

The Role of Sectoral Trade Unions in Protecting the Socio-Economic and Legal Interests of Workers in A Reforming Uzbekistan

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Abstract

The article analyzes the activity of protecting the socio-economic and legal interests of employees on the basis of trade unions based on sources and information from the periodical press and the Internet.

Keywords: Network trade unions, social, economic, legal, network.

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1. Introduction

On the eve of the 120th anniversary of the trade union movement, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev, at a meeting with industry workers and activists, noted that “Undoubtedly, trade unions, the most popular and largest non-governmental organization with 8 million members, have a worthy contribution to the results we are achieving.”[1] It is no secret that in our country, sectoral trade unions have been occupying a worthy place in protecting the socio-economic and legal interests of workers and our people in general, in short, in exercising their constitutional rights. Sectoral trade unions and their associations are taking a worthy place in shaping adopted social programs aimed at creating conditions for a decent life and a free, prosperous life for a person, in developing measures to monitor the social protection and legal interests of employees, in eliminating the main aspects of their standard of living and problems necessary for life.

2. Methods

It should be especially noted that if we analyze all sectoral trade unions in general from a scientific and theoretical perspective, we will witness fundamental changes in their activities. For example, in 2017, 95.4% of the clauses stipulated in 4,904 collective agreements signed at enterprises, organizations, and institutions in the Navoi region were fulfilled, and 99.1% of the clauses of 123 collective agreements concluded in the chemical and pharmaceutical industry were fulfilled. For example, the average annual cost of each employee in the Navoi region was 19,483 thousand soums, while this figure reached 7,058.0 thousand soums in the chemical and pharmaceutical industry.

3. Results and Discussions

Positive changes can also be seen in ensuring that employees are paid a decent salary and that it is paid on time. As an example, it can be noted that the overdue debt

of employees of the "Electrochemical Plant" JSC was eliminated by the regional association and the Republican Council of the branch trade union through an appeal to the managing chairman of this JSC, the chairman of "Uz Kimyosanoat" JSC, and the Navoi city administration. As a result, it is noteworthy that the average salary of employees in the chemical industry increased by 52.8% compared to 2016 [3].

If we consider the analysis of applications received from individuals and legal entities, during 2017 and the first half of 2018, out of 409 applications received by the Jizzakh regional trade union organization, 203 were satisfied, territorial explanatory work was carried out on 106, and the legal rights of 273 citizens were restored. During this period, 60 applications from citizens, including 54 written and electronic, 1 oral, and 5 via the "Hotline", were legally studied and 22 were satisfied, and legal explanations and advice were provided on 44.[3] In the process of scientific analysis, it should also be noted that at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Uzbek Trade Union Confederation on July 13, 2022, the number of primary organizations and members in the system of 34 sectoral trade unions decreased sharply. In particular, during 2017-2021, the number of primary organizations in the system of the Trade Union of Agro-Industrial Complex Employees decreased by 614, and the number of members by almost 417 thousand people, in the Trade Union of Entrepreneurship, Business and Service Sector Employees by 4,100, and the number of members by 255 thousand people, and in the Transport and Construction sector by 2,344, and the number of members by almost 220 thousand people. During this period, the number of members of the aviation workers' union decreased by 33%, from 22 thousand to 17 thousand people. From these facts, it should be concluded that great attention is paid to supporting entrepreneurship in our country. State shares in large industries and enterprises are being transferred to the private sector. Thousands of small business entities are being established every year. As we all know, trade unions do not form on their own. To do this, it is necessary to systematically explain to employees the essence, content of this organization, and the benefits it brings to members of society.

It is also worth noting the increase in the number of members in state institutions and public service, information technologies and mass communications, education and science, Almalyk Mining and Metallurgical Plant, Chemistry and

Pharmaceuticals, and healthcare systems. In this regard, we consider it appropriate to mention the opinion of the President of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev. We have created all the conditions for the free and independent operation of trade unions in Uzbekistan and have always been faithful to these principles. His statement that we will continue to firmly pursue the policy of ensuring the right to associate with trade unions and not interfering in their activities [1] is also an important call for all trade union members. As part of ensuring the implementation of the tasks set out in the resolutions of the VIII Congress to restore the practice of concluding regional and sectoral agreements at all levels where trade union bodies exist, 407 regional sectoral agreements were concluded between the district councils of the Trade Union of Agro-Industrial Complex Employees and the local councils of farmers, peasant farms and sectoral landowners of Uzbekistan, as well as the departments of agriculture and water management in 2021-2022. Also, measures were taken to increase the scope of additional benefits and guarantees for employees in collective agreements concluded at enterprises and organizations in the sectoral system, and more than 1 million, 432 thousand employees were provided with higher benefits and guarantees than those established by law through collective agreements at 80 thousand 721 enterprises and organizations [5. 2].

