**Remarks by UN SG Special Adviser Yukio Takasu**

 **At the Central Asia International Environmental Forum**

**“Strengthening Cooperation in the Field of Environmental and**

**Sustainable Development in Central Asia”**

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Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Prime Minister Mr. Abdulla Aripov, Chairman Kuchkarov, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Government of Uzbekistan for organizing this important regional forum. I also welcome and thank the participation and support of Government representatives from Central Asia and the many development partners.

The hosting of the Central Asian Environmental Forum is an important initiative to raise the issues of environmental protection and preserving ecosystems at a higher political level.

It is also a recognition of the important achievement of the Government’s efforts to tackle critical development challenges on many fronts.

Today’s development landscape requires us to think and act differently. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals call on us to consider poverty in all its forms and dimensions and to understand the intricate interaction between human activity and ecosystems.

Protecting land and marine ecosystems together with climate action are the basis and foundation for sustaining and developing societies and economies - ultimately all part of the SDGs. The failure in addressing the multitude of risks in ecosystems can derail progress in the implementation of the SDGs.

We must consider the multiplier effect of environmental degradation and ecosystem loss on society and the economy.

Earnest consideration of sustainability must therefore prioritize the access of societies to clean air and water, productive soil, and ways to adapt to climate change.

We must account for the growing human activity and the increasing demand that it imposes on nature. Similarly, it must incorporate the positive contributions all people if the use of natural resources is to be well managed.

Sustainable and equitable development requires strong coordination across institutions and stakeholders, based on a people-centred approach. We need to shift our focus towards prevention, building resilience and preparedness, reducing risks and mitigating the impact of disasters whenever they strike.

To this end, the human security approach, as agreed by UN GA resolution 66/290, provides a valuable framework for untangling the interconnectedness among environmental security, social inclusion, human mobility, and economic progress.

By placing people at the centre, the human security approach helps to assess the needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of people and communities. It helps identify how the insecurity of ecosystems is linked with economic, health, food, energy and community safety.

I believe there is a great deal that cross-sectoral and integrated approaches can bring to the biodiversity agenda. It can support in assessing complex challenges and identify entry points that will have positive multiplier effects on the well-being of affected people and the preservation of biodiversity.

Human security also forces us to work with diverse stakeholders - not only Governments and international organizations but also businesses and the scientific community to effectively address the issue at the local, national, regional and global levels.

Thus, I am convinced that the human security approach is essential to move towards the ultimate objective of SDG - no one left behind in meeting the wholeness of human progress.

With regards to the Aral Sea disaster, I am pleased that the UN Trust Fund for Human Security has made invaluable contributions to support cross-sectoral programmes in affected communities in Karakalpakstan. As a pooled fund at the country level, it has demonstrated the power of catalytic interventions that establish strong partnerships, better coordination, and integrated planning. Now we need to mainstream and scale-up the proven human security approach to a national and broader level.

The UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region aims at expanding the successful UN Joint Program into a national and global effort to ensure the human security of communities impacted by the Aral Sea disaster. I would like to add my voice to invite all interested partners to support this Trust Fund.

The UN stands ready to support the efforts of the Government of Uzbekistan to develop and implement a national plan to achieve the SDGs. The Action Strategy for 2017-2021 is fully coherent with the human security concept.

Let us work together to promote inclusive solutions that enhance the well-being of people in the Aral Sea region and their ability to live together in peace.