

## **Chairman's Summary of the International Conference "Water Unites" – Strengthening Cooperation on Regional Water Management in Central Asia**

Almaty, 17-18 November 2008

The Conference was organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, by the Government of Germany, the United Nations Development Fund and the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan.

### **November 17**

#### **Opening Session**

Mr. Paolo Garonna, Acting Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in his opening statement invited participants – representatives of the Governments of Central Asian countries, members of the UN family, regional organizations and international financial institutions – to engage in a substantial dialogue on how to strengthen cooperation on regional water resources management in Central Asia. He emphasized the importance of effective joint regional action to address the water and energy crisis so Central Asian countries can achieve the Millennium Development Goals. He reminded participants that the UNECE can provide effective assistance to the region through its relevant international legal instruments and in-house expertise.

Ms. Hedi Wegener, Member of Parliament, Head of the German-Central Asian Parliamentary Group in the Bundestag, in her opening statement stressed the development and security dimension of the CA water problems and reminded participants of the main elements of the Berlin Water Process, launched in April 2008 at the first "Water Unites" conference in Berlin by Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier:

- 1) Germany is keen to promote trans-boundary water management in Central Asia through concrete projects.
- 2) Germany is ready to share its expertise and know-how with the countries of the region.
- 3) It plans to establish a course on sustainable water management at the Kazakh-German University, open to students and young academicians from the region.
- 4) It further aims to promote networking among water experts from Germany, the EU and Central Asia. She underlined that the Berlin Water Process was established to facilitate the political dialogue within the region and to support and accelerate the implementation of the Central Asia Strategy of the European Union.

Mr. Anatoly Ryabtsev, Head of the Water Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture of Kazakhstan welcomed the conference as a timely contribution by the United Nations, Germany and other members of the development community to the joint efforts of Central Asian countries to strengthen the effectiveness of regional cooperation in the management of water resources.

### **Session One: Report of the Regional Risk Assessment of the Water/Food/Energy Situation in Central Asia**

Ms. Kori Udovički Director for Europe and the CIS of UNDP in her keynote address on the compound food, water and energy crisis analyzed both the history and broader context of the problems faced by the countries of Central Asia and the short-term challenges posed by the combination of an unusually harsh winter in 2008 and an extended dry period.

Mr. Ben Slay, Chief Economist of the Bratislava Centre of the Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS of the UNDP, made a presentation on the Central Asian Regional Risk Assessment (CARRA), being in the final phase of preparation by the UNDP. The assessment examines the risks facing Central Asia associated with the possible deepening and widening of the “compound crisis” phenomenon that took place in Tajikistan during the first quarter 2008 and resulting in serious threats to water, energy and food security. The study also provides an update concerning the current responses to these threats in Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. In the presentation some initial conclusions were suggested with regard to possible improvements in the management by the United Nations System and the international community of the development and humanitarian challenges of “the complex crisis” phenomena.

In a response to the presentation the representative of Kazakhstan spoke about the efforts of his country to improve the efficiency of water use through the reduction of the acreage of water-intensive cultures and the introduction of modern, water saving technologies in agriculture, so the expected reduction of water supply due to the effects of global warming does not put further pressure on the management of water resources in the region and so that the gradual rehabilitation of the Northern Aral Sea can continue.

The representative of Kyrgyzstan called attention to the accelerated melting of the glaciers in the mountains of Kyrgyzstan. The rapid degradation of the unique ecosystem of Central Asia, especially the shrinking of the Aral Sea, combined with the effects of global warming reduces the surface area of the glaciers and leads to more extended dry periods and reduced water flows, which, in turn, puts further pressure on the ecosystem. Only comprehensive, harmonized action can break this vicious circle. Complex measures should include upgrading of infrastructure and reducing water use, which in Central Asia is 2 – 2,5 times higher than in developed countries.

The representative of Tajikistan pointed out, that subjective factors had aggravated the objective risks the region faced. Building new water reservoirs would be a key element of long-term solutions: helping to store water and increase the supply of clean energy.

Introduction of new installations could be managed in a manner that it would not affect downstream countries in any noticeable way. Tajikistan makes every effort to take into account the interests of downstream countries but its efforts need to be matched by comparable efforts by downstream countries to improve water efficiency.

The representative of Turkmenistan pointed to the problems caused by old, insufficiently maintained equipment for water-use. The Bishkek water-energy summit of the presidents of Central Asia on 10 October this year reached an agreement on short term solutions, so hopefully this year a crisis can be averted. Long-term solutions should be based on more efficient water use. Without improving irrigation methods Central Asian countries would not be able to provide a growing population with food and other resources.

