

Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia	BULLETIN № 4 (97)	August 2023
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Meetings of the Heads of State of Central Asia

Joint press communiqué by the Heads of State of Central Asia and the President of the European Council¹ (extract)

On 2 June 2023, 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 Nurmuhamet Amanpesov) and President of the European Council Charles Michel welcomed the second regional high-level meeting in Cholpon-Ata.



[...]

¹ Source: Akorda, <https://www.akorda.kz/ru/sovместnoe-press-kommyunike-glav-gosudarstv-centralnoj-azii-i-prezidenta-evropejskogo-soveta-253950> (in Russian)

Photo: <https://khover.tj/rus/2023/06/prezident-respubliki-tadzhikistan-emomali-rahmon-prinyal-uchastie-vo-vtoroj-vstreche-glav-gosudarstv-tsentralnoj-azii-i-predsdatelya-evropejskogo-soyuza/>

The Leaders have agreed that diversification and closer sustainable connectivity goals in line with the Global Gateway strategy are of an utmost importance. In this context, the Participants welcomed the positive outcomes of the EU-Central Asia Connectivity Conference held in Samarkand where the Central Asia and EU expressed their interest and readiness to enhance cooperation both within the region and between Europe and Central Asia for energy security and alternative power supply routes, sustainable and secure digitalization and digital sovereignty, transport connections, and transition to green, sustainable, climate- and ecologically- friendly economy and e-commerce.

In this context, they welcomed the new “Team Europe” Initiatives on water, energy, climate change and digital connectivity, involving the private sector and European financing institutions, and looked forward to their swift implementation. The Leaders welcomed the EU study on sustainable connectivity in Central Asia and looked forward to its publication. The President of the European Council also commended the considerations on green transition, environmental protection and climate change in Central Asia as discussed at the last Consultative Meeting of Central Asian Heads of State in Cholpon-Ata.

[...]

The Participants re-iterated their interest in strengthening joint actions to fully and effectively implement the Paris commitments. They welcomed the outcomes of the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York, co-chaired by Tajikistan and the Netherlands and reconfirmed their will to work together on the Water Action Agenda. Noting that water is one of the most important assets for peace and well-being of the people in Central Asia, they recognized that the interests of the countries and peoples of the region need to be taken into account to find a common solution.

The Leaders confirmed the need to continue high-level dialogue and interregional interaction between the EU and Central Asia to develop innovative, mutually beneficial and open water-energy cooperation between the Central Asian countries and called for reinforcing efforts in this respect. In this context, the President of the European Council confirmed the EU's readiness to share its positive lessons in this area.

The Participants noted the negative impact of the Aral Sea disaster on regional security and advocated the need to boost joint efforts to find the most acceptable solutions to overcome the problem.

[...]

The EC President welcomed the on-going socio-economic and democratic reforms in the region as well as the positive outcomes of regional cooperation as important building blocks for the EU – Central Asia interaction. On the occasion

of the 30-anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), he congratulated the IFAS on progress in environmental improvement in the areas affected by the Aral Sea catastrophe and solution of the socioeconomic issues in the region.

Astana International Forum 2023²

Kazakhstan has launched a new dialogue platform, the Astana International Forum, to join efforts in tackling key global challenges.

The Forum was held under the auspices of the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in Astana on June 8-9, 2023. It became a platform for dialogue between high-level delegates from foreign governments, international organizations, business and academia on searching ways to address climate, food and energy security challenges.

The Forum agenda included keynote speeches, panel sessions, discussions and other related events.

Speech of the President of Kazakhstan at the plenary session of Astana International Forum³ (extract)

[...]

Distinguished Guests,

Of all the challenges we face, perhaps the most existential is climate change. Central Asia is one of its front lines. Even if we successfully limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C by 2050 – which looks increasingly unlikely – we will experience between 2°C and 2.5°C of temperature rise here in Central Asia.

This will transform or, more precisely, desertify and dehydrate our local environments. We must be prepared for greater difficulties.

We are really concerned about the scarcity of water resources. Droughts and floods in Central Asia will cause damage of 1.3% of GDP per annum, while crop yields are expected to decrease by 30%, leading to around 5 million internal climate migrants by 2050.

² Source: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa-budapest/press/events/details/18470?lang=ru>

³ Source: <https://akorda.kz/ru/vystuplenie-prezidenta-respubliki-kazahstan-ktokaeva-na-plenarnoy-sessii-mezhdunarodnogo-foruma-astana-851830>



The two great rivers of our region - the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya - will lose an estimated 15% by 2050. To prevent environmental disaster in the region, we urge that more resources to be allocated to support the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea.

Water and climate change are closely linked. Central Asia is a region where water security can be achieved only through close cooperation and efficiently tailored joint measures.

To discuss these and other climate related issues in the region, I propose to establish a project office of the Central Asian countries in Almaty and to hold a Regional Climate Summit in Kazakhstan in 2026 under UN and other international organizations' auspices.

My country could offer tremendous green economy opportunities and finally emerge as a renewable energy hub. However, time is not on our side. To decarbonize and build green economies at the necessary speed, we need resources and partnerships.

[...]

Speech of the President of Kyrgyzstan at the plenary session of Astana International Forum ⁴

(extract)



“Kyrgyzstan is aware of the importance of global challenges and is ready to contribute to their solution”, said the President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Japarov, speaking during his working visit to Kazakhstan at the International Forum in Astana.

The head of state noted the importance of responding to modern challenges and threats, giving priority to cooperation as the main postulate of a functioning international system.

First, the President focused on climate change and biodiversity conservation. (...). Unfortunately, it is a fact that the negative effects of climate change are manifesting themselves more and more clearly in our region in the form of melting glaciers, an increase in the number of natural disasters, which poses great threats and risks to socio-economic development and food security, entails ever-increasing costs.

The head of state noted that transition to green economy, adaptation to climate change, sustainable use of water and natural resources are dictated by a vital need.

⁴ Source: KNIA "Kabar", <https://kabar.kg/news/zhaparov-na-mezhdunarodnom-forume-astana-kyrgyzstan-osoznaet-vazhnost-global-nykh-vyzovov-i-gotov-vnesti-svoi-vklad-v-ikh/>

Second, speaking on water, Sadyr Japarov emphasized that Kyrgyzstan attaches great importance to sound water use and integrated water resources management for achievement of socio-economic and environmental goals.

“We have launched the process of updating legislation, including the Water Code. In February 2023, the 2040 National Water Strategy was adopted, under which Kyrgyzstan assumes obligations to improve state water accounting and the environmental situation; to ensure safe and high-quality water supply and sanitation; to ensure digital transformation of the Unified Information Water System; to create sustainable economic mechanisms for water management, stimulating sound water use; to establish basin councils based on the hydrographic principle.

I would especially like to highlight the fact that the location of Kyrgyzstan in the zone of water formation, which is also used by neighboring countries, determines our high responsibility before the entire region.

Kyrgyzstan stands for the importance and significance of cooperation in this area on a fair, reasonable and equal basis, which meets the interests of all countries in the region”, - Sadyr Japarov emphasized.

Third, the President raised the issue of energy, noting that today the world is going through a difficult stage in its development. Given the scarcity and high energy prices, RES are increasingly coming to the fore. At present, work is underway on the selection of water bodies where, in the future, construction and operation of small and medium hydro is feasible.

“I would like to note that here the hydropower potential of 252 large and medium rivers in Kyrgyzstan is estimated at more than 142.5 billion kWh, about 13% of which have been developed to date. The potential of RES is estimated at 840 million t of reference fuel per year. By 2050, we aim to achieve carbon neutrality primarily through the use of RES. In this context, I invite concerned parties to mutually beneficial investment cooperation on RES, also on the base of public-private partnership. We are creating a reliable state system of preferences and have taken appropriate measures to develop sustainable power industry,” the head of state added.

[...]

Trilateral summit of presidents of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan⁵

The President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rakhmon and the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev met in Ashgabat on August 4, 2023 for their first trilateral summit.



The agenda included: enhancement of mutually beneficial cooperation on water, energy and transport-logistics.

