

ADDRESS

by

H. E. Mr. Rahmat Bobokalonov
Minister of Land Reclamation and Water Resources
of the Republic of Tajikistan
to the participants of the
International Annual UN-Water Zaragoza Conference
(January 8, 2013, Zaragoza, Spain)

Dear colleagues and participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address the esteemed participants of the International Annual UN-Water Zaragoza Conference, which is focused on preparation for the International Year of Water Cooperation. The conference and its thematic focus is very close to my heart, since I am also, as all of you, a strong supporter of cooperation and dialogue on the vital resource for life – water. Regrettably, due to my previous commitments, I could not attend this very timely and important international event. However, thanks to the initiative of the organizers, I have an opportunity and pleasure of sharing with you my thoughts and ideas on the implementation of the International Year of Water Cooperation (IYWC).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has initiated the resolution on IYWC because we are confident that today's fresh water problems exist not due to lack of international agreements, decisions and recommendations in this area. There is a need in more effective and coordinated measures, coupled with a stronger political will at all levels. To effectively address the current and emerging freshwater problems we should take coordinated and long-term actions that will unite efforts undertaken by the governments, international and regional organizations, business communities, scholars, and civil society.

It is well known that climate change is likely to become an increasingly significant factor affecting water availability, in combination with other components that have already seriously influenced water quality and availability. The increased water related risks related to the changes in frequency and intensity of disasters, such as droughts, floods, storm surges, and landslides, will put extra stress on water resources management and will increase uncertainty about quantity and quality of water supplies. Receding glaciers, melting permafrost and changes in precipitation from snow to rain are likely to affect seasonal flows. Longer dry periods are likely to reduce groundwater recharge, lower minimum flows in rivers and affect water availability for irrigated agriculture, drinking water supply, industry, energy and navigation. Sectoral conflicts often hamper cooperation among groups with different water-use priorities (domestic use, hydropower, irrigation, industry, recreation and so on).

Challenges related to transboundary waters are expected to increase as a result of numerous pressures such as climate change and population growth. Competition over water is even more tough in water stress zones, leading sometimes to serious tensions among different groups of water users. Depleted and degraded freshwater supplies, caused by population growth, poorly managed development and weak governance, hamper sustainable development.

All the above underscores the need in cooperation and establishing a dialogue among all water users, such as agriculture, industry, energy, navigation and water supply and sanitation. Potential transboundary issues and conflicting interests can best be addressed through cooperation, adequate legal and institutional framework, joint approaches to planning and sharing of benefits and related costs. A reliable database, including meteorological, hydrological, and socioeconomic data, plays a key role in sustainable management of water resources.

Dear participants,

You might be aware that last year at the initiative of the Republic of Tajikistan the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution aimed at facilitation of the implementation of the IYWC through convening a series of global high-level events. The resolution *inter alia* has endorsed the following three international events:

1) A High-Level International Conference on Water Cooperation to be held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in August 2013;

2) A High-Level Interactive Dialogue of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly to be convened in New York on 22 March 2013, on World Water Day, to mark the 2013 International Year of Water Cooperation and the twentieth anniversary of the proclamation of World Water Day; and

3) The official World Water Day event dedicated to water cooperation, the theme of the International Year, to be held on 22 March, 2013 in The Hague, the Netherlands.

In this context, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan considers the Zaragoza Conference as the first in a number of events towards effective and comprehensive implementation of the IYWC. The discussions and outcomes of the Zaragoza Conference, as I sincerely hope, would contribute to the preparations for the global events, envisaged by the UNGA resolution on the implementation of the IYWC.

At the same time, I would like to underline that last year the Rio+20 Conference successfully concluded its work, where water was one of the main topics. The Rio+20 Conference has set a framework for elaboration of sustainable development goals (SDGs). In this regard, I would also like to propose to use appropriately and effectively the opportunities that would be provided within the IYWC to support and assist the intergovernmental process on the SDGs.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the International Year of Water Cooperation has already begun, and the degree of its success in addressing water related issues and goals, in advancing provision of basic human needs for all will depend, to a certain extent, on each of us. For this reason, we should integrate our efforts in order to make

the International Year of Water Cooperation a year of strengthening of mutual understanding, developing a dialogue and cooperation towards further progress in this broad area.

I wish you all good health and every success in the International Year of Water Cooperation.