

Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia	BULLETIN No 3 (78)	September 2018
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INTERNATIONAL HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION “WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”, 2018-2028

The International High-Level Conference on International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028 was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on 20-21 June 2018.

The goal of the Conference was to discuss the ways of achieving objectives of the Decade set by the UN General Assembly Resolution 71/222 of 21 December 21 2016 and contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Heads of State and Government, ministers and other officials, representatives of international and regional organizations, local authorities, civil society, as well as scientists and private sector participated in the Conference.

The Conference also offered a well-timed and important platform for drawing recommendations ahead of the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, where, among other matters, SDG6 “Ensuring access to and sustainable development of water and sanitation for all” will be discussed.

The Conference proceeded from the outcomes of the 8th World Water Forum, the High-Level Panel on Water, the International Decade “Water for Life” and other important global and regional water events and platforms.

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE INTERNATIONAL HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION «WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, 2018-2028»¹

Distinguished Heads of state and government,

Dear Heads and members of delegations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I welcome all of you in the city of Dushanbe at the International High-Level Conference on the International Decade for Action «Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028».

I hope that following the results of today's event, held in cooperation with the UN and other partners, effective practical steps will be developed to implement the internationally agreed goals and objectives in the field of water resources.

I am convinced that today's conference will provide an opportunity to prepare concrete recommendations on the topic of the forthcoming meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, where the SDG 6 will be discussed.

On March 22 of this year, on World Water Day, on the initiative of the President of the UN General Assembly, we jointly launched the process of implementing the new International Decade for Water.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his team for preparing and launching the Decade's Action Plan, which can be an important tool in its implementation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are embarking on the promotion of the new Decade with a very useful experience in the implementation of previous global water initiatives.

Over the past fifteen years in this direction, we have increased our joint efforts in the framework of global initiatives such as the International Year of Freshwater, 2003, the International Decade for Action "Water for Life, 2005-2015" and "International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013".

All these initiatives have made a valuable contribution to deepening our understanding of the irreplaceable role of water for life on our planet.

¹ Source: <https://wsdconf2018.org/news/speech-by-president-of-the-republic-of-tajikistan-at-the-opening-ceremony-of-the-international-high-level-conference-on-the-international-decade-for-action-water-for-sustainable-development-2018-2028/>

At the same time, they contributed to the active involvement of all stakeholders in water resources management, project implementation and the introduction of modern technologies and innovations in this field.

I would especially like to note the contribution of these initiatives to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Joint efforts in this direction have also laid a solid foundation for the development of a new sustainable development agenda, in which water resources are given a central place as a key element of this process.

At the same time, the following facts, which are well known to you, indicate that mobilization of common efforts has not yet produced the desired effect:

— more than 800 million and 2.5 billion of the world's population, respectively, do not have access to safe drinking water and basic services in the field of water sanitation;

— annually up to 300 thousand children under the age of five die due to lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation;

All this indicates that we are still considerably behind in the practical implementation of the set goals and objectives in the field of ensuring access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

In addition, the situation in achieving sustainable water management is complicated by the negative impact of climate change.

It is known that global climate change negatively affects the volume of freshwater resources and their quality, thus exposing different countries and regions of the world to even greater environmental stress.

Today, more than two billion people in the world experience water stress.

According to experts, by 2050 this figure can grow to five billion, i.e. will make up about half the world's population.

In this context, the trends of population growth and the demand for water resources pose new complex tasks.

Demand for water resources in the world is growing at an accelerated pace, which, in turn, causes tense relations between sectors of the economy.

Increased competition for access to water resources in conditions of increasing water deficit can lead to negative consequences even within one country.

These two factors — global climate change and demographic growth will determine the scope and opportunities for our further actions.

Along with these factors, there are a number of other tasks that require an integrated approach and active water cooperation.

These include issues of increasing the overall efficiency of water use, reducing water pollution and re-use, and developing new technologies for obtaining fresh water on an industrial scale.

The accumulated experience shows that it is difficult to achieve significant progress in the use of water resources overnight.

Proceeding from this experience, the beginning of the Decade, first of all, is aimed at forming a broad and open platform for strengthening and expanding the regular multilateral water dialogue with a focus on concrete actions.

To this end, we intend to convene every two years International High-Level Conference on the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Decade.

In this direction, we will continue our cooperation with interested countries and organizations within the framework of the International Steering Committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to express gratitude to all members of the current composition of the International Steering Committee, who have made a very useful contribution to the preparation of today's event.

We also intend to strengthen work in this direction by creating an International Center for the Implementation of the Decade in Dushanbe.

An additional platform for our interaction will be provided by the process of preparing and promoting a new resolution of the UN General Assembly on the mid-term review of the implementation of the Decade.

We hope for the active support of our partners in the promotion of this resolution within the framework of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly.

In our opinion, efforts to create mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of the Decade should be strengthened with the necessary human, financial and technical resources.

In this context, I would like to separately note the fact that the water sector has a large financial need for implementing the relevant projects and programs.

According to the calculations of the World Bank, only to achieve the two objectives of the 6th Goal of Sustainable Development, namely, universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation, will amount to 114 billion US dollars annually.

In this regard, efforts should be focused on increasing the efficiency of using available financial resources and finding new sources of financing for water-related industries.

In this respect, the expansion of public-private partnership opens new opportunities for attracting additional investments in the water sector and infrastructure.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Transboundary component of water cooperation is also an important issue.

Effective, fair and mutually beneficial water cooperation can become a catalyst for the development of countries connected by common water basins.

The Central Asian region, which is characterized by uneven formation of water resources, is a clear example of constructive water cooperation.

This situation, along with the differing needs of countries in the use of water resources in the sectoral and seasonal context, has recently been assessed as a factor of potential disputes and disagreements.

However, as time and practice shows, we were able to make significant progress in solving existing problems.

Currently, the region has created new opportunities and infrastructure for effective interaction and development of our countries.

Of course, such regional institutions as the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and its relevant commissions played a significant role in achieving such a result.

At the same time, today we are facing new challenges and threats, which, as never before, require the consolidation of joint efforts and concerted actions.

A clear example of these challenges is the dry season of the current year.

Due to the small amount of seasonal precipitation, the countries of the region are already facing low water levels, — the inflow of water in the rivers is much lower than the average annual indicators, and the forecasts indicate the water availability of rivers in the cropping season only in the amount of 60-70 percent of the norm.

This requires proper cooperation and close coordination of our efforts to solve such regional problems.

It is gratifying to note that the changes in recent years in the region in the political, economic, social, humanitarian and other spheres have found a positive development dynamics.

Such a reality, of course, creates the necessary prerequisites for further improving interstate cooperation and joint solution of existing regional problems.

Dear participants,

Long-term observations indicate an increase in the impact of climate change on nature and the socio-economic situation in Tajikistan and Central Asia.

According to these observations, over the past sixty years the average annual air temperature in Tajikistan has increased by one degree Celsius, the frequency and intensity of natural hydrometeorological phenomena have increased.

Under the influence of these factors in Tajikistan, natural disasters in the form of inundation, floods, mudflows, avalanches and landslides annually cause serious damage to the population and economy of the country.

In addition, over the past few decades, we have lost nearly 1,000 small and medium glaciers.

In order to monitor these processes and take measures to adapt to climate change factors, we have established the Glacier Research Center at the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan this year and look forward to the support of our development partners in strengthening its capacity.

I am confident that this Center will soon make its worthy contribution to the process of planning and managing water resources not only at the national, but also at the regional level.

Today in Tajikistan, about 98 percent of electricity is generated in hydroelectric power plants.

The government takes comprehensive measures to balance the production and consumption of energy by modernizing existing hydroelectric power stations, creating new power generation facilities, and introducing modern energy saving methods.

The reservoirs of hydroelectric facilities, in turn, contribute to ensuring reliable long-term and seasonal regulation of water flow, prevention of inundations and floods, as well as mitigating the effects of drought.

The use of Tajikistan's huge hydropower potential in order to provide the countries of the region with clean energy, one of the bases for the development of the «green economy», could seriously contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere.

In this context, I would like to note the importance of the implementation of the CASA-1000 regional project, as well as the resumption of the parallel operation of Tajikistan's energy system with the unified energy system of Central Asia, which provides an opportunity to supply our «green» electricity to near and far neighbors in the region.

