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**“Prospects of Water Use in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia  
on the Basis of Integrated Water Resources Management**

Dear Mr. Chairman!

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues!

First of all, let me thank the Organizing Committee for invitation to take part in such a substantial, very important and timely event. Undoubtedly, the Sixth World Water Forum will open a new page in the record of efforts on conservation of water resources, their sound use, and promotion of efficient resource management. Our Conference is dedicated to fostering a reasonable, professional view on water issues in the Central Asian region in order to make consolidated contribution to preparation of the Water Forum. All of us eventually wish that water be clean and accessible to all the people, that water be used soundly without distorting the ecological equilibrium.

Historically, the Central Asian region was not only a place where water problems were concentrated but was also characterized by its ability and skills to overcome such problems. Here, the people know the value of water and follow the ancient principle ‘Obi-Khayat’, which means ‘water is life’.

Last century, especially in the Soviet period, ambitious water projects were implemented and changed this land. A term of ‘water civilizations’ has occurred recently in historical sciences, particularly in Sinology. Let us leave studying the ancient roots of this term for historians, and I just would like to say that in this land a mere one generation saw the occurrence of water civilizations. The feat of Uzbek peoples who transformed an unpopulated, desert, barren salty area of Hunger Steppe into the flourishing, densely-populated progressive land is still awaiting its appraisal and entry in history.

Central Asia has been always the heart of new ideas in the water sector, accumulating the centuries-old experience and knowledge of the past generations. It was here that such coryphaei – founders of the Soviet irrigation and drainage school as Kostyakov, Askotchenskiy, Poslavskiy and many others made a start.

Of particular importance for world science is the experience accumulated by Uzbekistan in integrated development of land, construction of effective drainage systems to control soil salinization, automation of water management, and other scientific and industrial achievements that are practiced and disseminated among many countries all over the world. I see with pleasure and pride how the two basin organizations – BWO Syrdarya and BWO Amudarya – established before the very collapse of the Soviet Union have been functioning in the challenging environment of transboundary water sharing.

Finally, once again I would like to underline what I repeatedly spoke from different platforms. When the Soviet Union collapsed and a guarantor of unbiased allocation of the resources from the great Central Asian water-feeders – the Syrdarya and Amudarya rivers – has disappeared, the five Presidents have met and, having demonstrated their wisdom and political will, have established an exterritorial body – ICWC – which was to ensure water management to the benefit of all five nations under very difficult conditions induced by climate change. This is exemplary for many regions in the world. It is not for nothing the UN Secretary General said that: “The world is on the threshold of water wars”. The century-old wisdom of the Central Asian peoples will never allow to cross this threshold.

Since independence, the host country of this conference – Uzbekistan – has been continuing successfully to improve the water cause, i.e. implement integrated water resources management, apply automation of waterworks, and establish extension services. This is a result of laborious tasks of water professionals and purposeful activities of the government leadership. Finally, this has led to reduction of unit water use per irrigated hectare.

On the way towards the next World Water Forum we should unite our efforts and focus altogether on the water problems of global concern. We have to work together since water has no frontiers. That is why recently the issues related to transboundary water have been placed in the forefront of the current global challenges.

We should pay particular attention to a few very topical issues.

1. The highly sensitive matter of the growing pollution of water sources on a global scale.

2. Provision of population with clean drinking water.

3. Water and climate.

4. All-round implementation of integrated water resources management in practice. Clear and articulate division of management functions between the state and the water users' organizations.

5. Undertaking of feasible measures to promote scientific-technical progress in the water sector and aimed primarily to save water and prevent pollution.

6. Safety of hydraulic structures.

In my opinion, all these issues and other water-related aspects should be thoroughly analyzed and responded through a set of concrete measures.

Coming back to the first issue of pollution, I would like to express some of my considerations. Today's world is carried away by technological aspects of water treatment. New, breakthrough technologies originate and their inventors demonstrate facilities with which one may drink water taken from a puddle. This is good but may be it is better or rather more appropriate to concentrate efforts on prevention of natural water pollution. Counting only on economic sanctions on the industries polluting water sources would not solve the problem. We need realistic programs providing for concrete measures and monitoring of water bodies and supported by the governments.

As far as climate is concerned, it is necessary to keep in mind that the global warming issue moved from the category of scientific guess to that of real world. It is evident for us that global climate changes will first affect water resources. And the science still does not have a definite answer to this key question. Different assessments, forecasts, and opinions are available in this context. Therefore, it is necessary to agree upon and base probably on worse development scenario. In the meantime, the heat and drought in 2010 caused substantial damage to economies of Russia and a number of other countries and resulted in the rise of food prices. This reminded the society of the ways to eliminate such disaster since so far nothing but irrigation was found as a drastic measure to ensure stable farming under any climatic conditions. Unfortunately, the huge experience of our joint work accumulated in this area in the past was found to be unclaimed. I could do believe that the lessons of the past year would be learnt in both Russia and our neighbors, and the land reclamation matters would be adequately positioned in national policies. Otherwise, we will see collapse of the agricultural sector and further rise in food prices.

Another one aspect of this problem is the forecasted growth of population on the Earth and the forecast that as early as by the mid of this century the world will face the food shortage. This opens immense opportunities for our region in terms of food export. While today our region is a large exporter of raw hydrocarbons, then in the presence of political will and if well-thought-out measures are implemented, we could altogether become one of the main actors on the food market and fully compensate the forecasted shortage. We have everything for this – vast areas of cultivable land, huge resources of renewable freshwater, and sufficient quantity of employable population.

The legal framework of water relations is a very important issue. Unfortunately, this framework is not perfect and is not available at all in some countries. For us, especially under transboundary water conditions, it is very important that national legal water acts should be identical as much as possible. This should not be regarded as an infringement on sovereignty; this is only a requirement issuing from shared responsibility.

It seems advisable to adopt such legal acts that provide for the right of every human to water, while deprivation of access to water should be considered as an infringement on human rights with all the ensuing consequences.

The water-management organizations from some countries in the Eurasian region established an Information Network of Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asian countries almost one year ago. We appreciate the recognition and support of this initiative by WWC and EC. This new institution entrusted me to propose to you for the World Water Forum to adopt a Water Security Charter.

We think that such document will promote consolidation of the civil society and the decision-making authorities in order to solve water-related problems to the benefit of mankind at large. Let me announce a draft of this document.

Finally, I would like to thank the Government of Uzbekistan and personally the President, honorable I.A.Karimov for continuous attention to water issues and reasonable and wise water policy implemented under complex regional water conditions.

Thank you for attention.