

Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia	<b>BULLETIN</b> <b>№ 4 (93)</b>	November 2022
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## Meeting of the Council of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States

The meeting of the Council of SCO Member States was held in Samarkand on September 15-16, 2022.

The meeting was attended by:

Heads of delegations of SCO member states: Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India; Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President of Kazakhstan; Sadyr Japarov, President of Kyrgyzstan; Xi Jinping, President of China; Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan; Emomali Rahmon, President of Tajikistan; Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of Uzbekistan.

Heads of delegations of observer states: Alexander Lukashenko, President of Belarus; Ebrahim Raisi, President of Iran; Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh, President of Mongolia.

Invited guests: Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, President of Azerbaijan; Serdar Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan; Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of Turkey.

In addition, the meeting was attended by the heads of delegations of invited international organizations.

Earlier, a meeting of the Heads of SCO Member States in a narrow format was held.

At the Samarkand summit, SCO leaders, for the first time in the past three years, came together in person, a unique and effective opportunity to discuss bilateral, regional and global issues that had accumulated during the pandemic

A number of important decisions were signed at the summit, including 30 documents aimed at strengthening multifaceted cooperation under umbrella of SCO and taking cooperation to a brand new level.

Currently, Russia, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are full members of the organization. It also has observer members and other candidates.

By decisions of the SCO Heads of State, Belarus started the procedure of joining to SCO membership. Additionally, the status of an SCO dialogue partner was granted to Bahrain, Maldives, Myanmar, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait.

## Results of the Meeting of the Heads of State<sup>1</sup>

In line with the agenda, the participants discussed the status and prospects of cooperation development in relevant spheres and areas. The principal outcome document was the Samarkand Declaration of the SCO Council of Heads of State.

A record number of agreements, concepts, programs and other decisions have been adopted – 44 documents in total. Those included decisions, among others:

– on the Comprehensive Action Plan 2023-2027 for implementation of the Treaty on Long-Term Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation of the SCO Member States;

[...]

Statements of the Council of Heads of SCO States were also adopted:

- on actions to respond to climate change;
- on ensuring reliable, sustainable and diversified supply chains;
- on ensuring global food security;
- on ensuring energy security.

In addition, the following documents were signed:

[...]

- Cooperation Agreement between the authorized bodies of the SCO countries on plant quarantine;
- Program of cooperation between the SCO countries in using renewable energy sources;

[...]

- Concept of interaction between the SCO countries in smart agriculture and agricultural innovations;

[...]

- Memorandum of Understanding between the SCO Secretariat and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and other documents.



## Samarkand Declaration of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization<sup>2</sup>

(extract)

The leaders of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States (hereinafter referred to as “the SCO” or “the Organization”) as a result of the meeting of the Council of Heads of State in the city of Samarkand on 16 September 2022, declare the following.

[...]

The Member States intend to further develop cooperation in the field of politics and security, trade, economy, finance and investment, cultural and humanitarian relations with the aim of building a peaceful, secure, prosperous and environmentally friendly planet of Earth and achieving a harmonious coexistence of man and nature.

Underlining the significance of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary since signature of the Treaty on Long-term Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation of the SCO Member States, the leaders of the SCO member States approved the Comprehensive Plan for its implementation for 2023-2027. The Member States will further increase the SCO’s participation in efforts to ensure peace and security, advocating settlement of international and regional conflicts by exclusively peaceful political and diplomatic means in order to strengthen

<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/5841>

relations between the Member States so that the friendship of their peoples is passed on from generation to generation.

The Member States **consider Central Asia to be the core of SCO** and support the efforts of the countries of the region to ensure prosperity and peace, sustainable development and the formation of a space of good-neighbourliness, trust and friendship. They advocate further strengthening the role of SCO in enhancing stability and socio-economic development in the region, welcome the holding of regular consultative meetings of the heads of State of Central Asia and, in this regard, note the success of the regular summit on 21 July 2022 (Cholpon-Ata, the Kyrgyz Republic).

The Member States believe that the ongoing efforts to enhance connectivity between Central Asia and South Asia contribute to the common goal of ensuring prosperity and security in the vast SCO region by building sustainable trade, economic, transport and communication links and strengthening the dialogue among civilizations.

[...]

The Member States noted the outcome of the Meeting of the Energy Ministers of the SCO Member States (24 June 2022, Tashkent). They will continue to deepen cooperation between the SCO countries in the field of energy through practical implementation of the Concept of Energy Cooperation of the SCO Member States ( 12 August 2021, Dushanbe).

Member States stress the need to increase mutually beneficial cooperation in the energy sector, including efficient use of all types of energy resources, and support the application of various efficient economically and environmentally friendly technologies that reduce negative environmental impact and promote energy security and the transition to cleaner and greener energy sources in an energy efficient economy. They note the importance of jointly exploring ways to expand regional electricity interconnectivity in the SCO member states.

To this end, the Member States welcomed the adoption of the Programme of Cooperation of the SCO Member States in the Use of Renewable Energy Sources.

Member States stressed the commitment to build a sustainable economic system, including through the promotion of green and environmentally friendly technologies, as well as inclusive approaches to social development through the implementation of the SCO Green Belt Program (17 September 2021, Dushanbe).

Member States note the importance of cooperation in the fields of environmental protection, environmental security, mitigation of the adverse

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effects of climate change, biodiversity conservation and use, and the exchange of experience and operational information on these matters. They recognize that lack of access to safe drinking water, basic sanitation and healthy hygiene are major challenges of our time and note the need to focus on sustainable development and water management.

Member States are convinced that the climate agenda should not be used to introduce measures restricting trade and investment cooperation. Efforts will be made to establish an active dialogue with relevant international institutions in order to attract investment and finance joint projects and programs in the field of environmental protection and introduction of new environmentally friendly technologies, increasing the share of “green” economy.

Member States, taking into account a number of challenges facing the development of agriculture within the production cycle, advocate the introduction of modern technologies, active cooperation in the field of food security, prevention and control of transboundary epizootic diseases. In this connection they will continue practical implementation of the Joint Statement of the SCO Heads of State Council on Food Security (17 September 2021, Dushanbe) and note the approval of the Concept of cooperation of the SCO member states in the field of smart agriculture and agro-innovations and signing of the Agreement between the authorized bodies of the SCO member states on cooperation in the field of plant quarantine.

The interested Member States note the expediency of using the site of the SCO Demonstration Base in Yanglin (PRC) for exchange and training in modern agricultural technologies.

[...]

SCO Member States, stressing the importance of further implementation of the Agreement between the governments of the SCO member states on cooperation in disaster management assistance (signed on 26 October 2005 in Moscow), confirmed their willingness to step up joint efforts in this field. They will continue to strengthen interaction in such areas as exchange of operational information, training of personnel, holding of joint disaster and accident management exercises as well as promote cooperation in the field of disaster management in the border regions. The Member States will develop cooperation with the UN, other international and regional organizations in these areas.

The Member States note the importance of further strengthening cooperation in education within the SCO, expanding inter-university cooperation, holding forums of rectors, scientific conferences and symposia, and developing the activities of the SCO University. Seeking to expand cooperation in the field of digital learning in view of the trends of the world economy in the

era of digital globalization, the member states noted the adoption of the SCO Digital Literacy Programme.

The Member States note the importance of further development of scientific and technological cooperation in the SCO space, express their willingness to conduct joint scientific research, exchange of experience between scientists and scientific organizations within the SCO to find new sources of economic growth and solutions to overcome common social challenges. In this connection they stress the need to implement in practice the Statement of the Council of SCO Heads of State on strengthening cooperation in the field of science, technology and innovation ( 17 September 2021, Dushanbe).

[...]

In view of the importance of preserving the ecological balance in the SCO region and restoring biodiversity, ensuring favourable conditions for the well-being of people and sustainable development, the SCO member states emphasise the need to implement in practice the Action Plan to Implement the 2022-2024 Concept of Cooperation among the SCO Member States in the Field of Environmental Protection.

The Member States, supporting the proposal of the Republic of Tajikistan to declare 2025 as the International Year for the Preservation of Glaciers, note the initiative to establish an International Fund for the Protection of Glaciers through the adoption of a UN General Assembly Resolution.

The SCO member states noted the adoption, at the initiative of the Kyrgyz Republic, of the resolution of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly “Nature knows no borders: transboundary cooperation as a key factor for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity” and of the 41st session of the UNESCO General Conference “Enhanced monitoring and research on mountain glaciers”.

At the initiative of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Member States noted the adoption of the Resolution of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly on strengthening the interconnectedness of Central and South Asia.

Member States noted initiatives to adopt UN General Assembly resolution declaring an “International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education” and a “Decade of Action for Mountain Development” in 2023-2027 ( Kyrgyz Republic) as well as an “International Year of Mobilizing Volunteers for Development” (Republic of Kazakhstan).

Member States notes the outcome of the 2<sup>nd</sup> High Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action, Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028 (6-9 June, Dushanbe)



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Member States underlined the importance of further development of interaction with UN, with interested states and structures in solving the problem of Aral Sea associated with the drying of its basin on large-scale. They noted the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution on declaring the Aral Sea region as a zone of ecological technologies and innovations (18 May 2021) as well as its initiative on launching the Multi-partner Trust Fund for Human Security in the Aral Sea region taking into account the parties' positions.

[...]

### **Statement by the Council of Heads of State of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on climate change response<sup>3</sup>**

We, the Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), unanimously recognise that adverse effects of climate change exacerbate every day, thus making it even more relevant to take global action. Responding to climate change and facilitating post-COVID recovery of the world economy are key objectives of this time. The SCO states account for almost half of the world population. In the interests of these peoples and the entire global community, we reaffirm our shared determination to promote cooperation in tackling challenges stemming from climate change.

We recognise that climate change, with its negative effects, is a global issue, challenging the sustainable development of the humanity. Addressing this problem requires efforts by the entire global community, guided by the fundamental principles set forth in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), for the benefit of strengthening international cooperation and for the purpose of responding together to the ongoing transformation of the economy and society towards sustainable and inclusive development.

The member states believe that the Paris Agreement must be fulfilled based on the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility and taking into consideration the corresponding capabilities in light of the varying national contexts. It should be noted that, to achieve the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement, both curbing and absorbing greenhouse gas emissions are of decisive importance, and that countries have the right to independently set their national goals in preventing climate change and determine how these goals will be achieved.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/5842>

The member states contribute effectively to achieving the global goals dealing with preventing and adapting to climate change. While being faced with the challenges of post-COVID economic recovery and improving living standards, we have set an example for the international community by taking drastic steps to respond to climate change and setting ambitious objectives as part of our nationally determined contributions.

We want to stress that the support provided by developed countries according to Annex II to the UNFCCC must be commensurate with the developing countries' climate change action. The developed countries' have an obligation to the developing countries to provide and mobilise resources to fight climate change (Annex II to the UNFCCC).

We note with great concern that the developed countries (Annex II to the UNFCCC) have yet to fulfil their obligations concerning climate financing, which includes raising \$100 billion per year by 2020. We call on them to fulfil their obligations as soon as possible before COP27, to make a substantial contribution to setting a new collective quantitative goal with respect to climate financing for the period beyond 2025 and increase the required support of the developing countries in funding, developing and sharing technology and capacity building , to assist the developing 2 countries in climate change response in the context of sustainable development.

The member states support a balance between reducing emissions and development, advocating a fair transition. We want to emphasise that per capita greenhouse gas emissions in the developing countries are lower than in the developed countries. The developing countries' rights to independent and sustainable development must be ensured. The Paris Agreement states that, in the process of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, the developing countries require more time to reach peak carbon emissions. Unilateral enforcement violates multilateral principles, seriously undermining multilateral cooperation and collective and national efforts to tackle climate change, as well as weakening the countries' ability to deliver on the climate agenda.

