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**Address on key aspects of Tajikistan's domestic and foreign policy by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Leader of the Nation, H.E. Emomali Rahmon to the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan**

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Esteemed Compatriots!

Distinguished Members of Majlisi Milli and Majlisi Namoyandagon of Majlisi Oli!

This year I am addressing the supreme legislative body of our country in the truly historic for the glorious people of Tajikistan year - the 30th anniversary of the state independence and freedom of our beloved Motherland.

Everybody, including our dear compatriots, honorable members of the Parliament and distinguished participants have witnessed the 2020 as one of the most difficult years for the people of the planet, including Tajikistan from many perspectives.

As a result of the spread of the novel coronavirus and the associated rapid decline in economic activity and the unprecedented rise in unemployment, the situation on the planet has become even more complicated, leading to a severe economic, financial and social crisis.

It is hard to find any country or even sector in the world not affected by the crisis. According to the international experts, this is the first ever such a severe crisis of this kind during the last hundred years leading to a serious recession in the world economy.

The pandemic has negatively affected the world economy, including our national economic growth, public budget, foreign trade, exchange rate, and the operation of our industrial enterprises and service providers. In other words, we have worked in a tense global economic and financial situation in 2020, and despite the challenges we faced, we have taken a number of immediate actions to prevent the consequences of the crisis and protect our economic security.

We have revised the public budget for 2020 and introduced relevant changes in the revenue, expenditure and deficit indicators based on the declined budget revenues and need for increased funding in the social sectors, particularly in the healthcare and other contingencies. In particular, we channeled TJS 1.6 billion from the public budget additionally for the procurement of medicines and medical equipment, construction of temporary hospitals and support of healthcare workers.

We have mobilized more than 30 hospitals with 7,000 beds and 5,400 doctors and healthcare providers to facilitate full and timely treatment of people infected with COVID-19. In addition, we prepared 16,000 beds in 92 medical institutions.

The Executive Decree of the President of June 5, 2020 also offered significant tax and credit relieves, incentives and remedies totaling more than TJS 450 million to support the vulnerable groups and domestic entrepreneurs.

In addition, with a view to reducing the impact of the pandemic, our credit institutions provided credit relieves amounting TJS 2.3 billion to more than 260,000 customers and TJS 4 billion of loans to industrial entrepreneurs in 2020, which is by 2% higher against the 2019 indicator of this kind.

To improve the social conditions of the population, we increased the size of pensions, salaries of the budget-supported organizations and institutions' staff, and scholarships by 15%, salaries of law enforcement officers and military personnel by 10%, and allowances of persons with disabilities in need of care by 50% on September 1, 2020.

We scaled up the areas under basic and secondary growing of agricultural crops by tens of thousands of hectares to protect our country's food security and increase the domestic production.

Despite the negative impact of these factors, the immediate actions undertaken by the Government of the country made it possible to ensure the stability of macroeconomic indicators and maintain positive trends in improving living standards of the population.

Our economy grew by 4.5 percent in 2020 and the GDP reached TJS 82.5 billion TJS. During this period, the industrial production increased by 9.7%, agriculture by 8.8% and foreign trade by 0.8%, including export by 19.8% and created a foundation for the country's economic development. In particular, food production increased by 28.3% compared to 2019, which facilitated greater supply of the domestic market with the local produce.

We have mobilized more than TJS 5.4 billion of foreign investments, including TJS 1.3 billion of foreign direct investments to various sectors of our national economy. Last year, we constructed and commissioned 300 new industrial enterprises and workshops creating more than 6,500 jobs, 157 secondary schools and supporting facilities for 63,000 students, 108 healthcare facilities and more

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than 1.2 million m<sup>2</sup> of housing. During this period, we created more than 193,000 permanent and seasonal jobs, and the monetary income of the population increased by 10 percent. In 2020, deposits in our banking system increased by 17.2% and amounted to TJS 11.4 billion proving increased public confidence to the credit institutions.

In 2020, thanks to the dedicated work of the glorious people of Tajikistan, generous entrepreneurs and other honorable people across the country, we constructed and commissioned 18,300 industrial, social and cultural facilities on the occasion of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of our independence. The majority of these facilities are designed as educational, healthcare and sport complexes creating tens of thousands of new jobs. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to every youngster and adult in Tajikistan, including entrepreneurs and generous people for their faithful work for the sake of prosperity and progress of our beloved Motherland.

The history of our national statehood recorded the 2020 with important and memorable events, when we celebrated the 5500th anniversary of ancient Sarazm and the 700th jubilee of Kamoli Khujandi based on the resolution of a reputable international organization - UNESCO.

Also, last year we successfully conducted two politically important events - Parliamentary and Presidential elections in Tajikistan with the proactive participation of our people in peaceful environment, complete political stability and national unity.

The rapid changes in the current world and their negative impact on the world economy and each individual country require us to promote sustainable, inclusive and green development. To this end, the Government needs to intensify its activities on resistance to threats and crises, creation of development-centered opportunities and financial resources, diversification of the economy, expansion of the digitalization process, access to finance and business support, addressing social issues, climate change and the transition to a green economy. In other words, in the context of the rapidly changing and tense situation in the current world, we primarily need to rely on our domestic capacity and opportunities and make greater efforts for economic development, protection of food security and the public health.

In this context, in 2021 it is first of all important to enhance the effective use of the existing opportunities and resources, commission new and operationalize the existing assets, encourage domestic and foreign investment, and thereby, achieve the target indicators, in particular, GDP growth of at least 7 percent, and address the day-to-day issues of the population.

Distinguished Members of Parliament!

Over the past seven years, the public budget revenues increased from TJS 14.6 billion in 2014 to TJS 23.6 billion in 2020. In 2020, the share of social expenditures comprised 50 percent of the total public budget expenditures.