The representative of Uzbekistan emphasized that water infrastructure in upstream countries must not have any negative effect on the ecosystems of downstream countries. Only rational and just use of water resources can preserve the balance of ecosystems. The Governments of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, in a letter sent to the Government of Tajikistan, have protested against the building of new dams. It is the view of the Government of Uzbekistan that even the infrastructure in place today, in particular the Nurek reservoir, causes significant harm to downstream countries.

The representative of UNECE highlighted the role of the UNECE Water Convention in the resolution of the water conflicts in Central Asia even if it is up to the countries involved to develop a common understanding on the use of the available resources. Examples of important principles of the Convention that should be applied in the region are the application of Environmental Impact Assessment and the ecosystem approach, regular consultations between countries, more focus on water quality and the establishment of joint bodies with a broad mandate,

The Ambassador of France to Kazakhstan recalled that the Paris Security Forum on Central Asia, organized by France holding the Presidency of the European Union had paid particular attention to the problems of water management in Central Asia. The EU Water Initiative is an important framework for assistance in this area. The EU can play a catalytic role and provide modern technology to Central Asia. Italy coordinates work on the Water and Environmental Pillar of the Central Asia Strategy of the EU, which will be launched on 3 December in Ashgabat. The project by Germany and the Strategy Paper developed by Italy are two well-coordinated elements of the effort of the European Union to strengthen cooperation with the Central Asian countries both at the political and the operational level.

The representative of EurAsEC linked present day problems of water management in Central Asia to the break-up of the once unified water and energy system of the Soviet Union. Long-term solutions lie in a better overall cooperation and integration in the region, including an integrated water management policy.

The representative of UNFPA pointed to the direct link between population growth in the region and increased developmental and environmental challenges, and the possibility for

the UNFPA to develop cooperation in Central Asia in connection with the establishment of an office in the region.

The representative of SIC-ICWC objected to the presentation of the crisis as a problem on individual countries: It is rather a regional problem, requiring a regional approach. Central Asian countries need to agree on a multi-year program of water use. There is no guarantee that new installations will work in a coordinated regime, not causing harm to downstream countries. Sufficient guarantees need to be elaborated and agreed upon so development of infrastructure can go ahead.

The representative of USAID emphasized that the donor community needs to address the basic causes of the crisis. High priority should be given to a thorough reform of Tajikistan's agricultural policy, the elaboration of a water sharing regime based on international law and shared principles and disincentives to the private sector to invest in these areas should be removed. There is a need to link short term solutions to longer term efforts to address the underlying causes of the crisis.

The representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic called upon Central Asian countries to engage in an open and equal dialogue on water and energy resources. The Deputy Minister drew the attention of participants to the existence of a just and reasonable regime of the use of water and energy resources in Soviet times, which had been destroyed as a result of the collapse of the USSR and the refusal of neighboring countries to comply with their obligations to supply fuel and energy resources in return for services in the form of accumulation and delivery of water. Under these circumstances, with a view to the mutual dependence of the countries of the region concerning the delivery of water and energy resources, Kyrgyzstan proposed to apply the only principle upon which mutually advantageous cooperation can be built – the principle of cross-sector balance of interests in the field of water and energy. He believed that the five Presidents in Bishkek managed to elaborate short-term solutions only and long-term solutions can be elaborated on the basis of the “economic principle”, that is by recognizing the economic value of water.

The Deputy Minister also stated that in order to strengthen the scientific and technical basis for the solution of water and energy problems, Kyrgyzstan had initiated the establishment of a Water and Energy Academy in Bishkek, which would be tasked to elaborate, on a scientific basis and taking into account international experience, recommendations on the most effective and mutually advantageous uses of water and energy resources in Central Asia, in the interest of all countries.

The former Chairman of the EC of IFAS argued that the UNDP study failed to identify the real causes of the water and energy crisis. The cold winter and the drought simply served as a trigger: Tajikistan has been struggling with the same problems for over a decade. There is a need to focus on long-term solutions since it is likely that the crisis will be repeated again and again. The simple fact is that Tajikistan lacks generating capacity to cover its own needs. There is only one way out: to develop more generating

capacity, thus closing the gap between supply and demand. This can be achieved only by building large and medium hydro-power stations. The countries involved need to sit down and negotiate to narrow down the differences between their positions.