An important priority in the country remains providing the population with safe and quality drinking water and sanitation.

We have already started the development of a new program to provide the population with clean drinking water for the period until 2030.

This Program covers one of the key goals of sustainable development — universal access of the population to safe drinking water and sanitation.

The state policy of Tajikistan in the field of water use is simultaneously aimed at solving urgent social and economic problems in the region.

In this context, we are ready to use our vast resources of drinking water in the common interest.

Thus, the rational use of the unique reserves of the high-altitude Lake Sarez only, which contains seventeen cubic kilometers of water, enables long-term and sustainable provision of high-quality drinking water to the population of our region.

Concluding my speech, I express the hope that the participants of the conference, using the present opportunity, will make their worthy contribution to the development of concrete practical recommendations for the effective implementation of the goals of the new Decade.

I wish all present here a constructive and productive meeting, and to our esteemed guests a pleasant stay in the sunny and hospitable land of Tajikistan.

Thank you for attention!

SPEECH OF PRESIDENT OF TURKMENISTAN AT INTERNATIONAL HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE “WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”²

Dear participants of the Conference!

Ladies and gentlemen!

Let me express my gratitude to the President of the Republic of Tajikistan and the United Nations Organization for invitation to the Conference, hospitality, and excellent organization of the Conference.

Dear participants!

All people on the Earth consider water as a sacred source essential for livelihoods and prosperity since water revives the nature and makes vast steppes fertile and fruitful. That is why our ancestors valued every drop of water as a grain of gold. The Turkmen people generated a lot of wise proverbs and saws proving their respect for life-giving water: ‘Water is a father, land is a mother’; ‘Land with water is a garden, otherwise it is a desert’; ‘Beauty of land is water, and beauty of water is a swan’.

Hence, preservation and efficient use of water resources are not only among the main issues for our nation, but also among main current challenges. It would not be overstating the case to say that they impact the course of global processes and prospects for solid peace, stability, development and prosperity on our planet.

Water issues, including political, economic, social aspects, need an international consensus and consolidation of the efforts of states on a common worldview platform. At the same time, local interests and benefits should give place to the understanding of truly global goals and priorities, developing a unified strategy for actions on water for the long term.

We believe that it is possible to cope with these tasks working in close coordination with the United Nations based on the Sustainable Development Goals and those policy documents that were adopted during the UN Conference "RIO+20", at the VII World Water Forum in Daegu, and other global international meetings.

The main condition for joint activities in this direction should be the unconditional commitment to the principle of equal and equitable access to water resources, and its recognition as a fundamental human right. To guarantee the right to access water resources and responsibility for this should be obligatory for all states in the world.

² Source: Turkmenistan. Golden Age, <http://turkmenistan.gov.tm/?id=16556> (in Russian)

In this context, the importance to achieve the reasonable balance between the economic affairs and preservation of water resources and their efficient management was underlined. Global warming and the emergence of various natural and technology-related cataclysms are among the inevitable phenomena that the world encounters and will face with. The reaction to them should not be spontaneous, dictated only by short-term, narrow-national needs.

Today, we need systemic mechanisms for international cooperation with the aim to minimize the risks. We need clearly defined rules, a kind of code of conduct that would be based on the interests of all states and would be conditioned, first of all, by the needs of people, their habitual way of life that has developed over the centuries. Water is the common property of all mankind that belongs to all the peoples on the planet.

In this context, the need to develop efficient formats for international cooperation on water is obvious. Due to a number of historical, natural and geographical features, such formats are becoming particularly relevant for Central Asia. The development of the states in our region, their economy and social sphere, the level of prosperity and the quality of life of people directly depend on the access to water resources and their efficient management. Therefore, equal rights, respect, responsibility should stand as the fundamental, determining criteria for the relations between the countries in Central Asia on water use. Consistently supporting these positions, Turkmenistan has always stated that water issues in our region should be resolved:

- first of all, based on the generally recognized norms of international law;
- secondly, taking into account the interests of each of the Central Asian states; and
- thirdly, with the active participation of international organizations, primarily the UN.

This is our principled position, and, relying on it, we will continue working on the establishment of effective negotiating mechanisms between the Central Asian countries with the aim to develop the coordinated solutions. One of the most effective steps in this direction could be the establishment of a specialized UN structure on water affairs for Central Asia. I am confident that the international experience accumulated by the international community on water and water and energy problems can be efficiently used. I call the states in the region and UN Secretariat to consider this matter.

Dear participants of the Forum!

Activity of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea is an important aspect of water diplomacy in Central Asia. At present moment, Turkmenistan is the Chairman of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. We formed up the Concept of the Chairmanship, which includes the number of specific measures. It includes the development and adoption of a new Program to support countries of the Aral Sea basin, fulfillment of a Regional Action plan for environmental protection as a single ecological program of Central Asia countries, and number of other measures.

This year, it is planned to conduct the Summit of the heads of the state-founders of the Fund in Turkmenistan, and we hope that certain decisions, which are vital for improvement of the activity of IFAS and its efficiency, would be taken by the outcomes of this meeting. I suppose, we may fully rely on support of the UN agencies.

I would like to get back to the initiative of Turkmenistan proposed at the Conference for Sustainable Development Rio+20 on elaboration of the UN special program for the Aral Sea basin and on placing of Aral range of problems in separate direction of the United Nations activity.

It is obvious that protection of the Aral cannot longer to be considered as internal regional problem. The support of the world community, new focused, integrated international approach, active and systematic participation of the UN in this work are required for its successful solution. I call the United Nations and Central Asia countries to support our proposal and to start its implementation.

The UN General Assembly's Resolution on Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving of Aral Sea initiated by Turkmenistan and adopted by consensus on 18 April this year is a good foundation for this.

We assume that international water cooperation should be based on appropriate criteria at the national level. Those are complementary and inseparable processes. Consequently, I am sure that each state should fully realize its role and responsibility.

It was mentioned that, while implementing national plans in different spheres, Turkmenistan strictly relates them with ecological component of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially with the optimization of water resources use.

New Code of Turkmenistan on Water is the basis of integrated program for development and implementation of scientifically based regulations of rational water use, their preservation and rehabilitation, protection from pollution and exhaustion.

Adaptation measures for rehabilitation of forests and improvement of land management to mitigate climate impacts are also widely implemented in the country. At present, vast forests have been planted around the cities and settlements using water-saving irrigation methods under the large-scale national Green Belt program.

A large-scale project of construction of unique Altyn Asyr Lake is carried out in the center of the Karakums for collection of drainage water from irrigated lands of all velayats in the country. Its first phase has been put into operation in 2009.

What is the value and importance of the project for us?

Earlier, excess field water rich in salts and herbicides was simply discharged into the desert and formed there small dirty lakes. Thus, we damaged ecology as water in those lakes was non-usable: neither for animals nor for plants. There were many such water bodies in the desert. We have connected them through a canal and divert saline water from them to a large depression called Karashor.

By present, after several years, water has become cleaner at acceptable standards through natural biological processes. Large quantities of fish appeared there.

Construction of this manmade water pool, which is actually a complex hydro technical system, gives the opportunity to solve existing ecological, economic and social issues.

It includes the improvement of land condition in agricultural fields, protection of soil from degradation, return of thousands hectares of lands drowned by ground waters, growing of salt-resistant agricultural crops in the zone of the main and auxiliary collectors, irrigation of pastures, development of fishery, creation of water reserve. Construction of another phase of this grandiose facility, which is to work for the provision of ecological prosperity and hence, for the improvement of life quality of people both in Turkmenistan and in entire Central Asian region, is carried out.

A special attention is paid to the provision of the population with pure water. Modern drinking water plants have been built in the capital and velayats, while powerful desalination units have been built on Caspian coast. This is enough to say that more than half billion of US dollars are spent in the country for support and development of the environment and various ecological and water projects.

Dear participants!

Turkmenistan comprehensively supports the goals and objectives of the agenda of current Conference. We expect that the decisions taken by the outcomes of the work of the Forum would be one of the platforms for the future targeted and detailed international cooperation, elaboration of innovative models and management strategies for coordination of national programs of water use with regional and global plans of development in this sphere.

We are ready for closer cooperation with partners at the governmental, legislative, and expert levels and for mutually beneficial exchanges and interested in broader cooperation with international organizations.

I wish all the participants fruitful work.