However, we have yet to address the issues of full transition to international financial reporting standards and e-financing system, including e-procurement system since we are lagging behind in this area.

To adjust the affairs in the field of accounting, and to further encourage direct investments, the Ministries of Finance, Industry and Innovative Technologies, the State Committee on Investments and State Property Management, the Tax Committee and other relevant supervisory authorities have to undertake immediate actions to introduce international financial reporting standards, and make sure the entities of public interest and other economic institutions undergo mandatory annual audit.

I have to note that the banking system assets increased from TJS 311 million in 2000 to more than TJS 26 billion in 2020. Last year, credit institutions issued about TJS 10 billion of loans to various sectors of the country's economy, which is 4.6 percent more than in 2019. However, this indicator is still low enough to achieve our development goals.

The low level of lending to the national economy's areas, weak corporate governance, high operational and credit risks, persistent nonperforming loans, insufficient investment to the banking

system, and limited number of foreign bank representative offices are among the shortcomings hindering increased financing of manufacturing enterprises, which needs to be addressed at the earliest possible.

In this regard, the National Bank should bring the legal and regulatory framework in line with the requirements of the latest international practice, and ensure introduction of the corporate governance in financial institutions and gradually increase their statutory capital.

In this process it is important to undertake necessary actions jointly with financial institutions to improve the quality of banking system assets, increase the portfolio of long-term loans to manufacturing enterprises, and vitalize the national rating system for credit institutions and insurance companies.

The National Bank and credit institutions need to implement all necessary actions to attract greater amount of domestic and foreign capital to the banking system, expand banking services through the introduction of financial and innovative technologies and thereby jointly with relevant ministries and agencies undertake actions to fully implement non-cash operations, to avoid human factor while performing settlement transactions with the population.

Improving the investment and business environment and encouraging direct investments to ensure sustainable national economic development is a priority in our economic policy. Therefore, the heads of the State Committee on Investments and State Property Management, other ministries and agencies, governors of province, town and district are mandated to bolster their activities to attract direct investment, further improve the investment climate and business environment, in particular to introduce electronic systems for submission and review of applications, issuance of licenses, permits and certificates for business activities and eliminate subjective factors in this process.

These agencies need to make sure the businesses are registered through electronic and digital systems fully and ensure operation of service centers for entrepreneurs and investors in towns and districts of the country.

Currently development of digital technologies is a key to economic competitiveness. We are not satisfied with the implementation of the programs endorsed in this area and it is important to undertake necessary actions promoting creation of friendly environment for strengthening of digitalization.

In order to strengthen the institutional framework of the digital economy, the development of information and communication infrastructure throughout the country, the digitalization of the national economy and the expansion of the "e-government" process, the Government and relevant agencies are mandated to undertake necessary actions for establishment of an agency for innovation and digital technology of the President Office of Tajikistan.

In addition to this, in order to create favorable environment for engagement of citizens to the national economy, I propose to apply amnesty this year for legalization of funds and assets. The Government is mandated to draft and endorse relevant regulations for the implementation of this proposal.

Also, in order to eliminate unauthorized inspections or interference in the activities of investors and entrepreneurs, the State Committee on Investments and State Property Management along with relevant ministries and agencies should develop and submit to the Government relevant legal and regulatory documents at earliest possible.

The Ministry of Finance jointly with other ministries and agencies is mandated to finalize the draft revised Tax Code focusing on facilitation of doing business, in particular, manufacturing, and submit it to the Government by March 2021.

The Government has identified the contribution of the private sector in the "2030 National Development Strategy" as a driver for sustainable economic growth, the main tool for achievement of national goals and thereby creation of decent living conditions for people.

In the process of privatization of state property and implementation of individual projects on restructuring of natural monopolies and large state-owned enterprises, up to 90 percent of state assets were transferred to the private sector.

Thanks to the ongoing support by the State and the Government, the private sector has been developing steadily, and currently its share comprises 70% of our GDP, 68% of employment and 80% of the public budget tax revenues.

Currently, 70 public investment projects on development of various socio-economic sectors of the country with the total amount of about TJS 40 billion are under implementation. In 2020 alone, we signed 29 public investment agreements worth 10 billion TJS aimed at improving medical services, construction of education facilities, social protection, rural development, construction and rehabilitation of roads and energy facilities.

Since 2013, the Government has signed 17 direct investment agreements with domestic and foreign companies, which made it possible to establish 15 new manufacturing enterprises for a total amount of more than 10 billion TJS and employ more than 7,000 with permanent jobs.

In this regard, it is important to scale up activities on construction of metallurgical enterprises, ore processing, full cycle of mining and processing of non-ferrous and precious metals, development of machine-building, textile, food and pharmaceutical industries.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

After we attained independence, we completely revised our public policy in the field of industry by focusing on strengthened production and export of end products through the introduction of new technologies, increased use of local raw materials, their full processing and wider use of labor resources. As a result, over the past five years alone, we have produced more than 44 billion TJS worth of import-substituting products, which has significantly reduced the dependence of our domestic market on imported products.

In order to gradually increase the production of competitive industrial products, we have declared the intensive industrialization of the country as our fourth national goal.

In addition, the ministries of industry and new technologies, health and social protection and the State Committee on Investments and State Property Management are mandated to undertake specific and immediate actions to ensure the development of the pharmaceutical industry and training of highly qualified specialists with the skills for the application of the latest pharmaceutical technologies.

Tajikistan has rich mineral and non-mineral resources, such as ferrous, non-ferrous, precious and rare metals, rare and precious stones, coal and other resources, estimated amounting hundreds of billions of Somoni. To date more than 600 mines and 800 deposits containing more than 60 types of mineral and non-mineral raw materials have been discovered and studied in Tajikistan. Currently, only 27% of them are being mined and processed, which is not enough to achieve our fourth strategic goal. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the capacity of the Main Geology Department in the field of geological studies, transition to international standards for minerals management, as well as control of hazardous geological processes and groundwater studies and monitoring.