Having designated among the first such urgent topic for the region's countries as sustainable water supply, the President Serdar Berdimuhamedov stressed the importance of mechanisms for sustainable water management. This concerns, in particular, adoption of water-saving technologies, modernization of existing

⁵ This extract is focused on water-energy and environmental topics addressed in the speeches of the Presidents. Detailed info on the Summit is available on the links below:

<https://tdh.gov.tm/ru/post/37098/tryohstoronnij-sammit-prezidentov-turkmenistana-respubliki-tadzhikistan-i-respubliki-uzbekistan>

<https://khovar.tj/rus/2023/08/lider-natsii-emomali-rahmon-prinyal-uchastie-vo-vstreche-glav-gosudarstv-respubliki-tadzhikistan-turkmenistana-i-respubliki-uzbekistan/>

<https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/6536>

Photo <https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/6536>

water facilities and other relevant measures and conceptual technological solutions that would help to meet the water needs of our countries in full, with account of mutual interests.

Energy is one of the most important areas of partnership. In this context, the head of Turkmenistan spoke about the expediency of creating a self-sufficient model of cooperation that would meet the growing energy needs of the three countries and the necessary margin of safety for national energy systems.



To achieve these strategic goals, a systems approach is needed. There are already certain developments and good examples of cooperation, in particular, in the electric power industry. In general, Turkmenistan is ready to continue such cooperation, making it sustainable. Additionally, President Serdar Berdimuhamedov proposed to develop the long-term trilateral cooperation in the gas industry.

The President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon emphasized the importance of the Ashgabat Summit as a new important chapter in the history of traditionally friendly relations between the states.



In the context of energy and water-environmental cooperation, the Leader of the Nation stated that Tajikistan, taking into account its hydropower resources, is aimed at further developing “green energy” and is ready to continue to actively cooperate with the region’s countries in this direction. Drawing attention to changes in climate in recent years, the President emphasized the importance of Tajikistan’s global initiatives in the field of water and climate, which serve common interests and find unwavering support from the world community.

President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev has noted the positive effect of the Consultative Meetings of the Heads of State of Central Asia. It was stated that thanks to common understanding, mutually acceptable decisions are made on pressing matters on bilateral and regional agenda.

Focusing on new challenges, the President of Uzbekistan stressed the need for joint search for adequate and deeply thought-out responses.

This is especially important in the context of the growing regional water shortage becoming especially acute in recent years.

It was proposed to enhance cooperation in such areas as the promotion of advanced water-saving technologies and the modernization of irrigation systems, the digitalization of water management processes, and the joint development of infrastructure for collecting and storing mudflow and flood water.



“Here, it is necessary to use full potential of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and of cooperation with partner organizations and agencies, such as the World Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank,” the President of Uzbekistan said.

Also, the President noted that close and fruitful cooperation is maintained between the countries of Central Asia in the energy sector, including on supply and transit of energy carriers

Taking into account the general plans on transition to “green” economy, joint hydro and thermal energy projects were initiated.

Further, the floor was given to Philipp Saprykin, Deputy Head of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, who spoke about the activities of UNRCCA. As emphasized, over the past 30 years of progressive development, the states of the region have achieved significant success. Today Central Asia is a model of regional cooperation in many aspects. The Central Asian countries are making a significant contribution to counteracting global challenges, in response to which the UN Secretary General has put forward a New Agenda for the World.

In the context of the key factors of sustainable socio-economic development of Central Asia, including water, ecology and climate change, it was noted that the Ashgabat Summit is evidence of parties’ commitment to join efforts in this area. It was stated that the Central Asian countries have done a lot

together to achieve the SDGs and continue to take necessary measures to strengthen regional cooperation in the above and other areas.

In this context, he noted the importance of the Consultative Meetings of the Heads of State of Central Asia, the results of which serve as a guide for the activities of UNRCCA in relevant to its mandate areas.

Today, UNRCCA undertakes actions within the framework of its Strategy in support of cooperation between the states of Central Asia in the field of water, energy, environment and climate for 2022-2025. In the context of its activities, the Center also builds and maintains working partnerships with international organizations and agencies: the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (SIC ICWC) of Central Asia, UNESCO and others.

The importance that the UN Security Council attaches to cooperation in the Central Asian region was emphasized. At the end of the presentation the UNRCCA's commitment to enhanced cooperation was confirmed.

As a result of the trilateral summit meeting, a Joint Statement was adopted.

During the press conference the parties noted that the current Summit was pre-conditioned by the topical agenda discussed at the meeting.

Special emphasis was placed on three priority areas, the first of which was the sound use of water resources of the Amu Darya River; the second was the development of cooperation in the field of energy, discussion of new opportunities for cooperation in this sector; the third one was strengthening partnership in the field of transport and logistics, expansion of transport and transit corridors.



**Joint statement by the Heads of State of Turkmenistan,
the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan⁶
(extract)**

The Presidents of Turkmenistan, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan, on behalf of their states, hereinafter referred to as the “Parties”,

proceeding from the desire to further strengthen and deepen ties on the basis of friendship and good neighborliness, common history, traditions, culture and civilizational proximity of the people of the three states,

convinced that further development and deepening of relations between the three states meets the fundamental interests of their people and will contribute to strengthening peace, stability, security and sustainable development in the region,

emphasizing the common commitment to further strengthening cooperation in political, trade and economic, transport and logistics, water and energy, environmental, cultural and humanitarian and other areas of mutual interest,

⁶ <https://tdh.gov.tm/ru/post/37092/sovместnoe-zayavlenie-glav-gosudarstv-turkmenistana-respubliki-tadzhikistan-i-respubliki-uzbekistan>

reaffirming commitment to fundamental international legal principles and norms, including those enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,

have declared the following:

[...]

6. Noting the energy cooperation, the Parties, stressed the particular importance of cooperation on the supply of natural gas, oil and oil products, as well as electricity.

In this context, relying on positive experience of trilateral energy cooperation, the Parties agreed to hold negotiations at the level of heads of energy agencies in the second half of 2023 in order to consider the possibilities of joint efforts in the oil, gas and electricity sectors.

[...]

13. The Parties agreed to boost cooperation in the field of food security and agriculture by maintaining agro-industrial ties between Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, also to increase volume and supplies of agricultural products and food to the markets of other countries.

14. The Parties agreed to conduct further joint research and development in the field of effective management, protection and rational use of water resources, ensuring safety of hydraulic structures, reclamation of irrigated land, efficient operation and modernization of water infrastructure, conservation and reuse of water resources, including on the base of existing authorized regional bodies.

Noting the significance of existing and planned hydropower projects for solution of water and energy issues and for climate resilience in the Amu Darya River basin, the Parties, spoke in favor of strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation on integrated and rational use of water and energy, taking into account the interests of the states.

15. Noting the importance of continuing a constructive dialogue on water and energy, the Parties stressed the high priority of sound water use along the Amu Darya River. At the same time, they noted the need for further improvement of multilateral cooperation mechanisms in order to effectively respond to new challenges, including those related to climate change and potentially growing pressure on water along the Amu Darya River.

16. The Parties noted the importance of further strengthening cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation, desertification, land degradation, melting glaciers, environmental protection, early warning systems, ecology, biodiversity conservation and promoting common projects and programs in

these areas, as well as promoting joint initiatives that meet the common interests through regional and international platforms and cooperation mechanisms.

[...]

Ashgabat, August 4, 2023

Events under umbrella of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea

IFAS Board Meeting

The IFAS Board meeting was held in Dushanbe on June 5, 2023.

The meeting was attended by the members of the IFAS Board - First Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Roman Sklyar; Advisor to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shukhrat Ganiev; Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, Annageldi Yazmyradov – and other government officials from the IFAS founder-states, members of the IFAS Executive Committee, representatives of Central Asian embassies based in Tajikistan, as well as representatives of IFAS divisions.



Prior to the meeting, members of the IFAS Board met with Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan and of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea.

The Leader of the Nation greeted and congratulated participants on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the IFAS. He underlined that over the past period of time the Fund clearly demonstrated its relevance as an organization designed to resolve complex environmental and socio-economic issues.

The Head of State noted the Board's contribution to the development of interstate relations in the region and emphasized the importance of decisions made by the Board on strengthening cooperation between the countries in order to address the most pressing water and environmental problems.



In his speech, Emomali Rahmon made recommendations and shared his thoughts on Tajikistan's global efforts and initiatives aimed at addressing water, climate and glacier preservation, including adoption by the UN General Assembly of a resolution declaring 2025 the “International Year of Glaciers’ Preservation”, regional population growth, external impacts on national economies, efficient water use and other issues. He proposed to strengthen water cooperation, particularly as concerns agriculture, water-saving technologies and irrigation methods.