FINAL DECLARATION PROMOTING ACTION AND POLICY DIALOGUE³

Dushanbe, Tajikistan

June 20-21, 2018

The High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028, met in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 20-21 June 2018, to discuss how to achieve the objectives of the Decade, contained in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 71/222 of 21 December 2016, in order to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Heads of State and Government, ministers and other high-level dignitaries took part in this historical gathering together with representatives of international and regional organizations, local governments, civil society, the private sector and academia. The Conference also provided a timely and necessary platform for elaborating recommendations in the run-up of the next session of the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development where, among other issues, the Sustainable Development Goal 6 to “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” will be discussed. The Conference built on the outcomes of the Eighth World Water Forum, the High-Level Panel on Water, the Water for Life Decade and other major water-related events and platforms at the global and regional level.

We, the participating representatives of states and organizations,

Recalling the United Nations General Assembly resolution 71/222 of 21 December 2016, by which it proclaimed the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028 (hereinafter referred to as the “Water Action Decade”),

Also recalling the United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, which reiterates the importance of “ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” as a Sustainable Development Goal to be achieved by 2030, the underpinning importance of water related issues in other goals and targets in order to reach the overall Agenda and the centrality of the “No One Left Behind” principle,

Further recalling resolutions 68/157 of 18 December 2013 on the human right

³ Source: <https://wsdconf2018.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2018-06-21-Final-Declaration-clean.pdf>

to safe drinking water and sanitation and 70/169 of 17 December 2015 on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation of the United Nations General Assembly,

Taking note of the efforts and extensive work carried out by the High-Level Panel on Water,

Acknowledging the additional challenges facing countries with water scarcity and concerned with the impacts of such challenges, including inter alia their ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,

Highlighting the challenge of rapid population growth and the importance of water management in disaster risk reduction in mitigating and adapting to climate change and in ensuring ecosystem protection, particularly of watersheds in mountain areas, wetlands, deltas and in coastal zones, in order to increase the resilience of communities, and noting that water management can contribute, as applicable, to the implementation of relevant multilateral agreements, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the 2015 Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,

Stressing the need to manage in an integrated and sustainable manner water resources from source to sea around the water, food, energy and environment nexus, including by promoting the concept of circular economy and other relevant solutions to reduce, recycle and safely reuse water,

Expressing concern about the current and projected adverse impacts of climate change on water re-sources and sanitation, as well as the challenges posed by pathogens, nutrients and emerging pollutants, including pharmaceuticals and microplastics, that are threatening human health and the quality of surface and groundwater,

Bearing in mind the need to implement integrated urban water management, including sustainable waste management systems, in line with the New Urban Agenda, as part of Integrated Water Resource Management, by implementing inter alia nature-based solutions, decentralized wastewater management and improved rainwater management and harvesting,

Recognizing that, according to Sustainable Development Goal 6 Synthesis Report 2018 on Water and Sanitation, the world is not on track to achieve water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets at the global level by 2030 at the current rate of progress,

Recognizing that effective lake and river basin organizations, water planning and target setting at the appropriate levels, including of drinking water supply and sanitation safety, are key to the sustainable management of water resources and require coordination of actors, development of infrastructure, benefit sharing and harmonization of national and basin wide development agendas,

Recognizing that parliamentarians and citizens make an important contribution to water governance alongside national governments, as well as regional and local authorities, as applicable;

Reemphasizing the key role of women for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6, their insufficient representation in water-related decision-making processes and among water professionals at all levels, the disproportionate burden carried by many women and girls for water collection and use, their specific needs of safe water and sanitation facilities and the need to create an enabling environment to address these issues,

Acknowledging the importance of ensuring water availability for civilians and protecting civilian water infrastructure and service delivery in the event of conflicts and natural disasters, as well as for refugee and migrant populations living in informal or inadequate housing,

Looking forward to the Mid-Term Review of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028, as an important milestone focused on the goals of the Decade and water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

Noting the ongoing efforts by UN-Water in responding to the expectations of the international community, supporting the monitoring of the SDG 6 targets and providing coordination among its members.

Also noting the possibility to create an International Center for the Water Action Decade in Dushanbe with the support of the Government of Tajikistan and other interested parties to sustain the process towards implementation of the goals of the Water Action Decade and the organization of Water Action Decade Conferences.

Hereby reiterate our determination to achieve the objectives of the Water Action Decade and declare to:

Promote, at the local, national, regional and global levels, opportunities for public and private investment in infrastructure, including through the development of innovative financial instruments and mechanisms, and seek to increase the efficiency of investment to conserve and sustainably manage freshwater, wastewater and water contained in soil and vegetation, support community-based efforts and develop non-conventional water resources, such as water reuse and desalination;

Strengthen the capacities, resources and skills, as well as improve knowledge generation and exchange of practices, to support national and local governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in those countries and for those people furthest behind;

Make concentrated and coordinated efforts to build innovative, robust, flexible and fair systems for source to sea Integrated Water Resources Management, to increase water use efficiency and productivity, particularly in agriculture, energy, tourism, urban and rural development, as well as industry, to better appreciate the value of water and associated ecosystem services, to reduce emissions and the transport of hazardous substances and to take into consideration the serious impacts on the quality and availability of water resources caused from extractive activities,

Commit to reduce inequalities in access and ensure affordability of safe drinking water and sanitation services that are basic human needs, essential to the

health and well-being of families and communities, to avoid any kind of discrimination and to support countries and communities with specific needs and people suffering from poverty and in vulnerable situations, especially women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities and those living in remote areas, going beyond the household, particularly targeting schools, healthcare facilities and workplaces,

Improve communication and access to practical, water-related information and funding to empower communities at all levels, through clear messages, to promote participation, equity, improved accountability and social innovation, supporting the engagement of civil society representatives in decision-making processes related to the rational, transparent and sustainable use and management of water resources and the provision of water-related services,

Step up the efforts to develop tools, build institutional and human resources capacity, foster technology exchange, improve data that are appropriately disaggregated, disseminate knowledge, including traditional knowledge, skills and enhanced scientific and technical know-how to better understand the water cycle, contribute to the identification of appropriate solutions, including through South-South and tri-angular cooperation and improved research, education and training with a local perspective and special attention to children and youth,

Facilitate partnerships at all levels among different kinds of stakeholders, including public authorities, the private sector, civil society organizations and academia, with the engagement of women, youth, local communities and indigenous peoples, as appropriate, to develop and implement actions that address problems related to water and sanitation at suitable levels and to promote the all-of-society engagement necessary to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Prioritize water diplomacy and transboundary cooperation in line with the applicable principles of international law by strengthening inter alia the means of information and data exchange, open and inclusive multi-level and intersectoral dialogue in order to foster mutually beneficial solutions and institutional arrangements, such as basin commissions and plans, among riparian countries, for the development of transboundary river basins, lakes and aquifers and for protection of ecosystems and recharge zones,

Promote actions to address water-related disasters by significantly decreasing loss of life and damage as percentage of gross domestic product, by treating investment in disaster risk reduction as integral to expanding capacity for socioeconomic growth, by integrating science into policy, by substantially increasing investment in disaster risk reduction and establishing financing and investment principles and by supporting alliance of alliances in recognition that climate change may exacerbate water-related disasters, contributing to promote action for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction activities,

Recall the United Nations Secretary General's plan for the Water Action Decade 2018-2028 as a blue-print to coordinate and catalyze action throughout the Decade and invite the United Nations Secretary General to report to the Member

States about the progress made by the United Nations and its entities with the implementation of this action plan;

Note the intention of the Government of Tajikistan to hold Water Action Decade Conferences in Dushanbe on a biennial basis and to keep organizing them in an open and inclusive manner and invite all states, the United Nations, including UN-Water, and other relevant stakeholders, to actively participate in this Dushanbe Process.

Invite countries to consider the establishment of Water Action Decade centers and partnerships on specific themes, such as one for water and disasters, or at the regional level and use the already existing water-related centers, programs and partnerships, such as those under the auspices of the United Nations and its entities, including UNESCO Centers and Chairs, as useful mechanisms to enhance dialogue, cooperation, technical and scientific transfer and development for the effective implementation of the Decade.

Further invite all Member States to consider appointing water champions, who will play a mobilizing role for the Water Action Decade.

Strongly recommend Member States to prepare and adopt national strategies and plans and implement actions for the achievement of the water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets, as well as the goals of the Water Action Decade.

