The University of World Economy and Diplomacy
Institute for Advanced International Studies

REPORT

UZBEKISTAN’S LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK THROUGH THE SDG LENS: DYNAMICS, STRUCTURAL SHIFTS, AND PRIORITIES (2019-2026)

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Executive summary

- Legal and regulatory activity is becoming less extensive in terms of the number of acts adopted, while the scope of regulation is becoming increasingly cross-sectoral;
- Two interconnected priorities consistently dominate the structure of regulatory policy: economic development and institution building, corresponding to SDG 8 and SDG 16. Throughout the period under review, these goals accounted for the highest number of act references.
- There is a gradual shift from institution building toward economic development. The gap between SDG 16 and SDG 8 in the dataset narrowed from 90 references in 2019 to 8 in 2025. This trend is particularly evident in presidential acts. Following 2021-2022, the focus changes: SDG 8 became the primary direction of presidential regulatory policy.
- The social agenda remains a stable element of the regulatory legal framework;
- The importance of previously underrepresented areas is gradually increasing. The presence of SDG 1, 10, 12, and especially SDG 13, is strengthening;
- The environmental agenda is gradually gaining prominence; however, its share in the overall structure of regulatory activity remains limited compared with social, economic, and institutional priorities.

List of Abbreviations:
SDG - Sustainable Development Goals
RLA - Regulatory legal acts
GD - Government Decisions
PA - Presidential Acts
LRU - Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan

I. Introduction.

Uzbekistan regards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a strategic guideline for the country's socio-economic and institutional development. The institutional foundation for SDG implementation was established by Resolution No. 841 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 20 October 2018 and subsequently updated by Resolution No. 83 of 21 February 2022, "On Additional Measures to Accelerate the Implementation of National Goals and Targets in the Field of Sustainable Development for the Period up to 2030." As part of this process, the global SDGs were adapted to national conditions: 16 national goals and 126 targets were approved and organized across six areas including economic well-being, social protection, the environment, healthcare, effective governance, and education. A notable example of the adaptation of the global SDGs is Goal 1, which at the global level calls for the "eradication of extreme poverty," whereas in Uzbekistan's national framework it is formulated as "reduction of the share of low-income population". This adjustment reflects national nuances, where "extreme poverty" as measured by international criteria has been largely eliminated. In addition, Uzbekistan excluded SDG 14, "Life Below Water," from its national framework, as the country is double-landlocked and has no access to oceans, seas, or marine resources.

The sustainable development agenda has subsequently been incorporated into the national strategic planning and state regulatory framework, including the national strategy "Uzbekistan – 2030." Nevertheless, adapting the SDGs involves not only the development of strategic documents and the definition of target indicators, but also the consistent integration of relevant priorities into the regulatory legal framework. The regulatory framework for sustainable development constitutes one of the most systematic tools for implementing state priorities, as it is through regulatory legal acts (RLA) that the directions of state policy are established, implementation mechanisms are defined, powers are distributed among state institutions, and the legal conditions necessary to achieve socio-economic, institutional, and environmental goals are formed.

At the same time, the existence of individual acts related to specific SDG does not, in itself, provide a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of Sustainable Development Goals integration into state regulation. This requires treating the regulatory framework as an integrated system and examining its structure, changes over time, the relative representation of different areas of sustainable development, the degree of cross-sectoral interconnection, and the areas that are comparatively less represented in practice.

Such an approach makes it possible to move beyond the analysis of individual documents to identify the structure of the state's priorities in the field of sustainable development and how these priorities evolve over time.

Research objective. The objective of this analysis is to identify the nature and dynamics of the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into the regulatory legal framework of the Republic of Uzbekistan, determine key regulatory priorities and cross-sectoral linkages, and identify areas of sustainable development that are comparatively less represented.

Research methodology. The analysis covers regulatory legal acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted from 2019 through the first half of 2026 and includes three main groups of acts published in the national legislation database of the Republic of Uzbekistan lex.uz: Government Decisions (GD), Presidential Acts (PA), and Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan (LRU). The initial dataset comprises 6,878 regulatory legal acts, including 3,726 GDs, 2,501 PAs, and 651 LRUs.

The research methodology involves classifying each legal act according to one or more SDGs, based on its content and the areas it addresses. Where an act had a clearly defined objective, it was classified under one primary SDG. However, where an act covered several areas and pursued objectives of equal significance, assigning it to a single SDG would not have fully capture its multidimensional nature. In such cases, the act was classified into multiple SDGs. In this regard, the data presented reflect the frequency of the normative presence of the relevant goals, rather than the distribution of documents into mutually exclusive categories. Approximately 97.5% of all documents in the initial dataset were linked to at least one Sustainable Development Goal and included in the subsequent analysis. The remaining 2.5% were deliberately excluded from the sample due to the absence of a connection with the SDG agenda. Consequently, given the applied selection and classification methodology – which excludes irrelevant acts and allows a single act to be linked to multiple SDGs – the initial dataset of 6,878 acts resulted in a total of 8,291 SDG references. All subsequent analysis is therefore based on the number of SDG references rather than the actual number of regulatory acts.

