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INVITATION TO PARTNERSHIP
**on implementation of the Central Asian Sustainable
Development Initiative**

Submitted by

the Governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and
Uzbekistan through the Ad Hoc Working Group of Senior Officials



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We, the representatives of the Governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan, international and non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Highlighting the geopolitical importance of Central Asia in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) for the maintenance and enhancement of security, the preservation of a wholesome and healthy environment, the conservation of landscape and biological diversity and the development of transcontinental transport links;

Noting the extreme vulnerability of Central Asian ecosystems to human impacts and the unsound use of limited water resources, which have resulted in the Aral environmental disaster and placed significant obstacles in the way of the future development of the subregion;

Contributing to the implementation of the decisions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Millennium Goals and to events connected with the International Year of Freshwater (2003), and supporting the development and implementation of the next stage of the Aral Sea Basin Programme for 2003-2010;

Welcoming and supporting global and regional partnership initiatives, such as the European Water Initiative, the Global Water Partnership, the International Partnership for Sustainable Development of Mountainous Areas and the “East-West” Partnership within the framework of the Environmental Strategy for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;

Stressing the importance of building upon existing Central Asian organizations, programmes and projects pertaining to the environment and water and to the further development thereof based on the principles of integrated management, ecosystem approaches and cross-sector cooperation;

Call for the following action to be taken:

1. Support the efforts of Central Asian countries to achieve the priority goals of sustainable development, as set forth in the subregional report on environment, water and security in Central Asia, and to develop the Central Asian Sustainable Development Initiative announced at the World Summit on Sustainable Development;
2. Embark on the preparation of a multilateral partnership agreement between all stakeholders aimed at achieving the priority goals outlined in the report and developing a new phase of the Aral Sea Basin Programme for the period to 2010, as initiated by the heads of State of the Central Asian countries;
3. Coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders to achieve subregional sustainable development goals for the present and future generations.

Annex

ENVIRONMENT, WATER AND SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

Summary of the report

Introduction

1. The Central Asian subregion (the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan) is situated at the heart of the Eurasian continent. Its total area is 3,882 million km² and its population more than 53 million. It borders on Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran in the south, China in the east and the Russian Federation in the west and north.
2. The development of Central Asia has depended on water and land resources from time immemorial. Life here revolves around agriculture and animal husbandry, with vulnerable ecosystems and water the principal limiting factors. Irrigation agriculture in the region dates back to the sixth or seventh century B.C. Today the population of the subregion has grown sevenfold and the area under irrigation has doubled.
3. Since the early 1990s a number of projects to address environmental and development problems have been implemented with the support of donor and international programmes. Many of these have been very successful, but the complexity of the transition period has lessened their impact over time. It is clear now that a different approach is called for, based on long-term, sounder processes involving stakeholders and the community at large and anchored in the region's own capacities.
4. In the course of the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Central Asian countries developed just such an approach and proposed a partnership initiative for sustainable development in the subregion (the Central Asian Agenda 21), which was incorporated into the concluding documents of the World Summit. The initiative envisages the integration of processes that are already under way and the strengthening of cooperation mechanisms among sectors, countries and donors in order to achieve common development goals. An important role in this initiative is assigned to the programme of action to improve the environmental, social and economic situation in the Aral Sea basin in the period 2003-2010, the European Environmental Programme and other international programmes and initiatives.
5. The report on environment, water and security in Central Asia, prepared by Central Asian experts with input from the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and UN/ECE, reflects the key problems in Central Asia and proposes actions to achieve sustainable development goals in the light of the commitments made by the Central Asian countries, international organizations and donors.

I. CENTRAL ASIA: NATURAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

6. Central Asia is a unique natural environment with an enormous variety of ecosystems, including the very high mountain ranges of the Pamirs, Tien Shan and Altai mountains, vast deserts and steppes, large and ancient rivers and an abundance of lakes including Issyk Kul, one of the most beautiful and deepest in the world. The Central Asian ecosystems play an important role in maintaining the global environmental equilibrium and water exchange.

