



DOI: **10.5958/2249-7137.2021.01929.7**

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ismoil Nurmetov*

*Doctoral Student,
Department of History, Urganch State University,
Urgench, UZBEKISTAN
Email id: ismoil_nur84@mail.ru

ABSTRACT

In this article, some of the issues of international cooperation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the context of environmental protection activities in Central Asia have been observed. Since the early 2000s, a project has been implemented in Uzbekistan, with the support of UNDP, aimed at increasing the level of environmental monitoring and reporting in support of a more effective environmental policy. In the past two years, Uzbekistan has taken some measures to mitigate the socio-economic and environmental consequences of the Aral Sea disaster. Today, the Republic of Uzbekistan fulfills its obligations to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals, recognizing their importance and relevance in the context of national sustainable development.

KEYWORDS: *Cooperation, Environment, The Aral Sea Problem, Sustainable Development.*

INTRODUCTION

In the countries of the world, environmental degradation leads to huge costs, hinders socio-economic development. Degradation of the natural resource base (soil, water resources) negatively affects agricultural production. Air pollution and poor water quality in water supplies pose serious health risks. The importance of environmental quality for development has been reflected in the Millennium Development Goals¹.

Biodiversity is a common good that belongs to all people on Earth. Biodiversity and its ecosystems are also important in terms of national development goals, including sustainable livelihoods. Matching the goals of land use, construction and economic development with the

goals of protecting biodiversity and supporting ecosystems will enable countries to both preserve their rich natural heritage and enhance the well-being of their citizens².

The species diversity of flora and fauna is directly dependent on the state of ecosystems. Due to its geographical and climatic features, the Republic of Uzbekistan is also subject to the influence of negative environmental factors, including transboundary ones, especially due to the fragility of arid and mountain ecosystems and limited water resources. Currently, 91 species of fauna are included in the International Red Book, 324 species of flora and 184 species of fauna are included in the Red Book of the Republic of Uzbekistan. As of January 1, 2019, the forest fund of the Republic of Uzbekistan was 11 572.6 thousand hectares, or 25.7% of the country's territory, including 3 201.6 thousand hectares covered with forest³.

Sustainable development of the Central Asian region is inseparable from regional cooperation, primarily on environmental protection and water resources management. Transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia is carried out both on the basis of bilateral and multilateral formats.

It should be emphasized that pursuing an active regional policy, creating a favorable political atmosphere in Central Asia, building constructive and mutually beneficial relations with the countries of the region, strengthening regional security and stability are the main priorities of Uzbekistan's foreign policy.

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev in his speech at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly, speaking about the problems of ensuring security and stability in Central Asia, said that such an important issue as the joint use of the region's common water resources cannot be ignored⁴. The head of the state also expressed his conviction that there is no alternative to solving the water problem, taking into account the interests of the countries and peoples of the region equally. Therefore, Uzbekistan supports the draft conventions on the use of water resources of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya river basins, developed by the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy.

It should be noted that the formation of Uzbekistan's foreign policy is inextricably linked with the process of strengthening its statehood, the development of socio-economic reforms, the creation of a democratic legal basis for Uzbek society that arose after the collapse of the USSR. Adhering to the principle of many vectors, Uzbekistan established relations with all in the 90s of the 20th century, reputable international organizations⁵.

Cooperation in the field of ensuring global and regional security is an important area of interaction between Uzbekistan and the UN. In this area, the Head of State draws attention to an acute and urgent global problem – the tragedy of the Aral Sea and calls for the world community to focus its efforts on “reducing the destructive impact of this environmental disaster on the livelihoods of millions of people living in Central Asia and preserving the natural and biological balance in the Aral Sea region”⁶.

The environmental problems of Central Asia are diverse. They arose in the region due to the active influence of man on nature: here more than a hundred years ago they began to intensively develop natural resources, developing the economy, agriculture, and energy. Of course, the Aral Sea disaster is one of the global environmental problems.

