The Aral Sea Crisis

Anthropogenic factors (the main area are intensive irrigation and the development of hydropower) together with natural factors (polarity of the climate - a combination of high air temperatures, high evaporation and little precipitation) led to the death of the Aral Sea. The toxic water flowed into the sea along the Amu-Darya and Syrdarya rivers - the loss of its depth and volume of water became, the faster it warmed up, evaporation went easier, which accelerated its drying.

Water Balance of the Aral Sea, km³/year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time period</th>
<th>Water income</th>
<th>Losses for evaporation</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981–1986</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987–1990</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>-14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991–1994</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>-13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995–1998</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>-19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013–2016</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>-7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017–2018</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>-20.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the full restoration of the Aral Sea, 1080 km³ of water (see volume at the level of 1990s) plus about 50 km³ annually will be required to compensate evaporation losses. The total annual runoff of the Amudarya and Syrdarya rivers is about 126 km³. Thus, in order to fill the sea in the same volume, it will be necessary to completely stop all economic activity in the basin for at least 30-40 years - that is mostly unrealistic.

Overcoming the Consequences of Drying of the Sea Today Requires a Strong Consolidation of International Efforts

UN Secretary-General António Guterres (June 18, 2017): "Let the Aral Sea be a symbol of the destruction of the planet by humanity, and let it be a lesson for all of us to rechannel the entire international community in the implementation of the Paris climate agreement - so that it is not like the one I saw in Uzbekistan will not be repeated."

President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev approved the "Strategy of Action on Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021".

In February 2017, the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev approved the "Strategy of Action on Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021."

The document points to the importance of taking systemic measures to mitigate the negative impact of global climate change and the drying up of the Aral Sea on the development of agriculture and human life. For this purpose, the President of Uzbekistan approved the State Program for the development of the Aral Sea region for 2017 - 2021.

The program provides for the implementation of 67 projects by attracting and developing more than 8.4 trillion som at the expense of all sources of financing, including budget allocations, trust funds, grant funds and loans of the main IFIs (ADB, WB, EBRD, etc.). It is aimed at:

- Implementation of comprehensive measures to create new jobs, employment, as well as increase the investment attractiveness of the region;
- Development of the water supply system and increase of the level of provision of the population with clean drinking water, improvement of sewerage systems, sanitation and disposal of household waste;
- Measures for further development of the health care system in the region and preservation of the population gene pool;
- Further implementation of measures aimed at improving the living conditions of the population living in the region;
- Development of transport, engineering and communication infrastructure of settlements in the region, improvement of irrigation networks and introduction of modern energy-saving technologies.

Under Umbrella of the International Fund for the Aral Sea Saving

Uzbekistan consistently makes its significant contribution to the IFAS Programmes. Thus, by Resolution of Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 255 from August 29, 2015 there was implemented (as a contribution to the ASBP-3):

- "A complex program to mitigate the impacts of the Aral disaster, to restore and social and economic development of the Aral Sea region for period 2015-2018."

The program included 235 projects with total cost of USD 1920.8 million, of which USD 736.4 million came from Uzbekistan’s contribution from the state budget and USD 1,184.4 million from international financial agencies.
The government of Uzbekistan with the Resolution No. PP-3754 dated February 2, 2017 approved the proposal of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the Uzbek Agency “Uzcomposed” and IIC “Uzbekistan GEF” on the implementation of the project “Construction of the water conduit “Kungrad-Muynak” with the water distribution structure. The construction of the facility worth 26.6 billion UDS and length of 104 km was carried out for five months (from February to July of 2017).

More than 25 thousand people from Nukus, Bureut, Muynak, Kungrad and Karakalpak districts are now provided with clean drinking water. The ceremony of launch of the conduit with the daily supply capacity of 7500 cubic meters in the Muynak town was attended by the First Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Adhibau Ramatov and Chairman of Jizzorgy Enes of Karakalpakstan Musri Urtayev.

THE PROJECT “CONSTRUCTION OF WATER CONDUIT “KUNGRAD-MUYNAK” with the water distribution structure

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited Muynak region, and initiated additional actions to change situation to better.

In December 2018, the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited Muynak region, and initiated additional actions to change situation to better.