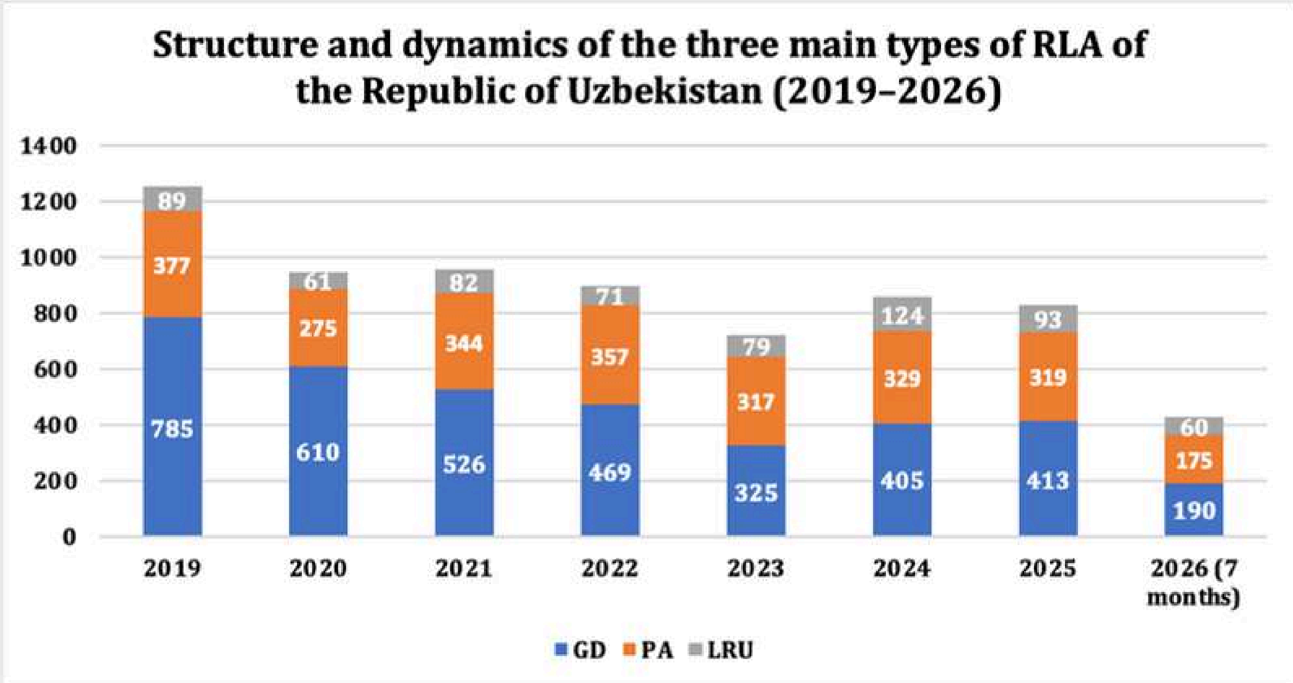
In addition, the indicators for 2020-2021 may have deviated from the normal trajectory of regulatory activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated emergency regulatory measures. The interpretation of the data therefore retains a certain margin of error. It should also be noted that 2026 is an incomplete observation period and is therefore used primarily to identify preliminary trends that require further validation upon completion of the full calendar year.

Practical significance. The practical significance lies in establishing an evidence base for the further improvement of strategic planning, cross-sectoral coordination, and the integration of the SDGs into state regulation. The results obtained make it possible to identify areas where regulatory policy has already established a firm presence, track the evolution of priorities, and highlight areas requiring further attention and deeper analysis. In a broader context, the findings may be used by government bodies and entities responsible for implementing the SDGs, international organizations and development partners, as well as think tanks and academic institutions, to more precisely align policy priorities, government programs, institutional responsibilities, financing mechanisms, and implementation outcomes regarding the sustainable development agenda.

Thus, this analysis examines the regulatory framework of the Republic of Uzbekistan not merely as a collection of regulatory legal acts, but also as a reflection of the transformation of state policy and the evolving structure of sustainable development priorities. Its findings provide a foundation for subsequently identifying regulatory gaps, cross-sectoral interlinkages, and potential areas for further policy refinement aimed at achieving the SDGs.

II. Main part.

By and large, despite some fluctuations, there is a general downward trend in the annual number of the three types of RLAs: their total count decreased by 34.1% (from 1,251 in 2019 to 825 in 2025).

