

## **In the Name of God**

**Integrated River Basin Management – Towards Sustainable Land/Water Development  
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### **Text of Keynote Speech**

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On behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran and people of Mazandaran Province, I am privileged to have the honor to welcome the World Bank Mission, members of the Parliament, national and provincial authorities, experts and also the representatives of water users to the “Consultation Workshop on Alborz Integrated Land and Water Management Project”.

The presence of such participants obviously indicates the great importance of this project, not only on both national and International levels, but also as a reminder of the responsibilities we have toward its sound implementation.

I congratulate the World Bank Management and experts for the support for a project which is in line with the objectives of the Government of Islamic Republic of Iran toward sustainable development and management of soil and water resources at basin level.

Identification and introduction of this project with a budget more than 212 million dollars and an implementation period of 7 years may not have been possible, except through recognizing all its capacities, positive intentions of the WB mission, sincere efforts of the managers and experts of relevant national and provincial agencies, and as the result of positive evaluation of the World Bank of successful implementation of “Tajan Irrigation and Drainage Network Improvement Project” in 1979, which was also supported by World Bank, all hereby appreciated.

Considering the time limitation, I would like to have the permission to bring to the attention of the respected participants a review of the soil and water resources of the Alborz Basin, as well as other basins in Mazandaran province and the country.

The watershed of the Alborz Project includes the Babolrud and Talar rivers, and covers 54000 hectares of high potential agricultural land with annual production of thousands of tonnes of farm and horticultural products. It also includes thousands of hectares of forest with unique species, and more than one billion cubic meters of high quality surface and ground water resources which makes it a good example of a rich basin in the northern part of the country.

The area of Mazandaran province is 24000 square kilometers and includes 590000 hectares of potential irrigated agricultural land with an annual water supply equal to 6.8 billion cubic meters.

The present agricultural lands of the province produce 5.5 million tonnes of the varieties of farm and orchard products, with an annual value of more than 15.000.000.000.000 Rials. The rice plantations alone account for about 44% of the countries rice production. Temperate and humid climate, average precipitation of 750 mm/year, mean temperature of 12C and evaporation range of 950 mm/year have created the best environment for sustainable agricultural development for production of strategic crops.

Fortunately, the new strategy of the world bank for developing countries, and towards this basin, which is an outcome of the agreement between the Government of Iran and the World Bank, is in line with the developmental objectives and long term goals and policies of the government of Iran in regards to sustainable development of soil and water resources. The objectives include:

- Promoting the management of natural resources and the environment, by employing the participation of stakeholders and users through the establishment of civil society based organizations within legal frameworks.
- Distribution/allocation of the benefits resulting from economic development on the basis of the needs of human societies,
- Transparency of government activities to strengthen the accountability of the government.
- Effective and integrated management of forest and range, irrigation and drainage networks, water resources, environment, establishment of basin soil and water committee and related fund.

Obviously, the accurate implementation of each of the above components in the framework of an integrated project for the first time in one basin in Iran can be a promising model for all the basins, not only in Iran, but as the World Bank has noted, for the Middle East and Africa as well.

It is clear that the transfer of the results and lessons learned from such modern mean of management of water basins, in all fields including technology, education and implementation can serve as guidelines for sustainable development.

To conclude by thanking again all the respected guests, and wishing valuable results for the workshop, the just expectation of the representative of the government of Iran from the World Bank is, away from all marginal issues, to follow up its defined tasks in all relevant countries with no hesitation.

Considering the knowledge of the World Bank of the high potential of the Mazandaran province, I request conduction of further detailed studies in all aspects that can result in continuity of movement toward sustainable development of the province. I also announce that such efforts will enjoy the support of all government/ political institutions, civil society and the people.