The member states are convinced that it is unacceptable to use the climate agenda to introduce measures that would limit trade and investment cooperation. They are calling for maintaining an inclusive and non-discriminatory regime based on the principles of voluntary climate action.

The member states appreciate the UNFCCC's key role in international talks and cooperation regarding efforts to combat climate change, and they celebrate the 30th anniversary of the signing of this document. Guided by the

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UNFCCC's fundamental principles, they are ready to work with all parties for the complete and effective implementation of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

The member states note that the Paris Agreement aims to make sure that the increase in average global temperatures stays well below two degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels, and that temperature increases be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius. They welcome the results of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) and support the efforts of Egypt to prepare for and hold the 27th UN Climate Change Conference (COP27). The member states reaffirm their readiness to undertake joint efforts in the context of the upcoming conference and to work with all parties to the UNFCCC under a mutual initiative, the principles of openness, transparency, inclusivity and consensus and also with due account for varying national contexts, so as to achieve the desired results.

The member states support the initiative of the Republic of Tajikistan to proclaim 2025 International Glacier Protection Year and note the proposal to establish the International Glacier Preservation Fund.

While recognising the role of carbon trading in achieving the goals of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, the member states consider it advisable to exchange experience and best practices in order to ensure the economic efficiency of adaptation measures and climate-change prevention measures through inclusive and equitable approaches, as well as the principle of common, but differentiated, responsibility.

While continuing to implement the Convention for Cooperation in Environmental Protection (Qingdao, 2018) and the Green Belt Programme of the Shanghai 3 Cooperation Organisation (Dushanbe, 2021), the member states intend to implement the following additional measures:

- facilitate sustainable development, efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve and upgrade infrastructure, including energy infrastructure;
- expand cooperation for developing and introducing resource-saving, energy-efficient, green and low-emission technologies;
- explore the possibility of implementing joint measures regarding the influence of climate change on marine life and vegetation;
- expand experience exchanges in the field of investment standards and sustainable projects, including green taxonomies;

- study prospects for more profound cooperation to mobilise funding, so as to prevent climate change and adapt to it;
- launch dialogue on carbon trading between SCO member states, including approaches for involvement in international carbon markets;
- promote capacity building, create systems for training climate specialists, draft programmes for retraining specialists on the basis of mutual cooperation between SCO member states;
- hold intra-SCO seminars, forums, roundtable discussions involving representatives of state agencies, business associations, research centres, scientists and other experts, so as to discuss interaction, as regards experience exchanges in the field of climate change;
- adhere to openness to encourage interested SCO observer states and dialogue partners to work together in the above-mentioned spheres.

## **Bilateral meetings of the Presidents of Central Asian countries at the SCO summit**

### **Meeting of the Presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan<sup>4</sup>**

On September 15, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev met with the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, Sadyr Zhaparov.

The leaders discussed the current areas of Kyrgyz-Uzbek bilateral cooperation, which has a good dynamics and can reach a new level, the press service of the Kyrgyz President reported.

The Heads of State paid special attention to the importance of launching construction of the "China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan" railway and the Kambarata HPP-1. They noted that the rapid implementation of these and other projects will contribute to the development of the entire Central Asian region.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://kabar.kg/news/zhaparov-i-mirzиеev-obsudili-aktual-nye-napravleniia-kyrgyzsko-uzbekskogo-sotrudnichestva/>

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## **Meeting of the Presidents of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan<sup>5</sup>**

On September 15, 2022, the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, as a part of his participation at the SCO Summit, had a meeting with the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

During the meeting, the Heads of State touched on topical issues of cooperation between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The promising areas of cooperation were identified in the field of energy and transport. They also noted the importance of starting implementation of a project on joint construction of two hydroelectric power stations on the Zarafhsan River and functioning of direct rail links between the capitals of the two countries.

## **Meeting of the Presidents of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan<sup>6</sup>**

The President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdymuhamedov and the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev discussed the issues of further development of bilateral cooperation ahead of SCO summit.

The Presidents noted with satisfaction that the traditionally close friendship, good neighborliness and strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have reached a brand new level in recent years and have been filled with specific practical content.

Attention was paid to the steady growth of trade, which has increased by 10% since the beginning of the year. Cooperation projects are implemented in logistics, industry, agriculture and water management.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://khovar.tj/rus/2022/09/prezident-respubliki-tadzhikistan-emomali-rahmon-vstretilsya-s-prezidentom-respubliki-uzbekistan-shavkatom-mirziyoevym-5/>

<sup>6</sup> Source: <https://turkmenportal.com/blog/51822/prezidenty-turkmenistana-i-uzbekistana-i-obsudili-voprosy-razvitiya-sotrudnichestva>

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## **77th Session of the UN General Assembly: Statements by Central Asian countries**

On September 20, 2022, the general debate of the 77<sup>th</sup> UNGA session was opened at the United Nations headquarters in New York city.

Delegations from more than 180 countries met during the high-level week of the 77<sup>th</sup> UNGA session.



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## **Statement by the President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev<sup>7</sup>**

Speaking from the main international rostrum, the Kazakh leader noted that the meeting at the UN headquarters was taking place at a critical time for humanity, when the world of today appears to have entered a new, increasingly bitter period of geopolitical confrontation.

In his speech, the president recalled that 77 years ago, the founding members placed within the UN Charter the principles and norms of international law that have successfully guided us ever since.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev emphasized the importance of observing the fundamental principles that lie at the root of this universal organization. In particular, he pointed to the need to rethink the linkages between three primordial principles: the sovereign equality of states, the territorial integrity of states, and peaceful coexistence between states.

These three principles are inter-dependent. To respect one is to respect the other two. To undermine one is to undermine the other two. Conversely, as these three principles are respected, they grow in strength. Together they become the basis for greater inter-state cooperation at every level: sub-regional, regional, and global. This is the global prosperity dividend. This system of values, embodied in the UN, remains a beacon of hope for millions of people in different parts of our planet.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev called for a strong defense of these values, putting the United Nations and the spirit of cooperation at their core.

The Head of State named the combatting climate change as another priority requiring increased international cooperation and solidarity.

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<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://dknews.kz/ru/politika/253676-prezident-kazahstana-vystupil-na-obshchih-debatah-77>





If we are to turn this tide, we need more action, and we need it fast.

Many of us have taken bold steps already. In Kazakhstan, we have pledged the total transformation of the oil- and coal-dependent energy sector into a Net Zero economy by 2060. To save our planet, we need investment at greater levels than we have ever seen. However, climate action cannot come at the expense of development or modernization. Therefore, at COP27 later this year, member states, as well as the global business community, must once again scale up their commitment to greater climate finance.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev emphasized that the climate agenda relates directly to the global food security crisis. He declared the commitment of Kazakhstan to utilize this agricultural potential to fight global food insecurity.



Kazakhstan will continue to act as a reliable supplier of grain and other food-staples. It also intends to grow its cooperation with the Islamic Food Security Organization located in Kazakhstan, as well as UN agencies. It is imperative in this connection to exclude food and fertilizers from any sanctions and restrictions whatsoever.

## **Statement by the President of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Zhaparov<sup>8</sup> (extract)**

On September 20, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Zhapar addressed the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly.

[...]

Regarding the general UN issues, I would like to note the following.

This year as half of the implementation period of the UN Sustainable Development Goals until 2030 has passed and we can now objectively look at the real situation at hand. The adoption of the SDGs in 2015 under the motto “Leave no one behind” was a bright example of the constructive negotiation capacity of the world community in the interests of all of us and subsequent generations.

Meanwhile, it has already become obvious that due to objective circumstances, including due to the coronavirus pandemic, the implementation of the sustainable development goals in developing countries, including our country, has slowed down, and without adequate international funding, many of them may not even achieve the critical indicators of the sustainable development goals.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: <https://kabar.kg/news/sadyr-zhaparov-vstupil-na-obshchikh-debatakh-77-i-sessii-genassamblei-oon/>



On my part, I want to confirm the firm commitment of the Kyrgyz Republic to the SDGs and their gradual implementation, taking into account national capacity. I believe that our country's own potential should be the main source and engine of sustainable development.

For these purposes, our efforts are aimed at achieving an accelerated and qualitative growth of the economy, including through mutually beneficial regional and international trade and investment cooperation.

For example, Kyrgyzstan actively participates in integration and cooperation processes, including the Eurasian Economic Union and the “One Belt - One Road” initiative of the People's Republic of China. We are also open to business cooperation and investment partnerships with all interested parties

As you know, Central Asia has no direct access to the sea, so an important regional project is the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railroad. Its implementation will expand international trade and investment, transit and tourism opportunities for Central Asia, located on the route of the Great Silk Road.

As part of the ongoing policy, priority is given to the development of a “green”, “digital” and “creative” economy. The country is actively developing the locomotive of the “green economy”: hydropower industry; small and medium-sized hydropower plants are being put into operation.

Our esteemed neighbors - Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan - will participate in the construction of the largest hydroelectric power station - Kambarata, because this will strengthen the energy security and optimize the use of water resources

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in the region.

In general, I want to note the spirit of unity, mutual understanding, trust and support, which was demonstrated in the city of Cholpon-Ata two months ago, when the Fourth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia was held under the chairmanship of Kyrgyzstan.

[...]

### **Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan Sirojiddin Muhridin<sup>9</sup> (extract)**

[...]

Allow me to address three additional topics which are very important for my delegation: implementation of our roadmap – 2030 Agenda, water, and climate change, as well as peace and security.

Tajikistan strongly reaffirms its commitments to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable development goals.

As we are lagging behind on many SDGs, the Government of Tajikistan has taken bold steps toward integrating SDGs into national policies and development plans. Despite substantial progress made towards the achievement of SDGs, there are significant risks, such as climate-related hazards and disasters that could slow or reverse Tajikistan's path towards the realization of 2030 Agenda and threaten agricultural productivity and food security.

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<sup>9</sup> Source: <https://khovar.tj/rus/2022/09/vystuplenie-ministra-inostrannyh-del-respubliki-tadzhikistan-sirodzhiddina-muhridina-na-obshhih-preniyah-77-j-sessii-generalnoj-assamblei-oon/>



Mr. President,

This year the world has witnessed unprecedented water-related natural disasters.

While we all have been struggling with the consequences of these water-related disasters, we are becoming increasingly aware that water is vital and a resource we must value, protect, and manage effectively.

We need actions that can make a real difference.

On 6-9 June 2022, we successfully held the Second Dushanbe Conference in Tajikistan, which became a key preparatory meeting for the midterm review of the Water Decade in 2023.

As you are aware, on 22-24 March 2023, the U.N. will convene its second water conference after 46 years.

The U.N. 2023 Water Conference will be a good opportunity for all of us to review and evaluate the progress made and the gaps and obstacles we have encountered in realizing the goals of the Water Decade.

Tajikistan and the Netherlands, leading the preparations for this global event, are diligently working and are determined to make the Conference a watershed moment for the whole world.

To this end, we launched the Water Action Agenda as one of the

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outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference. We expect and encourage everyone to come to the Conference with new commitments to enrich the Water Action Agenda.

This is important and necessary not only for us today, but for our children, our future generation!

Mr. President,

The impact of climate change on water resources is another crucial topic that requires our concerted efforts. Alongside the increase in mudflows and floods, water scarcities and droughts, and changes in the hydrological cycle, today, the accelerated melting of glaciers, the primary sources of fresh water on the planet, is of great concern.

