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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE  
THE INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR SAVING THE ARAL SEA

**REPORT OF THE DONORS' COORDINATION MEETING OF THE  
THIRD ARAL SEA BASIN PROGRAMME (ASBP-3)**

Almaty, Kazakhstan, 21 May 2010

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This report has been issued without official editing by the Environment, Housing and Land Management Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) secretariat.

## Summary

The meeting was an important step in the preparation of the Third Aral Sea Basin Program (ASBP-3). It offered an opportunity for an open and constructive dialogue between EC IFAS and several members of the donors' community, including the European Union, the World Bank, EDB, USAID, SDC, GTZ, France and others.

Participants reviewed the lessons learned during the implementation of the first two Programs. While they recognized the significant resources that IFAS member States devoted to improving the social and environmental situation in the Aral Sea basin, they noted that most of these projects were implemented outside of the ASBP framework. They agreed that ASBP-3 should be raised to a qualitatively new level and become more than a collection of a large number of projects, most of which had no assured funding. The Program should be built on a clear vision, have well-defined objectives and enjoy professional support by EC IFAS and regional organizations throughout its implementation period. Representatives of donors particularly stressed the need for a stable and uninterrupted support from EC IFAS throughout the period of ASBP-3 implementation. It was also emphasized that only projects with assured (at least partial) funding should be included in the final Program.

Several donors proposed to focus the Program on such new regional, and in fact global, challenges, as climate change adaptation. EC IFAS underlined that the successful implementation of ASBP-3 would contribute to the achievement of global development goals and important objectives of donors' strategies. This fact could be reflected in the Preamble of ASBP-3 by including reference to these documents.

National Representatives to EC IFAS informed participants of the work accomplished by the Working Group on Institutional and Legal Strengthening of IFAS and the Development of ASBP-3, including expert level discussions on the four main directions of the Program.

Representatives of donors paid tribute to the instrumental political role played by IFAS, among others the top-level mandate given by the Summit Meeting of April 2009 and the decisions of the IFAS Board on ASBP-3. They expressed readiness to continue working with EC IFAS on the elaboration of its strategy for ASBP-3. Donors called upon EC IFAS to ensure information exchange, monitoring, analysis and feedback, acting as the decision-support body of the IFAS Board throughout the implementation period of ASBP-3. EC IFAS recognized the need for full transparency through the preparation and implementation of ASBP-3: this would require the regular provision of relevant information by the governments of IFAS member countries, regional organizations and donors.

It was proposed to develop a new type of relationship between IFAS and the donors' community, including instruments for monitoring of program implementation and information exchange. The UNECE-GTZ Program on institutional and legal strengthening provides support to EC IFAS and its regional organizations giving EC IFAS the opportunity to provide effective and stable support of the ASBP-3, as required by donors.

Several donors provided information on programs and projects they wanted to place in the ASBP-3 framework. Others promised to provide this information in the future and urged EC IFAS to present to them agreed projects that meet established criteria as soon as feasible. EC IFAS in turn called upon donors to propose projects to be implemented in the ASBP-3 framework.

EC IFAS and donors agreed to work together intensively in preparing the Donors' Coordination Conference in the fall, including its tasks and objectives. EC IFAS planned to present the outline of ASBP-3 to the IFAS Board in July. It expressed strong hope that key donors that so far

remained outside of the process will join the preparation and implementation of ASBP-3, making it a key regional framework for effective donors' coordination – an important precondition of improved aid effectiveness.

## **Introduction**

1. Donors' Coordination Meeting for the Third Action Program to assist countries in the Aral Sea Basin (ASBP-3) was held in Almaty on May 21, 2010. The meeting was organized by the Executive Committee of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (EC IFAS) with the assistance of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) under the project "Regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources management in Central Asia", funded by the Government of Germany through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH.

### **1. Purpose and participants**

2. Donors' Coordination Meeting for the development of the ASBP-3 was convened pursuant to the Plan of Action to implement the joint statement of the Heads of States-founders of the IFAS made on April 28, 2009 in Almaty. The Plan of Action was approved on December 3, 2009 by the Board of the Fund. The joint statement has mandated the Executive Committee to develop, together with the Interstate Coordination Water Commission and Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development of IFAS, involving national experts and donors for subsequent consideration and approval by the founders of IFAS, the Action Program to assist countries in the Aral Sea Basin for the period of 2011-2015 (ASBP-3).

3. The meeting was attended by international organizations, international financial institutions, embassies, international and donor organizations, research institutions, as well as members of EC IFAS. The total number of meeting participants was 55 (see Annex 1).

### **2. Opening of the Meeting**

4. The meeting was opened by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of IFAS, Mr. S. Ibatullin who reminded the participants of the Joint Declaration of the Heads of the States-founders of IFAS made on 28 April 2009 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. He drew attention to the fact that ASBP-2 (2003-2010) enters its final phase. One of the objectives of EC IFAS was to support its successful completion. He noted that the results of evaluations by donor organizations, as well as the conclusions of a thorough internal review conducted by the EC IFAS demonstrate that the Programme has remained unfulfilled in many items. Nevertheless, the total combined amount of projects funding during the 7 years amounted to about U.S. \$ 2 billion, of which donor assistance amounted to less than 2%, other 98% were the contributions from the countries' national budgets. Given the existing problems and shortcomings in the implementation of this Program, the EC IFAS has set the goal to strengthen and raise the close cooperation with donor organizations in the development of the ASBP-3 to a new level. He briefed the participants on the work carried out by the EC IFAS from 2009. Mr. S. Ibatullin thanked the Technical Cooperation of Germany (GTZ), for the technical and financial assistance to EC IFAS, the European Commission - for the provision of experts for development of the ASBP-3 projects. He also noted with appreciation the close cooperation with the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

### 3. Statements

#### **First Session: Lessons learned from the development and implementation of ASBP-1 and ASBP-2**

##### **Lessons learned by the donor community**

5. The meeting participants heard a presentation, prepared jointly by **Simon Croxton (World Bank)** and **Hanspeter Maag (Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development)**. Alongside with the existing problems in the Aral Sea region and the current socio-economic status of the population, Simon Croxton noted the significant success associated with the accumulation of water in the northern part of the Aral Sea, and highlighted the following major factors that impeded the realization of the previous two programs: the emphasis on saving the Aral Sea without understanding what is technically feasible, and insufficient attention to the level of water consumption in the entire basin and the socio-economic development, lack of a clear vision of the functions of the EC IFAS with respect to the ASBP, lack of a clear vision and strategy within the ASBP, promotion of donor's own programs, and lack of transparency.

In order to ensure the successful development and implementation of programs in the future, in particular the ASBP-3, he stressed the need to develop a clearly-defined goal for development of the entire basin, the need to develop goals and objectives of the ASBP-3, and the need to determine the place and role of IFAS. He noted that in addition to the four main directions of ASBP-3, the donors need to address the following priorities in order to ensure equal conditions for the development of Aral Sea Basin countries: equitable socio-economic development; secure sources of subsistence; social harmony, environmental stability in Central Asia as a whole and in Aral Sea basin in particular by improving the efficiency of water resource management; search for effective solutions to the problems of water management, improving the environment and contributing to the socio-economic development of the Aral Sea Basin in the light of climate change and the four directions of the ASBP-3.

He emphasized the necessity to clearly define the role of EC IFAS. As part of its mandate as a coordinating body, EC IFAS must act as a "think tank", issuing guidelines on the priority areas of development for the most thought-out solutions on water resources management in the context of climate change. He stressed that the draft programs must be consistent with each other and must be supported by decision-support model that would allow identifying the existing gaps. Projects should be selected by determining their priority. It is also necessary to monitor their implementation.

The presenter has noted that EC IFAS must develop and implement a decision-support model with the participation of donors, in partnership with organizations within and outside the region, and submit a range of possible solutions for final decision to the Deputy Prime Ministers of the countries.

The need for feedback through the appropriate national authorities was highlighted. It was stressed that all projects brought to the approval must have guaranteed and adequate funding (from the national governments and/or donors). Successful implementation of projects should be supported by a continuous and stable operation of EC IFAS.

