USA, Germany, and Russia, and information about Uzbekistan's tourism resources was included in major international catalogs. During 1996–1997, staff of *Uzbektourism* underwent internships and training in Egypt, India, Pakistan, and Israel, as well as short-term English and management courses in England. By 1997, Uzbekistan's tourism industry comprised over 340 companies, of which 140 were based in Tashkent. The Professional Training and Qualification Department established within the Tashkent regional branch of *Uzbektourism* trained tour operators, travel agents, guides- interpreters, accountants, and private tourism managers. Statistical analysis shows that 41% of all international tourism companies were located in Tashkent, followed by Samarkand and Bukhara—indicating that tourism infrastructure and service networks were most developed in these regions [7]. However, most companies specialized in outbound tourism, focusing on shopping tours, beach holidays, pilgrimage travel, education, and medical tourism abroad, while inbound tourism (foreign visitors to Uzbekistan) received comparatively less attention. This imbalance limited the country's capacity to fully utilize its tourism potential, improve infrastructure, and increase employment. Between 1994 and 1999, Uzbek tourism enterprises maintained partnerships primarily with countries connected through direct flights of Uzbekistan Airways—including Turkey, India, Pakistan, Bahrain, Thailand, the UAE, Malaysia, Germany, the UK, Greece, Israel, and the USA. In 1996, *Uzbektourism* served 589,600 tourists, of whom 174,000 were foreign visitors—twice as many as in 1995. According to statistical data, in the first half of 1996, there were 112% more tourist visits than in the first half of the previous year. In 1996, 34,000 trips were made from Uzbekistan to the CIS countries and 69,000 to distant foreign countries.[8] These figures also show that the activities of tourism organizations in sending local tourists abroad, in comparison with international inbound tourism, have shown effective results.

By 1997–1998, *Uzbektourism* focused its strategy on three main directions:

1. Tourism routes along the Great Silk Road;
2. Cultural tours dedicated to the 660th anniversary of Amir Temur and the Timurid heritage;
3. Ethnographic tours introducing the culture and traditions of Uzbekistan's peoples.

In the process of creating Uzbekistan's national tourism image, efforts were undertaken not only through state and private funding, but also by attracting foreign investment into the tourism sector. One of the key aspects of tourism development—the hotel industry—became a major focus of Uzbektourism's strategy to draw foreign capital and improve the quality of services. Several international hotel companies and brands that need no special introduction, such as Meridian, InterContinental, and Holiday Inn, began to establish a strong presence in Uzbekistan's tourism market. Among the successfully implemented projects were the creation of the joint Uzbek–Malaysian enterprise “Hotel Uzbekistan” and the complete privatization of the “La Meridien Tashkent” hotel complex.

Through foreign partnerships, projects were launched to construct new modern hotels, as well as to reconstruct, renovate, and upgrade existing ones in accordance with both international and national standards. One example is the reconstruction carried out by Germany's “Inpro” company, which resulted in the reopening of the “Shodlik Palace” Hotel. The hotel's management was entrusted to Germany's “Von Kusten Hotel and Consulting” company, which, through the SRS booking service (Steigenberger Reservation System), contributed to attracting foreign tourists to Uzbekistan. Fully meeting international standards, the four-star “Shodlik Palace” Hotel, opened in 1997, was designed in a European architectural style. The hotel features two restaurants—“La Strada”, offering European cuisine, and “Galereya”, serving Oriental dishes—along with the “Hemingway” bar providing a wide selection of drinks and cocktails. In addition, the hotel includes a fitness center, a business center equipped with all necessary facilities for entrepreneurs, and two conference halls [9]. Particular attention was paid to the construction of high-standard hotels and accommodation facilities in Uzbekistan's historical cities, which traditionally attract the greatest interest from tourists.

In conclusion, Uzbekistan possesses favorable conditions for the development of almost all forms of tourism — elite, cultural, religious, ethnographic, nostalgic, ecological, speleological, and others. However, without a clear vision and concrete projects for the development of the tourism industry, its promising future could become uncertain. For this reason, the “Uzbektourism” National Company, together with the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established an international team of experts to develop such a concept, operating under the working name “McNulty Group.” The project, managed by Michael Joseph McNulty, involved highly qualified specialists from Uzbekistan, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States, and India. As a result of joint efforts, in 1997, the “Sustainable Development Programme – Tourism in Uzbekistan” was completed and put into operation [10]. The main objectives of this project were to attract tourists from international markets to Uzbekistan, to transform tourism business into one of the most profitable sectors of the economy, to develop not only recreational services but also all modern forms of tourism, to enhance professional training, to create competitive tourism products, and ultimately to enter the global tourism market. The activities carried out by Uzbektourism to create an independent national tourism network resulted in a noticeable growth of international cooperation, and positive outcomes began to appear in the hotel and service industries. Due to the positive influence of international collaboration, the number of tourists visiting Uzbekistan increased year by year, contributing significantly to the improvement of the country's socio-economic situation.

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