Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia

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Global events

29th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

The 29th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) was held in Baku on November 11-12, 2024. On the agenda were the CO_2 emission reduction efforts and the sources of additional funding to mitigate the environmental effects of climate change.

The Heads of State of Central Asian countries (except Turkmenistan) attended the Conference. The presidents took the floor at the opening ceremony.

Address by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the opening ceremony¹

The President of Kazakhstan spoke at the World Leaders Climate Action Summit in Baku, DKnews.kz reports.

The President of Kazakhstan was the first to take the floor after the opening of the plenary session.

At the beginning of his speech, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev reaffirmed Kazakhstan's commitment to the global climate agenda and emphasized the importance of international cooperation in combating climate change.

The Head of State noted that access to predictable financing and modern technologies is vital to achieving these goals. He stated that the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance should prioritize regions most impacted by climate change, including landlocked developing countries.

 $^{^1 \} Source: \ https://astanatimes.com/2024/11/kazakh-president-proposes-key-actions-to-tackle-climate-change-at-cop 29-in-baku/$

https://report.az/en/cop 29/kassym-jomart-tokayev-kazakhstan-welcomes-azerbaijani-president-s-initiative-on-caspian-sea/



"Despite accounting for only 1% of global emissions, Central Asia faces multiple climate risks. To enhance our response, we must now leverage technologies such as artificial intelligence, satellite monitoring, and other digital tools for early warning and better water and land management".

"Our country exports 43% of the world's uranium supplies and therefore plays a critical role in the low-carbon nuclear power generation. In October, a nationwide referendum supported construction of the nuclear power plant in Kazakhstan. We are committed to ensuring the project safety and efficiency through partnership with global technology leaders in this area".

"Climate change is affecting global water cycle. The water-related disasters account for over 80% of all natural disasters. We were not spared this year suffering from unprecedented floods. We are introducing a comprehensive disaster risk management system to respond to and recover from future natural disasters. This December, we are partnering with France to host the One Water Summit to drive the momentum on water agenda. This summit will address issues in global water governance".

"The Caspian Sea is in danger. Saving the biggest lake in the world is a matter of common concern that requires long-term international cooperation. We support the initiative of President Aliev to establish a Group of Experts from Caspian States"."

Address by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Japarov at the opening ceremony²

[...]

Against the backdrop of accelerating global climate change, today we must agree on coordinated, well-funded climate action to achieve the ambitions of the Paris Agreement.

We support the early adoption of the New Collective Quantitative Goal on Climate Finance and call on developed countries to raise the amount of climate finance assistance to developing countries to 2 trillion US dollars, with easier access to this finance.

For its part, Kyrgyzstan has initiated a mechanism for exchanging debt for climate and sustainable development projects. We propose restructuring the country's external public debt by applying debt exchange mechanisms for specific green projects, including using the mechanism of the Climate Trust Fund being created in Kyrgyzstan, which will finance projects in the field of ecology and sustainable mountain development. I invite interested countries to participate in the activities of this Fund.



² Source:

https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/KYRGYZSTAN_cop29cmp19cma6_HLS_ENG.pdf

[...]

"In this context, I would like to emphasize the projects being implemented in the field of renewable energy sources. Thus, together with our neighboring countries, a project has been launched to build one of the largest hydroelectric power plants in the region, Kambarata-1. In 2023, 10 small hydroelectric power plants were commissioned in Kyrgyzstan. In 2024, it is planned to build another 15 small hydroelectric power plants, and the implementation of solar power projects with a total capacity of more than 400 MW has also begun.

In the context of climate change, issues of efficient and careful use of water resources is becoming increasingly important. In this regard, we kindly request development partners to support our initiative to establish a Regional Center for the Implementation of Energy-Efficient and Resource-Saving Technologies in Bishkek.

[...]

I invite all participants to Kyrgyzstan for the Second Global Mountain Summit 'Bishkek+25' in 2027, during which we will summarize the results of the "Mountain Five Years".

[...]

Address by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rakhmon at the opening ceremony³

[...]

By adoption of the Strategy for the development of a "Green Economy", we intend to make energy production in the country entirely from renewable sources by 2032 and by 2027, we will transform Tajikistan into a "green country".

Today, 98% of our electricity is generated by hydropower, i.e. "green energy", and Tajikistan's contribution to global greenhouse emissions remains low, with our country ranking 130^{th} in the world in this regard.

³ Source: https://eng.khovar.tj/2024/11/president-emomali-rahmon-takes-part-in-climate-change-summit-cop29-in-baku/

[...]

It is encouraging that the "Water Declaration for Climate Action" is being adopted under COP29.

In this regard, we need to pay special attention to the issue of glacier melt, which is a result of the effects of climate change.

In this context, at the initiative of Tajikistan, the United Nations General Assembly has declared 2025 as the International Year for Glacier Preservation.