Ask the United Nations, within existing resources, regional organizations, International Financial Institutions, philanthropic organizations, the private sector and development partners to support the implementation of the Water Action Decade, particularly in developing countries, Least Developed Countries, countries suffering from water scarcity, Small Island Developing States and Land-Locked Developing Countries and middle-income countries, considering their specific circumstances.

Request the Government of Tajikistan to present the Chair's Summary of this Conference, accompanied by this Declaration, to the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and other relevant venues.

Urge all Member States to actively participate in the preparation process of a United Nations General Assembly resolution on the Mid-Term Comprehensive Review of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, to be undertaken during the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Request the Secretariat of this First High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028, to collect, in collaboration with the International Steering Committee, the actions and partnerships that were proposed by the participating states and organizations during this Conference in a document to be entitled "Call for Action and Partnership".

Invite the participating states and organizations to share the progress made on the actions and partnerships proposed during this Conference at inter alia the Second Water Action Decade Conference, and as a contribution towards the Mid-Term

Review of the Decade.

Decide that the theme of the Second Water Action Decade Conference shall be “catalyzing water action and partnership at the local, national, regional and global levels” to achieve the goals of the Water Action Decade and water-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets,

Express our sincere appreciation to the Government of Tajikistan for hosting the Water Action Decade Conferences in Dushanbe and for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to all participants; we also express our sincere appreciation to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Program, UN-Water and other partners for their support.

**JOINT STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN EMOMALI RAKHMON
AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN
SHAVKAT MIRZIYOYEV⁴**
(extract)

Upon invitation of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Mr. Emomali Rakhmon paid a state visit to the Republic of Uzbekistan on 17-18 August 2018.

In the course of negotiations held in the atmosphere of mutual understanding, constructiveness and openness, the Heads of State have discussed hot-spot issues of the current state of interstate relations, prospects for further expansion and deepening of bilateral multifaceted cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as pressing regional and international problems of mutual interest.

The Presidents, having noted with satisfaction the increased degree of interstate political, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian ties, as well as the tendency towards more intensive and progressive development of mutually beneficial fruitful relations between the two countries and having based on unbreakable friendship, good neighborliness and mutual respect, as well as the centuries-old historical and cultural community of the two fraternal nations, and having guided by the Treaty of Eternal Friendship between the Republic Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan of 15 June 2000, having believed that raising bilateral relations to the level of strategic partnership would give a new and powerful impetus for further constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on a long-term basis, and having recognized their high responsibility for peace-building and stability, sustainable development and prosperity in the whole region,

declare the following:

[...]

13. The Presidents once again have highlighted that integrated water and energy use, which takes into account the interests of all countries in the region, is vital for sustainable development, well-being, and prosperity of Central Asia. Open dialogue, enhanced mutual understanding and constructive cooperation, and search for mutually acceptable, equitable, and reasonable solutions are important.

The Parties have agreed to consider joint construction of two hydropower stations, with the total capacity of 320 megawatt in the Tajik area of the Zarafshan

⁴ Source: <http://www.president.tj/ru/node/18170> (in Russian)

River. The Heads of State charged the Intergovernmental Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation with studying the potential use of freshwater in Lake Sarez for drinking purposes in the both countries.

The Parties have positively assessed the results of the International High-Level Conference on the International Decade for Action «Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028” and expressed willingness to actively participate in implementation of the Final Resolution and other documents of the Conference.

The Presidents have noted with satisfaction the unanimous support and adoption of the UN General Assembly Resolution on “Strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian Region”, which has been developed jointly and presented by the Central Asian states on 22 June 2018. They have expressed intention to continue promoting and implementing joint regional initiatives on the international arena.

[...]

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION “STRENGTHENING REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO ENSURE PEACE, STABILITY, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION”⁵

Seventy-second session

Agenda item 65

Peace building and sustaining peace

*Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan:
draft resolution*

The General Assembly,

Guided by the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations that encourage measures for regional cooperation to advance the purposes and principles of the United Nations,

Recognizing the important role of the Central Asian countries in ensuring peace, stability and sustainable development in the region as well as in promoting regional and international cooperation,

Keeping in mind modern challenges and threats faced by the countries of Central Asia,

Acknowledging the major regional and international initiatives of the Central Asian States in the fields of security and development, including:

a) The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia as an effective measure towards the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction,

b) The declaration by the General Assembly of 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests as one of the key means of achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world,

c) The adoption of the first regional Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia and the Ashgabat Declaration,

⁵ Source: <http://uza.uz/en/documents/strengthening-regional-and-international-cooperation-to-ensu-23-06-2018>

d) The elimination of risks from uranium tailings, the legacy of nuclear tests and radioactive waste,

e) The proclamation of the period 2018–2028 as the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”,

f) Ensuring reliable and stable transit in respect of energy carriers and energy resources, including through the effective implementation of existing regional energy projects,

g) The development of sustainable, best-value infrastructure supporting transport and transit corridors and the strengthening of links between all modes of transport, including by opening new roads and railways, as well as flight routes, as well as the implementation of transport and transit agreements encompassing Central Asia,

h) Ensuring the protection of ecosystems, biodiversity and critical species of flora and fauna,

Welcoming the efforts of the Governments of Central Asian countries to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals contained therein at the national level;

Referring to the results of the international conference on the theme “Central Asia: shared past and common Future, cooperation for sustainable development and mutual prosperity”, held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on 10 and 11 November 2017, at which the countries of Central Asia reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation,

Noting with satisfaction the regional support for the initiative to convene regular consultative meetings of the Heads of State of the Central Asian countries,

Recognizing the importance of preventive diplomacy, and noting in this context the role of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia,

Recognizing also the efforts of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, which Afghanistan has joined,

Stressing the importance of the Afghan-led Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan and other such important regional initiatives, aimed at promoting regional cooperation, and welcoming the outcomes of the seventh Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, held in Ashgabat on 14 and 15 November 2017, aimed at further economic cooperation, and encouraging the efforts and contribution by Central Asian States to the development of Afghanistan,

Recognizing the outcomes of the ministerial debate of the Security Council on building regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a model to link security and development, held on 19 January 2018 during the presidency of Kazakhstan as the first Central Asian country on the Council,

Acknowledging the efforts of the Central Asian States to actively promote education as an important condition for effectively counteracting violent extremism as

and when conducive to terrorism,

Taking into account the outcome of the high-level international conference on countering terrorism and violent extremism, held in Dushanbe on 3 and 4 May 2018,

Supporting the holding of the World Nomad Games on a regular basis, thereby contributing to intercultural dialogue,

1. Notes with satisfaction the significant practical contribution and efforts of the Central Asian States in strengthening regional security and stability, as well as in fostering sustainable development;

2. Expresses its support for the ongoing regional efforts and initiatives to strengthen stability and economic cooperation in Central Asia;

3. Reaffirms that threats to stability and sustainable development in the region require closer and more coordinated cooperation between the States of Central Asia, as well as between them and international and regional organizations, and also reaffirms the importance of regional cooperation involving regional and international organizations in addressing these threats;

4. Calls upon the countries of the region to make effective use of the platform of regular consultations of Heads of State and other forums to promote cooperation in the region and beyond in ensuring peace, stability and sustainable development;

5. Supports the active cooperation of the Central Asian countries in implementing the initiatives outlined in the final communiqué of the international conference on the theme “Central Asia: shared past and common future, cooperation for sustainable development and mutual prosperity”;

6. Welcomes the first summit of Central Asian Heads of State, held in Astana on 15 March 2018;

7. Also welcomes the holding by Turkmenistan in 2018 of the summit of the Heads of the participating States of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea;

8. Encourages the efforts of the Central Asian States to promote the peace process and social and economic development in Afghanistan and their participation in the regional political and economic processes, and underscores the importance of the Kabul process as a main forum and vehicle for peace initiatives on Afghanistan, as well as other regional and international conferences, including the Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan: Peace Process, Security Cooperation and Regional Connectivity, held on 26 and 27 March 2018, as ongoing efforts of the international community to support the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process;

9. Notes the importance of developing and strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation in the sphere of the rational and integrated use of water and energy resources in Central Asia, taking into account the interests of all States of the region, and for that purpose calls for the holding of regular consultations to promptly develop mutually beneficial long-term sustainable mechanisms in this field;

10. Calls upon Member States to support the efforts of the Central Asian States aimed at mitigating the environmental and socioeconomic consequences of the drying

up of the Aral Sea;

11. Supports the further strengthening of good-neighbourly and friendly relations among the Central Asian States through deepening relations in the fields of education, science, technology, innovation, tourism, culture, the arts and sports, and for continued mutual assistance in emergency situations;

12. Notes the importance of developing an advanced transportation system in the vast area of Central Asia and the wide use of the transit potential of the region as a necessary condition for sustainable development and free movement of people, goods and services;

13. Calls upon the specialized agencies, funds and programs of the United Nations system to harmonize their programs and activities in support of the priorities for regional cooperation, integration and sustainable development in Central Asia, as identified by the countries of the region;

14. Encourages the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia to continue its efforts to promote peace, stability, security and prosperity in the region, within its mandate, in promoting preventive diplomacy in cooperation with relevant regional and international organizations;

15. Encourages the efforts of the partners of the Central Asian States and the international community as a whole to strengthen and expand cooperation with the countries of the region in the fields of regional security and sustainable development.

