

Minutes of the Sixteenth Meeting of the  
**SPECIAL WORK TEAM ON ARAL SEA BASIN (ST-ARAL)**  
 New Delhi, India  
 08 December 2009: 09.30-13.15 hours

**Year of Establishment: 1994**

**Mandate:** To assist in establishing broad based ICID National Committees in each Aral Basin country; to obtain and disseminate information on problems of Aral basin to other ICID countries with similar problems; to organize national and international discussions on related scientific and technical issues in the basin; and to cooperate with other international organizations in related activities.

**Members Present:** (1) Vice President Hon. Victor A. Dukhovny, Chairman, 2005 (Uzbekistan, 1994), (2) Prof. Dr. N. Hatcho (Japan, 2002); (3) Acad. Boris Kizyaev (Russia, 2002) represented by Mrs. Irina Bondarik; (4) Mr. Ron W. Coley (Canada, 2003) represented by Mr. Laurie Tollefson; and (5) Er. M. Gopalakrishnan, Secretary General, ICID.

**Member Honoraire Present:** Vice President Peter Kovalenko (Ukraine).

**Representatives from the Region:** (i) Mr. Polat Beisebekov (Kazakhstan); (ii) Mr. Kadybek Beishekeev (Kyrgyzstan); (iii) Mr. Khasanov Khamidula Usmanovich (Tajikistan); (iv) Mr. Ernazarov Nazimjon (Uzbekistan); (v) Mr. Lutfulla Mukhamednazarov (Uzbekistan); and (vi) Dr. Olga Zhovtonog (Ukraine).

**Observers:** (i) Dr. Sandor Szalai (Hungary); (ii) Dr. Kai Wegerich (The Netherlands); (iii) Mr. Ludmila Kireycheva (Russia); (iv) Mr. Yurchenko Irina (Russia); and (v) Glyuck Irina (Russia).

**Website:** <http://www.icwc-aral.uz>

**Item 1 : Confirmation of the minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of ST-ARAL**

(The 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of ST-ARAL during Lahore Meetings (2008) could not take place in view of scarce attendance of members.)

The minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ST-ARAL held at Sacramento in October 2007 were confirmed.

**Item 2 : Tenure of the Working Group/Work Team**

The deliberations in the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting (2006) brought out the progress achieved by the ST-ARAL in a nutshell. To recapitulate, those are:

- Establishing membership drive among ICID National Committees of Aral Sea Basin and receipt of application from Azerbaijan
- Acquiring publicity in information network developed based on the three years activity of Central Asian Regional Water Information Base (CAREWIB) project, supported by the Swiss Agency for Sustainable Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- Educational activities organized by the Training Centre of Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) with the support of CIDA and McGill University
- Acceptance of IWRM and its substantial implementation in Aral Sea Region
- Accomplishment of works related to IWRM and request for its wider dissemination and
- Establishment of broad based cooperation with different International and Donor Organizations.

The Chair did not hesitate to highlight that the Work Team has already outlived its stipulated tenure of 6 years and there was a need to call a closure.

However, it was felt by the team that the work of ST-ARAL should continue with a new mandate and action plan addressing pending task or transfer of the pending tasks to a proposed new Working Group on *"Irrigation, Drainage and Environment for Economy Transfer"*. An alternate name which sprung up was *"Water Resources Management in Degraded Basins"*. It was also felt that it can couple itself with either the Work Team on Lake Chad or other river basins, where Inter Basin Water Transfer (IBWT) was of importance elsewhere in the world, for a closer coordination.

Chairman VPH Prof. Victor A. Dukhovny could not attend the Sacramento (2007) and Lahore (2008) meetings. No further discussion was possible in the last meetings and it was decided to postpone the subject until the New Delhi meeting.

VPH Prof. Victor A. Dukhovny, Chairman, ST-ARAL vide his e-mail (30 October 2009) to the President and Secretary General, ICID has proposed to restructure the ST-ARAL to form new Working Group on *'Irrigation and Drainage in States with Transition Economy'*. VP Kovalenko (Ukraine), VPH Guluyk (Russia), and Dr. S. Khamraev (Uzbekistan) have supported the proposal of creating new WG. The CO has provided information towards the creation/ formation of new work body (ICID by-laws 3.1) to VPH Prof. Dukhovny (Uzbekistan). In response, VPH Prof. Dukhovny together with VP Prof. Kovalenko has submitted (**Annex 1**) the draft mandate and short description of the new WG for consideration.

