



# TV UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

## U.N. IN ACTION

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Programme No. 1040

Length: 5'03"

### IT CAN BE DONE: THE ARAL SEA LIVES AGAIN!

#### VIDEO

SHIPS, CAMELS, DESERT  
ARAL SEA (ARCHIVE)

VILLAGE

BAITAK PLAYS/SINGS

BAITAK EATS WITH FAMILY

#### AUDIO

##### NARRATION

One of the world's strangest sights. Camels protect themselves from the desert sun in the shade created by rusting fishing boats. These boats used to ply the Aral Sea. Once the planet's fourth-largest inland body of water, it shrank so dramatically that it was one of the very worst ecological disasters of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (23")

The catastrophe affected not only Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the nations that share the Aral. The entire Central Asia region was impacted. (10")

This dusty village – Karateren, in Kazakhstan – was once on the sea-side but within a generation the waters receded 50 kilometres. Now there are promising signs that the Aral Sea is coming back. (14")

Beginmov Baitak sings a traditional song celebrating the love affair between the Aral Sea and the people that live around it. Like about half the population in Karateren, Beginmov, had to

leave his beloved village in search of work when the sea dried up. Then Begimov heard that the waters of the Aral Sea were rising...(20")

BEGIMOV BAITAK: (In Kazak)

BEGIMOV BAITAK ON-CAMERA

"This is my motherland. I am very close to this place and the people here. And this is the reason why I am so happy about coming back." (8")

NARRATION

NUKUS/ARAL SEA

UZBEKISTAN 1 – AMUR DARYA

RIVER/COTTON

FIELDS/MOUNTAINS OF COTTON

The Soviet Union needed water for cotton cultivation and it drained the two rivers that fed the sea, the Syr Darya and Amu Darya. The sea shrunk rapidly devastating the surrounding environment and ruining the traditional fishing economy of the bordering cities and villages. (20")

ARALSK MARKET

ABANDONED PORT, OLD

TRAINS, FISHING BOATS AND  
CANNERY

The last time the citizens of Aralsk also in Kazakhstan were able to see the Aral was 25 years ago. Once an active seaport, a thriving transport hub and a major supplier of fish, the dilapidated city stands silent and crumbling. But the city is getting back to life thanks to the return of the sea. (22")

ARALSK – OLD MAN GETTING  
WATER

WATER

PROJECT/CONSTRUCTION

MONTAGE

Funded by the World Bank and the government of Kazakhstan, a major project is helping to bring the Aral Sea back from the brink. Newly reconstructed, rebuilt, and rehabilitated water works along the Syr Darya are increasing the carrying capacity of the river, filling the Northern

RIVER FLOW

Aral Sea and also benefiting farmers by irrigating their lands. (22")

ANIMALS BY THE RIVER (DUCKS, SHEEP, HORSES, SHEPHERD)

This year the Aral has taken millions of cubic feet of new water years ahead of schedule, surpassing even the brightest predictions made by experts. Each month the water pushes back the desert just a little more. There is now hope that Aralsk city itself might reconnect with the long gone sea, says Committee on Water Resource engineer Oryngali Amirkhanov. (26")

ORYNGALI AMIRKHANOV,  
ENGINEER, COMMITTEE ON  
WATER RESOURCES

ORYNGALI AMIRKHANOV: (In Kazak)

"We would like the sea to rise to 46 meters. This will allow us to get the sea within 8 to 10 kilometres from Aralsk...*[cutaway]*... There is a proposal to dig a canal from the city to the sea, linking Aralsk to the Aral once again..." (16")

*[Cutaway ]*

NARRATION

ARCHIVE  
FISH CAUGHT AT DAM

And another major resource is coming back: fish. The Aral once was a major supplier of fish to the Soviet Union. As the sea shrunk, water salinity shot up from 10 to 45 grams per liter. Fish stocks dwindled and the fishermen became an endangered species. But now the industry is going through a revival. (22")

ARALSK CANNERY

Aral fish is being consumed in Kazakhstan and exported to Russia, Uzbekistan and Ukraine. Fisherman, Raimberdiev Amirkhan...(10")

RAIMBERDIEV AMIRKHAN, ON-  
CAMERA

RAIMBERDIEV AMIRKHAN: (In Kazak)  
“If you compare with the past, life now is much better. We have been doing well. As the sea rose, more places for fishing became available. We just can’t live without the sea. Without it we get sick.” (13”)

NARRATION

UZBEKISTAN AMU DARYA RIVER

NUKUS/ARAL SEA

CANNERY, SMOKING FISH

Hope that the entire lake could be restored is still far off. The southern portion of the Aral depends on the Amu Darya river, which is so heavily irrigated that its water rarely reaches the former shores of the lake. But better water resources management, sound ecological policies and political will can make a significant difference, even in extreme cases, such as the revival of a sea that many thought to be irremediably dead and gone. (32”)

UN LOGO

This report was prepared by the United Nations.