

Speech by A. Sadikov at the 10th meeting of the EU-Central Asia Working Group on Environment and Climate Change

4 October 2021

Distinguished heads of delegations

Ladies and gentlemen!

First, let me express my gratitude to the European Commission, the Italian Ministry of Ecological Transition and the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan for organising today's meeting.

We appreciate the strong commitment of the European Union and the Central Asian states to foster mutually beneficial cooperation in maintaining a healthy environmental and climate conditions in the region.

In recent years, we have made significant progress in building regional cooperation in Central Asia across all priority areas, including environmental protection and adaptation to climate change.

It is clear that environmental and ecological improvements contribute to the well-being of people, as well as to building a sustainable and inclusive world. Here, a special role is given to the **development and integration of green solutions** that balance social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development for the continued prosperity and well-being of our people.

Everyone knows that the Aral Sea, which has turned from one of the largest inland water bodies into the Aralkum desert, is one of the Key Environmental Disasters of our region. It causes enormous damage to livelihoods, ecosystems and biodiversity of the Aral Sea region and all of Central Asia.

The President of Uzbekistan initiated large-scale actions to create a green cover of a total area of 2 mln hectares on the dried up seabed of the Aral Sea. Protective salt-tolerant vegetation has already been planted on nearly 500,000 hectares.

The unanimously adopted resolution of the UN General Assembly on Declaring the Aral Sea Region a Zone of Environmental Innovation and Technology is a vivid testimony of the world community's readiness to support the efforts of our countries to mitigate the consequences of the drying up of the Aral Sea.

We hope that the International Innovation Center for Aral Sea Basin under the President of Uzbekistan and the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan will make a worthy contribution to improving the environmental, socio-economic and demographic situation in the Aral Sea region

Dear participants!

Global climate change is negatively affecting the region's water resources, leading to reduced annual precipitation and drought. These processes can threaten food security in Central Asia.

We consider it necessary to pool the efforts on shared water management and climate change mitigation among the states in this region.

To expand the scale of cooperation in mitigating the consequences of the Aral Sea disaster, we propose to support the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, announced at the Third Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia, and to develop the **Green Agenda for Central Asia regional programme**.

This initiative promotes constructive cooperation in environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as wider introduction of resource-saving technologies.

In addition, the Republic of Uzbekistan has made significant efforts to address key environmental issues, conserve biodiversity, and work towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We have adopted key policy documents for environmental protection and green growth, among them:

- **Concept for Environmental Protection till 2030** of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- **Municipal Solid Waste Management Strategy** till 2028 of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- **Biodiversity Conservation Strategy till 2028** of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which envisages improved conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, taking into account ecosystem services and adaptation to climate change;
- **Uzbekistan's Strategy for Green Economy Transition by 2030**, addressing the lessons of the Aral Sea disaster and aiming to pool efforts to create conditions for attracting investment in the development and implementation of green economy principles both in the Aral Sea region and nationwide.

We should also note that a programme on attracting investment in low-emission vehicles, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), is exploring the procurement of electric buses for Tashkent.

The pilot project will introduce a **green transport corridor** into the city, which will undoubtedly contribute to healthier environment. In the future, this model will be applied in other cities in Uzbekistan.

Dear colleagues!

In conclusion, I would like to point out that Uzbekistan strongly supports deepening the regional cooperation on environmental protection and combating climate change, as well as enriching it with practical content within the EU-Central Asia Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation.

I am convinced that together we will establish effective and practical work and achieve tangible results for the prosperity of our common home, the Central Asia.

Thank you for your attention!