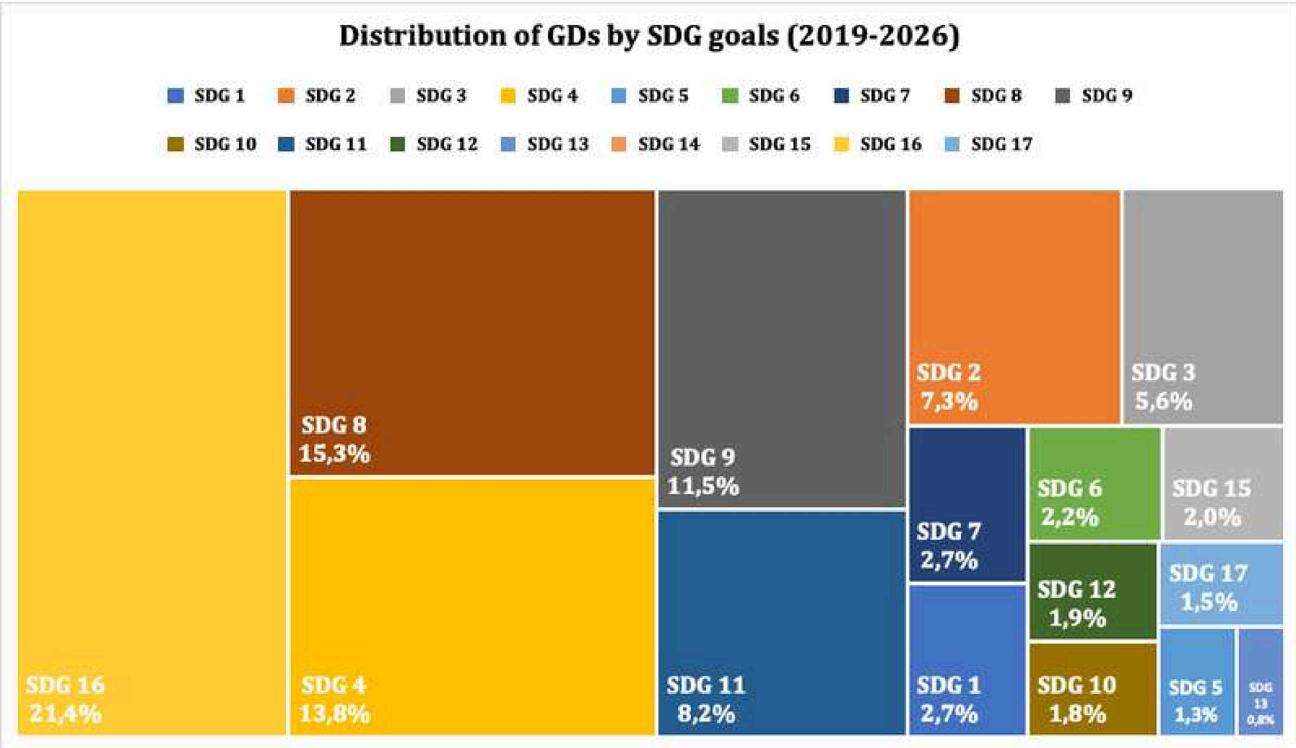


1. Government decisions show the most pronounced reduction in quantitative indicators over the period under review. The number of acts fell from 776 in 2019 to 403 in 2025 - a decrease of 48.1% - while the number of SDG references dropped from 847 to 478, or by 43.6%. This decline occurred primarily prior to 2023, when 318 acts were adopted and 366 SDG references were recorded.

Structure of GDs

SDG	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total quantity	Share for the entire period
SDG 1	3	19	21	16	12	22	18	4	115	2,7%
SDG 2	68	34	48	48	25	35	46	11	315	7,3%
SDG 3	36	42	40	31	22	26	35	8	240	5,6%
SDG 4	133	80	108	76	44	51	69	34	595	13,8%
SDG 5	6	8	11	11	4	9	4	1	54	1,3%
SDG 6	22	17	17	16	6	8	9	2	97	2,2%
SDG 7	20	18	9	22	8	19	15	7	118	2,7%
SDG 8	143	89	106	85	54	92	71	20	660	15,3%
SDG 9	117	98	94	48	26	53	38	23	497	11,5%
SDG 10	9	8	18	4	5	12	15	7	78	1,8%

SDG 11	73	50	55	32	32	53	37	22	354	8,2%
SDG 12	12	12	13	4	6	8	17	10	82	1,9%
SDG 13	2	1	5	7	4	8	2	4	33	0,8%
SDG 14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,0%
SDG 15	13	15	12	12	10	7	11	8	88	2,0%
SDG 16	175	163	133	129	100	96	84	46	926	21,4%
SDG 17	15	13	10	6	8	5	7	2	66	1,5%
Total number of references	847	667	700	547	366	504	478	209	4318	100,0%
Total number in the sample after exclusions	776	606	521	458	318	400	403	190	3672	



The structure of Government decisions is primarily centered on **SDGs 16, 8, 4, and 9**, which accounted for approximately 62.2% of all references during the 2019-2025 period. The next tier comprises **SDGs 11, 2, and 3**. At the same time, a decrease in concentration has been observed over the period; the reduction in the total volume of decisions was accompanied by a more even distribution across the various SDGs.

