



STATEMENT

by

H. E. Mr. Akil Akilov,

Prime-Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan

at

**High-level Dialogue of the 64th session of the General Assembly
on the Implementation of the International Decade for Action**

“Water for Life, 2005-2015”

and realization of the internationally agreed water-related goals

New York, 22 March 2010

**Mr. President,
Mr. Under-Secretary-General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, H. E. Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, for convening the *High Level Interactive Dialogue on the Implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for life" 2005-2015*. The dialogue coincides with the World Water Day and is one of the two important events envisaged by the General Assembly resolution entitled *"The Mid-Term Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" 2005-2015"*, which was adopted by consensus at the initiative of Tajikistan and 37 co-sponsor delegations. I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank all delegations for support and assistance rendered during the negotiations and finalizing the text of the resolution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are crossing the mid-point of the International Decade that started exactly five years ago today. I believe that it is timely to recall the message of the then Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. Kofi Annan, at the launch of the Decade in 2005.

Quote

"Water is essential for life... This is an urgent matter of human development, and human dignity. Together, we can provide safe, clean water to all the world's people. The world's water resources are our lifeline for survival, and for sustainable development in the 21-st century. Together, we must manage them better."

End of Quote

Today, five years after the launch of the Decade, this message is still relevant and urgent. We should ask ourselves whether we are on track to achieve timely and fully the goals and targets of the Decade. How many people have had access to safe drinking water and sanitation, how many children were saved from water-borne diseases, how many women and girls have been freed from the daily chore of hauling water?

For sure, the answers to these questions are positive. We achieved some progress on a number of the targets, but the progress on some of them is still lagging at most. Decrease in freshwater resources caused by the climate change may create additional difficulties on the way to the achievement of water-related internationally-agreed development goals. The problem may aggravate the situation, particularly, in arid and semiarid regions that experience the worst water stress. Effective water management has become a pressing issue for the international community.

Drinking water shortage in many countries and regions of the world, deterioration of water quality, degradation of water sources, excessive population upsurge, impact of global climate change and other negative consequences over the past years have considerably exacerbated the existing water problems.

I am confident that the three Round-tables of the High-level Dialogue will provide a solid foundation for interactive discussions on these and other aspects of the UN Water agenda. As the initiator of the International Year of Freshwater and the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" Tajikistan considers it vital to accelerate the implementation of the UN Water Agenda. We believe successful realization of the Decade would not only contribute to the provision of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, but also would facilitate the settlement of a number of other crucial problems, including health, in particular, health of children and mothers, food and energy security, environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the independence period, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has paid a special attention to the water issue both at the international, regional and national levels. It is known, that Tajikistan is rich in water resources. More than 800 billion km³ of freshwater are accumulated in the glaciers and lakes of the country. About 60 billion km³ are accumulated in the river basins that accounts for more than 56% of the water potential of Central Asia. But Tajikistan enjoys only 15% of its rivers' stream, while the rest part is flown to the downstream countries, mainly for irrigation. Moreover, about 40% of the people in the country have no access to safe drinking water, and it is the most pressing issue in rural areas. A number of projects on improvement of water access are being implemented with the donors' assistance. These targets are incorporated as an integral part to the National Development Strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Providing access to energy, particularly during the autumn and winter periods, is another urgent problem, which puts the country on the edge of energy crisis. Tajikistan can compensate the energy shortage only by developing renewable energy sources, in particular, by developing its hydroelectric potential that estimates at 527 billion kilowatt/hour a year. Today we use only 3% of this potential. Therefore, hydropower development is an issue of top priority for the Government that is striving for providing access to affordable energy and better living standards for its population.

A number of small, medium and large hydropower plants are under construction. We believe that development of renewable energy, including hydropower, is of vital importance not only for Tajikistan, but also for the whole region.

Water related natural disasters are the other pressing issue the country is faced with. Annually, hardly predictable natural disasters cause severe economic losses, human casualties and deprive families of their shelter. It is not infrequent when the whole settlements with socio-economic infrastructure (schools, hospitals, roads, administrative facilities) are washed down or destroyed by landslides.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The consequences of irrational and unsustainable use of water resources are well known. In the Central Asian states such attitude towards water resources caused degradation of the Aral Sea, which once was the largest freshwater source in the world. It is well known that it was irrigation in the downstream countries that mainly caused the Aral Sea degradation. It is suffice to say that in the middle of the last century the total volume of the Aral Sea exceeded one thousand km³, and the total area of the irrigated land in the region amounted to 2.8 million hectares. By the end of the last century the total volume of water in the Aral Sea decreased by 10 times. Currently, it accounts for about 98 km³, and there are 9 million hectares of irrigated land in the region.

Moreover, due to irrational and inefficient water resource management and low efficiency of the irrigation systems the water consumption in the region exceeds the international norms by several times, the water outflow into the Aral Sea has considerably decreased. In addition to that, due to deterioration of the currently irrigated lands, almost 40% of the lands suffer from salinization.

The Aral Sea crisis can be addressed to through the implementation of specific measures on water saving, through the rehabilitation of the irrigation systems, and by improving the agricultural policy with a focus on less water-consuming crops that, in its turn, could facilitate food security in the region.

The excessive population growth in the countries of Central Asian from 22 million in 1956 to the current 64 million people has resulted in increased water consumption. At the same time, due to climate change, the area of the glaciers and snow caps, which are the major water source in the region, has considerably decreased which resulted in the diminished water flow in the rivers. For this reason, our countries must revise their water consumption programs and

strategies especially those in agriculture, and to take concerted actions that will contribute to sustainable development of the entire region and its each country. As for Tajikistan, our country has already decreased by 40% the land allocated for cotton cultivation, and replaced cotton by less water consuming crops.

We believe that the establishment of a mutually acceptable mechanism of water and power resources management in the region that takes into account the interests of both the upstream countries rich in water resources, and the downstream countries rich in hydrocarbon resources, could contribute to mutually beneficial long-term cooperation among the countries and their sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the last years all efforts at the national, regional and global levels have been undermined by the global financial and economic, food and energy crises, and climate change. Now and then these challenges nullify achieved progress, which is still unsustainable. I believe only efficient and coordinated actions of the countries, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders can accelerate progress in achieving the goals during the second half of the Water Decade.

Given the aggravated water crisis around the world, population upsurge and impact of global climate change, the international community should take concrete measures aimed at a fair and integrated water resources management to meet the needs of all people, economic development of the countries and protection of environment.

To this end, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon put forward a proposal to declare the year 2012 as the International year of Water Diplomacy and to take further coordinated measures towards a fair and rational water resources management at the national, regional and international levels.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to convey the invitation to the distinguished representatives of the United Nations, governments, international and regional organizations, civil society and business communities to participate in the High-level International Conference on Mid-term Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life", 2005-2015, to be held in June 8-10, 2010 in Dushanbe. As it is envisaged by the General Assembly resolution, the Conference will be the next step toward a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Decade. We believe it will provide an opportunity for stock taking of the progress achieved in the implementation of the internationally agreed water-related goals and fulfillment of the commitments, as well as for discussing and developing new measures for strengthening efforts towards the timely and full achievement of the goals.

Thank you for attention.