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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHILD CUSTODY SYSTEMS IN DIVORCE CASES INVOLVING MINOR CHILDREN IN CHINA AND UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This study presents a comparative analysis of the child custody systems applicable to divorce cases involving minor children in the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The research examines the legal principles, legislative framework, and judicial approaches governing the determination of child custody after divorce in both jurisdictions. Particular attention is devoted to the implementation of the principle of the best interests of the child, the allocation of parental rights and responsibilities, and the role of courts in resolving custody disputes. The study employs comparative legal analysis, doctrinal research, and the examination of national legislation, international legal instruments, judicial interpretations, and relevant academic literature. The analysis demonstrates that both China and Uzbekistan recognize the paramount importance of protecting children's rights and welfare in custody proceedings and have incorporated the principle of the best interests of the child into their legal systems. At the same time, notable differences exist in the legislative regulation, judicial practice, and procedural mechanisms governing custody determination. Based on the comparative findings, the study identifies legal approaches that may contribute to the further improvement of child custody regulation, particularly with respect to strengthening child-centered decision-making, enhancing judicial consistency, and ensuring more effective protection of the rights and interests of minor children in divorce proceedings. The findings contribute to the comparative study of family law and provide practical recommendations for the continued development of child custody legislation in both countries.
Keywords: Child custody; Divorce; Minor children; Best interests of the child; Family law; Comparative legal analysis; China; Uzbekistan.

1.Introduction

The protection of children's rights has become one of the fundamental objectives of modern family law. Among the various legal issues arising from the dissolution of marriage, the determination of child custody remains one of the most sensitive and complex matters, as it directly affects the physical, emotional, educational, and social well-being of minor children. International human rights law recognizes that, in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. This principle is firmly established in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which has significantly influenced the development of national family law systems worldwide.

Both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Uzbekistan are States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and have incorporated its fundamental principles into their domestic legal frameworks. In China, issues concerning child custody following divorce are primarily governed by the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China and relevant judicial interpretations issued by the Supreme People's Court. In Uzbekistan, the legal regulation of child custody is based on the Family Code, the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Law "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child," and other legislative acts aimed at protecting children's rights and family relations.

Although both countries recognize the importance of safeguarding the interests of children, their legal systems have developed under different historical, social, and legal traditions. China has undertaken extensive reforms of its civil legislation through the adoption of the Civil Code in 2020, while Uzbekistan has implemented continuous legal reforms to strengthen the protection of children's rights and harmonize its legislation with international legal standards. These developments provide a valuable opportunity for comparative legal research on child custody regulation.

Comparative analysis of national legal systems serves not only to identify similarities and differences but also to evaluate the effectiveness of existing legal mechanisms and to explore possible legislative improvements. In the field of family law, comparative studies contribute to a better understanding of how different jurisdictions balance parental rights with the paramount objective of protecting children's welfare. Such research is particularly important in the context of increasing international cooperation, legal modernization, and the growing influence of international human rights standards on domestic legislation.

Despite the increasing academic attention devoted to children's rights, comparative legal research specifically examining child custody systems in China and Uzbekistan remains limited. Most existing studies focus on individual national legal systems or address broader issues of family law without providing a systematic comparison of custody determination mechanisms, judicial discretion, parental responsibilities, and the implementation of the best interests of the child principle. This gap in the literature underscores the need for a comprehensive comparative analysis.

Accordingly, the present study aims to examine and compare the legal regulation of child custody in divorce cases involving minor children in China and Uzbekistan. The research analyzes the legislative framework, guiding legal principles, judicial approaches, and procedural mechanisms applied in custody disputes. It further identifies common features and significant differences between the two legal systems and evaluates their respective strengths and challenges. Based on this comparative analysis, the study proposes recommendations that may contribute to the further development of child custody legislation and the enhancement of legal protection for minor children in both countries.

The research contributes to the comparative study of family law by providing a systematic examination of two legal systems that have received limited comparative attention in international legal scholarship. It is expected that the findings will be of value to legal scholars, legislators, judges, and policymakers engaged in the protection of children's rights and the ongoing improvement of family law legislation.

2.Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative legal research design based primarily on doctrinal and comparative legal research methods. The objective is to examine and compare the legal regulation of child custody in divorce cases involving minor children in the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The research focuses on identifying the similarities and differences between the two legal systems, evaluating their approaches to the protection of children's rights, and assessing the implementation of the principle of the best interests of the child.

