

7th WORLD WATER FORUM

SESSION “DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATION IN THE ARAL SEA BASIN TO MITIGATE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE”

The session was organized by the Executive Committee of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (EC IFAS) in cooperation with the Global Water Partnership for Central Asia and Caucasus (GWP CACENA).

Mr.Sh.R.Khamraev, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the acting Chairman of EC IFAS, chaired the session. Mr.Khamraev opened the session and gave the floor to Thierry Umbehr, SDC Regional Advisor, who made a presentation on IFAS activities contributing to implementation of the Aral Sea Basin Program.



Donors fully support ASBP-3 and are ready to work together with EC IFAS and governments of IFAS member-states to implement the program. The objective is to ensure better and comprehensive management and share water resources for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Mr. Thierry Umbehr highlighted that for more efficient use of existing resources and additional funding coordination of donors needed to be brought to a brand new level. EC IFAS is to play a key role in donor coordination through information exchange, research efforts, monitoring and assessment.

Then Iskander Abdullaev, CAREC Executive Director, made a review of the issues related to the Aral Sea and the ways of their solution. Vast salt desert covering almost 5 million ha, degradation and sharp reduction of biodiversity are among the main consequences of drying up of the Aral Sea in addition to decreased water volumes and water surface, increased water salinity and changed patterns of salinity.



The Heads of Central Asian states signed a joint statement, highlighting the major role of IFAS in coordination of actions and solution of fundamental problems of cooperation among the states in Central Asia and donor community, including international financing institutions.

The states of Central Asia affirmed their interest in development of mutually acceptable mechanisms for integrated use of water resources and protection of the environment for the benefit of all states in the region.

In the conclusion of this block of the session Sh.R.Khamraev made a presentation on IFAS work during the period of presidency of Uzbekistan.

He noted that the Heads of Central Asian States, while acknowledging the situation at hand, founded the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS). Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the state-founders of the IFAS. The IFAS and its member organizations aim to strengthen integration and cooperation for efficient use of water resources in order to achieve sustainable development and adapt to climate change in the region.

Based on the decision of the Heads of States of 28 April 2009, Executive Committee of IFAS (EC IFAS) prepared draft ASBP-3, which was approved by the Board of IFAS in 2011. Under the presidency of Uzbekistan almost 300 national and regional projects with the total cost of more than US\$8.5 billions are implemented as part of ASBP-3.

During the open discussion the following participants made reports:

Mr. E.N.Nisanbaev, Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Kazakhstan, on contribution of Kazakhstan to IFAS activity

Mr. M.Kazakov, representative of the Republic of Tajikistan at IFAS, on contribution of Tajikistan to IFAS activity

Mr. M.Akmuradov, representative of Turkmenistan at IFAS, on contribution of Turkmenistan to IFAS activity

Mr. N.Sheraliev, Director of GEF Agency, on contribution of Uzbekistan to IFAS activity

Mme. Olivia la O' Castillo, member of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, President of Sustainable Development Solutions for Asia and the Pacific, encouraged the world community to assist states of the Aral Sea Basin in implementation of ASBP-3.

Mr. William Rex, lead water resources specialist at the World Bank, confirmed the plans of the Bank to assist the IFAS in implementation of the Aral Sea Basin Program.

Mr. Seppo Rekolainen, Finnish Environment Institute, confirmed the plans of Finland to support less developed countries in Central Asia – Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - in strengthening the water sector.

Ms. Natalia Alexeeva, Senior GWPO Network Officer, briefly reviewed the activity of the network in the region.



Mr. Vladimir Mamaev, UNDP Regional Coordinator, confirmed the UN plans to continue supporting ASBP-3, especially since the regional UNDP office moved from Bratislava to Istanbul and became closer to Central Asia. This is to enhance its effectiveness.

Prof. Dukhovny V.A. presented the forecast of the main development trends in the Aral Sea Basin based on model forecasts and the ways for future survival. He underlined that the Amudarya River Basin, where serious water deficit is expected during 2030-2050, is to become priority of regional cooperation and donor attention. He also presented key directions for regional water strategy in accordance with the Aral Sea Program 3. He also underlined a need to focus on deltas and the Aral Sea itself.



Ms. Barbara Janusz – Pawletta, German-Kazakh University, briefly presented educational activities of the university under training curricula on integrated water resources management.

Elena Tsay, SIC ICWC, young specialist, participated in the World Youth Parliament for Water at the invitation of the Forum. She assured the participants of the session that young generation is ready to be strongly engaged in solution of the Aral Sea problems.



Finally, Sh.R.Khamraev read draft resolution of the session, which was unanimously adopted by the participants. Thereupon the session was closed.