The drying up of the Aral Sea has led to the emergence of a permanent environmental hazard and negative impact on the quality of life and health of the entire population of the Aral Sea region. The Aral Sea crisis zone directly covers the territories of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, as well as indirectly – Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Under the influence of the Aral crisis, the area of meadows here has recently significantly decreased. More than 100,000 jobs have been lost due to declining soil fertility, resulting in a loss of sources of income for most families and farms in the region.

The Aral Sea region was a region with a great variety of flora and fauna, about 40 kinds of fish and a number of rare animal kinds lived in the water bodies of the Aral Sea region, the number of saighaks (a type of resistant plants which rises near the Aral Sea) reached 1 million heads, the floristic composition was about 640 plant kinds. Until 1960, the Aral Sea was one of the largest closed water bodies in the world with an area of about 70 thousand km² and a water volume of 1083 km³, its length was 426 km, width – 284 km, maximum depth – 68 m.

Intensive withdrawal of water from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya for irrigation in recent times has caused a drop in sea level. Over five decades, the area of the Aral Sea has decreased by 8 times, the volume of water has decreased by 14 times, it has moved 120-200 km from the coast. Salinization of water reached 110-112 g / l in the western part, and 280 g / l in the eastern part. At the bottom of the dried up sea, a saline valley has formed, the total area of which is 45 thousand km².

As you know, the heads of the independent states of the region from the very beginning drew attention to the state of the Aral Sea, and the associated environmental disaster. Realizing that it was impossible to fight this phenomenon alone, they began to consult with each other to find ways out of this situation. Already in 1992-1993, political issues uniting the Central Asian “five” also emerged: thus, five-sided structures in the field of water use were created⁷.

As a result of the negotiations, on February 18, 1992, an “Agreement on joint management of the use and protection of water resources of interstate sources” was signed. Within the framework of this Agreement, the Interstate Water Coordination Commission (ICWC) was formed with the executive bodies of the BWO “Syr Darya”, BWO “Amu Darya”, the Scientific Information Center (SIC ICWC) and the Secretariat.

A significant event in this regard was the creation of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) in 1993, the founders of which were Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In order to prevent the negative consequences of the Aral problem within the framework of IFAS, three Programs to provide assistance to the countries of the Aral Sea basin were implemented (ASBP-1, ASBP-2, ASBP-3).

Uzbekistan, being a key founding state of IFAS, attaches great importance to the comprehensive strengthening of its activities. During the Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2015 in New York, the Uzbek side came up with an initiative to create a special Trust Fund for the Aral Sea under the auspices of the United Nations on the Aral Sea zone, the main task of which will be the coordination of efforts and the implementation of targeted programs and projects.

Today, IFAS remains the only regional structure that has united the countries of the region on issues of water use and sustainable development. Uzbekistan considers the Fund as a real

platform for the implementation of joint initiatives, programs and projects to reduce the negative consequences of the Aral Sea crisis.

On August 24, 2018, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev took part in the meeting of the Council of Heads of the IFAS Founding States (Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan). The head of the state highly appreciated the initiatives implemented during the chairmanship of Turkmenistan in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, and noted that the projects and efforts of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in this area complement each other⁷.

It should be noted that large-scale projects are being implemented in Uzbekistan to stabilize the environmental situation, improve the living conditions of the Aral Sea population. In the past two years, Uzbekistan has taken some measures to mitigate the socio-economic and environmental consequences of the Aral Sea disaster. On the dried seabed, 461 thousand hectares have been sown with saxual seeds, furrows have been prepared for planting seedlings of salt-tolerant plants on an area of 1.1 million hectares⁸. These and other measures are aimed at countering the removal of dust and salt from the dried seabed, mitigating the impact of climate warming in the region on the environment and public health⁹.