To this end, Tajikistan is actively promoting an integrated approach to addressing water and climate issues, including within Water and Climate Coalition. During the Coalition's first meeting, H.E. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, proposed declaring 2025 as an international year of Glaciers' Preservation. We are currently working on the draft resolution to advance the said initiative through the second committee of the U.N. General Assembly. We seek your constructive engagement and support for this important resolution.

[...]

## **Statement of the delegation of Turkmenistan<sup>10</sup> (extract)**

[...]

The course of development of global processes in the field of security dictates the need for strengthening the mechanisms of regional cooperation. On July 28 this year, the UN General Assembly, by its resolution, ***proclaimed Central Asia a Zone of Peace, Trust and Cooperation***. We are grateful to the world community for the decision taken, which creates conditions on a strategically important part of the political map of the world for active work to strengthen international security, prevent and resolve conflicts, and build strong and effective regional institutions in this regard.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: <https://www.mfa.gov.tm/ru/news/3363>





As the host country of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, Turkmenistan stands for full support to its work, which has proved its effectiveness.

Taking into account that December 2022 marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Regional Center, we intend to submit to the General Assembly a draft resolution on the role of the Center, reflecting in this document the significant events of recent years and consolidating the mechanisms of regional interaction built on its basis.

We are particularly concerned about the currently growing threats to global food security, which are rapidly spreading to an increasing number of countries and entire regions. In these circumstances, urgent efforts of the world community and effective measures to overcome the current situation are required.

In order to maintain the stability of the global food market, jointly search for solutions to complicated problems of providing food to the most vulnerable countries, as well as supporting the efforts of the UN Secretary-General in this direction, we propose to hold an International Forum on Food Security in Turkmenistan.

In the current conditions, the full implementation of the agreements reached on the Sustainable Development Goals is of particular importance. In this regard, supporting multilateral tools for monitoring the achievement of the

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SDGs, Turkmenistan will present the Second Voluntary National Review on the SDGs implementation during the High-Level Political Forum in 2023.

[...]

At the current session, Turkmenistan also looks forward to the continuation of a broad dialogue on the issue of energy security. In this context, we consider it necessary, based on the provisions of the resolutions of the UN General Assembly on the reliable and stable energy supplies to world markets, adopted at the initiative of our country, to accelerate work on the implementation of the proposals submitted earlier by Turkmenistan on the establishment of an open-ended international expert group to develop a modern UN international legal toolkit for regulating sustainable and reliable energy transit.

In Central Asia, for objective reasons, climate change and water issues are the most important, and in some cases, determining factors in the development of regional processes, having a significant impact on the overall situation, the implementation of socio-economic development programmes, and the solution of serious environmental issues.

Based on the positions of Turkmenistan on adaptation and mitigation of climate change, presented in November 2021 at the 26<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) in Glasgow, as well as practically considered during multilateral consultations within the framework of the Climate Conference in Bonn in June this year, Turkmenistan is preparing for the establishment in Ashgabat Regional Center for Climate Technologies for Central Asian Countries.

At the same time, noting the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of Turkmenistan in May 2022 within the framework of the implementation of obligations under the Paris Agreement, Turkmenistan intends to intensify efforts to implement the goals outlined in this document, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting the Global Methane Pledge.

We will persistently and purposefully strive to single out the Aral Sea issue as a separate area of the UN's activities. To this end, in May 2023, we intend to resume negotiations on the draft resolution of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on the establishment of the UN Special Program for the Aral Sea Basin, which will be based on the provisions of the UN General Assembly resolutions "On cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS)", adopted in 2018 and 2019.

[...]

**Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs  
of the Republic of Uzbekistan Vladimir Norov<sup>11</sup>  
(extract)**

[...]

The global climate shocks, the growing shortage of natural and water resources, the spread of infectious diseases - all contribute to the aggravation of conflicts and the emergence of humanitarian crises, as well as threaten the foundations of life.

Clearly, no country can avoid global risks and challenges or tackle them alone. Constructive dialogue and multilateral cooperation based on consideration and respect for the interests of all countries are the only way out of the dangerous spiral of crises. Effective international cooperation is essential if the world is to become more stable, predictable, and prosperous.

Under the current conditions, we strongly believe it important to strengthen the central role of the United Nations in addressing global and regional challenges. The UN should evolve for it to respond effectively to the transformations taking place.

[...]

This year, we adopted the Development Strategy for New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026, aimed at deepening the democratic processes, ensuring the rule of law, and improving the living standards of people.

This Strategy is based on the outcomes of the reforms carried out in our country over the previous five years and is designed to advance comprehensive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In particular, by 2030 we intend to halve the level of poverty, increase the effectiveness of the social protection system to respond all those in need, strengthen food security, and become one of the world's upper middle-income countries.

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<sup>11</sup> Source: <https://mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2022/vystuplenie-ministra-inostrannyh-del-respubliki-uzbekistan-vladimira-norova-na-obschih-debatah-77-y-sessii-generalnoy-assamblei-oon---32417>





[...]

Today, thanks to the joint efforts of the Central Asian States, a fundamentally new political atmosphere has been created in our region.

Launched at the initiative of Uzbekistan, the mechanism of Consultative Meetings of the Heads of State of the region has become a vivid symbol of a new era of regional cooperation.

At the last Consultative Meeting, held on July 21, 2022, a truly historic Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation for the Development of Central Asia in the 21st century was agreed upon.

The international recognition of the deepening partnership of the countries of the region is reflected in a number of resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly in support of strengthening peace, stability, and regional cooperation in Central Asia.

We rely on further support from the international community for the processes of rapprochement and cooperation between the countries of Central Asia, and integration of the region into global economic and transport ties.

[...]

Today, the negative consequences of climate change are acutely manifested in our region.

We stand ready to actively participate in the multilateral efforts to promote the topical issues of the green agenda and curb climate change

processes.

Uzbekistan has taken on an additional obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Paris Agreement and is implementing a comprehensive strategy for the transition to a green economy and the development of renewable energy.

In 2021 President of Uzbekistan launched a massive initiative called “Yashil Makon” (Green Land) on planting 1 billion trees and shrubs across the country over the next five years.

The Aral Sea is the biggest environmental crisis in our region. Over the past 5 years, 1.7 million hectares of forest plantations have been planted on the drained seabed.

I take this opportunity to thank the General Assembly for adopting the Resolution on “Declaring the Aral Sea region a zone of ecological innovations and technologies”.

By the end of this year, we plan to host the First Aral Sea International Forum under the UN auspices in Nukus.

In 2023, for the first time, we will host the 14th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, as well as a meeting of the Committee to Review the Implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in Uzbekistan.

We invite the Member States and the UN agencies to take part at these events at high-level.

[...]

## The results of state visits by the Presidents of Central Asian countries

Joint statement by the President of Kazakhstan  
K.-J. Tokayev and the President of Turkmenistan  
S. Berdymuhamedov<sup>12</sup>  
(extract)



The President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdymuhamedov paid a state visit to the Republic of Kazakhstan on October 15, 2022 by the invitation of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev,

<sup>12</sup> Source: <https://akorda.kz/ru/sovместnoe-zayavlenie-prezidenta-kazahstana-kasym-zhomarta-tokaeva-i-prezidenta-turkmenistana-serdara-berdymuhamedova-1591019>

During the talks, which took place in an atmosphere of friendship, mutual respect and trust, the Heads of State discussed in detail the prospects for further deepening strategic partnership and exchanged views on topical issues of regional and international agenda of mutual interest.

[...]

The Presidents agreed on the need for concerted measures to address environmental issues, including reducing water pollution, atmospheric air pollution, soil erosion, and natural disaster risks.

They confirm the need to consolidate efforts for all-round solution of issues related to improvement of socio-economic and environmental situation in the Aral Sea and Caspian Sea basins, especially in the zones of ecological crisis. The willingness to contribute to joint efforts on institutional and legal improvement of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea was also acknowledged. Concern was expressed about the ongoing shoaling of the Caspian Sea, caused by global climate change and reduced runoff from the rivers feeding the sea.

The Heads of State declare that transboundary water resources in Central Asia are the common good of the region's peoples and that the fate of tens of millions of people living now and of future generations, stability and well-being of the whole region depend on equitable and reasonable use of these resources. In this context, they advocate the strengthening of mutual understanding and the development of constructive cooperation, as well as the search for mutually acceptable and fair solutions.

[...]

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## Declaration on Deepening Strategic Partnership between Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan<sup>13</sup> (extract)



Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, hereinafter referred to as the Parties,

*Guided* by the fundamental principles of Turkmen-Uzbekistan relations laid down in the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan of January 16, 1996 and the Treaty of Strategic Partnership between Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan of March 6, 2017,

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<sup>13</sup> Source: <https://turkmenistan.gov.tm/ru/post/67213/deklaraciya-ob-uglublenii-strategicheskogo-partnyorstva-mezhdu-turkmenistanom-i-respublikoj-uzbekistan>



*Noting* the high level of Turkmen-Uzbek relations at the current stage of strengthening strategic partnership,

*seeking* to give long-term character to multifaceted bilateral relations, to develop them more actively in political, economic, trade, investment, scientific-technical, cultural-humanitarian and other promising areas, taking into account modern conditions and trends in the world economy,

*convinced* that further development and deepening of bilateral relations is in the fundamental interests of the two fraternal states and will contribute to their prosperity as well as to the strengthening of peace, stability and security in the region,

*reaffirming* its commitment to the fundamental international legal norms and principles enshrined in the UN Charter,

*declare* the following:

The parties hereby declare the establishment of a deepened strategic partnership between them, which envisages taking their diverse and multifaceted relations to a higher level and making them especially close and dynamic in order to expand cooperation in the bilateral format and in the international arena.

The deep strategic partnership between the Parties is based on their adherence to the principles of sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity of states, inviolability of borders, non-interference in their internal affairs, mutual respect and mutual benefit, and also provides for the development of extensive cooperation in the following areas.

[...]

#### **Trade and economic cooperation**

[...]

The parties intend to give impetus to cooperation in agriculture and the systematic development of relations between the agro-industrial complexes of Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, including for the purpose of increasing and expanding the supply of agricultural products and food to the markets of both countries.

[...]

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### **Environmental protection**

The parties will continue to develop cooperation in the field of environmental security and protection, prevention of transboundary pollution, rational use of natural resources, prevention and elimination of consequences of natural and technogenic emergencies.

The parties emphasized the importance of continuing a constructive dialogue on the equitable use of transboundary water resources in Central Asia

Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan consider the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea as a universal platform for cooperation of Central Asian countries in the implementation of environmental, scientific and technical projects and programs aimed at environmental rehabilitation of areas affected by the Aral Sea disaster.

The parties will fully support the work of this format, considering such an approach as an important element in achieving sustainable development in Central Asia.

The President of Turkmenistan and the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan are convinced that the implementation of the provisions of this Declaration will serve to further strengthen the strategic partnership between two states for the benefit of the fraternal peoples, of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, in the interests of peace and prosperity.

President of  
Turkmenistan

Serdar Berdymuhamedov

President of the Republic  
of Uzbekistan

Shavkat Mirziyoyev

*October 21, 2022 Ashgabat city*

## **Joint press statement of the Heads of State of Central Asia and the President of the European Council<sup>14</sup>**

**(extract)**

On 27 October 2022, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Zhaparov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov (represented by Turkmenistan's Deputy Chair of the Cabinet of Ministers) and President of the European Council Charles Michel welcomed the first regional high-level meeting in Astana.

In an open and friendly atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, the participants summarized the past period of multifaceted and mutually beneficial cooperation between Central Asian states and the EU and reaffirmed their commitment to continue building a strong diversified and forward-looking partnership underpinned by shared values and mutual interests. They reaffirmed their commitment to work together for peace, security, democracy, rule of law and sustainable development in full respect for international law. They expressed continued commitment to uphold the UN Charter, particularly the principles of respect for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity of all countries, non-use of force or threat of its use and peaceful settlement of international disputes.

