

Check against delivery



STATEMENT
by
the President of the Republic of Tajikistan
H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon
at the High-level side event
on Water and Sanitation for All

24 September 2008, New York

Esteemed colleagues,
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,
Distinguished Mr. Secretary-General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to extend to all of you my sincere appreciation for your participation in this important for all of us side event, which has been organized by Japan, the Netherlands, Germany and Tajikistan. I am confident that the event will make a substantial contribution to the achievement of one of the major tasks of the MDG, in particular, *“halving the number of people without a regular access to drinking freshwater and basic sanitation”*.

Water is a substance of vital importance which is crucial for all on-going processes in the world that ensure adequate existence of all living creatures, including human beings. For this reason, the right to water declared by the UN should be considered as “vitaly important for sustaining human dignity” and as “a prerequisite for the implementation of other human rights”. Based on this approach, we have to tackle the task to develop more efficient integrated approaches so that water could be rationally used for all needs of human beings, with due consideration for the human needs and nature laws. Only an approach of this kind could ensure sustainable development of our countries and preserve our planet for the next generations.

I would like to share with you, distinguished participants to this event, our bitter experience, and site as an example of the short-sighted water policy, without due consideration for the ecological specific features of the region that led to degradation of the Aral Sea in Central Asia, one of largest freshwater lakes in the world. The ever increasing shortage of water and its deteriorating quality brought about degradation of soils and vegetation, disastrous changes in flora and fauna, decay of fishery, and also diminished efficiency of irrigated agriculture, which in its turn, caused enormous social and economic problems.

The entire set of the above problems seriously threatens the process of sustainable development of the region.

The problem of the Aral Sea basin, which is located right in the center of Euro Asia, ceased to be a problem of a sub regional magnitude a while ago, and has actually acquired the regional and even planetary dimension.

Of course, the Governments of the five Central Asia states pay the utmost attention to the issues of water supply of population and improvement of sanitation. As one of the measures aimed at finding the solution to water supply and sanitation Tajikistan put forward a proposal to construct a water pipe that would carry water from the Lake Sarez, which is situated in a hard to reach location high in the mountains in the center of the Pamir Mountains chain. The lake contains 18 cubic kilometers of pristine clean freshwater, which could be supplied to millions of the inhabitants of the region. Simultaneously, such a motion would make in possible to prevent the threat of water

breaking from this natural dam that could cause huge destruction of a considerable part of Central Asia. My hope is that this proposal of ours would draw attention of the UN agencies and the international community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The global climate change over the recent years and the resulted processes aggravate the lives of millions of people in terms of water- and food supply, with the most vulnerable and poorest population being mostly affected.

In this regard, as the initiator of the *International Decade "Water for Life", 2005-2010*. Tajikistan puts forward a proposal to dedicate the second half of the *Decade* to specific efforts, both at the international and regional levels, aimed at providing this category of population with freshwater and basic sanitation. Alongside with mobilization of internal and external financial resources, it is essential that the countries, international organizations and donors focus their efforts on sustainable rendering of basic services on water supply and sanitation, construction of technical facilities, support of development of new technologies in this area and improvement of quality of rendered services, in compliance with up-to-date technical, social and ecological requirements. These and other issues should be under constant consideration at the UN and other international organizations, and their discussion should involve all countries of the world.

Given the need to make a mid-term review of the progress gained in the achievement of the goals set by the International Water Decade and to identify the tasks for the second half of the Decade Tajikistan considers it expedient to convene a special session of the General Assembly on water.

My country once again reiterates its readiness to host the International Freshwater Forum in Dushanbe in 2010 that could provide a venue for a preliminary discussion of achievements, challenges and experiences within the International Decade.

I do hope that these proposals will be supported by our partners and UN member states.

Counting on a constructive dialogue and concerned discussion of the entire spectrum of issues related to water supply and sanitation at this side event, I would like to express hope that the meetings of this kind will be held within the UN GA sessions on a regular basis.

Thank you for attention.