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WATER IS A SOURCE OF LIFE AND AN INSTRUMENT OF COOPERATION AND PEACE

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Central Asia is a region with scarce water resources, facing numerous challenges to ensure the sustainable use of its water resources. The water crisis in the region is the result of the combined effect of various factors, including increasing demand for water, climate change, and poor water management practices.

"Water is a human right and a common denominator of development to shape a better future. But the water situation is disastrous. According to the Secretary General, humans consume water "vampirically," and global warming leads to its evaporation, which, in turn, causes disruption of the water cycle, destruction of ecosystems and pollution of groundwater," stressed UN chief António Guterres.

Drought and water shortage have led to a reduction in agricultural crops and livestock deaths not only in the countries of the so-called "lower reaches" – Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, but also in Kyrgyzstan - the country of the "upper reaches", where several transboundary rivers of Central Asia are formed. This scientific article aims to provide an overview of the water issues in Central Asia: analyzing the situation in the so-called political Central Asia formed by five former Soviet republics and discuss potential solutions to address the challenges faced by the region.

According to the UN prediction, the populations of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan are expected to grow to 85 million by 2025. Population growth implies an increased need for agricultural and industrial products. Due to climatic conditions, highly productive agriculture in Central Asia is possible only on the basis of irrigated agriculture - the most water-intensive sector of the economy. But it is in it that the largest amount of water is lost. Now, more than half of the water withdrawn for irrigation evaporates and seeps into reclamation systems, not reaching the fields. Agriculture is the main economic activity in the region, and it accounts for the majority of water usage. Rapid population growth, coupled with expanding urbanization and industrialization, has put further pressure on water resources. As a result, the region's rivers and lakes are overexploited, leading to reduced water quality and quantity. For the Aral Sea basin, such losses amount to 30-40 km³ a year. Among climatic factors, evaporation generally takes the leading place in formation of water problems. It leads to consumption of large volumes of water not only from irrigated lands, but also from surfaces of natural and artificial reservoirs.

Climate change is another critical factor contributing to the water crisis in Central Asia. The region is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, with rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns leading to reduced snowpack and glacier melt. These changes are reducing the amount of water available for agriculture and domestic use, exacerbating the region's water scarcity issues.

Climate change in CA is primarily manifested in decreasing precipitation and melting of glaciers, the main suppliers of fresh water for the region's rivers. The reserves of fresh water conserved in the mountain glaciers of CA are estimated at 650 billion m³. Between 1957 and 2000, that is, in just 43 years, water reserves in the glaciers of the Pamir-Altai have declined by more than 25%. And these processes are continuing. The main cause of glacier destruction is global climate

warming; it is superimposed with natural phenomena (pollution of glaciers with dust carried by dust storms from Afghanistan, Iran, China, desert regions of Central Asia) and anthropogenic activities (salt and dust removal from the dried Aral Sea bed and the Atmospheric Brown Cloud).

The first stage of water diplomacy formation in Central Asia can be considered as 1991-2000. Agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan, with the Initiative of Republic of Tajikistan in Central Asia and neighboring states on cooperation in the sphere of joint management, use and protection of water resources of interstate sources" dated February 18, 1992 is the first agreement signed in the water sector. This agreement is the basis for joint cooperation of the Aral Sea basin countries. In Kzyl-Orda, March 26, 1993, agreement on establishment of International Fund for Saving Aral Sea was signed by governments of five Central Asian countries. The Agreement on Joint Actions for Solving the Problems of the Aral Sea and the Aral Region, Environmental Rehabilitation and Securing the Socio-Economic Development of the Aral Region was signed there as well. These documents consolidated the vision of the region's common objectives and created an interstate structure for saving the Aral Sea. On 11 January 1994, the heads of Central Asian states adopted a decision in Nukus approving the Programme for Specific Actions to Improve the Environmental Situation in the Aral Sea Basin for the Next 3-5 Years, Taking into Account the Socioeconomic Development of the Region, and the basic provisions of the Concept of Solving the Problems of the Aral, Priaralie and Aral Sea Basin. The next important document is the Nukus Declaration of the Central Asian States and international organizations on sustainable development of the Aral Sea basin, adopted in Nukus on 20 September 1995. The main feature of this document is the recognition by the states of the previously signed documents regulating their relations on water issues. Not less important is also agreement between governments of five countries of Central Asian region about status of International Fund for Aral Sea Saving and its organization from April 9, 1999 in Ashgabat, which determined Fund's status and its structure.

In 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals to build a better future for all people. The countries of Central Asia remain firmly committed to these goals and have launched an initiative to revitalize the region and preserve the water and ecosystems of the Aral Sea.

In 2017, UN Secretary-General António Guterres visited Muynak village in Karakalpakstan. He said at that time: "The Aral Sea tragedy is the biggest environmental disaster of our time, an example of how man is destroying the planet." Once the village of Muynak was a prosperous port city, the fourth largest supplier of fish products to the twelve republics. Here there was a cannery, gardens blossomed, people had healthy children and hopes for the future. But then everything changed. People disturbed the balance, and now there is a burial ground of ships on the dead shores of the Aral Sea.

Recently, the UN Water Conference, held at UN Headquarters from March 22-24, was a unique opportunity to accelerate progress toward universal access to safe water and sanitation by 2030. It was co-chaired by the King of the Netherlands, Willem-Alexander, and the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon.

According to the UN, the organizers of the forum reminded that water is at the core of sustainable development and supports all aspects of life on Earth. Access to safe and clean water is a basic human right. However, decades of mismanagement and misuse of water resources have led to a crisis that threatens many areas of life.

In this conference, the Secretary General gave the sad statistics: nearly three out of four natural disasters are water-related; one in four people live outside safely managed water services or have no access to clean drinking water; more than 1.7 billion people lack basic sanitation; half a billion practice open defecation; millions of girls and women spend many hours each day bringing water.

-All governments must develop and implement plans to ensure equitable access to water for all people while respecting this precious resource and establish strong international cooperation in this area.

Guterres underline “ One of my most important achievements as Prime Minister of Portugal was signing the Albufeira Water Convention with Spain 25 years ago,". The convention is still in force today." He urged all member states to join the UN water convention and take action to implement it.

- Investing "significant resources in water and sanitation systems." At the same time, according to António Guterres, those who do not have enough money for this should be supported by international financial institutions.

- Focus on sustainability and adapt infrastructure to the demands of the times.

- to invest in disaster-resistant pipelines, water infrastructure and treatment facilities, as well as to introduce new methods of water recycling and conservation. Also optimizing food systems to reduce methane emissions and water use.

- invest in a global information system that would be capable of predicting water needs in real time.

- to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and ensure climate justice for developing countries.

In recent UN Water Conference, which held at UN Headquarters from March 22-24, Guterres mentioned that "This is more than a conference on water," it is looking at the world situation through the lens of a critical resource and it should provide a qualitative leap in the ability of member states and the international community to recognize the vital importance of water for the sustainability of our planet and as a tool for promoting peace and international cooperation.

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INTERNATIONAL LEGAL PROTECTION OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS

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All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and all are entitled to equal protection under the law, without a double standard. All human beings have equal protection from