The media briefing followed the meeting.

According to the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Roman Sklyar, the participants addressed a number of important issues and made consolidated decisions.



"I would like to especially note that during the presidency of the Republic of Tajikistan in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea a number of important decisions were de. In particular, the IFAS became an observer at the UN General Assembly. This proves the high status of our organization," said Roman Sklyar.

As he says, at a later stage, the presidency of the IFAS passes from the Republic of Tajikistan to the Republic of Kazakhstan. "We, taking the baton, will carry out measures to ensure that all mechanisms and institutions of the IFAS work effectively. Today, we, the heads of country committees reported to the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, esteemed Emomali Rahmon on the current activities that unite us. In particular, Kazakhstan is interested in sustainable operation of Tajikistan's hydropower so that our agricultural producers receive the needed quantities of water. Bilateral relations between the Kazakhstan and Tajikistan are at a very high level. We see progress in all areas", said the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

"Today we have had a meeting with the President of the Republic of Tajikistan. We discussed the points on the agenda of the Board meeting and the matters related to sharing of transboundary rivers by the Central Asian countries. The importance of efficient water use for prosperity and progress in the Central Asian region was well recognized," noted Annageldi Yazmyradov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan.



"We thank our Tajik colleagues for hospitality. Today, members of the IFAS Board have addressed the issues on the agenda. They acknowledged huge and fruitful efforts of the IFAS Executive Committee under the Chairmanship of the Republic of Tajikistan. We came to a consensus that in the future we will strengthen activities of our organization and cooperation between the countries will be even more fruitful. All items on the agenda today have been approved by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, esteemed Emomali Rahmon," said Shukhrat Ganiev, Advisor to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.





The meeting concluded with the signature of a resolution on the following:

Decisions of the Board of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea

1. Preparation for the meeting of the Council of Heads of IFAS founder states to be held in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan on September 14-15, 2023;

1. Take into consideration the information of the Executive Committee of IFAS on the progress in preparation of the meeting of the Council of Heads of IFAS founder-states in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan.
2. Submit the following draft agenda of the meeting of the Council of Heads of IFAS founder-states to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian States:
 - results of Tajikistan’s chairmanship in IFAS;
 - activities on institutional and legal improvement of IFAS;
 - change in chairmanship in IFAS.
3. The Executive Committee of IFAS, the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination, the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development and relevant ministries and agencies of the Central Asian countries shall assist in preparation and organization of the meeting of the Council of Heads of IFAS founder-states.

Republic of Kazakhstan

R. Sklyar

Kyrgyz Republic

Republic of Tajikistan

S. Ziyozoda

Turkmenistan

A. Yazmiradov

Republic of Uzbekistan

Sh. Ganiyev

2. Progress on fulfillment of the Plan for preparation and celebration of the 30th IFAS anniversary

1. Take into consideration the information of the Executive Committee of IFAS on progress on the Plan for preparation and celebration of commemorative events dedicated to the 30th anniversary of IFAS, including preparation of an international conference as well as organization and coordination of other commemorative events.
2. Award the badge of honor “30 years to the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea” to the retired workers and employees of IFAS agencies and those, who contributed to regional cooperation (according to the attached list).
3. The Executive Committee of IFAS together with the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development, as well as relevant ministries and agencies of IFAS founder-states shall further fulfill the Plan for preparation and celebration of commemorative events dedicated to the 30th anniversary of IFAS.

Republic of Kazakhstan**R. Sklyar****Kyrgyz Republic****Republic of Tajikistan****S. Ziyozoda****Turkmenistan****A. Yazmiradov****Republic of Uzbekistan****Sh. Ganiyev**

**List of persons nominated for awarding
the badge of honor "30 years to IFAS" on behalf of the
IFAS Board**

Republic of Kazakhstan

1. Suleimenova Zulfiya Bulatovna, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources;
2. Turekhanov Valikhan Amirkhanuli, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Tajikistan;
3. Aliakparova Aygul Kuyanishbekovna, Chief Inspector of the President Administration;
4. Ibatullin Sagit Rakhmullaevich, veteran water professional;
5. Kipshakbaev Nariman Kipshakbaevich, veteran water professional;
6. Narbaev Marat Tursinbekovich, Head of Water Resources Department of IFAS Executive Direction in Kazakhstan.

Kyrgyz Republic

1. Omorov Manas Omorovich, veteran of IFAS;
2. Mambetjanova Seyde Abdrazakovna, veteran of IFAS.

Republic of Tajikistan

1. Sirodjiddin Mukhriddin, Minister of Foreign Affairs;
2. Zavqizoda Zavqi, Minister of Economic Development and Trade;
3. Mavlodod Abdukodir, Deputy of Chairman of the Committee for Environmental Protection;
4. Abdurazokzoda Daler, Head of the General Directorate of Water and Energy Policy of the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources.

Turkmenistan

1. Togalakov Khemra Amanmammedovich, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in the Republic of Tajikistan;

2. Pashiev Yanov Durdievich, Head of water use department of the State Committee for Water Management;
3. Chariev Saparmurat Kyrbandurdievich, Chief expert of Digital tool and information security division of the State Committee for Water Management;
4. Arazgeldiev Teke Myatievich, Head of Production Association “Turkmenderyasuvkhozlik”;
5. Karymov Rabbimdjan, Head of Amu Darya Water Control Center Use of the State Committee for Water Management;
6. Mukhamedov Ashirmurat, Head of Middle Darya Division of BWO “Amu Darya”.

Republic of Uzbekistan

1. Khamraev Shavkat Rakhimovich, Ministry of Water Management, ICWC member;
2. Shoismatov Ergash Rakhmatullaevich, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Tajikistan;
3. Djurabekov Ismoil Khakimovich, advisor to the Minister of Water Management;
4. Giniyatullin Rim Abdullovich, veteran of labor, one of the founders of ICWC;
5. Nurimbetov Rakhmatully Ibragimovich, Head of Regional organization cooperation department of MFA;
6. Mukhamednazarov Lutfulla Khaknazarovich, Secretary of National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage.

Organizing committee for the Conference

1. Rakhimzoda Sulton Nurmakhadpur, Chairman of IFAS Executive Committee;
2. Bekniyazov Murat Kabikenovich, Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to IFAS Executive Committee;
3. Bekmaganbetov Serik Abdrakhmanovich, Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to IFAS Executive Committee;
4. Khokimalizoda Mavlon, Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to IFAS Executive Committee;

5. Boyzoda Sanoi Shodi, Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to IFAS Executive Committee;
6. Ovezmukhamedov Islam Annamukhamedovich, Representative of Turkmenistan to IFAS Executive Committee;
7. Zhuraev Ilkhom Usmonovich, Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan to IFAS Executive Committee;
8. Ziganshina Dinara Ravilevna, Director of SIC ICWC;
9. Durikov Mukhammet Khudayberdiyevich, Director of SIC ICSD;
10. Mamedov Batir Kyrbangeldievich, Head of ICSD Secretariat;
11. Nazarov Umar, Head of ICWC Secretariat;
12. Kholkhujayev Odil Akhmedovich, Head of BWO “Syr Darya”;
13. Makhrarov Makhmud Yakhshiboevich, Head of BWO “Amu Darya”;
14. Nasirova Firuza Karimkhonova, Head of Information-Analytical Division and Secretariat of IFAS Executive Committee.

International development partners

1. World Bank;
2. European Union;
3. United States Agency for International Development;
4. GIZ program “Green Central Asia: transboundary dialogue on climate, environment and security in Central Asia”;
5. Asian Development Bank.

3. On progress made in implementing the Aral Sea Basin Program (ASBP-4)

1. Take into consideration the information of the Executive Committee of IFAS on the progress in implementation of the Aral Sea Basin Program (ASBP-4).

2. The Executive Committee of IFAS, ICWC, and ICSD shall continue their joint activities to ensure implementation of ASBP-4, with the involvement of relevant ministries and agencies of IFAS founder-states and regularly inform the Board on the progress.

3. The IFAS divisions and relevant ministries and agencies of founder-states of the Fund shall submit information to the IFAS Executive Committee every six months to ensure monitoring of the progress on ASBP-4.