6. **Marton Krasznai (UNECE)** in his address informed the participants about the support provided by UNECE to EC IFAS in a three-year program on institutional and legal strengthening of IFAS with a budget of \$ 2 million, financed by the Government of Germany through GTZ. This project activity provides support for the development of the ASBP-3, and, in turn, echoes the fourth component of ASBP-3. Modernized and strengthened institutional framework of IFAS, including the funding system, should be supported by the countries. He pointed out some achievements of EC IFAS in this process: a comprehensive study of the institutional and legal framework, two working group meetings of national and regional experts. He noted that successful ASBP-3 may provide a mechanism for the gradual strengthening of political and other support of IFAS and its regional organizations by participating countries. ASBP-3 also provides an opportunity to develop a

comprehensive approach to the institutional and legal strengthening: the development of institutions that are able to promote integrated water resources management should be achieved in a coordinated manner at national, basin and regional levels. Mr. Krasznai stressed the need to reform the IFAS budgetary and financial system, as one of the points, which require strengthening, and noted in particular different financial capacities of states, which are an obstacle for the rotation of organizations under the auspices of IFAS according to existing institutional arrangements. He also pointed out that even if the rotation system would be working, this would be an extremely expensive and inefficient method of ensuring the equal participation of all Member States in the work of regional organizations. However, he stressed that in principle the IFAS member states have resources to support an improved system of IFAS and its organizations.

7. **Benjamin Mohr (GTZ)** on behalf of Rainer Görtz (Director of GTZ in Kazakhstan) informed the participants about the programs of GTZ – “Transboundary water resources management in Central Asia” and “Enhancing the economic and environmental welfare in the Aral Sea Region (EEWA)”. He stressed that the strategic partnership with Central Asia is a priority for the Government of Germany. The “Transboundary Water Resources Management” Program is a part of the Berlin water process, initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany in 2008. “The Berlin Process” is a component of the EU’s Strategy of new partnership with the countries of Central Asia, initiated during the presidency of Germany in the European Union in June 2007. The “Transboundary Water Resources Management” Program is implemented by GTZ in close collaboration with national partners, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and IFAS. The aim of the Program, designed for 2009-2011, is to support the Central Asian states in the joint development of approaches for sustainable management of water resources in the region and in implementation of selected activities. The program consists of three components: the first component aims at increasing the capacity of regional organizations responsible for water management, in particular, the IFAS (through EC IFAS). The second component aims at improving institutional capacity for water resources management of river basins of selected transboundary rivers. The third component aims to improve the integrated water resources management at the appropriate local/national level through national pilot projects and development of cross-sector capacity.

**The Third Aral Sea Basin Program as integral part of international development efforts:  
IFAS as a factor of regional cooperation.**

**The role of ASBP-3 within development efforts in Central Asia as seen by the donors’  
community.**

8. Senior Political Advisor of the **UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia, Mr. Fedor Klimtchouk**, noted that one of the tasks of UNRCCA is to assist and support the Central Asian countries to counter the existing threats and new challenges through the development of regional cooperation. He presented the results of UN Secretary-General visit to Central Asia, who noted the importance of the IFAS and the need to fully support it. The UN Secretary-General personally acquainted himself with the consequences of the Aral Sea tragedy and thoroughly discussed the water and energy issues with the leaders of all states of the Aral region. Fedor Klimtchouk also added that the April Summit of Heads of States of Central Asian countries decided to strengthen the institutional structure and legal framework of IFAS. When considering the options and forms to improve the organization, the countries have expressed general agreement on the feasibility of an evolutionary approach to implementing the change. Substantial assistance in this work is already provided by GTZ and the UNECE. The UN structures, including UNRCCA, also see their aim in providing full support to the successful implementation of these tasks, as well as in assisting the development of comprehensive and mutually acceptable mechanisms for water management, taking into account the interests of all states in the region. UNRCCA was guided by these objectives when it signed the Memorandum of cooperation and collaboration with IFAS on 3

March 2010. UNRCCA developed a road map of cooperation with IFAS for the period of 2010-2011, which implies the exchange of information and joint activities. This document will be handed over to EC IFAS for consideration and approval. In July, UNRCCA together with EC IFAS and international partners is planning to hold a meeting of ministers of energy, water resources, as well as representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian states, in support of EC IFAS at the final stage of ASBP-3 development. It is planned that this event will be attended by the representatives of international and regional organizations, donor community and Afghanistan, which shows the growing interest of this country in the joint discussion of water and energy issues with Central Asian States. At the end of his speech, he praised the work done by EC IFAS to implement the assignments of Heads of States and added that UNRCCA is ready to provide its full support to EC IFAS in the framework of its political mandate.

9. **Delphine Marie (European Commission, EC)** had stressed that the ASBP-3 Program is only a part of a comprehensive process and noted the role of EC IFAS, which serves as a vector directed at improving cooperation in the management of natural resources, including water resources. She noted the need to develop better mechanisms for interaction and the role of EC IFAS, which allows cooperating and harmonizing the entire process. She stressed the importance of developing tools for monitoring and information exchange. She had expressed readiness to provide further support to EC IFAS.

10. **Andrei Barannik (USAID)**, in his address had outlined the activities of USAID in the region (e.g. water and energy resources of the region, issues with transboundary management of these resources, etc). He informed the meeting about the proposed work of USAID in the field of environment, water resources and other relevant sectors. USAID will provide further support in an attempt to improve the efficient use of water resources in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and in addressing the food security issues in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In the water sector, the USAID will support the EC IFAS in two areas of research:

- (1) Comprehensive analysis of the economic impact of the optimized use of water and energy resources in the basins of Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers;
- (2) Adaptation of vulnerable energy infrastructure to climate change: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. USAID allocates about \$ 1 million to these studies. The speaker noted that the findings will contribute to the goals and objectives of the EC IFAS and ASBP-3, and to the identification of national positions with regard to water and energy issues and the development, implementation and conclusion of relevant regional agreements. USAID will continue to develop partnerships for sustainable low-carbon development. USAID assistance is also planned for a number of other programs, such as Ustyurt Plateau Landscape Programme, Integrated Pest Management (CRSP) and others.

11. **Saghit Ibatullin** delivered to the participants a presentation on key developments and work done by EC IFAS in the period from April 2009 to the present day. He briefly described the consultative meeting with donors on November 17, 2009 and a working meeting with donors on 17 March 2010. He noted that during the year 2009 and five months of 2010, the EC IFAS had organized and participated in over 80 events (meetings and discussions on different levels, bilateral and multilateral consultations, including national consultations in all Central Asian countries). He provided information about the Action Plan approved by IFAS Board on December 3, 2009, providing for the development of the ASBP-3 and implementation of the project “Regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources management”. Participants of the meeting were also informed about the “Framework Document for the development of the ASBP-3”, developed by the EC IFAS, the four main directions of the program, objectives, tasks of ASBP-3, criteria for project selection and the importance of monitoring project implementation under the program. EC IFAS plans to place a list of current projects and projects planned for inclusion into the ASBP-3 at the website of the Executive Committee. He reminded the participants that during the consultation with donors on 17

November 2009, donors have promised to provide EC IFAS the names of contact persons (focal points) for their assistance in the selection of projects originating from the countries. The first draft of ASBP-3 program must be submitted to the IFAS Board in late June - early July 2010. In late October - early November 2010, an international donors' conference is planned to be held. A so-called "album" of projects for the ASBP-3 will be prepared for this event. Saghit Ibatullin urged the donor community to actively participate in this program and noted the importance of transparency in the activities of the donors.

12. **Michael Trainor (USAID)** drew attention to the paragraph 5 of the Joint Declaration of the Heads of States - founders of IFAS dated 28 April 2009, where "The Parties reaffirm their interest in finding a mutually acceptable mechanism for the integrated management of water resources and environmental protection in Central Asia taking into account the interests of all states of the region". He noted that this is the most important and quite an ambitious task before the countries of the region and the donor community, so all the efforts and work should be specifically aimed at this task.

13. **Alexander Peytchev (OSCE)** informed the participants that on May 17-18, 2010, the OSCE Centre in cooperation with the Executive Directorate of IFAS in Kazakhstan held a round table in Kyzylorda on "Contemporary issues of water and environmental security of Kazakhstan's Aral Sea". The main issue was to attract the international community to the environmental awareness raising among the population about the tragedy of the Aral region. OSCE Centre is implementing an extra-budgetary project in the Kazakhstan's part of the Aral Sea region and Syr Darya river under IWRM, which aims to support the water sector, assist the population in overcoming the effects of environmental tragedy and other issues. This project will soon be open to the donor organizations, members of the OSCE. He thanked the Chairman of EC IFAS for activities of the Fund and underlined that, in turn, the OSCE supports the initiatives of EC IFAS and is ready to provide support under the memorandum of understanding signed between the Executive Directorate of IFAS in Kazakhstan and the OSCE Centre in Astana.

14. **Michael Thurman (UNDP)**, in his speech informed the meeting that UNDP has received confirmation of funding for a regional project "Enhancing Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Capacities in Central Asia". The project is designed for 2010-2014 and UNDP plans to include this project into the ASBP-3 program.