[...]

On the basis of this resolution, an International Conference on Glacier Preservation is planned to be held in Dushanbe next May.



Continuing on this theme, the Head of State highlighted the support for the joint proposal from Tajikistan and France to declare the years 2025-2034 as the 'Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences'.

Given the importance of the mentioned issues, I propose to establish a Regional Coordination Centre on Glaciology in Dushanbe under the auspices of the World Meteorological Organization and in cooperation with other development partners. [...]

Address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the opening ceremony⁴

[...]

Uzbekistan is committed to expanding its practical contribution to jointly overcoming the consequences of global climate change.

First. Increasing technical assistance from major powers and multilateral institutions to identify climate risks faced by developing countries is important.

In this regard, we propose to establish an International Center for the Assessment of Climate Loss and Damages.



Second. Unified approaches are essential in preventing the pollution of transboundary water resources and preserving sustainable biodiversity.

⁴ Source: https://president.uz/en/lists/view/7690

Using our region as an example, I would like to highlight that the total disappearance of the Aral Sea before the eyes of a single generation has become a global tragedy. In this regard, we support the development of a Declaration on Obligations to Ensure the Ecological Safety and Health of River Ecosystems under the auspices of the United Nations.

Third. We plan to launch a Regional Genetic Resources Bank, involving leading multilateral structures in order to improve crop resilience to climate change.

We put forward an initiative to create in our country the UN Agro-Industry Innovation Hub for landlocked countries.

Fourth. We propose to create an Alliance of World Climate Capitals for the transfer of advanced knowledge and best practices on sustainable development in megalopolises and cities, which are negatively affected by climate change, and host its first forum in the city of Tashkent.

Fifth. We invite the representatives of your countries to participate at the Global Youth Festival of Digital Green Initiatives on May 15, 2025 in the Aral Sea region as part of the International Climate Day.

[...]

SIC ICWC at COP 29 in Baku

As part of COP 29, a session titled "Sustainable water resources: technologies and innovations" was organized by the Ministry of Water Management of Uzbekistan on November 18, 2024

Regional Director of the International Water Management Institute Barbara Janusz-Pavletta, Deputy Chairman of the IFAS Executive Committee Serik Bekmaganbetov, SIC ICWC Director Dinara Ziganshina, Head of the IFAS Agency in Uzbekistan Vadim Sokolov, Deputy Director of the Water Resources Service of the Kyrgyz Republic Ulukbek Bayaliev and others took part in the event.



First Deputy Minister of Water Management, Mr. Butunbayev, highlighted the water sector reforms initiated by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. He emphasized the enhanced efficiency of transboundary water use through cooperation with neighboring republics. Additionally, Mr. Butunbayev presented the nation's efforts in canal concreting, water-saving technologies, and digitalization of the water sector.

Dr. Ziganshina shared insights into the ongoing research at SIC ICWC, focusing on climate change impacts and adaptation strategies. She discussed the IKI project, the strengthening of partnerships through the "Expert Platform on Water Security, Sustainable Development and Future Studies", and capacity-building initiatives for regional water management organizations. Furthermore, she presented the activities carried out under the UNECE Water Convention's adaptation program.





A panel session titled **"One World, One Climate: Uniting Efforts on Transboundary Adaptation"** was held on November 21, organized by the Strategic Initiative Agency of the Russian Federation.

The session focused on discussing strategies for transboundary adaptation, addressing issues such as water and energy security, agriculture, ecosystems, climate migration, and the prospects for collaborative projects.

In his introductory report, Alexei Kokorin (IPCC, Nature and People Foundation) outlined the main agreements reached at COP 29, highlighting the

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importance of international coordination under climate agreements and the critical role of scientific evidence in shaping adaptation strategies.

The first part of the panel discussion featured examples of adaptation efforts and water cooperation across countries and basins. Svetlana Bacherikova (Rosvodresursy) presented cases of ongoing water collaboration between Russia and neighboring countries, emphasizing key tools for protecting and sustainably managing transboundary water bodies. Rafik Verdiyev (Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan) shared insights into joint adaptation projects in the Caspian Sea region. Dinara Ziganshina (SIC ICWC) presented the challenges and achievements in climate change adaptation and transboundary cooperation in the Aral Sea basin. She emphasized the importance of joint regional programs, research initiatives, innovations, educational efforts, and financing mechanisms to address these issues effectively. Aidar Yesembayev (International Centre for Green Technology and Investment Projects, Kazakhstan) shared Kazakhstan's adaptation practices, highlighting the relaunch of the Green Bridge Initiative as a platform for exchanging experiences and fostering collaboration.