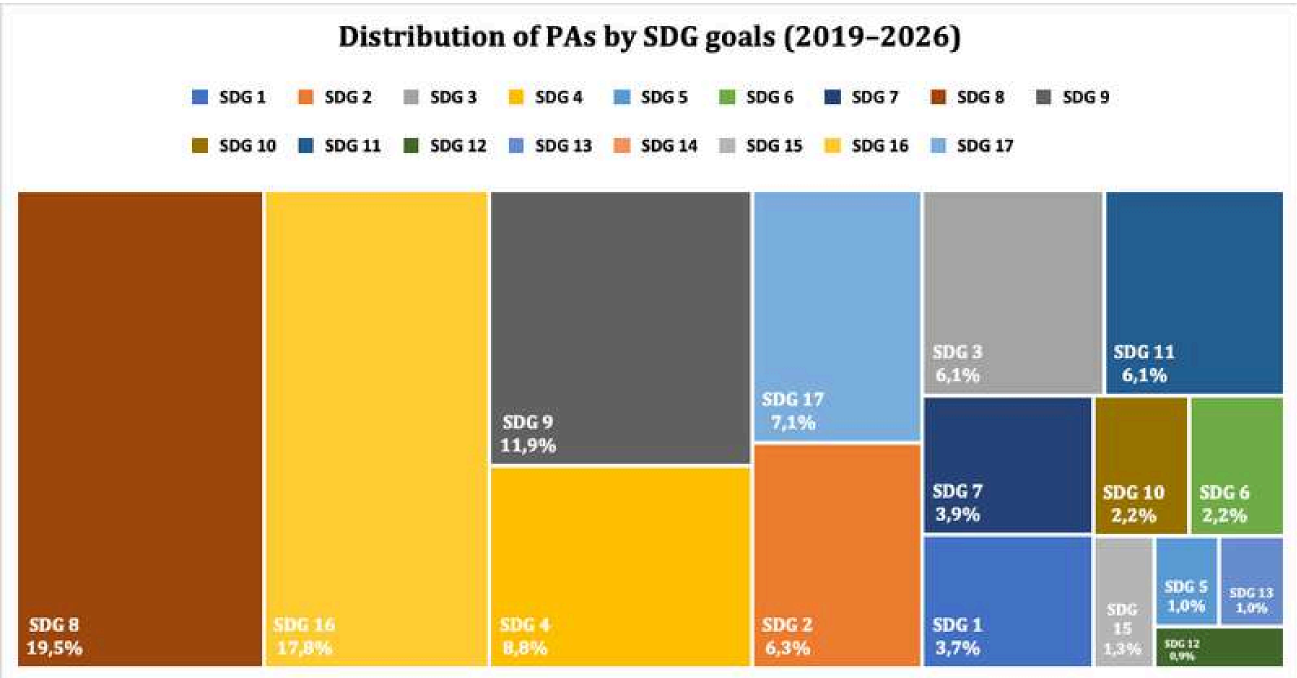
The most pronounced structural decline is observed for **SDG 9**. The number of references to it fell from 117 in 2019 to 38 in 2025 - a drop of 67.5% - while its share of the annual total decreased from 13.8% to 7.9%. **SDG 16** maintained the leading position throughout the period, although the extent of its dominance gradually diminished.

The number of references dropped from 175 in 2019 to 84 in 2025, and its share fell from 20.7% to 17.6%. Notably, this decline followed a consistent pattern: 175 → 163 → 133 → 129 → 100 → 96 → 84. **SDG 8** also saw an absolute decrease - from 143 to 71 references - yet it retained the second position. References to SDG 4 fell from 133 to 69, with its share shifting from 15.7% to 14.4%.

At the same time, several goals that were previously less prominently represented are showing an upward trend. The number of references to **SDG 1** rose from 3 to 18, with its share increasing from approximately 0.4% to 3.8%. For **SDG 10**, the figure rose from 9 to 15, and the share from 1.1% to 3.1%; for **SDG 12**, the figures went from 12 to 17 and from 1.4% to 3.6%, respectively. **SDG 3** is particularly illustrative: the absolute figure remained virtually unchanged – 36 in 2019 and 35 in 2025. Yet, due to the overall reduction in the total dataset, its share rose from 4.3% to 7.3%.

Overall, two parallel trends are evident in the Government decisions: a substantial reduction in the total volume and a gradual diversification of the structure. The leading SDGs continue to dominate, although their relative prominence is gradually declining as the share of social and cross-sectoral areas increases.

2. Acts of the President show a less pronounced reduction in their total number, while their internal structure is also gradually changing. The number of acts included in the analysis fell from 365 in 2019 to 309 in 2025 – a decrease of 15.3%, whereas the number of references to the SDGs dropped only from 449 in 2019 to 420 in 2025.