15. **Patrick Vaillant (French Embassy in Kazakhstan)** stated that France supports the initiatives of EC IFAS, aimed at strengthening cooperation in Central Asia in terms of integrated water resources management, and notes the role of EC IFAS in their coordination. He informed the participants that in April 2010, France had approved the funding of the project by the French GEF. This project aims at strengthening the capacity of Information Administration for the management of water resources. The project will be entrusted to the International Office for Water. France suggests that components of the project in Central Asia may be included in the ASBP-3.

## **Second Session: The development of the Third Aral Sea Basin Programme in light of the Joint Statement of the Heads of State - Founders of IFAS from 28 April 2009**

### **Outcomes of the second Working Group on the Strengthening of Institutional and Legal Frameworks of IFAS and the Development of ASBP-3: statements by the representatives of EC IFAS responsible for the four main directions of the Programme, and the EU project experts**

16. **Andrei Demydenko (expert of the EU project)** made a presentation on development of goals and targets for the ASBP. He noted the importance of defining clear indicators and vision.

17. **Khayrullo Ibodzoda** (co-leader of the first direction of ASBP-3, the “Integrated use of water resources with consideration of the interests of all states in the region”) informed the meeting about the second meeting of the Working Group on strengthening the institutional structure and legal framework of IFAS and development of the ASBP-3. During the discussion, participants identified key challenges in this direction, possible targets and explained the need to incorporate indicators of project implementation in this direction into the project proposals.

18. **Mavlon Kazakov** (leader of the second direction of ASBP-3, the “Environmental” one) described the results of the second meeting of the Working Group. Participants discussed the issues with project implementation and benchmarks (indicators) for ASBP-3, as well as organizational issues.

19. **Marat Narbayev** (leader of the third direction of ASBP-3, the “Socio-economic” one) introduced the scheme of work (including the schedule) for the development of the ASBP-3 and stages of development of the socio-economic direction of ASBP-3. The results of the second Working Group meeting in April 2010 identified the major issues related to the social and economic development in the Aral Sea basin, as well as have set the targets for this direction.

20. **Kurbangeldy Ballyev** (leader of the fourth direction of the ASBP-3 “Strengthening institutional and legal frameworks”) stressed that this direction was not present in two previous ASBP programs and therefore, its inclusion as a separate direction in ASBP-3 is of particular importance. During discussion of this direction, short-, medium- and long-term prospects to address the specified tasks have been developed.

21. **Murat Bekniyazov** (coordinator of the working groups developing the ASBP-3) summed up the session and informed the participants about project proposals that the EC IFAS is receiving. To date, the number of project proposals that meet the requirements of the Framework Document is as follows: Kazakhstan - 13, Kyrgyz Republic - 27, Tajikistan - 14, Turkmenistan - 21, and the Republic of Uzbekistan - 25. This is not the final number of project proposals, they are still being received.

## 22. Questions and answers

In response to the question from **Alena Sialchonak (UNICEF)** regarding the deadline for submission of project proposals for the ASBP-3 **Saghit Ibatullin** explained that the deadline was identified during the Second Meeting of the Working Group to be May 20, 2010. It was pointed out that many projects have been rejected due to their non-compliance with the requirements of the Framework Document for the development of ASBP-3. What is important is not the number of projects, but the quality and support from the Central Asian countries. The question remains open for the regional projects (projects that are supported by two or more countries).

**Michael Trainor (USAID)** asked a question concerning the formulation of ASBP-3 directions and operational distribution of problems: (1) Development of a mutually acceptable mechanism for the management of water resources and (2) Hydropower potential of the region.

**Khayrullo Ibodzoda** (co-leader of the first direction of ASBP-3 “Integrated use of water resources with consideration of interests of all states in the region”) commented that the issue of the hydropower potential of the region is covered by the first direction of ASBP-3. During the Second Meeting of the Working Group in April 2010, the countries have not reached a consensus on this issue.

23. **Haruko Okusu (UNEP)** has expressed the readiness of UNEP to provide technical support to the development of the ASBP-3.

24. Executive Director of **CAREC, Talaibek Makeev**, informed the meeting participants about the activities carried out with the assistance of CAREC, namely the Asia-Pacific Conference on Environment and Development in September 2010 and the “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference in autumn 2011. He noted that the Kazakh government had launched an initiative called the “Green Bridge” – as a bridge between Europe and Asia, particularly important in two areas: (1) the work on mitigating the climate change, where Kazakhstan is involved and supports low-carbon development, (2) investments in ecosystem services taking into account the interests of transboundary (particularly water) ecosystems for Central Asia. He spoke about a number of CAREC projects, including payment for ecosystem services, etc.

### **Third Session: Information and comments from donors**

25. Chairman of the third session of the meeting, **Alfred Diebold (Technical Director, EC IFAS)**, suggested the donor and international organizations to express their expectations with regard to the ASBP-3, to provide specific information on current and planned projects in areas covered by the ASBP-3 and to provide comments on the priorities and criteria to support the proposals for regional and national projects.

26. **Bo Libert (UNECE)** said that the activities of the UNECE are based on the five regional conventions, four of which are transboundary in nature, and particularly stressed the role of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes for Central Asian region. He stressed that UNECE is not a donor organization, but pays great attention to the development of regional cooperation in Central Asia with a focus on institutional and legal strengthening of regional cooperation. The UNECE welcomes the fact that this issue is reflected in the fourth component of the ASBP-3 and can build on the ongoing work in this direction, which is supported with funding until the end of 2011. The UNECE plans to include its current projects into the fourth direction of the ASBP-3, to cover the following aspects:

- (1) Legal and institutional strengthening of regional organizations;
- (2) Water quality – creation of a regional platform for action in this area;
- (3) Safety of dams and hydraulic infrastructure;
- (4) Introduction of IWRM through national policy dialogues.

In conclusion, Bo Libert noted that the UNECE is working to promote institutional strengthening and development of ASBP-3 in anticipation of political action and commitment from the countries of the region. Alfred Diebold added that the importance of aid is not only measured in monetary investment, but also by the degree of ongoing action.

At the request of A. Diebold, Bo Libert provided more specific information about planned projects to be included in the ASBP-3: it is planned to allocate about \$ 400,000 for the Dam Safety, \$ 70,000 – for the Water Quality, Euro 300,000-400,000 for IWRM projects (it is hard to evaluate the funding for the latter component, because the work is carried out in different countries of Central Asia). \$ 2 million is allocated and will be used until 2011 for the legal and institutional strengthening.

**Marton Krasznai (UNECE)** stated that capacity-building projects in Central Asia to introduce the green technologies are also considered for possible inclusion into the ASBP-3.

27. In order to clarify what projects of the ASBP 1 and 2 may be included into the ASBP-3, **Alfred Diebold** addressed the European Commission’s expert with the question on the Past ASBP Experience Assessment Project. **Andrei Demydenko** (European Commission Project Expert)

delivered to the participants a presentation on the analysis of Past ASBP Assessment: “Assessment of the ASBP 1 and 2 - a tool to support the ASBP-3”. To this end, there was a proposal to have an interactive table tool. All available information on the projects has been collected from 5 sources (IFAS reports on ASBP-1, ASBP-2, information from various donors, from the Internet, from private databases) and segregated by 3 types of projects, mentioning their title, timing, goals, target indicators, actions, performance indicators or expected results, costs, countries where the project was held, funding sources, donor organizations, type of financing. On 18 May, there were 264 projects in the table. It was suggested to use this tool as an instrument for ASBP-3 project information. It was suggested to send the proposed tool for comments to donor and international organizations, and for further improvement inside EC IFAS.

**Alfred Diebold** had noted the importance of having a transparent mechanism for submission of ASBP-3 project.

28. **Vladimir Tsirkunov (World Bank)** presented a Regional Programme for the Advancement of hydrometeorological and climatic services for inclusion into the ASBP-3. Presentation of this project was made to draw attention to unresolved issues.

This regional initiative is supported by all countries of IFAS, some donors have also expressed support for this initiative and it is planned that it will become an integral part of the ASBP-3. The main goal is to address the existing problems in work of the National Hydrometeorological Services of countries, caused by the poor condition of Hydrometeorological organizations.

To date, the countries are ready to provide technical assistance in the framework of the signed Memorandum of Understanding between the NHMSs. To this end, a Working Group, where the World Bank acts as a coordinator, was created. The Regional Center of Hydrology under EC IFAS will be the focal point. The program represents a set of national and regional activities identified as urgent and high priority.