With a view to developing the mining and other processing industries, the Main Department of Geology jointly with relevant ministries and agencies are mandated to develop and submit to the Government a draft State Program for Geological Development for 2021-2030 based on the analysis of resources and the level of geological studies.

In 1991, only 358 industrial enterprises were registered in the country. In 2020 alone, we established and put into operation 300 new industrial enterprises and workshops creating more than 6,500 jobs. As a result, last year the number of industrial enterprises reached 2.274, and we expect this number to exceed 3.500, or increase by more than 54 percent in the next seven years.

In this regard, the leadership of the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies, together with other ministries and agencies, governors of province, town and district are mandated to gradually address the challenges in order to continuously implement the activities on accelerated industrialization of the country.

The ministries of economic development and trade, industry and new technologies and education and science need to undertake necessary steps to establish an effective system of training and professional development of specialists at home and abroad, as well as industrial and scientific complexes, including innovation and technology parks. To this end, the number of students and specialists sent to educational institutions abroad for training and professional development every year should be doubled.

During our independence, we implemented 34 public investment projects with the total amount of 57.2 billion TJS to address the issues in the energy sector and ensure its development. At present, 17 other public investment projects worth 16.4 billion TJS are ongoing in this sector.

In this period, more than 2,000 MW of new capacity was put into operation, and the electricity generation increased from 17bn kW/h in 1991 to 21bn kW/h in 2019.

The Government of Tajikistan intends to expand the construction and reconstruction of a number of small and large vital facilities to ensure energy security in the near future and to fully meet the power needs of the population and the national economy.

Currently, activities on the reconstruction of Norak, Sarband and Qairoqqum hydropower plants at a total cost of 11.3 billion TJS, as well as the construction of 500-kv transmission lines and substations within the CASA-1000 project are underway and we started the construction of Sebzor HPP in Roshtqal'a District of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province.

This year, Sarband HPP will be completely reconstructed and put into operation. The project's cost is over 1.5 billion TJS and the HPP's capacity will reach 270 megawatts, which is 110 megawatts more than its current capacity.

Additionally, we will start the construction of a 500-kilovolt transmission line from the Roghun HPP to the Sangtuda converter substation increasing our electricity export capacity, and commence modernization activities to reduce power losses and introduce a modern metering system in Dushanbe, Bokhtar, Kulob, Panjakent, Istaravshan, Isfara, Konibodom, Buston and Danghara Districts at the amount of 2.4 billion TJS.

However, there are still a number of important issues to be addressed in the field of sustainable energy supply, including the efficient and rational use of energy. Therefore, the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources and industrial companies need to work with other relevant ministries and agencies to address the sector's issues, in particular on the counting of generation and consumption, reduce losses, use of energy-efficient devices.

Distinguished Members of Parliament!

In recent years, the road and transport sector has been developing steadily, and as a result, we have achieved one of our strategic goals, i.e. connectivity of our country with other economies of the region.

To this end, over the years of independence, we have implemented 53 public investment projects amounting 20.3 billion TJS in the transport sector, and built put into operation more than 2,200 km of international roads. The activities implemented in this area made it possible for Tajikistan to improve its position by 20 points in the global road quality ranking of the annual international survey within the Global Competitiveness Report over the past two years and the World Economic Forum ranked Tajikistan as the 50th in its study among 141 countries. In this process, we plan to build and put into operation more than 1,500 km of international roads in the years to come.

Currently, 15 public investment projects with the total amount of 8 billion TJS are under implementation in the transport sector and we expect to complete 4 of these initiatives. Dushanbe-Qizilqala section of the Dushanbe-Bokhtar highway at a cost of 1.6 billion TJS, Kulob-Shamsiddin Shohin and Shkev-Qalaikhumb sections of Kulob-Qalaikhumb highway at a cost of 780 million TJS and Kulob-Muminobod highway at a cost of 350 million TJS will be commissioned within these projects.

This year, we will start the implementation of 10 other public investment projects with the total amount of 8 billion TJS to construct and renovate transport and communications infrastructure and construct transit corridors.

These projects will construct the roads of Obi Garm-Nurobod, sections of Qalaaikhumb – Vanj in Dushanbe-Kulma highway, Qizilqala-Bokhtar of Dushanbe-Bokhtar, and motorways of Hulbuk-Temurmaliq-Kangurt, Bokhtar-Dangara and Khujand-Konibodom, bridges on the Panj river in Kokul area of Farkhor District, and on Ghund river in Khorugh Town, and reconstruct anti-avalanche corridors in Barsem area of Shughnon District. This year, we will finalize the design of Danghara-Guliston and Guliston-Kulob motorways and start their construction in 2022.

In this regard, the ministries of transport, finance and State Committee on Investments and State Property Management have to take necessary actions to ensure high quality and timely implementation of the projects and the use of modern technologies. The Ministry of Transport jointly with other relevant ministries and agencies need to strengthen the transport infrastructure, create transit corridors, ensure access to sea ports and establish border terminals and logistic centers.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

According to the analyses the agricultural production average growth made 7.3 percent annually between 1997-2020 and increased by five times in this period.

The incentives offered to the livestock, poultry and fishery sector gave a serious impetus to the development of these sectors. As a result, in 2020 the number of poultry farms reached 181 and increased by 2.7 times against 2017. In 2020, the production of poultry meat amounted to 31,000 tons and eggs reached almost one billion pieces, which increased by 4.5 and 5.5 times respectively compared to 2017. The last year, the number of fish farms increased by 35%, and fish production increased by 2.3 times compared to 2017.

