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**ISSUES AND POSSIBLE APPROACHES TOWARD ADDRESSING
WATER ISSUES IN CENTRAL ASIA**

Note by the secretariat¹

1. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union there have been several attempts trying to deal with the difficult situation with regard to transboundary waters in Central Asia. There are several presidential declarations and agreements making statements on the development of the co-operation. However, in spite of the efforts including the implementation of projects funded by different donors, the situation seems to have deteriorated politically as well as with regard to the situation in environment, health and irrigated agriculture. The countries do not agree on how to share the water resources in quantity and over the seasons, even if they still largely follow the water distribution that was established during Soviet times. Water quality is further a problem.
2. During the preparations for WSSD regional cooperation and water has emerged as key issues for the region. Ministers of Economy, Finances and Environmental Protection in Central Asia made a statement in September 2001 to “Apply to the international community with suggestion to provide support to the sub-regional intent on

¹ This document was not formally edited.

development and implementation of the Central Asian Agenda 21 and Convention on Sustainable Development, as instruments for sub-regional resources integrated management” and to “Follow the UN General Assembly decision to declare the year of 2003 as an International Year of Fresh Water, launch the sub-regional strategy development that will cover problems of regional water reservoirs, water currents, drinking water problems and rational water use”

3. A request was made to the UNECE Secretariat during the 4th ExeCom meeting in Kiev 1-2 March, to further explore the feasibility of raising the issue of water and security in Central Asia on the agenda for the Kiev 2003 Conference.
4. UNECE staff participated in a Workshop “Rio plus 10: Central Asia” in Almaty, May 2002 where the preparations for WSSD were discussed and recommendations were prepared. A ministerial meeting of the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development for Central Asia (17 May 2002, Dushanbe, Tajikistan) followed this Workshop. This ministerial meeting decided: “To propose to the Central Asian Governments to take into account the Central Asian Ministerial Statement (Almaty, 2001) and proposals of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on a common position of CA countries to WSSD in Johannesburg and UNECE Ministerial Conference in Kiev in 2003”, and “To charge the Chairman of ICSD at support Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) to announce on 4-th session of Preparatory Committee (Bali, Indonesia) and WSSD (Johannesburg) the principal proposition of the Central Asian Ministerial Statement (Almaty, 2001) in a format of the regional partnership initiatives.”
5. Concludingly, there is a process of trying to find a common position of the Central Asian States to WSSD and the Kiev conference. It is not yet clear whether this would create a sufficient basis for real progress on the issue of water and security. The recent initiative of the Environment Ministers of the Newly Independent States (NIS) to develop a joint environmental strategy by May 2003 provides an opportunity to raise the issue of water and security in Central Asia at the Kiev Conference. The Environment Ministers, including Environment Ministers of Central Asian States, agreed that the environmental strategy would establish objectives and propose actions in such areas as natural resource management and transboundary problems. Integrated water resources management, including transboundary water issues, is expected to be one focus of this endeavor.