V. Tsirkunov also presented the history of development of the Program: listed the prerequisites, fundamentals, including the Program for risk reduction in emergency conditions in the EECCA countries, the CAC Disaster Risk Management Initiative, the CA Regional Energy-Water Development Framework. Analytical base includes a study performed by the Global Fund for disaster risk reduction and mitigation/World Bank GFDRR/WB (2008-2009) in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the WMO/ISDR in the Central Asia region. The expected results and the specific technical parameters were presented. Key elements include a turn of NHMSs towards the services and sectors of the economy, work in continuous contact with the users, provision of climatic services. V. Tsirkunov introduced the present situation with respect to the financing of the Programme: \$ 1.4 million is received to improve the NHMS of Kyrgyzstan, and \$ 3-4 million is expected from the Global Fund for disaster risk reduction and mitigation; the hydromet of Tajikistan expects \$ 6-7 million under a Pilot Program for adaptation to climate change. Further action plan includes the preparation of funding from the International Development Association, the major part will be in the form of grants, and a part will be in form of loans (low interest), \$ 5-10 million is expected potentially. V. Tsirkunov noted that the total program cost is estimated at \$ 40 million, so there is a need to integrate donor funding. There is a possibility to receive \$ 100,000 per each country from the Finnish side, as well as to get assistance through the Hydrometeorological Institute of the country in form of training the staff of NMHSs.

Risks and concerns include the possible lack of financial resources, sustainability of investments, since it is required to increase the national budget allocations for NHMSs to optimize the performance of modernized NMHSs (This part represents the greatest risk); as to the issues of interaction, a high degree of cooperation between the NHMSs with little potential for cooperation at

regional and national levels was noted. Nevertheless, despite the risks, there is a high chance of implementing this initiative.

29. **Simon Croxton (World Bank)** said that currently there is the concept of a regional program for hydropower resources, it is planned to implement the “Energy - climate change” project in collaboration with USAID. Some activities on climate change are currently under way in Uzbekistan. He pointed out four aspects that may be entered into the ASBP-3: energy production; energy transfer; water efficiency; improvement of the dialogue between water organizations. During the first few years, these activities provide for analytical work, including modeling of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers in cooperation with ICWC. He stressed the important role of IFAS as a coordinator for these issues.

30. **Andrei Barannik (USAID)** noted that IFAS is a unique regional organization. There was a suggestion that the IFAS would review and reiterate its goals, objectives and principles, which would carry a clear message for the member-countries in formulating their policies on national and regional levels in order to avoid repetitions. He also noted the possibility of Afghanistan's accession to these processes. He pointed to the need to assist the IFAS in providing support in broader context of climate change, considering the full scenario of climate change, as well as achievements in regional cooperation, including agriculture and energy. He noted the support of the UNECE in activities performed by IFAS on institutional reform and expansion of the mandate of IFAS in the light of Copenhagen process and results of the Conference. Mr. Barannik also noted that USAID has a supporting office for hydrometeorological services under the framework of support of natural disasters mitigation activities.

As a comment to the speech of Mr. Barannik, **Mr. Ibatullin** told about the EDB project “Impact of climate change on water resources of Central Asia”, implemented more than a year ago, results of which were published and presented at the World Water Forum in Istanbul. The report describes 6 situation scenarios. At present, the urgent part is to determine the patterns of influence of climate change to the water resources and their depletion. This initiative should be supported, and the results used as a database for modeling. Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the NMHSs creates the political field for further actions under these projects through the RCH and other organizations.

**Elena Yerzakovich (UNESCO)** informed the participants that the UNESCO's Regional Centre of Glaciology in Almaty planned in the framework of scientific and technical cooperation, with funding from the Government of Kazakhstan, may be seen as a component of activities for evaluation of climate change.

31. **Benjamin Mohr (GTZ)** stressed the need to determine the expectations and priorities of EC IFAS, which would allow donors to work more efficiently. He noted the role of IFAS as a regional organization being the coordinator for donors, under the Paris Declaration.

B. Mohr noted that the implementation of joint activities will allow donors to harmonize the activities not only for greater efficiency, but will also add a national touch to projects. He stressed the need for clear direction to coordinate donor support. To do this, there are conventions and declarations, the agenda focuses on climate change, financial criteria are required for the donors to join the cooperation. Referring to the statement of S. Croxton concerning the decision-making criteria and donor expectations, B. Mohr proposed to include them into the ASBP-3 projects, to ensure their proper implementation.

B. Mohr (GTZ) provided information on the implementation of the regional program “Enhancing the economic and environmental welfare in the Aral Sea Region (EWA)”, funded by the amount of \$

4.5 million. The Enhancing the economic and environmental welfare in the Aral Sea Region (EEWA) Program, carried out by GTZ, is a part of the economic development program for Central Asia and is included in the national development strategy in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The EEWA Program follows a tiered approach. At the micro-and meso-levels, technical assistance is provided to agricultural producers, small farmers, small and medium enterprises in agricultural sector, livestock and fish enterprises, as well as to the relevant processing industries and service providers. Activities of this level are also designed to meet the specific needs of women. The program aims to develop policies and strategies for sustainable development, as well as promote the regional cooperation among the riparian countries and regions of the Aral Sea. Under the signed Memorandum of Understanding between the Technical Cooperation of Germany (GTZ) and the Executive Directorate of IFAS in Kazakhstan, the EEWA Program was included into the ASBP-3.

32. **Delphine Marie**: had noted that the European Commission holds the same position as the GTZ: There are ongoing programs, but they require coordination with strategies by donors and IFAS, to determine the points of contact between the projects planned by the European Commission and the ASBP-3. Regional Programme of the European Commission for 2011 covers the ASBP-3 with its scope, therefore, it is important to define priorities for the ASBP-3.

**Simon Croxton (World Bank)** emphasized that the role of IFAS as a coordinator in the light of the ASBP-3 increases and needs support, but we need to trace back the development to determine the stability of operation, since the ASBP-3 is a kind of a “business proposal”.

As a comment on the speeches of some representatives of donor organizations, **a member of the Executive Committee from Turkmenistan, Kurbangeldy Ballyev**, stressed that IFAS is the only organization of this level. Based on his own experience of working in the IFAS for a long time (more than 10 years), he noted the entirely new level of work of IFAS at the present time, featured by absolute transparency. He indicated that he understands the concerns of donors regarding the stability of the Fund.

K. Ballyev noted that the IFAS needs not only financial but also political support. Perhaps it is important to give the message to the leaders of the Central Asian countries by the donors themselves. It was suggested to join the efforts and to work in the remaining 3-4 months of development of ASBP-3 on daily basis, and to create a working group for this purpose.

33. **Paul Haener (International Office for Water)** noted the importance of quality information base for decision-making for institutional strengthening. He presented the project “Capacity building in decision-making for water resource assessment in EECCA”, approved for funding by the Ministry of Environment of France. The project aims at building capacity in data management in relevant national and local bodies, and, should there be a need, in joint bodies, and thus provide support for implementation of both policy and measures concerning the management of transboundary water resources. Implementation of project activities would help to create and deploy an electronic system of regional metadata catalog obtained whenever possible from those who actually prepare the data to achieve greater accountability for the quality of produced information. The project provides for determination of two pilot basins in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) to disseminate the results of the use of procedures in relation to other transboundary basins in EECCA subregion at the international level. One of the pilot basins selected was the Aral Sea basin. The project is estimated at 18 months, from July 2010 to November 2011.

In course of execution of this project, it is required to coordinate other existing projects in this direction in order to avoid duplication. Participants noted the role of EC IFAS in the coordination of these projects. As a comment, **Alexandr Nikolayenko (GTZ)** offered that currently there is a regional program on building a database for selected transboundary basins in Central Asia

(Kazakhstan - Syr Darya Basin), so there is a need to coordinate the implementation of a new project with this regional program.

34. **Natalia Alexeeva (UNDP)** informed the participants about the inclusion of Risk Management of Climate Change Project (noted by Michael Thurman) into the ASBP-3, and about the allocation of \$ 12 million to this program in conjunction with other programs. Jointly with UNECE, it is planned to implement projects in the field of IWRM, hydropower projects in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and in the Chu-Talas Basin.

35. **Harald Davland (Ministry of the Environment of Norway):** noted that this is his first donor meeting organized by IFAS, so he can not present any specific proposals. He noted the possibility of participation in such areas as climate change, deforestation, reduction of glaciers, and had declared openness to cooperation.

36. **Tatsuji Nishikawa (Japan International Cooperation Agency)** informed the participants that this is his first contact with EC IFAS. The Agency is an observer in this event, and agrees to maintain contact with EC IFAS.

