



STATEMENT

by

**The President of the Republic of Tajikistan,
H. E. Mr. Emomali RAHMON
at the 5th World Water Forum**

Istanbul, March 16, 2009

Distinguished Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants to the Forum,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to make a statement at this global Water Forum, which more than once proved its ability to make a significant contribution into addressing the most urgent water issues the world over. I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the President of Turkey, H.E. Mr. Abdullah Gül, for the invitation to take part in such an important global event.

Today's rapidly changing world presents us with a lot of surprises. Hardly the global community managed to undertake relevant measures at mitigating and getting adjusted to the impact of global climate change, it got confronted with a new challenge, the financial crisis. It stands to reason, that currently all countries the world over are focused on this phenomenon, and are channeling all their energy and resources to addressing it. However, we should not forget that the water issue, because of its extreme importance, must always remain an item of top priority, both on the global and national agendas.

It becomes quite obvious that political leaders are playing the key role under the circumstances, since they could contribute to attaching primary importance to water issues during the crisis. It is noteworthy that the organizers of this Forum, being aware of the significance of the current situation, for the first time in the history of the world water forums, set into motion a political mechanism, and today's meeting is a proof of this. There is no doubt that this step will give an impetus to further strengthening of contacts aimed at designing unified approaches towards resolving water problems.

As the initiator of the International Decade of Action "*Water for Life*", 2005-2010 and an active participant to the global water events Tajikistan wholeheartedly supports these endeavors, and is striving to make a bigger contribution to this process. As it was mentioned before, global climate change is one of the major modern challenges

related to water resources. This problem is most urgent in Central Asia where climate changes are especially obvious, and are aggravated by the demographic stress.

The glaciers of Tajikistan, which are the main source of water for the rivers of the region, decreased by one third over the last decades, while the population increased by many times. According to the scholars, these trends have a tendency to persist, and will result in a considerable reduction of rivers flow in the medium- and long-term perspective. Given the intensive development of the economies in the states of our region, which, according to some assessments, by 2030 will require the increase in water consumption by 15 to 20 per cent, the above trend definitely gives rise to serious concern.

The obsolete irrigation system is another aspect of the problem. As some data indicates, today in Central Asia up to 40 percent of water used for irrigation is being wasted. This brought about shortage of water and energy that our region is currently experiencing. Extremely cold winter of the last year and the drought of the successive summer vividly proved that the region does not have sufficient capacity either for generation of electricity or regulation of water resources, and that the intergovernmental cooperation in this area is not adequate.

The resulted situation suggests that urgent measures must be taken in order to get adjusted to the above realities and to integrated management of water resources in the region.

One of such measures could envisage an increase in capacity of water reservoirs in the upper steam countries, whose landscape is suitable for construction of reservoirs that would not affect the ecological systems. This could ensure a reliable multi annual and seasonal regulation of water flow, an increase in generation of hydropower, and also rational use of natural resources.

More than once did Tajikistan put forward the initiative to jointly develop its enormous hydropower resources, the estimated annual capacity of which is equal to 527 billion kVt/hour. This amount exceeds the needs of all the countries of the region by three times. Common regional approaches towards development of water and energy resources

in Central Asia will make it possible for the states of the region to totally meet their needs.

In this regard, will you allow me to note that in contrast to water, gas and oil are qualified as non renewable resources, and as it is stated in the Strategy of regional cooperation on rational and efficient use of water and energy resources in Central Asia, which was developed within a special UN program SPECA, their deposits in the region will be sufficient only for the next 60 to 70 years. For this reason, Central Asia can not expect a very promising future in this respect, unless right now we will start laying down the foundation for a complex and rational use of hydropower resources of the region. Water related nature disasters, which we have witnessed more frequently in the recent time, pose an equally important problem, both in Tajikistan and Central Asia. The experts insist that they are caused primarily by climate change. It stands to reason, that such nature disasters entail considerable economic losses, which affect the ability of the country to attain sustainable development.

Last June the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan organized the International conference on water related nature disasters reduction, with the aim to increase awareness of governments, international organizations and donors of this subject. As a result of the discussions new proposals and recommendations were made, which were laid down in the Conference final document entitled the Dushanbe declaration.

In particular, the Conference participants supported the Tajikistan initiatives to ensure that in the second half of the International Decade of Action "*Water for Life*", 2005-2010 the least developed and developing countries receive increased assistance for addressing their water issues, and to establish the International Consortium on Use of the Lake Sarez Water Resources for providing the Central Asia states with pristine clear drinking water.

