



Workshop on the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems Nexus Assessment In the Syr Darya River Basin

2-4 December 2014 in Almaty, Kazakhstan

Introductory morning on 2nd December 2014

Session 1 – Opening – FAO Contribution

Good morning,

On behalf of Ms Shoji Yuriko, the Sub-Regional Coordinator of the FAO Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia, I would like to extend a warm **welcome** to all participants and I would like to thank UNECE and GWP for the organisation of this workshop. I would also like to thank the Republic of Kazakhstan for hosting us here in Almaty. FAO is pleased to be **part of** this assessment process and is looking forward to engage with all of the parties represented here.

The Sub-Regional Office for Central Asia was created some five years ago to strengthen the delivery of services of our Organization to its Member Countries in Central Asia in order to improve agricultural development and increase living's standards of rural communities. Our current work programme is guided by the recommendations of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe and Central Asia on Agriculture and aligned with the country priorities as being defined in the available Country Programming Frameworks (2012-2015). An informed policy dialogue and enhanced regional cooperation for the sustainable management of water resources in Central Asia have been defined as key expected outcomes of our current work programme towards which this workshop is contributing.

FAO is an active member of the Nexus task force established at the sixth session of the Parties to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary and International Watercourses to oversee the assessment of the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus in selected transboundary basins. As such, we are providing guidance and technical expertise to the assessment process.

FAO has previously contributed to analyse the highly complex structure of the water-agriculture-energy nexus in Central Asia. In 2012, with the financial support of the Turkish Government through the FAO-Turkish Partnership Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Executive Committee of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (EC-IFAS) and the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA), it introduced the innovative scenario thinking approach for the first time in the sub-region for advancing water cooperation in the Aral Sea basin. 'Scenario thinking' helps to see the bigger picture, and provides a framework to engage in dialogue with all stakeholders. This forward-thinking and highly participatory consultation process has proved to have the potential to encourage a systematic thinking and foster mutual understanding. In this scenario



development process, FAO has been providing a neutral forum where government representatives of all Central Asian states and Afghanistan can hold open and fair discussions and prepare for the future.

Today, in this workshop, we will have a chance to discuss some of the **future uncertainties** that the Syr Darya Basin is facing. What are the development plans of the different sectors here? How will these plans play out in the future? Are there opportunities for different sectors to work together to achieve their goals?

Though we might not find the answers to all these questions, this workshop will provide a space to think about them together.

For FAO, it is of course important that **food and agriculture** are well considered in the discussions. For that, it is not only important to look at crop production, but also livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, and forestry. All of these **agricultural sub-sectors** use natural resources and impact the environment in very different ways.

For instance, the livestock sector uses large parts of the agricultural land for grazing and feed production. Here in Central Asia, where people depend on traditional pastoral grazing systems, overgrazing is already a concern as grasslands are becoming dry and barren.

I do not want to continue making a long list of the problems we are facing, but point to the opportunities we have when approaching water, energy, food and ecosystems in an integrated manner. We can explore options for treating and reusing wastewater in agriculture. We can discuss multiple uses of hydropower dams. Or we can take a closer look at aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems can play their part in mitigating climate change impacts.

Decision-makers cannot sit back and wait for the future to happen. A forward-thinking and multi-sectoral approach is needed for anticipating, planning and managing all transitions successfully (e.g. population, climate change, economy). Nexus thinking can help decision-makers to rethink their policies and strategies, taking into consideration the changing environment in which we are operating, and take better informed decisions in an uncertain world.

With this in mind, I am looking forward to some interesting and forward-looking discussions and I wish everyone a successful workshop.

Thank you.