The meat import to Tajikistan decreased from 10700 tons in 2014 to 180 tons in 2020, or by 60 times. The poultry meat imports in 2020 decreased by more than 3 times compared to 2017. In 2020 the production of grain increased by more than 4.6 times, potatoes 7.7 times, vegetables and melons by 4 times, and fruits by 3 times respectively compared to 1991.

During the independence, 22 public investment projects with the total amount of 5.4 billion TJS were implemented on development of agriculture, including construction and reconstruction of irrigation infrastructure, development of new lands, improvement of land reclamation, the agriculture sector equipment with the necessary machinery, high quality seeds and access of the sector's players to finance. Currently, 7 other projects amounting 2.4 billion TJS are under implementation.

As part of the implementation of programs on development of individual sectors, the area of orchards and vineyards in the country has reached more than 200,000 hectares and increased by 2.2 times compared to 1991.

Thus, more than 112,000 hectares of new orchards and vineyards have been created in the country during the independence, which has been significantly contributing to the country's food security, public employment, and growth of export and supply of the food and garment industries with raw materials.

To this end, it is very important to further increase agricultural production and ensure the efficient use of water and arable land, innovative technologies and advanced agricultural machinery and create intensive orchards.

In this regard, the leaders of province, town and district, heads of farm, individual farmers and families need to make sure to effectively use the land resources, primarily household and presidential lands, store and use high quality seed and thereby obtain up to three harvest, especially in 2021. Today we see the results of the conscientious work of farmers and the measures taken by the Government in the abundance of our own products.

Given the current complex situation in the world, we need to make sure to be prepared for any potential challenge and avoid any scarcity and shortage of food products that our population might encounter. To strengthen the public support to farmers and facilitate the abundance of the consumer market, I propose to exempt all farmers in the country from the single land tax for one year, i.e in 2021. The Government should take steps to find additional sources to reimburse this tax.

At the same time, the ministries of agriculture, finance, economic development and trade, the state committees for investment and state property management, as well as land management and geodesy need to undertake strict actions to encourage domestic and foreign investment to develop the sector, establish logistics centers and ensure processing, packaging and export of agricultural products in line with the market requirements and international quality standards.

Nowadays, tourism is a driver for economic growth and fast growing sector in the world. Having recognized the importance of this sector in the national economy, we have identified the development of tourism as one of our priorities and declared the 2019-2021 as the Period of Rural Development, Tourism and Folk Crafts.

The analysis shows that in 2018, for the first time since independence, the number of tourists reached almost 1.2 million, which is 2.6 times more than in 2017. In 2019, tourists comprised 1,26 million of the total number of foreign visitors to Tajikistan. Some 145 newly established travel agencies were licensed during 2018-2020, and a total of 224 companies entered the tourism market in this period.

Thanks to these initiatives and the incentives provided by the Government in this area, the private sector has expanded, the number of hotels and other service infrastructure has increased, and these measures promoted the rural development, especially those located on tourist routes. This process needs to be further scaled up.

In this period, Tajikistan has been included in the top ten most attractive countries for tourists, top ten countries for hiking, top five for simplified visa system, the Pamir Highway was among the top ten amazing beautiful roads in the world and Dushanbe was among the top 10 safe sites.

However, disregard of these achievements and given the final year of the Period of Rural Development, Tourism and Folk Crafts initiative, the Committee for Tourism Development and other relevant authorities, including heads of province, town and district are mandated to undertake immediate actions to increase the share of tourism in our country's development, address social issues, bring services in line with international standards, explore new ways to create tourism infrastructure, and attract more domestic and foreign tourists, and focus on development of domestic tourism.

Distinguished Members of Parliament!

Addressing social issues has always been at the heart of the policy of the Tajik State and the Government, as the spheres of science, education and health are the core for socio-economic progress. Last year, 157 primary, general secondary, and secondary vocational schools as well as additional classrooms for 63,000 seats were built and put into operation in the country. Overall, 3020 educational facilities with more than 1.3 million seats have been built and put into operation since 1991.

We need to create all the necessary conditions to improve the quality of education at all levels, and undertake necessary actions to make sure the parents, community members and teachers feel higher sense of responsibility.

The new brand institutions such as presidential schools, lyceums and gymnasiums lead in this dimension and every year more than 97% of graduates of these schools get admitted by higher education institutions in the country and abroad. The Ministry of Education and Science needs to widely replicate the initiative and the experience of these schools across the country to improve the education quality.

With a view to further improving the quality of education, based on proposal I made during my Address to the Parliament last year, we declared 2020-2040 as the period of natural, hard and math sciences followed by the endorsement of the Government Action Plan for 2020-2025 on implementation of this initiative.

The ministries of finance, education and science, the National Academy of Sciences as well as other ministries and committees with educational institutions in their structure are mandated to cooperate with the heads of province, town and district to prevent negligence in implementing this decision and to equip math and science classrooms, and report to the Government accordingly.

In addition, with a view to further encouraging youth and teenagers, scientists, researchers and teachers to study natural, hard and math sciences I propose to annually hold national competition subtitled "Science - Lantern to Enlightenment". Previous competitions, such as "Tajikistan - My Beloved Homeland" and "Book is the Lantern to Wisdom" have proved a very important point that unique talents are growing among our teenagers and young people deserving our full support and encouragement.

I hope that in the next competition, the young talents will test their knowledge and skills, and play a valuable role in the development of natural, hard and math sciences in the future. Therefore, it is important to arrange this competition at high level and increase the amount of prizes.

In addition, the Government, the Ministry of Education and Science, the National Testing Center, all government agencies and heads of province, town and district are mandated to ensure admission of the competition winners by universities of their choice without admission examination and to provide financial incentives to morally and materially encourage their teachers and parents to further promote education of their children.