The environmental perspective was underscored by Alexey Spirin (En+ Group), who presented research on environmental risks in the Baikal and Selenga basins. His report included an assessment of climate impacts on water availability in the region and recommendations for minimizing ecosystem damage. Natalia Lukina (Centre for Forest Ecology and Productivity Problems, Russian Academy of Sciences) highlighted the significance of nature-based solutions for biodiversity protection, showcasing successful projects focused on forest ecosystems.

Other reports addressed key financial aspects of climate adaptation. Representatives from PJSC Sberbank discussed adaptation financing instruments, while JSC Capt outlined financing mechanisms for cross-border projects. The Association «National Network of the Global Compact» highlighted the role of business in climate change adaptation.

The session underscored the need for an integrated approach and robust interstate cooperation to tackle climate challenges. Proposals included the establishment of joint educational platforms, dedicated funding mechanisms, and technology transfer initiatives. These ideas lay the groundwork for new projects aimed at fostering sustainable development and enhancing climate resilience.

16th Session of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) serves as the global voice for land protection and is one of the three core UN treaties, alongside the climate and biodiversity conventions.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the primary decision-making body of the 197 Parties to the UNCCD, which include 196 countries and the European Union.

COP16, held under the theme "Our Land. Our Future," took place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on December 2–13, 2024.

Coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the UNCCD, COP16 was the largest UN conference on land to date and the first COP16 to be held in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This region is where the impacts of desertification, land degradation, and drought are most keenly felt.

COP16 marks a pivotal moment, highlighting a renewed global commitment to accelerate investment and actions that restore land and build drought resilience, ultimately benefiting both people and the planet.

One Water Summit⁵

The One Water Summit took place on December 3, 2024 as part of the UNCCD COP-16 High-Level Session in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

It aims to contribute to the ongoing UN discussions to enhance global water governance, accelerate action on SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation), and build on the momentum of the 2023 UN Water Conference. Indeed, the Summit aims to act as an incubator for solutions in preparation for the next 2026 UN Water Conference.

It also integrates its agenda into other existing water processes and initiatives such as the World Water Forum, the Dushanbe Conference or World Water Week.

⁵ Source: https://oneplanetsummit.fr/en/events-16/one-water-summit-287

This agenda must be strongly solutions-oriented to change our approach to water management by integrating water into all policies, whether or not they involve enhancement:

- international cooperation on transboundary waters and freshwater ecosystems
- technical solutions for access to water (nature-based solutions, innovative science, technologies.....)
- water footprint methodology
- opportunities for bridging the global financing gap in the water and sanitation sector

YouTube broadcast of the Summit: https://www.youtube.com/live/BIMg9J-0Llk

Welcome Address by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the Opening Ceremony⁶

Head of State Kassym-Jomart Tokayev addressed the opening ceremony of One Water Summit ongoing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Kazinform News Agency reports citing the press service of Akorda.

The President expressed his gratitude to France, Saudi Arabia and the World Bank Group for the assistance in organization of the event. He also thanked the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for hosting this joint event in Riyadh.

⁶ Source: https://www.eureporter.co/environment/water-2/2024/12/09/one-water-summit-a-global-response-to-water-issues-a-vital-challenge-for-central-asia/



At the summit, the Head of State noted that water security underlies sustainable development, economic progress and environmental protection.

– More than 2 billion people around the world still lack access to quality drinking water and more than 4 billion people face severe water scarcity. Today's challenges require a unified global response to ensure a sustainable future for all. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to His Royal Highness for his just announced plan to help all regions and countries facing the problems I have mentioned. Kazakhstan, being a landlocked country with a vast territory, clearly understands the true value of water. We know firsthand that water is not endless resource. It is important to conserve water like the apple of our eye. This is only way the humanity will be able to achieve sustainable progress, he said.

– All people, in particular, vulnerable groups and nations living in remote areas are entitled and must have access to safe drinking water that complies with sanitary requirements. Targeted investments in climate water infrastructure can transform entire regions, providing reliable access to clean water and contributing to sustainable growth. The accession of Kazakhstan to Freshwater Challenge global initiative, focused on ensuring universal access to clean water for all, proves our country's commitment to these goals, said Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

According to the Head of State, technological innovations and regulation are needed to protect water sources from industrial, chemical, agricultural and household pollution. Another important aspect in ensuring stable access to water is the development of water reservoirs' capacity, preservation of glaciers and introduction of innovative irrigation systems.

The Kazakh President proposed to partner in studying and protecting glaciers by uniting global research centers.

- Glaciers play a vital role in the global water cycle, feeding rivers and lakes, providing water to nearly two billion people around the world. It is necessary to conduct joint research and develop unified policies to counter the disappearance of glaciers and support water management strategies in regions that needed it, the President believes.

The Kazakh President noted further that building resilience to waterrelated disasters is an essential component of water security. Each year, floods and droughts affect more than 1.5 billion people worldwide, severely impacting the lives of vulnerable groups of population, namely those living in small islands and coastal areas. The Head of State considers it a priority to develop early warning systems to reduce risks and protect the population.