37. **Mohan Reddy Junna (International Water Management Institute)** noted that IWRM is the best combination and strategy, stressed the importance of improving water efficiency in the region, and, therefore highlighted this aspect as a target for possible projects. The Institute participates in this meeting to identify projects which it can contribute to.

38. **Batyr Khadzhiev (UNEP)** expressed willingness to send a list of ongoing projects in the region with explanations.

39. **Yelena Yerkovich (UNESCO)** – pointed out that UNESCO is currently forming a regional program for 2012, so there is a need to consider the ASBP-3 projects for timely inclusion. A request was made to send research projects under the ASBP-3 for consideration.

40. **Alex Grzybowski (UNRCCA)** told about the project on the road map cooperation with organizations under IFAS, within which it is planned to hold a meeting of ministers of energy, water resources, as well as representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian states in support of EC IFAS in the final phase of development of the ASBP-3, as well as a seminar on transboundary waters. Memorandum of Understanding between UNRCCA and EC IFAS will provide the basis for this cooperation. This project is consistent with the legal and institutional strengthening of IFAS.

41. **Iskandar Mirhashimov (CAREC)** noted four areas of activity: management of water quality; drinking water supply systems in small settlements; assigning the status of international significance in accordance with the RAMSAR Convention to one or two wetlands in the delta of Syr Darya river and in the eastern part of the Small Aral Sea, representing the key ornithological habitats; evaluation of ecosystems and their services in cooperation with UNECE and GTZ and the Association of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan.

The representative of CAREC asked the following question – countries are represented by different ministries, and knowing the status of the ministries one may suggest that greater priority will be given to the traditional "economic" projects to be included to the ASBP-3. Therefore, will the IFAS be able to make a step forward and, on the basis of an analysis, develop and include projects that have no less importance, but were not submitted by countries (Environmental, Health)?

S. Ibatullin, referring to the Framework Document, said that this work had already been completed. One of the reasons for returning submitted projects back for revision is the above-mentioned reason, namely, non-compliance to the Framework Document.

**Fourth session: The way ahead: Planned activities in preparation of the ASBP-3, objectives and tasks of the Donors' Coordination Conference in October 2010 (with due account of the outcomes of first three sessions)**

42. The session included a discussion of possibilities to improve the situation in the Aral Sea region.

**Bo Libert (UNECE)** has also noted the importance of linking ongoing project activities with the daily lives of people.

**Marat Narbayev (member of EC IFAS from Kazakhstan)** continued to discuss further elements of work on the ASBP-3, namely: meeting experts from donor agencies working on certain areas of the ASBP-3, identification of priorities and preferences of individual donors, finding specific requirements for project proposals that would increase the degree of financial support, holding consultation on project selection criteria, discussion with experts from donors the forecasted ASBP-3 projects.

**Murat Bekniyazov (member of EC IFAS from Kazakhstan)** noted the “Syr Darya Control and Northern Aral Sea” project (SCNAS-1, restoration of the Northern Aral Sea and the hydraulic structures) as a good example of activity. He also informed the participants that at the moment, feasibility study for the second phase of the project to create a two-level sea and filling of Sarykamysh Bay is under development.

**Normukhammad Sheraliyev (member of EC IFAS from Uzbekistan)** said that there is a need for greater interaction between the IFAS bodies. Today, the Aral Sea dries up, and the Aral Sea region degrades in a geometric progression. In this regard, it is necessary to pay more attention to the practical work and projects to improve the social and economic and ecological condition of the Aral Sea region. Priority should be given to those projects which had previously been endorsed, negotiated and adopted at the regional and international levels.

**Kurbangeldy Ballyev (member of EC IFAS from Turkmenistan)** stressed that the purpose of the ASBP-3 is not the filling of the Aral Sea or solution to all environmental and socio-economic problems. The world globalizes, as globalize the Central Asian countries. Any executed project makes an objective and subjective contribution. He expressed the hope that the donor community will assist in mitigation of the crisis in the Aral region.

**Mavlon Kazakov (member of EC IFAS from Tajikistan)** presented his vision of the Aral Sea Region problems: water supply, public health, electricity supply, natural phenomena, degradation of biodiversity.

**Khayrullo Ibodzoda (member of EC IFAS from Tajikistan)** stressed that the ASBP-3 is related to the water and energy issues. He noted the shortage of energy resources in Tajikistan during winter.

43. **Saghit Ibatullin** summarized the Donors Coordination Meeting and highlighted the following main points. The future work of the Executive Committee will include the following milestones

- IFAS Board - among the most important issues – submission of the skeleton of ASBP-3 - for approval – in early-mid July.

- Conducting working meeting of national and regional experts with the assistance of international experts. It is expected that the World Bank will supply two experts, the French government - one expert.
- Holding the International Donors' Conference. It is expected that the Conference will produce actual results (project support), and in order to achieve that, consultative meetings with representatives of donor and international organizations, experts and focal points from the donors will need to be held.
- EC IFAS plans to hold 1-2 meetings of working groups on institutional and legal strengthening of IFAS and development of ASBP-3.

44. **Saghit Ibatullin** also noted that if so far the goal was to establish a dialogue with donors and international organizations. Now the dialogue is already established and EC IFAS needs to start a mechanism for close partnership to achieve policy coherence and continuous two-way exchange of information. The Executive Committee will actively disseminate the information and looks forward to receive information from donors on the ongoing and planned activities.

The Chairman had expressed his gratitude for the recognition of the role of IFAS as a coordinating body, and also expressed understanding of the concerns of donors regarding the stability and availability of certain guarantees, transparent structure, and absence of corrupt elements for long-term operation of the Fund. He thanked the donors for the list of projects submitted for inclusion into the ASBP-3 and noted that the main contribution is not so much the money, but participation, political will, recognition of problems and the ability of IFAS to resolve these problems. It was also stated that the list was open for new projects.

Mr. Ibatullin confirmed that EC IFAS will continue to work with organizations that regained interest in the activities of IFAS after years of interruption, and with organizations that had just expressed interest in the work of IFAS and the ASBP-3. He added that there are new organizations in the region, for example - the Centre of Glaciology (as reported by the representative of UNESCO), and the Water Center in Astana. Involvement of these organizations is relevant, because decisions relating to the new challenges of the ASBP-3 require an assessment of risks associated with IWRM and climate change. Thereupon, the EC IFAS intends to act in accordance with the resolution of the Copenhagen Conference in all four directions of ASBP-3. The third ASBP is focused on addressing new challenges, building on the successes of the past programs.

The Chairman noted that the contacts of the donor and international organizations at the level of governments of the countries is a significant step to strengthen the joint efforts in promoting political dialogue, and had asked to continue cooperation at the level of governments.

Mr. Ibatullin underlined that the Executive Committee places special emphasize to execution of projects and the project monitoring mechanism, which was presented earlier. He addressed the donors with a request to share their experiences in projects implementation, as there is a positive and critical look at these issues. He also added that in order to avoid problems encountered in the past, it is important for donors to be guided by transparency while supporting the ASBP-3.

In conclusion, the Chairman noted that the EC IFAS and the donor and international organizations need to develop common goals and objectives for the Donor Coordination Conference, knowing the vision of donors will allow IFAS to be better prepared for this phase. He noted the fruitfulness of this meeting that can be considered a real step forward to the Conference in the end of 2010.