VPH Prof. Dukhovny proposed VP Prof. Kovalenko (Ukraine) to lead the new WG, while keeping himself available for the position of Vice Chairman, once IEC approves the formation of new WG.

The Central Office has circulated (27 October 2009) VP Prof. Kovalenko's e-mail to all NCs seeking their suggestions/ observations towards creating a new WG as above.

In response to VP Prof. Kovalenko's e-mail, VPH Prof. Brane Maticic (Slovenia) has informed (29 November 2009) that he will not be able to attend the New Delhi meeting in December 2009 but has raised some issues for discussion from the viewpoint of Slovenian conditions during the meeting:

- There is supposed to be geographical consideration among ICID countries with transition economy in Europe and outside Europe - Geographical considerations;
- There are ICID countries with transition economy in Europe that are members of EU and others that do not yet belong at present time to EU - Political & Economical issues should be considered;
- There are countries within EU that are pro- globalization in food production and against globalization - what are critical issues for the development and modernization of agriculture with water management activities specially in countries with transition economy within EU;
- Different environmental problems in these different countries should be considered as well; there is opposition against irrigation & drainage activities in some countries; and
- Spatial needs and spatial planning should be taken into consideration; they are different in different countries.

VPH Prof. Maticic does not intend to spoil the general opinion on issues with the establishment of such WG but perhaps feels that some more time may be needed to develop maturity on these issues. Nevertheless, participants (including representatives of Hungary and Germany, same as representatives from Ukraine and Russia and members of working group) supported opinion of VPH Prof. Dukhovny and VP Prof. Kovalenko to join specific interests of the States that went from top level development with centralized socialistic system to market economy through significant fall of all indicators of production and wellbeing.

Taking in to account the importance of commonly acceptable decisions for those states, there is a need to find most reliable financial, economic, institutional and technical approach for rehabilitation of former huge irrigation and drainage projects. The participants therefore decided to propose title for this group as *"Working Group on Irrigation and Drainage in States Under Social-Economic Transformation"*. They were sure that integration of scientific and practical experiences of these countries; and follow up of success stories will create a big impact in combating poverty and guarantee of food security for states with emerging economy.

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Participants invited all National Committees, who once had socialistic system, to join the new WG.

ST Aral proposed its recommendations as 1<sup>st</sup> Draft “Action Plan” (**Annex 2**).

**Item 3 : To review the membership of the Work Team**

**Item 3.1 : Work Team Membership**

Considering the proposed new direction of WG, Chairman proposed to invite fresh nominations from the existing membership and other NCs for the new term of WG.

**Item 3.2 : Country Membership**

The following points were noted under this item during the 13th meeting:

- Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are active NCs of ICID.
- Turkmenistan was accepted as a member in Bali (1998) but their initial payment of subscription was awaited.
- Tajikistan made the initial payment and remained active till December 2002. It is now an inactive NC.
- Azerbaijan was admitted to ICID family but the payment of their subscription to affect the new membership is awaited.

The Central Office of ICID was in correspondence with the Chairman, ST-ARAL and Chairman, ASRWG regarding country membership of the NCs of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. The CO may request the NC of Kyrgyzstan to pay its dues, at least for one year, to keep its membership active in ST-ARAL to support its activities.

**A. CONTINUING ITEMS**

**Item 4 : Further progress regarding Aral Sea Basin (ASB)**

In the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, IPTRID indicated about the distribution of the English version of the report on Aral Sea Basin (ASB) amongst the key actors and stakeholders of the region based on the IPTRID mailing list. SIC-ICWC translated the ASB report into Russian language with the help of IPTRID and Chairman, ST-ARAL and distributed the book amongst the key stakeholders using SIC-ICWC mailing list.

The Chairman, ST-ARAL while expressing his gratitude to IPTRID and all other donors of the ASB for providing financial and technical assistance, stressed the need to promote the work related to drainage investigations, drainage design and drainage investments.