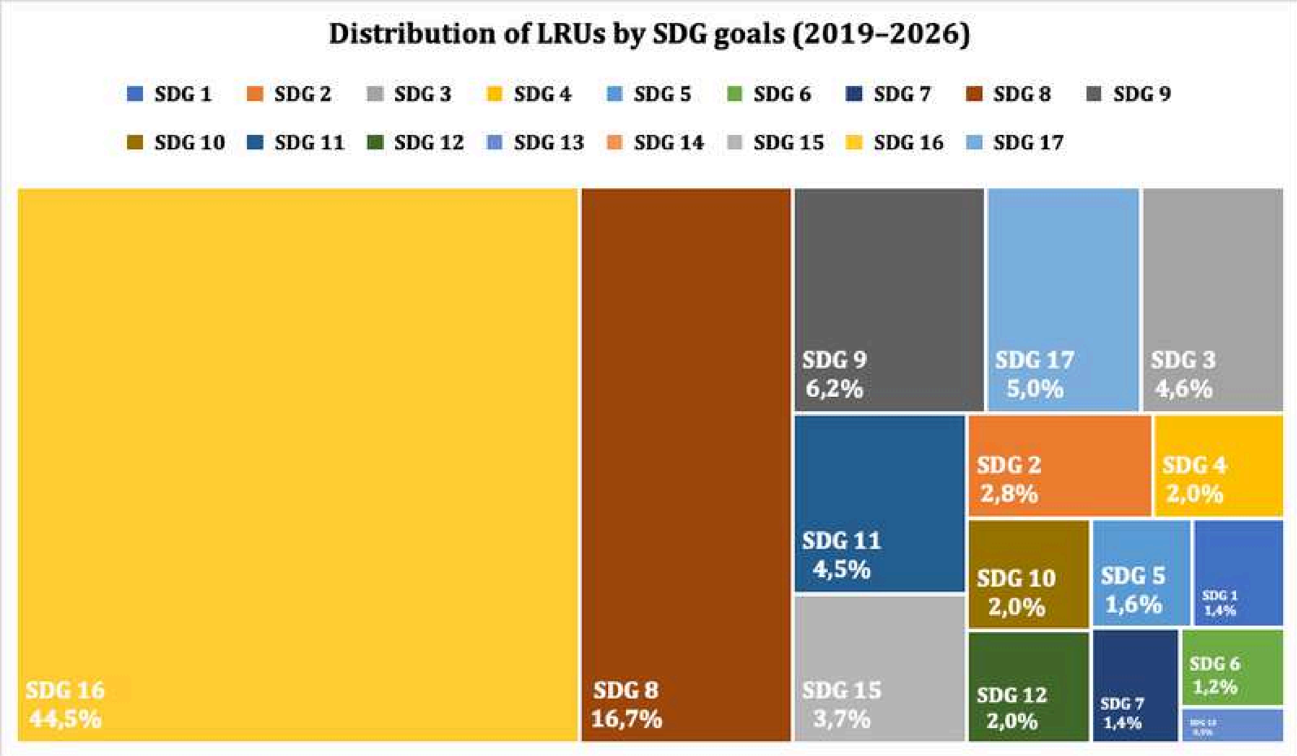
Structure of PAs										
SDG	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total quantity	Share for the entire period
SDG 1	9	17	16	21	21	12	17	7	120	3,7%
SDG 2	23	34	29	33	26	21	22	15	203	6,3%
SDG 3	17	34	21	42	23	33	18	9	197	6,1%
SDG 4	41	30	37	41	25	43	41	24	282	8,8%
SDG 5	3	1	3	9	6	4	4	1	31	1,0%
SDG 6	9	6	7	21	9	6	5	8	71	2,2%
SDG 7	16	10	11	14	29	24	16	6	126	3,9%
SDG 8	85	53	73	81	104	83	96	52	627	19,5%
SDG 9	54	41	49	60	47	60	45	27	383	11,9%
SDG 10	7	3	16	14	13	10	7	2	72	2,2%
SDG 11	16	26	22	32	35	27	26	13	197	6,1%
SDG 12	3	2	0	4	4	9	5	2	29	0,9%
SDG 13	1	0	0	2	6	6	9	7	31	1,0%
SDG 14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,0%
SDG 15	4	4	5	5	7	8	6	4	43	1,3%
SDG 16	111	62	102	74	54	68	70	32	573	17,8%
SDG 17	50	23	19	30	38	22	33	13	228	7,1%
Total number of references	449	346	410	483	447	436	420	222	3213	100,0%
Total number in the sample after exclusions	365	269	339	334	300	315	309	175	2406	

A key feature of this dataset is the changing ratio between **SDG 16** and **SDG 8**, indicating a gradual shift in emphasis toward economic development while maintaining significant focus on strengthening institutions. At the beginning of the period, **SDG 16** was the dominant. In 2019, 111 acts were attributed to it, compared to 85 for **SDG 8**. However, a turning point occurred in 2022: **SDG 8** took the lead for the first time, with 81 acts versus 74. In 2023, the gap widened further – 104 versus 54 – and in 2025, it stood at 96 versus 70. Consequently, the share of **SDG 8** in the annual total rose from approximately 18.9% in 2019 to 22.9% in 2025, while the share of **SDG 16** declined from 24.7% to 16.7%. Thus, this represents not merely a change in the absolute number of acts, but a shift in the primary focus within the structure of the PAs. At the same time, other major areas – primarily **SDG 9** and **SDG 4** – do not show a comparable structural shift and maintain a relatively stable position.