Our objective from these initiatives is to raise the level of literacy of people, primarily teenagers and youth, strengthen their sense of patriotism, national identity, respect and study of the Tajik language, ancient history and culture and develop scientific and technical knowledge and science in the country.

At the same time, one of the main issues in the field of education is the lack of pre-school education institutions in most towns and districts. Last year 14 preschool institutions for 2520 children were constructed only, which does not meet the current demand.

In this regard, the heads of the ministries of education and science, economic development and trade, finance, the State Committee on Investment and State Property Management, governors of province, town and district are mandated to undertake necessary actions for construction of kindergartens and child development centers through encouragement of entrepreneurs and mobilization of funding from other sources and take this issue very seriously and with a high sense of responsibility.

As I have mentioned on many occasions, prior to attaining independence Tajikistan had 13 higher education institutions with 69000 students only. Currently there are 41 such institutions with 245,000 students and about 40,000 Tajik students study abroad.

I would like to highlight that the leaders of the Ministry of Education and Science, and higher education institutions need to pay greater attention to the quality in the admission of prospective students and training of professionals. The Ministry of Education and Science is also tasked to organize compulsory courses of foreign languages and information technology at all levels of education starting from preschools to gymnasiums, lyceums and other institutions, and to strictly control the quality of training in this area.

Study of young Tajik people in higher education and research institutions in other countries is one of the important initiatives introduced by the Government for development of science and education. Currently, more than 40000 bachelor, masters and PhD students from Tajikistan pursue their education in other countries.

We need to increase the number of young talents studying abroad through Durakhshandagon International Scholarship of the President of Tajikistan, international education programs and other facilities. With a view to motivating students and young researchers, we significantly increased the amount and lots of of the Presidential Scholarships last year. Concurrently, at the end of the last year we established a special State Award for scientists and teachers of math, hard and natural sciences and every year 15 outstanding talents are selected as the winners of this Award.

With a view to ensuring state support and strengthening the social status of Bachelor, Master and PhD students I propose to increase their scholarships by 30% on September 1, 2021.

According to the data we have, every year up to 500 teachers, scholars and researchers from the institutes of the National Academy of Sciences, line academies and other higher education institutions of the country are engaged in programs on exchange of experience, retraining and masters and PhD studies. However we cannot be satisfied with this numbers.

The National Academy of Sciences, other line academies and higher education institutions of the country need to pay greater attention to this issue further. In this regard, with a view to increasing the number of young talents studying math, hard and natural sciences abroad, the Ministry of Education and Science, the National Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade are mandated to draft and submit to the Government the Program on Training of Young Scientists (2021-2030) within the next three months.

During our independence, we have been constantly strengthening the physical infrastructure, laboratory and staff capacity of scientific institutions of the National Academy of Sciences. For example, while in 1991 the National Academy of Sciences had 148 graduate students only, then in 2020 this number reached up to 1.200, or increased by almost 8 times. The number of members of the National Academy of Sciences has doubled as well. The scientists need to take further actions towards the areas identified by the Government and proactively contribute to the development of the country.

Dear Friends!

Whereby the healthcare is one of the most important social spheres, during independence the Government of Tajikistan has annually been increasing this sector's funding, which accounts to TJS 2.1 billion currently.

In this period, we have constructed more than 1,300 new healthcare facilities, and trained about 25,000 healthcare professionals with higher education and 147,000 paramedical staff.

Currently our healthcare sector employs about 110,000 staff, including 75,000 doctors and paramedical specialists, with 68% of them being women.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again offer my sincere gratitude to all healthcare workers, especially to doctors and nurses, who saved the lives of thousands of our compatriots during the outbreak of COVID-19 by remaining faithful to the oath they have made and serving the Tajik people honestly.

I also would like to thank all the people of the country, who demonstrated patience and did not panic during such a difficult period, on the contrary, they have united, adhered to the principle of mutual respect, supported doctors and their families and made hard efforts alongside the Government. At the same time, my appreciation goes to patriotic entrepreneurs and other generous individuals, who have supported the healthcare facilities, doctors and needy families with medical equipment, medicines and foodstuffs.

We thank the God for not having any case of COVID-19 infection in our country since the early January, thus currently Tajikistan is free of COVID-19 cases. However this does not mean we can neglect the precaution measures related to the health of ourselves and others, in contrary we need to be cautious and seriously follow the personal and public safety requirements and protect each other like before.

In 2020, the public budget spent almost 1 billion TJS to purchase the needed devices, medicines and personal protection equipment for the healthcare facilities. Another priority of the healthcare sector is its upgrade to the latest requirements. To this end in 2020, we constructed 108 new healthcare facilities and implemented capital repair activities in 283 facilities.

Based on analysis the cases of infection with agents of various diseases have turned into one of the serious issues in the healthcare sector lately. In this regard, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection needs to study the possibility of establishing a National Microbiology and Viral Studies Center and submit its proposals to the Government on the ways of addressing this issue.

In 2020, a number of effective measures have been taken to strengthen the social support of pensioners, persons with disabilities, orphans and poor families, and more than 700,000 people from vulnerable groups have received additional social assistance amounting more than 250 million TJS in total. The Government pays constant attention to the protection of health and care of orphans, persons with disabilities, the elderly and the people with no custodians through timely actions on improvement of their social state.

With a view to continuing the Government's activities on the public support to vulnerable groups, I propose to increase by 20% the allowance of persons with congenital disabilities on September 1, 2021 based on the Laws of the Republic of Tajikistan "On pensions of citizens" and "On insurance and state pensions".

I also propose to increase the pension of children with disabilities under the age of 18 by 20% and the pension of the persons with disability of first category by 50% appointed based on the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On Insurance and State Pensions". This initiative will improve the social conditions of about 100,000 people from these vulnerable groups.

