

Secretary-General's remarks at high-level event on the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region

Allow me to begin by expressing my deep appreciation to the Government of Uzbekistan and the co-sponsors – the Governments of Japan, Nigeria, and Norway, the Human Security Unit, the United Nations Country Team in Uzbekistan and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office – for organizing today's high-level event to launch the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region.

Indeed, I do believe human security is a comprehensive concept that allows to bring together the different areas of work of the United Nations. Human security requires peace, it requires development, it requires respect for human rights. It is a way to make sure that we are able to act to the benefit of the people we care for in a very effective manner.

I want to express my deep appreciation to my Special Adviser, Yukio Takasu for his very strong leadership in this domain and I believe this project is one of the demonstrations of the enormous importance of the concept of human security.

Allow me to offer a personal recollection.

In June 2017, with the wonderful hospitality of the Government of Uzbekistan, I had an unforgettable visit to the country. I saw for myself the drying of the Aral Sea – one of the largest ecological catastrophes of our time.

I heard moving accounts from people and experts about how the severe damage to the Sea also undermined the region's social and economic systems. Livelihoods, traditional ways of life, and hopes for the future – all this has been lost.

But I also witnessed enormous local resilience and a yearning to look ahead.

That is why I am heartened to be here today as Governments and the United Nations system are poised to help write a new chapter for communities in the region.

The knowledge we will gain through this effort will also have useful impacts in Central Asia and wherever climate change, environmental degradation and water scarcity are hindering sustainable development.

Indeed, the growing demands for water, the poor management of water resources, and the growing impact of climate change are increasing water stress in many parts of the world.

Moreover, when ecosystem decline is coupled with other forms of insecurity, as we have seen in the Lake Chad Basin, the intersection of water scarcity, climate change, inequality and violent extremism can lead to more intractable crises.

The Fund will advance comprehensive solutions.

It will also embody the idea of human security by focusing on people, communities, prevention and partnerships, and on holistic approaches that address root causes.

The human security framework has already borne fruit in the region.

Through two integrated programmes supported by the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, communities have experienced an upsurge in jobs, 45 per cent of which have gone to women, empowering them with better access to health care, and a general increase in their sense of well-being.

These programmes have built a coalition of stakeholders across key institutions and sectors, which is now primed to take these effective initiatives to scale.

The approach, the partnerships and the political leadership are in place. Now we need to extend the collaboration and resources to make the vision of the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund a reality and to advance sustainable development in the region.

Our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals will require a surge in financing.

I therefore appeal to donor nations to help bring the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region fully to life.

Our integrated, collaborative and human security-centred interventions have already transformed lives in the region, restoring optimism, opportunity and dignity.

The Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region can not only consolidate and expand these gains, but also serve as an example for future action around the world.

I thank the Government of Uzbekistan for the efforts to develop this Fund. I am grateful to all of you who support this Fund, and I pledge the full partnership of the United Nations in this endeavour.

Thank you.