The doctrinal legal research method is used to analyze the normative content of national legislation regulating child custody. The study examines the relevant provisions of the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China, the Family Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child," judicial interpretations issued by the Supreme People's

Court of China, and other applicable legal instruments governing family relations and children's rights.

The comparative legal method constitutes the principal methodological approach of the study. It facilitates a systematic comparison of the legal frameworks governing child custody in China and Uzbekistan by examining their legislative principles, custody determination criteria, parental rights and obligations, judicial discretion, and procedural mechanisms for resolving custody disputes. Through this comparison, the study identifies both common legal principles and distinctive features that characterize each jurisdiction.

In addition, the research applies document analysis to examine international legal instruments and academic literature relevant to child custody and children's rights. Particular attention is given to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which serves as the principal international legal framework influencing the development of domestic child protection legislation in both countries. Relevant scholarly publications, peer-reviewed journal articles, legal commentaries, and official legal documents are also reviewed to provide theoretical support for the comparative analysis.

The research further employs analytical and interpretative methods to examine how statutory provisions are applied within each legal system. These methods enable the study to evaluate the coherence of existing legal regulation, the role of judicial interpretation in custody determination, and the extent to which national legislation reflects internationally recognized principles concerning the protection of children's rights.

The study is limited to the comparative analysis of the legal regulation of child custody in divorce cases involving minor children. Selected published judicial decisions and official court guidance documents are examined as illustrative examples of how the relevant statutory provisions are applied in practice; however, the study does not undertake a systematic empirical analysis based on interviews, surveys, or a statistical review of court decisions across either jurisdiction. Instead, the research relies primarily on authoritative legal sources, official legislative texts, judicial interpretations, illustrative case law, international legal instruments, and academic literature to ensure the reliability and objectivity of the findings.

3.Child Custody System in China

The legal regulation of child custody in the People's Republic of China is primarily governed by the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China, which entered into force on 1 January 2021. Matters relating to marriage, divorce, parental rights, and the protection of minors are regulated in Book V (Marriage and Family) of the Civil Code. In addition to the Civil Code, judicial interpretations issued by the Supreme People's Court play an important role in guiding courts in the adjudication of child custody disputes. The legal framework is further complemented by the Law on the Protection of Minors and other legislation concerning children's welfare and family relations.

Chinese family law recognizes that both parents retain parental rights and obligations toward their children regardless of whether the marriage continues or is dissolved. Divorce does not terminate the legal relationship between parents and their children. Instead, the law requires that issues relating to the upbringing, education, and protection of minor children be resolved in a manner consistent with their lawful rights and interests. Parents are encouraged to reach an agreement concerning child custody during divorce proceedings. Where such an agreement cannot be achieved, the people's court determines custody according to the applicable legal provisions and the circumstances of the individual case.

The determination of child custody in China is guided by the principle of protecting the lawful rights and interests of minor children. Judicial practice gives particular consideration to the child's best interests, taking into account multiple factors rather than relying solely on the

preferences of either parent. Courts generally assess the child's age, physical and psychological needs, living environment, educational stability, emotional relationship with each parent, caregiving capacity of each parent, and the ability of each parent to provide a stable environment conducive to the child's healthy development.

The Civil Code establishes specific rules for children of different age groups. As a general rule, children under the age of two are ordinarily placed in the custody of their mother unless circumstances indicate that such an arrangement would not be in the child's best interests. For children who have reached the age of eight, the court is required to respect the child's genuine wishes when determining custody, provided that those wishes are expressed voluntarily and are consistent with the child's welfare. For children between these age groups, custody is determined through a comprehensive assessment of all relevant circumstances with the objective of maximizing the child's overall well-being. These thresholds are codified in Article 1084 of the Civil Code, which also directs the people's court, when parents cannot agree on custody of a child over the age of two, to decide the matter in accordance with the best-interests principle and the actual circumstances of both parents. Article 1085 further obliges the parent who does not hold physical custody to contribute, in part or in whole, to the child's support, irrespective of the custody arrangement reached. Judicial practice illustrates how courts apply these statutory criteria in more complex family situations: the Shanghai High People's Court has cautioned that, in divorces involving two children, courts should not default to splitting the siblings so that each parent receives one child, and must instead assess each child's welfare individually, taking into account the emotional bond between the siblings themselves (Shanghai High People's Court, 2025).