It may be noted that IPTRID Strategic Framework was subject to further review. IPTRID’s own future status is not certain. Members of Group impressed their views about the need for ICID to transform IPTRID into a real mechanism for analyzing and aggregating the advance technology for all developing countries including the states in transition.

**4.1 WWF5 and Aral Sea Basin**

During WWF5 at Istanbul, a special session on Aral Sea Basin was arranged with GWP showing a new interest in introducing IWRM concept.

Pre-Forum Conference in Bishkek organised with assistance from Turkish Government had big impact on the dissemination of principal positions of global water improvement in region. Sub-regional side event (SE 026) on ‘Climate change, water resources management, governance and capacity building issues in Central Asia and Caucasus’ was co-organised by Interstate Commission for Water Co-ordination in Central Asia (ICWCCA) and Global Water Partnership (GWP) on 18 March 2009 at Istanbul, Turkey.

During the event VPH Prof. Dukhovny presented a book on ‘IWRM – From Theory to Real Practice: The Experience of Central Asia’. The book highlights IWRM practical experiences from CACENA. The book is available online at: <[http://www.cawater-info.net/library/eng/gwp/dukhovny\\_sokolov\\_e.pdf](http://www.cawater-info.net/library/eng/gwp/dukhovny_sokolov_e.pdf)>.

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President Chandra Madramootoo, VPH Dukhovny and Secretary General Gopalakrishnan participated in the event. Central Asia representatives together with SDC organized special presentation on implementation of IWRM in the Central Asia especially in Ferghana valley on the territory of three states

The background, challenges and actions and principal outcomes of CACENA side event are enumerated in **Annex 3**. Additional information on Aral Sea Basin and GWP CACENA can be accessed at: <[www.cawater-info.net](http://www.cawater-info.net)>, <[www.gwpcacena.net](http://www.gwpcacena.net)>.

#### **4.2 APWF and Aral Sea Basin**

The members of ST might be interested to note an initiative that took place during the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia Pacific Water Summit (APWS), organized during 3-4 December 2007 at Beppu in Japan. Among many other sessions, Aral Sea Panel Session on "Commitment for Ensuring Water Security in the Aral Sea Basin – Cooperation versus Competition" is of particular interest to ST-ARAL. The background of summary report of Aral session is available at **Annex 4**. Now ICWC are continuing to participate actively in development APWS and preparing for its' 2<sup>nd</sup> Summit.

#### **Item 5 : Capacity Building Programs**

The following points were brought out:

- CAREWIB Project is being implemented with the financial assistance of the SDC. This will strengthen the present organizational infrastructure and encourage large-scale involvements of stakeholders and world audience in the Aral Sea problems.
- Now, due to CAREWIB project enforcement and spread of information, there is an increase in number of visitors (up to 1000-1400 per day) which has initiated development of national systems by same order as previous regional systems. Big success in this area has been achieved by Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek national teams. This will help spread the methodological approach of the CAREWIB, not only to national network formation with proper information on qualitative and quantitative availability of water, land and environmental characteristics, but also on the provincial and sub basin level.
- As result of success of CAREWIB, the UN Commission for Eastern Europe and Central Asia promoted the idea of creation of special unit of Russian-speaking countries besides presenting their activities on water, irrigation and drainage on website: [WWW.CAWATER-INFO.net](http://WWW.CAWATER-INFO.net). Organizing meeting of this collaboration took place in Moscow in April 2008, and as a result more than 20 new organizations from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus have participated through this new window. It can be used as official window of new ICID group in future.
- The IWRM has been successfully implemented in the Ferghana region (the territory of 3 states: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) where involvement of stakeholders initiative, hydrographization and some technical measures saved more than 250 million m<sup>3</sup> of water per year from an area of 110,000 ha of irrigated lands. As a result, the IWRM concept was disseminated to other areas as well. Particularly in Uzbekistan, where implementation of IWRM began in 7 different rayon of 7 provinces covering an area of 250,000 ha, with support from SDC.
- Technical Assistance from Asian Development Bank for Improved Management of Shared Water Resources in Central Asia coordinated by SIC-ICWC initiated preparations of Agreements on the transboundary aspects for Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers and financial issues for collaboration.

