

“Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation”

Fourth EU – Central Asia High-Level Meeting

Bishkek, 13-14 February 2013

Joint Communiqué

The representatives of the European Union and Central Asian countries,

aware of the importance of addressing environmental challenges as an essential condition for sustainable socio-economic development and stability,

acknowledging that the challenges raised by climate change and environmental protection are a major concern for the EU and Central Asia, as underlined by RIO+20,

reaffirming the commitment to strengthen further mutually beneficial cooperation in the context of the European Union Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia, building upon the 3rd Progress Report of its implementation and the outline for future orientations adopted by the European Union Council on 25 June 2012,

recalling the third EU – Central Asia Joint Communiqué in Rome in November 2009 and *confirming* the importance of environmental governance, climate change and sustainable water management as core priorities for cooperation, as outlined in the Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation between EU and Central Asia (hereafter “the Platform”),

taking into account the conclusions reached at subsequent EU - Central Asia Working Groups,

recalling the Declaration “Save water, Go green” made at the 7th “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference, held in Astana in September 2011,

acknowledging the progress achieved since 2009 by partners Countries in Central Asia in these areas,

in close coordination with other international partners, notably the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development of Central Asia, CAREC and other relevant partners,

in accordance with the thematic priorities for bilateral and regional cooperation defined jointly by the European Union and the countries of Central Asia:

1. *Welcome* the progress achieved since the launching of the Platform; and its role in enhancing dialogue and building a solid foundation for effective co-operation between countries of both regions and among them in this crucial sphere;
2. *Take stock* of work jointly undertaken in the area of environmental governance, climate change and water cooperation and *endorse* the recommendations adopted by the Working Group of the EU Water Initiative, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, in Geneva, July 2012 and those of the Working Group on Environmental Governance and Climate Change in Almaty, September 2012;

3. *Emphasise* the importance of mainstreaming environmental concerns into other sectoral policies when drafting national policies and legislation;
4. *Recognize* the need to exchange environmental information and knowledge, to strengthen institutional frameworks and technical capacities of national and regional institutions, and *reaffirm* the need for a regular process of environmental assessment and for developing the SEIS (Shared Environmental Information System) approach across the region, in cooperation with the European Environment Agency;
5. *Recall* the usefulness of implementation of the relevant multilateral environmental agreements addressing the priorities identified in the Platform;
6. *Promote* the importance of public awareness and support of civil society participation, including regional networks, in environmental policy making and its effective implementation;
7. *Confirm* the high value of sharing best practices and *decide* to enhance dialogue and exchanges on the agreed priority topics through a series of regional seminars during 2013 and 2014 on: information networks and SEIS, environmental impact assessment and strategic impact assessment, green economy (including energy efficiency), civil society and environmental governance, development of national adaptation strategies, climate change mitigation policies and programmes, water scarcity and droughts, the adaptation of the water sector, including transboundary river basins, to climate change, and the continuation of tailor-made responses to the individual needs of Central Asian countries in the framework of the National Policy Dialogues;

8. *Underline* the importance of the continuing cooperation and the exchange of best practice models, best available approaches and techniques in the field of integrated water resource management and water supply and sanitation; the European Union, its Member States and other partner countries stand ready to continue supporting the introduction of modern water management methods and proper measures on effective and rationale use of water resources, water saving technologies, including in a transboundary context;
9. *Noted* the agreement between the five Central Asian partners on the third Aral Sea Basin Programme and *call the attention* on the international donors community to support it
10. *Take stock* of the cooperation to prevent further global warming and to adapt to climate change, and find appropriate climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, underlining the need to develop and enforce policies that will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and their impacts on environment and health
10. bis *Draw the attention* on other environmental issues of concern to the region: increased melting of glaciers, degradation of mountain ecosystems and its impact on all ecosystems of the region, safeguarding biodiversity, reducing pollution related to waste management, industrial site and contaminated tailings, monitoring and addressing the risks related to environment and human health.
11. *Express their determination* to forge a closer partnership, on the basis of current projects and further develop new projects designed to strengthen

cooperation between the European Union and Central Asia within the framework of the Platform;

12. *Emphasise* the importance of a balanced approach, taking account of regional synergies as well as of the policies and needs of each Central Asian country and paving the way for effective project coordination by the European Union and its Member States;
13. *Decide* to meet again in the European Union in 2015 to assess progress in the implementation of the EU-Central Asia Platform for Environment and Water, to review cooperation activities and to establish priorities and practical steps for the Platform for the next period.
14. *Welcome* the proposal to hold the fifth High-Level Conference in Milan, in 2015, in occasion of the Universal Exhibition (EXPO 2015)