In this context, the Government is to take actions on the construction of three Presidential Boarding Schools for full orphans in Dushanbe City, and in Khatlon and Soughd provinces. It is indispensable to create the best conditions for education and life in these institutions, like they are in place in international presidential schools.

The Committee for Architecture and Construction jointly with the Directorate for Construction of Government Buildings need to draw the design of these facilities by early October and submit it to the President for approval. In this regard, the Government, the Ministry of Education and Science, governors of province, town and district and heads of educational institutions are mandated to undertake all necessary measures to make sure that every full orphan is covered with occupational training, employment and run and independent life.

Our public policy attaches a particular attention to the regulation of labor relations, development of the labor market and public employment. However, based on the analysis, the level of professionalism of laborers does not still meet the requirements of the labor market, and this issue needs in major reforms. It is important for the reform process to focus on the need for training of professionals in hundreds of other occupations in Tajikistan.

Currently, 62 primary technical and vocational education facilities train professionals on 97 specialties and five adult training centers with 41 branches and 21 representative offices train specialists on 93 occupations in the country. Based on our guidance, this year 47 centers of national and modern crafts will be launched within technical lyceums and colleges to teach 50 occupations and crafts.

However, we are aware that most of these institutions have outdated teaching aids and do not train

students on the use of modern equipment and technologies. In addition, the primary vocational education institutions and adult education centers are lack of specialty tailored textbooks. It is therefore crucial to undertake specific actions for implementation of serious reforms, update of the education system and enhancement of the physical infrastructure of the primary and secondary vocational training institutions. At the same time, the ministries of labor, migration and employment, and education and science are mandated to take necessary actions to review the curricula and training plans for folk crafts and occupational skills, and supply these institutions with textbooks.

In this regard, it is important to undertake specific actions on major reforms, modernization of the education system and strengthening the physical infrastructure of primary and secondary vocational education institutions. In this regard, I would like to urge on assign to each primary vocational education institution a person in charge out of members of the Government, Parliament and heads of central and local authorities in order to address their issues within the next two years.

Tajikistan's social policy pays an utmost attention to enhancement of the role of women and girls. In the elections of 2020 8 and 15 women were elected as Members of the Upper and Lower Chambers comprising 25.8 and 23.8 percent of its total membership respectively, which increased by 4% compared to the previous elections.

The number of women in the local assemblies reached 41.5 percent in Dushanbe, about 35 percent in Khatlon, more than 33 percent in Soughd, more than 34 percent in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province and about 30 percent in republican subordination districts.

Talented, professional and enterprising women are increasingly involved in the civil service and public administration. As of January 1, 2021 women make 4,485 or 23.4 percent of the total number of 19,210 civil servants.

The contribution of women and girls in the development of science, education and health is increasing. Currently, women make 73% of the staff in the education sector and 68% in the healthcare and social protection.

Ladies also have a visible role in the agriculture and economic development. They lead 35,600 farms and 77,400 enterprises.

Granting loans is one of the ways to improve the economic situation women and their families. In 2020 women entrepreneurs were issued 2.1 billion TJS of loans.

The Government will further support the initiatives of women in the country and will take additional actions to engage greater number of them to senior positions. To this end, the Committee on Women and Family Affairs is mandated to develop a draft resolution of the Government on the "2021-2030 National Strategy for Enhancement of the Role of Women in the Republic of Tajikistan" and its action plan for 2021-2025 and submit them to the Government for review and endorsement.

Our youth have a valuable contribution to the development of all economic and social spheres of the country, by actively participating in the construction of nationally important grand facilities, carrying military service-protection of national borders, promotion of the country's safety and security and they deserve acknowledgment and our pride.

In recent years the youth play a significant role in development of sport and its popularization, and promotion of healthy lifestyle among the population.

While by 1991 there were only about 1000 sport facilities in the country, their number reached 10,220 in 2020, meaning 9 times increase in the quantity of such facilities during the independence.

In 2020 alone - the year of pandemic and difficult economic and financial conditions- 147 sports facilities amounting TJS 1,63 billion were constructed and commissioned for teenagers and youth in different towns and districts of the country.

With a view to encouraging Tajik sportsmen in 2015 we have established the Presidential Award on

Sports, and so far almost 200 young sportsmen received this award.

We will further attach a primary attention to the development and popularization of sports, promotion of healthy lifestyle and increased participation of youth in political and social life, their inspiration to learning and innovations. We will also give high priority to the support of young talents and building modern and well equipped infrastructure for youth.

I would like to highlight the importance of improvement of the soft and poetic Tajik language for our state language is the most sacred and precious treasure of our nation.

In globalization era and in the context of clash of cultures and languages, alongside learning foreign languages, including Russian and English, we also need to make constant efforts to promote the wider use of the Tajik language.

I would like to recall that this is the task of every patriotic citizen of our country, including parents, teachers, education and science representatives, the intelligentsia, representatives of mass media, poets and scholars.

Tajiks have a rich culture and ancient history which we are proud of. For example, the 5500-year history of Sarazm alone, which is acknowledged by the world known scientist, prestigious research centers and the reputable international organization of UNESCO, proves the unconventional ancient history of Tajik nation.

Paying a tribute to the culture and the ancient history of our nation, studying the inheritance of thousands of our well-known celebrities, including poets, writers, scientists and philosophers is the task of every Tajik patriotic citizen.

We have started creative efforts on preservation of historical sites and in cooperation with international organizations have been trying to further promote the tangible and intangible heritage of our country across the world.