The Chairman further intimated that ST-ARAL together with Prof. Chandra Madramootoo, President, ICID and President Hon. Aly Shady would continue exploring assistance for the Capacity Building Programme. UNESCO-IHE is also taking interest for developing network of training branches in the region.

#### **(i) New initiatives in Aral Sea Basin**

In the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting (2006), the Chairman Special Team mentioned that the ST should continue its efforts in coordinating with Brace Centre of McGill University (Canada), SIC-ICWC, CIDA and EU for bringing developments in different zones of Central Asia.

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But taking into account the small movement from CIDA, the ICWC applied to different donors and succeed in getting assistance from IHE-UNESCO for preparation of trainers of training program (sponsored by Dutch Government).

Swiss Government through SDC introduced huge assistance to the region for development of IWRM program for local provincial training Centres in Kyrgyzstan (Osh), Tajikistan (Khojent) and Uzbekistan (Andijan and Ferghana) that permitted training of more than 9000 specialists from WUAs and farms in 2008.

## **(ii) Environmental and Socio-economic Assessments**

As result of completion of the first stage of the project on "Delta Syrdarya improvement" financed by the Government of Kazakhstan and The World Bank and preparation of a feasibility study on the second stage of the project situation in delta Syrdarya, functioning improved significantly in the North Sea to the proposed design level. Now, the second stage of project has begun and 6 lakes' system will get sustainable water availability.

Promotion of the works for South Priaralie was carried out by the Government of Uzbekistan and as a result some coastal lakes will get water.

### **Item 6 : Top level meeting in Almaty and new AFAS**

Outstanding meeting of 5 Heads of States – Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan took place on 28 April 2009 in Alma-Ata. This was first Summit after 2002, where problems of Aral Sea basin were presented which resulted in appointment of a new Chairman of Executive Committee of Aral Sea fund. Presidents signed Memorandum that stated their will to develop future collaboration between states, to prepare new Program of Aral Sea (PBAM-3) and to pay special attention to finding mutual solutions on the rational use of water and hydropower resources of the region.

Based on this decision, the new EC IFAS organised a set of meetings together with ICWC and different donors for their involvement in preparation of this program and other parts. Specific attention and first push to this movement was given by World Bank, Government of Germany, UN EECE and OSCE. Special body of UN – Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia was formed in Ashgabat with direct goal of organising/monitoring water and environmental situation in Central Asia.

### **Item 7 : Issues on "Scientific and technical framework of transfer of Siberian water to Central Asia"**

While deliberating various issues, Prof. Dukhovny informed that the region should concentrate its attention in the next 20-25 years on the efficient use of its own water and increase its productivity. The project on 'transfer of water' has sound viability for tackling the problems of Siberia from excess water and ASB from water scarcity by mid 21<sup>st</sup> century. But the real needs of Central Asia will depend on many factors such as characteristic of the region in terms of self-sufficiency in food and development of irrigation, global prices of agricultural produce, political and social situation in the region and in the neighbouring states.

The Chairman, ST-ARAL also brought to the notice of the members regarding new political movement in the sphere of Euro Asian Economic Council, which helped to generate fresh interest in the future of transfer of Siberian river flows to the region of Central Asia.

Mr. Acad. Boris Kizyaev, Member, ST-ARAL informed during the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting that the plan was political having social implications. The Government has yet to work out the feasibility. In 2-3 years, some result could be expected.

Mayor of Moscow Mr. Lusjtkov published a book about renovation of this proposal that caused big reaction in mass media. This question also was discussed in the Russian Water Forum in November 2009 where Ambassador of Kazakhstan in Russia also supported this idea.

The Central Office requested (11 May 2009) Mr. Acad. Boris Kizyaev (Russia) to provide update on the above issue. In response, VPH Dukhovny informed (18 May 2009) that he has brought out the issues in his presentation which are available on their website.