In order to eliminate overdue wage arrears during 2022, the sectoral trade union organization submitted presentations and applications to employers, local executive authorities, state labor law inspectorates, prosecutor's offices, and courts. As a result, overdue wage arrears in the amount of 15 billion 693 million soums were collected [4]. Also, during 2022, as a result of work on union membership and clarification of applications in 3,707 enterprises and organizations that did not have a trade union, more than 46,000 employees working in 2,583 legal entities were admitted to trade union membership [5.3].

It is worth noting that in 2023, 8.5 thousand employees applied to trade unions. According to the results of a comprehensive analysis and study of their applications, more than 26 billion 114 million soums of necessary money have been recovered in their favor. At the same time, public monitoring has been conducted to ensure timely payment of wages, compliance with the minimum wage standards, and elimination of overdue wage arrears, and as a result of the efforts of trade unions, 372 applications were filed with the courts, prosecutor's

offices, government bodies, and labor inspectorates, resulting in the recovery of 151 billion soums of unpaid wages to workers over the course of 10 months of 2023[1]. At the same time, it is also worth noting that more than 5 thousand deficiencies in labor protection that could pose a threat to the lives and work activities of employees in 932 enterprises and organizations have been eliminated. During the period under scientific analysis, the Trade Union of Healthcare Workers of Uzbekistan carried out large-scale work in the field of protecting the rights and interests of employees in the sector, improving socio-economic conditions, and labor protection. For example, it is worth noting that in 2020-2025, the number of employees in the sector increased from 225,667 to 9,649,030, and the number of members in non-governmental organizations increased by 151,186. The sectoral collective agreement concluded with the Ministry of Health introduced 32 additional benefits not provided for in the Labor Code, and additional guarantees and bonuses were implemented based on agreements with social partners. The average minimum wage in the industry increased from 1.8 million soums in 2020 to 3.3 million soums in some institutions in 2024, the additional funds spent on each employee increased by 1.8 times, and in 2020-2024, 93% of 66,880 measures were implemented, and 1.28 trillion soums were spent on this area in 2024. As a result of the activities of the Labor Inspectorate, the rights of more than 500,000 employees were restored, and hundreds of billions of soums were recovered in their favor. 1,846 lawsuits were filed in courts, and the rights of 14,965 employees were protected [4].

On July 28, 2025, 18 employees of the Kashkadarya Drilling Works Joint-Stock Company filed a collective appeal with the federation. The appeal noted that the workers had not received their monthly salaries for 2 months and that there were violations in the process of mass dismissals. In response to this appeal, representatives of the Trade Union of Energy, Oil and Gas and Geology Workers of Uzbekistan visited the enterprise and held a direct meeting with the employees and the employer. The investigation was attended by the labor inspectorate, the social protection department, and representatives of the Kashkadarya regional council. According to the results of the investigation, in accordance with the agreement on the timely payment of wages to the employees, 202 million soums were paid to the employees on August 12, 2025, 523 million soums on August 15, and 630.6 million soums on August 28, 2025, a total of 1.35 billion soums in arrears of wages. As noted

at the international scientific-practical conference held on September 9-11, 2025, it was noted that a completely new model of social protection policy has been created in the new Uzbekistan. In the process of such updates, agreements were signed between the Government, the Federation, and the Confederation of Employers of Uzbekistan Trade Unions. According to the general agreement, it was noted that all sectoral and regional collective agreements and collective contracts include a complex of measures aimed at social support for employees and their family members. In accordance with these local documents, trade unions of Uzbekistan are expected to gradually increase the real incomes of employees, expand the system of training professionals in demand in the labor market, and cooperate in vocational training and retraining of employed representatives of the population, and in this regard, sectoral trade unions are expected to further expand practical work.

As the Chairman of the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan K. Rafikov noted in his report "New Uzbekistan - New Trade Unions: On the activities of the Federation in 2021-2025 and the priority tasks of trade unions at a new stage of national development based on the "Uzbekistan-2030" strategy" at the IX Congress of the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan on November 1, 2025, in particular, protecting the interests of trade union members in draft regulatory documents adopted by authorized bodies at the sectoral and regional levels should remain one of the most important tasks of sectoral trade unions and regional councils [2. 7]. As the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan noted in his speech at a meeting with activists and veterans of trade unions of Uzbekistan, currently 14 sectoral trade unions operate within the federation. Unfortunately, their voices are not heard in promoting initiatives that would reliably ensure the rights of employees working in the relevant sectors. New areas and directions, and accordingly new professions and modern technologies are rapidly entering our economy [1]. In such conditions, shouldn't sectoral trade unions cooperate with ministries and departments and set clear tasks for them? Therefore, it is important to note that ministries and departments and sectoral trade unions have proposed to establish a system of regular joint meetings of collegial bodies. Indeed, the implementation of the above ideas will directly contribute to the more effective implementation of sectoral collective agreements and contracts, timely payment of wages, and the possibility of discussing and resolving other socio-economic and legal issues at joint

meetings.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that one of the most important tasks today is to organize effective public control of trade unions over compliance with labor legislation by sectoral trade unions, to develop and take measures to further improve its forms and methods.

References

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