

Closing remarks by Mr. Nabil, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Afghanistan

Ms. Chairperson,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are getting near to the end of three productive working days. On behalf of the Afghanistan delegation, I would like to extend my thanks to the presenters for their excellent presentations and the participants for their valuable comments and contributions.

We spoke in great details on the technical matters and therefore I would like to focus on the cooperation aspect. Without genuine and willful cooperation and in the absence of sincere belief in seeing our interests in the interest of our neighbours and others, knowledge of technical issues can not help us and our efforts will go down the drain.

Afghanistan attaches tremendous importance to the regional cooperation and working with its neighbours and countries in the region. Although, our understanding of, and desire for regional cooperation is far broader and goes way beyond transboundary water issues - Cooperation on transboundary waters will pave the way for cooperation in other areas such as trade and transit, cross – border cooperation, movement of people, trade in energy.

As we all agree water is a precious commodity. The people and industries need for water increases but the generosity of nature instead of growing is shrinking. The need for water in our country like many other countries in the world is growing as well. Due to verity of reasons including three decade of war imposed on us as result of cold war and regional powers rivalries competing for power and influence, we were not able to benefit of our legitimate rights and to use the opportunities were available to us. But during

this period Afghanistan neighbouring downstream countries have increased the consumption of transboundary waters.

Ladies and Gentlemen, not being able to use waters flowing in the rivers of country due the reasons mentioned above or any other reason, do not and can not deprive countries, including Afghanistan of their right.

We had designed ambitious projects for irrigation and hydropower before 1978 – 1979, but the war prevented us to implement them. Now is the time we start implementing some of them and we ask for the understanding and cooperation of our neighbours.

We believe that, while lives of 80 % of our people depend on agriculture and while 7 million hectares of our land needs water while 80% of our people in rural area have no access to drinking water we have every right to make better use of water. We are sure none of our neighbours, countries in the region and international community will and should argue against our legitimate right to use the water flowing in our rivers. We hope international and regional organizations including International Financial Institutions understand our position and provide technical assistance and financing for our irrigation and hydropower projects.

We are willing to support proper and just allocation of transboundary water considering the watershed and volume of water produced in a country. We only want our faire share – it is not our intention to deprive our neighbours or for this matter others from their fair share. In Afghanistan we have to make up for the lost time and lost opportunities of benefiting of water resources. It is our right but we believe in doing it in a just and fair manner.

It is imperative we all work to explore the best and most efficient ways of using water resource. And to not complicate things further

more, let me repeat what a participant said yesterday, “Avoid creating artificial reservoirs, swamps and lakes and then claiming water right for it”.

In conclusion, let me once again extends my thanks you the organizers for the excellent arrangements and the government and people of Kazakhstan for the warm hospitality extended to me and Afghanistan delegation.