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ENHANCING INFORMATION RIGHTS IN UZBEKISTAN: A COMPREHENSIVE OUTLOOK

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The Right to Information (RTI) is not only a fundamental human right but also a crucial tool for promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance. It allows citizens in Uzbekistan to access information held by public authorities, enabling their active participation in decision-making processes. Throughout history, there has been a recognition of the importance of information as a basic human right. Notably, in 1766, Sweden pioneered legislation protecting freedom of the press and information, marking a significant milestone.

In democratic societies, RTI plays a pivotal role in empowering citizens, ensuring transparency in governmental processes, and fostering an informed citizenry. It traces its origins to the belief that an informed citizen is indispensable for the proper functioning of a democracy.

RTI empowers the public and civil society by providing access to information held by public bodies. This empowerment facilitates holding leaders accountable, better understanding the world, and safeguarding other human rights. It is a vital tool for enhancing government transparency, especially in the utilization of public funds, combating corruption, and building genuinely responsible democracies. The protection of whistleblowers is crucial to encourage the sharing of information in the public interest.

Over the past 15 years, global progress in access to information has been significant, with nearly 120 countries adopting comprehensive RTI laws, covering almost 90 percent of the world's population. While these laws have been instrumental in advancing social, economic, and human rights, challenges persist in ensuring universal transparency and protection of the right to information.

The head of state, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has affirmed citizens' rights regarding information, emphasizing the ongoing measures to deepen democratic transformations. Despite potential resistance from officials holding outdated views, the commitment to openness, freedom of speech, and citizens' right to information remains unwavering.

To achieve these objectives, the Development Strategy for 2022-2026 was adopted, recognizing citizens' access to impartial information as a fundamental human right. The strategy outlines specific goals, such as Goal 71, aiming to transform a healthy societal outlook into a national movement by disseminating the developmental strategy. Goal 74 focuses on enhancing interethnic harmony and religious tolerance, while Goal 89 strives to strengthen citizens' rights in receiving and disseminating information, including the development of a unified legal act.

Goal 98 underscores efforts to enhance communication effectiveness globally. This involves supporting the information agency "Dunyo" and cooperating with leading global news agencies to promote Uzbekistan's image internationally. Measures include diplomatic information campaigns and negotiations with representatives of European countries to provide objective information about reforms and strengthen international media coverage.

By realizing these goals, Uzbekistan can achieve several milestones, including improved citizens' access to information, international recognition, robust legislation, broad information coverage, empowered citizens, transparent request procedures, and alignment with open government initiatives. The Right to Information is globally recognized as a critical component of good governance.

Uzbekistan's journey to enhance the Right to Information is marked by significant strides and a commitment to transparency and citizen empowerment. While challenges persist, the outlined goals and strategies position the country on a promising path towards fostering a culture of openness and accountability. The global recognition of the Right to Information underscores its importance in shaping effective governance practices worldwide.

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