

## **Statement by the Donors and Implementing Agencies<sup>1</sup> on the Occasion of the Presentation of the Third Aral Sea Basin Program (ASBP-3)**

**Almaty, 9 December 2010**

The shrinking of the **Aral Sea** caused one of the gravest man-made ecological catastrophes of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It has affected the health and livelihoods of millions of people living in the Aral Sea Basin. More generally, water and energy resources issues have already impacted negatively on regional cooperation, and as a consequence, on the economic growth of the countries of Central Asia, and in the coming decades, **unsustainable use of water resource and the consequences of climate change** might further aggravate the environmental and economic situation in the region. In the long run only **regional efforts** can achieve environmental sustainability and effective climate-change adaptation in the Aral Sea basin.

Following the April 2009 Summit Meeting of Heads of States Founders of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the Third Aral Sea Basin Program (**ASBP-3**) was developed by the Executive Committee (EC) of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and regional organizations, with permanent involvement of the Donor community. ASBP-3 reflects the priorities of the countries and offers an opportunity to IFAS member states to more effectively combine national and regional efforts to improve the environmental and socio-economic situation and achieve environmental sustainability in the Basin. Donors **fully support** the Program and are ready to work together with EC IFAS and the Governments of IFAS member states in its implementation. The availability of Water resources is not *per se* the problem for Central Asia. The challenge is to ensure more effective and integrated management and to share and use water resources for the benefit of all stakeholders.

**EC IFAS has an important role** to play in ASBP-3, as the platform for dialogue and coordination among Central Asian countries on water management issues. For this reason, the institutional structure and legal basis of EC IFAS should be strengthened. Thus, it would be enabled to provide stable, professional support as well as the required transparency and efficiency for the implementation of ASBP-3.

Donors acknowledged that there is a gap between ASBP-3 needs and available resources but the proposed program provides an essential framework to guide future assistance to the region. Donors offer their continued support, it being understood that specific funding decisions will be taken by each donor in accordance with budgetary possibilities and relevant financing procedures. This support includes further strengthening both the institutional and development capacities of EC IFAS and other IFAS technical bodies. At the same time, it is expected that additional funding for ASBP-3 will also be made available by the Central Asian countries, using their own resources.

**Raising donor coordination** to a new level is necessary to ensure the most effective use of available resources and attraction of additional funding. EC IFAS should play a key role in donors' coordination through information exchange, research, monitoring and evaluation.

Donors see their cooperation and dialogue with IFAS member States in the ASBP-3 framework as an opportunity to elaborate mutually advantageous, **environmentally and socially responsible solutions to problems linked to the use of shared water resources** and facilitate effective **climate change** mitigation and adaptation measures.

Finally, donors recommend the establishment of a regular joint process for taking stock and reviewing the progress on the implementation of the approved ASBP-3.

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter referred to as 'the Donors'