7. The subregion is rich in natural and energy resources. Turkmenistan is the world's third largest gas supplier. Uzbekistan is the world's eighth largest gold producer. A large proportion of the world's freshwater reserves are concentrated in the mountain ecosystems of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Kazakhstan is famous for its rich hydrocarbon and mineral resources. Central Asia boasts significant potential in terms of renewable energy resources and hydroelectric power.

8. Central Asia is a transport crossroads. The Turkestan-Siberian main line and a network of other railways criss-cross the subregion. There is access to the Persian Gulf through Iran, to the Indian Ocean through Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to the Asia-Pacific region through China. The network of motor roads, communications, shipping and air routes is well developed. The existing transport infrastructure also has good potential for development.

9. The warm climate, abundant sunshine and fertile soil create favourable conditions for the development of farming. Uzbekistan is the world's fourth largest cotton producer. The land is good for grazing, and the extensive river network and abundance of artificial reservoirs are conducive to the development of commercial fisheries.

10. Central Asia is known for its unique landscapes and rich variety of flora and fauna. Many Central Asian regions serve as natural habitats and migration sites for various species of flora and fauna, and certain natural habitats are unique to Central Asia. This is also the area where the wild varieties of many cultigens have their historical origins. A number of globally significant relic and endemic species of flora and fauna have survived in Central Asia.

11. The Central Asian States have taken steps to develop the potential of their civic societies. A number of important decisions have been made at the head of State level, subregional organizations have been established and joint programmes and projects have been launched. The countries in the subregion are actively developing their collaboration with regional and international programmes, have joined many international and regional organizations and have acceded to international environmental agreements.

12. Despite many unresolved problems, the system of subregional agreements and organizations that has been established, for example IFAS, the Inter-State Commission on Sustainable Development of Central Asia (ICSD) and the Inter-State Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia (ICWC), has contributed to the maintenance of peace and security in Central Asia for 10 years and prevented the recurrence of previous conflicts arising out of

water and land shortages. IFAS is one of a handful of representative subregional organizations in the world, since it was founded by heads of State.

II. SECURITY THREATS AND LIMITING FACTORS FOR DEVELOPMENT

A. Ecosystem deterioration - shrinking living space

13. One distinctive feature of Central Asia is the vulnerability of its ecosystems. Central Asia forms a uniform environmental area comprising the closed-drainage system of the Caspian and Aral basins with no outlet to the ocean, which, combined with the arid climate, results in significant environmental limitations on economic activity and trade.
14. The development of irrigation agriculture in the Aral Sea basin on a scale unprecedented in modern history overstrained the ecosystem and led to its ultimate ruin. Intensive water uptake caused the level of the Aral Sea to drop by 17-19 metres and its capacity to decrease by 75%. By the end of the 1980s the sea had virtually ceased to exist and a catalogue of woes became apparent, for example a drastic deterioration in water quality and human health; large-scale desertification; soil salinity and swamping; decreased biological diversity; and an increase in adverse climatic effects.
15. The resource-based approach that evolved during the arms race still dominates water management thinking in Central Asian countries. Despite the compelling example of the Aral disaster, water is primarily considered in terms of agriculture and power generation without any regard for its other functions. Consequently, drinking water quality, human health, soil fertility and crop yields are deteriorating, and poverty, unemployment and migration are on the increase.
16. Central Asian prosperity depends to a great extent on the natural equilibrium in the zones of river formation - the mountainous ecosystems of the Pamirs, Tien Shan and Altai. High mountain ecosystems absorb moisture from the upper layers of the atmosphere, transported by air masses mainly from the Atlantic Ocean, and act as gigantic freshwater accumulators. However, degradation processes such as deforestation and erosion, waste pollution and rangeland reduction are increasingly causing problems in Central Asia's mountains. The glaciers of the Pamirs and Altai lost over 25% of their ice reserves during the period from 1957 to 2000, and this process is continuing apace.
17. Forested areas in Central Asia have shrunk to less than one quarter of their original extent since the middle of the last century. Saxaul and flood plain forests (tugais) have been particularly hard hit by human activities. In the flood plain of the Amu Darya alone, the area under forest has decreased from 150,000 hectares to 22,000-23,000 hectares in the past decade. This process is continuing. The degradation of tugai forests has been strongly affected by the disruption of the hydrological system of the rivers.
18. Ecosystem deterioration has led to a marked reduction in biodiversity. The number of extinct or endangered animal species and plant varieties is growing. In some cases these processes are irreversible. Overregulated river water flow and pollution have reduced fish

