



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

ADDRESS

by

H.E. Mr. Vladimir Norov
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan
at the Thematic round table III “Environmental Sustainability”
in the framework of the high-level event
on the Millennium Development Goals

New York, September 25, 2008

**Dear Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished heads of delegations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The UN Millennium Declaration adopted in September 2000 by the heads of states and governments of the world posed before international community the concrete tasks aimed at reducing poverty, bettering health of population, strengthening peace, human rights and ecologic stability.

Uzbekistan is successfully implementing the Strategy of raising well being of population on achieving the UN Millennium development goals at the national level. As a result of implementation of comprehensively well thought-out and purposeful social and economic policy for over the past three years the volumes of Uzbekistan's GDP have been growing with high rates – on average 7 to 8 percent annually. The country dynamically accomplishes the reforms in the sphere of education and healthcare. Uzbekistan is among the countries with high level of literacy – 99.4 percent. At the moment, the average life expectancy of Uzbekistan's population makes up 72.2 years of age against 69.3 years of age in 1990. The mortality rate decreases. The disease indicators of population, including the infectious diseases, are on the decline.

In the framework of implementing the state programs of Year of healthy generation (2000), Year of mother and child (2001), Year of health (2005), Year of social protection (2007), Year of youth (2008) Uzbekistan is creating all necessary conditions to ensure a full-fledged, healthy and spiritually rich life of population.

The achievements of Uzbekistan in the aforementioned spheres are inseparably linked with providing for stability of ecologic state and addressing problems of environment protection. These issues are considered by the Government of Uzbekistan as an integral part of economic reforms, and the implementation of action plans, strategies and programs in this sphere is under the close attention of state.

For over the years of independence Uzbekistan adopted over 80 laws and subordinate legislative acts related to protecting nature and those that regulate the issues of managing the rational use of natural resources.

One of the priority directions of Uzbekistan's policy in the sphere of environment protection is an ecologic recovery and providing for social and economic development of the area adjacent to Aral.

Today everyone is aware of the tragedy of the Aral Sea. The irrational use of water resources for over the past 50 years that brought about the change in regime of flow of Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers became a reason for one of the largest anthropogenic catastrophes in modern history – drying

up of the Aral Sea. As a result, a difficult complex of ecologic, social, economic and demographic problems that are of international and global nature both on their origins and level of consequences came about in the area adjacent to Aral.

Comprehension of those problems has been reflected in the UN Report for 2005 on human development in Central Asia which notes that the drying up of Aral Sea is not only of regional but also a global significance.

The Government of Uzbekistan undertakes all necessary measures to mitigate consequences of the Aral crisis. Annually the country channels nearly 10-15 million dollars from the state budget to the ecologic disaster zone, above all, to the sphere of healthcare, education and social support of the population of the area adjacent to Aral.

The efforts of the governments of Central Asian states and international community for over the past 15 years bore definite positive results that allowed in a way to alleviate consequences of the Aral crisis for population, flora and fauna of the disaster zone.

In this context, we are extremely concerned about the plans and a tenacious strife of a number of states of the region to artificially decrease the volume and regime of flows of transboundary rivers of Syrdarya and Amudarya.

In line with the key documents of international law, including the UN conventions on the protection and use of transboundary watercourses and international lakes (1992) and on the law of the non-navigational uses of international watercourses (1997) that define the main principles of using transboundary rivers, it is envisaged that all states of watercourse "use international watercourse within their respective territories in equitable and reasonable way".

These documents also envisage obligation of states of international watercourse during its use on its own territory to undertake "all appropriate measures to prevent infliction of significant damage to other states of watercourse" and in the case of infliction of damage all measures must be taken "to liquidate or abate such damage, and if needed the issue of compensation is put forward".

The international law in the sphere of using water resources of transboundary waters envisages a general obligation of states of the region to cooperate "with an aim to achieve optimal use and appropriate protection of international watercourse".

Therefore each country must act proceeding from the requirements of aforementioned UN documents that envisage construction and commissioning of new hydro-energy facilities with obligatory involvement of

authoritative and neutral international audit organizations to hold technical feasibility studies and assessments of drafts of these facilities to provide for a mandatory observance of ecologic requirements and preserving established volumes and regimes of watercourse of those rivers.

Any case of ignoring of those principles may lead to unpredictable ecologic, economic, social and political consequences in the region. The purposeful work in developing hydro-energy capacities on transboundary rivers in mid-term prospect along implementation of the set projects will negatively affect the system of water use, situation in agricultural production complex and ecologic balance in the region, and firstly, in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

We proceed from that these issues must be resolved based on mutual understanding, bilateral dialogue and consensus between the countries of the region.

Thank you.