Chairman referred to his publications in Russian and international press where an analysis of the present situation in region has been presented underlining the previous idea that the water availability from present water resources

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in Central Asian states can be guaranteed only under condition of close collaboration and effective water use. Destabilising factors such as climate change, demographic pressure, growth of Afghanistan water demands can cause an additional water demand after 2025-2030. But now the principal focus of water and irrigation development in Central Asia should be to organise better implementation of IWRM following the experiences of IWRM in Ferghana to save at least 20% of water from present volume of water delivery, to reduce water consumption significantly and to overcome hydropower egoism, which may have big impact on energy generating organizations. Enforcement of international and regional water laws together with implementing proper financial tools will assist in sustainable survival of region on its own water.

In present situation, only North Kazakhstan and South Siberia introduced sharp demand for additional water

Future water demand for region needs to be mutually investigated by Central Asia, Russia and international scientific and design organizations by identifying most efficient approach in different conditions. Nevertheless, final decision will depend on the common political will of all the involved project States.

#### **Item 8 : Need for developing linkages with WG-CLIMATE**

In the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting (2006), VPH Prof. Dukhovny stressed the need for including more work on socio-economic aspects addressing issues like reduction of poverty, provision of livelihoods etc through implementation of improved water management practices.

VPH Prof. Dukhovny, Chairman, ST-ARAL brought the following three issues to the attention of Chairman, WG-CLIMATE:

- (i) Impact of change in precipitation, temperature and humidity of air on the water resources of region
- (ii) Impact of glacier melting on the river flow and
- (iii) Impact of climate change on the water consumption of crops.

The Chairman, WG-CLIMATE agreed (2007) to consider the aspects under the purview of WG-CLIMATE.

During the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting at Sacramento (2007), it was suggested to continue the discussion on ST-ARAL through E-mails.

Now Central Asian states provide big works in this direction. Particularly Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have completed second report on present and expected transformations due to climate change and strategies for their adaptation. IFAS together with Euro Asian bank published a generalised report on regional forecast that will be use for the preparation of a new Program of Aral Sea (PBAM-3).

By the invitation of President ICID Prof. Chandra Madramootoo, VPH Prof. Dukhovny participated in a global Conference in November 2009 at Montreal, Canada where reports from SIC ICWC were presented on impact of climate change on water and food security in the region.

#### **Item 9 : Any other business**

VPH Prof. Dukhovny, Director, Scientific Information Centre of Interstate Commission for Water Coordination, Uzbekistan participated in the International Conference "The Problems of Aral : Impact on the Gene Pool of Population, Flora, Fauna and International Cooperation for Mitigating Consequences" scheduled during 11-12 March 2008, Tashkent. Report was introduced and published in the special issues of proceedings.

*VPH Prof. Dukhovny joins the other participants in personally thanking President ICID Prof. Chandra Madramootoo, Secretary General Er. M. Gopalakrishnan and Dr. Daryl Fields of World Bank for their big assistance that allowed the participation of delegates from Central Asia in New Delhi meetings.*

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**DRAFT**  
**WORKING GROUP ON 'IRRIGATION AND DRAINAGE IN STATES UNDER**  
**SOCIAL-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION'**  
**(to be established)**  
**[Erstwhile Special Work Team on Aral Sea Basin (ST-ARAL)]**

**Background**

The principal goal of the new Working Group on Irrigation and Drainage in States with Transition Economy is to facilitate a single platform of National Committees of ICID that belong to States characterized by transition economy, in overcoming certain mutual problems in Irrigation and Drainage.

It is well known that after the splitting up of former USSR States that were included in Warsaw collaboration or Soviet Union went through very difficult times to overcome the problems connected with changing economic, political and social situation, especially in rural area during the past 2 decades. These are characterized by some common features such as:

- reduced size and direction of government subsidy to agriculture, water management, irrigation and drainage;
- lack of investment not only in development of Irrigation and Drainage, but also in sustainability of these networks;
- lack of States' attention to Irrigation and Drainage.

As result, in all these States, one can recognize that there is a:

- reduction of irrigated area (it was 12 Mha or 5% of global irrigated area);
- significant loss of organizations responsible for supporting infrastructure of irrigation and capacity building in water management;
- failure of Irrigation and Drainage science;
- lack of interest of young professional in Irrigation and Drainage.

**Goal:** to promote innovative approaches and necessary instruments to provide sustainable irrigation and drainage management within IWRM plans and RD projects in the countries of transition.