[...]

The Participants expressed their interest in strengthening joint actions in the field of “green development”, environmental protection and climate change in accordance with the Paris commitments of the Parties. Taking into account the positive experience of the EU in developing and implementing mechanisms for joint management of water resources and transboundary rivers, the Participants discussed options for strengthening inter-regional cooperation in the implementation of innovative, mutually beneficial and open water-energy partnership in Central Asia. The Parties note the importance of strengthening the expert and analytical interaction between think tanks of the two regions in order to develop joint approaches to common challenges.

The Participants expressed their deep gratitude to Kazakhstan for initiating and hosting the first meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia and

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<sup>14</sup> Source: <https://akorda.kz/ru/sovместnoe-zayavlenie-dlya-pressy-glav-gosudarstv-centralnoy-azii-i-prezidenta-evropeyskogo-soveta-279233>



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the EU and agreed to meet regularly.

## **Events organized by EC IFAS in September 2022 in Tashkent**

### **Coordination Meeting of the IFAS Executive Committee with International Development Partners<sup>15</sup>**

The third Coordination Meeting of the IFAS Executive Committee with international development partners was held on 20 September 2022.

The progress made in implementation of the Aral Sea Basin Program (ASBP-4) and in institutional and legal improvement of IFAS was reviewed during the meeting. The 2023 work plan on cooperation with international development partners in addressing water and environmental issues and further development of regional cooperation under umbrella IFAS, taking into account the extension of the Tajikistan's chairmanship, were also discussed.

ASBP-4 was approved on 29 June 2021 by the Decision of IFAS Board and its implementation was assigned to the IFAS Executive Committee together with ICWC and ICSD.

ASBP-4 includes a number of projects, also investment ones, to contribute to achievement of water, environmental, food and energy security in Central Asia. The program also is aimed at implementation of joint actions and prospective programs to overcome the Aral Sea crisis and strengthen regional cooperation through targeted actions at national, regional and international levels.

The Coordination Meeting was organized with the support of the World Bank's CAWEP Program.

Representatives of Central Asian governments took part in the meeting, including Minister of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan D. Daler, Minister of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan S. Khamrayev, Vice-Minister of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan S. Mukataev, Head of Water Management Department of the State Committee for Water Resources of Turkmenistan Y. Pashchiev, Deputy Director of the Water Resources Service under the Ministry of

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<sup>15</sup> Source: IFAS Executive committee, <https://www.facebook.com/ec.ifas/>

Agriculture of the Kyrgyz Republic A. Djayloobayev, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Republic of Kazakhstan A. Karstensa, leading specialist on water resources management, the World Bank W. Young and others.



As a result of the meeting, participants once again expressed their commitment to support implementation of ASBP-4 and underlined the importance of the IFAS Executive Committee's coordination platform, which facilitated information exchange and coordination between development partners and Central Asian governments in implementation and monitoring of projects and programs in the region.

## **Regional Workshop “Central Asia towards the UN 2023 Water Conference”<sup>16</sup>**

The regional workshop “Central Asia towards the UN 2023 Water Conference” was held on 20 September 2022. The UN Conference is to take place in New-York in 2023 under the co-chairmanship of Tajikistan and the Netherlands.

The workshop was organized by the IFAS Executive Committee with the financial support from the CAWEP program of the World Bank, USAID and

<sup>16</sup> Source: IFAS Executive committee, <https://www.facebook.com/ec.ifas/>

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GIZ.

The main objective of the workshop was to demonstrate cooperation and cohesion of Central Asian countries in making commitments to new actions for solving water challenges.

The workshop was to familiarize the participants with the goals, objectives and principles of the UN 2023 Water Conference, discuss the vision of the Central Asian countries on the topics of the Interactive Dialogues and possible voluntary commitments of the region's countries and development partners for inclusion in the Water Action Agenda of the UN Water Conference.

The outcomes of the Regional Water Cooperation Forum in Central Asia, which was held during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dushanbe Water Decade Conference (June 6-9, 2022), as well as draft initiatives, commitments and key messages contained in the Joint Statement of the Central Asia Region for the UN 2023 Water Conference were also discussed during the workshop. The region's countries and development partners also made their suggestions on voluntary commitments to be included in the Joint Statement.

Representatives of Central Asian governments, intergovernmental organizations, international financing institutions, other concerned international agencies, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academia, scientific community, private sector, etc. took part in the workshop.







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## 8th meeting of the Working Group on Institutional and Legal Improvement of IFAS<sup>17</sup>

The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group on institutional and legal improvement of IFAS was held on 21-22 September 2022 in Tashkent.

Members of the Working Group from the IFAS founder-states, representatives of the Executive Committee and its branches, and ICWC and ICSD organizations took part in the meeting.



Institutional and legal improvement of IFAS is carried out with the purpose of establishing the effective and sustainable institutional mechanism, which is capable to respond to new challenges and solve existing environmental and socio-economic problems and integrated water use and protection issues in the region.

On the first day, the summary of Agreements on stage 1 of institutional and legal improvement and the report on stage 2, as well as the options of the improved institutional framework of IFAS were presented and discussed.

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<sup>17</sup> Source: IFAS Executive Committee, <https://www.facebook.com/ec.ifas/>



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On the second day, mandates of the improved IFAS bodies and the review of institutional framework options in connection with the improved mandates of IFAS bodies were discussed.

As a result of the meeting, the final document of the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group was agreed.



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## **Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference<sup>18</sup>**

The Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference was held under the motto “Transforming Planet” in Nicosia from 5 to 7 October 2022.

The conference was comprised of the following sessions:

- From Dobris to Nicosia: 30 years of environmental cooperation in the pan-European region.
- Environment in the pan-European region: visions of 2030 and beyond.
- Third High-level Meeting of Education and Environment Ministries.
- Greening the economy in the pan-European region: working towards sustainable infrastructure.
- Applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism.
- Reporting on the outcomes of the thematic sessions.

Ministerial Declaration of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, the "Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development", the "Framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030" and the "Final review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System" were considered and adopted by the Conference.

### **Ministerial Declaration of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (extract)**

1. We, the ministers and heads of delegation from [number] countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region and the representative of the European Union, meeting in Nicosia, from 5 to 7 October 2022, in the framework of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, make the following declaration.

2. We recall that the “Environment for Europe” process was launched in

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<sup>18</sup> Source: <https://unece.org/info/events/event/368999>

1991, at Dobris Castle in the then Czechoslovakia, with the overarching goal of strengthening cooperation to protect and improve the environment, aiming at peace, stability and sustainable development, while acknowledging that cooperation towards convergence of environmental quality and policies in Europe represents a strong integrating force and provides one of the cornerstones of the construction of the new Europe.

[...]

6. We reaffirm our commitment to improving environmental protection and advancing sustainable development in the ECE region, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through partnership between the public and private sectors. We recognize that greening the economy is of critical importance for the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals and reconfirm our commitments made at the Eighth Environment for Europe Conference held in Batumi, Georgia, from 8 to 10 June 2016. In this regard, infrastructure development and tourism are among the main sectors concerned and it is therefore critical to ensure that environmental, social and health concerns are fully considered and addressed within those sectors, and that disaster risks are identified and mitigated.

7. We confirm the value of the “Environment for Europe” process as a unique pan-European platform for addressing environmental challenges, improving environmental governance, promoting environmental and cross-sectoral cooperation and informationsharing among countries, and as a pillar of sustainable development in the region with a 31-year-long proven track record of important and tangible achievements the result of cooperation among all stakeholders. It has shown itself to be capable of driving progress in overcoming known challenges and of welcoming measures to support countries to face new challenges, transforming itself according to the needs of the region. We consider that it should play a central role in the inclusive and sustainable recovery of the pan-European region, in its green and just transition, and in building a sustainable future based on deepening cooperation and the advent of peace.

8. We recognize the important role that sustainable infrastructure plays in the green economy transition and in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. We underline that sustainable and resilient infrastructure investment should be at the core of green economy policies and commitments, also playing a central role in COVID-19 pandemic recovery plans. We highlight United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme resolution 5/9 on sustainable and resilient infrastructure, and reaffirm the important role that the “Environment for Europe” process could play for its implementation. In this context, we acknowledge that the



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Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment provide a framework and guidance for assessing and reducing environmental impact, both in greening infrastructure and industry. We emphasize the importance of the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decisionmaking and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers in this context in order to ensure transparent, effective, safe and inclusive public participation in decision-making.

9. We affirm that a systemic, inclusive and resilient approach, as outlined in the International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure, is required for different types of infrastructure planning and management. New sustainable and resilient infrastructure should promote resource-efficient use to reduce long-term environmental impacts. We will explore the way forward for the pan-European region, including through innovation, nature-based solutions and engagement with the private sector. The future regionwide approach to sustainable infrastructure should provide the basis for common goals, targets and criteria for policymaking, financing, performance monitoring and replicability of practices that best suit domestic and transboundary needs. We will promote effective, safe and inclusive public participation as an essential prerequisite for good governance of infrastructure development and building a sustainable future for present and future generations, using proven tools such as environmental impact assessment and strategic environmental assessment. We also recognize the need for a common understanding of ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/L.1 sustainable and safe infrastructure and of how to quantify progress across countries, together with the need to strengthen transboundary cooperation to address technological and environmental risks and prevent adverse impacts.

10. We also recognize that applying principles of circular economy to sustainable tourism through multi-stakeholder cooperation, effective incentives, support programmes and regulations is critical for building back better the tourism sector – one of the sectors most affected by the pandemic in the pan-European region. We will promote the transformation of the tourism sector by implementing programmes and projects oriented to applying circular models in the tourism value chain. Moreover, we will build knowledge based on existing circular tools and initiatives, with a view to enabling further dissemination and outreach across relevant ECE member States. We encourage member States and other stakeholders in a position to do so to consider joining and committing to actions under the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative, which unites the tourism sector behind a common vision of circular economy of plastics and the Glasgow

Declaration: A Commitment to a Decade of Tourism Climate Action.

11. will support efforts to reduce water and energy use and greenhouse gas emissions from tourism, particularly from high-impact subsectors (including cruise liners, aviation and accommodation), as well as to improve efficiency in the use of other resources such as water. We also commit to improving wastewater treatment and waste management, including food waste and plastics, in the tourism sector, and to applying circular economy principles across the tourism value chain. We appreciate the commitment expressed by the member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe at its sixty-ninth session, held in Geneva, from 20 to 21 April 2021, to step up their efforts to promote circular economy approaches and the sustainable use of natural resources, in particular through the voluntary commitments made as a part of the “Environment for Europe” process. We commit to supporting and promoting these decisions by fully exploiting the potential of the “Environment for Europe” process and, in particular, the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy, for mobilizing voluntary commitments and sharing positive experiences, such as walking and cycling tourism. More broadly, we will foster a circular economy, favour a life cycle approach and support resource efficiency and waste prevention in production and consumption, notably through repair, product information, refurbishment and remanufacturing, as well as the use of sustainable public procurement and financial incentives.

12. We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the voluntary Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy adopted at the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference. We welcome the positive progress in the implementation of the voluntary commitments of the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy to operationalize the Strategic Framework, and call upon the countries and other stakeholders to continue reporting on the existing voluntary commitments under the Batumi Initiative and consider taking on new commitments, including in the areas of sustainable infrastructure and sustainable tourism. We support further promotion of the Batumi Initiative through existing knowledgesharing platforms, such as the Green Growth Knowledge Partnership and the One Planet Network. We further invite ECE, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations Environment Programme, in close cooperation with each other and with other relevant international organizations, to support countries in their efforts to green their economies and achieve sustainable development.