Previously underrepresented goals are gradually gaining prominence in presidential acts. References to **SDG 11** increased from 16 in 2019 to 26 in 2025, while those for **SDG 1** rose from 9 to 17. A particularly notable trend is observed with **SDG 13**: after a single reference in 2019 and a complete absence in 2020-2021, the figure rose to 2 in 2022, 6 in 2023-2024, and 9 in 2025; an additional 7 references have already been recorded for the first half of 2026. This may indicate the growing importance of climate-related issues in presidential acts and a shift from sporadic mentions to more systematic inclusion in regulatory documents. Nevertheless, the absolute figures for this area remain relatively low. Consequently, the focus is gradually shifting from institutional strengthening toward economic development and a broader range of cross-sectoral areas.

3. The laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan differ from the two preceding groups primarily in the absence of a distinct long-term trend toward a reduction in their number. Overall, despite a decline in 2020, the figures for the 2019-2025 period show moderate growth: the number of acts increased from 85 to 92, while the number of their references to the SDGs rose from 108 to 114.

Structure of LRUs										
SDG	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total quantity	Share for the entire period
SDG 1	0	0	0	4	0	3	3	1	11	1,4%
SDG 2	7	0	4	1	1	5	2	1	21	2,8%
SDG 3	5	2	3	3	9	4	7	2	35	4,6%
SDG 4	2	3	1	0	1	5	3	0	15	2,0%
SDG 5	3	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	12	1,6%
SDG 6	0	0	1	2	1	3	2	0	9	1,2%
SDG 7	2	1	0	0	1	4	1	2	11	1,4%
SDG 8	15	8	9	19	16	28	20	12	127	16,7%
SDG 9	6	5	4	8	7	10	5	2	47	6,2%
SDG 10	1	1	2	2	0	3	5	1	15	2,0%
SDG 11	5	0	6	5	1	7	6	4	34	4,5%
SDG 12	4	0	3	2	0	3	3	0	15	2,0%
SDG 13	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	4	0,5%
SDG 14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,0%
SDG 15	4	3	1	2	3	7	5	3	28	3,7%
SDG 16	47	32	52	32	44	61	41	29	338	44,5%
SDG 17	6	1	3	5	5	7	8	3	38	5,0%
Total number of references	108	57	90	87	90	153	114	61	760	100,0%
Total number in the sample after exclusions	85	51	79	70	78	123	92	51	629	



The most distinctive feature of the analyzed legal framework is the high concentration of references to **SDG 16**. Between 2019 and 2025, it accounted for 309 references, or approximately 44.2% of the body of legislation. **SDG 8** ranks second with 115 references (16.5%). Together, these two areas account for over 60% of all references. When **SDGs 9 and 17** are included, the four leading goals represent approximately 72.1% of all references. Notably, the share of **SDG 16** is gradually declining, while the presence of SDG 8 is increasing.

The limited representation of environmental goals in the body of laws deserves special attention. **SDGs 13 and 6** are the least represented. Over the entire period under review, only four laws were linked to **SDG 13**: one in 2019 and 2022, and two in 2025; no such references were recorded in the other years. Nine references were recorded for **SDG 6**; the first appeared only in 2021, after which the number remained low, ranging from one to three per year. Thus, issues regarding climate change and sustainable water resource management have not yet formed a distinct and stable area of legislative regulation and are primarily addressed through other types of regulatory legal acts. This situation may stem from the multifaceted nature of the climate and water agendas, which require coordinated regulation across the water management, agriculture, energy, environmental, territorial development, and finance sectors. It is also necessary to consider the pronounced transboundary dimension of the water agenda. Consequently, the low representation of **SDGs 6 and 13** at the legislative level does not necessarily indicate the absence of a corresponding state agenda.