reserves. The overall catch from the natural reservoirs of Central Asia has decreased by over 60% since 1990.

19. Central Asian countries, other Caspian States and the international community are seriously concerned about the situation of the Caspian Sea ecosystem, the world's largest inland reservoir with a unique biological variety of flora and fauna. The incompatibility between environmental and economic interests in the Caspian basin endangers this unique ecosystem.

20. More than a half of Central Asia is prone to desertification. The land area affected by degradation in Kazakhstan is 179.9 million hectares or 66% of the country, and as much as 80% is affected in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. If salination trends persist, most agricultural land in river basins will become unsuitable for irrigation farming within a few decades, and salination of rivers will preclude their use as sources of drinking water.

21. New areas of man-made desertification are still being added to the long list of military testing grounds, such as the infamous Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground, the Baikonur cosmodrome and the modern desert of Aralkum. The maximum capacity of the natural environment in the subregion has been exceeded several times over.

B. Water resource supply

22. Available water resources have always limited settlements and business activity in Central Asia. The largest rivers are the Syr Darya and Amu Darya (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), the Chu and Talas (Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan), the Tarim (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and China), the Ili (China and Kazakhstan), the Irtysh (China, Kazakhstan and Russian Federation), and the Ural, Ishim and Tobol (Kazakhstan and Russian Federation). Natural water bodies and large reservoirs are extremely important. The mountainous part of the basin contains over 4,000 large and small glaciers with a total area of over 4,000 km². There are more than 10 large reservoirs in the upper Aral Sea basin with a total dischargeable capacity of 30 billion m³.

23. A significant volume of freshwater (17-20 km³) is contained in lake Sarez, which was formed in the Pamir mountains in Tajikistan following an earthquake in 1911 at over 3,000 metres above sea level. But today the lake poses a serious danger in that water may burst through the natural dam and cause a disaster. Long-term exploitation without any maintenance also creates a risk that Central Asia's dykes and canals may burst. The rural population is unable to tackle these problems on its own without assistance.

24. Population growth and economic development have significantly increased the demand for water. Annual surface and groundwater draw-off as a proportion of total water reserves in the Central Asian countries varies from 20% in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to 80-90% in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Today needs are met primarily from the ecosystem, but the water shortage is already having an adverse effect on the social and economic situation. For example, in recent years the water supply in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya has accounted for less than 50% of the agreed draw-off limit, which was already insufficient to

satisfy demand. This shortage will become increasingly pronounced, especially against the background of population growth in Central Asia, increased water uptake by Afghanistan and accelerating processes of desertification and climate change.

25. The continentality and aridity of the climate and the extremely uneven distribution of water resources throughout the region and from season to season place additional demands on the arrangements for water use in Central Asia. The imbalance between the interests of the electricity generating industry and irrigation and the uneven pattern of seasonal water consumption are aggravating the tensions between economic sectors and countries. Afghanistan is another major water consumer in the Aral Sea basin and may have to increase its share of water for social and economic development. This will place additional demands on the coordination of subregional interests.