13. We appreciate the progress achieved in the pan-European region over the past four decades in reducing emissions of the main air-polluting substances and their impacts. We also note that air pollution, both outdoor and indoor, remains a major concern in the region and globally, causing significant threats to

human health and the environment. We remain committed to accelerating the reduction of air pollution, safeguarding human health, the phasing out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons and the phasing down of hydrofluorocarbons, including their contribution to global warming. In this regard, we remain committed to ensuring adequate monitoring of, and public access to relevant information on, air pollution, in particular ground-level monitoring. We also welcome the final progress report of the voluntary Batumi Action for Cleaner Air, noting with appreciation the implementation of initiatives launched by interested countries and other stakeholders aimed at improving air ECE/NICOSIA.CONF/2022/L.1 quality and protecting public health and ecosystems. We also welcome close cooperation with the ECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, in particular, the creation of a forum for international cooperation on air pollution under the Convention, to provide a means for countries around the world to cooperate to prevent and reduce air pollution. We welcome the exploration of synergies in achieving progress under the Batumi Action and the possibility of continuing to promote the Batumi Action measures.

14. We appreciate progress achieved under the ECE multilateral environmental agreements and recognize their important role in supporting countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We commend the tangible results achieved with the implementation of the ECE multilateral environmental agreements, both in enhancing environmental protection and industrial safety, as well as in improving social, economic and health aspects of people's lives across the pan-European region and beyond. We commit to strengthening the participation of civil society and the private sector in the implementation of those agreements. We encourage interested countries to ratify and implement those instruments and provide adequate resources for their implementation.

15. We recognize the crucial importance of having access to diverse information sources and reliable, up-to-date, quality data and statistics, namely by using modern tools and techniques, for facing both current and emerging needs and challenges. We reaffirm our commitment to facilitating partnerships and mutual support among national statistical offices and related agencies, for example, environmental agencies, to produce data and statistics for monitoring progress in environmental protection.

16. We acknowledge the importance of regular, indicator-based environmental assessments, and confirm our commitment to keeping the pan-European region under regular review in support of sustainable development and the transition to a circular, green and sustainable economy. We take note of the key findings of the seventh pan-European assessment, produced by ECE and the

United Nations Environment Programme, and the urgent need in particular to:

- Pursue integrated water resources management, transboundary water cooperation and integrated coastal zone management;
- Mainstream biodiversity conservation across all relevant sectors and policies;
- Halt biodiversity loss and, where possible, restore ecosystems to a healthy state.
- Reverse the degradation of coastal waters, marine ecosystems and seas, and enhance efforts to achieve the global targets of protection and conservation of at least 30 per cent of terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas across the region by 2030;
- Prevent pollution to air, water and soil to drive towards a pollution-free planet;
- Reduce land take further and consistently, avoid further degradation of land and habitat quality due to biodiversity-unfriendly agricultural and land management practices, and increase efforts for soil conservation;
- Establish a resource-oriented, pan-European e-waste management partnership, and further broaden access to reliable, detailed information on chemicals and waste in order to achieve their sound management;
- Devote additional resources to achieving the institutional and technical capacity necessary for the planning, design, execution, operation and decommissioning of sustainable infrastructure projects;
- Develop and implement appropriate and common pan-European methods and systems for monitoring and information management, employ the revised ECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators, and adopt indicators to cover important emerging policymaking themes, also with a view to improving the availability of quality data for the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Select key impact tourism indicators to be included in ECE statistical databases.

17. We reaffirm the importance of further strengthening and scaling up education for sustainable development to advance environmental governance, strengthen environmental democracy and empower learners of all ages with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to address the interconnected global challenges we are facing, including climate change, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, pollution, poverty, and gender and other inequalities.

18. We commend the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme as an effective and practical policy tool with a proven track record stretching back over more than a quarter of a century, and recognize the role it plays in supporting the achievement and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals in the pan-European region. We endorse the fourth cycle of environmental performance reviews, invite ECE to conduct it and encourage countries to benefit from the Environmental Performance Review Programme by undertaking further reviews and considering elaborating road maps to implement recommendations.

19. We also commend the general establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System across the region to support a regular process of environmental assessment. We invite countries to continue their efforts to implement all pillars of the Shared Environmental Information System – content, infrastructure and cooperation – and to address any remaining gaps. We also recommend that countries make environmental information publicly available, findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable, and encourage collection of local and indigenous knowledge, citizen science and crowdsourced data. We also encourage countries, when developing digitalization of environmental information systems relying on open data, big data and state-of-the-art digital technologies, to improve data availability, transparency and public involvement in decision-making.

20. We welcome the work of the GReen Economy and ENvironment Action Task Force, and we invite the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to continue its activities in cooperation with relevant partners.

21. We acknowledge the role of regional initiatives in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and recognize the important contributions of the United Nations system, multilateral development banks and other international, regional and inter-State organizations. We acknowledge the health and environment nexus and remain committed to cooperating with the World Health Organization and the health sector. We invite Regional Environmental Centres to regularly report to the Committee on Environmental Policy on their activities.

22. We reaffirm the essential role that civil society participation plays in enhancing decision-making to improve the environment and promote sustainable development, and commit ourselves to further developing partnerships with civil society organizations and to creating the necessary conditions for their operation, including effective access to environmental information, participation and access to justice in environmental matters. We also welcome the contribution of the European ECO-Forum to the “Environment for Europe” process.

23. We invite the Committee on Environmental Policy to convene a mid-term review in 2025 to assess progress in the implementation of the main outcomes of this Conference.

24. We decide to hold the Tenth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in five years, to assess the progress in our joint work and devise new directions, and we invite expressions of interest from Governments wishing to host that event.

25. We express our gratitude to the Government of Cyprus for hosting this Conference, and for having addressed, exceptionally and with great determination, the impact of the pandemic on the organization of this event, and we wish to thank both the Government and the people of Cyprus for their warm hospitality.

## **Nicosia Ministerial Statement on Education for Sustainable Development<sup>19</sup>**

(extract)

We, the ministers responsible for education and the environment from the countries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, meeting in the framework of the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Nicosia,

[...]

1. *Strongly support* the continuation and stepping up of efforts for the implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development until 2030 at the regional (ECE) level, in synergy with relevant efforts undertaken at the global and subregional levels (e.g., the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the European Union/European Economic Area, Central and Eastern Europe, Mediterranean, Central Asia) and at the national level;

2. *Adopt* the Framework for Implementation of the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development from 2021 to 2030;

3. *Recognize* the great importance of the issues elaborated in the Framework and the need to, as a matter of urgency, mobilize political and

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<sup>19</sup> Source: [https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/ECE\\_NICOSIA.CONF\\_2022\\_11\\_R.pdf](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/ECE_NICOSIA.CONF_2022_11_R.pdf)

financial resources for strengthening the education for sustainable development (ESD) contribution to all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, in order to fully benefit from its potential to effectively contribute to addressing the multiple crises and challenges related to the achievement of sustainable development;

4. *Commit* to further promote and upgrade efforts in creating the necessary enabling conditions for the implementation of the Strategy for ESD, supporting institutions, educational systems and educators at all levels within and beyond schools, colleges, technical and vocational education and training institutions and universities, in order to capitalize on learner-centred, positive, real life experiences and good practices to make learning more relevant and interesting, as well as to effectively help learners to develop the knowledge, skills, mindset and action needed for the necessary large-scale green transition and a more sustainable future;

5. Also commit to carefully consider global, regional, subregional and national studies and assessments of the impacts and consequences of humanitarian health and social crises, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, on education and the environment, and capitalize on both negative and positive lessons learned, as well as to:

a) (a) Ensure that the content and pedagogy of value-based ESD will be enriched and strengthened, addressing the root causes of the COVID-19 pandemic and similar crises (focusing on the relationship between nature and society);

b) Optimize funding and availability of resources, invest in and enhance resilience and preparedness of education and training on sustainable development, such as accessible learning platforms, digital hybrid learning, including safe, affordable and equal access to the Internet, as well as targeted educator capacity development programmes;

c) Promote healthier, greener and safer conditions and practices within and beyond schooling settings;

d) Secure the needed educational interventions for accelerating the necessary lifestyle changes, transforming social and economic systems that are currently primarily focused on economic growth to the detriment of the planet and reorienting them towards a sustainable future, improving our relationship with nature, understanding its value and putting that value at the heart of our decision-making in order to create a safer and sustainable post-pandemic era;

6. *Reconfirm* the relevance and importance of all (horizontal and vertical) issues and themes identified in the Strategy for ESD;



7. *Recognize* that climate change, biodiversity and ocean literacy (see also the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–2030 and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration) are critical priority issues at the global and ECE levels, as they are connected and combine nearly all Sustainable Development Goals through integrated, interdisciplinary educational approaches, such as by linking sustainable development with culture and circular economy, as well as by connecting climate change with the security nexus of water-energy-food-ecosystems;

8. *Commit* to focus our efforts, promote and achieve concrete progress on the four following priority areas/strands of policy identified by the Steering Committee and on strengthening the role of youth within these strands to ensure that youth are more active in planning and integrating ESD policies and actions at the national and regional levels:

a) Linking ESD with quality education by embedding ESD into quality standards, framework mechanisms and resources associated with formal quality assessments and institutional reviews and effectively involving all those who oversee quality enhancement and have responsibility for this agenda in education at the national/international level;

b) Implementing ESD across all educational and training programmes in formal, non-formal and informal educational settings, through the whole institution approach, which aims to strengthen the sustainable development aspect of the overall culture of learning institutions through appropriate learning programmes, governance, infrastructure and relationships with societies and networks within and outside the institutions; capitalizing on lessons learned on the whole institution approach in the ECE region; providing competent and coherent frameworks for its promotion; involving educators and all stakeholders, particularly youth, in whole institution approach plans to promote ESD in their respective institutions; and strengthening cooperation between formal and non-formal education;

c) Assuring, through appropriate institutional and operational frameworks and means, that digital education and information and communication technologies are developed and used in systematic, balanced and blended ways to support the processes needed to enhance learning and ESD, in particular by removing barriers to access to digital technologies and through enhancement of opportunities for blended learning and accessing open educational resources and practices, while raising awareness about the positive, critical and potentially negative impacts that technology, and information and communications technology in particular, can have on learning for a sustainable future;

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d) Connecting ESD with economic and social development, addressing entrepreneurship, employment, business, financial and policy areas that influence the sources of welfare and well-being by identifying functional approaches, guidelines, projects and organizations that support the required knowledge, values, attitudes, qualifications and skills for new jobs related to green and circular economy and green technologies, as well as contribute to the necessary green transformations and sustainable development;

9. *Focus on* the implementation of the four priority strands of the Framework for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD from 2021 to 2030, by:

a) Requesting ECE to continue providing secretariat support to further advance ESD in the region;

b) Requesting member States to update their national ESD strategies in accordance with the new implementation framework 2021–2030;

c) Encouraging member States to develop synergies and networks of collaboration by sharing ideas, good practices and projects, based on the key priority areas of the new implementation framework 2021–2030;

d) Encouraging member States to enhance multisectoral and multidisciplinary collaboration on ESD at all levels of governance with ministries of education and environment, collaborating with all other ministries that have an impact on sustainable development, to ensure the whole-of-government approach that is critical for ESD implementation in all countries of the region;

e) Encouraging member States to strengthen the UNECE ESD Youth Platform by appointing youth national focal points and to support youth activities on promoting ESD at the regional, subregional and national levels;

f) Inviting member States to continue regular reporting to ECE on national progress in the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD within the established reporting mechanism, updated in accordance with the priority areas of the new implementation framework 2021–2030, and based on the experience from the previous monitoring and evaluation methodology, while also allowing for the comparability of reporting outcomes with previous ECE national implementation reporting exercises;

g) Inviting ECE to further enhance cooperation with UNESCO, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the European Union, the Mediterranean Committee on Education for Sustainable Development and other relevant bodies (e.g., the Alumni Network of the Central Asian Leadership Programme on Education for Sustainable Development);

h) Requesting the Steering Committee to prepare, with the support of the ECE secretariat, a workplan and budget for the implementation of the Strategy for the period up to the end of 2025. This should include targeted assistance activities, taking into account the ECE/CEP/AC.13/2022/7 7 results of the final evaluation report on the implementation of the Strategy, as well as needs identified by the subregional and national capacity-building activities held in South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Mediterranean and those expressed by the member States;

10. *Invite* stakeholders, as well as bilateral and multilateral donors, to continue contributing to and supporting the implementation process;

11 *Invite* member States, in keeping with the commitment made under the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, to continue to support countries to strengthen education in areas related to sustainable development;

12. *Request* the Executive Secretary of ECE to catalyse efforts for resource mobilization, including financial support, by member States, for strengthening and scaling up ESD actions [in partnership with UNESCO and UNEP];

13. Also *request* the Executive Secretary of ECE to mainstream ESD activities, partnerships and initiatives in all programmes;

14. *Reconfirm* that future ECE ministerial high-level meetings on ESD should be held on a regular basis, preferably at the Environment for Europe conferences, as appropriate, which provide a broad framework bringing together a wide range of stakeholders.