Republic of Kazakhstan

R. Sklyar

Kyrgyz Republic

Republic of Tajikistan

S. Ziyozoda

Turkmenistan

A. Yazmiradov

Republic of Uzbekistan

Sh. Ganiyev

4. On activities of the Working Group on Institutional and Legal Improvement of IFAS

1. Take into consideration the information of the IFAS Executive Committee on activities of the Working Group on institutional and legal improvement of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.
2. The IFAS Executive Committee shall take measures to complete as soon as possible the process of institutional and legal improvement of IFAS jointly with the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination, the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development and relevant ministries and agencies of the Fund founder-states.

Republic of Kazakhstan

R. Sklyar

Kyrgyz Republic

Republic of Tajikistan

S. Ziyozoda

Turkmenistan

A. Yazmiradov

Republic of Uzbekistan

Sh. Ganiyev

5. On activities of the Executive Committee of IFAS in 2022.

1. Take into consideration the information on activities of the Executive Committee of IFAS in 2022.

2. The Executive Committee of IFAS shall take measures for implementation of updated Work Plan of the Executive Committee of IFAS for the period of Tajikistan's chairmanship.

Republic of Kazakhstan

R. Sklyar

Kyrgyz Republic

Republic of Tajikistan

S. Ziyozoda

Turkmenistan

A. Yazmiradov

Republic of Uzbekistan

Sh. Ganiyev

5. On participation at the UN Conference for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028 (March 22-24, 2023, New York, USA)

1. Take into consideration the information of the IFAS Executive Committee on participation at the UN Conference for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028 (March 22-24, 2023, New York, USA).

2. The Executive Committee of IFAS, ICWC, ICSD jointly with relevant ministries and agencies of the IFAS founder-states shall ensure implementation of the Joint Statement of the Heads of Central Asia States at the 2023 UN Water Conference.

Republic of Kazakhstan

R. Sklyar

Kyrgyz Republic

Republic of Tajikistan

S. Ziyozoda

Turkmenistan

A. Yazmiradov

Republic of Uzbekistan

Sh. Ganiyev

7. On application of modern water accounting and monitoring equipment in the Amu Darya and Syr Darya River basin

1. Take into consideration opinions of the parties on application of modern water accounting and monitoring equipment in the Amu Darya and Syr Darya River basins.

2. The Executive Committee of IFAS jointly with the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination shall facilitate mobilization of investments for implementation of the project “Improvement of water accounting and monitoring systems in the Amu Darya and Syr Darya River basins” included in the Aral Sea Basin Action Program (ASBP-4).

Republic of Kazakhstan

R. Sklyar

Kyrgyz Republic

Republic of Tajikistan

S. Ziyozoda

Turkmenistan

A. Yazmiradov

Republic of Uzbekistan

Sh. Ganiyev

8. On the agenda of the next meeting of the IFAS Board

The next meeting of the Board of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea is to address the following issues:

- results of the meeting of the Council of Heads of IFAS founder-states in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan, September 14-15, 2023;
- progress on implementation of ASBP-4;
- activities of the Working Group on institutional and legal improvement of IFAS;
- agenda of the next meeting of the IFAS Board.

Republic of Kazakhstan

R. Sklyar

Kyrgyz Republic

Republic of Tajikistan

S. Ziyozoda

Turkmenistan

A. Yazmiradov

Republic of Uzbekistan

Sh. Ganiyev

Meeting of the Working Group on institutional and legal improvement of IFAS⁷

On 8 August 2023, the Working Group on institutional and legal improvement of IFAS gathered for its regular meeting. The meeting was chaired by the Chairman of the Executive Committee of IFAS S. Rahimzoda.

Members of the Working Group from IFAS member states, representatives of the Executive Committee of IFAS and its structural divisions, as well as representatives of the World Bank took part in the meeting.



⁷Source - <https://www.facebook.com/ec.ifas>



On the first day, Mr. Sul-ton Rahimzoda provided a brief summary of the discussions of the Working Group and provided recommendations to the IFAS Board and Summit of Heads of States. The group also discussed such matters as the approval of proposed structure of EC IFAS and its permanent location, requirements to institutional budget, the number and mandate of the Com-missions, the proposed institutions and a new name of IFAS.

The existing regional organizations involved in coordination of energy policy were also presented. This helped the Working Group members to decide on energy aspects within IFAS.

On August 9, the participants discussed options for the IFAS legal framework and updated version of the IFAS institutional framework, taking into account discussions on the first day, the number and mandate of the commissions and bodies, as well as further steps on preparation for the Summit of Heads of IFAS founder-states.



Events dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea



International Conference “Central Asia: Towards Sustainable Future through a Strong Regional Institution”

5-7 June 2023, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

In 2023, the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea celebrates its 30th anniversary. The decision to establish IFAS was made by the Heads of Central Asian States at their meeting in Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan, on January 4, 1993, and the Regulation on IFAS was approved subsequently at the next meeting of the Heads of Central Asian States on March 26, 1993 in Kyzylorda.

For 30 years of its activity, IFAS has been able to provide a regional platform for dialogue and cooperation to address the region’s most pressing problems related to water and the environment. The Fund contributed to the development of qualitatively new interstate relations in the region by strengthening regional cooperation and ensuring conflict-free resolution of complex water management issues.

The following activities were held as part of jubilee events conducted in Dushanbe on July 5-7, 2023:

- Meeting of the IFAS Board
- International conference “Central Asia: Towards Sustainable Future through a Strong Regional Institution”.

The Conference aimed to reflect on the past accomplishments, to provide insight into current streams of cooperation, and to develop an agenda for future vision. The Conference celebrated a special role of the IFAS as a unique platform for water and environment cooperation in Central Asia. Within the framework of the Conference, stakeholders were given the opportunity to organize interactive dialogue sessions, side and special events.

The objectives of the Conference were to:

1. Take stock and commemorate the achievements made by the IFAS in establishing an inter-governmental basin organization for cooperation in the Aral Sea basin;
2. Recognize the broader regional developments, challenges and opportunities and the need for a multilateral cooperation, joint effort and partnership with IFAS;
3. Recognize the profile of the IFAS as a unique results-oriented political platform for regional cooperation on water, environment and socio-economic development in the Aral Sea basin;
4. Set a forward-looking strategic vision for the improved legal and institutional structure of the IFAS.

The Conference brought together high-ranking officials, policy-makers, experts, scientists and enthusiasts from IFAS member-states and other regions, representing government agencies, international organizations, financial institutions, academia, civil society and other interested parties. Special attention was given to participation of youth, women, the private sector and scientific community.

Conference included two plenary sessions, four interactive dialogues, two cooperation workshops focused on the future of water and environmental cooperation in the Aral Sea basin and enabling technical factors and approaches.

At the end of the first plenary session of the conference there was a ceremony of awarding the retired workers and employees of IFAS agencies, who contributed to the development of the Fund's activity for many years.

The purpose of this initiative was also to recognize individuals, who have over years contributed to strengthening of interstate relations in the field of water resources, environmental protection and sustainable development in a

transboundary context for the benefit of the present and future generations of the Central Asian region.

At the ceremony on behalf of the President of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, members of the IFAS Board from each country of Central Asia were awarded by the badge of honor “30 years of IFAS” and a diploma.

The anniversary medal “30 years of IFAS” on behalf of the IFAS Board was awarded to representatives of the governments of the Central Asian countries, structural divisions, veterans, ambassadors extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the IFAS founder-states, development partners and others.

Also, a letter of Appreciation from the Executive Committee in honor of the 30th anniversary of the Fund was awarded to IFAS veterans, representatives of ICWC, ICSD, structural divisions, IFAS bodies, employees of relevant ministries and departments, representatives of development partners and others who were active in the field of water resources and environmental protection of the Aral Sea basin.

The International Conference "Central Asia: Towards Sustainable Future through a Strong Regional Institution" was launched on June 6, 2023.

Session 1: Inter-basin dialogue

D. Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC took part in the session presenting the “Water cooperation in the Aral Sea basin.” She showed how the cooperation among the region’s countries developed in the past thirty years. The following achievements were demonstrated, in particular:

- All-round support from the Heads of State. The cooperation priorities on water, energy and environment have been repeatedly voiced at various high-level events by the Heads of State;
- Jointly established institutions help to adapt to new realities peacefully and in practical way;
- The developed system of annual planning and monitoring allows conflict-free and timely water management;
- Technical collaboration among the riparian states: over 1500 people work in ICWC system only;
- Data, information and knowledge exchange. The developed and regularly upgraded SIC ICWC portal - CAWater-Info – is noteworthy here;

- Developed and implemented Aral Sea Basin programs (ASBP), signed agreements on water sharing, including on bilateral basis;
- Joint regional projects, research, and regular capacity building of staff in the water sector;
- ICWC working groups on water conservation, IWRM, water accounting, and Amu Darya and Syr Darya lower reaches.

