



SOUTH-SOUTH NEWS

PREPCOM CONFERENCE

**“TOWARDS THE UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20): WATER COOPERATION ISSUES”**

19-20 OCTOBER, 2011

DUSHANBE, TAJIKISTAN

BACKGROUND

History shows direct links between economic development and the development of water resources. There are countless examples of how water has contributed to economic development and how development has in turn demanded increased harnessing of water. Coupled with the need for water to sustain our planet's fragile ecosystems, our water requirements to meet both our fundamental needs and our collective pursuit of higher living standards make water unique among our planet's natural resources.

Population growth, urbanization, economic growth, technological change and changing consumption patterns are recognized as the main factors influencing shifts in water use. Climate change brings in an additional stressor – on water as well as on these factors. Predicting the likely combined impact of these forces is daunting however, especially as the world's population is projected to grow from 6 billion to 9 billion between 2000 and 2050, with demand for food and other goods increasing significantly. There is still substantial uncertainty about the scale of future demands.

Competition for water already exists at all levels and is forecast to heighten in most countries along with mounting water demand.

In 2030, 47% of the world's population will be living in areas of high water stress. Yet water management around the world remains deficient in terms of performance, efficiency and equity, while implementation of environmental safeguards and measures to improve water use efficiency and to mitigate pollution are falling short in most sectors. Many regions, and particularly poorer communities, are already vulnerable to floods, droughts and similar water-related disasters that can destroy lives, assets and incomes. Access to basic water services for drinking, sanitation, and food and energy production remains insufficient across developing regions – with some estimates suggesting that more than 5 billion people (67% of the world population) may still be without access to adequate sanitation in 2030.

A multilevel, inclusive approach

Water resources management issues must be addressed at the local, national and, as appropriate, regional and international levels. All stakeholders, including those in government, international organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia, should be engaged, taking into account social, economic and environmental factors and paying special attention to the livelihoods of the poor and most vulnerable people.

Water management choices must also be consistent with other government policies. Decisions should emerge from informed consultation and negotiation, taking into account basin interconnectedness and relationships among different land and water resources, and weighing the costs and benefits of all options.

There are many challenges to overcome. Action is needed to improve water resources planning, evaluate availability and needs within watersheds, reallocate or expand existing storage facilities where necessary, emphasize the importance of managing water demand, develop a better balance between equity and efficiency in water use, and overcome inadequate

legislative and institutional frameworks and the rising financial burdens of ageing infrastructure.

Creating a new dialogue

Mobilizing political will and commitment to address water issues worldwide remains crucial. Equally important is forward thinking and a willingness to consider innovative ways to approach local, regional and international cooperation.

Sectoral conflicts often hamper cooperation among groups with different water-use priorities (water for domestic uses, hydropower, irrigation, industry, recreation and so on). These conflicts also affect ecosystems, whose sustainability depends on environmental flows. When a river or aquifer crosses a political boundary and there is competition among sectors or countries, these problems become more complex and can lead to conflicts.

Water is becoming an international issue not only through transboundary water resources, however, but also through the ramifications of trade and international business holdings. Production and consumption choices in all countries have water footprints, which, through the medium of virtual water, affect the use of water everywhere. A country can import or export water scarcity, pollution and degradation through its trade policies.

Open discussion of the issues shaping our water resources today and strong citizen participation in decision-making (which is key to fostering good governance and a climate of accountability and transparency) can stimulate cooperative action and political commitment. Promoting a culture of consultation and increasing consultative and participation capacities will help to deliver benefits in all areas, including collaborative water management.

The challenge is to build a new dialogue on the role of water management in sustainable development. Countries should work together to identify socioeconomic priorities and to invest in and use water to power the engines of growth.

Water cooperation

History has often shown that the vital nature of freshwater is a powerful incentive for cooperation and dialogue, compelling stakeholders to reconcile even the most divergent views. Water more often unites than divides people and societies.

Riparian countries should strengthen dialogue and cooperation and take measures for the mutually beneficial and rational use of transboundary water resources on the basis of recognized norms, principles and legislation. Specific and tangible steps could be taken by riparian countries, including through cooperation, in accordance with existing and future agreements. It is possible for parties with divergent interests to benefit from such resources by means of specific arrangements tailored to a given basin's characteristics.