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev drew attention to the fact that water shortage threatens food and energy security, as well as industrial growth. He emphasized that strategic investments in water-efficient agriculture and renewable energy sources may significantly improve economic resilience and reduce pressure on the environment.

– Water has not boundaries. It connects communities and ecosystems. As the country presiding in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, Kazakhstan supports the promotion of regional cooperation and joint actions. In our opinion, the countries standing at the forefront of the fight against climate change, should expand dialogue, develop international partnerships and unite the resources to implement water projects. In pursuit of these goals, Kazakhstan is pleased to join the One Water Vision coalition called to unite stakeholders to address the global water crisis and promote integrated water resource management. As part of these efforts, Kazakhstan, with the support of the United Nations, will hold the Regional Climate Conference in 2026, he said.

The Head of the State reminded the forum's participants that water resources are one of the global priorities in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

- Water security is not just a technical or environmental issue; but it is a moral imperative. To address the water security problem requires the development of a multilateral dialogue based on the One Water principle. Kazakhstan is ready to make its contribution to the collective efforts to enhance global water resources management, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev concluded. Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, President of France Emmanuel Macron, President of the World Bank Group Ajay Banga, Co-Chair of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water (GCEW) Johan Rokström, heads of state, heads of international organizations, communities and companies addressed the Summit.



Kazakhstan Proposes Five Key Water Initiatives at the One Water Summit⁷

Kazakhstan introduced five key initiatives to address pressing water issues at the One Water Summit. Zulfiya Suleimenova, Special Representative of the President of Kazakhstan for International Environmental Cooperation, outlined the country's plans for water policy and environmental cooperation.

First, Kazakhstan intends to ratify the UN Protocol on Water and Health. The country is already a party to the UN Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, as well as the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses. Another major step will be the implementation of a program to

⁷ Source: https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/water/press/news/details/896268

improve the efficiency of water use in agriculture, which has been developed jointly with the French Development Agency.

One of the key initiatives is Kazakhstan's participation in the global Freshwater Challenge program, which aims to preserve ecosystems. The first project under this program will focus on the restoration of the Aksuat Lake system in the Naurzum Reserve.

Considerable attention is also paid to the restoration of the North Aral Sea. Currently, preparations are underway for the second stage of the North Aral Sea Conservation Project. This project aims to develop infrastructure, improve hydrological conditions of the North Aral Sea and the Syr Darya River delta, and support the economic, social, and environmental stability in the Kyzylorda region.

Unique Balkhash Lake is also a spotlight. Kazakhstan's largest private company, Kazakhmys, will allocate \$5 million to preserve and maintain this ecosystem and surrounding wetlands.

There are also inland waters that deserve our attention, with Lake Balkhash being one of them. Half of its water is salty, while the other half is fresh. Its southern part is a Ramsar wetland. With your permission, I would like to announce that Kazakhstan's leading private company, Kazakhmys Corporation, will donate \$5 million to projects aimed at preserving the lake's ecosystem. We are proud that private sector representatives are willing to take on such ambitious challenges and show leadership in preserving aquatic ecosystems, said Suleimenova.

It is worth mentioning that during the One Water Summit, a trilateral agreement was signed between the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, the French Development Agency (AFD), and the French Geological and Mining Research Bureau (BRGM). The agreement is focused on studying and achieving sustainable water management in the Balkhash Lake basin. The document includes measuring and analyzing water resources, modeling climate and anthropogenic impacts, and forecasting the lake water balance until 2040.

One of the project's objectives is to optimize the operation regime of the Kapchagay reservoir to stabilize the water level of Lake Balkhash. Based on the study's results, measures will be taken to clean rivers, prevent soil degradation and water pollution, develop fisheries and eco-tourism, and create a regulatory framework for protection of the lake.

The fifth initiative, the Water Tower Partnership, aims to contribute to global efforts in filling gaps in glacier knowledge. It will support research, integrate local knowledge about glaciers, and assist young glaciologists.

Chairman of Halq Maslahaty of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov took part in One Water Summit⁸

National Leader of Turkmen people, Chairman of Halq Maslahaty of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov took part in One Water Summit, reports TDH



The National Leader of the Turkmen people noted that presently water cooperation is the most crucial component of global processes that largely determine the prospects for stability, development and well-being on the planet. In this context, guaranteeing equal and equitable access to water is a prerequisite not only for political and legal order but also for moral order, a matter of responsibility before present and future generations.

- We believe that one of criterion of the effectiveness of multilateral water dialogue should be the absolute commitment of its parties to two fundamental provisions: sound use and equitable distribution of water resources. Turkmenistan has always firmly and consistently stated that access to water is a natural right of nations and every person.