Although one parent may be granted primary custody following divorce, the non-custodial parent continues to possess important legal rights and obligations. Chinese law recognizes the right of the non-custodial parent to maintain personal contact with the child through visitation, while also imposing a continuing obligation to contribute to the child's maintenance and upbringing. At the same time, the custodial parent is expected to facilitate lawful contact between the child and the other parent unless restrictions are necessary to protect the child's interests.

Judicial discretion occupies a significant position within the Chinese child custody system. The Civil Code establishes general legal principles, while judicial interpretations issued by the Supreme People's Court provide more detailed guidance regarding the evaluation of evidence, assessment of parental suitability, and consideration of children's preferences. This combination of statutory regulation and judicial interpretation enables courts to adapt legal rules to the particular circumstances of individual families while maintaining consistency in the application of family law.

Recent developments in Chinese family law demonstrate an increasing emphasis on child-centered decision-making. Legislative reforms associated with the adoption of the Civil Code, together with continuing improvements in the protection of minors, reflect the broader objective of strengthening legal safeguards for children affected by divorce. Rather than treating custody solely as an issue of parental rights, the contemporary Chinese legal framework increasingly regards custody as a mechanism for ensuring the healthy development, welfare, and long-term interests of the child.

4.Child Custody System in Uzbekistan

The legal regulation of child custody in the Republic of Uzbekistan is primarily based on the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Family Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Law "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child," and other legislative acts governing family relations and the protection of children's rights. As a State Party to the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Uzbekistan has undertaken to ensure that the rights and lawful interests of children are protected in all legal proceedings affecting them, including divorce cases.

Under Uzbek family law, divorce does not terminate the parental rights and responsibilities of either parent. Both parents retain equal rights and obligations concerning the upbringing, education, maintenance, and overall development of their minor children. The dissolution of marriage affects only the legal relationship between the spouses and does not alter the legal relationship between parents and their children. Consequently, each parent remains responsible for ensuring the child's welfare in accordance with the law.

When parents divorce, they are encouraged to reach a mutual agreement regarding the child's place of residence, upbringing, communication with each parent, and financial support. Such agreements are generally recognized provided that they do not violate the rights and legitimate interests of the child. Where the parents fail to reach an agreement, the custody dispute is resolved by the court in accordance with the Family Code and other applicable legislation.

In determining with which parent a child will reside, Uzbek courts evaluate the circumstances of each individual case. Judicial decisions are guided by the principle that the child's rights and lawful interests must receive primary protection. In assessing custody disputes, courts may consider factors such as the child's age, emotional attachment to each parent, the personal qualities of the parents, their ability to provide appropriate living conditions, the child's educational and moral development, and other circumstances relevant to the child's well-being. No single factor is decisive; rather, the court conducts a comprehensive assessment of all relevant circumstances before reaching a decision. This authority derives from Article 75 of the Family Code (Exercise of Parental Rights), which empowers the court to determine the child's place of residence when parents living separately cannot reach agreement, and from Article 88, which requires the guardianship and trusteeship authority (organ opeki i popechitel'stva) to participate in court proceedings concerning disputes over the upbringing of children and to submit an opinion for the court's consideration. Article 68 additionally recognizes the child's right to express his or her own views in any judicial or administrative proceeding affecting him or her, although, unlike Chinese legislation, it does not fix a specific statutory age at which that view becomes determinative.

The legal framework also preserves the rights of the parent who does not reside with the child. Such a parent generally retains the right to maintain personal relations and direct communication with the child, unless a court determines that such contact would be contrary to the child's interests. At the same time, the non-residential parent continues to bear the legal obligation to provide financial maintenance for the child in accordance with the Family Code. The custodial parent is likewise expected to respect the child's right to maintain family relationships with the other parent whenever this is consistent with the child's welfare. This entitlement is set out in Article 76 of the Family Code, which specifically governs the exercise of parental rights by a parent living apart from the child and obliges the parent with whom the child resides not to obstruct such contact.