However, challenges also remain:

- There is an urgent need for basin-wide long-term planning and inter-sectoral management mechanisms that are climate and other challenges resilient;
- It is necessary to improve forecasting and accounting of water resources and enhance data exchange;
- Sustainable financial and economic mechanisms for rational water use are required;
- Science-based opportunities and up-to-date technologies and innovations should be widely used and applied;
- More attention should be paid to water and air quality and environmental degradation.

The following future tasks for joint work are proposed at strategic, legislative, operational and expert levels:

1. Access to safe water and adequate sanitation for everyone
2. Transboundary water cooperation for sustainable development
 - Searching jointly for win-win solutions
 - Dialogue through data and information exchange
 - Education, science and expertise
 - Coordinated response to natural disasters
 - Engagement of youth
3. Effective water resources management
4. Water, energy, food and ecosystem nexus
5. Adaptation to climate change and mitigation of water-related risks
6. Financing water

Session 4: Policy and science dialogue

Director of SIC ICWC, D. Ziganshina was a co-presenter of “Digital RS-based online tools for sustainable agricultural water management in Central Asia - WUEMoCA and Droughtmap-ASB”.

The participants were demonstrated the WUEMoCA – a decision support tool developed by SIC ICWC together with German partners to identify irrigated territories in the Aral Sea basin that need particular water management actions due to water shortage, land degradation or abandonment.

WUEMoCA integrates in its structure the RS technology with the database of administrative boundaries, water distribution nodes, regular grid cells and user zones to map land use, assess crop yields and model evapotranspiration.

The RS-based data combined with crop modeling allows identifying gaps in crop growth at different stages depending on various factors and helps taking timely appropriate measures.

Second analytical tool - Droughtmap-ASB – was then presented. This is a system of agricultural drought monitoring helping to detect drought spots and areas for urgent actions. It helps to prepare and disseminate drought warning bulletins.

Workshop 1: Innovative solutions for strengthening regional cooperation

The workshop on “Innovative solutions for strengthening regional cooperation” jointly organized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), SIC ICWC and the European Union was held on the 7th of June.

The aim was to facilitate roundtable discussion on emerging and innovative approaches to enhancing regional co-operation between water and energy management in a changing climate.

The Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan Daler Juma and the EU Special Representative for Central Asia Terhi Hakala made welcoming speeches. Takayoshi Kato, the leading expert of the OECD project on water, energy and land use nexus in Central Asia made an overview presentation and identified key issues for discussion.

Director of SIC ICWC, D. Ziganshina moderated the workshop.

Tulegen Sarsembekov (expert from Kazakhstan) and Abdurashid Mirzayev (Head Dispatcher of CDC “Energy”) shared best practices and talked about the existing challenges which were encountered during coordination process in water and energy sector in Central Asia. Bakhtiyor Rakhimov from NGO “Water for Sustainable Development OBRU” presented the opportunities of digitalization for rational use of water resources using Tajikistan as an example. Torsten Brezina, Cluster Coordinator of GIZ Regional Programs in Central Asia, shared his vision on how Central Asian countries could work together and with development partners in the future to mobilize more funding to support innovative water and energy solutions in the region.

Participants talked about technological, managerial and institutional innovations, including innovative financing mechanisms during discussion. It was emphasized that in order to build investor confidence in innovation, a number of policy issues need to be addressed and that policy dialogue is needed to fully address the issues related to environmental protection, water pollution, climate change, land management and renewable energy, emphasizing the importance of a water-energy-food nexus approach. A recommendation was made to emphasize the need for economic assessments. It was noted that education and capacity development are crucial for identifying, implementing and sustaining innovations.

Resolution of the participants of the International Conference “Central Asia: Towards Sustainable Future through a Strong Regional Institution”

We, the participants of the International Conference “Central Asia: Towards Sustainable Future through a Strong Regional Institution” dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, representing governments, international and regional organizations, UN agencies, financial institutions, civil society and other stakeholders:

Taking into account an important and significant event the 30th anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea as a unique regional structure for strengthening water and environmental cooperation and partnership in achieving sustainable development, including the SDGs for the period up to 2030 and the goals of the International Decade of Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028, maintaining health and a decent person quality of life;

Considering the availability of water, energy and other natural resources in the region, relevant infrastructure, existing national legislation, bilateral and multilateral framework and other agreements, resolutions of the United Nations

General Assembly on the Aral Sea basin and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea;

Noting the presence of transboundary rivers, the commonly shared of many socio-economic and environmental problems against the background of water scarcity, climate change and its consequences, natural disaster risks, the interconnection of various types of water use – “water- energy-food-ecosystems” (Nexus), as well as the importance of achieving effective water resources management to resolve them;

Emphasizing the importance of expanding water and ecological cooperation, water diplomacy, advancing the role of women and youth, spiritual ties between generations, preparation of qualified personnel, strengthening all mechanisms for regulating water relations and resolving disputes, especially at the cross-border level, including taking measures to mitigate the consequences of the Aral ecological disaster on a planetary scale, climate change and related negative processes;

Emphasizing the expediency of rational and efficient use of water, energy and other natural resources in the region, the need to continue work on improving the mechanisms of long-term and mutually beneficial cooperation, with consideration of the interests of all parties;

have discussed a wide range of topical issues that require intensified action in the context of existing problems and possible future risks;

and highlighted the following:

- In Central Asia, water is an essential component of socio-economic development, as well as a key element of national and regional security. The countries of the region have always adhered to the position of development of an equitable and comprehensive cooperation on water and energy issues on the principles of good neighborliness, mutual respect, support and mutual consideration of interests;
- The Central Asian states have favorable opportunities to strengthen partnership in the field of water resources, environmental protection, glaciers preservation and other areas of cooperation within the framework of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, which has shown its effectiveness over 30 years of work;
- The states of the Aral Sea basin demonstrate to the world community the unity of the positions of the countries of the region, including through joint participation and statements at major thematic events: the UN 2023 Water Conference, the 9th World Water Forum, etc.

The participants of the conference, considering the above, as well as the main points of the discussions held during the plenary and thematic sessions, **appeal:**

- to the governments of the Central Asian countries to make additional efforts to improve institutional and legal mechanisms, raising awareness and taking action to mitigate water-related risks attract and apply new progressive technologies, increase funding, introduce other innovative tools and approaches, encourage research and exchange, as well as strengthen water and ecological cooperation, water diplomacy to solve the above problems and implement the proposed measures;
- to financial institutions, international organizations, donor countries and other development partners to provide all possible support, including financial, technical, technological, to the countries of Central Asia to solve the main tasks of achieving sustainable development, especially in rural areas, including the implementation of the Action Program to Assist the countries of the Aral Sea basin (ASBP-4) by 2030 and the Regional Environmental Protection Program for the Sustainable Development of Central Asia;
- to the representatives of private sector of the region to promote the solution of water problems and the introduction of “green” technologies, including through the use of alternative energy sources, new investments, in particular, through public-private partnership mechanisms;
- to the civil society of the region to actively participate in discussions of water problems and generation of ideas, proposals for joining efforts with the government, private sectors and international organizations to solve them.

The conference participants express gratitude to the bodies and organizations of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and other partners for organizing the Conference at a high level and creating conditions for fruitful work, as well as the host party for the hospitality provided.

Adopted
on the 7th of June, 2023,
Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan

Round table dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea

The round table dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea was held in Tashkent on 23 May 2023.

The event was organized by the IFAS Agency in Uzbekistan and the National Water Partnership of Uzbekistan. Researchers, water practitioners, as well as representatives of international organizations, ministries and government agencies, and higher educational institutions of Uzbekistan took part in this event.



Director of SIC ICWC, D. Ziganshina presented on the “Role of ICWC Central Asia in establishing and strengthening regional water cooperation”. She underlined decisive leadership of water ministers of the Central Asian countries in building and maintaining water cooperation over the last 30 years.