⁸ Source: https://usa.tmembassy.gov.tm/news/141523

This principle is clearly applicable to Central Asia, where water, in view of a number of historical, cultural, natural and geographical characteristics, has its value and importance, and where access to this resource is a direct and often decisive factor of economic and social well-being, welfare and quality of life of people, said G. Berdymuhamedov.

He expressed Turkmenistan's approach that water issues in Central Asia should be addressed through three important principles. The first one is adherence to international law. Water resources are a common property and their use should be regulated in accordance with universally recognized norms, in particular, on the basis of UN conventions. The second is mutual consideration of interests. Decisions should take into account the needs of all states in the region. Only such an approach will ensure fairness and sustainability. And the third principle is the involvement of international organizations and, first of all, the United Nations. We are confident that UN's participation in water initiatives strengthens their legitimacy effectiveness, emphasized G. and Berdymuhamedov.

– Based on this, to keep and strengthen good-neighborliness, development and cooperation in Central Asia, as well as to establish a mechanism for transboundary water use in the region, at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, Turkmenistan proposed to consider an initiative to establish a UN Regional Council on water use in Central Asia, with the headquarters in Ashgabat, and to accelerate the process of adoption of the UN conventions on the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers.

This Council, in close cooperation with all the Central Asian countries, will coordinate water management, organize cooperation between agencies in the region, and develop a legal framework for water use. We believe that Turkmenistan's initiative is urgent, and its implementation, in the near future, will bring substantial practical results in strengthening regional cooperation, emphasized the National Leader of the Turkmen People.

Any discussion of water-related challenges must consider the impact of climate change. Rising temperatures, shrinking glaciers, and changing precipitation patterns require not only adaptation but also urgent collective action, he said.

Despite their remoteness from Turkmenistan, glaciers are of great significance for the country. They are the natural sources of rivers such as the Amu Darya, whose water is essential for life, agriculture, and ecosystems in the region.

Expressing his conviction that the preservation of glaciers is possible only through the use of modern technologies, the National Leader of the Turkmen People emphasized Turkmenistan's willingness to participate in international initiatives on monitoring, research, and protection of glaciers, including the introduction of climate-resilient solutions

As an actor of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, Turkmenistan focuses on implementation of key provisions of the 2030 Agenda. Among these is Goal 6: Ensure equal access to clean water, which is a national priority, noted Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov. To achieve this, the country is systematically working on the construction of new water facilities and the development of infrastructure to provide the population with clean drinking water. Several target programs have been adopted to ensure the continued operation of hydraulic structures, based on international standards and best practices.

Focusing on the issue of sound use of water resources in the Amu Darya River, which Turkmenistan considers a critical resource for both national and regional development, the National Leader of the Turkmen People underlined the modern irrigation techniques, water-saving technologies and water losses minimization efforts that are promoted in the country.

Addressing Turkmenistan's proposal to develop a UN Special Program for the Aral Sea Basin and make the Aral Sea issue a distinct UN activity, G. Berdymuhamedov highlighted the two UN General Assembly Resolutions "Cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea" adopted on Turkmenistan's initiative as the foundation for effective international cooperation on the Aral Sea.

Regarding the Resolution of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific "Consideration of the modalities for the establishment of the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea Basin," Chairman of the Halq Maslakhaty emphasized that the implementation of these important documents should be a key priority for all international efforts regarding the Aral Sea.

Undoubtedly, the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of the Fund play a vital role here. G. Berdymuhamedov continued emphasizing that their activities should not only rely on the assistance of the Fund's member states but also on broad and consistent international support.

Turkmenistan believes in the ability of the global community to unite its efforts and establish an effective and sustainable water management system. This requires concerted efforts from us to strengthen regional cooperation, enhance scientific research, and adopt new technologies, noted the National Leader of the Turkmen People.

Highlighting the upcoming launch of the UN Regional Center for Climate Change Technologies in Central Asia, which will soon begin operations in Ashgabat, G. Berdymuhamedov assured that the Government of Turkmenistan will provide maximum support to this new institution and create most favorable conditions for its effective functioning.

In conclusion, G. Berdymuhamedov reaffirmed Turkmenistan's readiness to continue cooperating with the UN and other international organizations on water issues, based on the principles of mutual responsibility and respect for the interests of all states in the region.

General Assembly of the International Network of Basin Organizations

The regular General Assembly of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) was held in Bordeaux, France on October 7-9, 2024. The event on the common title "Water resources and climate change: how can basins management be more resilient" brought together 400 registered participants. The GA's program included introductory workshops, plenary and thematic sessions.

The workshops presented water governance projects and discussed the possibilities of water management and biodiversity policy coherence. In particular, the need for more economic oriented approach to water management in Europe against the currently prevailed technical approach was stressed. A set of indicators developed under GOVAQUA project for assessment of water governance was presented as well.