## **Key findings and recommendations concerning Progress on the Shared Environmental Information System**

### **A. Key findings**

1. Below are the key findings that the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment would like to convey to ministers of Environment at the Ninth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference (Nicosia, October 5-7).

2. In general, the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) has been successfully established in Europe and Central Asia.

3. All member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) have, to varying degrees, made progress regarding the establishment of a national system during the past years and in making environmental information available and accessible.

4. National Shared Environmental Information Systems vary in form and regularity regarding their updates and content, and gaps remain that need to be addressed.

5. The availability and accessibility of information and knowledge for decision makers – government, industry and the public to make choices for achieving concrete results have been improving, but some sectors, more so than others, continue to face challenges in this regard.

6. Challenges remain in measuring progress toward policy goals in the pan-European region, with regard to new policy trends such as the circular economy or sustainable infrastructure, as demonstrated by the preparation of the seventh pan-European environmental assessment.

7. The Seventh Pan-European Environmental Assessment revealed various data gaps across the region in almost all areas, with data available for some countries but missing for others or missing recent data. Data for some of the indicators needed for this assessment are not collected on a regular basis, particularly for emerging strategies, including the two conference themes.

8. The System is not a static instrument and will need to evolve over time into fully integrated and open data systems based on the System's principles and adapt to future developments in order to inform policies and the public holistically, including through the application of revised ECE indicators and other relevant indicator systems.

9. The digitalization of environmental data management and the use of new technologies will be key in the future.

10. Countries still need assistance to fully implement all the provisions and principles of the System to ensure that all data streams related to ECE environmental indicators are fully generated and shared.

11. It is important that countries understand the Shared Environmental Information System as part of their regular internal environmental monitoring process. Such an approach will effectively guide any future developments and ensure quantifiable progress in the System is achieved.

12. Further reviews of the Common Environmental Information System would help to address the deficiencies and thereby support regular assessments and reporting in the future.

## **B. Recommendations**

13. Based on the key findings and results of the final review report on the establishment of the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia (see annex to the present document) and the findings of the Seventh Pan-European Environmental Assessment, the Working Group recommends that countries address remaining gaps in the development of the Shared Environmental Information System, covering relevant components, thematic categories and data flow.

### **Infrastructure**

14. In addition, with respect to infrastructure, governments should:

a) Improve national legislation and address remaining gaps in legislation on monitoring and reporting on certain environmental topics; Improve national legislation in place and close legislative gaps in monitoring and reporting related to certain environmental themes;

b) Enhance digitalization of environmental data, thus supporting several member States' efforts in implementing their digital agendas and implementation of digital environmental information systems in line with Shared Environmental Information System principles to further enhance the availability and accessibility of high-quality environmental data;

c) Enhance the use of new technologies in environmental monitoring and production of environmental data (such as big data, the Internet of Things and artificial intelligence);

d) Ensure that sufficient financial resources are allocated to the establishment, operation and maintenance of environmental monitoring and information systems through national budgets and / or international support;

e) Invest in data collection and information processing, since knowledge plays an important role in decision-making, with regard to water policy development (e.g., water accounts, ecosystem assessment and indicators); for example, the continuous improvement of monitoring and communication technologies is seen as a top priority in terms of a water information system for the pan-European region.

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## Content

15. As for content, government should:

a) Align the Shared Environmental Information System with the revised ECE environmental indicators to increase their policy relevance;

b) regularly revise relevant indicators and data flows to inform the latest policies and to support decision-making related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a green and circular economy and other global policies;

c) continue to integrate and harmonize environmental data flow in accordance with the principles of the Shared Environmental Information System;

d) better align data collection processes with national policy contexts and targets and improve the use of available data flows and related indicators in the production of environmental assessments and reports including for the pan-European environmental assessment;

e) improve the use of relevant environmental assessments and reports to measure progress against policy targets and objectives and improve policymaking;

f) Integrate policy and science to develop appropriate and standardized monitoring and information management methods and systems, including through the application of new technologies, to fill data gaps and improve decision-making

g); encourage the use of appropriate and standardized monitoring methods, in particular for monitoring emissions into the atmospheric air, and public availability of monitoring data, while increasing cooperation and national investment to address monitoring gaps;

h) enhance regular data production and the publication of environmental information online in accordance with the System's principles;

i) intensify efforts to supplement beach and marine litter inventories with information on the composition and sources of litter;

j) establish a region-wide chemical and waste impact monitoring scheme;

k) improve systems for collecting data on environmental financing, such as on environmental expenditure (what actors spend on environmental protection, to what extent, for what purposes, and who finances it);

l) develop a common definition of «sustainable infrastructure» to enable reporting and measurement of progress across countries and subregions;

m) select some specific indicators of key impacts of tourism for inclusion in ECE statistical databases and align them with those developed to monitor sustainable development in tourism, ensuring their compatibility with the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Cooperation**

16. As for cooperation, governments should:

a) create or improve institutional mechanisms for regular data generation and exchange among various institutions at the national level, in particular for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals and the creation of green and circular economies;

b) encourage environmental authorities to work closely with their respective national statistical agencies and other relevant institutions to integrate and share information.

17. The Working Group also recommends that ECE, the United Nations Environment Programme and the European Environment Agency continue their long-standing and effective cooperation in support of the development of the Shared Environmental Information System in Europe and Central Asia. These organizations should also actively support countries in regular reviews of environmental information systems and in their digitalization efforts.

18. These recommendations may need to be revisited in the future based on future reviews that countries may undertake.



## **Activities under the UNECE Convention on Transboundary Watercourses in October 2022**

### **Seminar “Emerging risks in accidental water pollution: focus on natural hazard-triggered accidents”**

On 5 October 2022, a seminar of the Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents “Emerging risks in accidental water pollution: focus on natural hazard-triggered accidents” was held in a hybrid format in Budapest. The participants discussed the lessons learned from the past in preventing accidental water pollution triggered by natural hazards, prevention by design to ensure safe industrial installations in a changing climate, as well as innovative approaches to limit the consequences of accidental water pollution events.

Dr. Dinara Ziganshina made a report "Adaptation of critical infrastructure to the effects of climate change." In particular, she noted the importance of understanding both physical climate and other related economic, social and environmental risks. For example, in Central Asia, vulnerability of water infrastructure is related not so much to climate change impacts as to depreciation of infrastructure and the lack of funds to its maintenance. The true resilience to climate risks can be achieved only when all actors clearly understand sectoral and risk interdependencies and work together in riparian countries. It is important to take a life-cycle approach to building and operation of resilient water infrastructure.

### **Global Workshop on Water, Agriculture and Climate Change**

On 17-18 October 2022, UNECE in cooperation with partners organized the Global Workshop on Water, Agriculture and Climate Change in a mixed format.

Welcoming remarks were delivered by Olga Algayerova, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of UNECE, Mikko Ollikainen, Head of the Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat, and Li Lifeng, Director of the Land and Water Division, FAO.

Mark Smith, General Director of the International Water Management

Institute (IWMI), gave a keynote address. He noted the impact of climate change on rainfed agriculture, the importance of improving performance of irrigation systems and transforming irrigation (new technologies, innovative financing chains, possible relocation of irrigation from high-risk areas, etc.).

Session 1 "Floods and Droughts Impact on Agriculture" was devoted to the review of the current trends in changing climate, its impact on the water cycle and the subsequent effects for agriculture.

Katrin Ehlert, Scientific Officer of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) spoke about "The Integrated Drought Management Program (IDMP)". According to the WMO's latest estimates, the incidence of drought has increased by 29% over the past 20 years. The agricultural sector accounts for 82% of the damage caused by drought. At the same time, drought forecasting and warning systems are lacking or inadequate in 54% of WMO Members. There are also difficulties in determining the onset and end of drought due to the lack of clear definition of drought. The Integrated Drought Management Program coordinated by WMO calls for a shift from reactive approaches to proactive strategies for drought prevention and prediction. FAO has started work in Uzbekistan to support drought policy-making processes.

Gregor Gregoric, the Slovenian Environment Agency officer spoke on cooperation on drought management at the regional level using the example of the Drought Management Center for Southeastern Europe, which was established in Slovenia. The Center is engaged in information and analytical work, develops bulletins and online tools. In particular, the online tool for drought risk in the Danube basin, methodologies for assessing impacts and risks of droughts, and the Danube Drought Management Strategy were developed.

Shavkat Batyrov, Head of Department for International Relations and Transboundary Water Issues, Ministry of Water Management of Uzbekistan spoke on measures implemented in Uzbekistan for adaptation and resilience to climate change. The priority areas of action under the relevant national Concept and Strategy include transboundary water management, automation of structures in cooperation with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and investment projects together with WB and ADB.

Aminu Magaji Bala from the Lake Chad Basin Commission made a presentation on "Climate change trends in the Lake Chad basin, its impacts on the water cycle and the subsequent consequences on agriculture".

During Session 2 "Water management and agricultural production under climate change: towards resilient systems" adaptation measures and strategies for mitigation of climate change and related extreme weather events in

agriculture, while maintaining water quality and quantity for the population, economic sectors and the environment, were presented.

Rosa Morales from the Institute of Peruvian Studies and a member of the Adaptation Committee of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change presented priorities, needs and innovations in adaptation technologies for water and agriculture. In particular, she focused on the approaches and methods used by indigenous peoples and other user-driven initiatives. In addition to the well-known concepts of software and hardware, she underlined the importance of orgware, implying the capacity building of institutions involved in adaptation.

Maher Salman from FAO spoke on improving water management and agrifood systems to adapt climate change on the example of the projects in Chad, Egypt and Lebanon.

Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi from the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) presented “Smart water management for enhancing resilience at multiple scales”. In particular, he discussed digitalization as a basis for improving water efficiency and productivity. The online resource using satellite data for drought monitoring at the national level (South Asia Drought Monitoring System, SADMS) was given as an example. Demand management rather than meeting demands are the dictate of the times. The use of aquifers for water accumulation can also be of use under local contexts.

Adam Kovacs, an expert of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, presented approaches towards sustainable agriculture in the Danube River Basin. In particular, a guidance document and a policy paper on sustainable agriculture in the Danube River Basin were prepared in 2021. They contain key principles, a toolbox for measures and the examples of best practices. The water balance modeling for the basin is under work now. The emphasis will be made on protecting small farmers and supporting voluntary adaptation measures.

