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Letter dated 9 January 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I write with regard to the multilateral consultations on the development of the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea basin, held in Ashgabat on 18 December 2019.

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of the Chair's summary, which was adopted following the results of the consultations (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session under agenda item 19.

(Signed) Aksoltan Ataeva
Permanent Representative



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Chair's summary

The participants of the multilateral consultations on the development of the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea basin, held in Ashgabat on 18 December 2019, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions [72/273](#) of 12 April 2018 and [73/297](#) of 28 May 2019 on cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, as well as the joint communiqué adopted 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 Türkmenbaşy, Turkmenistan, on 24 August 2018:¹

Recalled the memorandum of understanding between the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the International Fund for Saving Aral Sea, signed in Dushanbe on 3 June 2004;

Recalled also the memorandum of understanding between the United Nations (United Nations Department of Political Affairs) and the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea on cooperation in the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and preventive responses to environmental threats in the Aral Sea, signed in Ashgabat on 3 March 2010;

Underlined, that various United Nations entities are currently working with the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, its subsidiary bodies and its member States on a range of issues;

- The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia engages with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in the areas of environmental protection and water resources management, as well as data collection and dissemination and early warning, in line with the memorandum of understanding signed in March 2010. In addition, the two entities cooperate in providing support for the ongoing work of national experts in developing a comprehensive regional water strategy for Central Asia;
- In September 2016, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Volunteers, on the basis of a 2012–2016 joint programme, launched a second joint programme, for the period 2016–2019, to build the resilience of communities affected by the Aral Sea disaster, in partnership with regional, national and local stakeholders;

Reaffirmed the Sustainable Development Goals and targets related to water resources, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,² and determined to achieve the goal of ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, and other related goals and targets;

Emphasized that water is critical for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger, that water, energy, food security and nutrition are linked, and that water is indispensable for human development, health and well-being and a vital element of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant goals in the social, environmental and economic fields;

¹ [A/73/444](#), annex.

² General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

Recalled General Assembly resolution [71/222](#) of 21 December 2016 on the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028, as well as further efforts to achieve the sustainable development of water resources, in which the Assembly encouraged Member States, the Secretariat and organizations of the United Nations system, through their coordination mechanisms, including the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism on All Freshwater Related Issues, Including Sanitation (UN-Water) and major groups, to accelerate their efforts to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals;

Recognized that the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 contributes to the achievement of the objectives of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028, and acknowledged that disasters, many of which are exacerbated by climate change and are increasing in frequency and intensity, significantly impede progress towards sustainable development;

Underlined the need to strengthen regional mechanisms for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Central Asia;

Recalled the Final Declaration and Co-Chairs’ summary³ and the Call for Action and Partnerships of the High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028;

Noted that the forth Asia-Pacific Water Summit is to be held in Kumamoto, Japan, in October 2020, at which participants will discuss various water-related issues, including water-related disasters and relevant recommendations for action;

Noted also the outcomes and the Ministerial Declaration of the eighth World Water Forum, held in Brasilia from 18 to 23 March 2018, as well as the outcomes of the United Nations special thematic sessions on water and disasters;

Reaffirmed the role of multilateral, regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations and funds, bilateral arrangements, United Nations programmes, and other international organizations in fostering dialogue and supporting cooperation in the field of integrated management of transboundary water resources;

Acknowledged that the negative humanitarian, environmental and socioeconomic consequences of disasters in endorheic (inland) water basins, such as the Aral Sea tragedy, go well beyond the regions and represent a global concern;

Underlined that the General Assembly, by its resolution [73/297](#) of 28 May 2019 emphasized the importance of the development of regional environmental protection programmes for sustainable development in Central Asia, including assistance programmes for the countries of the Aral Sea basin;

Stressed that, in the joint statement of the consultative meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia, adopted in Tashkent on 29 November 2019,⁴ the participants of the meeting emphasized the intention of the countries of the region to strengthen interaction in the basin of the Aral Sea and to undertake effective coordination of their efforts in addressing the problems of the Aral Sea region, using capabilities of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and the resources of the multi-partner human security trust fund for the Aral Sea region, established under the auspices of the United Nations;

Noted the creation of the multi-partner human security trust fund for the Aral Sea region under the auspices of the United Nations, which aims to overcome the

³ [A/73/166](#), annexes I–II.

⁴ See [A/74/571](#).

negative circumstances of the ecological catastrophe in the Aral Sea region and implement projects to improve the socioeconomic situation in the region;

Called upon the relevant United Nations system entities, in particular the regional commissions, to consider the possibility of conducting an independent feasibility study on the modalities for strengthening regional coordination and cooperation to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of natural disasters in endorheic (inland) water basins such as the Aral Sea, and to assess in that regard the viability of establishing the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea basin to enhance regional support in natural disaster prevention and mitigation.