It is true that the poor and developing countries possess the least resources and capacity required for a complex solution of water problems, and the current financial crisis has considerably aggravated the problem. For this reason, the support of these countries on the part of the international community is becoming of vital importance.

Emergency Funds, which as we suggest should be established within the UN system, also will be serving this aim. We believe that the participants to this Forum will also support the above ideas. If so, the relevant foundation will be laid down for advancing these ideas at the global level.

The purpose of the International Consortium on Use of the Lake Sarez Water Resources is not only to provide a part of the population of the region with pristine clear water but also to considerably mitigate the risk of catastrophic drainage of water from the natural dam that could endanger the lives of about 6 million people on the territories of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. This could become a vivid example of how risk can be transformed into cooperation. It is worth mentioning that the region has already had a similar experience. It is known that in the second half of the last century Central Asia was faced with an ecological disaster of a global magnitude, that is degradation of the Aral Sea, which was caused by extreme use of water resources for the purposes of irrigation of the agricultural land. In order to mitigate the aftermath of this crisis and to preserve the Sea in 1993 there was established the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, which, as of today, is one of the major regional organizations promoting the solution of complicated water economy problems.

I would like to underline once again that Tajikistan has always been, remains and will remain committed to mutually advantageous cooperation. Uneven distribution of water resources is characteristic of Central Asia. The main flow of the Aral Sea basin is formed on the territory of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (*over 80 per cent*) but is being used by Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (*over 85 per cent*). In particular, *56 per cent* of total water resources of the region are formed in Tajikistan, and only about ***10 percent*** of them are being used by Tajikistan itself. It stands to reason, that competing patterns of water use and differences in the seasonal use of water and energy resources, and their unbalanced distribution brings about in a clash of interests not only in the economic sphere but also between nature, human society and economic activities. Under these circumstances it is essential to find new ways of developing a dialogue and mechanisms for cooperation in the area of water resources use.

In this regard, given the ever-growing water crisis, I believe it is necessary that all Central Asian states reconsider their strategies and approaches towards integrated usage

of water resources for all their needs. From our point of view, one of the expedient measures in this regard must be building up capacity of water reservoirs in order to ensure reliable regulated irrigation flows and increase in production of hydropower, which is needed for achieving sustainable development.

Today's global challenges and changes demand that the existing global and regional water strategies and approaches towards usage of water resources be revised. In this regard, we believe that it is necessary to revise the underlying international legal documents in the field of water usage, which must be adjusted in order to meet today's requirements and challenges. The main criteria in this regard must be the following: meeting water needs of human society and environment, socially just approaches towards integrated management of natural resources, improvement of water legislation and more efficient, and transparent mechanisms of distribution of resources.

Rational management of water resources in the basins of transboundary rivers must be formed with due consideration to a just and mutually advantageous usage not only of water but also of other natural resources of the basin and region. Only such an attitude could ensure sustainable development of our countries and preservation of environment for future generations.

Water diplomacy should become the key instrument in this regard, because it is water that becomes the main prerequisite for ensuring both the well being of the population and regional security. The study of transboundary water cooperation shows that many other regions in the world are confronted with a similar situation.

I believe that declaring the year 2012 as *the International Year of Water Diplomacy* would considerably promote strengthening of cooperation and designing new approaches towards regulation of water relations between the transboundary countries.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that declaring the year 2012 as the International Year of Water Diplomacy will give a positive impetus not only to the achievement of the goals set by the International Decade of Action "*Water for Life*", 2005-2010 but also of the Millennium Development Goals.

As the initiator of the Water Decade, Tajikistan is very much interested in its successful implementation. Given the necessity of an interim assessment of progress in the achievement of the goals set by the International Water Decade, and to define objectives for its second half, we propose to convene in Dushanbe in 2010 the International conference that would become a venue for preliminary discussion of the achievements, challenges and experience gained within the framework of the International Decade of Action “Water for Life”, 2005-2010.

We invite all those concerned to cooperate in the preparation and holding of this important high level event .I am confident that many participants to this Forum will join us in order to sum up the results of the first half of the Decade and develop specific proposals for the successful implementation of the goals and objectives of its second half.

In conclusion, I would like to wish the Forum every success, and once again to extend my appreciation to the Forum organizers for providing excellent conditions for its fruitful work.

My hope is that the Forum indeed will bridge vision and practice, which completely corresponds to its motto “*Bridging Divides for Water*”.

Thank you for attention.