**List of participants of Donors' Coordination Meeting of the Third Aral Sea Basin Programme  
(ASBP-3)**

*May 21, 2010, Almaty, "Saltanat" Conference hall,  
"Tien-Shan" Grand Hotel*

№	Ф.И.О./Name	Должность, организация/ Position, organization	Контакты/Contact details
<b>Международные Финансовые Организации International Financial Institutions</b>			
<b><u>Всемирный Банк</u> World Bank</b>			
1	<b>Саймон Крокстон</b> Simon Croxton	Старший специалист по природным ресурсам. ЦА региональный офис/Senior Natural Resources Specialist. Central Asia Regional Office.	tel: + 7 (727) 298 05 80 fax: +7 (727) 298 05 81 E: scroxton@worldbank.org
2	<b>Владимир Циркунов</b> Vladimir Tsirkunov	Старший инженер-эколог/ Senior Environmental Engineer	tel: +1-202614-06-96/97/98 E: vtsirkunov@worldbank.org
<b><u>Евразийский Банк Развития</u> Eurasian Development Bank</b>			
3	<b>Мироненков</b> Александр Петрович Mironenkov Alexandr	Начальник Отдела Технического Содействия ЕАБР /Head of Technical Support Department	tel: +7 (727) 244 4044 E: <a href="mailto:mironenkov_ap@eabr.org">mironenkov_ap@eabr.org</a>
4	<b>Сарсембеков</b> Тулеген Таджибаевич Sarsembekov Tulegen	Главный специалист, Отдел Технической Поддержки/Chief specialist, Technical Support Department	tel: +7(727) 244 4044 E: <a href="mailto:sarsembekov_tt@eabr.org">sarsembekov_tt@eabr.org</a>
<b>Донорские организации, посольства Donor organization, embassies</b>			
<b><u>Агентство США по международному развитию, USAID</u> United States Agency for International Development, USAID</b>			
5	<b>Андрей Баранник</b> Andrei Barannik	Региональный Советник по Окружающей среде для Азии. Отдел координации программ/ Regional Environmental Adviser for Asia. Program Office.	tel:+7 (727) 250 76 12/17,ext. 6352 fax: +7 727 250 76 35/36 E: abarannik@usaid.gov
6	<b>Дж. Майкл Трэйнол</b> J. Michael Trainor	Старший специалист по вопросам энергетической политики. Отдел экономического развития/Senior Energy Policy Specialist Office of Economic Growth	tel:+7 (727) 250 76 12/17, ext. 6343 fax: +7 (727) 250 76 35/36 E: <a href="mailto:MTrainor@usaid.gov">MTrainor@usaid.gov</a>
7	<b>Сергей Елькин</b> Sergey Yelkin	Координатор энергетических проектов. Отдел по экономическому развитию/ Energy project coordinator. Office of Economic Growth	tel: +7 (727) 250 76 12/17, доп 6307 fax: +7 (727) 250 76 35/36 E: <a href="mailto:syelkin@usaid.gov">syelkin@usaid.gov</a>
<b>Техническое сотрудничество Германии (ГТЦ)</b>			

<b>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)</b>			
8	<b>Александр Николаенко</b> <b>Alexandr Nikolayenko</b>	Региональный советник Программы по Трансграничному Управлению Водными Ресурсами в Центральной Азии/Regional Advisor of the Transboundary Water Management Programme in Central Asia.	tel: +7(727) 387 06 28 E: <a href="mailto:alexandr.nikolayenko@gtz.de">alexandr.nikolayenko@gtz.de</a>
9	<b>Бенжамин Мор</b> <b>Benjamin Mohr</b>	Старший консультант проекта «Содействие улучшению экономического и экологического благосостояния в регионе Аральского моря»/ Senior Advisor «Enhancing Economic and Environmental Welfare in the Aral Sea Region (EEWA)»	tel: +7 (727) 387 06 31 fax: +7 (727) 387 06 31 E: benjamin.mohr@gtz.de
10	<b>Мусаева Мадина</b> <b>Madina Mussayeva</b>	Региональный консультант проекта «Содействие улучшению экономического и экологического благосостояния в регионе Аральского моря»/Regional Consultant of the project «Enhancing Economic and Environmental Welfare in the Aral Sea Region (EEWA)»	tel: +7 (727) 387 06 31 fax: +7 (727) 387 06 31 E: <a href="mailto:madina.mussayeva@gtz.de">madina.mussayeva@gtz.de</a>
<b>Японское агентство международного сотрудничества</b> <b>Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA)</b>			
11	<b>Татсуджи Нишикава</b> <b>Tatsuji Nishikawa</b>	Эксперт JICA, Советник по формированию проектов в Казахстане/ JICA Expert, Project Formulation Advisor in Kazakhstan	JICA Astana Liaison Office tel: +7 (717) 221 28 15 E: <a href="mailto:nishikawa.tatsuji@jica.go.jp">nishikawa.tatsuji@jica.go.jp</a> <a href="mailto:Kh.shynar@gmail.com">Kh.shynar@gmail.com</a>
<b>Министерство окружающей среды Норвегии</b> <b>Ministry of the Environment of Norway</b>			
12	<b>Харалд Довланд</b> <b>Harald Dovland</b>	Заместитель Генерального Директора/ Deputy Director General	tel: +47 22 24 59 95 fax: + 47 22 242755 E: <a href="mailto:Harald.Dovland@md.dep.no">Harald.Dovland@md.dep.no</a>
<b>Посольство Финляндии</b> <b>The Embassy of Finland</b>			
13	<b>Туомас Киннунен</b> <b>Tuomas Kinnunen</b>	Второй Секретарь, Заместитель Посла /Second Secretary, Deputy Head of Mission	tel: +7 (717) 222 39 39 fax: +7 (717) 222 39 69 E: <a href="mailto:johanna.sipinen@formin.fi">johanna.sipinen@formin.fi</a> <a href="mailto:Simo.hiilamo@formin.fi">Simo.hiilamo@formin.fi</a>
<b>Посольство Франции</b> <b>The Embassy of France</b>			
14	<b>Патрик Вайлант</b> <b>Patrick Vaillant</b>	Заместитель Главы/Deputy Head of Mission	tel: +7(717) 279 51 00 fax: +7 (717) 279 51 01 E: <a href="mailto:Olga.TAMHIUWIU@diplomatie.gouv.fr">Olga.TAMHIUWIU@diplomatie.gouv.fr</a>
15	<b>Ноэми Ларруи</b> <b>Noemie Larrouilh</b>	Атташе по вопросам сотрудничества/Cooperation Attache	tel: +7(727) 396 98 00 fax: +7 (727) 396 98 10 E: <a href="mailto:noemie.larrouilh@diplom">noemie.larrouilh@diplom</a>

			atie.gouv.fr
<b><u>Посольство Арабской Республики Египет</u></b> <b><u>The Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt</u></b>			
16	<b>Соби Эль-Сахайми</b> <b>Sobhy El-Sohaimy</b>	Атташе по вопросам культуры и образования/Cultural and Educational Attache	tel: +7 (727) 292 40 94 fax: +7 (727) 292 96 43 E: elsohaimys@gmail.com
<b><u>Коммерческий офис Посольства Арабской Республики Египет</u></b> <b><u>Commercial Office of the Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt</u></b>			
17	<b>Мохамед Саид Халлаф</b> <b>Mohamed Said Khallaf</b>	Коммерческий Консул/Commercial Counselor	Tel: +7 (727) 291 89 97 Fax: +7 (727) 293 03 91 E: mohamedkhallaf@hotmail.com
<b><u>Посольство Индии</u></b> <b><u>The Embassy of India</u></b>			
18	<b>Шри Ашок Сажанхар</b> <b>H.E. Shri Ashok Sajjanhar</b>	Чрезвычайный и полномочный посол Республики Индия в Казахстане/Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Republic of India to Kazakhstan	tel: +7(717) 292 57 18 fax: +7 (717) 292 57 14 E: <a href="mailto:amb.astana@mea.gov.in">amb.astana@mea.gov.in</a>  ind.emb.astana@gmail.com
<b><u>Международное бюро по водным ресурсам</u></b> <b><u>International Office for Water (IOWater)</u></b>			
19	<b>Поль Хайнер</b> <b>Paul Haener</b>	Менеджер отдела водных информационных систем/Manager of the "Water information System division"	tel: 33 (0) 4 92 94 58 00 fax: 33(0) 4 93 65 44 02 E: p.haener@oieau.fr
<b><u>Европейский Союз</u></b> <b><u>European Union</u></b>			
<b><u>Европейская Комиссия, делегация в Казахстане, Кыргызстане и Таджикистане</u></b> <b><u>European Commission, Delegation to the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan</u></b>			
20	<b>Дельфин Марье</b> <b>Delphine Marié</b>	Проектный Менеджер, Окружающая Среда и Вода/ Project Manager, Environment and Water	tel: +7 (727) 320 02 24 fax: +7 (727) 291 07 49 E: <a href="mailto:delphine.marie@ec.europa.eu">delphine.marie@ec.europa.eu</a>
<b><u>Совет Европейского Союза, Специальный представитель ЕС для Центральной Азии</u></b> <b><u>Council of the European Union, EU Special Representative for Central Asia</u></b>			
21	<b>Дженнифер Зехринг</b> <b>Jennifer Sehring</b>	Политический советник по водным вопросам Специального представителя ЕС для Центральной Азии/Political Adviser to the EU Special Representative for Central Asia	tel: + 32(0) 2 281 73 61 fax: +32(0) 2 281 51 46 E: <a href="mailto:jennifer.sehring@consilium.europa.eu">jennifer.sehring@consilium.europa.eu</a>
<b><u>Международные Организации/ International Organisations</u></b>			
<b><u>Европейская Экономическая Комиссия ООН (ЕЭК ООН)</u></b> <b><u>United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)</u></b>			
22	<b>Бу Либерт</b> <b>Bo Libert</b>	Региональный советник по окружающей среде/ Regional Adviser on the Environment	tel: +4122 917 23 96 fax: +4122 917 06 21 E: <a href="mailto:bo.libert@unece.org">bo.libert@unece.org</a>
23	<b>Мартон Крашнай</b> <b>Marton Krasznai</b>	Региональный советник по экономическому сотрудничеству и интеграции /Regional Adviser on Economic Cooperation and Integration	tel: +4122 917 27 60 fax: +4122 917 01 78 E: <a href="mailto:marton.krasznai@unece.org">marton.krasznai@unece.org</a>
<b><u>Региональный Центр ООН по Превентивной Дипломатии в Центральной Азии</u></b>			