26. Lake Balkhash, one of the largest lakes in the Eurasian continent, plays a significant role in maintaining the natural and climatic balance in the region. Experts believe that the shallowing and salinization of Balkhash may have repercussions comparable to the tragedy of the Aral Sea. The gradual degradation of its ecosystems is being hastened by the construction of hydroelectric installations in China. The Irtysh is another river which has suffered heavily from human impacts. Given current climate trends and decreasing discharge, the diversion of water from this river in Chinese territory could have disastrous consequences for the economy and environment of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation.

27. The truth is that no economic sector uses water resources efficiently, especially irrigation farming. Water losses are principally due to mismanagement and obsolete technologies. According to experts, such losses account for as much as 37% of the water supplied. In industry, increased leakage from water mains and distribution networks is attributable to the run-down state of the supply systems.

28. The per capita level of water consumption in Central Asia is on average twice that of the developed countries. However, the supply of water for domestic and drinking needs remains inadequate: 62-90% in urban areas and 70-76% in rural areas. The problem of the lack of clean water is further aggravated by pollution, both from current activities and left over from the past. There is still a serious danger that the Syr Darya river may become contaminated with radioactive wastes from the tailings ponds and chemical dumps in the Mayлуу-Suu river basin. Contamination from pesticides and mineral fertilizers is another big problem.

29. The subregional situation as regards the supply of safe drinking water is worsening every year. About 4 million people in Kazakhstan do not have piped water, 14% of the urban and 27% of the rural population do not have access to safe drinking water and 16.5% use water from open reservoirs for drinking purposes. About 40% of the population of Tajikistan uses water from open sources. The rising cost of water supplies, a lack of transparency in pricing and non-existent public monitoring are further causes of increasing social tension.

30. Consequently, in the Aral area 80% of pregnant women suffer from anaemia and the incidence of childhood anaemia is six times the average for Central Asia as a whole. The subregional death rate, especially maternal and infant mortality, is still extremely high and shows no sign of decreasing. Intestinal illnesses are one of the commonest causes of infant mortality. The number of children dying of infectious diseases is more than five times higher than in the Eastern European countries. The increase in morbidity and the high rates of maternal and infant mortality present real dangers for the gene pool and future generations.

31. Water is a key factor for the well-being of the Central Asian countries. The availability of clean water will to a considerable extent determine the quality of life and the future development of the subregion. These countries are bound together by the ecosystems of water basins. Any change in water use in one country will inevitably affect the interests of the others. The need for a common plan for managing the water basins of Central Asia is dictated by the natural environment and necessitates the elaboration and development of cooperation arrangements.

III. MANAGEMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL POTENTIAL

32. In Central Asia there is an obvious connection between unsound water use, water shortages and reduced soil productivity on the one hand, and rising levels of morbidity, poverty and conflict, on the other. The principal factors which give rise to these problems are poor management, lack of public participation, underutilization of international expertise, unwillingness to share information, and a dearth of educational programmes and capacity.

33. The Almaty Declaration by the Central Asian heads of State recognized that the management of transboundary river resources should adopt the ecosystem approach and proceed in a fair and rational way, avoiding damage to one another's interests. In the Nukus Declaration, the heads of State proclaimed their full support for international agreements, especially those concerning the protection of transboundary waters.

Water management in its current form mainly represents agricultural interests rather than those of all the other economic sectors. The organization of water management should be modernized to give equal weight to the interests of irrigation, hydro-power and other sectors, to observe the priorities of drinking water supply and water conservation, etc., and to guarantee the principle of the equal rights and responsibilities of all water users.

34. With the ecosystem approach, the significance and role of Central Asia's water resources and the significance of large bodies of water in the subregion such as the Aral Sea can be completely reappraised. The glaciers of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and the subregion's water reserves are important for the maintenance of global equilibrium, security and sustainable development in Central Asia and neighbouring regions.