The World General Assembly officially opened on the second day on 8th of October. Welcome speeches were delivered by Ms. Sylvie Cassou-Schotte, Vice-President in charge of water and sanitation for Bordeaux Metropole, Mr. Alain Rousset, President of the Adour-Garonne Basin Committee, and Mr. Loic Fauchon, President of the World Water Council. INBO World Presidency was officially handed over from the Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco to France. Ms. Barbara Pompilli, Special Envoy of the Presidency of the French Republic for the One Water Summit underlined in her speech the need for more political participation to solve water related problems in the context of changing climate.

At the High-level session on water resources management Mr. Henk Ovink presented the forthcoming report of the World Commission on Water Economics. The focus is on identifying barriers to effective water management and searching for appropriate decisions to provide incentives and innovations. The panelists of Session 1 on financing water resource management at basin level indicated that public funds would never be enough for the water sector and that private funds should be attracted (Ms. Marjeta Jager, Directorate General for International Partnerships), noted the importance of science and education at the international level (Mr. Abou Amani, UNESCO-IHP) and the need to use financing lessons from other sectors (Mr. Anders Jagerscog, WB).

Thematic session "International and transboundary cooperation for basin management" presented experiences from the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, the Nile Basin Initiative, the Binational Autonomous Authority of Lake Titicaca between Peru and Bolivia, the International Boundary and Water Commission between Mexico and the United States, the Mekong River Commission, the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine, and the Basin Committee for Adour-Garonne in France. The presenters noted that the economic impact of drought is larger than that of flood (Danube basin), stressed the problems with information sharing (Nile basin) and the need for stronger coordination in joint monitoring and forecasting of floods in the Mekong basin.

Parallel thematic sessions were held on the restoring and maintaining water quality, including transboundary cooperation and water quality management. Representatives of basin commissions for Rhine-Meuse, Canada-United States, United States and Mexico, India-Bangladesh, Orange-Senqu shared their lessons on quite successful water quality monitoring.

Representative of SIC ICWC Ms. Oygul Usmanova, Head of international communications division spoke in the thematic session "Water scarcity: planning and tools for the quantitative management of water resources at basin level". In her presentation "Ecosystems during water scarcity in the Aral Sea Basin: planning and management tools", she explained the organization of water management in the Aral Sea basin, dwelling on the problem of decreasing water availability in the region and focusing on the Amu Darya River Basin and the river delta. The well-functioning operational water management at the level of ICWC and the need for the long-term strategies in the context of growing water scarcity in the region were particularly noted.

Other sessions covered the tools and measures for adapting to climate change, including wastewater reuse and other non-conventional water resources, data and information for climate change adaptation in basins. In particular, Mr. M. Kazumitsu from Japan International Cooperation Agency presented the webplatform for visualization of all water-related events. The data transmitted from 9 regional monitoring centers is automatically updated every ten minutes. During the session on climate change adaptation in the interest of a sound basin governance, representatives of joint commissions for the Congo River and the Amazon told on methods of transboundary diagnostic assessment at basin level and further development of strategic action plans, by which they are governed in their operations.





In the last day of the World General Assembly, the updated INBO bylaws were approved and new Bureau members were elected, with SIC ICWC becoming one of the members. Next INBO World General Assembly will be convened in Brazil in 2027.

10th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention

The 10th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention was held in Ljubljana, Slovenia on October 23-25, 2024. The event brought together more than 600 representatives from over 100 countries, UN agencies, NGOs and international financing institutions.

The session began with a high-level segment entitled "Our Waters, our Future: Transboundary Water Cooperation to Power Climate Resilience", which was aimed to discuss the role of transboundary water cooperation for climate resilience and sustainable development in transboundary river basins.

During the general segment, on the second and third day, participants reviewed progress achieved under the programme of work 2022-2024, including climate change adaptation, source-to-sea management approach, conjunctive management of transboundary surface water and groundwater, transboundary water agreements development, intersectoral nexus cooperation, equitable and sustainable water allocation in a transboundary context, monitoring, assessment and data sharing, and the financing of transboundary water cooperation. Progress towards achieving the SDG target 6.5 was reviewed as well.

The meeting adopted a new programme of work for 2025-2027, highlighting the importance of strengthening financing mechanisms, resilience to climate risks and intersectoral cooperation, including through the nexus approach for coherent management of water, energy and agricultural resources.



Three new publications were launched at the meeting:

- "Good practices and lessons learned in data-sharing in transboundary basins", which emphasizes the need for transparency and data-sharing to build trust and stability in water management.
- "Progress on transboundary water cooperation: mid-term status of SDG indicator 6.5.2, with a special focus on climate change, 2024", which analyses progress on operational water cooperation around the world with a focus on climate change.
- "Third report on implementation of the Convention on the protection and use of transboundary watercourses and international lakes (2020-2023)", which summarizes current achievements and highlights priorities for the coming period to strengthen transboundary cooperation and conflict prevention.