The Chair summarizing the session underlined that the CARRA analyzed both the broader and the specific dimensions of the “compound water, food and energy crisis”. The broader context included history of the problems, weaknesses of water resources management, effects of climate change and environmental hotspots. There was a need to look forward and search for win-win solutions, where upstream reservoirs may provide solutions to downstream countries. The crisis is a challenge and opportunity at the same time. Applying relevant international conventions, regional institutions should work together to develop the necessary guarantees, to strengthen mutual confidence and strive towards reaching agreements. The Bishkek meeting of the presidents had been encouraging but the agreement is only a short-term solution. There is a need to look into linking short term and long-term action. There is an urgent need to develop an early warning system for the whole region.

### **Session Two: The Berlin Water Process, and Integral Part of the Central Asia Strategy of the EU**

The Ambassador of Germany underlined that the main objective of the German project is to generate win-win solutions. Strengthened confidence, stability and security would facilitate the achievement of the MDGs by all countries of the region. The European Union and within it Germany has the experience and the resources to promote the achievement of this objective. GTZ, as a result of extensive consultations with all stakeholders, has elaborated a set of concrete ideas and is proposing regional, sub-regional and national fast-track projects, which it plans to implement in close cooperation with the European Commission and the UNECE. The project jointly to be implemented by gtz and two German R+D organizations (GFZ – DLR) will not only provide badly needed new equipment for measurement but would also aim at improving information flows and creating an integrated database, which is transparent and is available to all experts. Only on the basis of scientifically verified data and knowledge is it possible to take optimal decisions.

The representative of GTZ presented the “Proposal for a Programme on Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia”, elaborated through a series of consultations with the governments of all Central Asian countries. The proposal was developed under the Berlin Water Process” launched last April during the first “Water Unites” conference. The Proposal consists of three components: 1) Regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources management 2) River basing approach for selected transboundary rivers and 3) National pilot projects for improved water management.

Ambassador Pierre Morel, the Special Representative of the European Union highlighted the need to maximize the efficiency of international support in light of the tragic problems. The water-energy-food crisis impacts upon the stability and security of the region. The Bishkek meeting of the presidents has eased tensions ahead of the upcoming

winter and summer. Water issues are an important part of the EU Strategy, since trans-boundary water issues require political solutions. The GTZ proposal, which needs to be analyzed carefully, would fit into the broader EU framework. There is a full coherence between the GTZ and the EU approach, since the Central Asia Strategy of the European Union was elaborated under the German EU Presidency. According to the EU approach, water-related issues need to be solved on a regional basis in the spirit of upstream and downstream solidarity. In September, at the Central Asia Security Forum in Paris, very difficult discussions took place. This spirit had lead later to the Bishkek meeting of the presidents. No one sided approach could work: there is a need for a cooperative approach to security. The UNECE and the EU has developed good cooperation and the UNECE activities fit into the broader EU strategy. The Conference "Water Unites" has gathered available organizations and institutions for water management. The EU Strategy would provide a comprehensive framework for consistent joint action.

The representative of the German Aerospace Center (DLR) presented various state of the art technologies, including the use of satellite imagery, offering near real-time observation and monitoring of the water and environmental sector in Central Asia especially with regard to optimizing irrigation schemes. The DLR offers continuous capacity building and training programs to multinational as well as national water and environmental management and education institutions. It could provide technical assistance and capacity building for the drafting of the concept of a joint water information management system - a similar system has been designed and supported for the Mekong delta.

The representative of the Central Asian Regional Environmental Centre (CAREC) spoke about national policy dialogues and efforts to strengthen river-basin organizations. He emphasized that regional cooperation was essential for the solution of environmental and water related challenges.

The water and environmental pillar of the Central Asia Strategy of the European Union will be introduced on 3 December in Ashgabat – was the message of the representative of Italy, coordinating the development of this component of the Strategy. The Strategy will include guidelines for work and cooperation in this important area. He highlighted five key elements of the Strategy: water management issues requires a regional approach, international legal instruments, in particular the UNECE Conventions could play a key role in the elaboration of solutions, climate change affects every sector, every policy, there is a need to increase the efficiency of the management of water resources and the EU should keep in mind the links between water and health.

