

Statement
on behalf of the Delegation of Uzbekistan
Uzbekistan on the Course of Sustainable Development
(at the 5th Plenary Session of the UN Conference on Sustainable
Development, Rio de-Janeiro, Brazil, June 20-22, 2012)

Distinguished Chairman,
Distinguished participants of the conference!
Ladies and Gentlemen!

Allow me to express our deep gratitude to the Government of Brazil for hosting the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, top-level meeting that the whole world had prepared for long before its beginning.

In the last 20 years since the first UN Conference on Sustainable Development substantial changes have occurred on our planet. Rapid demographic growth, fast industrialization, globalization, growing demand for food, electricity generation – all these human activities are straining limited natural resources. Our ecosystem is encountering numerous challenges amid climate change and large-scale pollution of the environment, deficit of water resources, etc.

And today it became clear that the time is ripe to go over to new economic system, which provides transition towards more rational use of resources and conservation of ecosystems for sustainable development.

In implementation of its national development model, Uzbekistan seeks optimal combination of macroeconomic planning and environmental and social policies as a priority.

Uzbekistan, as a participant of the global process of attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is consistently implementing the objectives set by the Millennium Development in 2000, based on which the national MDGs for the period up to 2015 have been developed. Attainment of MDGs is elevated to the status of government priorities.

In recent years government spending for the social sectors and welfare have more than pentapled. Annually over 50 percent of State budget is earmarked for the social sector and welfare.

Annual spending for education in Uzbekistan constitutes 10-12 percent of GDP. The country adopted the State Programme for Development of School Education;

National Human Resources Training Programme; the Programme and Concept on Development of Environmental Education, Training and Retraining of Environmental Workers, and Prospects of Improving the Further Training System in Uzbekistan.

Large-scale reforms have been implemented in the health system; health service in line with international standards, have been created; State Programme of Health Reforms has been adopted. Radical reforms and development of healthcare, elimination and substantial reduction of acute infectious diseases became the outcome of the implementation of this Programme. Maternal mortality rate has been reduced by over one-half and child mortality rate by two-thirds. Average life expectancy has gone up.

As a result of economic reforms, Uzbekistan succeeded in maintaining macroeconomic stability and balanced development of economic sectors; the growth rates are averaging 7-9% per annum. Structural reforms and diversification of the sectors of the economy have been implemented along with active investment policy and technical modernization of the manufacturing sectors.

Uzbekistan is successfully implementing Economic Modernization Programme focused on reduction of energy intensity, use of renewable sources of energy; Clean Development Mechanism projects are being implemented; strategies for improved water supply and sanitation of the cities and settlements of Uzbekistan up to 2020 are being formulated. As a result of implementation of the project on integrated water resources management, water use for irrigation has been reduced by 20-30%.

Uzbekistan is focusing its attention on protection of the environment. A number of targeted government programs and national action plans are implemented. The country is fulfilling the commitments related to 12 international legal instruments in this area.

National Environmental Action Plan has been formulated, identifying the prioritized environmental challenges and selecting the remedies. For its further implementation, Environmental Action Programs for 1999-2005 and 2008-2012 have been formulated and successfully implemented.

Based on the Strategy and Action Plan for Biodiversity Conservation, the efforts are underway to safeguard and revive animal and plant world, the programme for expansion and creation of the new protected areas for the period up to 2020 has been developed. In recent years their area increased by over 70,000 hectares. A new kind of a protected area – *Lower Amudarya Biosphere Reserve* has been established.

In the framework of regional cooperation, through established regional institutions, the efforts are underway to implement integrated water resources management, water efficiency and higher productivity, quality standards, scientific and information exchange.

One of the key factors of attainment of the substantial results in political and socioeconomic development and improvement of the environmental situation in the country is active participation of the civil society institutions – political parties, social institutions and movements in these processes.

The results obtained and ongoing qualitative changes in the economy, society, and politics enable to set the objectives of transition to the next stage with the focus on achievement of sustainable development goals in the long-run and one of the effective tools of transition to the green economy.

Preliminary analysis of the capacity of the sectors of the country's economy demonstrated vast potential of the sectors such as energy, water and land resources, waste management "to turn green".

On the course to sustainable development, Uzbekistan is increasingly focusing on development of human resources, enhancement of environmental awareness, and public education. In the framework of implementation of the Strategy for Environmental Education for Sustainable Development, UNECE is actively working to enhance the education of general public.

At the same time, there is a range of unresolved problems. Uzbekistan, located in the arid climatic zone of Central Asia, is currently encountering the environmental challenges of global climate change, cross-border pollution of air, desertification and land degradation, loss of biodiversity, shortage and worsening quality of water resources. All this is causing a number of socioeconomic problems.

Most problems related to worsening of the environment are cross-border in nature, which, in turn, stipulates the need to formulate and implement independent and balanced environmental policy of cooperation in the protection of the environment on regional and global levels.

Thorough focus is required for resolution of the problems caused by the implications of the environmental disasters - desiccation of the Aral Sea, which affected the lives of dozens of millions of people living in the Aral Sea basin

Water is a critical resource for Central Asian countries. For Uzbekistan with about 30 million inhabitants, water resources are the backbone of food security.

Water supply of irrigated lands in Uzbekistan is still dependant on water policies of neighboring upstream countries, whose actions lead to the changes in the flow of the major rivers – Amudarya and Syrdarya, in the way adverse for the agriculture.

Underscoring utmost significance of water resources for sustainable development, including food security, healthcare, agriculture, and rural development as well as the right for safe and clean drinking water and sanitation, the importance of **reasonable and fair use of transborder water resources based on the norms and principles of international water law** must be underlined.

Uzbekistan envisions its vital prospects in the accession to the ranks of developed countries of the world, continuing and advancing political and economic reforms as well as modernization of the country, creating civil society, and thus supporting decent living standards of its citizens.

Based on the decisions of the UN ECE Conference of the environment ministers and for sustainable development of the country, following activity is envisaged:

- Formulation of the long-term Strategy and Programme of Sustainable Development of Uzbekistan based on the existing Concept of Sustainable Development;
- Formulation of the Strategy of Further Modernization of the Economy in line with development and *environmentalization* of the sectors of the economy, including further development of renewable energy;
- Further development and improvement of the National Environmental and Climate Monitoring System including modernization of National Monitoring Network to improve the quality of information and making balanced decisions;
- Enhancement of regional cooperation based on international law related to rational management of crossborder water resources and strengthening the measures on regional and international levels to prevent cross-border pollution of natural resources, combating climate change and loss of biodiversity.

We also voice our support for the proposal of UN Secretary General to review the aid programs for developing countries by international organizations for implementation of sustainable development goals.

We hope that consistent implementation of the envisaged measures will enable to facilitate sustainable development of social, economic, and environmental sectors in the country. Only joint efforts will enable to prevent the violations of the environmental, social, and economic balance in general and Central Asia in particular.

The results of this Conference are very important, on the basis of which we are to develop national programs for sustainable development starting from 2015.

Thank you for your attention!