June 18, 2018

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES⁶

On 20-22 July 2018, a meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian countries was held in Cholpon Ata city. It was attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan K.Abrakhmanov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic E.Abdyldaev, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan S.Muhriddin, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan A.Kamilov, and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan B.Myatiev.

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Central Asian countries:

In order to implement the agreements reached during the working (consultative) meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia on 15 March 2018 in the city of Astana, at the initiative of the Kyrgyz side, in a friendly atmosphere, discussed the state and prospects of development of regional cooperation, issues of ensuring security, borders, transport and transit communications, using water and energy resources, trade-economic and cultural-humanitarian cooperation, including interaction of the Central Asian countries within the framework of international organizations.

Emphasized the importance of the upcoming regular consultation meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia in the city of Tashkent in March 2019 in order to further deepen and expand regional cooperation.

Welcomed the existing positive dynamics in the process of international legal registration of state borders between the Central Asian countries, intensification of interregional and cross-border cooperation in the region.

Noted the need for further development of cooperation in combating international terrorism and extremism, illicit drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and other challenges and threats to regional security, including within international and regional organizations.

Emphasized the need for creation of favorable conditions to further strengthen trade and economic ties, grow mutual trade.

Expressed the opinion that promotion of intra-regional investment cooperation is important for business activity between Central Asian countries.

Confirmed that the expansion of transit possibilities of the region will contribute to strengthening economic cooperation, developing transport infrastructure and launching transit freight traffic through transport communications of the region's

⁶ Source: http://uza.uz/en/society/joint-statement-of-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-c-22-07-2018?sphrase_id=6306721

countries.

Advocated for the integrated use of water and energy resources in Central Asia and emphasized the importance of developing sustainable long-term mechanisms for mutually beneficial cooperation in this area, taking into account the interests and needs of all the states of the region.

Noted the cultural, historical and linguistic community of peoples of the Central Asian countries and confirmed their commitment to further interacting in the field of education, culture, art, science, tourism and other spheres.

Expressed confidence that the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Central Asian countries held on 20-22 July 2018 in Cholpon Ata city will give an additional impetus to further developing regional cooperation based on traditions of friendship, good-neighborliness, mutual understanding and trust among peoples of the five Central Asian states.

Agreed to continue the political dialogue at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian countries for discussing the state of regional cooperation and determining the prospects of their further development.

Agreed that the next meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian countries will be held in the Republic of Tajikistan.

VISIT OF THE WORLD WATER COUNCIL'S PRESIDENT BENEDITO BRAGA TO THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

The World Water Council (WWC) promotes efforts aimed at achieving water security, development and sustainability, while avoiding environmental catastrophes. To this end, among many other activities, WWC examines relevant practices and lessons in different countries and regions. One recent result of such activity is the policy and practice oriented book “Global Water Security: Lessons Learnt and Long-Term Implications”, which was published by WWC with the support of the Ministry of Water Resources of China. This book is to establish an improved understanding of the importance of water resources as an essential cross-cutting vector of socio-economic development.

The President of the World Water Council Prof. Benedito Braga visited Uzbekistan on 4-9 June 2018. The aim of the visit was to get deep insight into the causes of the Aral Sea disaster so that to take stock of the Central Asian lessons and avoid similar environmental catastrophes in other parts of the world.

During the visit, the President Braga met with representatives of state agencies and international organizations in Uzbekistan.

On the 4th of June, Mr. Braga had a meeting at the Legislative House of the Uzbek Parliament (Oliy Majlis) with the Deputy Speaker B.Alikhanov, the Deputy from Ecological Movement S.Samoylov, and the Head of Law Group O.Rakhimov. The participants exchanged opinions on a wide circle of issues concerning environmental conservation and the key role of water resources in ecosystems and human life. The President Braga underlined that WWC paid considerable attention to parliamentarians as the importance of good water law cannot be overvalued.

Prof. Braga noted his well recognition of water problems in Central Asia and Uzbekistan through the long-term cooperation with an active WWC member – the Scientific-Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (SIC ICWC) in Central Asia. He expressed his full support to initiatives of Uzbekistan in searching for practical decisions and shifting from words to actions. In this context, according to him, it was important to pay particular attention to infrastructure, investments, and information.

Finally, the President Braga offered prospects of mobilizing the Council's support during the next meeting of the WWC Board of Governors to the establishment of a Multipartner Trust Fund on human security for the Prearalie region.



Meeting at the Legislative House: S.V.Samoylov, B.B.Alikhanov, O.Rakhimov, D.R.Ziganshina, and B.Braga. 4 June 2018



Meeting at the Legislative House: S.V.Samoylov, B.B.Alikhanov, and B.Braga

President Braga had a bilateral meeting with the Deputy Director of SIC ICWC. The parties agreed on strengthening cooperation and wider involving the region in Council's activities, particularly in part of transboundary water issues.

In the first half of day on the 5th of June, President Braga took part in the Central Asian International Environmental Forum "Strengthening Cooperation on Environment and Sustainable Development", which was organized jointly with the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection of Uzbekistan and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia.



Benedito Braga, 5 June 2018

President Braga welcomed the participants during opening of the Forum and stressed the importance of fruitful cooperation for sustainable development. Particularly, he underlined that Central Asia has a huge capacity to become a showcase region with new approaches and innovative plans for solution of water and environmental issues in the context of climate change. He told that we would maximally benefit if we were willing to search for common solutions and jointly find tradeoffs and enter new frontiers.



Minister of Water Management Mr.Sh.R.Khamraev, Chairman of the State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection Mr.B.Kuchkarov, President of the World Water Council Mr.B.Braga, and Director of GEF Agency of IFAS Mr.V.I.Sokolov



President Braga with the leadership and staff of the Ministry and TIAME, 5 June 2018

In the second half of the day President Braga had a visit to the Uzbek Ministry of Water Management and the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers (TIAME).

During a meeting with the Ministry's leadership and personnel the President noted that the World Water Council applauded the decision of the Government of Uzbekistan to reform the national water sector. "We highly value the efforts made by Uzbekistan to achieve efficient and effective water use. The mere fact of the establishment of the Ministry of Water Management speaks in support of those efforts and the pragmatic approach applied in the country. I would like to invite the Ministry to take part in the forthcoming elections to the new Board of Governors of WWC. In addition, your experience in introducing water-saving technologies would be of importance for WWC", said Benedito Braga.



President Braga interviewed by Uzbek TV channels

After the meeting, Prof. Braga visited laboratories of the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers and met with students, young scientists, and lecturers.



While talking to young scientists and students, President Braga promised to consider during the preparatory process to the next 9th World Water Forum a proposal by one of young scientists on organization of a special ground at the Forum for discussion of young scientists' ideas for water.

At the end of day, President Braga had a meeting with the OSCE Project Coordinator Mr. John MacGregor.



On the 6th of June, President Braga visited Samarkand, where he was able to see historical and cultural sites of this ancient oasis. In the course of the visit, he was also presented the water management system in the Zerafshan Valley.

Deputy Minister of Water Management Mr. R.Mamutov explained the high-level guest the history of irrigation development in the Valley and the current water-related situation at the Ak-Karadarya waterworks facility.