The representative of Kazakhstan emphasized the importance of making use of the available experience. The present cooperation is based on documents signed in 1992-1993. Since 1998 the situation has become more difficult with regard to the mutual delivery of water, energy and fuel. The work of the BWO-s (based on documents signed in 1992) is not very effective. Still, thanks to this system no conflict over water has gone beyond the normal framework of regional relations. Before introducing costly state of the art technologies, simpler steps could be taken. First of all there is a need to strengthen the

legal basis and institutions for regional cooperation, first of all IFAS. It would be important to strengthen the Secretariat and to create supranational structures and competences. Only through stronger regional action could the present vicious circle be broken, when environmental effects of the shrinking of the Aral Sea contribute to the rapid melting of glaciers, leading in the long run to more reduced water flows. The dialogue today is welcome: it resulted in good proposals and revealed good intentions - a step has been made towards a common understanding.

The representative of Kyrgyzstan stressed that more economic stimuli is needed both in the field of water use as well as in regulative systems of the upstream countries. The example of the Chu-Talas project proved that goodwill is a decisive factor. The presidents exhibited wisdom during their October meeting in Bishkek when an important compromise was reached, which could serve as a precedent for future solutions.

The representative of Tajikistan was convinced that the Berlin Water Process will play an important role in strengthening cooperation on regional water management. A key reason of present problems is the lack of effective multilateral agreements on water use and the lack of clear interpretation guidelines for the existing agreements, especially when it comes to defining such principles as fair distribution of water with regard to energy and irrigation needs and the prevention of harm. Tajikistan intends to strengthen its energy security through more intensive use of hydro-energy. This is fully in line with global trends when countries move to renewable energy sources. The forecasts on the effects of climate change for Central Asia are alarming. It is expected to cause a broad range of negative consequences, including mass migration. The countries of the region should be able to freely use water resources based on reasonable distribution. No unilateral solutions were possible: the only solution was improved regional cooperation on water management. That is why the German initiative is so welcome. When it comes to the reform of existing structures of water management, a careful approach is important. There is need to have full clarity as to why, how and in what form reforms should be undertaken.

The representative of Turkmenistan underlined that regional institutions had been established after the fall of the Soviet Union and they have functioned since and have been able to prevent conflict among the states of the region. However, today reforms and a solid legal basis are badly needed. Regional water management is based on a few legally binding agreements. In many cases there was a complete lack of such agreements, like in the case of shared river basins between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. GTZ had taken into account the proposal of Turkmenistan to amend this situation. Turkmenistan fully supports the German "Water Unites" process. It believes that after the implementation of the program there would be a significant improvement of the situation.

The representative of Uzbekistan supported the proposals on the improvement of information exchange and research. Focus should be on 1) monitoring, analysis and forecast of water flows; 2) regional cooperation on dissemination of knowledge and training. He also supported the five elements of the EU Strategy. The regional approaches should take into account the interests of all countries. Uzbekistan fully supports the

strengthening of the legal basis of regional management of water resources. Since the rational use of water resources and the protection of the ecosystem is the shared responsibility of all countries, regional mechanisms should be strengthened. Uzbekistan supports the integrated management of regional water resources.

The representative of ESCAP pointed out the opportunity provided by the Berlin Water Initiative in renewing the process of developing “shared vision” and enhancement of development opportunities. He also pointed out opportunities of synergy provided by ongoing activities of ESCAP, especially those related to the ongoing project for the development of eco-efficient water infrastructure in Asia and the Pacific and the strengthening of water security in the region.

The representative of SIC-ICWC stressed that rather than establishing a new information system, the existing information system and database should be strengthened. Also the existing regional networks should be strengthened. Training should be strengthened through support to existing universities and colleges.

## **November 18**

### **Inauguration of the Executive Committee of IFAS**

A representative of the Host Country emphasized that EC-IFAS has accomplished an impressive amount of work before its transfer to Almaty. The status of IFAS should be strengthened by making it a special commission of the UN, endowed with stronger competences, in order to fulfill its tasks.

The former Chairman of IFAS pointed to the declining interest of donors to finance IFAS, due to the recurrent disagreements among the countries of the region. To redress the situation, there has been attempts to strengthen regional structures, in particular BWO-s, but implementation discipline has not been sufficient. Even the highest level leaders of the region recognized that there was a need to improve regional water resources management. In light of this the GTZ project is most welcome. Regional projects need to be coordinated with the governments of the region.