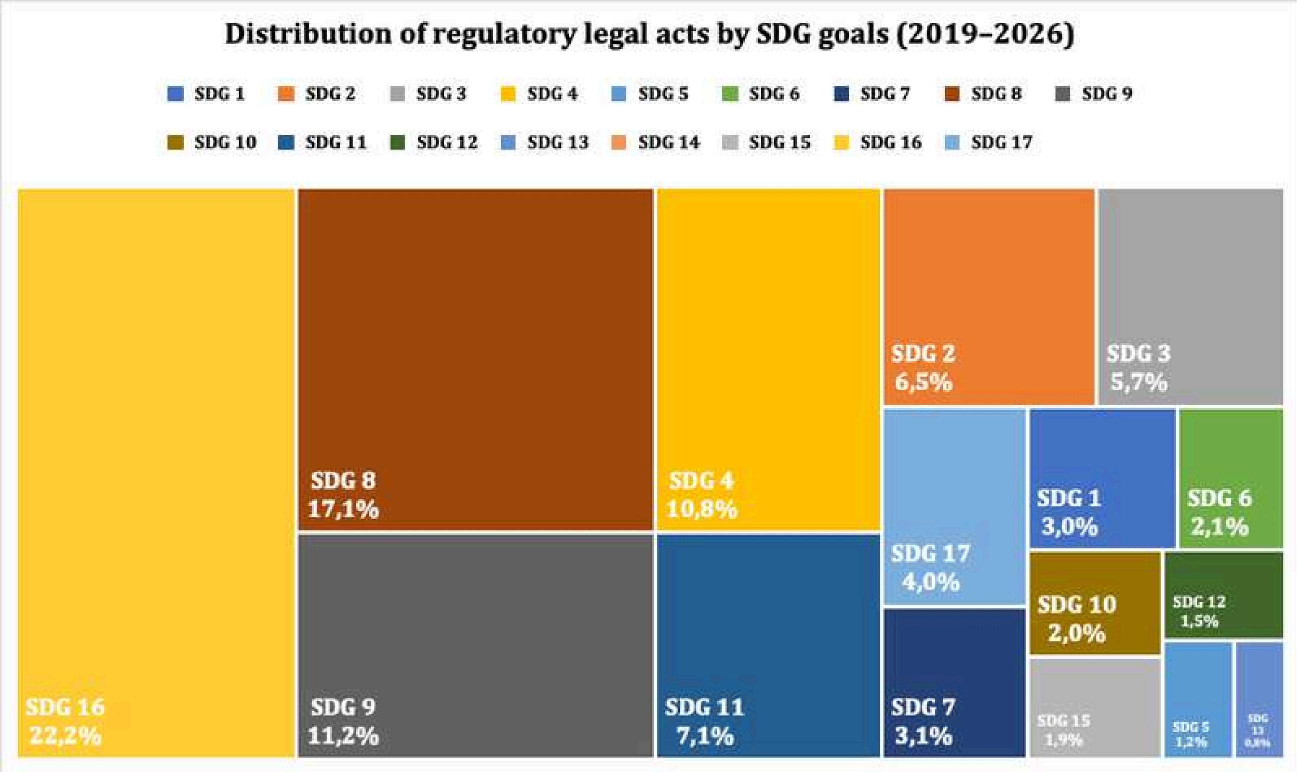
It may suggest that these issues are primarily regulated through subordinate legislation, policy documents, and interstate mechanisms, while also reflecting the ongoing difficulty of establishing a unified legislative framework for cross-sectoral and transboundary matters.

III. Overall assessment.

Across the combined set of the three types of regulatory legal acts, the number of documents included in the analysis fell from 1,226 in 2019 to 804 in 2025 – a decrease of 34.4%. However, the number of references to the SDGs declined much less sharply – from 1,404 to 1,012, or by 27.9%. This indicates an increase in the cross-sectoral nature of regulatory frameworks; whereby individual legal acts address multiple areas of sustainable development.

