

Statement of H.E Khan Mohammad Takal

Deputy Minister of Water

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Excellencies, government delegations, representatives of UN and other International and Regional organizations , ladies and gentlemen, Assalam u Alaikom wa Rahmatuallah,

At the outset, I would like to thank the government of Kazakhstan for hosting this event,

Water is one of the essential elements of life and water resources are identified as a key element of development. We view water as source of cooperation. Today we are faced with the growth of population and rising needs for water for livelihood and drinking, agriculture, livestock, industry, ecology on one hand and on the other hand we see the growing limitations of water resources due to unreasonable use of water in our day to-day life, in agriculture and other uses including climate change which adversely impacted water resources quality and quantity.

Afghanistan is a land-locked country, located in south-central Asia. It is mountainous comprising the greater part of the massive Hindu Kush range at the western end of the Himalayas and several smaller ranges. The water resource system in the country is highly degraded due to the population growth, climate change and inadequate infrastructure. Moreover, the climate change has a great impact on the water availability in the country.

Some changes are: (i) rise in the snowline and reduced snow cover, (ii) glacier retreat and (iii) increase in evaporation and evapo-transpiration, increasing crop water use and reducing runoff and access to groundwater. The net effect of these changes will be reduction in river flow, and available water for irrigation, power generation and groundwater recharge.

Afghanistan's economy is highly dependent on agriculture production; therefore, more than 90% available water in the country is being used in irrigation sector. The decline in river flow will inevitably affect the volumes of water flowing to downstream neighboring countries. It is also predicted that the climate change will cause more extreme rainfall events and droughts with significant impacts on agriculture and flood-affected towns and villages.

In the past, the persistence of reliable water for irrigation was resulted from gradual melt of snow and glaciers. Flow in rivers for irrigation uses this natural mechanism, acting as natural reservoirs but today this mechanism has been threatened by climate change and the flow regime has also been changed. Moreover, the absence of dams and reservoirs on the rivers to control and regulate the flow is the main problem to harness the water for various uses. Today the past traditional models and managements of water resources are not working due to heavily degradation of fresh water resources.

Cooperation on shared water resources is of paramount important especially in this time to reduce vulnerability and mitigate climate change impacts. Afghan government is working on mechanism with Tajikistan for the purpose of data sharing and data exchange on shared water resources at the present time. Further, we are going to extend this cooperation with all other riparian countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Afghanistan as a land bridge in the heart of Asia, strongly pursues the objectives of regional cooperation and regional integration. We firmly believe that enhancing inter-dependency and mutual benefits through cooperation could lead to, among others, greater regional stability and prosperity for our nations. In this regard water can be a strong catalyst and a driving force. The transboundary basins in the region pose significant challenges as well enormous opportunities. In the face of growing water scarcity and severe climate change impacts, only by adopting a mutual gain approach, we can jointly develop opportunities that neither state could fully capitalize on if acting independently. Opportunities for mutual gain expand the potential rewards associated with cooperation and further promote inter dependency and to this end we are of the view that there are various areas of cooperation that could be identified and developed through close cooperation.

In the face today's significant challenges, cooperation is a must, we are committed to enhance transboundary water cooperation with riparian countries and we firmly believe that integrated water management of these shared invaluable resources will

lead to greater prosperity of our economies and preserving ecological systems and achieving sustainable development.

Thank you ,