

Transcript of GFDD's second Global Roundtable with His Excellency, Sirodjidin Aslov, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to the United Nations.

**Natasha Despotovic: (GFDD Executive Director)**

**Question #1**

Could you talk about Tajikistan in your own words and give us a brief presentation of some facts you would like to highlight about your country.

**Ambassador Sirodjidin Aslov: (Republic of Tajikistan)**

**Response #1**

Thank you. First of all I would like to thank South South News and Global Foundation for Democracy and Development for organizing this meeting.

As you mentioned, my country is a mountainous country in Central Asia. It is a very beautiful country, but we do have some economic problems. The country's political situation is very stable; my government has two major priorities; ensuring Tajikistan's energy independence and, of course, ensuring food security. Due to the fact that 93% of the land is mountain and only 7% is acceptable for use as arable land, and it is the reason why we import goods from outside and this causes us a lot of difficulties. However, we do have good climatic soil conditions in the mountainous areas too. Only 6% of the territory is made up of glaciers, and more than 40% is covered by permanent snow, but we can use 25% of the land for the growing of fruits and other kinds of crops.

**Asuncion Sanz: (GFDD Director – office in Washington DC)**

**Question #2**

Mr. Ambassador: Tajikistan was a part of the USSR before the fall of the Union and China has been investing heavily in your country. How would you describe the relationship of Tajikistan with China and Russia and what would you expect from these powerful neighbors?

**Ambassador Sirodjidin Aslov: (Republic of Tajikistan)**

**Response #2**

We have a very good relationship with these two large countries, and as for Russia, currently we have 1 million migrants working there and we are working on migrant issues bilaterally. Also, both Russia and Tajikistan are both members of regional organizations, like CIS and Eurasia Organization.

Russia is one of the most strategic partners of Tajikistan. First and foremost, for security issues. As you may know our country shares a 12,000km border with Afghanistan and we face a lot of challenges with this country. That is why we belong to the United Nations Global Anti-terrorism strategy, and we have also regional security treaties where Russia takes the lead.

In regard to China, we are cooperating on economic issues. The Chinese economy is one of the strongest in the world and we have 400 Km border with China, and we currently have many different agreements together. For example, in the building of small and medium hydro-power stations, and also we have sought their assistance with the construction of roads, which is very expensive. China also works with Tajikistan on developing agriculture and in other sectors of the economy.

**Emy Rodriguez: (GFDD Environmental Program Manager)**

**Question #3**

Touching on what was said earlier we know that the country's main exports are based on mining and water, and you mentioned a little bit about agriculture. We were curious to know what the country should do to strengthen its economy and to diversify in order to overcome the swings in the market?

**Ambassador Sirodjidin Aslov: (Republic of Tajikistan)**

**Response #3**

Environmental issues are an integral part of sustainable development and for these types of issues we can say our region is a prime example. As you know in the time of the Soviet Union, our area was specified for cotton production, but during that time politicians did not understand that they would

make a huge problem for the region in future. That is why now we are suffering the consequences. We have Aral Sea crisis in our region – it used to be the world's 4th largest lake but now the volume of the lake has decreased by 11 fold, and that's why one of the main important, interstate issues in our region is the water usage problem in the five countries. Of the five, two of them, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, are water giving, and the other 3 countries are downstream, so take water. Tajikistan provides 60 % of all the water supply to its Central Asian neighbors.

**Nicole Fernández: (Student on behalf of Internet Audience, Antonio Cocoa)**

**Question #4**

The role of water as a resource for the development of a country is unquestionable, but the results will depend on the institution managing it. What is that institution in Tajikistan and what are its competencies?

**Ambassador Sirodjidin Aslov: (Republic of Tajikistan)**

**Response #4**

That is a very good question. Without the regional bodies or interstate committees it would be impossible to manage water resource issues. The Interstate Water Commission, is located in Uzbekistan and they are responsible for the allocation of water supplies between the five countries. In Tajikistan, the Ministry of Water Resources Amelioration is a member of this Commission.

**Yamile Eusebio: (GFDD – Director - office in New York)**

**Question #5**

Statistics indicate that 60% of the population live below the poverty line, does our country expect to achieve the MDG to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty by 2015?

**Ambassador Sirodjidin Aslov: (Republic of Tajikistan)**

**Response #5**

The 60% figure was before 2003, and now our Government is implementing our national development strategy for poverty reduction. The first strategy was for the period 2007-2009, and the outcome was that it was reduced to 53% by 2009. Now it is implementing its second poverty reduction strategy for 2010-2012 and for the end of this period we hope to reduce poverty rate to a level of 40%. We have made good progress on this issue because the Government has involved its resources and we have some from International Organizations. We have developed good mechanisms for the implementation of these strategies and we have good partners like World bank, UN agencies, UNDP and Asia Development Bank as well as other international institutions, so we expect to reach this level by the end of 2012.