TASHKENT DECLARATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE "PROBLEMS OF ARAL: IMPACT ON THE GENE POOL OF POPULATION, FLORA, FAUNA AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR MITIGATING CONSEQUENCES"

Participants of the International Conference have adopted the following statement on environmental crisis in the Aral Sea region and measures of international cooperation for mitigation of the Implications:

1. The outcomes of the International Conference have proved once again that inefficient use of water resources which took place over the recent 15 years resulting in change in waterflow of the Amudarya and Sirdarya rivers have caused one of the most large-scale man-made disasters in modern history – drying out of the Aral Sea. As a result a complex range of environmental, socio-economic and demographic problems emerged, of international, global character in terms of origin and the level of implications.

2. The situation in the Aral Sea region is under peril of rapid and considerable deterioration if inflow of water resources decreases and becomes imbalanced in future. Glaciers of Pamir and Tuan-Shan over the last 50 years have lost 25% of their ice reserves and this process is progressing intensively. Coupled with inefficient use of water resources this can contribute to expansion of disaster area, increase area of saline lands, unsuitable for agricultural cultivation and living, deprive millions of people of employment and income and cause further losses in flora and fauna of the Aral Sea region. Prevention of aggravation of the Aral Sea area situation is an integral part of economic, social, environmental and other aspects of regional security both for Central Asian counties and their neighbors.

3. In this context the issues of reasonable use of water resources of transboundary rivers of the region is becoming increasingly important as well as the need in comprehensive and well-considered approach and decisions related to use of water resources, primarily runoff of transboundary rivers for the sake and in the interests of all countries and peoples living in the region. Countries of the region, in accordance with key documents of international applicable law, including Conventions on Protection and Use of Transboundary Waterways and International Lakes (1992) and On Right of Unnavigable Use of International Waterways (1997), defining key principles of using transboundary rivers within the limits of their respective territories should strive for using of transboundary rivers in fair and reasonable manner, implementation of appropriate measures for prevention of considerable detriment to other runoff countries.

4. The efforts taken by the Central Asian states and international community during the last fifteen years brought certain positive results that permitted to mitigate the consequences of the Aral Sea crises to local population, flora and fauna within the territory of disaster. However, over the pas several years, the amount and intensity of this assistance has declined. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – the states that are the first to face the implications of the disaster – experience serious difficulties in overcoming the outcomes of global catastrophe.

5. Participants of the conference express their great appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, UNFPA, UNIDP, the World Bank, Asian Bank, GTZ and other international organizations for new initiatives in finding and development of effective ways and mechanisms aimed at mitigation of the

Aral Sea region environmental crisis implications, as well as social and economic protection of the population, sustaining and restoring of biodiversity.

6. The participants highlighted the necessity of maintaining strict water resource saving regime and efficiency in the region both for potable water and water used for agricultural purposes, prevention of unjustified water losses in the process of its delivery to consumers through, for instance, introduction of new irrigation technologies, implementation of projects of reconstruction of water supply and irrigation systems, reconstruction and building of new collector and drainage systems, technical modernization of pumping facilities and extensive installation of water consumption meters, development of water management institutions.

7. After discussing of all the issues, participants of the conference have resolved that key tasks of international community and countries of Central Asia should include the following:

- assist the Aral Sea regions in the environmental disaster in issues of protecting gene pool of population, improvement of public health, access to clean potable water, enhancement of the sanitary and hygiene level, decrease in incidence levels, infant and maternal mortality and improvement of environment protection;
- provision of assistance in transboundary water resource management, prevent deliberate decrease in volume and regime of transboundary rivers runoff to the Aral Sea, which might entail worsening of environmental situation in the Aral Sea area, health, living conditions of millions of people living in this region;
- assist countries of the region using water resources of transboundary rivers for supply of drinking and irrigation water, in its efficient use by reducing the unjustified losses, implementation of state-of-art watering technologies, integrated management of water resources which would balance needs of sustaining and restoring functions of fragile eco-system of the Aral Sea area with other needs, including agricultural and commercial;
- implement measures restricting desertification and salinization of soil including forest planting, rehabilitation of ponds in Amudarya delta, and other land treatment and specialized measures in the area of environmental disaster;
- create conditions for expansion of employment and growth in individual income in the environmental disaster area by development of shall businesses, primarily those with low water consumption in industry, agriculture and services as well as improvement of economic activities to ensure better food supply, higher farmers' incomes and qaulity.

8. The participants invite international donor and sponsors, including international organizations, financial institutions, foreign countries and other donors, to participate in implementation of the Comprehensive Plan of Actions focused on mitigation of climate change implications in the Aral Sea area.