

Plan of Participation of the Aral Sea Basin Countries in Third World Water Forum

Background. The Third World Water Forum (3rd WWF) will include sessions on Regional Cooperation for Shared Water Resources, highlighting effective cooperation in transboundary water management. Within this context, the sessions regarding regional cooperation among the Central Asian republics in the Aral Sea basin are being developed. One of the outcomes of this workshop will be a plan for the topics to be presented in the sessions at 3rd WWF including: (i) preparations for the presentation of those topics, (ii) the expected audience at 3rd WWF presentations, and (iii) the representation of Central Asia at the 3rd WWF.

Topics to be Presented at the 3rd WWF. Central Asia has been experiencing complex and increasing water problems and stress over the past several decades. These problems are shared between the basin riparian countries and the Aral Sea and they will become more difficult to solve in the future. The Central Asian republics each pursue their own independent development, but they are committed to joint actions when dealing with transboundary water problems of the region. Each country acknowledges that it must contribute to joint solutions to these common problems. Over the past 10 years, the countries have developed cooperative institutions and policies so that in the future they can collaboratively address problems of the Aral Sea Basin. The development of transboundary water management in Central Asia will be reinforced in the 3rd WWF sessions which will highlight many of these issues, including:

1. Preparation Works Done for 3rd WWF

- Results of Virtual Water Forum "Partnership in Water in Central Asian Region";
- What was done by the "Water Voice"?
- Aral Sea Basin Management Model (ASBMM) - A tool for cooperation

2. Ten Years of Cooperation in Shared Water Resources in Central Asia: Past Experience

- ICWC activity in prevention of water conflicts;
- IFAS and the Aral Sea Basin Program;
- Regional water cooperation efforts;
- Water management improvements: Demonstration projects and policy reforms;
- and
- Developments in cooperation on regional water management.

3. Future Challenges

- Future alternatives - analysis of different options of water development;
- Development of agreed and mutually connected regional and national water strategies;
- Climate change - What should be done?
- Plan of real actions.

4. Integrated Water Resources Management in the Context of Regional Cooperation in the Aral Sea Basin

- Concepts of integrated management in the region;
- IWRM in Fergana Valley - First experience on the regional level;
- Moving towards a multisectoral approach in the region;
- Engaging stakeholders in water planning and management;
- Connection of water management to market forces to improve efficiency.

5. Environmental Issues in the Aral Sea Basin

- Prospects for the Aral Sea and surrounding areas;
- Water quality problems and responses;
- Water management dimensions of the Regional Environmental Action Plan;
- Land and water management in the fragile upper catchment zone;
- Combating desertification and land degradation.

6. Roles and Responsibilities of Local, National, Regional and International Institutions

- Water User Associations and other non-governmental organizations;
- National authorities with responsibilities affecting regional water management;
- Regional institutions and organizations engaged in water management;
- International and donor organizations.

Audience for Presentations at 3rd WWF. The expected audience includes the community of water sector stakeholders concerned with:

- Transboundary water management
- Major environmental problems of water use
- Economic development of countries with economies in transition; and
- Mitigation of tensions over water allocation.

Representation at 3rd WWF. Depending of available financing, it is expected that the delegation from Central Asia to the 3rd WWF will include:

- ICWC and IFAS Representatives;
- Nongovernmental Organization representatives, and
- Other stakeholders.

Expected Outcomes from 3rd WWF. Through the planned sessions, feedback will be obtained from the world community at the 3rd WWF on the problems faced by Central Asian water stakeholders which will help to shape future efforts on these issues in the region. The world community, especially the donors and other organizations interested in cooperative regional water management will be better informed about efforts in Central Asia to cooperatively solve transboundary water problems.