

## Side Event at the 80th session of the Commission:

### ***Consideration of the modalities for the establishment of the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea basin***

#### Concept Note

**Date/time:** Wednesday, 24 April 2024, 16:45-18:00 hrs.

**Location:** Asia-Pacific Foyer, UNCC, Bangkok

**Organizer:** Turkmenistan

#### **Background**

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The negative humanitarian, environmental and socioeconomic consequences of the Aral Sea basin catastrophe are widely acknowledged. The UN General Assembly resolutions 72/273 of 12 April 2018, 73/297, of 28 May 2019 and 75/266 of 3 March 2021 emphasize cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, while General Assembly resolution 75/278 of 18 May 2021 pertains to declaring the Aral Sea region a zone of ecological innovations and technologies.

The joint communiqué adopted by the Heads of State of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan during a meeting of the Council of Heads of the Founding States of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, held in the Avaza national tourist area in Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan, on 24 August 2018 led to the creation of the multi-partner human security trust fund for the Aral Sea region under the auspices of the United Nations.

ESCAP resolution 79/8 of 22 May 2023 has mandated the secretariat to commission a study on consideration of the modalities for the establishment of the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea basin. The study is examining the feasibility of and the modalities for strengthening regional cooperation with a view to mitigating and minimizing the consequences of water related disasters in the Aral Sea basin. The ESCAP secretariat has engaged an expert to conduct this study and consultations are underway with relevant regional and international specialized entities on the necessity, viability, and modalities of establishing the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea basin.

The side-event at the 80th session of the Commission provides an opportunity to engage key stakeholders and their views will substantively contribute to the study on the modality for the establishment of the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea basin.

#### **Organization and target audience**

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The event is open to all participants of the Commission session. It is targeted at a broad range of practitioners and researchers: from high-level government representatives to practitioners of disaster risk reduction and climate action, civil society and private sector representatives, donors, and international and regional organisations.

## Objectives and expected outcome

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1. Consolidate efforts to address water-related disaster issues in the Aral Sea's basin, fostering collaboration among subregional countries and engaging the support of the international community.
2. Alignment of the plan for conducting the study mandated by ESCAP resolution 79/8 with implementation of the Resolution.

## Programme

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Moderated by: Ms. Tiziana Bonapace, Director of Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Risk Reduction Division of ESCAP

16.45 – 16:55 Opening remarks

Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP

H.E. Mr. Yalakov Babanyyaz, Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan

H.E. Mr. Ardasher Qodiri, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific

16:55 – 17:10 Overview of the Aral Sea situation and resolution

Mr. Ovezmuhammedov Islam, Chief Project Engineer, State Committee for Water Management of Turkmenistan

17:10 – 17:20 Proposed plan for implementing the Aral Sea Resolution

Ms. Dinara Ziganshina, Consultant at ESCAP, Deputy Director of the Scientific Information Centre of Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia (*pre-recorded video*)

17:20 – 17:50 Perspectives from regional stakeholders

H.E. Mr. Arman Issetov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Kingdom of Thailand and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to ESCAP

Mr. Jamshed Kamolzoda, Head of General Department of Population and Territorial Protection of the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan

Mr. Fakhriddin Sultanov, Consul-General of Uzbekistan to the Kingdom of Thailand and the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to ESCAP

Mr. Nikolay Pomoshchnikov, Head of ESCAP's Subregional Office for North and Central Asia

17:50 – 18:00 Wrap up by the moderator

Concluding remark by:

H.E. Mr. Muhammetnyyaz Mashalov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan in Malaysia and Permanent Representative to ESCAP