<b>UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia</b>			
24	<b>Федор Климчук Fedor Klimtchouk</b>	Заместитель главы, Старший политический советник Регионального Центра ООН по Превентивной Дипломатии в Центральной Азии/ Deputy Head, Senior Political Advisor	tel: (+993) 12 48 16 12 fax:(+993) 12 48 16 07 E: <a href="mailto:klimtchouk@un.org">klimtchouk@un.org</a>
25	<b>Алекс Гжибовский Alex Grzybowski</b>	Международный консультант ООН/UN International Consultant	tel: 250-656-1317 250-888-1534 E: alex77@telus.net
<b>Программа ООН по Окружающей Среде United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)</b>			
26	<b>Хаджиев Батыр Khadzhiev Batur</b>	Старший руководитель программ, Азиатский технологический институт, Программа ООН по окружающей среде/ Senior Programme Officer, Asian Institute of Technology, UN Environment Programme	E: <a href="mailto:batyr@rrcap.unep.org">batyr@rrcap.unep.org</a>
27	<b>Харуко Окусу Haruko Okusu</b>	Координатор программ и контактный центр по международным экологическим соглашениям в области биоразнообразия в Азиатско-тихоокеанском регионе/ Programme Officer and Biodiversity MEA Focal Point for Asia and the Pacific	tel: (662) 288 1870 fax: (662) 280 38 29 <a href="mailto:haruko.okusu@unep.org">haruko.okusu@unep.org</a> <a href="mailto:pongsri.siripunthana@unep.org">pongsri.siripunthana@unep.org</a>
<b>Программа развития Организации Объединенных Наций, ПРООН United Nations Development Programme, UNDP</b>			
28	<b>Наталья Алексеева Natalia Alexeeva</b>	Координатор Водной Программы по Центральной Азии / Water Programme Coordinator for Central Asia	tel: + 7 727 258 26 43 (внт: 1543) fax: +7 727 258 26 45 E: <a href="mailto:natalia.alexeeva@undp.org">natalia.alexeeva@undp.org</a>
29	<b>Майкл Турман Michael Thurman</b>	Региональный Советник по снижению риска стихийных бедствий по Европе и СНГ/ Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Advisor, Europe and CIS	tel: +7 (727) 258 26 43 fax: +7 (727) 258 26 45 E : <a href="mailto:michael.thurman@undp.org">michael.thurman@undp.org</a>
<b>Программа ООН по образованию, науке и культуре (ЮНЕСКО) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)</b>			
30	<b>Елена Ерзакович Yelena Yerzakovich</b>	Консультант программы естественных наук, Кластерное бюро ЮНЕСКО в г. Алматы/ Natural Sciences Programme Consultant, UNESCO Almaty Cluster Office	tel. +7(727) 2 582 643, ext. 1424 fax +7(727) 279 48 53 E: <a href="mailto:almaty@unesco.org">almaty@unesco.org</a> <a href="mailto:y.yerzakovich@unesco.org">y.yerzakovich@unesco.org</a>
<b>Детский фонд ООН (ЮНИСЕФ) United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF)</b>			
31	<b>Алена Сиалчонак Alena Sialchonak</b>	Заместитель Представителя ЮНИСЕФ в Республике Казахстан/ UNICEF Deputy Representative in the Republic of Kazakhstan	tel: (7172) 322 878 fax: (7172) 321803 e-mail: <a href="mailto:esialchonak@unicef.org">esialchonak@unicef.org</a>
<b>Организация по безопасности и сотрудничеству в Европе (ОБСЕ) Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)</b>			

32	<b>Александр Пейчев</b> <b>Alexander Peytchev</b>	Сотрудник по экономическим и экологическим вопросам/Economic and Environmental Officer	tel: +7(717) 258 0070 fax: +7 (717) 232 83 04 E: Alexander.peytchev@osce.org
33	<b>Вильям Метзгер</b> <b>William Metzger</b>	Специалист по проектам/Project Specialist	tel: +7(717) 258 0070 fax: +7 (717) 232 83 04 E: <a href="mailto:William.metzger@osce.org">William.metzger@osce.org</a> <a href="mailto:willmetz@umich.edu">willmetz@umich.edu</a>
<b>Международные исследовательские центры</b> <b>International Research Centers</b>			
<b>Международный институт управления водными ресурсами</b> <b>International Water Management Institute (IWMI)</b>			
34	<b>Моан Редди Джунна</b> <b>Mohan Reddy Junna</b>	Руководитель по Центральной Азии/ Head, Central Asia	tel: +998-71 237 04 45 fax: +998-71 2370317 E: <a href="mailto:m.junna@cgiar.org">m.junna@cgiar.org</a>
35	<b>Анарбеков Ойтур</b> <b>Oytur Anarbekov</b>	Старший научный сотрудник/Senior researcher	tel: +998-71 237 04 45 fax: +998-71 2370317 E: <a href="mailto:o.anarbekov@cgiar.org">o.anarbekov@cgiar.org</a>
<b>Региональные организации</b> <b>Regional Organizations</b>			
<b>Региональный Экологический Центр Центральной Азии (РЭЦ ЦА)</b> <b>The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC)</b>			
36	<b>Макеев Талайбек</b> <b>Talaibek Makeev</b>	Исполнительный директор РЭЦ ЦА/ CAREC Executive Director	tel: +7 (727) 278 5110 278 5022 229 26 19 fax: +7 (727) 270 53 37 E: <a href="mailto:talaibek.makeev@gmail.com">talaibek.makeev@gmail.com</a>
37	<b>Мирхашимов Искандар</b> <b>Iskandar Mirkhashimov</b>	Менеджер программы поддержки водных инициатив РЭЦ ЦА	tel: +7 (727) 227 85 11, 278 50 22, 229 66 46, 229 26 19 fax: +7 727 270 53 37 E: <a href="mailto:iskandar@carec.kz">iskandar@carec.kz</a>
<b>Исполнительный Комитет МФСА</b> <b>Executive Committee of IFAS</b>			
38	<b>Ибатуллин</b> Сагит Рахматуллаевич <b>Saghit Ibatullin</b>	Председатель Исполкома МФСА/ Chairman of EC IFAS	tel: +7 (727) 260 77 45 E: <a href="mailto:saghit@inbox.ru">saghit@inbox.ru</a>
39	<b>Нурмаганбетов</b> Демесин Шералиевич <b>Demessin</b> <b>Nurmaganbetov</b>	Зам. председателя Исполнительного комитета Международного Фонда спасения Арала/ Deputy Chairman of EC IFAS	tel: +7 (727) 387 34 31(111) mob: +7(701) 734 13 64 E: <a href="mailto:mail@ec.ifas.org">mail@ec.ifas.org</a>
40	<b>Альфред Дибольд</b> <b>Alfred Diebold</b>	Технический директор/Technical Director of EC IFAS	tel: +7 (727) 387 34 31(114) mob: +7(701) 531 02 16 E: <a href="mailto:diebold@ec-ifas.org">diebold@ec-ifas.org</a>
41	<b>Бекниязов</b> Мурат Кабыкенович <b>Murat Bekniyazov</b>	Представитель Республики Казахстан в Исполкоме МФСА/Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to EC IFAS	tel: +7(727)38734 31 (ex.109) mob: +7(777)248 21 68