35. Water quality management cannot be divorced from water resource management. However, a certain level of competition exists between ministries with different environmental protection responsibilities, and hence they are not particularly interested in cooperating despite

the existence of formal agreements between them. The basis for joint action is not so much protocols and agreements as shared goals. The integration of goals and priorities thus remains an important task.

36. A serious obstacle to the introduction of efficient management is the shortage of capacity. The limited resources at the disposal of ministries, which must endure constant reorganizations and staff cuts while simultaneously being asked to protect the public interest, coupled with the weakness of civil society and non-governmental organizations reflecting the views of local communities and concerned with the environment, mean that it is difficult in practical terms to implement recommendations on management. A shortage of capacity is observable as much in technical matters as in education, analytical skills or readiness to cooperate.

37. Most national and international experts agree that the working out of agreements on specific issues to do with inter-State water relations would be considerably hastened if the Central Asian countries adopted a common strategy for the sound use and protection of their ecosystems, and if they accorded a higher status to the coordination commissions in Central Asia. The Dushanbe Declaration by the Central Asian heads of State called for IFAS to be given the status of a United Nations body. Boosting the status of this body would significantly improve the coordination of existing programmes and projects to achieve sustainable development goals.

Agenda 21, 38.30: The regional commissions, as appropriate, should play a leading role in coordinating regional and subregional activities by sectoral and other United Nations bodies and shall assist countries in achieving sustainable development.

IV. PARTNERSHIP AS A BASIS FOR ACHIEVING PRIORITIES

38. Without partnership it will not be possible to address environmental protection issues. Partnership is essentially a new type of relationship between governmental, non-governmental and international organizations, the business community, donors and recipients. Central Asia has put forward an initiative for the sustainable development of the subregion, namely the Central Asian Agenda 21, which presupposes a strengthening of cooperation to achieve consensus on joint goals, unhindered exchange of information and the participation of all stakeholders in decision-making.

39. The Aarhus Convention could play a significant role in strengthening capacity and developing partnership. As things stand, however, the role of non-governmental organizations and their involvement in programme implementation is insignificant. Reasons include the insufficiency of resources at the disposal of non-governmental organizations, their financial and logistical weakness, the unwillingness of official agencies to admit them to full partnership in programmes, and the lack of a sound legal framework to support the proper functioning of civil society.

40. Joint action by Central Asian countries could be made more effective through the participation of the international organizations and donors, who could act as guarantors of the agreements. Management systems could garner strong outside support.

41. It should be noted that the existing legal framework of relations among the various Central Asian countries and between the subregion and the international community fails to promote optimum use of domestic capacity, nor does it derive maximum advantage from the opportunities offered by the international community. New frameworks for intersectoral and subregional cooperation are required to tackle the problems of the environment, water and security. A multilateral agreement and joint programme worked out between all the participants in the process - countries, donors, the business community and the civil sector - could be a starting point for this. Such an agreement should articulate the common goals, which should be measurable, and elaborate mechanisms for achieving, inspiring and monitoring these goals and holding people accountable for their performance.

42. The decisions adopted within the framework of preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Doha Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, the Johannesburg Declaration and the European Water Initiative) have laid the groundwork for a new kind of relationship between countries and regions, based on principles of effective management and partnership and a system in which Governments, international organizations, donors and the principal actors can overcome administrative and sectoral barriers to resolve complex and multifaceted problems. At Monterrey it was proposed to elaborate a global agreement that would include the commitments of the developed and developing countries.

43. The proposal for a regional agreement was reflected in the Central Asia progress review on the implementation of Agenda 21 and the statement by ICSD at the World Summit on Sustainable Development: "Our countries propose to put in place an economic mechanism which includes the possibility of debt-for-environment swaps and the signing of a subregional agreement." The institution of partnership created by the regional agreement will provide a basis for effective management and intersectoral and inter-State cooperation for sustainable development and security in Central Asia.