**Mandate**

- to agree concerning the organizational and management structure of the working team;
  - to develop and strength a network among the countries of transition;
  - to organize monitoring and evaluation of common problems in the States that belong to transition economy;
  - to create database and exchange of information about changing situation in Irrigation and Drainage in these States and to attract global and national attention to existing trends affecting global and national food security and wellbeing of rural population;
  - to summarize the experiences in overcoming negative tendencies in organizing public-private partnerships, implementation of IWRM and broad-basing of stakeholder;
  - to monitor the ecological situation in the transition states, including problems of close basin (Aral Sea, Caspian Sea), salinization and water logging, etc.;
  - development of appropriate advance irrigation and drainage technology in transition states and its dissemination through capacity building;
  - to promote farmer's training to create awareness about irrigated and drainage agriculture.
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### **Proposed activities**

- organizing conferences and workshops;
- development of web portal similar to 'CAREWIB portal' and Russian website [www.cawater-info.net](http://www.cawater-info.net);
- produce publications/ proceedings.

### **Long-term perspective of activity**

- to create enabling environment for effective scientific cooperation and cross policy coherence on irrigation and drainage issues within IWRM on catchments scale;
- to develop long term vision on future role of irrigation and drainage in the countries of transition to overcome poverty, provide food security and environmental sustainability on the basis of water scenario development on local and regional level;
- to integrate irrigation and drainage management with IWRM plans at river basins levels and RD projects;
- to develop agro environmental measures within the projects on irrigation and drainage together with the measures for long-term protection of water resources and sustainable agro-landscapes;
- to develop new mechanisms and tools to implement investment projects in irrigation and drainage restoration and development by using advanced water and energy saving technologies, economic and policy instruments.

All countries with transition economy are invited to join sub- teams according to their priorities and capacities.

### **Tenure**

- six years (2009-2015)
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**DRAFT ACTION PLAN  
WORKING GROUP ON 'IRRIGATION AND DRAINAGE IN THE STATES UNDER  
SOCIAL-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION'**

To start the activities of WG, the following actions are proposed:

**1. Working Group set up**

- 1.1. Disseminate information about establishment of the Working Group among the appropriate ICID members with invitation to apply for membership to the ICID Central Office and ask for opinions
- 1.2. To improve working plan according to the responses from potential participants

**2. Collection of information/data about current situation on various aspects**

- 2.1. To develop questionnaire on current problems of irrigation, drainage systems and environment; state of policy; legal, institutional and technical developments in water management; economical situation, science and education
- 2.2. To create common methodological approach to establishment an electronic data base and organize a forum for exchange of information and opinions
- 2.3. Regular evaluation of the information in the data base including ongoing and finished projects in connection with mandate of the WG

**3. Development of special web-page of the WG on the Russian portal of CAREWIB**

**4. Formulation and implementation of joint projects**

- 4.1. To make assessment of existing research gaps and best practices;
- 4.2. To formulate ideas for joint projects to strengthen the situation in water management with focus on integrated water management;
- 4.3. To organize dialogue for preparation of recommendations for water governance and policy making tools;
- 4.4. Project development based on stakeholders dialogues and their associations.

**5. Vision for future development**

- 5.1. To establish an analytical sub-group for the permanent follow up and monitoring of working plan development
  - 5.2. Overview of the national documents in connection with future development of water management, e.g. adaptation strategies to climate change, national communications for UNFCCC and UNCCD etc
  - 5.3. Synthesize the national inputs
  - 5.4. To develop long term vision on future role of irrigation and drainage in the participating countries to provide food security and environmental sustainability on the basis of water scenarios development on local and regional level
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**SPECIAL WORK TEAM ON ARAL SEA BASIN (ST-ARAL)**

**5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum  
GWP Sub-Regional Side Event (SE 026)  
on  
'Climate Change, Water Resources Management,  
Governance and Capacity Building Issues in Central Asia and Caucasus'  
18 March 2009 at Istanbul, Turkey**

**Background**

The CACENA (Caucasus and Central Asia) region can geographically be subdivided into:

The Southern Caucasus (three countries – Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia), and Central Asia (five countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). There is a big differentiation in renewable water resources availability among the countries within each subregion.