Since the early 2000s, a project has been implemented in Uzbekistan, with the support of UNDP, aimed at increasing the level of environmental monitoring and reporting in support of a more effective environmental policy. Several joint bodies have been established in Central Asia in order to promote information exchange between monitoring and evaluation organizations. The Hydrometeoro-logical Service of Uzbekistan performs the functions of an information and communication center – it maintains general data and provides hydrometeorolo-gical data, information on the level of pollution of water resources and forecasts to consumers of such information in neighboring countries. In addition, the Central Asia Regional Water Sector Information Base (CAREWIB) project is a useful base that collects information on the state of affairs in the field of water resources management in the Aral Sea basin¹⁰.

Significant progress should be noted in the establishment and organization of advisory councils with the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs play a critical role in environmental protection and sustainable development, drawing the attention of governments and society to urgent and emerging environmental issues around the world. For example, joining efforts of CAREC with NGOs is a prerequisite that will help them to pool resources and more actively represent the interests of the region on domestic and international negotiation platforms to solve environmental problems in Central Asia.

The Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) is a leading regional knowledge center in the field of environment and sustainable development, recognized by national, regional and international partners. This organization was established in 2001 by the governments of five Central Asian countries, as well as the European Union and UNDP in accordance with the decision of the 4th Pan-European Conference held in 1998 in Aarhus (Denmark)¹¹.

Since its inception, promoting environmental cooperation and sustainable development in Central Asia, CAREC has developed into a regional organization. The governments of Central Asian countries, including the Republic of Uzbekistan, view CAREC as a unique platform that allows them to participate in international environmental processes, increase their potential in gaining access to international financing mechanisms in the field of climate change and

biodiversity, and assist in promoting such regional governance models in environmental protection, as the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (EC IFAS) and the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD).

CAREC works in five directions. The first is related to climate change and energy efficiency issues. The second – with the environment, where the value of the surrounding world is considered in terms of its renewability, ecological functions, the issues of the relationship between water and energy are studied. The third is education, where various possibilities are considered for educating the new generation in the spirit of the correct concept and perception of nature and care for the environment. The fourth is water cooperation. And the fifth block is health and the environment¹².

Today, the Republic of Uzbekistan fulfills its obligations to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals, recognizing their importance and relevance in the context of national sustainable development. To achieve these goals, a number of strategic documents have been adopted in the country in recent years: the Action Strategy for the five priority areas of development of Uzbekistan in 2017- 2021, the Strategy for the transition to a “green” economy, the Strategy for the further development and reform of the electric power industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Concept of environmental protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030¹³ and others.

The Republic of Uzbekistan is part of a worldwide movement to mitigate and relieve modern environmental challenges such as ozone depletion, climate change, prevention of desertification and land degradation.

REFERENCES:

1. President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev spoke at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly. 20.09.2017. // www.uza.uz
2. The concept of environmental protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 // www.lex.uz
3. Davletov S.R. Environmental issues in Uzbekistan at the modern stage of development // ACADEMICIA: An International Multidisciplinary Research Journal. Vol. 10 Issue 5, May 2020. P. 1775-1780.
4. Measures to Improve Environmental Policy: Progress in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Region. OECD, 2007. // www.sourceoecd.org
5. National database of legislation, October 31, 2019, No. 06/19/5863/3979.
6. Nishanov D.B. Foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the 90s of the 20th century. Abstract of thesis of PhD, – Moscow, 2008.
7. Petrenko T. Экология – проблема региональная. // **Экономическое обозрение** (Ecology is a regional problem. // Economic Review), No. 12, 2018
8. Promotion of water, energy and food security in Central Asia. Nexus Bulletin No1. RECZA, 2019. – P. 3.
9. Cooperation of Uzbekistan with the United Nations // www.mfa.uz

10. Regional cooperation in solving the Aral problem reaches a new level 25.08.2018. //www.mfa.uz
11. Troitsky E.F. (Центральная Азия в системе международных отношений) Central Asia in the system of international relations (1992 - 2009). Abstract of thesis of Doctor of History. – Tomsk, 2010.
12. Millennium Development Goals, 2015 // www.un.org.
13. The Ecological Party of Uzbekistan stands for the development and deepening of international cooperation in all spheres of life! 12/14/2019. //www.pv.uz