Structure of Regulatory legal framework

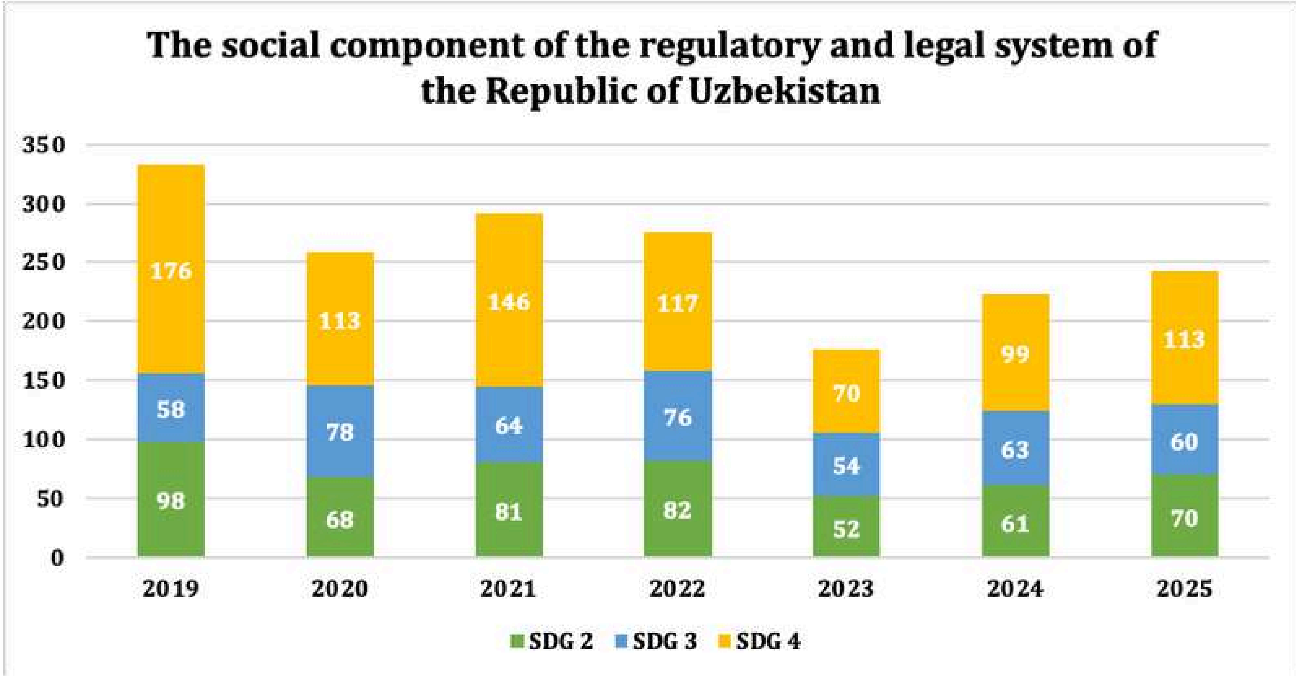
SDG	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total quantity	Share for the entire period
SDG 1	12	36	37	41	33	37	38	12	246	3,0%
SDG 2	98	68	81	82	52	61	70	27	539	6,5%
SDG 3	58	78	64	76	54	63	60	19	472	5,7%
SDG 4	176	113	146	117	70	99	113	58	892	10,8%
SDG 5	12	10	15	21	11	16	9	3	97	1,2%
SDG 6	31	23	25	39	16	17	16	10	177	2,1%
SDG 7	38	29	20	36	38	47	32	15	255	3,1%
SDG 8	243	150	188	185	174	203	187	84	1414	17,1%
SDG 9	177	144	147	116	80	123	88	52	927	11,2%
SDG 10	17	12	36	20	18	25	27	10	165	2,0%
SDG 11	94	76	83	69	68	87	69	39	585	7,1%
SDG 12	19	14	16	10	10	20	25	12	126	1,5%
SDG 13	4	1	5	10	10	14	13	11	68	0,8%
SDG 14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,0%
SDG 15	21	22	18	19	20	22	22	15	159	1,9%
SDG 16	333	257	287	235	198	225	195	107	1837	22,2%
SDG 17	71	37	32	41	51	34	48	18	332	4,0%
Total number of references	1404	1070	1200	1117	903	1093	1012	492	8291	100,0%
Total number in the sample after exclusions	1226	926	939	862	696	838	804	416	6707	



The overall structure is characterized by a stable core comprising **SDG 16, SDG 8, SDG 9, and SDG 4**. Over 2019-2025, **SDG 16** accounted for 1,730 references, **SDG 8** for 1,330, **SDG 9** for 875, and **SDG 4** for 834. Together, these four goals accounted for approximately 61.1% of all references.

The consistent ranking of **SDG 8 and SDG 16** in the top two positions across all analyzed sets of acts indicates the emergence of two core pillars of state regulatory policy: economic development and institutional building. Collectively, this reflects the close interconnection between economic modernization and development of institutions as mutually reinforcing foundations of the implemented reforms. The third position alternates between **SDG 4 and SDG 9**, highlighting the significant importance of the education and infrastructure-industry agendas within the overall structure of regulatory priorities. At the same time, a gradual shift in the balance of priorities can be observed within this core. The most notable trend is the convergence of **SDG 16 and SDG 8**: while in 2019 the gap between them stood at 90 references, it had narrowed to just 8 by 2025.

The social component of the regulatory framework comprises **SDG 2** (Zero Hunger), **SDG 3** (Good Health and Well-being), and **SDG 4** (Quality Education), all of which maintain a consistent presence regardless of shifts in institutional and economic priorities. The situation in the education sector is particularly illustrative. The strong representation of **SDG 4** in strategic planning and policy documents demonstrates that human capital remains a key element of state policy. However, not all aspects of the social component exhibit such sustainability.



The importance of previously underrepresented areas is gradually increasing. This trend could be observed with **SDG 1**, where the number of references rose from 12 in 2019 to 38 in 2025, and the share increased from approximately 0.9% to 3.8%. For **SDG 10**, the figure grew from 17 to 27; for **SDG 12**, from 19 to 25; and for **SDG 1**3, from 4 to 13. The trend for **SDG 13** is particularly notable: the number of references rose from 4 in 2019 to 13 in 2025, while reaching 11 in the first half of 2026 alone. This indicates growing attention to climate change issues within the regulatory framework.

At the same time, each of the three types of regulatory legal acts has its own profile. Government decisions are characterized by the most pronounced reduction in their total volume and a broader distribution across the SDGs; Presidential acts by relative quantitative stability and a strengthening of the economic component; and laws by the highest concentration around SDG 16.

Overall, the normative agenda of the SDGs is gradually becoming less concentrated, while retaining a stable institutional-economic core. At the same time, the representation of social and environmental dimensions is expanding, reflecting the gradual increasing complexity and diversification of the regulatory framework for sustainable development.

Note: This report has been prepared in Russian an English languages. In the event of any discrepancy or ambiguity in interpretation, the Russian-language version shall prevail.

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