As result of that visit Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan released Resolution No. 37 of January 16, 2019, which approved “Comprehensive Development Program of the Muynak District of Karakalpakstan 2019-2021”.

The Program includes 75 projects for implementation during 2019-2021 with total cost of Uzb. Sums 295,442 million (about 3.2 billion USD). The President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirzoyev, has announced that the development of measures and institutional approaches for managing and improving pasture productivity, development of a set of measures and a national action plan to prevent and mitigate the effects of drought and to develop the available renewable energy potential in the region.

The first initiative of the President of Uzbekistan - To declare “Piriaryle - the Zone of Environmental Innovations and Technology”

This suggests that we are fundamentally changing the ideology of solving the Aral catastrophe: we do not just draw attention to the ecological crisis in order to reduce its negative consequences, but create a mechanism to eliminate it. Much has been done by the countries to mitigate the consequences of the Aral Sea disaster; the socio-economic conditions in the regional countries have changed, the water situation in the region has changed dramatically. In the Aral Basin, as elsewhere in the world, the impacts of climate change are really observed. Many other factors also indicate that it is time to change practices regarding the creation of ecosystem resilience with economic growth.

The second initiative of the President of Uzbekistan is to promote growing seedlings of desert and forage plants

“With proper coordination, we will be able to cover the whole dried sea bottom with forest plantations within the 10–12 years.”

With the International Innovation Center of the Aral Sea region, the Forestry Department is included - it will be engaged in growing seedlings of desert and forage plants, and will provide not only the Republic of Karakalpakstan, but also the neighboring Central Asian republics with seed material for afforestation in desert.

Since 2000, international organizations have been involved in this work, in particular Germany (GIZ), the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the Japan Ecological Fund, France, etc.

In the past 17 years, forest plantations in the Southern Aral Sea region have covered more than 350,000 hectares. Including on the area of 321,800 hectares - at the expense of the Uzbekistan’s budget, 27,000 hectares - funded by GIZ (Germany), 1,500 hectares - by the non-governmental organization Kolumba (France), 25,000 hectares - IFAS.

At dried bottom of the Aral Sea and territory in the Southern Aral region, there are still about 2 million hectares suitable for forest plantations and fixation of movable sand dunes.
The third proposal of the President of Uzbekistan is to create in the Aral Sea zone transboundary protected areas.

"Biodiversity conservation should be our common goal." The President proposed to find a common regional approach to preserve the unique fauna of the region (endangered species of animals such as Kulan, Saiga and others) should be saved in the Aral Sea transboundary protected natural territories.

Today, eight reserves, two national nature parks, one Lower Amu Darya State Biosphere Reserve, the Republican Center for the Breeding of Rare Animal Species, and the Republican Center for the Breeding of Rare Plant Species in Tashkent are planned to create a national park "Central Kyrgyz Reservoir" and a local area of 1.1 million hectares, a nature complex "Preserves of the Aral Sea region" in reserve reserve "Uzbekistan" with an area of 17.0 thousand hectares. In the summer of 2019, documents were prepared to give legal status to the Uygur complex by a bill on "The protection of nature, the Parson for the creation of a transboundary network of protected natural territories" was launched within the framework of which it is planned to expand the system of protected transboundary territories from 2.5 million to 4.5 million hectares (about 11% of the territory of Uzbekistan).

The fourth proposal of the President of Uzbekistan: "It is necessary to drastically increase the level of regional cooperation in water conservation, management and rational use of transboundary water resources."

In Uzbekistan over the past 5 years, new water-saving technologies are implemented and an area of more than 307 thousand hectares of irrigated land (2% of the total irrigated area) was mobilized.

On November 1, 2018, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on this issue signed a special decree. And in the next five years, we plan to cover almost 20% of the irrigated area with modern advanced water-saving technologies.

The fifth proposal of the President of Uzbekistan is the development of effective scientific cooperation.

The President of Uzbekistan literally said: - "In this regard, we consider it important to organize joint inter-disciplinary research, using for that the platform of Scientific Information Centers of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development."

On November 27, 2018, a special high-level United Nations assembly was held at the UN headquarters in New York on the theme "Promoting regional and international cooperation towards comprehensive strategies in support of sustainable development."
On 8 January 2019 President of Uzbekistan signed Decree № 4099 about Support Measures to the Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Human Security for the Aral region.