The biggest part of the territory is located in the arid and semi-arid climate, and irrigated agriculture accounts for about 85-90% of total water use. The most common challenging issues for the Caucasian sub-region are the low access to proper drinking water supply and sanitation, water ecosystems degradation, floods and, in some zones, water scarcity. For Central Asia there are increasing water deficit and water ecosystems degradation. Transboundary issues (conflicting interests for water among upper and downstream countries) are common for the whole CACENA region.

There are principal efforts undertaken by national water authorities mostly addressing to implementation of the integrated water resources management (IWRM) principles towards sustainable development and MDGs achievement in all eight countries. These include public participation in decision making, promoting political will to cooperation among sectors and countries, initiating dialogues among all stakeholders and support to practical actions at local levels. Due to active role of the Regional Water Partnership (RWP) CACENA in a close cooperation with the Executive Committee of International Fund for the Aral Sea Saving (EC IFAS) and the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) a lot of joint activities have been implemented, as a result of which good relationship has been established between water related professionals from all countries. During the regional meetings within the framework of RWP CACENA, exchange of information and management experience takes place between the principal stakeholders. The RWP CACENA provides favorable conditions for integrating not only into the GWP network activities, but together with the IFAS and other regional processes also for involving local partners into activities supported by other international organizations and donors.

**Main Challenges and Actions**

There are a number of challenges for sustainable water resources management in Central Asia and Southern Caucasus, which are predetermined by the following destabilizing factors:

- Population growth, although its rates have reduced in comparison with the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, makes up not less than 1.5% per year resulting in significant, additional demands for water;
  - Urban population growth and expanding urban areas causes additional pressure on the water resources;
  - Changes in crop pattern due to restructuring of agriculture there is tendency to produce more highvaluable crops;
  - Climate change causes increasing water requirements for agriculture and more often recurrence of extreme flood and drought events;
  - Progressing instability in world prices on agricultural production against increase in costs of agricultural inputs makes the irrigated farming less cost-effective, at the same time there are no alternatives to irrigation due to its high social significance for the region (about 60% of rural population rely on it).
  - Worsening of the competition for water resources between upstream and downstream countries - mainly due to shifting the water flow regimes towards the interests of maximum hydropower production, especially in winter time – created serious friction in regional cooperation.
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- Possible increase in water withdrawals from the Amudarya river by Afghanistan after stabilization of its economic situation will add stress on the actual water balance.

There are also a number of internal challenges, which should be added to those listed above:

- Lowering the accuracy of water resources accounting/registration and forecasting, resulting in unproductive water losses along river channels;
- Obsolescence and degradation of water infrastructure at all levels of water management hierarchy resulting in increase of unproductive water losses and deterioration of monitoring;
- Low level of capital investments to rehabilitation and upgrading water infrastructure;
- Increased number of end water users (farmers);
- Insufficient financing of Operation and Maintenance (O&M) resulting in loss of skilled personnel.

The principal outcomes of the CACENA side event were as following:

**a. *Climate Change***

- i. EC IFAS presented recently completed regional report on Climate Change in Central Asia, which shows the real picture of the challenging issues region will face in coming few decades
- ii. Tajik Minister of Land & Water to look at less water consuming crops. This initiative was supported by other water leaders from CACENA countries
- iii. Agreement of immediate need improved water efficiency among key actors
- iv. Actions to be taken for improved water quality

**b. *Transboundary Cooperation***

- i. Water leaders from the region confirmed their commitment for cooperation and looking to the GWP CACENA as a neutral platform for transboundary dialogues
- ii. ADB is happy with progress and will support further efforts towards new agreements

**c. *Water Governance***

- i. IWRM is a baseline for on-going reforms in water sector over the region
- ii. Uzbek delegates called to build cooperation on the UN Convention 1997 principles. In response, Tajik delegates proposed Central Asian Convention on Water

**d. *Capacity Building***

- i. The need for joint regional capacity development umbrella was stressed to coordinate all actors involved (local, regional, international donors and agencies, etc.)
- ii. Build on achievements from Swiss financed IWRM project in Fergana Valley (led by ICWC and IWMI) with involvement GWP CACENA, UNDP and CapNet
- iii. Universities of Helsinki and Montana ready to cooperate for growing new generation of water leaders