On the 7th of June, in line with the agenda of the Conference “Joint actions to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe: new approaches, innovative solutions, and investments”, President Braga together with other participants made a trip to the Aral Sea area (Prearalie), particularly to the cities of Nukus and Muynak, where the guests visited a graveyard of ships and got acquainted with environmental situation in this region. The guests met with local population, local authorities and community organizations.





Muynak, Graveyard of ships. 6 June 2018



The participants also visited the Aral History Museum in Muynak where they took a look at the culture of this area and the history of the Aral tragedy, as well as the Art Museum named after I.V. Savitsky in Nukus. In the latter museum the guests had a look at cultural items of the ancient Khorezm, arts and crafts of Karakalpakstan. The graphic art exposition comprised of the contemporary art of Uzbekistan and the

Russian graphic art of the 20-30-ties of XX century arouse particular visitors' interest.



President Braga during the opening of the International Conference “Joint Actions to Mitigate the Consequences of the Aral Catastrophe: new approaches, innovative solutions, and investments” organized by the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Ministry of Innovation Development, and the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan

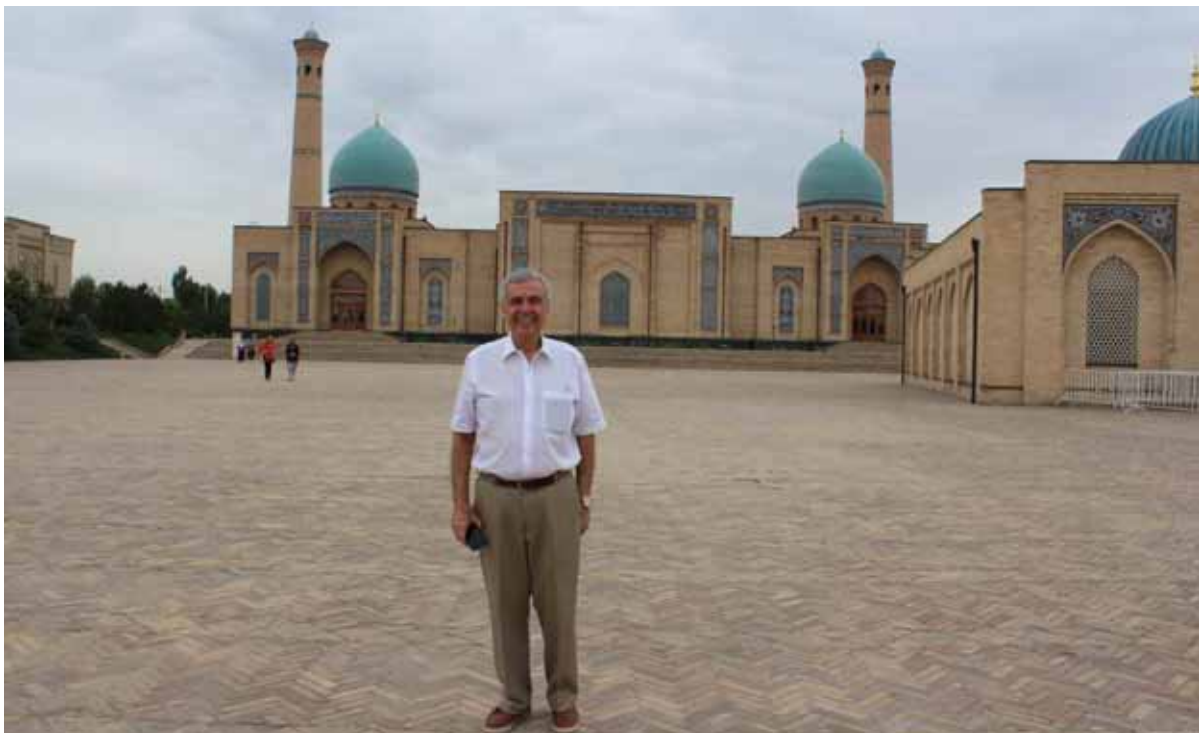
Under the impression of the trip to Prearalie, President Braga is his speech at the opening of the conference on the 8th of June drew attention to natural factors that should be taken into account in making decisions. The nature-based solutions and sustainable development and IWRM plans may be helpful in this context.

The speaker underlined the importance of cooperation and dialogue at the regional and global level, based on political will, diplomacy, innovative approaches, and well-placed investments.

The President of the World Water Council Benedito Braga and the Head of the GEF Agency of IFAS V.I. Sokolov discussed the possibilities of cooperation with WWC within the framework of the Aral Sea Basin Program of IFAS on the margins of Conference. As Prof. Braga noted, intense climate changes have been observed over the last decade. This has a negative effect on the use of land, water and other natural resources. Under umbrella of IFAS, Central Asia may become a showcase region in application of new approaches and fulfillment of long-term plans to solve environmental problems and implement innovative water projects.



Plenary session: Yukio Takasu, Special Advisor on Human Security addresses the meeting. Left to right: John MacGregor, OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan; Benedito Braga, President of the World Water Council; Shavkat Khamraev, Minister of Water Management; 8 June 2018



President Braga also had an opportunity to visit historical sites in Tashkent and promised to come back to see Bukhara. He was especially touched by hospitality of the Uzbek people during the visit.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON JOINT ACTIONS TO MITIGATE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARAL CATASTROPHE: NEW APPROACHES, INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS, INVESTMENTS (7-8 JUNE 2018)⁷

On 7-8 June 2018, Tashkent hosted the International Conference “Joint Actions to Mitigate the Consequences of the Aral Catastrophe: new approaches, innovative solutions, investments”.

Given the proximity of the topics of the forum and conference, as well as the same participants, the International Conference was held in the days of the Central Asian International Environmental Forum held in the capital from 5 to 8 June 2018.

It was organized by the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Ministry of Innovation Development of Uzbekistan, and the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The International Conference was organized and held in partnership with the relevant ministries and departments of the Republic, International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), The Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC), representatives of the United Nations Development Program, UNESCO, World Bank, German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan, JSC "UZVTORCVETMET, Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological cooperation of the OIS (COMSTECH), and other international and regional organizations.

The participants included the deputies of parliaments and heads of ministries and agencies of the Central Asian countries, experts of the government and administrative bodies of the country, national and foreign scientists and professionals, representatives of IFAS, CAREC, GIZ, UN agencies, COMSTECH, Global Water Partnership, World Bank and other leading financial institutions and international organizations, foreign companies interested in investing projects to improve environmental situation in Prearalie, as well as foreign and national NGOs, business and media representatives.

The participants underlined that the Aral Sea problem was recognized by the world community as a global problem of our time. For more than 50 years, large-scale negative environmental and the socio-economic consequences of the desiccation of the Aral Sea for the Central Asian region are well-known. The Republic of Uzbekistan makes a significant and tangible contribution to mitigate impact of the Aral catastrophe on environment and health of the population of Prearalie. However, the

⁷ Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan: <http://eco.uz/en/bulletin/6522-international-conference-joint-actions-to-mitigate-the-consequences-of-the-aral-catastrophe-new-approaches-innovative-solutions-investments-7-8-june-2018-y>

scale of existing problems requires drawing the attention of the broad world public to measures aimed at restoring ecosystems in the region and achieving its sustainable development. The countries of the Aral Sea Basin still need large investments, new technological and innovative solutions for systemic joint actions to stabilize the environmental situation in Prearalie, develop economy in a balanced way, address social issues, and adapt the region's population to climate change.

Thanks to the efforts of the leadership of Uzbekistan aimed at establishing good-neighborly relations with all countries of Central Asia, some progress has been made in resolving a number of complex issues of a regional nature, including problems of management and use of water resources in recent years. One of the priorities in the foreign policy of Uzbekistan, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. M. Mirziyoyev specifically identified the solution of issues of joint use of the region's water resources and unification of efforts in overcoming the consequences of the Aral Sea crisis. This is evidenced by the decisions, recent international forums, and results of bilateral and multilateral meetings of managers and delegations of the Central Asian countries.

It was specially noted that the International Conference gave a new impetus to attracting investments and strengthening regional cooperation in the implementation of projects aimed at improving the state of environment and living conditions of the population in Prearalie.

The objectives of the International Conference were alignment of practical orientation and actions of the countries of the region under the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea to address the problems in Prearalie; analysis and evaluation of implemented programs to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe; determination of ways of cooperation in the implementation of projects aimed at improving environmental and socio-economic situation in the Aral Sea region, and also attraction of investments for their implementation.