			E: <a href="mailto:mbekniyazov@mail.ru">mbekniyazov@mail.ru</a>
42	<b>Нарбаев</b> Марат Турсынбекович <b>Marat Narbayev</b>	Представитель Республики Казахстан в Исполкоме МФСА / Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to EC IFAS	tel: + 7(727) 387 34 31 (ex.110) mob: +7(701) 780 70 75 E: <a href="mailto:narbayev@ec-ifas.org">narbayev@ec-ifas.org</a>
43	<b>Ибодзода Хайрулло</b> <b>Khayrullo Ibodzoda</b>	Представитель Республики Таджикистан в Исполкоме МФСА/Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to EC IFAS	tel: +7 (727) 387 34 31(ex.118) mob: +7(701)787 71 05 E: <a href="mailto:ibodzoda@mail.ru">ibodzoda@mail.ru</a>
44	<b>Казакон</b> Мавлон <b>Mavlon Kazakov</b>	Представитель Республики Таджикистан в Исполкоме МФСА/Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to EC IFAS	tel: +7 (727) 387 34 31(ex.122) mob: +7(701)7876960 E: <a href="mailto:mavlon_kazakov@mail.ru">mavlon_kazakov@mail.ru</a>
45	<b>Баллыев</b> Курбангельды <b>Kurbangeldy Ballyev</b>	Представитель Туркменистана в Исполкоме МФСА/Representative of Turkmenistan to EC IFAS	tel: +7 (727) 387 34 31(ex.115) mob: +7(701) 7876966 E: <a href="mailto:kballyev@mail.ru">kballyev@mail.ru</a>
46	<b>Шералиев</b> Нормухаммад <b>Normukhammad Sheraliyev</b>	Представитель Республики Узбекистан в Исполкоме МФСА/Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan to EC IFAS	tel: +7 (727) 387 34 31(ex.120) mob: +7(701)7876963 E: <a href="mailto:sheraliyev@mail.ru">sheraliyev@mail.ru</a>
47	<b>Шиварева</b> Светлана Павловна <b>Shivareva Svetlana</b>	Исполнительный Директор Регионального Центра Гидрологии ИК МФСА/Executive Director of the Regional Center of Hydrology EC IFAS	р.т. 7(727) 267-64-83; факс. 7(727) 267-64-64; моб. 7(701) 715-48-15; моб. 7(777) 014-13-26; e-mail: <a href="mailto:shivareva@meteo.kz">shivareva@meteo.kz</a>
<b>Международные эксперты/International experts</b>			
48	<b>Демиденко Андрей</b> Алексеевич <b>Andriy Demydenko</b>	Эксперт проекта ЕС/EU project expert	tel: +7 (727) 387 34 31 (ex.116) mob: +7 (702) 216 71 95 E: <a href="mailto:andriydemydenko@gmail.com">andriydemydenko@gmail.com</a>

## Секретариат

49	<b>Кудайбергеноулы</b> Копболсын <b>Kopbolsyn Kudaibergenuly</b>	Главный специалист секретариата ИК МФСА/ Chief specialist of the EC IFAS Secretariat	тел: +7 727 387 34 31 (102) факс: +7 727 387 34 33 E: <a href="mailto:kopbolsin.k@mail.ru">kopbolsin.k@mail.ru</a>
50	<b>Журумбетова</b> Жулдыз Нурдавлетовна <b>Zhuldyz Zhurumbetova</b>	Специалист секретариата ИК МФСА/ Specialist of the EC IFAS Secretariat	тел: +7 727 387 34 31 (102) факс: +7 727 387 34 33 E: <a href="mailto:zhuldyz@ec-ifas.org">zhuldyz@ec-ifas.org</a>
51	<b>Карлиханов</b> Торехан Карлиханович <b>Torekhan Karlikhanov</b>	Директор информационно-аналитического центра ИК МФСА/Director of the EC IFAS Information and Analysis Centre	тел: +7 727 387 34 31(112) факс: +7 727 387 34 33 E: <a href="mailto:karlikhanov@ec-ifas.org">karlikhanov@ec-ifas.org</a>
52	<b>Оспанов</b> Канат Медетович	Главный специалист информационно-аналитического центра ИК МФСА/Chief	тел: +7 727 387 34 31 (112) моб: +7 777 722 40 42

	<b>Kanat Ospanov</b>	specialist of the EC IFAS Information and Analysis Centre	E: <a href="mailto:kanski@inbox.ru">kanski@inbox.ru</a>
53	<b>Кенжеахметова</b> Асель Асхатовна <b>Asel Kenzheakhmetova</b>	Специалист информационно-аналитического центра ИК МФСА/Specialist of the EC IFAS Information and Analysis Centre	тел: +7 727 387 34 31 (104) моб: +7 777 363 86 33 E: <a href="mailto:asel@ec-ifas.org">asel@ec-ifas.org</a>
54	<b>Керимкулов</b> Тулеген Иксанович <b>Tulegen Kerimkulov</b>	Руководитель аппарата ИК МФСА/Head of the IFAS Executive office	тел: +7 727 387 34 31(105) факс: +7 727 387 34 33 E: <a href="mailto:tulegen.k@mail.ru">tulegen.k@mail.ru</a>
55	<b>Асхатова</b> Айнур Асхатовна Ainur Askhatova	Пресс-секретарь ИК МФСА/EC IFAS Press secretary	тел: +7 727 387 34 31 (104) моб: +7 701 773 1352 E: <a href="mailto:ainur@ec-ifas.org">ainur@ec-ifas.org</a>

**Agenda of the Donors' Coordination Meeting  
of the Third Aral Sea Basin Programme (ASBP-3)**

Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea

Almaty, 21 May, 2010

**09:00 – 09:30** Opening Statement by Mr. Saghit Ibatullin, Chairman of EC IFAS  
Information on the project "Regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources management" (UNECE/GTZ)

**09:30 – 11:00** **First Session** (Chair: Mr. Saghit Ibatullin)

**1. Lessons learned from the development and implementation of ASBP-1 and ASBP-2**

- Lessons learned by the donors' community: representative of the World Bank (Mr. Simon Croxton) and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC (Mr. Hans- Peter Maag)
- Discussion
- The development of ASBP-3: Vision, objective, tasks, main directions and structure (Mr. Saghit Ibatullin, Chairman of EC IFAS)
- Discussion

**2. The Third Aral Sea Basin Programme as integral part of international development efforts**

- IFAS as a factor of regional cooperation (Mr. Fedor Klimtchouk, UNRCCA)
- The role of ASBP-3 within development efforts in Central Asia as seen by the donors' community (Mr. Andrei Barannik, USAID)

**11:00 – 11:30** Coffee/Tea Break; in parallel: press briefing

**11:30 – 13:00** **Second session** (Chair: Mr. Saghit Ibatullin)

**The development of the Third Aral Sea Basin Programme in light of the Joint Statement of the IFAS Heads of States-founders from 28 April 2009**

**1. Outcomes of the second Working Group on the Strengthening of Institutional and Legal Frameworks of IFAS and the Development of ASBP-3: statements by the representatives of EC IFAS responsible for the four main directions of the Programme, and the EU project experts:**

- Comments of the EU project experts with regard to the development of ASBP-3 (A.Demydenko)
- Information concerning the ASBP-3 main directions (reports by working group leaders)

- Integrated Use of Water resources (Mr. Mr.Khayrullo Ibodzoda – representative of the Republic of Tajikistan in EC IFAS, Mr. Normukhammad Sheraliyev – representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan in EC IFAS);
- Ecological Issues (by Mr. Mavlon Kazakov, representative of the Republic of Tajikistan in EC IFAS);
- Socio-economic Issues (Mr. Manasbek Omorov – representative of Kyrgyz Republic in EC IFAS, Mr. Marat Narbaev – representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan in EC IFAS);
- Strengthening of the Institutional and Legal Mechanisms (by Mr. Kurbangeldy Ballyev, representative of Turkmenistan in EC IFAS).

### **Questions and answers after each short presentation**

2. **Information on the process of submission of project proposals** (by Mr. Murat Bekniyazov – representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan in EC IFAS, Coordinator of the four groups on ASBP-3)

**13.00 – 14.00** Lunch

**14.00 – 16.00 Third session** (Chair: Mr. Alfred Diebold, EC IFAS Technical Director)

**Information and comments from the donors** regarding:

- **Expectations of the donors’ community towards ASBP-3 as a regional framework for coordination and project implementation**
- **Information on on-going and planned projects in areas covered by ASBP-3**
- **Priorities and criteria of support to regional and national project proposals**

(Participants are encouraged to circulate a paper on their on-going and planned projects beforehand).

**- Discussion**

**16.00 – 16.30** Coffee/Tea Break

**16.30 - 18.00 Fourth session** (Chair: Mr. Alfred Diebold, EC IFAS Technical Director)

**The way ahead: Planned activities in preparation of the ASBP-3, objectives and tasks of the Donors’ Coordination Conference in October 2010 (with due account of the outcomes of first three sessions)**

- Statement by Mr. Saghit Ibatullin, Chairman of EC IFAS
- Comments from donor representatives

**18.00 Closing statement by Saghit Ibatullin, Chairman of EC IFAS**

**18.30** Cocktails