Water issues involve many stakeholders with conflicting and competing needs and cross multiple physical, political and jurisdictional boundaries. Transboundary water cooperation needs to be guided by regional and international agreements and should be fostered among countries, including within existing mechanisms for water cooperation.

2013 – INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF WATER COOPERATION

The year 2013 in accordance with the General Assembly resolution 65/154 is declared as the International Year of Water Cooperation.

In this resolution the UN General Assembly *invites* the Secretary-General, in cooperation with UN-Water, and mindful of the provisions of the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67, to take appropriate steps to organize the activities of the Year and to develop necessary proposals on activities at all levels to support Member States in the implementation of the Year. Besides, the UNGA *encourages* all Member States, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the Year to promote actions at all levels, including through international cooperation, as appropriate, aimed at the achievement of the internationally agreed water-related goals contained in Agenda 21 the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation as well as to increase awareness of their importance.

To take advantage of the Year of Water Cooperation at the adequate level Tajikistan as the initiator of the resolution is committed in cooperation with the UN institutions, particularly the UN-Water, and other partners and the UN Member States to implement a comprehensive plan of activities beginning from September 2011.

WATER COOPERATION ISSUES IN THE AGENDA OF THE UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The main focus of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development will be on the following issues:

- Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication;
- Institutional framework for sustainable development.

Water issues are the important part of the abovementioned themes of the Conference. At the High-Level Meeting on "Advancing of Sustainable Development" held in the framework of the General Debate of the 65th Session of the UNGA, as well as other high-level meetings the importance of water resources in achieving the MDGs was underlined. It was acknowledged that global climate change, financial and food crises, economic decline and reduction of resources had negative impact on Member States' efforts to achieve the MDGs on water and sanitation. Overcoming these difficulties and joint efforts of Member States in achieving the internationally agreed goals on water supply issues are primarily dependent on the level of cooperation between countries, different water users, economic sectors, etc.

Therefore, the thematic session on water cooperation in the framework of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development is not only timely but also essential for the Conference in order to ensure completeness of coverage of water issues. This high-level thematic session will provide an opportunity for discussion of important water issues among different water users within and between countries, existing problems and their solutions. Participants of the session would also identify specific objectives and future plans for the International Year of Water Cooperation, 2013.

Implementation of this component is important for the whole range of activities to be rendered during the International Year of Water Cooperation since such a possibility will be unique for the Member States to discuss water related issues at high level before 2013.

FUTURE PLANS AND MECHANISMES FOR ORGANIZATION OF THE THEMATIC SESSION WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20)

In order to include the thematic session on water cooperation in the program of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) it is necessary to schedule the following events:

1. To organize a prepcom conference "Towards the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20): Water Cooperation Issues";
2. To draft a concept note on the thematic session on water cooperation of the Conference Rio+20;
3. To request the Secretariat and the Preparatory Group of the Conference Rio+20 to include the thematic session on water cooperation in the program of the Conference;
4. To organize a group of partners from the UN Member States (representing different regions) and the UN institutions for preparation and organization of this meeting at the relevant level.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PREPCOM CONFERENCE ON "TOWARDS THE UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20): WATER COOPERATION ISSUES"

The Prepcom conference will be organized by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in cooperation with UN-Water, UNDP Office in Dushanbe and the South-South News.

The Prepcom conference will take place on 19-20 October 2011 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. About 50 participants will be invited to the Dushanbe conference from the six regions of the world, as well as from the secretariats of intergovernmental organizations of transboundary river basins, UN institutions, UN-Water, a number of countries that play an active role in promoting and addressing water issues in the UN agenda.

The objective of the Dushanbe conference is to discuss current issues and challenges in water cooperation that will be later included in the concept note and the programme of the thematic session on water cooperation in the framework of the Conference Rio+20. The Outcome of the Dushanbe conference, as well as the application on behalf of the Government of Tajikistan will be submitted to the Secretariat of the Conference Rio+20 before 1 November 2011.

In case of inclusion of the thematic session on water cooperation in the programme of the Conference Rio+20, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Tajikistan to the United Nations will hold consultative meetings at the UN headquarters in order to consider the programme of the thematic session, to discuss its draft outcome document and to establish a group of partners from the UN Member States (taking into account regional belongings) and the UN institutions to prepare and hold the thematic session at appropriate level.