Therefore, the ministries of education and science, culture and the National Academy of Science are mandated to take necessary steps to explore the history and heritage of the Tajik nation, ensure compulsory study of the Tajik Nation's history, state language and geography of Tajikistan in all educational institutions with the medium in the language of minorities in a proper way, and make sure the textbooks are drafted, translated and made available to these institutions in a timely manner.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Last year the new convocation of the Parliament of Tajikistan was elected, and I have participated at their first sessions and shared my views on improvement of the legal framework and further enhancement of the Parliament's activities.

I believe, by adopting laws and resolutions the Members of the Parliament will further contribute to the development of the society. However, they should not be limited with adoption of legal and regulatory documents. They also in cooperation with the executive authorities need to make sure the laws are in line with the current needs and availing their legislator rights draft legal and regulatory documents meeting the need of the society, development and progress.

I believe that our supreme legislator body will further improve parliamentary hearings to discuss the laws, the practice of law enforcement, socio-economic programs and other burning day to day issues and thereby contribute to the society progress.

At the same time the members of parliament at all levels, starting from the Upper and Lower Chambers down to local assemblies need to be proactive and enterprising, perform their duties on development governance pillars honestly, raise the public awareness and faithfully contribute to landscaping and development activities in their constituencies to ensure implementation of the our national policy on the ground.

During my meeting with judges on November 2019, I shared my views on the issues of the rule of law and justice, training of qualified specialists with high morality and professional skills, avoidance of corruption and some shortcomings in the activities of judicial authorities.

Therefore, the leadership of Supreme Court and Supreme Economic Court need to pay a strong attention to the professional development of judges, training, selection and adequate deployment of specialists.

The volatile situation in the globe together with sustained current challenges and threats to the humanity, such as terrorism and extremism, arms and drugs trafficking, and cyber and transnational crimes requires our utmost attention to our national security, as the followers of terrorist and extremist organizations try to destabilize the situation in the society and provoke religious and belief based conflicts, and widely use Internet to mislead the population, in particularly youth to eventually recruit them into banned organizations.

I would like to emphasize that the enemies of our nation and their foreign sponsors have not yet abandoned their nefarious and selfish plans that they had in early 90s. They are still trying from abroad by all possible tools to destabilize our society and impose foreign cultures and religions on our people.

The glorious people of Tajikistan, especially the dedicated youth should bear this in mind and be always precautionous.

As I have underscored on many occasions, the activities of such extremist and radical movements are one of the main and actual threats to Tajikistan and other countries in the region, which require us taking joint actions.

To continue the activities in this area, the Prosecutor General's Office is mandated to draft a new 2021-2025 National Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan on Combating Terrorism and Extremism and submit to the Government for the further review and endorsement.

We have declared many times that Tajikistan is a natural ally of other countries and international and regional organizations in countering terrorism and extremism, illicit drug and weapon smuggling, cybercrime and other organized transnational crimes.

Therefore, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Committee for National Security need to strengthen cooperation in this area with their counterparts in other countries, as well as regional and international institutions.

Corruption is a jeopardizing and dangerous phenomenon in the society, and the fight against it must be the main task of public authorities, civil society and every citizen of our country. In this regard, there is a need for anticorruption entities to take further actions aimed at preventing corrupt acts and creating the environment of zero tolerance by involving public authorities, representatives of mass media and civil society.

Given the difficult situation in the region, the Government of Tajikistan attaches a primary attention to the strengthening of border protection, especially on the Tajik-Afghan border, and takes the necessary actions to prevent drug and arms trafficking, spread of extremist literature and commitment of other transnational crimes along the state border.

I would like to recall, that these actions are taken not only to protect the interests of our country, but also to maintain peace and stability in other far and near, particularly neighboring countries. In this regard, the State Committee for National Security is tasked to jointly with other military authorities and law enforcement agencies take necessary steps and strengthen the control to ensure stable protection of the state borders and maintain a high level of military preparedness of the Border Troops.

The current situation in the world and in the region urges us to pay a serious attention to the supply

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of our Armed Forces as never before, since the most important task - the protection our state borders, ensuring security of the state and the nation, protection of the public stability, prevention and elimination of any external threats and challenges - is vested in the the Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies.

Strengthening our country's defense capacity and military preparedness depends on the training of professional personnel devoted to their State and Nation, in the the spirit of patriotism and self-identity.

During our independence more than 10,000 of our youth have studied at local and foreign military educational institutions and have faithfully served their Motherland in different units of the Armed Forces. And nowadays thousands of our young people study in such institutions as well.

At the same time, taking into consideration the current situation we need to modernize our Armed Forces and equip them with advanced military supplies.

I would like to emphasize that maintain the Armed Forces in constant combat readiness is the true guarantee of state protection from any threats and challenges.

Therefore, the Ministry of Defense should take necessary actions to develop and implement public programs on development of defense industry, strengthening the activity of industrial enterprises on production of special devices and military equipment repair, and supply the Armed Forces with the latest weapons and ammunition.

The Ministry of Defense is also mandated to strengthen its activities on engagement of reserve personnel mobilization, promote their training on the military registration in towns and districts, and pay a primary attention to stronger military preparedness, arrangement of military sessions, field training and military exercises through the use of latest methods.

The leadership of military authorities and law enforcement agencies need to create favorable living and military service conditions, constantly improve the professionalism of officers and military preparedness of soldiers, their professional training in the spirit of devotion to the Motherland, strict compliance with the service discipline in accordance with the military charter and counteraction to any violation of laws, particularly corrupt behaviors and ensure the proper deployment and of personnel. Distinguished Members of Parliament! During its independence Tajikistan has established diplomatic relations with 178 countries and became an active member of international and regional organizations. In this context we have been strengthening friendly relations and cooperation in all areas, first of all with our close neighbors-Central Asian states, as well as with the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which are of particular importance in Tajikistan's system of interstate relations, and we are set to further pursue this policy.