44. The possible core elements of a regional agreement are:

- Reaffirmation of political will at the highest level and the adoption of a defined number of commitments by Central Asian countries to achieve sustainable development goals;
- Agreement with donors on foreign aid and the participation of Central Asia in the implementation of the interconnected decisions taken at Johannesburg, Monterrey, Doha and Davos and on the mobilization of foreign and domestic funding;

- Preparation and signing of international legal instruments on transboundary issues, the environment and security in Central Asia;
- Establishment of a subregional United Nations Commission in Central Asia, the strengthening and broadening of the powers of existing subregional organizations, and the setting up of a public forum for development issues;
- Organization of a wide-ranging discussion with the public, government structures, the business community and local authorities on sustainable development goals and measures to achieve them; and the involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process;
- Strengthening the capacity of non-governmental organizations, ministries for environmental protection and water management departments to fulfil the commitments they have undertaken;
- Establishment of an information gateway for Central Asian development;
- Establishment of a public foundation for sustainable development in Central Asia with the involvement of Governments, donors, the business community and the public at large;
- Preparation and implementation of projects to meet goals and commitments.

45. It is common knowledge that partnership should be underpinned by common goals. These goals should correspond to national and subregional priorities as well as to commitments in the fields of the environment, water and sustainable development adopted previously by the Central Asian countries. In addition, these goals should feature quantitative indicators and schedules for achieving them.

V. MAIN GOALS AND COMMITMENTS

46. Environmental experts and Government bodies have determined the following goals to address the key issues of security, water and the environment:

Goal 1. Ensure sustainable operation of water basin ecosystems of vital importance for human life. Prevent degradation of water basin ecosystems essential for subregional viability.

Goal 2. Sound use of and access to drinking water. The supply of water, of requisite quality and in sufficient quantities, to the public, industry and ecosystems.

Goal 3. Intersectoral partnership and capacity-building. The establishment and reinforcement of mechanisms to coordinate the interests and strengthen the resources of the civil sector and of environmental protection and water management organizations.

47. The attainment of these goals, which are in line with the Millennium Development Goals adopted at the Millennium Summit on 6 September 2000, will promote regional and global security and poverty reduction and should take account of the following factors: population growth in Central Asia (estimated at 41% over the period from 1995 to 2025); national economic growth; rising cost of water owing to an increase in pollution and water purification costs; increase in water mineralization and acceleration of soil salinization processes; deterioration of irrigation systems and the water supply network, and lack of funds to mend them; shrinkage of glaciers owing to global climate changes.

VI. INDICATORS

Goal 1. Ensure the sustainable operation of water basin ecosystems of vital importance for human life

1.1. Drawdowns for ecosystem needs. Perform controlled releases to flush out water ecosystems. Maintain inflow into the southern part of the Aral region to support the system of wetlands (5.5-8.0 km³/year) and for the Syr Darya delta (for the system of wetlands) and the Maloe Sea - 5.0 km³/year. The allocation of 20 km³/year by 2015 for the environmental needs of the Aral Sea basin is recognized to be a feasible and politically acceptable objective to be achieved through water-saving initiatives applicable to all types of water consumption.

1.2. Stabilize irrigated land salinization processes and the transport of salts from irrigated areas to rivers. This necessitates the application of water-saving technologies in irrigation farming, the rehabilitation and development of drainage systems and return flow recycling. Toxic salts accumulation processes could be stabilized in 20% of the total irrigated area in the region. The proportion of reused drainage water and run-off could be increased to 15% by 2010-2015. The importance of this objective was stressed in the Dushanbe Declaration by the heads of the State of the Central Asian countries (6 October 2002).

1.3. Increase the share of renewable energy sources to 15% of the primary energy supply. This objective is achievable through increased use of hydroelectric power generation (the capacity of Tajikistan's mountain rivers ranks third in the world in hydro resources with a gross hydro capacity of 527,000 GW/year; Kyrgyzstan's capacity is 162,500 GW/year; Kazakhstan's is 110,000 GW/year; and Uzbekistan's is 88,000 GW/year).

