

Speech by Mr. Nabil, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Afghanistan

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and gentlemen

I am delighted of the opportunity to participate at this important meeting. Let me thank you the organizers for making it possible for us to meet on topic an important for the present and future of our planet earth. Let me also express my sincere thanks to government and people of Kazakhstan for hosting this meeting and for the warm hospitality they extended to me and my delegation.

The increasing demand for water due to growth of population and industries, the adverse impact of climate change which as per many scholars has caused depletion and degradation of freshwater supplies should be a cause of grave concern. Unfortunately the above mentioned negative aspects exacerbated by, poor water management and weak governance. As we know the vital nature of freshwater has a strong potential for discourse and conflict. To mitigate the chances of probable tension and possible conflicts, if it can not be totally eliminated, these challenges should be addressed in a spirit of cooperation to the interest of all. Kofi Annan the former UN Secretary General on World Water Day in 2002 said.

“Fierce national competition over water resources has prompted fears that water issues contain the seeds of violent conflict. ...If all the world’s peoples work together, a secure and sustainable water future can be ours”.

I would like add to this wonderful idea and say the people or may be I should say governments should not only **work together** but they must work in a fair manner and have the need and interests of everyone and all stakeholders in mind. If they try to put their narrow interest first without consideration of others legitimate needs it would be recipe for disaster. It would create distrust, result to conflict, violence. Instead of building confidence, good neighbourly relations and in place of development and prosperity, it would create distrust, and result to conflict and violence.

Mr. Chairman,

Let us talk positive let us discuss how we enhance cooperation how we can make best use of water this valuable treasure that we are blessed with. In Afghanistan while we would like to protect our legitimate, as any nation would do, will be happy to find ways to help our neighbours and countries in the region. I just spoke that countries should not think only of their national interest. But this by no mean should prevent Afghanistan and for this matter any other upper riparian of benefiting from their legitimate rights as Stephen McCaffrey one of the greatest international lawyer and expert on water and transboundary water pointing out. He says that upstream State that has not significantly developed its water resources because of its mountainous terrain or any other reason and down stream countries were lucky enough to so and they have used the watercourse extensively for irrigation for centuries, if not millennia, do not have inherent right to complain if upper riparian develop its water resources for hydroelectric and agricultural purposes on the ground that this would significantly harm their established uses. In the contrary they should help so the upper riparian country manage the water more efficiently. This in the long run might benefit all stakeholders.

- Now coming back to the agenda, my colleagues who are expert in the field will discuss input to the datasheet;
- On the climate change, for the past few years very important international conferences and gatherings have been convened and discussed devastating impact of climate change on the water resources, as well as occurrence of natural disasters which have cost thousands of lives and inflicted tremendous economic and social damages to any countries on societies. We in Afghanistan have not been immune of its harm and for the past few years have experienced both, hundreds of our people have lost their lives and social and economic damages cost us million of dollars.
- On the legal and institutional aspect of transboundary water cooperation I must say that, the Water High Council and its Secretariat is reviewing the water Law and working on the transboundary water policy. I am quite sure that you agree with

me that transboundary water issue is an extremely complex issue. It is related to many other aspect of life in a society such as environment, social and economic. To adopt a rational and informed policy we have to collect sufficient data on the above stated areas. We must clearly understand how it would affect our agriculture and farmers our need for energy and to know how many people and communities lives are depended on each basin. We have already begun collecting data. But, collecting sufficient and reliable data needs time and patients. In order to attain the needed information we need wide range technical assistance and appropriate equipment;

- Before talking on monitoring transboundary waters, I would like to comment on financing. As distinguished participants might be aware, in May 2008 the Cabinet of Afghanistan aproved the Afghanistan National Development Strategy of Afghanistan (ANDS). On June 12 2008 was the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan endorsed this document. In the Conference it was agreed that agriculture and irrigation should be brought up in the list of priorities as the first priority. We completed feasibility and design of a number of irrigation projects, but are not able to implement them due to lack of funding. The donors and International Financial Institutions are not coming forward to finance these projects. We have heard their augments, but we think, arguments are not strong enough to stop them supporting a country which is in dire need of cash and need to provide jobs and income for millions of impoverished unemployed people.