For many years, the ICWC platform, with its quarterly meetings, executive bodies, and jointly implemented projects served as a space for continuous and open negotiations. Through the years, water professionals, including executive bodies of ICWC, such as BWO Amu Darya, BWO Syr Darya, Scientific-Information Center, Secretariat, and Coordination-Metrological Center, advanced their skills to convince and justify their arguments in resolving water issues. ICWC also has managed to build multilateral cooperation and work with development partners. Within the framework of ICWC, bilateral cooperation has been initiated and developed in

recent years for regulation of water allocation in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya River. The contribution of ICWC to development of training and research, including in such new areas as GIS, water financing, and water-heritage- culture nexus is also invaluable. Thus, the future tasks are to maintain and further develop the experience accumulated under umbrella of ICWC



Deputy Director of SIC ICWC, A. Nazariy presented the analysis of available water supply in the riparian countries in the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins from 1993 to 2013. The analysis shows that the countries cope better with dry periods as evidenced by greater water supply. He also shared SIC's approaches to assessment of plausible inflow to upper reservoirs and lateral inflow through the hydrological analogue year method.

International events

IHE Delft workshop as part of cross-regional learning for transformative water diplomacy

A cross-regional learning workshop for transformative water diplomacy (CROWD) was held in Delft, the Netherlands on May 30-31, 2023. The workshop was organized by the Institute for Water Education IHE Delft. The main focus of the event was on cross-regional learning to promote water diplomacy and unlock its transformative potential.

20 people from 9 countries took place in the event. The participants included representatives of higher educational institutions, academia, governmental and non-governmental, regional and inter-regional institutions, as well as private sector and centers on transboundary water management and climate change from the Netherlands, Sudan, Jordan, Nigeria, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, USA, Germany and Finland.

In the first day, researcher from SIC ICWC Mr. A. Dolidudko made presentation on the mission, tasks and the role of SIC ICWC in Central Asian regional cooperation. Other representatives of SIC ICWC Mr. Sh. Muminov and Mr. R. Sattarov participated online.

During the two-day workshop the participants discussed the notion of water diplomacy and its transformative approaches for more sustainable development, as well as the analysis and tools needed to ensure that water diplomacy addresses the effects of climate change, large infrastructure and environmental degradation in an equitable way.

The Young Water Diplomat Program was also presented during the event. The Program will train young water diplomats from the South. This is a unique initiative for enhancing knowledge on water diplomacy and integrating the latter into political processes.



Eurasian congress'23 “Eurasia of the Future: from challenges to solutions”

Eurasian Congress '23 took place under the slogan “Eurasia of the Future: from Challenges to Solutions” in Sochi on June 8-9.

The Congress offered a space for open dialogue between businesses, financial institutions, representatives of governments, academia, and experts.

The Congress featured a number of sessions:

- High Tech as a Driver of Eurasian Integration,
- Digital Transformation and Building a New Economic Setup in Eurasia,
- Eurasian Water and Energy Complex,
- Transport and Logistics in Eurasia, etc.

Dinara Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC spoke at the Eurasian Water and Energy Complex session.



She underlined that the Central Asian countries had formed themselves and on their own initiative an Interstate Commission for Water Coordination for coordinated regulation, integrated and rational use and conservation of transboundary water resources. The Commission functions under umbrella of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea, which celebrated its 30th anniversary a day earlier in Dushanbe.

Support by the Heads of state, regular meetings, the extended network of executive agencies, a system of operational transboundary water management

and monitoring, and integration of science and analytics (SIC) in the work are among the undisputable advantages of the ICWC and IFAS system.

Thanks to this and despite occurrence of extremely dry and wet years and very complicated political, economic, social and environmental conditions, the counties managed to maintain peace, while adapting water management, as far as possible, to new realities.

As requested by the Heads of Central Asian States, the institutional and legal improvement of the IFAS is underway. The relevant working groups have reached agreements on the four focus areas of the upgraded structure of the Fund. These are water, energy, environment and water- and ecology-related socio-economic issues.

In this context, the reporter paid attention to environmental issues since those are difficult to assess in terms of cost effectiveness.

Dinara Ziganshina shared the future plans. Currently a team of experts from Central Asia and foreign partners work on transboundary public-private partnership. In addition to international experience, they examined the Central Asian countries in joint financing transboundary water cooperation so that to develop the already existing mechanisms and upgrade them proceeding from regional and water specifics.

It is believed that sustainable financing mechanisms and individual transboundary PPP projects should fit into mutually agreed long-term plans of integrated water management, use and conservation on the basin scale. This means that basin-wide strategic assessments are needed in addition to project-specific assessments. And, undoubtedly, rational water use should be the engine of all actions.

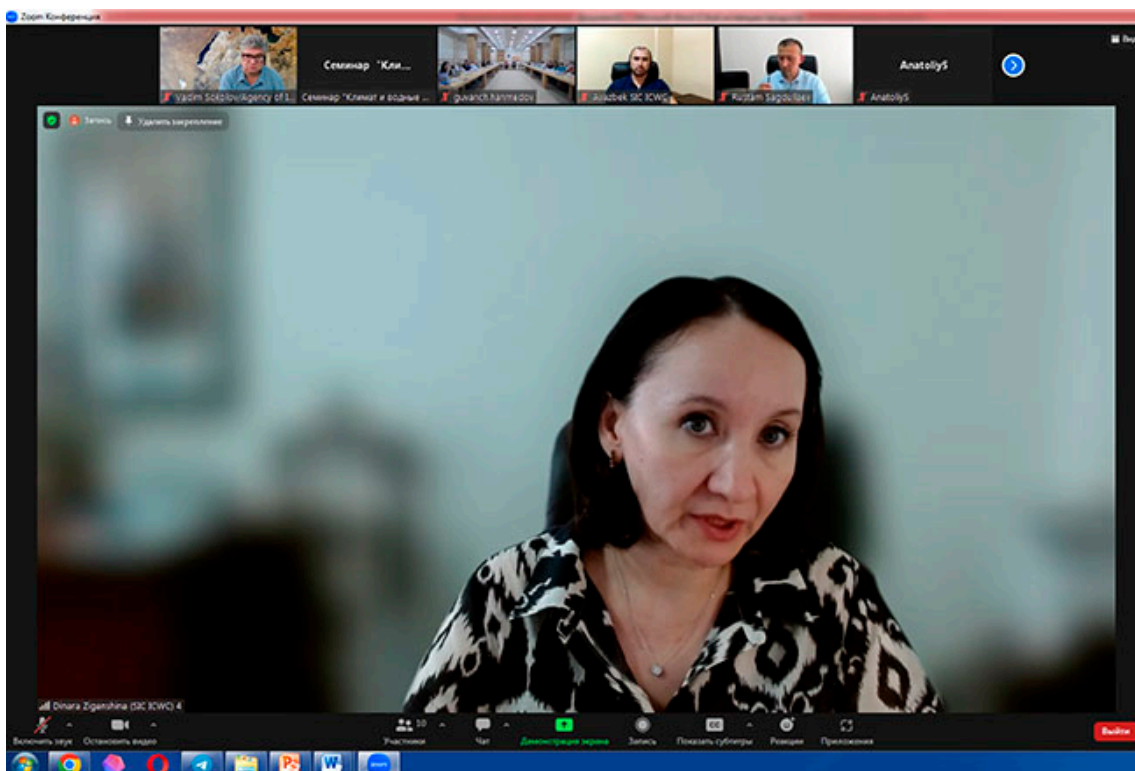
UNDP, SIC ICWC and SIC ICSD organize climate and water workshop

On 13-14 June, as part of the project “Developing a National Adaptation Planning Process in Turkmenistan”, the first round of planned six workshops was held for the members of the Coordination Mechanism and decision makers on integration of adaptation into water planning. The workshop was organized by SIC ICWC jointly with the Scientific-Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (SIC ICSD) and with the financial support of UNDP.

The main objective of the workshop was to equip the participants with the knowledge on new conditions of water formation, use and protection in the context of climate change at the global, regional and national level, strengthen their understanding of the impact of climate change on water resources, and present the regional forecast platforms (tools).



Director of SIC ICWC, Dinara Ziganshina noted the importance of holding such a series of workshops on adaptation of Turkmen water planning to climate change. She stressed that the Central Asian countries have already accumulated some experience in adaptation of the water management system to new conditions as a result of political, economic, social and hydrological transformations in the last 30 years. This generated positive results that were mentioned during the Conference dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea in Dushanbe on 6-7 June.



