



JOINT STATEMENT

of the Central Asian
states at the UN 2023
Water Conference

(Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Tajikistan,
Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan)

22-24 March 2023,
New York, United Nations

The comprehensive rapprochement of the Central Asian states is due to the dictates of time and fully meets the fundamental interests of the fraternal peoples. Ensuring sustainable development, stability and security of the region is a common task that makes us responsible to future generations.

Water resources play a key role in achieving sustainable development in Central Asia, and transboundary water cooperation is an essential component in ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the region. Effectively established water cooperation can become a catalyst for development, and the lack of such cooperation can cause serious risks and costs that can adversely affect the overall economic and social situation.

Meanwhile, new challenges, such as the impact of climate change, glaciers shrinking in volume and area, financial and economic crises of recent years, emerging epidemiological diseases, in particular COVID-19, require closer cooperation from the Central Asian countries to reliably provide water to the population, various sectors of economy and natural objects. Along with this, significant population growth is expected, which will lead to an increase in water demand by 1% annually and will be about 30% by 2050, from now.

A particular concern is the ecological catastrophe of the drying up of the Aral Sea, which resulted in the formation of 5.5 million hectares of deserts that have a negative impact on human health and the state of ecosystems throughout the region.

These challenges, coupled with the growing demand for water, energy and food resources, require decisive action to be taken to ensure the rational use of the water resources of the Aral Sea Basin.

The countries of Central Asia have always adhered to the position of developing comprehensive cooperation on water and energy issues in the region on the principles of good neighborhood, mutual respect, support and mutual consideration of the interests of all parties.

The UN Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028 (hereinafter referred to as the UN 2023 Water Conference) is the second UN conference dedicated to water resources, after the conference in Mar del Plata in 1977 and provides a unique opportunity to catalyze and accelerate actions towards achieving SDG6 and other internationally agreed water-related goals and targets.

Central Asia uses the platform of the UN 2023 Water Conference to inform the world community about the existing problems in the region and attract attention and resources to solve them, as well as to demonstrate the solidarity of the countries of the region on issues related to water resources, the readiness to jointly combat today's and future challenges, including through appropriate commitments at the national and regional levels.

In this regard, the Parties declare the following:

1. Water is fundamental to all aspects of life and the UN 2023 Water Conference provides a unique opportunity to take further concerted actions to address water issues at all levels.
2. Countries of Central Asia recognize the importance and actuality of the Conference for addressing water-related issues and express their willingness to contribute to its success.
3. The states of the region recognize that urgent and effective actions are needed to achieve SDG 6 and other internationally agreed water goals and therefore express their willingness to make the following commitments at the regional and national levels as a contribution to the outcome of the Conference - Water Action Agenda:
 - 3.1. Regional level:
 - 3.1.1. Cooperation, especially in the field of water resources, is a key factor in solving existing problems and challenges, as well as ensuring peace, stability and development in the region, and therefore the countries of Central Asia reaffirm their commitment to further strengthening regional cooperation to achieve sustainable development.

- 3.1.2. Regional institutions are important tools for mutually beneficial cooperation, and in this regard, the parties will make every effort to strengthen their potential. In this context, the parties are committed to accelerating the improvement of the organizational structure and legal framework of IFAS, taking into account the interests of all countries in the region.
- 3.1.3. The implementation of joint projects is an important component of solving water problems and strengthening confidence-building measures, in connection with which the countries of the region express their readiness to develop and implement joint projects and programs, attract foreign investment in the leading sectors of the economies of the states of the region, including for the implementation of the Program of Action for assistance to the countries of the Aral Sea Basin (ASBP-4) and the Regional Environmental Program for Sustainable Development in Central Asia (REP4SD-CA).
- 3.1.4. The Parties emphasize the importance of expanding interaction and coordination in the field of the climate agenda, careful attitude to natural resources, conservation of glaciers and water resources in general, building a low-carbon economy, introducing resource-saving and "green" technologies, including the development of renewable energy sources, and express their readiness for joint activities in these directions.
- 3.1.5. The countries of the region are committed to jointly resist the Aral Sea crisis and its negative consequences, as well as to take specific measures to comprehensively address the problems associated with improving the socio-economic and environmental situation in the Aral Sea basin, especially in areas prone to the ecological crisis.
- 3.2. National level:
 - 3.2.1. The countries of the region will continue joint actions on the integrated management and rational use of water resources and environmental protection in the Aral Sea basin.
 - 3.2.2. The countries of the region will intensify work on the introduction of water-resource-saving and innovative technologies.
 - 3.2.3. The parties will continue activities for the afforestation of territories, including in the Aral Sea zone.
 - 3.2.4. The Parties consider water diplomacy as a political and diplomatic form of multilateral cooperation.
4. The countries of Central Asia recognize the importance of constant interaction and support of development partners to strengthen cooperation in ensuring the sustainable development of the region and the efforts of regional institutions to involve partners on a systematic basis. The readiness of development partners to continue active and constructive joint work with national governments on this common agenda to improve the living conditions of the population of the region is welcomed.
5. The Parties emphasize that 2023 is also important for the region in connection with the 30th anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea - the main regional institution that ensures mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of water resources and environmental protection. Based on this, the states of the region intend to widely use this event in order to demonstrate the unity of the region in managing water resources and solving existing water problems and conclude the results of the Fund's activities for this period within the framework of the IFAS Summit in September 2023 in Dushanbe.
6. The states of Central Asia are committed to mutual understanding and comprehensive mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of water resources and express their readiness to work together to implement the commitments made within the framework of the UN 2023 Water Conference at all levels.



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