By the Uzbekistan Government and the UN there were completed institutional arrangements for Trust Fund and adopted RoadMap of support actions.

On 1 March 2019 Uzbekistan has made its own contribution to the Trust Fund (first tranche in the amount of US $ 2.0 million). On 28 March 2019 Government of Norway allocated $ 1.1 million for the Trust Fund.

Under leadership of the State Committee for Investments of Uzbekistan there was established Target Group to negotiate with 17 major donor countries with aim to mobilize financial contributions to the Trust Fund.

On July 15, 2019, Head of the Uzbekistan Mission to the European Union, Diloruz Khakimov, met with Ms. Rina Kyoka, the Chief Foreign Policy Adviser to the President of the European Council.

Rina Kyoka stressed that EU’s interest in supporting the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan. In this regard, it was decided to allocate 5 million Euros to finance projects within this fund.

On August 19, 2019, delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan led by First Deputy Foreign Minister Bihrom Nematov visited the Green Climate Fund Global Programming Conference in Songdo, Republic of Korea, and held talks with the Deputy Executive Director of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Javier Manzanares.

Deputy Executive Director of the GCF positively evaluated the results of work with Uzbekistan in 2017-2019. In particular, it was noted that, in recent years, Uzbekistan, together with organizations accredited to the GCF, has sent several feasible and relevant projects to the Fund to attract grant funds. According to them, one of the key projects of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the World Bank “Adaptation and mitigation of climate change in the Aral Sea basin” for $ 19 million.

During 2-9 of April 2019, a visit of GGGI experts to help Uzbekistan to attract financial resources from the United Nations Green Climate Fund and other international financial institutions. At the initial stage Uzbek side proposed for the implementation 13 projects worth over $ 250 million together with GGGI.

Uzbekistan plans to involve experts of the GGGI in the organization of the International conference “Aral region - a zone of environmental innovations and technology” (planned for 24-25 October 2019), and the establishment of cooperation with the International Innovation Center Aral.

In February 2019, Uzbekistan joined the Agreement on Establishing the Global Institute for Green Growth (GGGI).

Action Program for Assistance to the Aral Sea Basin Countries (ASBP-4)

On January 30, 2018, a meeting of the Board of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea decided “To develop the Action Program to assist the countries of the Aral Sea Basin (ASBP-4)”.

On August 23, 2018, at an extraordinary meeting of the Board of the Fund, the Concept of ASBP-4 was approved, which reflects the main objectives and principles of this Program.

Directions of the ASBP-4 are as follows:

- Integrated water resources management;
- Ecological director;
- Socio-economic development;
- Improving institutional and legal mechanisms.

These areas cover the entire spectrum of the existing problems of the Aral Sea basin and logically follow from previous practical activities within the framework of IAS.
On July 30-31, 2019, in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, there was held the second meeting of the Regional Working Group on the development of the Action Program to assist the countries of the Aral Sea Basin (ASBP-4). The meeting was attended by representatives of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, members of the Regional Working Group for the Development of ASBP-4 from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, representatives of the IDFC-executive bodies, as well as a consultant to the Regional Program "Transboundary Water Management of Central Asia" from project of the EU Nexus Dialogue in Central Asia.

There was achieved full consensus about composition of the ASBP-4 - there were included 32 regional complex projects, which will be further elaborated in details for submission to countries and donors for funding in November 2019.

On August 20-21, 2019, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited the Republic of Karakalpakstan to get acquainted with the progress of the reforms.

On April 26, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev held a meeting with UN Secretary-General António Guterres at his residence in Beijing.

At the meeting, it was noted that following the upcoming International Conference on the development of environmental innovations and technologies in the Aral Sea region on 24-25 October this year, Uzbekistan intends to initiate a special resolution of the UN General Assembly on declaring this region the "Zone of environmental innovations and technologies".

Uzbekistan is looking forward to your active participation in the International Conference “Aral region - a zone of environmental innovations and technology” (planned for 24-25 October 2019 in Nukus city).

For information: apply Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan - info@mfa.uz

25.02.2020

Thank you for attention!

- Viam supervadet rademc unctutn
- Walk together and you shall reach