Recent legislative reforms in Uzbekistan have strengthened the legal protection of children's rights. In particular, amendments to the Law "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child" introduced a statutory definition of the principle of the best interests of the child, thereby reinforcing its role as a guiding principle in matters affecting children. This legislative development reflects Uzbekistan's continuing efforts to harmonize domestic legislation with international standards on children's rights and to ensure that child-related decisions are made with primary regard to the child's welfare.

Overall, the child custody system in Uzbekistan is founded upon the principles of parental equality, judicial protection of children's rights, and the best interests of the child. While parental agreements are encouraged, courts play a decisive role in resolving custody disputes whenever agreement cannot be reached. The current legal framework seeks to balance parental rights with the paramount objective of ensuring the healthy development, stability, and comprehensive protection of every minor child following the dissolution of marriage.

5.Comparative Analysis

5.1. Similarities

Despite differences in their legal traditions and legislative structures, the child custody systems of China and Uzbekistan share several fundamental characteristics. These similarities are largely attributable to both countries' commitment to protecting children's rights under domestic law and their obligations as States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). In both jurisdictions, child custody following divorce is regulated with the primary objective of ensuring the healthy development and welfare of minor children rather than protecting the interests of either parent.

A fundamental similarity is the recognition that divorce does not terminate the legal relationship between parents and their children. Under both Chinese and Uzbek law, parental rights and responsibilities continue after the dissolution of marriage. Regardless of which parent is granted primary custody, both parents remain legally responsible for the child's upbringing, education, maintenance, and overall development. Consequently, custody determination concerns the child's place of residence rather than the continuation or termination of parental status.

Another important similarity is the application of the principle of the best interests of the child. Both legal systems require that custody decisions prioritize the child's welfare above the competing interests of the parents. Courts are expected to examine the specific circumstances of each case before determining custody, taking into account factors relevant to the child's physical, emotional, educational, and social well-being. This child-centered approach reflects the influence of international standards on domestic family law in both countries.

Both China and Uzbekistan encourage parents to resolve custody matters through mutual agreement during divorce proceedings. Where parents are able to reach an agreement concerning the child's residence, upbringing, and parental responsibilities, the agreement may be recognized provided that it does not conflict with the child's lawful rights and interests. However, if no agreement can be reached, the dispute is submitted to the competent court, which determines custody according to the applicable legal framework and the circumstances of the individual case.

The two legal systems also recognize the continuing rights of the non-custodial parent. Although the child ordinarily resides with one parent following divorce, the other parent generally retains the right to maintain personal contact and communication with the child, subject to limitations necessary for the protection of the child's welfare. At the same time, the non-custodial parent continues to bear legal responsibility for the financial support and maintenance of the child in accordance with national legislation.

Judicial involvement constitutes another significant similarity between the two jurisdictions. In both China and Uzbekistan, courts play a central role in resolving custody disputes where parental agreement cannot be achieved. Judicial authorities examine the evidence presented by the parties, assess the circumstances affecting the child's welfare, and issue legally binding decisions intended to safeguard the child's best interests. This judicial oversight contributes to the protection of children's rights and ensures that custody disputes are resolved through lawful procedures.

Finally, both countries have progressively strengthened the legal protection of children through legislative reforms influenced by international human rights standards. Recent developments in Chinese family law and ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan demonstrate a common commitment to improving child protection mechanisms and enhancing the legal framework governing child custody. Although the specific legislative approaches differ, both jurisdictions continue to emphasize children's welfare as the paramount consideration in custody determination.

Overall, the similarities between the child custody systems of China and Uzbekistan indicate that both legal systems are founded upon shared international principles concerning the protection of children's rights. Their common emphasis on parental responsibility, judicial protection, the best interests of the child, and continuing parental obligations provides a solid legal basis for safeguarding children's welfare following divorce.

5.2. Differences

Although China and Uzbekistan pursue the common objective of protecting the rights and welfare of minor children after divorce, their child custody systems differ in several important respects. These differences arise from the distinct legislative structures, judicial practices, and legal traditions of the two countries.

The first major difference concerns the legislative framework governing child custody. In China, child custody is regulated by the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China, which is supplemented by judicial interpretations issued by the Supreme People's Court. These judicial interpretations provide detailed guidance on the application of statutory provisions and promote consistency in judicial practice. In contrast, Uzbekistan primarily regulates child custody through the Family Code and related legislative acts. Although judicial explanations may assist courts in interpreting the law, they do not have the same practical significance as the judicial interpretations adopted by the Supreme People's Court of China.

