

**Remarks by Yukio Takasu,
Special Advisor to the UN SG on Human Security at the International Conference
“Joint Actions to mitigate the consequences of the Aral catastrophe:
New approaches, innovative solutions, investments”**

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Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to express my appreciation to the Government of Uzbekistan for their kind invitation and for giving me an opportunity to share a greeting from Secretary-General António Guterres.

When the Secretary-General visited Central Asia a year ago, he made a point to visit the Aral Sea. He described the situation as “probably the biggest ecological catastrophe of our time” and encouraged the entire international community to mobilize for the implementation of the Paris Agreement to ensure that such tragedies will not be repeated.

As his Special Adviser on Human Security, I had the great fortune of visiting the region of Karakalpakstan yesterday and witnessed efforts by the Government, the UN system, development partners, and the affected people to build resilience and enhance the well-being of local communities.

The Aral Sea disaster is a vivid testament to the need for all of us to manage resources in a sustainable manner. The human, environmental, and socioeconomic consequences have been dramatic and devastating with severe damage inflicted on communities and the environment.

At the same time, I found some signs of hope: a lot of new construction was going on in Muynak, cattle being fed in the surrounding wetlands and flamingos laying eggs. There is much we can do to mitigate the adverse consequences of the Aral Sea disaster, improve the livelihoods of people, and preserve biodiversity in the region.

The Secretary-General is a strong supporter of human security. In his address in December 2017, he stated that “human security is promising - it stresses human dignity, empowerment, and focuses on vulnerable people through integrated approaches”.

The human security approach, based on the common understanding agreed to by the UN GA resolution 66/290, calls for people-centered, multi-sectoral responses, and emphasizes the empowerment of vulnerable people.

The human security approach highlights the interconnectedness of ecosystems and societies, as well as the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation on people’s lives.

The human security approach seeks integrated solutions that are grounded in the realities of local communities. It brings together a range of stakeholders – from federal and state governments to

UN organizations, the private sector, civil society and local communities – towards a common strategy for positive environmental and developmental outcomes.

For nearly two decades, the UN Trust Fund for Human Security has supported programmes globally that aim to protect vulnerable people, reduce disaster risks and build the resilience of vulnerable communities.

In Uzbekistan, the Trust Fund has supported a programme which brought together UN agencies and Government partners in a truly cross-sectoral initiative tackling the economic, food, health and environmental challenges in communities across Karakalpakstan. The programme has achieved successful results and integrated human security at the local and national levels by working with communities.

The United Nations is pleased to partner (through the UN country team) with the Government, the people of Karakalpakstan, and other development partners to achieve collective success.

The United Nations will continue to align its activities closely with the efforts of the Government in the recovery and development agenda for the Aral Sea region, including the State Programme for the Aral Sea region in 2017-2021. We stand ready to support the people affected by one of the largest ecological disasters by collaboratively addressing multiple human insecurities.

Multi-Partner Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region

While progress is being made, we need to scale-up the human security approach and coordinate the activities of all partners to support the affected communities. We must back the Government's efforts in addressing the consequences of the disaster and fill gaps in the coordination of aid flows coming into the region.

In response to the call made by President Mirziyoyev at the 72nd UN General Assembly in 2017 and by Foreign Minister Kamilov at the 70th General Assembly in 2015, and on the basis of the needs of the population in Karakalpakstan, the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for Aral Sea region is being launched.

I would like to extend my appeal to all donors and international partners to positively consider joining this Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

I hope that with your generous support, this Trust Fund will develop as an effective and innovative mechanism for mobilizing all stakeholders to meet the needs of the local population in the Aral Sea region, thus allowing them to live free from fear, want and indignity, and with greater confidence in a sustainable future.