During the meeting, four new members of the Implementation Committee were elected and the work of the Committee over the past period was reviewed. The Implementation Committee held a separate side event entitled "Learn more about the Implementation Committee" (October 23). At this event, Atila Tanzi (Chair), Dinara Ziganshina (Vice-Chair) and Makane Moïse Mbengue (Committee Member) presented the tools used by the Committee to support countries in addressing emerging challenges, assist with compliance issues and facilitate knowledge sharing among Parties.



Fifteen side events were organized as part of the Meeting of the Parties. Director of SIC ICWC Dinara Ziganshina participated in the following side events, presenting research and approaches for sustainable water management in Central Asia.

The event "Water Management Innovations in the EU Eastern Partnership Countries" organized by the OECD and UNECE on the eve of MOP10, shared the experiences of Eastern European countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine) in the field of IWRM and national water policy dialogues and addressed the plans on development of similar activities in the Central Asian countries, including with the support of the "Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate resilient transformation of the energy-water-land Nexus in Central Asia/IKI" project.

The examples of intersectoral cooperation on climate change adaptation and the tools proposed for development as part of the IKI Nexus project were discussed at the event "Effective climate governance through a collaborative approach (Nexus)" organized jointly by UNECE and OECD on October 24.



The models of cooperation and financing on adaptation in transboundary basins were discussed at the event "From incubation to financing for adaptation: developing water and climate projects in transboundary basins" organized by the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia Network of Water-Management Organizations (EECCA-NWO) and the Africa Network of Basin Organizations (ANBO) on October 24. The experiences of the Danube River Basin and Lake Victoria, as well as the approaches of the World Bank and the African Development Bank were shared. Summarizing the results of the session, Dinara Ziganshina outlined the overall directions for the future, including in Central Asia.



The crucial role of data sharing for increasing transparency and building trust between countries in transboundary water basins was highlighted at the event "Transboundary Data Sharing as a Tool for Water Diplomacy and Promoting Peace" organized by Finland, Switzerland and Senegal on October 25. Dinara Ziganshina noted the role of data sharing in establishing dialogue and practical interaction between countries and other stakeholders and spoke about the modernization of the Regional Information System in Central Asia. Both the benefits and potential challenges of using satellite data were highlighted as well.



The 11th session of the Meeting of the Parties will be held in Dakar, Senegal in 2027.

Regional events

Scientific-Practical Conference «Water in Central Asia: the future in cooperation»

On November 8, a scientific-practical conference "Water in Central Asia: The Future in Cooperation" dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the late V. Dukhovniy (posthumous), N. Kipshakbaev and the 80th anniversary of R. Giniyatullin was held in Tashkent by the decision of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC).



The Conference was aimed to build a dialogue between decision makers and experts, between seniors and youth on water management in line with water, energy and land nexus in Central Asia.



The conference was organized in the form of sessions:

- Session in honor of celebrants
- Water security in Central Asia in the context of climate change: challenges and opportunities
- Sound water use, water conservation and ecosystem protection
- Transboundary cooperation and water-food-energy-environment nexus
- Information, education and science for water security and cooperation

Besides ICWC members and their representatives, scientists and practitioners from research institutes, academia, water management and international organizations, and representatives of younger generation of researchers took part in the Conference. The geography of the participants expanded to the Central Asian countries, Russia, Switzerland (online).











Meeting on the development of a Regional Center of Excellence for the nexus approach on the base of the Expert Platform on Water Security, Sustainable Development and Future Studies

On November 9, as part of the project "Regional mechanisms for the lowcarbon, climate-resilient transformation of the energy-water-land Nexus in Central Asia" implemented by a consortium of partners led by OECD with the support of the German International Climate Initiative (IKI), SIC ICWC held the first working meeting on the establishment of the Regional Center of Excellence for the Nexus Approach in Tashkent.

The Regional Center of Excellence is planned to build on the base of existing Expert Platform on Water Security, Sustainable Development and Future Studies. Key experts of the Expert Platform from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the head of the IWMI Country Office for Uzbekistan took part in the meeting.

The idea behind this work is to build a partnership of researchers and experts, with wider involvement of youth and women to promote the nexus

approach and build trust and networks among research community of the Central Asian countries and also between science and policy.

The participants discussed objectives and thematic areas and possible modalities of such a partnership and how to involve youth in this activity. SIC ICWC presented its proposal on studying the Central Asian water-related heritage and its valuation as one of the areas of work. All participants supported this proposal. In conclusion, the next steps for the development of activity were outlined.