A second difference relates to the statutory regulation of children's age in custody determination. Chinese legislation contains specific legal provisions applicable to children of different age groups. As a general rule, children under the age of two ordinarily remain with their mother unless exceptional circumstances justify a different arrangement. Furthermore, when a child has reached the age of eight, the court is required to respect the child's genuine wishes, provided that those wishes are compatible with the child's best interests. Uzbek legislation does not establish comparable statutory age thresholds. Instead, courts determine custody through an individual assessment of the circumstances of each case without prescribing fixed legislative rules based on the child's age.

The treatment of the child's opinion also differs between the two jurisdictions. In China, the Civil Code expressly requires courts to consider the wishes of children who have reached the legally prescribed age. This requirement provides a clear statutory basis for child participation in custody proceedings. In Uzbekistan, although courts may consider the child's views depending on the child's maturity and the specific circumstances of the dispute, the legislation does not establish an equivalent statutory age at which the child's opinion must be taken into account in custody cases.

Another distinction concerns the role of judicial discretion. Chinese courts exercise their discretion within a comprehensive framework established by both statutory law and detailed judicial interpretations. This approach contributes to relatively uniform application of custody principles across different courts. In Uzbekistan, courts possess broader discretion in evaluating individual family circumstances because legislative provisions are formulated in more general terms. As a result, judicial assessment plays a particularly significant role in determining the outcome of custody disputes.

The two legal systems also differ in their legislative development concerning the principle of the best interests of the child. In China, this principle is reflected throughout the Civil Code, judicial interpretations, and legislation concerning the protection of minors. In Uzbekistan, the legal significance of the principle has been reinforced through recent amendments introducing its statutory definition into the Law "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child." This legislative reform strengthens the legal foundation for child-centered decision-making while reflecting Uzbekistan's continuing harmonization of domestic legislation with international standards.

Finally, differences may also be observed in legislative drafting techniques. Chinese family legislation contains more detailed statutory provisions regulating particular custody situations and is supported by an extensive system of judicial interpretation. Uzbek legislation, by comparison, establishes broader legal principles that allow courts greater flexibility in adapting decisions to the particular facts of each case. Each approach presents its own advantages: the Chinese model provides greater legal certainty and predictability, whereas the Uzbek model allows courts to respond more flexibly to the unique circumstances of individual families.

In summary, the principal differences between the child custody systems of China and Uzbekistan relate to the structure of their legal regulation, the treatment of children's age and participation in custody proceedings, the role of judicial interpretation, and the degree of judicial discretion exercised by courts. Despite these distinctions, both legal systems ultimately pursue the same objective of ensuring that custody decisions promote the rights, welfare, and healthy development of minor children following divorce.

5.3. Lessons for Improving Child Custody Regulation

The comparative analysis of the child custody systems of China and Uzbekistan demonstrates that both legal systems have established legal mechanisms intended to safeguard the rights and welfare of minor children following divorce. At the same time, each jurisdiction possesses legislative and judicial practices that may provide valuable experience for the further development of child custody regulation in the other country. Comparative legal research is not intended to identify a superior legal system but rather to examine how different approaches may contribute to improving the protection of children's rights.

One important lesson derived from the Chinese legal system is the value of providing more detailed legislative guidance for courts when resolving custody disputes. The combination of statutory provisions contained in the Civil Code and judicial interpretations issued by the Supreme People's Court contributes to greater consistency and predictability in judicial decision-making. Although judicial discretion remains necessary in individual cases, more detailed legal guidance can reduce inconsistencies in court practice while ensuring that similar cases are resolved according to comparable legal standards.

Another significant lesson concerns the participation of children in custody proceedings. Chinese legislation expressly recognizes the importance of considering the wishes of children who have reached the legally prescribed age, provided that their views are consistent with their best interests. This approach reflects the principle of child participation recognized by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Continued development of legal procedures that enable children to express their views in an age-appropriate and voluntary manner may further strengthen child-centered decision-making in custody cases.

