

Statement

by

H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan

at

the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit “Water Security and Water-related Disaster Challenges: Leadership and Commitment”

May 19, 2013, Bangkok, Thailand

Your Excellency Ms. Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand,

Distinguished Mr. Yoshiro Mori, President of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum,

Distinguished participants to the Summit,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to extend my appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand for the invitation, cordial reception and excellent organization of the work of the 2nd Asia-Pacific Water Summit.

Similar to the 1-st Water Summit that was held in December 2007 in the wonderful Japanese city of Beppu, today’s meeting is aimed at achieving one of the top priority goals of modern times, namely, ensuring water security. There is no doubt that special focus on the issue of water-related natural disasters, in combination with enhanced leadership and commitments, will contribute to the achievement of water security and to addressing other numerous water-related issues.

Today the international community is searching for new ways of achieving sustainable development. The *Rio+20* Conference laid down the foundation for the development and coordination of sustainable development goals, and the intergovernmental process of their discussion is currently in full swing.

Special attention in this process is given to the achievement of goals on water-related issues because the international community has become aware that the achievement of other development goals also depends on the availability of water resources, their quality and their integrated management.

Distinguished Participants to the Summit,

It is obvious that different countries and regions of the world have different approaches to water security, which are determined by nature, climate, socio-economic, political and other conditions.

I would like to cite as an example Central Asia, where the solution of the water security problem is related to the following issues:

- 1) Uneven distribution of water resources in the countries of the region.
- 2) Expected reduction of water resources for the mid- and long-term perspectives as a result of impact of climate change.
- 3) Increase in water consumption as a result of the population growth and development of economy.
- 4) Increase in frequency of water-related natural disasters and on-going degradation of the Aral Sea.
- 5) Insufficient cooperation of the countries of the region on water-energy issues.

Over 80 % of the water resources in the region originate on the territory of the two upstream countries, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, while 85 % of this amount are used by the downstream countries, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. And the interests of the upstream and downstream countries during the same seasons do not always coincide, which give rise to certain disagreements.

The situation is aggravated by the impact of climate change that already caused a considerable degradation of snowcaps and glaciers in the region, and also by a forecasted reduction of river discharge in the mid- and long-term perspectives. Due to today's rate of the population growth in the region, which is among the highest in the world (1.5 -2.5%), and rapid development of economy, the ever increasing amount of water resources is required to meet the existing needs.

Water-related natural disasters, which annually cause damage worth of hundreds of millions US dollars, make the current situation more complicated.

In the last three years the damage caused by natural disasters only in Tajikistan was estimated at the amount exceeding 700 million US dollars. As for the Aral Sea degradation, the scale of this ecological disaster has been known for a long time but, regrettably, it is still early to speak about any improvement of the situation.

It is obvious that development of mutually advantageous regional cooperation could become a key mechanism for solution of the above problems. Regrettably, it is hard to call the current relations among the Central Asian states as trustworthy and cooperative. If the countries of the region could establish mutually advantageous and constructive relations, this could by many times reduce all kinds of risks and would benefit the achievement of water security. The region has sufficient resources to ensure food, energy and water security and simultaneously preserve and improve environmental sustainability. However, because of the lack of sufficient cooperation, the countries of the region have been experiencing water-related difficulties of various degree.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

More than once have I declared, and would like to avail myself of this opportunity to declare once again, that Tajikistan is committed to the solution of the above mentioned problems, and is willing to jointly use the water resources of the country with all neighboring countries and other parties concerned.

The enormous water and hydro energy resources of Tajikistan, if effectively developed, could bring huge socio-economic and ecological benefits to all countries of the region. The hydropower potential of our country is estimated at 527 billion kWh per year, and currently only 3 to 4 percent of it are being used. Further rational use of this potential would make it possible to ensure adequate seasonal and multiannual regulation of water resources, which is fundamental for achieving water security under the ever increasing impact of climate change and other regional challenges. This also will allow to generate inexpensive and ecologically sound electricity, to reduce the risk of floods and mitigate the effect of droughts and shallow water periods, to decrease carbon dioxide emissions and facilitate improvement of the climate in the region.

All the above added together will lay down a solid foundation for achieving water security in the region and will strengthen the interstate cooperation, which is so important for maintaining peace and stability in Central Asia.

Distinguished Participants to the Summit,

While addressing the global water problems in the period prior to the year 2015, the international community, is guided not only by the Millennium Development Goals, but also by the goals and objectives set up by the International Decade of Action “*Water for Life*”, 2005-2015, and Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 with regard to reduction of risks of water-related natural disasters.

We are confident that while developing the Sustainable development goals the international community will take into consideration the multifunctional and multisectoral role of water.

The other internationally agreed water-related goals that have been adopted by the international community in recent decades should also be taken into account.

I believe that in the process of the implementation of these goals we all were able not only to put into practice specific projects and programs related to addressing water-related problems faced by our countries, but also to comprehensively identify at the local, regional and global levels, all water-related challenges and problems and further ways and mechanisms of their solution.

In this regard, as the initiator of the most important UNGA water resolutions, such as the *International Year of Fresh Water, 2003*, the *International Decade of Action “Water for Life”, 2005-2015*, and the *International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013*, Tajikistan believes that the time has come to develop a “Global Water Vision”. A “Global Water Vision” should include not only the internationally agreed strategic goals in the field of water resources, but also practical ways and approaches to the implementation of the goals on water supply, management of water resources and water security. In addition, a “Global Water Vision” should also be in accord with other strategies and modern approaches towards addressing the global problems and challenges of 21 century, in particular, with the concept of “green economy” and sustainable development goals.

Distinguished Participants to the Summit,

In conclusion, I would like to once again draw your attention to the development of water cooperation as a key component for ensuring water security.

As you might be aware, by the initiative of Tajikistan, the General Assembly proclaimed the year 2013 as the International Year of Water Cooperation. This Year, which calls on for cooperation in the field of water resources, provides a unique opportunity for coordination of our efforts and actions aimed at the development of a dialogue and mutual understanding, at further strengthening of partnership and cooperation at all levels and among all parties concerned, for the purpose of addressing modern water issues.

This year on August 20-21 in the city of Dushanbe there will be held the International High-level Conference on Water Cooperation, which provides the opportunity to demonstrate the efforts that the countries undertake in the water sphere, and exchange best practices of successful cooperation and partnership in addressing the water issues, and in search for the answers as how to meet the water-related challenges. The aim of the Conference is to identify specific actions and mechanisms for effective realization of the recommendations developed on the basis of the outcomes of various meetings, within the framework of the International Year of Water Cooperation, including the outcome of this Summit.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity and invite all of you to take an active part in the Dushanbe Conference and to make your own contribution to the achievement of its goals and objectives.

Thank you for attention.