The European Union energy initiative: the European Union proposes that beneficiary countries should increase the share of renewable energy sources to at least 15% of primary energy needs by 2010 and improve their energy efficiency.

1.4. Expand the area of specially protected zones in river deltas and zones of flow formation and set in place a thoroughgoing water-conservation regime in these areas.

1.5. Increase forest cover in mountainous areas, reduce erosion in highland areas and boost the water-retaining capacity of mountain ecosystems. “It is necessary to expand the scope of erosion control activities and ensure forest replenishment, expansion and protection, given that these are some of the main objectives of the sustainable development of mountainous areas.”

1.6. Integrate the Caspian environmental programme into economic activities. “Upgrade the Caspian environmental programme to a programme for the sustainable development of the Caspian region and incorporate it into the economic programmes of the Caspian basin States and projects for developing new technologies and business.”

Goal 2. Sound water use and access to drinking water

2.1. Reduce unproductive water loss in irrigation farming by 20% by the year 2010. The introduction of principles of integrated water resource management will make it easier to reduce inherent losses at all levels of the distribution network on farms. The primary focus should be on providing incentives for and introducing capital-efficient water-saving methods at the level of the farm or the field (which account for up to 50% of total water loss). Water conservation legislation and a special water-saving investment programme need to be worked out.

2.2. Develop low-water-use industries, including dry-land cultivation. Water and salt management plans envisage no expansion of the area under cotton, but population growth will lead to a big increase in the cultivation of cereals and feed crops.

2.3. By 2015, guarantee optimal limit values for per capita domestic consumption at the regional level. By 2015, drinking water consumption should not exceed 250 litres per person per day in urban areas and 100 litres a day in rural areas.

2.4. Overhaul water supply networks. The piped distribution network should be expanded to cover up to 99% of the urban population and up to 60% of the rural population.

2.5. Cut the proportion of non-recoverable water consumption in industry by 30-40%, possibly through the introduction of modern resource-saving technologies that allow water to be recycled.

2.6. Improve the management of hazardous wastes within the watersheds of transboundary rivers. This objective is to be achieved through the implementation of joint regional projects, harmonization of national legislation with European Union norms in the area of waste management and recycling, development of economic mechanisms encouraging introduction of cleaner technologies and waste reduction, the introduction of cleaner technologies, pollution-free production and waste abatement.

Goal 3. Intersectoral partnership and strengthening capacity

3.1. Existence of a political structure to support extensive public dialogue and the achievement of sustainable development goals - establishment of a commission for

sustainable development in Central Asia under the auspices of the United Nations. “A special United Nations commission must be set up, with responsibility for coordinating the activities of international organizations and donor countries in addressing the problems of the Aral Sea basin.”

3.2. Adherence to the UN/ECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. The heads of State of the Central Asian countries have expressed their “full support for international agreements, particularly those concerning ... the protection of transboundary waters”. Inter-State and regional standards and agreements on environmental impact assessment and compensation mechanisms need to be worked out. The priority objective is to make an inventory of all bodies of water and develop a reference tool for inter-State water apportionment. Ratification by the Central Asian countries of conventions and development of a subregional mechanism to implement them.

3.3. Development and implementation of an integrated approach to water resource management and environmental management problem-solving in the subregion, initially at the national level (priority should be given to pilot projects in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya). Establishment of water users’ associations, water councils and other farmers’ associations.

3.4. Development of a “regional water partnership in Central Asia” that takes account of the social, economic and environmental significance of water and ensures the involvement of all stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations.

3.5. Free access to information about the state of the environment and natural resources, including water resources and their management and use. The achievement of this objective will be facilitated by the development and introduction of transparent information systems for the management, assessment, forecasting, use and conservation of water resources, together with the development of communications systems throughout the water distribution network (basin management bodies, water management organizations and water users) intended to enhance the decision-making process.