At the same time, Uzbekistan's recent legislative reforms demonstrate the importance of explicitly incorporating the principle of the best interests of the child into national legislation. The statutory definition of this principle provides clearer legal guidance for courts and other competent authorities responsible for making decisions affecting children. Continued refinement of legislative provisions implementing this principle may further enhance the protection of children's rights in family disputes.

The comparison also highlights the importance of promoting parental cooperation after divorce. In both China and Uzbekistan, voluntary agreements between parents are encouraged because cooperative parenting generally contributes to the child's emotional stability and healthy development. Strengthening legal mechanisms that facilitate parental agreement, including mediation and other alternative dispute resolution procedures where appropriate, may reduce adversarial litigation while protecting children's interests more effectively.

Furthermore, both countries may benefit from continued efforts to enhance judicial specialization in family law. Custody disputes often involve not only legal questions but also psychological, educational, and social considerations affecting children's welfare. Ongoing professional training for judges dealing with family cases may contribute to more comprehensive and child-centered judicial decision-making. Cooperation between courts and qualified child protection specialists may also assist in ensuring that custody decisions adequately reflect the individual needs of each child.

Finally, continued harmonization of domestic legislation with international standards on children's rights remains an important objective for both jurisdictions. As States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, China and Uzbekistan share a common responsibility to ensure that custody decisions consistently prioritize the child's best interests while respecting the rights and responsibilities of both parents. Comparative legal research, judicial dialogue, and the exchange of legislative experience may contribute to the continued modernization of child custody regulation and strengthen the legal protection afforded to minor children in divorce proceedings.

Overall, the comparative study demonstrates that both legal systems possess valuable legislative experience capable of informing future legal reforms. By combining clear legal standards, effective judicial procedures, respect for children's participation, and the consistent application of the best interests of the child principle, both China and Uzbekistan may continue to improve the effectiveness of their child custody systems and ensure stronger protection of children's rights following parental divorce.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study compared the child custody systems applied in divorce cases involving minor children in China and Uzbekistan. The analysis shows that both countries recognize the protection of the best interests of the child as the main principle governing custody decisions. In both legal systems, divorce does not terminate parental rights and responsibilities, and courts are required to make custody decisions with primary regard to the child's welfare. At the same time, the comparison demonstrates that the two countries regulate these issues through different legislative approaches and judicial mechanisms.

The research found that Chinese legislation provides more detailed legal rules on child custody, particularly regarding the child's age, the consideration of the child's wishes, and the application of judicial interpretations issued by the Supreme People's Court. In Uzbekistan, the Family Code establishes the general legal framework, while courts have broader discretion in assessing the circumstances of each case. Recent amendments to the Law "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child" also show Uzbekistan's continuing efforts to strengthen the legal protection of children and to further align national legislation with international standards.

Overall, the comparative analysis indicates that both legal systems have their own strengths. China's approach provides greater legal certainty through more detailed regulation, whereas Uzbekistan's approach allows courts greater flexibility in considering the specific circumstances of each family. The experience of both countries demonstrates that effective child custody regulation depends not only on legislative provisions but also on their consistent application by the courts and the proper implementation of the best interests of the child principle.

Based on these findings, several recommendations may be made.

First, Uzbekistan may consider providing more detailed legislative guidance for courts when determining child custody. Clearer statutory criteria could contribute to greater consistency in judicial practice while preserving the flexibility necessary to decide each case according to its individual circumstances.

Second, explanatory guidance issued by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the application of child custody provisions could help ensure a more consistent interpretation of the Family Code by lower courts.

Third, further attention may be given to the practical implementation of the child's right to express his or her views under Article 68 of the Family Code. Clarifying how this right should be considered in custody proceedings may strengthen child participation while ensuring that decisions continue to be based on the child's best interests.

Fourth, greater use of mediation and parental agreements should continue to be encouraged where they are consistent with the rights and welfare of the child. Resolving disputes through cooperation may reduce conflict between parents and provide a more stable environment for children after divorce.

Fifth, continued professional training for judges and guardianship authorities remains important. Child custody disputes involve legal as well as psychological and social issues, and specialized training can contribute to better-informed judicial decisions.

Finally, both China and Uzbekistan should continue improving their child custody legislation in light of international standards on children's rights. Comparative legal research and the exchange of legislative experience may support future legal reforms and contribute to more effective protection of the rights and interests of minor children.

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