

Tashkent resolution
participants of the international conference “Joint actions to mitigate the
consequences of the Aral catastrophe: new approaches, innovative solutions,
investments”

(Tashkent, June 7-8, 2018)

At the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh. M. Mirziyoyev, drew the attention of the international community to one of the burning ecological problems of the present day - the drying out of the Aral Sea and called for the active consolidation of international efforts to overcome its consequences.

In order to accomplish this task, the Cabinet of Ministers Ordinance No. 327-c of 26.04.2018 on the holding within the framework of the Central Asian International Environmental Forum in Tashkent on June 7-8, 2018, an international conference on the topic: “Joint actions to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe: new approaches, innovative solutions, investments”, in the preparation and conduct of which the interested ministries took part and departments, academic institutions, business representatives, international and public organizations.

Participation in the conference of leading experts from more than 20 countries of the world, representatives of the diplomatic corps and international organizations, acting in Central Asia, prominent scientists and specialists testifies to the high importance and urgency of solving ecological and socio-economic problems, connected with the disaster of the Aral Sea, for Central Asia and the whole planet.

During the conference, it was noted that the visit to the Aral Sea region by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Antonio Guterish, in June 2017 was yet another indication of close attention to this region and willingness to help its inhabitants. The UN initiated the establishment in Uzbekistan of a multi-partner trust fund for human security for the Aral Sea region and provides practical assistance in the implementation of a number of socially significant projects.

It was also noted that the Republic of Uzbekistan is making considerable efforts to mitigate the negative consequences of the Aral Sea crisis. During the years of independence, a large-scale work was carried out within the IFAS programs of ASBP-1, ASBP-2, and ASBP-3.

In order to implement a set of measures, aimed at improving the ecological and socio-economic situation, living conditions in the Aral Sea region, timely and effective implementation of investment projects to mitigate the consequences of the environmental disaster of the Aral Sea on January 18, 2017, the State Program for the Development of the Aral Sea region for 2017-2021 was adopted, aimed at improving the conditions and quality of life of the population of the Aral Sea region, providing for:

- implementation of comprehensive measures to create new jobs, ensure employment of the population, as well as increase the investment attractiveness of the region;

- development of the water supply system and increasing the level of providing the population with clean drinking water, improving sewage systems, sanitation and recycling of domestic waste;

- further development of the health system in the region and adoption of measures to conserve the gene pool of the population;

implementation of measures aimed at improving the living conditions of the population living in the region, repair of in-house engineering communications and common areas in apartment buildings, as well as landscaping of adjacent territories to the creation of children's and sports grounds;

development of transport, engineering and communication infrastructure of settlements in the region, improvement of the irrigation network and outdoor lighting networks, improvement of heat supply systems in Nukus and Urgench cities, providing for the introduction of modern energy-saving technologies.

The speeches of the conference participants paid special attention to the implementation of practical measures to mitigate the negative consequences of the Aral Sea crisis. In particular, the Aral Sea region Development Fund under the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been established to ensure reliable and stable financial support for the implementation of measures for the further development of the Aral Sea region, cardinal improvement of the conditions and quality of life of the population.

Tax incentives are presented to newly created microfirms and small enterprises in the sphere of industry, functioning in the regions of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and Khorezm region.

The preferential amounts of a monthly parental payment for the maintenance of children in pre-school educational institutions, specialized schools, centers of culture and leisure of the population, located in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and the Khorezm region.

In the Republic of Karakalpakstan and Khorezm region, a new type of social benefit has been introduced in the form of one-time material assistance to needy families, lonely citizens, pensioners, families with breadwinner and other low-income categories of the population.

For residents of the Republic of Karakalpakstan and Khorezm region, railway tickets and air tickets are sold at special preferential rates.

Measures are being taken to raise funds for technical assistance (grants) from foreign donors to finance projects to provide the population of the Aral Sea region with clean drinking water, create new jobs, improvement of the ecological situation. About 8.5 trillion soums are sent to implement this program.

Participants of the international conference "Joint actions to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe: new approaches, innovative solutions, investments", thoroughly discussing the proposed innovative ideas and new approaches to overcome the negative impact of ecological and social factors, associated with the desiccation of the Aral Sea, on the health of the population and the state of the environment of the Aral Sea region, ways to implement investment projects to improve the ecological situation in this region, made the following conclusions and recommendations:

Conclusions:

1. The Aral Sea problem is recognized by the United Nations Organization as one of the most acute global problems of our time, for the solution of which it is necessary to mobilize the efforts not only of the countries of the Central Asian region, but also the whole world community.

2. For more than 50 years, the scale negative ecological and socio-economic

consequences of the desiccation of the Aral Sea for the Central Asian region have been widely discussed around the world.

3. The scale of existing problems requires attracting the attention of the broad world public to measures aimed at restoring the ecosystems of the region and achieving its sustainable development.

4. Projections of the future growth of the water deficit as a result of population growth, economic development of countries, climate change and other factors require the implementation of consolidated measures of the countries of the region on water conservation and monitoring of water resources and vulnerable ecosystems, including the dried bottom of the Aral Sea.

5. The countries of the Aral Sea basin still have needs for large investments, new technical and innovative solutions for systemic joint actions to stabilize the environmental situation in the Aral Sea region, balanced development of the economy, addressing social issues and adapting the region's population to climate change.