The Director of the new Executive Committee of IFAS believed that the crisis this year was the result of problems related to water use left unresolved. As international experience shows, well-functioning impartial inter-governmental structures need an organization for inter-sector analysis, preparation of decisions and donor-relations. Another important factor was mutual trust and confidence. Progress in these areas had so far been modest. The key for progress is integrated water resources management, and first of all the elaboration of a solid legal basis, e.g. an international convention on the sustainable use of water in the Aral Sea basin. The first step should be a speedy accession of all countries to the UNECE Water Convention. The regional and basin-wide databases should be improved. In 1998 the Heads of state agreed on the establishment of a water-energy consortium. Unfortunately, not much progress has been made in this area. Better donor coordination is also a priority task. The Mekong River Commission developed

under a UN umbrella, was a good example, but cooperation on the Chu and Talas rivers is also an adequate model. The periodic relocation of the Executive Committee of IFAS leads to the disruption of its work. The status of the BWO-s should be higher and there is a need to improve the administration of regional institutions.

### **Session One: Presentation of the Cooperation framework for addressing water issues in Central Asia and launch of the ENVSEC East Caspian Assessment**

The representative of the UNDP made a presentation on a Cooperation Framework for Integrated Water Resources Management that is being developed within the EU Water Initiative. Countries in Central Asia rightly request better donor coordination that would facilitate progress towards a sector-wide approach. UNDP would see this as contribution to the “Water Unites” process. Donor coordination mechanisms need to be strengthened, possibly in a legally binding format.

The representative of the United Nations Environment Programme launched and presented in detail an assessment of environment and security risks in the Eastern Caspian region, prepared by UNEP on behalf of the Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC). The Eastern Caspian region undergoes fast development due to increased oil and gas exploration in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. The report seeks to identify environmental, socio-economic and political issues that are profoundly affecting the livelihoods of the populations and could lead to social tensions and instability. Fisheries and agriculture are particularly affected by rapid development: There are also concrete threats to health of people exposed to contamination from industrial-military legacies, past accumulation of waste and current activities. The ENVSEC analysis also looks into the impact of climate change on the vulnerable ecosystem of the Caspian Sea, and on the region's potential for tourism as a growing and real opportunity for sustainable development of the coastal zone. Concrete actions to help the countries reduce the risks and promote environmentally-sound solutions for the region were proposed to be undertaken in cooperation with other Caspian and Central Asia-wide processes.

The representative of the Central Asian Regional Environmental Centre (CAREC) spoke about the activities of CAREC and its role in the Environment for Europe process. CAREC is a partner of the EU in the development of environmental aspects of its Central Asian Strategy. The Central Asian Initiative for Sustainable Development of the Central Asian states is an important framework for this work. He emphasized the need to support inter-sector dialogue and to better integrate environmental considerations, e.g. water quality, in water-related decision-making. In its turn CAREC is about to start, in support of the Central Asian Initiative on Sustainable Development, a series of projects focusing on the improvement of the quality of water in the region.

The representative of ICSD underlined the importance of making full use of existing highly effective structures and further efforts to strengthen regional cooperation. In particular, he pointed out that the existing Convention on the protection of the environment in the interest of sustainable development in Central Asia constitutes a good

legal framework and called on donors to strengthen regional processes through supporting the recently established Regional Mountain Centre of Central Asia.

The representative of the OSCE highlighted activities implemented by the OSCE and its partners under the Environment and Security (ENVSEC) Initiative and stressed the importance of further developing its co-operation with IFAS, ICWC and ISDC. He also named three priority areas to assist the countries of the region in concluding agreements on trans-boundary water courses: strengthening legal basis of the agreements; developing economic mechanisms of water use based on the balance of interests; improving monitoring mechanisms over the agreements implementation.

### **Session Two: Modernizing the legal basis and strengthening the institutions for regional water management in Central Asia**

The representative of the UNECE presented a brief analysis of the weaknesses of regional institutions in the field of water management and spoke about the objectives of the institution building project to be implemented under the Berlin Water Process.

The representative of Kazakhstan stressed that the strengthening of regional institutions should always be on the agenda of IFAS. Decision-making is often protracted, because proper authorization is lacking. The relevant organizations need to strictly regulate the powers of the members of these institutions.

The representative of Kyrgyzstan underlined that there exists more than 30 agreements and documents regulating regional cooperation and water issues, but many of them contradict each other. Therefore it would be important to establish a registry of these documents. Very often present regional institutions serve the interests of individual countries. Therefore they need to undergo a thorough reform on the basis of a true regional approach.

The representative of Tajikistan pointed out that there is a great number of inter-governmental agreements, in addition to the legal instruments on IFAS and ICWC. During the past 15 years the advantages and disadvantages of these arrangements have become obvious. There have been a few decisions on the improvement of regional organizations dealing with water management. There is a need to include water users and researchers in this work.

