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Pathway towards ensuring water security in the Aral Sea Basin

Your Majesties, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, let me express my sincere appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand under the leadership of H.E. Ms. Yingluk Shinavatra for hosting this important Summit and great attention given to the participants.

For centuries the waters of the two rivers of Central Asia - Amudarya and Syrdarya have been the source of life and well-being of the people of Uzbekistan and the Aral Sea Basin. However, the irrational approach of the former Soviet system of management has led to worldwide environmental disasters, such as shrinking of the Aral Sea.

Present water-related challenges in Central Asia are as follows:

Climate change, resulting in reduction of glacier reserves, decrease of expected water resources by 10-15%, and increasing frequency of low water years.

Reducing of water availability. Population growth in the region and economic development lead to a decrease in water availability per capita. In the last 5 years water availability per capita in Uzbekistan decreased by almost 2 times, from 3,000 to 1,700 m³ per year.

Disruption of the natural regime of the transboundary rivers and water balance, which becomes the cause of increasing water scarcity, degradation of ecosystems, flora and fauna, increased desertification, and etc.

These problems are mainly aggravated the water resources by anthropogenic impacts. According to the agreement of February 18, 1992 between the countries in the region it is agreed *"not to allow committing, in their territories, of actions affecting the interests of other Parties and capable of harming them, leading to a change in agreed quantities of water discharges and contamination of water sources"*.

We are concerned with some countries' intention to implement the construction of hydro-power facilities with massive dams in the upper of the rivers.

In his speech at UN General Assembly on Millennium Development Goals in New York in 2010, H.E. Mr. Islam Karimov, the President of Republic of Uzbekistan noted that *"any decrease in the watercourse of Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers means a radical disturbance of the existing fragile environmental balance in the entire region. And under these*

international audit companies. Guarantees should be given to ensure that the construction of facilities will not have irreversible environmental impacts and will not disturb the current balance of the use of the water resources by all states located along the course of rivers".

In their joint statement adopted within the International Fund of Aral Sea Saving (ISAF) on 28th of April, 2009, the Heads of Central Asian states re-confirmed their *"interest in use of water resources and protection of environment in the region taking into account the interests of all states"*.

3. In order to achieve sustainable development, the following priorities should be set in the field of water resource management: (a) access to drinking water supply and affordable sanitation; (b) water for food production; and (c) water for ecosystem and biodiversity preservation according to Millennium Development Goals and recognized at Rio+20.

Excellencies,

The presidency in the International Fund of Aral Sea Saving (IFAS), where all 5 countries are members, for the next term goes to Uzbekistan. We are going to take important measures to raise Fund's capacity to a higher level. Uzbekistan's efforts will be directed at specific projects and programs to reduce the negative consequences of the Aral Sea crisis, the recovery of flora and fauna, improved access to drinking water and sanitation, creation of adequate socio-economic conditions for the sustenance of the population, especially in the Aral Sea area, which heavily affected by the disaster. To achieve these objectives it is necessary to unite the efforts of all countries in the region and the international community.

It is time for all countries to move from words to specific, actual actions and consolidation of efforts of the international community towards ensuring water security and solving environmental problems for the benefit of all the people of the world.

Your Excellency Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand,

Once again, let me express my feelings of gratitude to you and the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for hosting this Summit and I hope that the results will be an urge and solid basis to ensure water security.

Thank you.