According to the program of the Conference, its participants made a trip to the zone of the Aral Sea region on 7 June: Nukus, Muynak, Cemetery of dead ships on the dried-up bottom of the Aral Sea, where they got acquainted with the ecological situation in this region, and held meetings with local residents and representatives of state bodies and public organizations.

On 8 June, plenary and sectional meetings of the Conference took place. Activities of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the new Program of Action on Aral Sea Basin Problems - ASBP-4, issues of deepening cooperation of the countries of the region on joint use of water resources of transboundary rivers in Central Asia, economic and social development of the Aral Sea zone and the creation of the Multi-partner Trust Fund for Human Security for the Aral Sea Region under the auspices of the United Nations, creation and development of protected natural areas in the Aral Sea area, activation of forest reclamation works on the dried bottom of the Aral Sea, as well as attraction of young specialists to discuss ecological problems of the Aral Sea and the development of new approaches and innovative solutions in the use of the region's water resources were discussed.

The participants of the conference had an opportunity to visit the Central Asian International Specialized Exhibition of Environmentally Clean Technologies «Green & Ecological Technologies Central Asia – GETCA 2018» and an exhibition of projects of national and international organizations implemented in the Aral Sea region, to take part in a business forum and meetings of staff of relevant ministries and departments, local government bodies with representatives of international financial institutions and organizations.

The Forum approved a package of project proposals aimed at improving environmental and socio-economic situation in the Aral Sea region, for implementation of which foreign investments and representatives of local business were involved.

The Tashkent resolution adopted by the results of the conference, as well as conference proceedings were sent to the parliaments and the governments of the Central Asian states and foreign countries, international and public organizations.

During the Forum, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the UNDP Country Office in Uzbekistan, The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Forestry, Agency GEF of IFAS, and the Executive Directorate of EC IFAS in Kazakhstan on coordination of forest plantations on the dried bottom of the Aral Sea, as well as the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan and General Secretariat Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the OIS (COMSTECH) and others.

TASHKENT RESOLUTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “JOINT ACTIONS TO MITIGATE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARAL CATASTROPHE: NEW APPROACHES, INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS, INVESTMENTS”⁸

At the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh. M. Mirziyoyev, drew the attention of the international community to one of the burning ecological problems of the present day - the drying out of the Aral Sea and called for the active consolidation of international efforts to overcome its consequences.

In order to accomplish this task, the Cabinet of Ministers issued the Ordinance No. 327-c of 26.04.2018 on holding an international conference on the topic “Joint actions to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe: new approaches, innovative solutions, investments” within the framework of the Central Asian International Environmental Forum in Tashkent on June 7-8, 2018. Relevant ministries and departments, academic institutions, business representatives, international and public organizations took part in the preparation of the event.

Participation of leading experts from more than 20 countries of the world, representatives of the diplomatic corps and international organizations acting in Central Asia, prominent scientists and specialists in the conference testifies the high importance and urgency of solving ecological and socio-economic problems related to the Aral Sea disaster for Central Asia and the whole planet.

During the conference, it was noted that the visit of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr. Antonio Guterres to the Aral Sea region in June 2017 was yet another indication of close attention to this region and willingness to help its inhabitants. The UN initiated the establishment of a Multi-partner Trust Fund for Human Security for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan and provides practical assistance in the implementation of a number of socially significant projects.

It was also noted that the Republic of Uzbekistan is making considerable efforts to mitigate the negative consequences of the Aral Sea crisis. During the years of independence, a large-scale work was carried out within the IFAS programs - ASBP-1, ASBP-2, and ASBP-3.

In order to implement a set of measures aimed to improve ecological and socio-economic situation and living conditions in the Aral Sea region, timely and efficiently implement investment projects to mitigate the consequences of the environmental

⁸ Source: CAREC, <https://carececo.org/news/Tashkent%20resolution.pdf>

disaster of the Aral Sea, on January 18, 2017, the State Program for the Development of the Aral Sea region for 2017-2021 was adopted to improve conditions and quality of life of the population of the Aral Sea region, providing for:

implementation of comprehensive measures to create new jobs, ensure employment of the population, as well as increase the investment attractiveness of the region;

development of the water supply system and increase of the level of providing the population with clean drinking water, improvement of sewage systems, sanitation and recycling of domestic waste;

further development of the health system in the region and adoption of measures to conserve the gene pool of the population;

implementation of measures aimed at improving living conditions of the population in the region, repair of in-house engineering communications and common areas in apartment buildings, as well as improvement of adjacent territories with creation of children's and sports grounds;

development of transport, engineering and communication infrastructure of settlements in the region, improvement of the irrigation network and outdoor lighting networks, improvement of heat supply systems in Nukus and Urgench cities, with introduction of modern energy-saving technologies.

In their speeches, participants paid special attention to the implementation of practical measures to mitigate the negative consequences of the Aral Sea crisis. In particular, the Aral Sea region Development Fund under the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been established to ensure reliable and stable financial support for the implementation of measures for the further development of the Aral Sea region, cardinal improvement of the conditions and quality of life of the population.

Tax incentives are presented to newly created microfirms and small enterprises in the sphere of industry operating in the regions of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and Khorezm province.

The preferential amounts of a monthly parental payment are introduced for the maintenance of children in pre-school educational institutions, specialized schools, centers of culture and leisure of the population located in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and the Khorezm province.

In the Republic of Karakalpakstan and Khorezm province, a new type of social benefit has been introduced in the form of one-time material assistance to needy families, lonely citizens, pensioners, families with breadwinner and other low-income categories of the population.

For residents of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and Khorezm province, railway tickets and air tickets are sold at special preferential rates.

Measures are taken to raise funds for technical assistance (grants) from foreign donors to finance projects to provide the population of the Aral Sea region with clean

drinking water, create new jobs, improvement of the ecological situation. About 8.5 trillion soums are allocated to implement this program.

Participants of the international conference “Joint actions to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe: new approaches, innovative solutions, investments”, having thoroughly discussed the proposed innovative ideas and new approaches to overcome the negative impact of ecological and social factors associated with the desiccation of the Aral Sea on the health of the population and the state of the environment of the Aral Sea region, ways to implement investment projects to improve the ecological situation in this region, made the following conclusions and recommendations:

Conclusions:

The Aral Sea problem is recognized by the United Nations Organization as one of the most acute global problems of our time, for the solution of which it is necessary to mobilize the efforts not only of the countries of the Central Asian region but also the whole world community.

For more than 50 years, large ecological and socio-economic consequences of the desiccation of the Aral Sea for the Central Asian region have been widely discussed around the world.

The scale of existing problems requires attracting the attention of the broad world public to measures aimed at restoring the ecosystems of the region and achieving its sustainable development.

Projections of the future growth of water deficit as a result of population growth, economic development of countries, climate change and other factors require the implementation of consolidated measures of the countries on water conservation and monitoring of water resources and vulnerable ecosystems, including the dried bottom of the Aral Sea.

The countries of the Aral Sea basin still have needs for large investments, new technical and innovative solutions for systemic joint actions to stabilize the environmental situation in the Aral Sea region, ensure balanced development of the economy, address social issues, and adapt the region's population to climate change.

Thanks to the efforts of the leadership of Uzbekistan aimed at establishing good-neighborly relations with all countries of Central Asia in recent years, some progress has been made in solving a number of complex regional issues, including the problems of water management and use.

One of the priorities in Uzbekistan's foreign policy was underlined by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. M. Mirziyoyev, who specifically identified the issues of joint use of the region's water resources and the unification of efforts in overcoming the consequences of the Aral Sea crisis.

The international conference gave a new impetus to attracting investments and strengthening regional cooperation in implementing projects aimed at improving

environment and living conditions of the population of the Aral Sea region.

Recommendations:

1. The states of the region, within the framework of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, should strive for coordinated practical orientation and their actions to address the problems of the Aral Sea region, improve the effectiveness of implemented programs to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe, identify ways of cooperation in the implementation of projects aimed at improving ecological and socio-economic situation not only in the Aral Sea region but also throughout the Aral Sea basin, as well as attracting investments for their implementation.

