

“Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation”

The Third EU – Central Asia High Level Conference

Rome, 5 - 6 November 2009

Joint Communiqué between European Union and Central Asian countries

The representatives of environment of the European Union and Central Asian countries,

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

wishing to bolster implementation of the EU Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia, which provides the framework for a closer cooperation in the fields of environmental resources and water,

driven by a shared commitment to developing and organising a long-term partnership on the basis of common objectives and undertakings to strengthen environmental sustainability in Central Asia, and *determined* to share their experience and expertise with the purpose to support the Republics of Central Asia to develop an efficient and integrated management of these resources,

following the Joint declaration at the EU Central Asia Forum on Security Issues (Paris, Sept. 2008), *taking into account* the EU concept paper on “Enhanced regional cooperation on Environment and Water with Central Asia” presented on the occasion of the 2nd EU CA High Level Conference on environment in Ashgabat, and *in accordance with* the operative conclusions reached on this occasion (3 December 2008), *underlining* the importance of the upcoming 15th Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen this December for the global long-term efforts for climate change mitigation and adaption, and *recalling* the substantial exchange of views on environment held at the EU- Central Asia Ministerial Conference in Brussels (15 September 2009),

agreed that the following areas will constitute the EU CA platform for enhanced cooperation: environmental governance, climate change, sustainable water management.

1. Environmental integration and environmental governance

Environmental integration is a key to good governance in tackling environmental and resource challenges. There is a need to strengthen cooperation between EU and CA in taking steps to put environmental integration into practice, including through implementation of **all** relevant legally binding instruments. In this regard participants welcomed the results of the Conference on Environmental Integration and Sustainable Development, held in Astana in March 2009 upon initiative of the European Commission.

2. Joining forces to combat climate change and minimise its impact

Since climate change has become the general background for any environmental issue, with security implications, and aware that Central Asia is particularly vulnerable to climate change effects, EU and Central Asia partners will develop long term strategies to prevent and mitigate and adapt to the climate effects on human health and on the environment.

Cooperation should be strengthened in the field of climate change. The EU will assist CA countries in policy making and implementation of measures related thereto, including for the accession to relevant multilateral instruments, implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and its mechanisms, emissions trading and clean technologies. The EU will work with CA countries on how they can best engage in a coordinated way in the post Copenhagen arrangements.

These efforts should be further developed over time in accordance with the outcome of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen this December.

In this context, we also note the necessity of enhancing our cooperation in energy efficiency and saving, renewable and alternative energies as well as in reliable, sustainable, low-carbon technologies. The European Union will pay particular attention to regional cooperation in Central Asia on the rational, efficient and sustainable use of hydraulic, hydro-energy and fuel resources and the environment, taking the interest of all the countries of the region into consideration. **Furthermore, we stress the importance of using to the utmost the existing international mechanisms, such as the “Clean Development Mechanism” and the “Joint Implementation Projects”, as well as of strengthening cooperation in the international community.**

3. Water issues

Water management is a vital environmental challenge for the region. We undertake to enhance cooperation on water issues within the framework of the EUWI Eastern Europe Caucasus Central Asia (EECCA) and making use of the “Berlin Water Process”. The already established Working Group will be used as the mechanism to address water-related cooperation issues in Central Asia and encourage further progress on regional cooperation, including suitable measures to adapt to climate change.

The EU is ready to use its cooperation capabilities to facilitate the implementation of best practices, the availability of drinking water and sanitation as well as the increase in the efficiency of water usage in energy and agriculture, while safeguarding the ecological balance in the region.

4. Further environmental issues

We draw the attention on other important environmental issues for the region: land degradation, deforestation and sustainable land use, forestry management, safeguarding biodiversity, including support for the implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, reducing pollution related to industrial sites and contaminated **tailings**, monitoring and addressing the risks related to environment and human health.

Finally, environmental awareness should be supported in the region and the civil society involvement should be promoted with regard for existing regional mechanisms, such as the Central Asia Regional Environment Centre (CAREC).

In order to promote the implementation of the above platform, we suggest that a regular dialogue be launched on how to address the threats posed by climate change in Central Asia. We agreed to establish a new EU-CA Working Group on Environmental Governance and Climate Change, that will also help to strengthen policy cooperation at regional level and will provide guidance on cooperation activities between EU and CA, taking advantage from the participation of other donors, IFIs, international organizations, **regional bodies, including the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development in Central Asia**, and representatives of civil society including NGOs and private sector.

We decide to meet again **in Bishkek for the “Fourth EU – Central Asia High Level Conference”** in 2010 and on the occasion of the Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” to be held in 2011 in Astana, and thereafter to convene an EU CA Ministerial Conference in 2012 to discuss progress, review cooperation activities, and consider practical steps to strengthen the European Union - Central Asia Platform for environment and water.