Other reporters noted that it could not be denied anymore that climate changed on a global scale. In this context, it is urgently needed to assess the intensity of climate change in order to develop adaptation and mitigation strategies. Decreasing water availability and growing temperatures are impacting almost all economic sectors and deteriorating quality of life but the countries can transform climate threats into opportunities for sustainable growth in the future. That is why adaptation measures are so important.

UNDP, SIC ICWC and SIC ICSD workshop on international climate and water cooperation

On 11-12 July, as part of the project “Developing a National Adaptation Planning Process in Turkmenistan”, the second round of planned six workshops was held for the members of the Coordination Mechanism and decision makers on integration of adaptation into water planning.

The workshop was organized by SIC ICWC jointly with the Scientific-Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (SIC ICSD) and with the financial support of UNDP. Experts from SIC ICWC, SIC ICSD, Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, Global

Water Partnership, Agency for Implementation of IFAS Projects in Uzbekistan, Secretary of the Kazakh Party of the Chu-Talas Commission, representatives of UNECE and others took part and made presentations at the workshop.



The main objective was to enhance knowledge of the participants about international, regional and national legal instruments of water resources management in the context of climate change. The participants learned about country climate commitments, UN conventions on water and climate, existing water management system in the Central Asian region, examples of transboundary cooperation all over the world, and water diplomacy.

Director of SIC ICWC, D. Ziganshina in her presentation “Adaptation of water allocation in the Amu Darya River Basin to changes taking place over the last three decades” indicated to experience accumulated by riparian countries of the Aral Sea Basin in adaptation of water management to new conditions. She explained the dry year situations in 2001 and 2008, analyzed the inter-state water limits over 30 years, and gave practical recommendations on how to improve the current situation in the basin. Responding to questions, she told on forthcoming reforms in IFAS organizations.



Expert from SIC ICWC, A. Rysbekov made two presentations on “Legal and institutional frameworks of water cooperation under umbrella of ICWC” and “Examples of governance adaptation in transboundary basins”. In particular, he presented the chronology of establishment of regional organizations, the legal mechanisms regulating transboundary water relations and addressed strengths and weaknesses of regional organizations, as well as advantages and shortcomings of bi- and multilateral agreements reached between the CA countries. He also showed examples of adaptation of transboundary water management in the Rhine, Danube, Mekong, and La Plata River basins and of joint operation of Itaipu Dam.



UNECE representatives A. Belokurov and T. Kutonova spoke on the UN Water Conventions, particularly the role of the UN Convention for adaptation of transboundary river management to climate change and the examples of adaptation measures in the transboundary Dniester River basin.



Secretary of the Kazakhstan party of the Chu-Talas Commission, I. Akbozova made a report "Adaptation to climate change in the Chu-Talas Transboundary Basin", where she presented the legal framework and mechanism of cooperation in the Chu-Talas Basin, talked about the development of cooperation and adaptation experience in the Chu-Talas basin.

Representatives of SIC ICSD made presentations on Turkmenistan's climate and water commitments, main directions of water diplomacy in Turkmenistan, ICSD and adaptation to climate change, ongoing activities to overcome the crisis in the Aral Sea zone of Turkmenistan, adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins, and the Caspian Sea, with detailed Turkmenistan's commitments under international documents on climate change, etc.

Finally, the participants have got answers to raised questions.

SDC workshop to plan the national water resources management project in Uzbekistan, Phase III

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has been implementing water development projects in Uzbekistan and the region as whole since 1998. The Agency completed 5 regional and 3 national water resources management projects. In particular, the National water resources management project in Uzbekistan implemented in 2016-2019 yielded the expected results. Practical results have been achieved on transparent and user needs-driven water management.

Therefore, the Ministry of Water Management of Uzbekistan and SDC have signed an agreement for implementation of Phase II of the National water resources management project in Uzbekistan in 2020-2023. The overall project goal is to improve the rural population's livelihoods through integrated water resource management in Uzbekistan. This is to be achieved also through adoption of information and communication technologies in day-to-day operations of the Ministry, basin irrigation system authorities, rayon irrigation system authorities, and water user and farmer associations, creation of favorable conditions for gaining required knowledge, collection and sharing of information on a real-time basis.



On 15 June, a workshop was organized at the Ministry of Water Management to plan Phase III of the Project. The event brought together representatives of international organizations dealing with water, concerned national ministries and agencies.

Opening the workshop, Minister of Water Management of Uzbekistan, Mr. Khamraev noted that the results achieved by the project were very important and relevant for Uzbekistan in time, when water stress increases due to climate change.

The project implementation team headed by O. Islamova presented the Project's Phase II and summarized the results achieved.

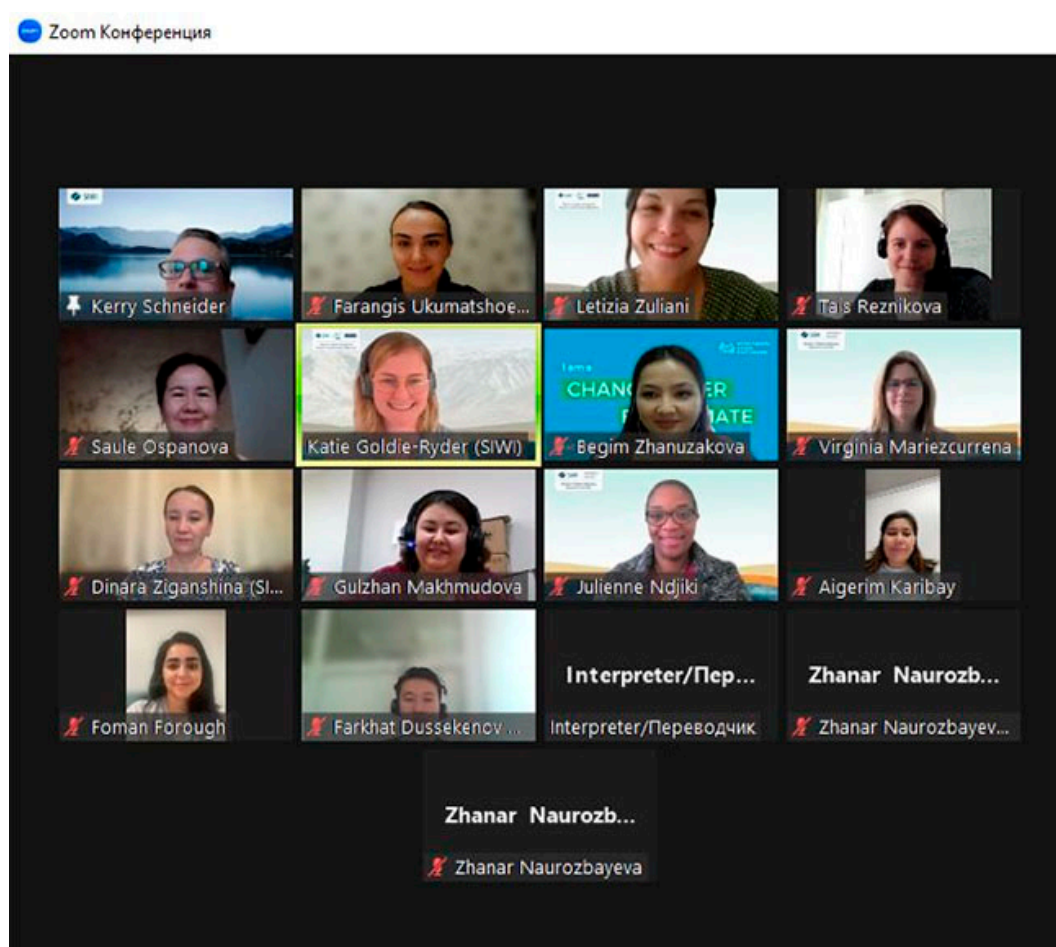
In her speech Director of SIC ICWC, Dinara Ziganshina highlighted real coordination between Uzbek ministries and agencies in the process of drafting a new Water Code and presented SIC's approaches to cross-sectoral integration in the Central Asian countries. In particular, she underlined the importance of practical tools for coherent implementation and monitoring of strategic tasks on water, food, energy and environmental security. She presented the results of background analysis regarding the benefits of cross-sectoral solutions on water, food and energy security in Central Asia conducted by SIC ICWC with the support of OECD in 2020. The analysis used statistics for more than 110 indicators from the five countries. Ms. Ziganshina also demonstrated SIC's methodology for assessment of water security in administrative territories (case-studies of Khorezm, Navoiy and Samarkand provinces). Future plans on a forthcoming project "Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate-resilient transformation of the energy-water-land nexus in Central Asia" to be implemented by OECD, UNECE, SIC ICWC, and EBRD were shared as well.