THE MAIN GOALS OF THE PREPCOM CONFERENCE

- To discuss different aspects of strengthening cooperation and dialogue to resolve current water issues, towards achieving the MDGs and IADGs and their further inclusion to the program of the thematic session within the framework of the RIO+20 Conference;
- To demonstrate best practices in different regions of the world in water cooperation among water users at local and national levels, in improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and in promoting rational use of water resources for development and environmental protection;
- Preparation of concrete recommendation on effective approaches and mechanisms towards joint use of water resources in transboundary basins of rivers, aquifers and lakes, and the draft outcome document of the thematic session within the framework of the RIO+20 Conference;

EXPECTED OUTCOME

A summary of the prepcom conference will be prepared. This will include a draft concept note and program as well as a draft outcome document of the thematic session on water cooperation within the framework of the RIO+20 Conference and also key messages, proposals and remarks of the panellists and other participants. The summary will be distributed to all Permanent Missions to the UN, UN-Water and other interested and relevant organizations.

Date and Venue

19-20 October 2011, Conference Hall "Kokhi Vahdat", Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Participation

The main criteria for selection of speakers and participants will be their deep knowledge and experience on water cooperation issues. Privilege will be given to experienced water experts and scientists on water cooperation issues between the countries in transboundary river basins. UN member states and International organisations, as well as river basin organizations and committees may delegate their representatives to the Prepcom Conference.

Programme

**THE PREPCOM CONFERENCE “TOWARDS THE UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20): WATER COOPERATION ISSUES”
19-20 October 2011, Conference Hall “Kokhi Vahdat”, Dushanbe, Tajikistan**

19 October	
09:00am	Registration of participants
9:00- 9:45	Opening Welcome keynote of H.E. Akil Akilov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan Welcome keynote of H.E. Mr. Sha Zukang, UN Under Secretary General, Secretary General of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) <i>Opening remarks by:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- H.E. Mr. Rahmat Bobokalonov – Minister of Melioration and Water Resources of Tajikistan- Mr. , Representative of the UN-Water- H.E. Mr. Alexander Zuev, UN Resident Coordinator / UNDP Resident Representative- Mr. , – Representative of the UNESCO- H.E. Mr. Francis Lorenzo, President of South-South News
9:45-10:00	Coffee Brake
10:00-11:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plenary Discussion “National, regional and intergovernmental water cooperation issues: best practices in water cooperation among water users at local, national and regional levels, in improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and in promoting rational use of water resources for development and environmental protection; <i>Moderator: Mr. Olcay Ünver, Coordinator, United Nations World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP); Director, Programme Office for Global Water Assessment, Division of Water Sciences, UNESCO</i> <i>Speakers:</i> The participants from different regions and countries of the world
11:30-11:45	Coffee Brake
11:45-13:00	Continuation of the Plenary Discussion
13:00-15:00	Lunch
15:00-16:45	Interactive Discussion on the Draft Programm and Draft Outcome Document of the Thematic Session on water cooperation within the framework of the RIO+20 Conference

	<i>Moderator: Mr. Reza Ardakanian, Director, UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development (UNW-DPC)</i>
16:45-17:00	Coffee Brake
17:00- 18:30	Continuation of the Interactive Discussion
19:00	- Reception on behalf of the Minister of melioration and water resources of Tajikistan
20 October	
9:30-11:00	<p>Interactive Discussion on the Draft Programme and the Draft Outcome Document of the Thematic Session on water cooperation within the framework of the RIO+20 Conference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Moderators:</i> - Mr. Sulton Rahimov, First Deputy Minister of Melioration and Water Resources of Tajikistan, - Ms. Kenza Robinzon, Secretary of the UN-Water, UNDESA
11:00-11:15	Coffee Brake
11:15-13:00	Discussions, Q&A
13:00-15:00	Lunch
15:00-15:30	<p>Closing</p> <p><i>Closing remarks by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - H.E. Mr. Rahmat Bobokalonov – Minister of Melioration and Water Resources of Tajikistan - Mr. Representative of the UNDESA - Mr. Representative of the UN-Water