

**PRESENTATION BY MR. BERDI BERDIYEV,
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**Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing security and stability
through co-operation**

**Session II: Water governance at national level – best practices and new approaches in
the OSCE region**

Mr. Chairperson,
Ladies and gentlemen,

To begin with, allow me to thank the event hosts for their warm and friendly welcome and wish the organizers and participants of this Forum every success in their effective, results-driven work.

I should like to start my statement by noting that this year is marked by the global community's focus on pertinent environmental problems, above all linked to climate change and water governance. As you know, a large international climate change conference is being held this year in Paris and the heads of a variety of States and leaders of international organizations have been invited. During that forum, countries will present their reports on work on solving issues related to climate change, adaptation measures and mitigation, among others.

We can note a range of important international and regional events on the matter of rational water use, such as the 7th World Water Forum, which took place in April in Daegu, Republic of Korea, the High-Level International Conference on the implementation of the International Decade for Action "Water for Life", which was held in June in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan, and the International Forum "Important Aspects of the Rational and Effective Use of Water Resources and Environment Protection", which took place at the beginning of April 2015 in Ashgabat and involved a large number of officials, international experts and scientists from various States and international organizations.

Of course, the current 23rd OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, which is taking place under the heading "Water governance in the OSCE area – increasing security and stability through co-operation", occupies an important place in the series of events on water governance. As you know, the first preparatory meeting took place in Vienna on 26 and

27 January, during which water governance, rational water use and protection of the ecosystem were considered. The second preparatory meeting was held in Belgrade from 11 to 13 May. During the meeting, the prevention of the risk of natural disasters and the damage caused by flooding to ecosystems and the economies of OSCE States were discussed.

Why is the international community's attention so fixed on environmental issues of such nature?

Firstly, climate change and water governance are very closely related: climate change has a serious impact on the form and content of natural resources in various parts of the world, meaning that adaptive measures must be swiftly adopted for the management of such resources.

Secondly, these issues now pose a real environmental threat. According to environmental scientists, the consequences of global warming, including extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, will have a major impact on agriculture and water resources.

Scientists and researchers have established a direct correlation between global warming and the rise in the number of natural calamities and disasters on our planet. If in the 1980s there were around 120 natural disasters in the world per year, today there are now around 500 incidents a year. Climate change, which is happening right now, does not in any way fit into natural cycles and, what is more, is occurring at a rapid pace. Already today we are talking in terms of not thousands of years, but hundreds and even tens of years.

Central Asia is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change in the world. Such changes have a negative impact on natural and, predominantly, water resources, which is leading to problems with water supply and food security for States in the region. Across the whole of Central Asia, global warming is occurring at a rapid rate, and under none of the possible climate change scenarios that have been predicted will there be an increase in the water available. With the expected rise in water use to meet the vital needs of the growing population, economic activities will put more pressure on river flows. River water sources are increasingly becoming the key limiting factor in food production.

Thus, the water problem in Central Asia is the most important and, in some cases, defining factor in the development of regional processes, which has a significant impact on the implementation of social and economic development plans and the resolution of serious environmental issues. In this regard, regional consensus is the only reasonable platform for effective co-operation between States. Turkmenistan supports approaches aimed at consistently reviewing and solving water and water energy issues in Central Asia, on the basis of the universally recognized norms of international law, taking into account the interests of all States in the region and with the involvement of international organizations. Our country believes that the top priorities for the States of the Central Asian region are improving the efficacy of water use and water saving, fair distribution of water resources, and reaching compromises between the interests of upstream and downstream countries and the needs of water users and ecosystems.

In June 2015, Turkmenistan assumed the chairmanship of the Central Asian Inter-State Commission on Sustainable Development and next year will assume the chairmanship of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. In the course of multilateral

activities within these regional structures, Turkmenistan intends to use these regional platforms to stimulate inter-State co-operation in relation to, among various other environmental issues, the water problem in the region, declaring it a priority area of co-operation with international organizations.

Such an approach could form the basis for a global universal instrument for solving water problems – “water diplomacy”, if you will, at the international level. The development and creation of such an instrument was proposed by the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, during his statement at the 7th World Water Forum, which took place in Daegu. As the Head of Turkmenistan noted: “It is in the creation of a new political and diplomatic form of multilateral communication, which could become known as ‘water diplomacy’, that we see a chance for systematic dialogue aimed at considering all the problems related to the development and recovery of water sources and their intelligent and economical use.”

Since water resources are limited owing to the climate and geographical conditions in the Central Asian region, adapting to climate change, water supply and food security are crucial issues for the region. With this in mind, Turkmenistan put forward an initiative for the creation, under the auspices and with the active involvement of the United Nations, of a specialized structure, to be named the Regional Centre for Climate Change Technologies. One of the most important areas of work of such a centre could be solving problems related to rational water use. In this regard, Turkmenistan is prepared to lend its active support to the development of inter-State co-operation in tackling the water problem in the region, declaring it a priority area of co-operation with international organizations.

I would like to conclude my statement with the words of the famous British artist Peter Blake: “The earth is a water planet where the quality of water defines the quality of life. Good water, good life. Bad water, bad life. No water, no life.” We must not allow the last two scenarios to become a reality, but should do everything possible to ensure that good water and good life are preserved on earth. Therefore, we must employ our existing intellectual capacity, industrial expertise, life experience, centuries-long culture and traditions of treating water resources with respect in order to preserve natural riches for future generations.

Thank you for your attention.