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Statement

by

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United Nations Under-Secretary-General

**Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission
for Europe**

at

**the High-Level Side Event “Central Asia: Commitments to Water
Action Agenda”**

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within the frame of the United Nations 2023 Water Conference

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the Tajik Government and the World Bank for co-organizing this event.

UNECE is a long-term partner of Central Asian countries. Specifically on water, we have supported efforts in the region for more than 20 years, in many of the areas highlighted as priorities in the Joint Statement.

Let me give you few examples.

Since 2008, with the support of the European Union, UNECE has advanced the implementation of integrated water resources management through **National Policy Dialogues on water**.

The dialogues supported the adoption of the water code in Turkmenistan, the development and adoption of the Water Sector Reform Programme 2021-2025 in Tajikistan, the establishment of the Chu River Basin Council in Kyrgyzstan, and the adoption of the State Programme for Water Management to 2040 in Kazakhstan. They have mainstreamed economic considerations in water governance. They have led to the development of concrete investment proposals.

At the regional level, UNECE has supported transboundary water cooperation. For instance, we have worked with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to strengthen the Chu and Talas Commission and its work on climate resilience. We have worked with all Central Asian countries

to enhance **dam safety**. We have strengthened legal and institutional frameworks for dam safety in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. We have developed operational rules and technical regulations. We have supported bilateral cooperation for several large hydrotechnical facilities. Most recently, we have worked with Syr Darya countries and produced the first ever mapping of all tailing management facilities, as a basis for stronger cooperation on the prevention of **accidental water pollution**.

We are pleased to see progress in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan towards **accession to the Protocol on Water and Health** and will support these countries' efforts. I encourage other countries in the region to also accede to the Protocol.

We will soon start **implementation of a new project** aimed at the integrated management of energy, water and land resources, and unlocking investments in these areas. The project, which is funded by IKI, will support implementation of the Joint Statement as well as the ASBP-4.

Excellencies, please accept assurance that UNECE is **committed to continue supporting Central Asian countries and IFAS** in these areas and beyond, together with the key development partners in this panel.

Thank you for your attention.