The representative of Turkmenistan pointed out that since Central Asian countries had gained independence a multitude of agreements and declarations on regional water management have been signed– but new challenges required an agreement on the concept of the use of water resources. This, in turn, would require the reduction of disagreements on this topic – the assistance of international organizations would be welcome in this area.

The representative of Uzbekistan stated that all member countries supported the bid of Kazakhstan to host EC-IFAS. IFAS needs to improve the efficiency of water use and needs to attract more donors support. There is a need to set clear deadlines for the completion of these tasks. Kazakhstan should take the initiative – in the form of starting work on a plan of action. Uzbekistan does not agree with the proposal that Almaty should become permanent venue for the Secretariat (of IFAS) or that more supranational competences are needed. The level of participation in various bodies of regional water resources management needs to be agreed upon with each member state.

The representative of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) pointed out that the establishment of IFAS in 1993 was a timely decision but as time goes by focus should be on gaps in its work and on its inefficiencies. There are five relevant documents signed by the Presidents (of member States) covering all relevant aspects but these are not fully implemented. The Presidents have agreed to review the material, technical and organizational basis of IFAS. This work should be concluded by 2010, but so far there is no progress on most of the issues. A key problem plaguing IFAS is the fragmentation of activities of various regional institutions. There is a need to increase transparency and to inform the public of the work carried out. A serious problem is the insufficient financing of regional institutions by the member States. Donor assistance is badly needed, among other to help the sector to attract young, talented cadres. These ideas could be discussed at a special meeting of IFAS, which could be called after the Water Forum next March. IFAS should coordinate the work on the strengthening of regional institutions. The project by GTZ is very good and of great interest for regional organizations. In recent years many, not always successful efforts had been made in this area, so any work should start with a lessons learned study. A good analysis is needed, but decisions should be taken by the member States. There has been some progress in strengthening water resources management at the country level, now it is time to move to the regional level.

Dr. Bulat Yessekin as the representative of the National Water Council of Kazakhstan quoted World Bank and OECD reports, according to which Central Asia was not ready for cooperation. For any progress mutual confidence is needed as a basis. Only international organizations could provide a neutral forum for regional efforts in Central Asia. The region is facing urgent challenges and Governments cannot close their eyes in front of these problems. There is a need to adapt international experiences and to improve the framework of cooperation in Central Asia. Presently even the objectives of regional water resources management are not clear and have not been agreed upon. There is an urgent need for compromise among the countries of the region and for a joint search for win-win solutions and to establish a regional economic mechanism of sharing of common benefits. Regional institutions need political, technical, organizational and financial support.

According to the former Executive Director of the Executive Committee of IFAS the Fund was established as a consensus organization: its Chair should represent the interests of all member States. In the mid-nineties the World Bank gave a grant to IFAS/ICWC, but this had not solved legal and institutional problems. IFAS should be given a UN

status, so that operational costs of its staff could be paid by donors and their staff could become international civil servants, not depending on their respective governments. An internationally recruited Technical Director could be part of the Secretariat. The presidents need to be involved to guarantee political support. A new agreement needs to be worked out with the involvement of international lawyers and other experts.

The representative of the Regional Mountain Centre of Central Asia supported the proposals on strengthening regional institutions and to develop a dialogue on these issues. The Berlin Process with the involvement of UNECE could help IFAS to renew itself. After two decades there is a need for reform and confidence building. In early times cooperation was very much “Soviet style”, based on the “friendship of the people” but later countries formulated more clearly their national interests and there is a clear need for balancing these national interests on the basis of universally accepted principles and norms of international law. The Berlin Water Process needs to involve various experts (political, legal, technical, financial), which means involving the ministries of foreign affairs, water management organizations, financial organizations, etc.

The representative of the SIC of ICWC underlined that there are positive expectations on the new EC-IFAS. There is a need to focus on urgent problems, first of all the reform of the organizational structure. There is further a need for a thorough assessment of the situation, a lessons learned exercise, a coordinated exchange of opinions. Donors also need to be coordinated: IFAS and ICWC could play a coordinating role. There is a need to review and strengthen existing structures. The modernization of the legal basis is a complex issue. Representatives of member states need to represent the interest of their countries in this process. As a result of the development a better functioning regional structure, IFAS could better coordinate the work of ICWC and the BWO-s. For the coordination of political decisions, a bi-annual Central Asian Water Summit should be considered.