

WELCOMING SPEECH

**by H.E. Mr. Sirodjidin Aslov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, to the participants of the UN-Water Zaragoza Conference:
Water and Sustainable Development. From Vision to Action
15 January 2015, Zaragoza, Spain**

Distinguished Heads and Representatives of international, regional and national organizations,

Distinguished Participants of the Conference,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to express my gratitude to the organizers of the annual UN-Water Zaragoza Conference and welcome you all, distinguished participants of this important Conference.

Since the international community is at the threshold of adopting new strategic goals for further action – Sustainable Development Goals, the theme of this conference becomes increasingly important for the solution of the global water issues.

The practice of realization of the reached agreements shows that the most important moment in their implementation is the selection of appropriate approaches, as well as the joint active and effective actions of all stakeholders.

It is gratifying that the Zaragoza Conference is aimed at discussion of these approaches and actions, and I am confident that recommendations and outcome documents of the Conference would lead to adoption of coordinated measures for successful achievements in solution of issues related to the sustainable use of water resources.

It is notable that many UN institutions, including the UN-Water mechanism and other international and regional institutions are actively involved in this process.

Dear participants of the Conference,

It is completely logical that during the recent times, the world leaders and governments often focus their attention on the issue of water resources, since due to their strategic importance, they are extremely crucial for solution of issues in all spheres related to sustainable development.

Therefore, the Rio+20 document “The Future we Want” recognizes water at core of sustainable development as it is closely linked to a number of key global challenges.

The growing influence of modern challenges and global changes to the state and availability of water resources obliges us to focus more attention on solution of water issues, consolidating our vision and actions with the use of appropriate and effective approaches and implementation tools.

Tajikistan, in its turn, which has consistently called for a joint action by the international community in solving water problems, continues to take concrete steps in this direction.

Declared by the UN General Assembly and by the initiative of Tajikistan the International Year of Freshwater (2003), the International Decade for Action “Water for Life” (2005-2015) and the International Year of Water Cooperation (2013), as well as the measures adopted by countries at national, regional and global levels on their implementations, undoubtedly, made a significant contribution to the solution of today's water problems.

I would like to mention that the experiences and lessons learned during the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals have also become the basis for implementation of projects and programmes on water supply and formulation of new goals and tasks in the sphere of sustainable water use.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the year 2015 terminates the International Decade for Action “Water for Life” a comprehensive assessment of the activities carried out during this period, identification of difficulties and problems in the implementation of the Decade goals, as well as planning of further activities for the post 2015 period are of crucial importance now.

To that end on 19 December 2014 the UNGA has adopted by consensus a resolution proposed by Tajikistan and entitled “International Decade for Action, “Water for Life”, 2005-2015, and further efforts to achieve the sustainable development of water resources” which calls upon member countries, UN system institutions, including the “UN-Water” and other organizations to comprehensively evaluate progress achieved in the implementation of the Decade and continue taking steps for achievement of the internationally agreed water-related goals.

The resolution also implies the convening of two important events:

- High-Level Interactive Dialogue of the sixty-ninth session of the UN General Assembly in New York in the end of March 2015, and
- High-Level International Conference on the Implementation of the International Decade on 9-11 June 2015 in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan,

The main objectives of these events are conducting of comprehensive review of the progress achieved in the implementation of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015, including the best practices and lessons learned relevant to the achievement of sustainable development, as well as recommendations for the further post 2015 actions, including the promotion of efforts in formulating the Sustainable Development Goals related to water resources.

The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan with the purpose of implementation of the provisions of this resolution and successful conducting of the International High-Level Conference is taking relevant steps. In this regard, there has been established a National Organizing Committee under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan and, at present, negotiations are under way with the representatives of the scientific circles, as well as international and regional organizations on creation of the International Steering Committee, the first meeting of which is scheduled in February in the UNESCO HQ in Paris. After the first meeting the related documents of the Conference will be sent to all governments and other stakeholders. Detailed information on the Conference is available in the website of the Conference: www.waterforlifeconf2015.org.

I hope that many of you, distinguished participants of the Conference, will have an opportunity to participate in this important international event and to contribute to achievement of its goals and objectives.

Taking this opportunity I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year. May the year 2015 bring new ideas and initiatives, new visions and achievements in the field of water resources with significant contribution to the achievement of the internationally agreed water-related goals and sustainable development on the whole.

I thank you all for your attention and wish you a fruitful work, health and success.