Yarid Guevara from the Ministry of Environment of Panama spoke about climate change adaptation strategies and measures in the binational Sixaola River basin shared by two countries. Panama has 5 hydrological zones and 52 river basins. Water management is characterized by decentralization and involvement of all stakeholders. There is a need to make diagnostic assessment of the system.

Ben Haraseb from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Land Reforms of Namibia highlighted climate change adaptation measures in Namibia and on the trans-boundary level. The complexity of management comes from unpredictable weather and multiple climatic zones in the country.

Maximino Herrera from the Dominican Institute of Integrated Development made a presentation “Increasing climate resilience in the province of San Cristobal: the Dominican Republic Integrated Water Resources and Rural Development”.

At Session 3, the findings and lessons learned in the process of intersectoral cooperation at the regional or basin scale were addressed, and actions to integrate the nexus approach into national strategies and policies were discussed. In particular, Takayoshi Kato (OECD) presented the water-energy-land-use nexus approaches to strengthen resilience to climate change impacts. In particular, a new nexus project in Central Asia was presented. Lucia de Strasser (UNECE) spoke on the experience of the Water Convention in intersectoral cooperation at transboundary level.

The case studies were presented by Gorana Basevic from the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina (findings from Drina nexus assessment: nexus approach in national and regional activities) and Walter Bamidele Olatunji from the Niger Basin Authority, who spoke on the Niger Basin climate resilience initiatives, including implementation of the 2016-2024 Niger Basin Resilience Investment Plan totaling \$3.11 billion.

Representatives of the Green Climate Fund with the presentation entitled “The role of GCF in water security”, the World Bank, with “Financing climate adaptation and transboundary water management”, and the Adaptation Fund, with “Transboundary approaches to climate adaptation: lessons learned from Adaptation Fund portfolio” addressed the participants of Session 4 "Financing and implementation of water and agriculture adaptation projects at transboundary level".

Case studies on the financing issues were discussed on the example of the Volta river basin (intersectoral cooperation within the framework of the Volta flood and drought management project), the Drin/Drim river basin (climate-resilient transboundary flood risk management) and the Sahara and Sahel zone (Climate Centers to assist communities and other stakeholders in Africa). The Principal Executive on Climate Change, Development Bank of Latin America explored the added value of financing and transboundary adaptation initiatives. In particular, she noted the importance of better coordination and ecosystem approach in transboundary projects.

In conclusion, the following can be summarized: focus on the importance of preventive and resilience measures; better access to reliable data and monitoring of surface and groundwater quality and quantity, drought and floods, and socio-economic indicators; more active dissemination of knowledge and lessons learned; forest and wetland restoration is among key issues of ecosystem

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protection; it is important to introduce new technologies and innovative solutions and, at the same time, use traditional knowledge; capacity building should accompany technical solutions; greater emphasis on community level and decentralization; transboundary cooperation is more important than ever, especially at intersectoral level and in terms of financing; the need for awareness raising and political support; both strategic and tactical solutions are important; focus on demand management rather than on meeting demands; agriculture can free up water for other users.

## **The 13th meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate**

The Thirteenth Meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes was held on 19 October 2022.

The Task Force was informed about the recent activities on climate change adaptation in transboundary basins namely the outcomes of the last meeting of the Global network of basins working on climate change adaptation (25 April 2022), results of the pilot projects as well as financing climate change adaptation in transboundary basins.

Representatives of the pilot projects and other basins of the Global Network of Basins working on climate change adaptation informed about their activities. In particular, representative of the bilateral Commission on the Sixaola River told about progress on the 2021-2025 Work Plan in terms of flooding and pollution risks, prevention and monitoring and made a focus on tourism development. Representative of the Okavango River Commission (Angola, Namibia and Botswana) presented the projects aimed at strengthening resilience, introducing alternative agricultural practices and improving water infrastructure. A. Sh. Dzhaloobayev told about activities of the Chu-Talas Commission (Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) undertaken on climate change. The Joint Action Program (JAP) on the Chu-Talas was developed within the framework of a joint GEF project. The Program covers such issues as water quantity and quality, conservation of ecosystems, climate change, cooperation, and monitoring. As a follow-up to the Joint Action Program, individual national action plans were developed for each country.

Representative of the European Commission outlined the work on climate adaptation within the framework of the European Green Deal in the following four priorities:

- Smarter adaptation (knowledge improvement and uncertainties control)
- More systemic adaptation (all levels and sectors)
- More operational
- Greater international efforts

As part of the Common Implementation Strategy for the Water Framework Directive for 2022-2024, different expert groups are active. A group on water scarcity and droughts was recently established and is now working particularly on updating the Guidance on river basin management plans in a changing climate.

The task force also discussed how to raise attention to transboundary and regional cooperation in global climate change processes and the future work on climate change in transboundary basins under the Water Convention.

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## **The 24th International Congress on Irrigation and Drainage and the 73rd ICID International Executive Council Meeting<sup>20</sup>**

The 24<sup>th</sup> International Congress and 73<sup>rd</sup> ICID International Executive Council meeting were held in October 3-6 in Adelaide.

The official delegation from the Republic of Uzbekistan headed by the Minister of Water Management of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh. Khamraev, who is also the Vice President of ICID for 2019-2022 took part in these events.

The Congress was attended by delegations and representatives from more than 46 countries, international and non-governmental organizations, international financing institutions and development agencies, representatives of international and regional research institutions, as well as irrigation and water experts and scientists. According to the Organizing Committee, the events were attended by more than 700 high-level international experts, including 420 national representatives from Australia and 280 international organizations and national irrigation and drainage committees from ICID member countries.

The delegation of Tajikistan (headed by B. Gaforzoda, Head of the Land Reclamation and Irrigation Agency under the Government of Tajikistan, Secretary of the Tajikistan NCID) also took part from Central Asia.

In his speech Mr. Khamraev emphasized positive changes that were taking place as a result of reforms promoted by the President of Uzbekistan Mr. Mirziyoyev. He underlined that in line with the new country policy, Uzbekistan actively promotes irrigation and drainage, carries out extensive work to improve water use efficiency, strengthens efforts to develop mutual water cooperation among the riparian countries of the Aral Sea Basin.

The participants were informed about the state mechanism to facilitate water sector development in Uzbekistan, increase its productivity through efficient and rational water use, introduction of water- and resource-saving modern technologies, measures implemented for digitalization of water management and introduction of public-private partnerships in the water sector.

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<sup>20</sup> Source: IFAS Agency in the Republic of Uzbekistan, <https://aral.uz/wp/2022/10/24/report-2/>





The Uzbek delegation effectively used the Congress platform for bilateral talks and meetings with the heads of delegations of international organizations and ICID countries to expand cooperation and undertake joint water projects.

On October 5, The Minister of Water Management S. Khamraev met with ICID President Dr. Ragab Ragab and the Secretary General of the organization Mr. Ashwin B. Pandya.

During the meeting, Dr. Ragab noted Mr. Khamraev's contribution to the organization during his three-year service as the ICID Vice-President. In gratitude for his activities, Dr. presented Sh. Khamraev with the badge of honorary ICID Vice-president.



He emphasized that Uzbekistan's advanced experience in water management and friendly cooperation with neighboring countries are a good example for all members of the ICID family.

Bakhtiyor Kamalov made a presentation at one of the sessions on the newly established Center for Implementation of Investment Projects under the Ministry of Water Management of Uzbekistan. He shared the information on current and prospective projects of the Center, as well as on future goals of the organization.

Members of the Uzbek delegation took part in the international exhibition, and became acquainted with the advanced technologies offered by 10 leading water companies around the world.



On 6 October, the Head of IFAS Agency, V. Sokolov, participated in a special event organized by the National Irrigation and Drainage Committee of India – inauguration and presentation of the 25<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Irrigation and Drainage, which would be held on November 1-8, 2023 in Visakhapatnam (Vizag), Andhra Pradesh, India.

The main theme of the future congress is «Tackling water scarcity in agriculture»

The two key topics for discussion at the congress would be:

Q64: What alternative water resources could be tapped for irrigation farming?

Q65: Which on-farm techniques can increase water productivity?



## **Speech by Sh. Khamraev, Minister of Water Management of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Vice-President of ICID, at the plenary session of the ICID Congress**

Dear Mr. President!

Distinguished Chairman of the meeting, I would like to thank you for giving me the floor.

Uzbekistan is the most populous country in Central Asia, with over 35.7 million people, that is about half of the total population in the region. Thanks to the reforms undertaken by the leadership of Uzbekistan over the past five years, the country has created the political, legal, socio-economic and scientific-educational foundations necessary for building a New Uzbekistan.

The territory of Uzbekistan is located in the continental dry climate zone, with low precipitation and therefore, almost all spheres of life and development of the country rely on water resources.

It is important to note that Uzbekistan is located in the Aral Sea Basin, where the main water sources are the transboundary rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya. There are almost no other sources of water. At the same time, out of the total amount of water used in the country, only 20% of the water consumed is formed within its own territory, while more than 80% is formed in the upstream states.

Moreover, our limited available water resources in recent decades have been exposed to the impacts of climate change, which along with the past extensive development in the region (when quantitative rather than qualitative indicators were the main targets) has led to the world-known ecological tragedy of the Aral Sea (the fourth largest inland water body in the world) and today we have instead a new salt desert in the heart of our region.

Dear participants of the ICID Congress!

While understanding the social value of irrigation and wise state policy in the water sector over the years of independence, Uzbekistan has managed to preserve the unique irrigation infrastructure and potential that has been created for centuries. I won't bore you with figures – the details can be found in the booklet on irrigation in Uzbekistan distributed at the forum.

Modern water management and irrigated agriculture remain one of the most important sectors of the economy in Uzbekistan, providing 16% of GDP; but most importantly, it is a factor of social stability while providing 30% of employment.

In support of radical reforms initiated in the water sector, in July 2020 the President of Uzbekistan signed a special decree "On approval of the Concept for water resources development in the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2020-2030".

Thanks to recent intensive work of the Ministry on modernization of water facilities, improvement of water management system through introduction of "smart water" technology, encouragement of water-saving technologies, attraction of investments in this sector, there is a tendency to reduction of water use and withdrawal (in early 1990's, more than 63 bln. m<sup>3</sup> of water was used per year). In 2011-2015, the total water withdrawal has decreased to 53 bln. m<sup>3</sup> per year. The water withdrawal was only about 45 bln. m<sup>3</sup> in the dry year 2021.

As I mentioned, Uzbekistan is located in the arid climate zone, so more than 95% of the grown agricultural products rely on irrigation. There are 4.3 mln. ha of irrigated land in Uzbekistan. At the same time, more than half of the irrigated land is subjected to salinization. Therefore, we pay great attention to development of drainage and to improvement and sustainability of the state of irrigated land, introduce technologies of land fertility improvement, apply effective technologies of soil salinity reduction and prevention.

The priority of our work is also to improve the system of water forecasting and accounting, form water databases and ensure transparency of information. Special attention is paid to ensuring the safety and reliable operation of reservoirs and other water facilities.

A very important area of work is transfer to market economy principles, as well as introduction of public-private partnerships and outsourcing in the water sector. We also pay attention to the improvement of the professional development system and interface between education, science and production.

Implementation of integrated water resources management is aimed at ensuring a guaranteed water supply to the population and economic sectors, improving water quality and preserving the ecological equilibrium.

