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## GLOBALIZATION AND WATER MANAGEMENT: THE CHANGING VALUE OF WATER

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### WATER PROBLEMS IN MOSLEM CENTRAL ASIA

Igor Hodjamberdiev<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** There are several basic Moslem documents that may support contemporary views on the water situation. They are: *Right of Thirst* (Al-Wanscharisi, *Le pierre de Touche des Fetwas*, v.2, Paris 1909; Al-Bukhari 2, 104 in *Hadith Encyclopedia*), a special "fetwa" of Council of Leading Islamic Scholars (Saudi Arabia in 1978) and others. The annual renewable freshwater available per person in Middle East is 300 cubic meters per person at end of 1990s, and this is expected to drop dramatically by 2025. In Central Asia there are other problems resulting from the impact of ambitious projects built in the Central Asian region during the Soviet period. These projects included inefficient irrigation networks of canals, non thrifty water-reservoir (for Fergana valley, mostly), and very fast growth of cotton production. The impacts of these projects have caused the death of the Aral Sea, resulted in pesticide poisoning of water and vegetables, led to desertification, and had other harmful effects. Inefficient behavior of population and the economy is an unfortunate consequence (some 70 percent of water is lost). There is a lack of appropriate fiscal arrangements between water suppliers and users. Beside that, old-traditions (similar in all South Asian Moslem area), such as micro-canal ("arik") networks and delicate spreading of water for each village and family by highly skilled "mirabs," have kept water consumption high. After USSR collapsed, five new Central Asian states were created: two water producing states Kyrgyzstan and Tadjikistan, due to the ice of Tien-Shen and Pamir, and three water-consuming states- Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan. "Wild market relations" have percolated into state-to-state relations. For example: (a) winter-spring water flow from the Toktogul water-depository (Kyrgyzstani) to rural areas of Uzbekistan were impacted by electrical production as gas supplements were cut off from Uzbekistan in February 2001, (b) refusal of Kyrgyzstani Law Assembly to ratify the Kyrgyzstan-Kazakhstan agreement to provide free water to Central Asian states has been one of the shocks of transition during the latest seven years of real independence. The most severe problem is soil-water privatization (there is some experience in Pakistan and India) in Kyrgyzstan that began in September 2001). These processes have been complicated by demographic growth and contradictions with four centuries of the tradition that water is a community property. Several international conferences (UN Conference with Presidents of Regional States on the Aral Sea Problem in Nukus, 1995; Ministry Ecology Meeting in Tashkent 1998; Consultative Meeting of Ministers Ecology and Finance in Almaty, 2000, and others) have not produced any visible results. UN financed programs (Int Fund Aral Save) too have not worked.. Reasons for the inability to impact water problems are: weak environmental policies, disregard for public opinion, non transparency of financial and technical support (Central Asian NGOs' meeting Declaration for Ministry Meeting in Almaty, 2000). A Public Council of the Central Asian Region has been formed to provide independent monitoring of the situation and to disseminate public information in the spirit of the Aarhus Convention. It has made several maps of the regional water and soil problems.

**KEY TERMS:** Water problems, water use,

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Oriental Languages and Cultures, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. igorho@sdnp.kyrnet.kg