Online workshop "Digitalization: supporting inclusive, sustainable and effective water diplomacy processes"

The Women in Water Diplomacy Network organized a workshop on 16 June 2023. This workshop sought to elaborate and discuss the 2023 International Women's Day theme, "DigitAll: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality." This theme is particularly significant for transboundary water cooperation processes – enabling transboundary water dialogues and supporting data sharing among other applications.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption and adaptation of digital pathways for dialogue and decision making across many transboundary basins. However, in many parts of the world – including transboundary basins in conflict sensitive areas – those that need support the most have the least access to online tools putting at risk particularly marginalized stakeholders.

This knowledge and experience sharing online workshop was aimed to elevate lessons learned and good practices for the adoption of digital processes and tools with focus on eroding barriers to inclusive participation and supporting effective water cooperation.



Director of SIC ICWC, Dr. Dinara Ziganshina presented the digitalization processes and mechanisms in a transboundary context of Central Asia. The water agencies of the five Central Asian countries have been closely cooperating through the ICWC and under umbrella of the IFAS as long as over 30 years

As part of its mandate, SIC ICWC develops and maintains different information tools, including the CAWater-Info portal, which integrates in its body a set of databases, knowledge base, and analytical tools and models. In

addition, the remote sensing and GIS technologies applied there help to increase transparency of decision making, improve water use efficiency and raise economic benefits.

Regional Conference “Financial and investment support of measures for rational water use”

The Regional Conference “Financial and investment support of measures for rational water use” was held in Ashgabat on June 20, 2023.

The event was opened by D. Genjiev, Chairman of the Committee for Water Resources of Turkmenistan, who stressed on pressing issues of rational water use and water financing, resulting from strategic objectives of development in Turkmenistan and Central Asia.

D. Shlapachenko (UN Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan) welcomed the participants and highlighted the relevance of the conference topics in light of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, global water and environmental conventions and other international development programs.



S. Rakhimzoda, Chairman of EC IFAS welcomed the participants and emphasized that water services are still underestimated in Central Asian countries. At the UN 2023 Water Conference in March 2023 in New York, a special focus of discussion was on financing water, especially in the context of climate change.

D. Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC, stressed the need to make the water sector more attractive for both domestic and external investments. Currently, the water sector in the Central Asian countries is financed mainly through public budgets that cover only 40-80% of the actual needs. Research and design institutes operating in this area are underfinanced. EDB estimates the priority investment needs in water and energy sectors at about US\$ 8.7 billion by 2030 but the actual needs seem to be well higher. Therefore, new forms of financing such as public-private partnerships and their appropriate application become more important. Expert research and joint work of the countries on financing and rational water use are among priority tasks for achieving water security in Central Asia.

I. Abdullaev, Professor at the University of Giessen, made a report on financing climate-resilient infrastructure in Central Asia. He noted that, first, it is necessary to increase innovation policy and water productivity. Investing in the water sector means investing in economic development.

The role of the private sector will grow but cannot replace the role of the public sector. It is important to diversify investments in the water sector. According to ADB estimates, about \$35 billion is needed for infrastructure development, including the water sector; \$40 billion, taking into account adaptation of infrastructure to climate change. There is a need for cross-sectoral investments (investments in development, not a separate sector), with demonstration of the role of water investments as a catalyst for the development of other sectors.

Sh. Muminov, Deputy Director of SIC ICWC made a presentation on “Financial and investment support of water-energy nexus coordination in Central Asia: history, state-of-affairs and world best practices”. He presented SIC’s work implemented jointly with OECD within the framework of the Expert Platform on Water Security, Sustainable Development and Future Studies, in particular, on feasible options of financial and investment support of water and energy cooperation in Central Asia.

D. Shoimzoda, Deputy Minister of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan: “Widespread implementation of IWRM opens new opportunities to improve management and boost cooperation. Transboundary cooperation should become a catalyst for development. Increased integration of science and technology is an important vector of efforts. Tajikistan is developing

and implementing national and sectoral programs aimed at improving water and energy efficiency. Due to its social orientation, the water sector in our countries is not attractive for investors. But we have to find such mechanisms that will nevertheless allow us to attract financing for its development”.

B. Kamalov, Deputy Minister of Water Management of the Republic of Uzbekistan talked about measures to improve water management and use in the country, including implementation of water-saving technologies, digitalization, and modernization of pumping stations. He noted the fruitful work of bilateral and multilateral commissions between the countries. Uzbekistan is ready to conduct a constructive dialog for improving regional mechanisms of cooperation.

S. Ataev, Committee of Water Management of Turkmenistan underlined that development of the water sector is one of priority directions of the country. Transboundary water cooperation was also noted.



UNECE training workshop “From practitioner to practitioner: how to use the two global water conventions to promote cooperation on the ground”

The training workshop, which took place in Geneva on July 3-4, 2023, was organized by the Water Convention secretariat as part of Program area 1: Increasing awareness of and accession to the Convention and application of its principles drawing on the benefits of cooperation under the Convention’s program of work 2022-2024 led by Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana and Hungary.



The training workshop was to contribute to the enlargement of the community of practitioners who would have a good understanding on the Conventions and could promote accession to Conventions and their implementation.

The workshop's sessions were organized around the following key issues:

- What are the main principles, substantive and procedural obligations and how to implement them?
- How implementation of the Conventions helps to achieve the SDGs and how does it help address pertinent issues in water management?
- How to make the Conventions operational in the growing number of basins? How to promote them and advance accessions?

The participants in small groups presented and discussed practical instruments provided by the Conventions under various topics of transboundary cooperation, among which are the guidance on development of transboundary agreements, on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins, on water allocation in transboundary context, on water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus and benefits of cooperation, and on monitoring and assessment of transboundary aquifers.

The training workshop brought together experts from countries, basin organizations, regional organizations, international organizations, development cooperation agencies and NGOs whose work is closely related to transboundary water cooperation.

Dinara Ziganshina, Vice-Chair of the Implementation Committee under the Water Convention took part in the training workshop as a rapporteur.

The 3rd International conference on water and climate “Basin management, key to adaptation and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals”

The 3rd International Conference on Water and Climate “Basin management, key to adaptation and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals” was held on 6 and 7 July 2023 in Fez, Morocco.

The Conference was organized by the Ministry of Equipment and Water of the Kingdom of Morocco in partnership with the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) and the World Water Council (WWC).



The Conference brought together state representatives, UN agencies, international organizations, bilateral and multilateral donors, basin organizations (national and transboundary), regional and local authorities and other stakeholders interested in basin management.

This 3rd edition of the Conference was to ensure the link between the United Nations Conference on Water (22-24 March 2023) and the COP28 on climate (30 Nov. - 12 December).

The Conference agenda consisted of five sessions:

- Session 1 Innovation and Technologies for Water Saving
- Session 2 Groundwater Management: Challenges and Prospects
- Session 3 Water Governance: For a Better Intersectoral Coherence

- Session 4 Water Resources Mobilization: How to take into account the real cost of water?
- Session 5 Commitments by and for basins for the implementation of the Water Action Agenda 2030.

Dinara Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC, made presentation on “Commitments of the Central Asian countries and regional organizations under the Water Action Agenda” at Session 5.



She demonstrated positive dynamics in transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia under SDG 6.5. However, additional efforts should be made to enhance sharing of data and information, fill gaps in the data on transboundary aquifers, and ensure water financing.

While recognizing the 30-year cooperation under the umbrella of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea, during the 2023 UN Water Conference the Central Asian countries made a joint statement, with the commitments to water cooperation and climate agenda, focusing on cross-cutting nature of water, IWRM, water conservation, innovations, joint programs and institutions.

Acting as a regional organization, SIC ICWC is committed to closer cooperation between the countries and partners in order to promote transboundary water cooperation based on evidence, enhanced data and knowledge, capacity building and increased policy-research interface.

Editorial Board:

D. Ziganshina

I. Beglov

Editorial office:

Karasu-4, B-11 A,

Tashkent 100187,

Republic of Uzbekistan

SIC ICWC

Our web-site:

sic.icwc-aral.uz