Here we should note the great contribution of Uzbekistan to solution of the Aral Sea problems, through active participation in actions and reforming the platform of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (its 30th anniversary will be celebrated in March 2023). On the initiative of Uzbekistan on May 18, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted Resolution 75/278 "Declaring the Aral Sea region a zone of ecological innovations and technologies". A special resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan was approved in January this year containing:

- The Concept of transforming the Aral Sea region into a zone of environmental innovations and technologies;
- Multilateral "Roadmap" on foreign investment priorities in the Aral Sea region for 2022-2026.

One of the most important areas of activity is the development of interstate relations on transboundary water use, development and promotion of mutually acceptable mechanisms for joint management and programs for rational water use, ensuring a balance of interests of all the Central Asian countries.

To provide a legal platform for all the above-mentioned reforms and development of the water sector, we plan to submit a draft of the new Water Code of Uzbekistan to our Parliament for consideration by the end of this year.

Dear members of the ICID International Executive Committee!

Our main task is to find practical solutions to global and regional problems, such as transboundary water cooperation, adaptation to climate change, irrigated land productivity, food security and ecosystem sustainability.

The 24th ICID International Congress here in South Australia shows that together we are a great force.

Achievements of Uzbekistan in the water sector are highly appreciated by the world water community. This is confirmed by our active participation and contribution to activities of international water organizations such as the World Water Council, Global Water Partnership, International Network of Basin Organizations, Asia-Pacific Water Forum and others.

The Republic of Uzbekistan always uses ICID platform to promote advanced experience in irrigation and drainage through exchange of scientific, technical and other information between the national committees of the member countries, dissemination of the latest scientific and practical information through ICID publications.

The National Committee of Uzbekistan promotes implementation of a unified economic, scientific and technical water policy aimed at the development of the water sector, water saving, reclamation of irrigated land, introduction of advanced irrigation equipment and technologies for sustainable development of agricultural production.

As vice president of ICID, I am responsible for the Europe region, which includes the national committees of Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and the newly acceded Kyrgyz Republic.

Initially, we have studied the structure of the national committees, their plans and tasks of their work. We have developed an action plan and a mechanism for their implementation.

Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020-2021, we could work only with national committees of the Central Asian countries, as communication with European countries was limited. Quarterly meetings with representatives of ICID national committees were organized every year on the platform of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia.

In March and December 2021, we organized webinars with the participation of representatives of Asian and African countries, as well as international organizations and banks, where we exchanged experience on water management and problem areas. Also, water specialists together with journalists from the Central Asian countries organized a field expedition along the Syrdarya River from the river mouth (Toktogul reservoir) to the Aral Sea in order to get acquainted with the integrated use of water resources in the basin for energy, irrigation and environmental needs.

Dear ICID members, colleagues!

Together we create a new culture of water governance that decision-makers have learned to overcome oversized ambitions and barriers on the way to overall water and food security and to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

Good luck to all of us on this path of effective water cooperation!



## **The International scientific and practical conference “Water Security – the Basis for Sustainable Development”**

**The International scientific and practical conference “Water Security – the Basis for Sustainable Development”** was held in a hybrid format in Dushanbe on 5-6 October 2022.

The main objective of the conference was to contribute to addressing water security challenges and achieving sustainability in such areas as sound water use in the context of climate change, protection and use of watercourses, hydropower and clean energy sources through enhanced cooperation, information exchange, knowledge and best practices.

Dr. Dinara Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC, made a presentation on "The Role of Water Diplomacy and Science in Sustainable Water Management in Central Asia." She presented lessons of water diplomacy learnt over 30 years of cooperation under umbrella of ICWC of Central Asia. Among the tasks for the future, she suggested paying special attention to legal awareness, science, education and collective efforts of the states in achieving common goals to further promote cooperation through water diplomacy mechanisms.

The Deputy Director of SIC ICWC Dr. Shavkat Kenjabaev reported on "Territorial Water Security Assessment: a practical tool". He briefly outlined the methodology, which represents the first quantitative and qualitative assessment of water management at the level of administrative territories of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and the main results on water security of households, economic sectors, infrastructure, ecosystems and social sphere using the case study of the Khorezm province, Uzbekistan.

## **Sixth North and Central Asia Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

On 6-7 October 2022, the Subregional Office for North and Central Asia of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) organized the **Sixth North and Central Asia Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) "Accelerating the recovery from COVID-19 and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Agenda at all levels."**

The main objective of the Forum was to facilitate an inclusive dialogue among multi-stakeholder groups in North and Central Asia on strengthening SDG implementation.

The Forum sessions corresponded to SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

During the session "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" (SDG 6) the participants discussed the current status, trends, emerging issues and interlinkage in implementing SDG 6; transboundary cooperation for environmentally sound management of freshwater resources and for peaceful regional integration and required capacity development interventions; means to secure required investments to progress in clean water and sanitation supply in underserved regions; innovative technologies and technology-based entrepreneurship for efficient water use; good practices to facilitate inclusivity in access to clean water and sanitation.

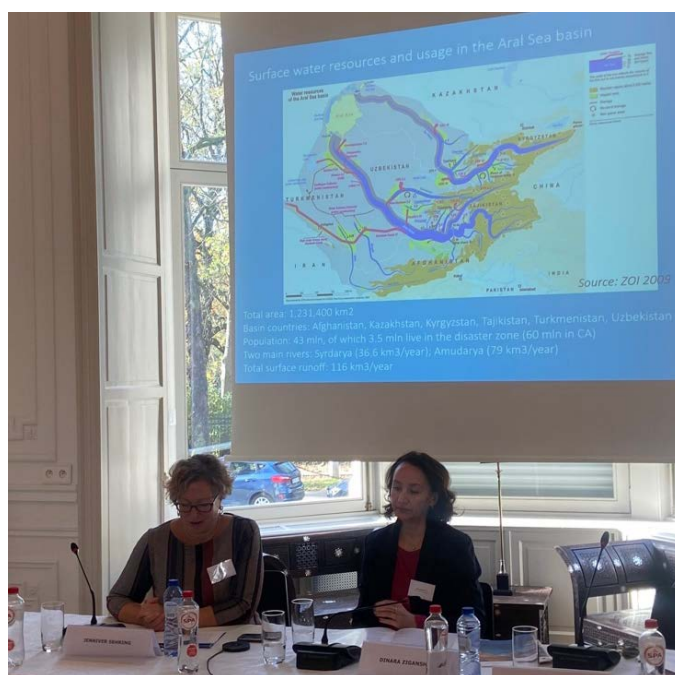
Speaking at the session, Dr. Dinara Ziganshina told about achievements and challenges of transboundary water management in Central Asia on the example of ICWC activities.

## Hydrodiplomacy: Building and Strengthening Transboundary Water Governance Institutions

European office of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation hosted the conference “Hydrodiplomacy: Building and Strengthening Transboundary Water Governance Institutions” on November 2-3, 2022 in Brussels. The participants considered the issues of transboundary water management and climate change on examples of Central Asia, Himalayas and the Middle East.

Sonja Koppel, Secretary of the UNECE Water Convention made the introductory speech on international law and cooperation on shared rivers.

The first session was devoted to presentation of the results of the hydrodiplomacy pre-conference study ([available online](#)). Nilanjan Ghosh and Dipak Gyawali presented the report “Water governance in the Himalayas: re-thinking institutions, science and transboundary cooperation.” Efficiency, challenges and potential of regional organizations for transboundary waters in the Aral Sea Basin and the Euphrates and Tigris Basin were discussed by Dinara Ziganshina and Jenniver Sehring and Hamza Shareef and Tugba Evrim Maden, respectively.

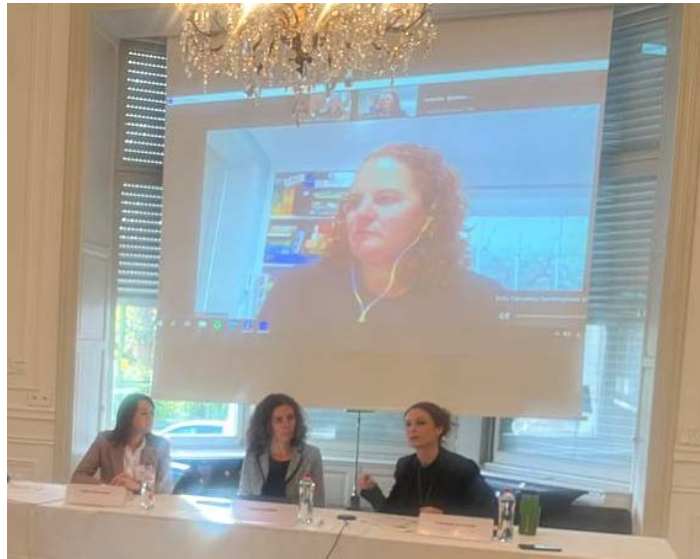


Then in groups the participants discussed the effectiveness of governance and decision making procedures in Central Asia, Himalayas, and the Middle East, focusing on science-policy interaction, EU and international community involvement, and expectations of regional partners from development partners.

At the second session “Water insecurity: identifying ways for global water cooperation and the role of public-private partnerships”, Tania Pentcheva (senior manager government and industry relations, Xylem Inc.), Jacqueline Tront (water resources and environmental systems, WB) and Ambassador Tanja Miskova (Slovenian Ministry for Foreign Affairs) took the floor. Jenniver Sehring presented the book entitled “Gender dynamics in transboundary water

governance: feminist perspectives on water conflict and cooperation”, which was published in July 2022 under the editorship of J. Sehring, R. Horst, and M. Zwarteveen.

During the third session “Transboundary river commissions: water-energy-food nexus cooperation” Aurelien Dumont (UNESCO project officer), Jacqueline Nyirakamana (chairperson of the Nile Basin Initiative, Ministry of



Environment, Rwanda), Susanne Schmeier (Associate Professor of water law and diplomacy, IHE Delft), and Dinara Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC. Dr. Ziganshina noted, in particular, the positive role of river commissions in maintaining transboundary cooperation, peace and stability. The key ingredients of success are the diversity of river commissions in terms of form and structure for solution of specific tasks in individual basins, the transformability and adaptability to changing situation, the technical expertise and a platform for permanent dialogue.

The challenges of transboundary cooperation for ensuring energy security (with engagement of Markus Fischer from the largest Danish Orsted company) and food security were addressed in small groups.

Helge Zeitler, environmental expert of EC made a report on the key role of water in climate actions and policies.

Then, the participants discussed the priorities of EU’s hydrodiplomacy and issues to be addressed at COP27 and the 2023 UN Water Conference. It was noted, in particular, that the priorities should: facilitate data exchange and their democratization and expansion of global water conventions; include actions at subnational level, where water conflicts prevail; focus on water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus, the linkage between humanitarian interventions and development projects, the water footprint in production chains, and the importance of research and analytical centers; contextualize interventions; support dialogue along with achievement of concrete results on more effective water use.



#### Key messages:

- bilateral agreements allow taking many controversial issues off the table but should be better integrated into basin-wide arrangements;
- capacity building is an important element of sustainable water management and transboundary cooperation; however, more systemic and balanced approach is needed for better effectiveness and sustainability;
- data and information exchange are in the heart of efforts on building capacities of water governance institutions; however, data reliability and transparency challenges remain unsolved;
- the role and potential use of public-private partnership is insufficiently studied and understood by decision makers;
- the processes of negotiation on new agreements or revision of existing ones should involve all stakeholders, including affected communities and sectors;
- understanding of gender differences in combination with other factors (age, social status, professional affiliation, ethnic background or race, etc.) may help to better assess and see how to improve water management at national and transboundary levels;
- it is important to rely not only on customary approaches but also initiate new approaches and new thinking to solve current and future challenges;
- facilitating exchange of views and dialogue among experts from different disciplines, basins and regions helps to better understand the situation and propose workable solutions.

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