6. Thanks to the efforts of the leadership of Uzbekistan, aimed at establishing good-neighborly relations with all countries of Central Asia, in recent years, some progress has been made in solving a number of complex regional issues, including the problems of water management and use.

7. One of the priorities in Uzbekistan's foreign policy was the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh. M. Mirziyoyev, who specifically identified the issues of joint use of the region's water resources and the unification of efforts in overcoming the consequences of the Aral Sea crisis.

The International Conference gave a new impetus to attracting investments and strengthening regional cooperation in implementing projects aimed at improving the state of the environment and living conditions of the population of the Aral Sea region.

Recommendations:

1. The states of the region, within the framework of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, should strive for a coordinated practical orientation and coordination of their actions, implemented to address the problems of the Aral Sea region, improve the effectiveness of implemented programs to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe, identify ways of cooperation in the implementation of projects, aimed at improving the ecological and socio-economic situation, not only in the Aral Sea region, but also throughout the Aral Sea basin, as well as attracting investments for their implementation.

2. *The Conference participants consider important areas of cooperation in solving social and environmental problems in the Aral Sea region:*

2.1. Harmonization of practical actions of the countries of the region, aimed at solving the problems of the Aral Sea basin and Aral Sea region;

2.2. Inventory and assessment of the implementation of previously adopted programs and projects to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe and the development of proposals for their implementation;

2.3. Ensuring the implementation of the package of project proposals reviewed and adopted at the Conference, aimed at improving the ecological and socio-economic situation in the Aral Sea basin, for the implementation of which foreign investments and

funds of representatives of local business are involved;

2.4. Deepening cooperation between the countries of the region on joint management of water resources of the transboundary rivers of Central Asia, ensuring economic and social development of the Aral Sea region and developing new approaches to innovative solutions in the use of water resources in the Aral Sea basin;

2.5. The intensification of efforts to establish under the auspices of the United Nations a multi-partner trust fund for human security for the Aral Sea region;

2.6. The development of protected natural areas in the Aral Sea region, the creation of a unified system for planting trees and the coordinated activation of forest reclamation works on the dried day of the Aral Sea, on a single scientifically grounded basis;

2.7. Involving young specialists in discussing the ecological problems of the Aral Sea, developing innovative solutions and using modern technologies to solve them.

3. *The Conference participants consider the most important tasks:*

3.1. International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea:

- to intensify the search for new approaches and use of innovative ideas for the development and implementation of ASBP-4;

- support the initiative of the United Nations to establish in Uzbekistan a multi-partner trust fund for human security for the Aral Sea region;

- assist in the implementation of a package of innovative projects adopted by the conference participants.

3.2. Governments of Central Asia:

- to intensify activities to preserve and strengthen the potential of IFAS, to find new ways to improve its structures in accordance with the positive changes in economic and political relations, the development of cultural ties in the Central Asian region;

- accelerate the formation of proposals in ASBP-4 and submit them to the IFAS summit in August 2018;

- to provide for the improvement of regulatory and legal acts in accordance with new approaches to the use of transboundary water resources in the Aral Sea basin and the implementation of international water law norms in national water legislation.

3.3. State institutions, business entities, public organizations of the countries of the Central Asian region:

- to direct efforts to search for new approaches to the development of cooperation between state institutions, business structures, non-governmental non-profit organizations and other civil society institutions in the implementation of projects within ASBP-4 and other regional programs of international organizations;

- take systemic measures to increase employment and increase incomes of the population in the zone of ecological disaster by attracting foreign investments for the creation of modern low-water industrial and agricultural industries, the development of small business, the service sector;

- to develop and implement plans to widely inform the population of Central Asian countries and foreign countries about new approaches to solving environmental and socio-economic problems in the Aral Sea region;

3.4. Scientific and educational institutions of the Central Asian region:

- to develop and implement new programs to increase the level of ecological knowledge of the population, especially young people at all stages of the educational

process, making extensive use of the principles of continuous ecological education and education for sustainable development;

- to intensify the search for and implementation of innovative technologies for energy, resource and water saving in industry, agrarian sector and public services, and widely promote best practices in the rational use of water, including groundwater, and other natural resources.

4. *International financial institutions and international organizations:*

4.1. Provide expert support, scientific and methodological assistance and organizational and technical assistance in the formation of ASBP-4 and the implementation of projects included in the Program;

4.2. To promote the establishment in Uzbekistan of a multi-partner trust fund for human security for the Aral Sea region and financing of its programs aimed at mitigating the negative consequences of the drying up of the Aral Sea on the living and health conditions of the population of the region;

4.3. To direct the efforts of the expert community to disseminate effective innovations in the practice of implementing regional programs and projects aimed at helping the countries of the region to improve their health and protection of the gene pool of the population, reducing morbidity, infant and maternal mortality, improving access to safe drinking water, improving sanitation and hygiene, improving environmental protection;

4.4. To assist the countries of the region that consume the water resources of transboundary rivers for drinking and irrigation purposes, in their effective use due to the reduction of unjustified losses, the introduction of progressive irrigation technologies, integrated water resources management.

The participants of the Conference call on the governments of the countries and international organizations to consolidate their efforts to address the socio-economic and environmental problems of the Aral Sea region, increase the effectiveness of implemented programs and projects to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe for the environment and public health, as well as attract investment for the purpose of their implementation.