

Resolution of the Russian Federation State Duma
International Roundtable Discussion
**“Great Lakes of Eurasia: Legislative Issues of International, Cultural,
and Environmental Cooperation”**

(17 September 2018)

The Great Lakes of Eurasia play an important role in the economic, ecological, esthetic, cultural, and educational development of many regions. At the same time, pollution, shallowing, and even the death of a number of lakes cause anxiety and concern. A sad example of irreparable losses is the disappearance of the Aral Sea. During the past twentieth century, thousands of large and small lakes have disappeared from the surface of the Earth. This negative trend continues to this present day.

According to forecasts, by 2040, the population of the Earth will grow to 9 billion and requirement for water resources will increase by 30 percent. The bulk of fresh water – 26,000 km³ – is concentrated in the 16 largest lakes including Lake Baikal, Lake Teletskoe, Lake Ladoga, and Lake Onega. Lake Baikal alone accounts for 88% of the total reserve of fresh water in Russia.

The Caspian Sea and other salt lakes of Eurasia that cater to the needs of communications, raw materials, fishing, and recreation resources are similarly important. In this sense, the role of preservation of the largest lakes in Eurasia and the world in general for future generations, needs assurance of harmonic relations between lakes and societal development. In most Eurasian countries, the scale of lake exploitation exceeds permissible norms and limits, creating environmental problems, decreased biological productivity, and a threat of their degradation. Unparalleled historical and cultural legacy of lake regions is fast becoming lost.

A wider development of international and national legislative measures aimed at remediation, and the rational use and protection of lakes are urgently needed. Implementation of sustainable ecological development of lake regions requires conversion to a Green Economy that takes into account natural resources scarcity

and their regenerative capability, improves efficiency of resources use and, hence, overall efficiency of the economic activities and quality of life.

To avoid ecological degradation of lakes that frequently leads to the growth of social tension, it is necessary to increase responsibility for the use of water and the biological resources of lakes.

At present, the aggravated global water crisis, shortage of potable water, and building up of conflicts for access to freshwater sources has affected lake regions in general.

In recent years, global awareness of international cooperation towards the protection, preservation, rebirth, and sustainable development of water resources of cross-border lakes has taken place. With the support of the public executive and legislative bodies, the dialogue between all stakeholders strengthens and involvement of the business community into cooperation with non-governmental environmental organizations increases.

The Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea signed 12 August 2018 is an excellent example of international cooperation. It confers exclusive and sovereign rights to the Caspian Sea, and the development and use of its other resources to five states, confidently secures resolution of all relevant issues based on the principles of consensus and plus sum, ensures the truly peaceful status of the Caspian Sea, and the non-presence of armed forces of non-regional states at the Caspian Sea.

Taking into account the discussion that took place on September 17th 2018, the participants of the International Roundtable Discussion “Great Lakes of Eurasia: Legislative Issues of International Economic, Cultural, and Environmental Cooperation”:

Confirm the exceptional importance of lakes and their resources in the sustainable development of lake regions and for Eurasian countries in general.

Welcome the signature of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea

Note the importance of establishment of the International Association of Inter-Lake Regions and expansion of international cooperation in this field.

Support the efforts of the International Association of Lake Regions towards the development of cooperation and integration processes of Eurasia countries in the protection and preservation of water resources of lakes and the ecologically sustainable innovative development of territories and communities on their shores.

Confirm the necessity of attaining the maximal possible support from the authorities and business communities of the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union towards the development of cooperation of the Eurasia lake regions and strengthening of the legislative framework on the ecologically sustainable and innovative development of Eurasia lakes.

Express their gratitude to the leaders of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace and the Geneva Water Hub for providing the report “A Matter of Survival”.

Note the important contribution of the Geneva Water Hub into the promotion of the ‘Blue Peace’ idea, water resources as an instrument of peace, and the development of Water Diplomacy.

Take into account the initiatives of the Swiss Confederation Government in the development of international mechanisms and innovative financial instruments for the implementation of water projects assisting peace, stability, and cooperation.

Note the idea of establishing the ‘Blue Fund’ proposed by the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace as meriting special attention and further discussion at international level.

Express deep concern over the worsening condition of most lakes of the Eurasian space.

Realize the importance of joining the efforts of public institutions, social organizations, educational and research institutes, business communities, and cultural and educational organizations in drawing attention to the problems of lake regions and the joint work required to overcome them.

The Roundtable participants recommend legislative bodies, governmental institutions, civil society, academic circles and business communities, international and non-governmental organizations of Eurasian countries to:

- Expedite the agreed ratification of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, and the harmonization of national legislation with the provisions of this Convention
- Assist the strengthening of inter-parliamentary relations of the Eurasian states in the work of preserving and strengthening a healthy ecosystem of lake regions
- Expand and strengthen cooperation with UN organizations, Geneva Water Hub, UN Environment Europe Office, and other international organizations, academic and business communities with regards to the matters of efficient management of water and biological resources of lakes, and innovative and sustainable development of lake regions
- Set up a Task Force under the aegis of the State Duma Committee for the affairs of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Eurasian integration, and relations with fellow countrymen to study, generalize, and prepare recommendations on the matters of the sustainable development of lake regions of Eurasia

In addition, the roundtable participants propose that:

- The commission of the Eurasian Economic Union shall develop and promote joint projects and scientific programs aimed at economically and ecologically sustainable development of lakes and lakelands, with EurAsEC member states, other foreign states, and international organizations
- The Russian Federal Agency for Tourism shall support the development of socially responsible ecotourism and scientific and educational tourism in the Eurasia lake regions
- The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation shall assist strengthening of public-private partnership in addressing environmental issues of the lake regions, supporting them on the road to establishing a Green Economy, innovative and ecologically sustainable development
- Educational institutions of Eurasian countries shall develop and promote joint projects and scientific programs aimed at the ecologically sustainable development of lakes and lakelands, in the authorities of EurAsEC member states, other foreign states, and international organizations
- Mass media shall cover the wider topics related to Eurasian lake regions, the content of the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace' report "A Matter of Survival";
- The practice of Roundtable Discussions be held on a regular basis together with the International Association of Lake Regions and other international organizations on the matters of innovative and ecologically sustainable development of Eurasian lakes and lake regions.