



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Sagit Ibatullin, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 29, 2010

The United States welcomes Mr. Sagit Ibatullin to the Permanent Council today, and thanks him for his presentation of the current priorities and activities of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea or IFAS.

The United States strongly supports the work of IFAS, and believes the fund is making steady progress in helping Central Asian states coordinate their efforts to better address the deterioration of the Aral Sea. There can be no doubt that the adverse environmental, economic, and public health effects of the Aral Sea's shrinkage pose a serious problem for the economic vitality and environmental sustainability of bordering Central Asian states.

IFAS has played a key role in promoting a global dialogue about the threats posed to states' development and security as a result of water resource issues. It has strengthened (and, when necessary, even created) coordination mechanisms for member countries, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Perhaps most importantly, ISAF has raised funds to finance programs that will restore the Aral Sea and revitalize the Aral Sea basin. Without your efforts, regional governments would have a far more difficult time in overcoming the barriers to solving this collective action problem. We see some useful parallels between your work and that of the countries of the Danube basin in building regional cooperation for environmental goals.

Mr. Ibatullin, the OSCE is similarly committed to addressing the environmental challenges participating States face in order to enhance the scope of comprehensive security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. As such, we believe that through effective partnership with the OSCE Office of the Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities, this organization can help IFAS achieve its long-term objectives of saving the Aral Sea and supporting the bordering communities adversely affected by the Sea's devastation. Indeed, the OSCE's multidimensional approach to security makes it a particularly appropriate partner for IFAS future efforts. In this regard, we hope you will actively reach out to the OSCE in the coming months and years so we might coordinate our efforts to address regional water resource management issues.

Thank you once again, Mr. Ibatullin, for your appearance here today. We wish you every success in your work.