3.6. Significantly boosting public and government access to the Internet, and an increase in the number of environmental broadcasts and articles in the mass media.

3.7. In the field of education, doubling of the number of environmental courses and programmes.

48. The goals listed above and the mechanisms needed to achieve them could form the basis of a partnership agreement between Central Asian countries, donors and international organizations. Such an agreement could be presented at the forthcoming Pan-European Conference of Ministers in May 2003, as the contribution of the Central Asian States and the international community to achieving the Millennium Goals and the commitments and decisions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

CONCLUSIONS

49. The decade of experience accumulated by the newly independent Central Asian States has shown that the uncoordinated efforts of individual sectors, countries or international organizations have failed to yield the anticipated results, nor have they addressed the urgent environmental and development problems of Central Asia. Another approach is called for, based on long-term internal processes in these countries, involving stakeholders and the public at large, incorporating international and regional programmes and agreements, and underpinned by international experience and internal capacity.

50. The Central Asian countries have developed such an approach and put forward a partnership initiative that was incorporated into the Implementation Plan of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The bottom-up process, which was launched on the initiative of the Central Asian countries in partnership with regional and global programmes, should form the requisite basis for the development of the democratic reforms now under way in the subregion and for the conservation of ecosystems and the sound use of resources.

51. At the consultative subregional meeting held in Almaty on 30 and 31 January 2003, senior policy makers in the environmental protection and water management sectors of the Central Asian countries, with input from representatives of international and voluntary organizations, the business community and donor countries, fleshed out the priority development goals for the subregion and adopted a proposal to draft a partnership agreement between the Central Asian countries and stakeholder organizations, donor countries, and regional and international institutions with a view to honouring the commitments and meeting the goals agreed at the World Summit.

52. The priority goals and quantitative indicators outlined in the report will help to consolidate the efforts of the various sectors, stakeholder organizations and donor countries and make fuller use of capacity both within these countries and throughout the international community. Conservation of ecosystems, rational water use, strengthening of intersectoral partnership and consolidation of capacity are preconditions for stability and the maintenance of national and regional security.

53. To build on these decisions, the Central Asian countries have set up intersectoral working groups comprising representatives of the Central Asian countries, subregional organizations and the economic, water and environmental sectors in order to pool efforts to prepare a future programme for the sustainable development of the Aral Sea basin countries. This programme should incorporate all the international experience that has been accumulated, outline a mechanism for coordination and implementation, ensure extensive public involvement and strengthen capacity. It should be presented at the forum on freshwater, to be held in Dushanbe in August 2003, for adoption at the highest level.

54. To strengthen the political underpinning of the preparation and implementation of the Central Asian Sustainable Development Initiative, the existing subregional institutions and mechanisms created by the Central Asian heads of State will be consolidated and strengthened. Pursuant to the declaration by the Central Asian heads of State, negotiations have begun on giving United Nations status to IFAS (similar to the high-level Central Asian Commission on Sustainable Development).

55. On the basis of principles of partnership and the Aarhus Convention, efforts will be made to organize a wide-ranging process of public consultations involving the community and the technical process of planning and implementing specific projects and programmes to achieve the goals and commitments that have been adopted. A plan of specific actions will be developed for each goal, factoring in the processes that are actually unfolding in Central Asian countries and taking account of the interests of all stakeholders and the environment. The partnership between sectors and countries initiated in Central Asia will be developed and supported by all stakeholders. The improved coordination arrangements will help promote the continuity and strengthening of this process.

56. The collaborative experience of the Central Asian countries and their initiatives and cooperation arrangements augur well for the feasibility of the commitments and the goals proclaimed by the subregion. A healthy population, adequately fed and watered, will live in harmony with the environment in the Central Asian subregion, which has always been and will remain the shared home of many nations and millions of people.