**Some ideas on follow-up activities after 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum:**

- Meeting of ICWC in April 2009 – to discuss outcomes of the 5th World Water Forum and follow-up activities.
  - Meeting of Presidents of the IFAS countries in Kazakhstan – to discuss further Joint Aral Sea program activation.
  - Give input to the “Wider Europe Initiative” proposed by Finland on its water component
  - Cooperation with Helsinki University of Technology on a 2009-2010 Caucasus curriculum on IWRM for young water professionals
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- A number of working regional meetings under umbrella of “Transboundary Dialogue” to discuss progress on interstate agreements, which are under preparation with support from ADB and conducted by EC IFAS (certain contribution to dialogues will be made by GWP CACENA with involvement of Finland).
- Launching new program for CACENA jointly with WWC and IUCN “Water Governance” – summer 2009 (expected Finland involvement – details will come later).
- Special session during Regional Asian Conference of ICID in December 2009 – to discuss further collaboration program for the Central Asian countries.
- Preparations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit to be held in Singapore in June 2010

Additional information available at: [www.cawater-info.net](http://www.cawater-info.net), [www.gwpcacena.net](http://www.gwpcacena.net)

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**SPECIAL WORK TEAM ON ARAL SEA BASIN (ST-ARAL)****APWF and Aral Sea Basin**

One of the decisions in the 4<sup>th</sup> WWF held in Mexico in 2006 was to involve the region's water ministers and establish an effective mechanism that will encourage more collaborative efforts on water resources management. It was hoped that this will accelerate the process of integration of water resources management for the socio-economic development effectively in the Asian and Pacific regions. This resulted in the creation of an Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF).

The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of APWF was held in Beppu, Japan in December 2007. The forum identified that the 'Aral Sea Basin' agenda is unique and is of the global importance and recommended a UN recognition for concerted action.

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia Pacific Summit, while making the speeches by the heads of the Government pertaining to Central Asian Countries, the President Republic of Tajikistan and Vice Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan agreed that the economy and vulnerability of water related disaster need a cooperative approach. This was particularly so to solve water related issues including those of the ASB. Increasing investment levels, particularly in rehabilitating their country's ageing water infrastructure were asked for and mentioned that it require immediate attention.
- In the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia Pacific Summit, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) reported on their commitment to boost water investments in the ASB region. The intended outcomes of the ADB Water Financing Programme (WFP), which was launched in the 4<sup>th</sup> WWF by the ADB for a new five-year WFP, were also presented in the meeting. The WFP will direct new investments at rural communities, cities and heart of the water sector, river basins. Under the WFP, the ADB enhanced actions of interest in water. Well over US\$2 billion annually was allocated between the periods 2006 -2010 (4<sup>th</sup> WWF Synthesis, 2006).

Aral Sea Panel Session on 'Commitment for Ensuring Water Security in the Aral Sea Basin – Cooperation versus Competition' was organized during the 1<sup>st</sup> APWS. The summary report of the session follows:

The Aral Sea crisis is the disaster of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It will require huge efforts to solve the Aral Sea basin problems. Efforts have been made in last 15 years, but many problems still remain to be solved. The Large Sea is shrinking continuously. The problem is worsening due to global climate change, population growth and economics of the Central Asian countries.

The Aral Sea Panel Session has been organised to discuss existing problems and propose new initiatives to achieve sustainable water management in Central Asia.

The session was Chaired by President of the World Water Council Mr. Loich Fauchon and attended by the President of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea, President of the Republic of Tajikistan H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon, officials from Central Asian countries, representatives of the international organizations, academics, NGOs, private sectors and media. The problems of the Aral Sea Basin in the context of the Priority Themes of APWF were discussed within the framework of the session. The initiatives proposed were:

- Offer the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea; the status of the United Nations Institute for coordination of activities of international organizations and donors. Also announce the Aral Sea Basin as the priority region for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.
  - Support the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan about organization of an International Conference on water related disaster reduction in 2008 in Dushanbe, during which the outcomes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Asia-Pacific Water Summit were shared.
  - Promote the creation of the Aral Sea Basin Public Water Council.
  - Create a Central Asian sub-regional Centre of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan.
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