The issues of strengthening and expansion of multifaceted cooperation with our strategic and development partners-the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, the European Union and the United States of America will remain as a priority in Tajikistan's foreign policy.

Based on our long-term national strategic goals, we will also develop and expand friendly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation with friendly countries of the Islamic World, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific, Africa and America.

The Government of Tajikistan since 2007 has been reforming the system of movement of foreign citizens and has established a simplified visa procedure for citizens of 112 countries. It is necessary to further improve this process in order to attract more foreign tourists and investors.

We will establish partnership relations and continue strengthening cooperation with the world community within the international and regional organizations.

In this regard, we will continue and expand our cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Economic Cooperation Organization and the Organization of Islamic

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Cooperation, development partners as well as international and regional financial institutions.

This year Tajikistan commences its Presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization marks its 20th anniversary this year. Tajikistan has been significantly contributing to the progress and development of this organization from the initial days of its establishment as one of its founder states.

Thanks to the coherent implementation of its foreign policy, Tajikistan has been able to make a meaningful input in addressing various global issues.

In this context, Tajikistan is internationally acknowledged as a lead country in addressing a wide range of security, water, environment and climate change issues.

I have stressed on several occasions that the maintenance of peace, stability and security in Central Asian region is on the top of our foreign policy priorities.

Everybody is well aware that Tajikistan is at the frontline of combating current threats and challenges and our country plays an important role for region's the security.

In this regard, we will continue close and beneficial security cooperation with the countries of the region and neighbors, including the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and other partners.

We are convinced that prominent stability and security in Afghanistan can be achieved only through Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled peace building process.

Further appropriate introduction of our constructive plans, peace oriented initiatives and good intentions and will of Tajikistan at the international stage as well as full-fledged presence of our country in the process of addressing the current global issues are among the objectives for achievement of which we will further strive.

To this end, we will continue our international activities with the greater efforts in accordance with the provisions of our Foreign Policy Concept Framework.

Dear Compatriots!

Distinguished Members of the Parliament!

The supreme goal of the Tajik State and the Government is to ensure sustainable economic growth of our country through increased efficient use of available resources and opportunities, finding new windows for development, improvement of education, healthcare, and human resources and thereby improve the living standards of the glorious people of Tajikistan.

Strengthening the international image of Tajikistan is among our most important objectives in this process. These goals oblige first of all members of the Government and the Parliament, heads of public institutions, including all civil servants, as well as entrepreneurs and generous philanthropists, and dedicated residents of our country to get united and work closely together towards the establishment of a democratic, law-based, secular, social and progressive state.

The 2021 is a special year for our Motherland, the year when we celebrate our Grand National Holiday -30th anniversary of our state independence.

The Government endorsed its Action Plan on landscaping and development to decently celebrate this sacred historic date.

Members of the Government and heads of public institutions appointed as persons in charge for towns and districts, governors of province, town, district and village are mandated to ensure implementation of activities envisaged in this plan of action with high quality and in a timely manner.

I would like to emphasize once again that the main task of each of us, starting from the Head of the State to the members of the Parliament and the Government, heads of government agencies and all civil servants is to serve faithfully to the people of Tajikistan and stand ready to help the people any time they need.

The 2020 with all its challenges has proved that we have the necessary strength, opportunities, experience, conditions and resources for further improving our living standards, developing our Motherland and promoting prosperity of our independent state.

We need to be entrepreneurial and initiators and make our direct contribution to the development of our ancestral land. This means, we have to organize our activities for the prosperity of our beloved homeland in a way so that every citizen of our country becomes our partner and contributes to this process.

Although most of the facilities and buildings planned for the celebration of the national holiday have been already commissioned (out of 25,000 facilities and more than 18,300 facilities), but still it is necessary to expand the work to the fullest extent and ensure the implementation of the approved plan.

I believe in the creative capacity of the glorious people of my country, including motivated youth, patriotic and skilled women, and with full confidence I reiterate that we will all together work further diligently and faithfully to change the image of our beloved Motherland by developing its every single remote corner by the celebration of the Grand 30th Anniversary of independence of our beloved Tajikistan.

Every single citizen of our country, every youngster and adult must always bear in mind that protecting the independence and freedom as the most valuable gift for every honorable citizen, is not an easy task in today's difficult and volatile environment.

The protection of this invaluable credit necessitates each of us to make consistent efforts day and night, prove our national honor and dignity, work hard faithfully and devotedly, and most importantly be in unity and solidarity.

In the most difficult and sensitive environment in the current world, we must always stand by and support each other as we have inherited this good legacy from our noble ancestors. The glorious people of Tajikistan demonstrated this good ancestral legacy during the last very difficult and stressful year.

Tajiks are an ancient Nation in the world with more than 6,000-year history and since the ancient times we have been acknowledged as a highly educated nation dedicated to science, poetry and reading, skilled in state building and governance, architecture and urbanization, in other words, creators of a civilization.

We are proud that Tajikistan indeed is the place of origin to Navruz, Sada, Tirgon and Mehrgon holidays and each of these holidays have more than 6,000-year history. We can also be proud that ancient Navruz is declared to be a global holiday.

We are blessed to have been able to use without any difficulty the precious and eternal heritage of our ancestors created more than 1,000 years ago in educating and upbringing our young generation and introduce it to the people around the globe.

The honorable people of Tajikistan have a high sense of patriotism and nationhood and with such good and creative qualities can take even greater steps to turn their sacred homeland into a prosperous country and up to date with the current world.

I wish good health and happiness, and success to all noble people of my country, to the members of Parliament and Government, dear parents, military officers of the Armed Forces and staff of the law enforcement agencies, intelligentsia, brave and courageous youth, patriotic and knowledgeable

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women, and peace and stability as well as greater progress to our beloved Tajikistan.

Thank you!

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