

International Cooperation and Problems in Area of Transboundary Water Sharing

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«...The Parties once again confirm their interest in the development of mutually acceptable mechanism on integrated use of water resources and environmental protection in Central Asia taking into account the interests of all states in the region...»(Joint Statement of the Heads of State-Founders of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, 28 April 2009, Almaty)

Economies of Central Asian countries are closely linked with the use of transboundary water resources in the Amudarya River and Syrdarya River, which, in turn, are related to current and potential issues of water, energy, and ecology. The 5th World Water Forum (16-22 March 2009, Istanbul) was focused on the issues of rational and equitable water use in context of global warning, population growth, and increasing demands for drinking and irrigation water resources. The importance of international water law was underlined and attention was paid to inadmissibility of using water only in the interests of one state. Moreover, it was stressed that all states should be based on principles stipulated in the UN Conventions. The IFAS Agency and other branches of this fund try to learn lessons from and use opportunities provided by international cooperation, by establishing partnerships with various international organizations. Many decisions regarding construction of hydropower structures in the region are dictated perhaps by the existing economic situation. Because of growing differences between watermen and powermen during the transition period, the interests of hydropower sector came into conflict with those of agricultural producers. The operation modes of large reservoirs have been started to change. This led to growing of conflicts between economic sectors. The time calls for additional research and adjustments in design and construction of large structures on transboundary watercourses. Since independence, despite common traditions in political and legal culture and similar governmental and social institutes, each state in Central Asia, national water legislations of Central Asian states differ from each other significantly. Nevertheless, this does not put an obstacle for the region's states in continuous improvement of their water legislations in connection with international norms and regulations. Thus, by the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan of August 9, 2007, Uzbekistan joined the Convention on Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Helsinki, 17 March 1992) and the Convention on the Right of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (New York, 21 May 1997).

International community has developed a body of legal mechanisms in area of water resources management. Regarding transboundary water resources, it is planned to harmonize strategies and action plans. In this context cooperation ensures sovereign equity, territorial integrity, mutual benefits, and equitability for all of parties. International experience in implementation of similar projects on transboundary rivers, such as Rhine and Danube, Mekong and Indus, Nile, Columbia, etc. gives rise to optimism.

The IFAS Agency seconds the project “Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in the Ferghana Valley in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan” as it is aimed at coordinated use and management of shared water in the region.

Today, this is the time for urgently needed constructive dialog of policy makers and professionals about water, energy, and ecology. Water is a common asset of nature in the region. Water should not be a cause of conflict among the states. In this context, we should base on national water legislations and, in case of conflicts, on international norms and regulations by signing bi- and multilateral agreements between the states.