2. The Conference participants consider important the areas of cooperation in solving social and environmental problems in the Aral Sea region:

2.1. Harmonization of practical actions of the countries of the region aimed at solving the problems of the Aral Sea basin and Aral Sea region;

2.2. Inventory and assessment of implementation of earlier adopted programs and projects to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe and development of proposals for their implementation;

2.3. Ensuring the implementation of a package of project proposals reviewed and adopted at the conference aimed at improving ecological and socio-economic situation in the Aral Sea basin, for the implementation of which foreign investments and funds of representatives of local business are involved;

2.4. Deepening cooperation between the countries of the region on joint management of water resources of the transboundary rivers in Central Asia, ensuring economic and social development of the Aral Sea region and developing new approaches to innovative solutions in the use of water resources in the Aral Sea basin;

2.5. The intensification of efforts to establish a Multi-partner Trust Fund for Human Security for the Aral Sea region under the auspices of the United Nations;

2.6. The development of protected natural areas in the Aral Sea region, creation of a unified system for planting trees and coordinated activation of forest reclamation work on the dried day of the Aral Sea on a single scientifically grounded basis;

2.7. Involvement of young specialists in discussing the ecological problems of the Aral Sea, development of innovative solutions, and use of modern technologies to solve them.

3. The Conference participants consider the most important tasks:

3.1. International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea:

- intensify the search for new approaches and use of innovative ideas for the development and implementation of ASBP-4;

- support the initiative of the United Nations to establish in Uzbekistan a Multi-

partner Trust Fund for Human Security for the Aral Sea region;

- assist in the implementation of a package of innovative projects adopted by the conference participants.

3.2. Governments of Central Asian states:

- intensify activities to preserve and strengthen the potential of IFAS, find new ways to improve its structures in accordance with the positive changes in economic and political relations, develop cultural ties in the Central Asian region;

- accelerate the formation of proposals in ASBP-4 and submit them to the IFAS summit in August 2018;

- provide measures for improvement of regulatory and legal acts in accordance with new approaches to use of transboundary water resources in the Aral Sea basin and implementation of international water law norms in national water legislation.

3.3. State institutions, business entities, public organizations of the countries of the Central Asian region:

- direct efforts to search new approaches to the development of cooperation between state institutions, business structures, non-governmental non-profit organizations and other civil society institutions in the implementation of projects within ASBP-4 and other regional programs of international organizations;

- take systemic measures to increase employment and incomes of the population in the zone of ecological disaster by attracting foreign investments for the creation of modern low-water industrial and agricultural industries and development of small business and service sector;

- develop and implement plans to widely inform the population of Central Asian countries and foreign countries about new approaches to solving environmental and socio-economic problems in the Aral Sea region;

3.4. Scientific and educational institutions of the Central Asian region:

- develop and implement new programs to increase the level of ecological knowledge of the population, especially young people, at all stages of the educational process extensively using principles of continuous ecological education and education for sustainable development;

- intensify the search for and implementation of innovative energy, resource and water saving technologies in industry, agrarian sector and public services and widely promote best practices in rational use of water, including groundwater, and other natural resources.

4. International financial institutions and organizations:

4.1. Provide expert support, scientific and methodological assistance and organizational and technical assistance to develop ASBP-4 and implement projects included in the Program;

4.2. Promote the establishment of a Multi-partner Trust Fund for Human

Security for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan and financing of its programs aimed at mitigating the negative consequences of the drying up of the Aral Sea on living and health conditions of the population in the region;

4.3. To direct efforts of the expert community to disseminate effective innovations for practical implementation of regional programs and projects aimed at helping the countries of the region to improve their health and protection of the gene pool of the population, reducing morbidity, infant and maternal mortality, improving access to safe drinking water, improving sanitation and hygiene, and improving environment protection;

4.4. To assist the countries of the region that consume transboundary water resources for drinking and irrigation purposes in their effective use by reducing unjustified losses and introducing modern irrigation technologies and integrated water resources management.

The participants of the conference call on the governments of the countries and international organizations to consolidate their efforts to address socio-economic and environmental problems of the Aral Sea region, increase effectiveness of implemented programs and projects to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe for environment and public health, as well as attract investment for the purpose of their implementation.

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL CONFERENCE “THE ARAL SEA IN THE STREAM OF MODERN HISTORY”⁹

On May 24, on the occasion of the 25 anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), the International scientific and practical conference “The Aral Sea in the stream of modern history” took place.

The conference was organized by the Executive Directorate of IFAS in Kazakhstan and supported by the Smart Waters project, which is implemented by CAREC with the financial support of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and by GIZ program on Transboundary Water Resources Management in Central Asia.

The Conference was organized as part of the regional expedition around the North Aral Sea, organized by GIZ and the regional demonstrational tour, which is organized within Smart Waters project.



Representatives of state bodies of Central Asia and Afghanistan participated in the conference, inter alia: ministries of water resources management, environment protection, ministries of foreign affairs, scientific institutes, representatives of the

⁹ Source: CAREC - <http://carececo.org/en/main/news/Aral-conference-Kyzylorda/> and the Executive Board of IFAS in the Republic of Kazakhstan

Executive Committee of IFAS and its structural departments, city administration of Kyzylorda region, CAREC and international development partners – USAID, GIZ and OSCE.



The conference was held in the spirit of constructive dialogue on the problems of Aral Sea. Participants were sharing their experience gained during the expedition and demonstrational tour, suggesting the possible ways of strengthening the regional cooperation in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Some of the ideas on further collaboration were suggested: to organize the comprehensive research within the basin, starting from the upstream countries, where the flow is forming (Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), and down to the main irrigated lands of the basin (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).

The conference has proved once more that the countries of the basin already have everything for strengthening the regional cooperation, and first of all – strong support on the political level. Participants expressed their wishes that someday this region “from the region of environmental disaster will turn to the region of the sustainable development and prosperity”.

At the end of the conference, the ED IFAS announced the resolution, which promotes the necessity of the dialogue continuation, strengthening the multisectoral regional cooperation to provide sustainable development and improvement of environmental conditions in Prearalie. Participants supported this initiative.

RESOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL CONFERENCE “THE ARAL SEA IN THE STREAM OF MODERN HISTORY”

Kyzylorda city

24 May 2018

The Participants of the International scientific and practical conference “The Aral Sea in the stream of modern history” on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea,

taking into account Sustainable Development Goals¹⁰, including:

- UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/273 on Cooperation of the United Nations and International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea adopted on 12 April 2018;
- UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/222 International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” over 2018-2028 adopted on 21 December 2016;
- Joint statement at the Ministerial Conference “Water and Good Neighborhood Relations in Central Asia” under the Berlin Process “Water Initiative for Central Asia” on 7-8 September 2015 in Berlin;
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa adopted on 17 June 1994;
- Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) adopted on 17 March 1992;

guided by the joint statement of the Heads of founder-states of IFAS of 28 April 2009 in the Almaty city,

1. Request the Governments of the countries to activate implementation of state programs and projects aimed at sustainable development of the water sector and resolution of problems in the Aral Sea basin in the following areas:

- efficient management and rational use of water and land resources;
- development of regional water quality monitoring system;
- increased access to clean drinking water and sanitation;
- reclamation of irrigated land and pastures;
- creation of favorable conditions to improve distant-pasture cattle rearing;

¹⁰UN General Assembly Resolution A/70/L.1 adopted on 18 November 2015

- improvement of security of hydraulic facilities;
- capacity building of operational and inspection services of the water sector;
- improvement of legal and institutional frameworks;
- enhancement of fundamental and applied target research;
- professional development.

2. Undertake to examine new opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation between concerned state bodies, higher education and research institutions and regional organizations on water, environment, and socio-economic issues.

3. Recognized the need to promote broader exchange of information on scientific and technological advances in the water sector, forestry, fishery, integrated water resources management, meteorology, hydrology, and ecology.

4. Agreed to implement regional projects aimed at solving water and environmental problems, including joint expeditions to the Aral Sea area every three years.

5. Underlined the importance of efforts undertaken by the Governments of the founding states of IFAS to implement the Aral Sea Basin Programs (ASBP – 1, 2, 3) and develop ASBP-4.

6. Request to enhance the activity of IFAS and its organizations to strengthen regional water cooperation, taking into account the interests of all founding states of IFAS, security of hydraulic facilities, afforestation, biodiversity management, develop a regional biodiversity monitoring system, and improve socio-economic and environmental conditions in the Aral Sea basin.

7. Thanked the UN system's organizations, international financial institutions, donor countries and other development partners for their support and assistance to the countries in the region in addressing the actual challenges of the Aral Sea basin.

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