“CHALLENGES OF TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA”

Dr. Saghit Ibatullin, Chairman of the Executive Committee IFAS
3 - 4 September 2012, Helsinki, Finland
The region of the Aral Sea Basin
Major factors affecting the transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia:

• Population growth: increasing deficiency of water resources, reduction of specific water availability in 3-5 times, requiring additional annual 500-700 mln m3 of water.

• Climate change: loss of glacier reserves, expected reduce of water flow by 10-15%, growing frequency of floods and droughts.

• Consequences of the Aral Sea shrinkage resulted in the degradation of natural resources and ecosystems destruction: desertification, pollution and loss of biodiversity, water quality deterioration etc.

• Conflict of interests in the use of transboundary water resources between the upstream and downstream countries of the Aral Sea basin.

• The principles of Integrated Water Resources Management are not fully applied in the countries of Central Asia.

• The need in the development of effective early warning systems and preventive measures to prevent and reduce risks and consequences of natural disasters.

• The outdated water saving technologies: lack of modern irrigation techniques, advanced methods of recycling etc.
Joint Statement of Heads of states-founders of IFAS - as a basis to promote recognition of the UNECE Water Convention

• Joint Statement of Heads of states-founders IFAS (28th April 2009) – ‘Parties reaffirm the interest in the development of mutually acceptable mechanism for integrated use of water resources and protection of the environment in Central Asia, taking into account the interests of all the states in the region’.

• IFAS and its organizations – are the regional platform for promoting national policy dialogues on recognition of the UNECE Water Convention, and also development and implementation of bilateral & multilateral agreements.

• Assistance to the countries of the Aral Sea basin by developing Action Programmes (ASBP-1-2-3).
Main directions of the Third Aral Sea basin Program (ASBP-3) and central obligations of 1992 UNECE Water Convention: Do they correlate?

- The main concepts and principles of UNECE Water Convention correspond to the tasks set in the Joint Statement of Heads of states-founders of IFAS.
- Furthermore, they correlate with the four main directions of ASBP-3:
  - Integrated Water Resources Management
  - Environmental Protection
  - Socio-economic development
  - Improving the institutional and legal mechanisms
The correlation between the provisions of Water Convention and the Joint Statement of Heads of states-founders IFAS

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<td>- Protection of transboundary waters by preventing, controlling and reducing transboundary impacts.</td>
<td>Parties acknowledged the need in: - Achieving Millennium Development Goals and improving socio-economic and environmental conditions within the Aral Sea basin. - Integrated use and conservation of water resources, combating desertification and land degradation - Following generally acknowledged principles of the International Law. - Developing of mutually acceptable mechanism on integrated use of water resources and environmental protection in Central Asia taking into account the interests of all states in the region.</td>
<td><strong>DIRECTION 1</strong> Integrated Use of Water Resources. <strong>DIRECTION 2</strong> Environmental Protection. <strong>DIRECTION 3</strong> Socio-Economic Development. <strong>DIRECTION 4</strong> Improving the institutional and legal mechanisms.</td>
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1992 UNECE Water Convention: Central Asia and Afghanistan

**Parties:** KAZAKHSTAN, UZBEKISTAN and TURKMENISTAN

**Status of ratification:**
- Kazakhstan - 11 Jan 2001a
- Uzbekistan - 4 Sep 2007a
- Turkmenistan* - 4 Aug 2012a

The support of the Convention from its CA participants is expressed in the following:

**Kazakhstan** – Development of the National Plan on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

**Uzbekistan** – Considerable works towards modernization of irrigation infrastructure and monitoring systems, which led to significant reduction in water consumption.

**Turkmenistan** – National Policy Dialogues on IWRM, water supply and sanitation. Revision of the national legal frameworks for water management and protection.

Afghanistan

**Who is next?**
- Kyrgyzstan
- Tajikistan
Cooperation with international organizations and donor community
UNECE Water Convention

Some constraints to application of the UNECE environmental instruments:

• The knowledge of UNECE environmental instruments and opportunities they provide is often limited in Central Asia.

• Insufficient understanding of the obligations sometimes results in misinterpretation of their key provisions and their inappropriate use in the regional political debates over the use of water resources (i.e. Part I of the Water Convention: the equitable and reasonable utilization principle (article 2)).

• Today’s highest concern is linked to the need in the establishment of favourable economic and technical conditions in some CA states to advance the acceptance of the Convention. To achieve this, the developed countries are requested to provide assistance through modernisation of industrial water treatment systems.
Prospects for strengthening transboundary water cooperation in CA

• To develop and implement jointly IWRM plan in transboundary basins.

• To improve the institutional structure of regional and basin organizations.

• To implement the long-term regional Program ASBP-3.

• To strengthen and enlarge collaboration with international organizations and donor community.

• To ratify previously prepared bilateral/multilateral agreements for transboundary cooperation, in particular those that have been negotiated for a long time and are ready to be signed (agreements stipulated in the 2009 Statement of Heads of IFAS state-founders).

• To develop the interstate relations on the basis of international law and best practices in the management and protection of transboundary water resources.