International Stakeholder Workshop on the Water-Energy-Food-Environment Nexus in the Aral Sea Basin

The International Stakeholder Workshop on the Water-Energy-Food-Environment Nexus in the Aral Sea basin was organized and held by the IWMI country office in Uzbekistan jointly with CGIAR Research Centers as part of the NEXUS Gains Initiative in the Aral Sea basin on November 14 in Tashkent.



The NEXUS Gains Initiative works at the critical intersection of food, energy and water security, while preserving the ecosystems that underpin food systems in selected transboundary river basins.

The workshop was attended by the experts from ministries and agencies, research institutes, as well as international organizations, such as SIC ICWC, CGIAR, IWMI, IFPRI, ICARDA, Alliance Biodiversity & CIAT, GIZ, etc.

This workshop provided a platform for the exchange of experiences from different disciplines on the NEXUS approach as a possible option to mitigate water stress caused by climate change, population growth, economic development and urbanization.
SIC ICWC Director, Dinara Ziganshina delivered a message at the opening ceremony.

On the sides of the workshop, IWMI and the University of Manchester granted the SIC ICWC a certificate for the PyWR model for the Chirchik River Basin.



International Roundtable "Water Law Development in Central Asia"

An international roundtable on "Water law development in Central Asia", organized by the Diplomatic Academy of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED) of Uzbekistan and the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Kyrgyz Republic was held online on November 19, 2024. The event brought together experts, diplomats and scholars to discuss water cooperation, law and governance in the region.

The roundtable comprised the following sessions:

- "Supporting implementation of the objectives of the UN Water Action Decade", where the challenges faced in connection of the implementation of the Water Action Agenda were addressed.
- "Water governance and diplomacy" focused on the legal framework of transboundary water cooperation.
- "Development of hydropower and water-saving technologies" in the context of sustainable development perspectives.



Particular attention was paid to the development of international legal instruments in Central Asia, as well as to cooperation within the framework of existing interstate agreements. Director of SIC ICWC Ms. Ziganshina presented the legal framework for regional water cooperation and underlined the importance of a comprehensive analysis and multi-level approach to legal instruments to ensure their proper implementation. Dr. Ziganshina stressed the

need to raise legal awareness, implement legal norms and strengthen institutional cooperation in the region.

The roundtable facilitated exchange of experience and collaboration between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on water law and diplomacy. Participants agreed to continue dialogue and introduce innovative solutions to overcome transboundary water challenges.

SIC ICWC at SPECA Meetings

27th Session of the SPECA Working Group on Water, Energy, and Environment

The 27th session of the SPECA Working Group on Water, Energy, and Environment was held on November 25, 2024 in a hybrid format in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The Working Group serves as a key instrument for regional cooperation among Central Asian countries, addressing challenges in water management, energy security, and environmental sustainability. This meeting reviewed the progress in the water and energy sectors over the past year and discussed plans to further strengthen regional collaboration.

The Deputy Minister of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Deputy Executive Secretary of UNECE and ESCAP, and the Deputy Head of the UN Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia delivered welcoming speeches during the opening ceremony. They highlighted the critical importance of sustainable water and energy cooperation, as well as regional integration.

The session presented a regional roadmap for integrating energy systems to support sustainable development (ESCAP), scenario modelling for strengthening energy connectivity in Central Asia (SEI), the role of water trade, management and hydropower in adapting to climate change and an introduction to the International Year of Glacier Conservation (2025). The primary focus was on sharing experiences in the development of hydropower solutions for sustainable development.

Additionally, a report was presented on the ESCAP Resolution 79/8: modality on establishing UN Special fund for the Aral Sea (ESCAP, D. Ziganshina).



In a separate session, each SPECA member country shared their achievements and challenges in the water and energy sectors. Key topics included the adoption of new technologies, improvements in water management and the development of renewable energy.

SPECA Economic Forum 2024: Green Development in the SPECA Region

On November 26-27, the SPECA 2024 Economic Forum was held at the National Library of Tajikistan in Dushanbe. The event was organized under the United Nations Programme for Central Asia (SPECA). The Forum gathered representatives from government agencies, international organizations, academia and the private sector to discuss pressing issues related to green development in the region.

The Forum focused on the following areas:

- Green development and cooperation: strategies for sustainable growth in Central Asia.
- Water, energy and climate change: promoting intersectoral planning and joint action.
- **Innovation and technology:** strengthening innovation ecosystems for sustainable development.
- Gender equality and economic empowerment: ensuring equal opportunities in a green economy.



Dinara Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC, made a presentation during Session II: Water, Energy and Climate change. Her report highlighted information and analytical tools developed under the IKI Project titled "Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate resilient transformation of the energy-water-land Nexus in Central Asia". Key elements of the presentation included: upgrading the CAWater-Info Knowledge Portal to version 4.0., enhancements to the CAWater-IS Regional Information System, the development of water-energy nexus modelling tools, and strengthening expert collaboration and analytics. The presentation underscored the importance of integrating data and knowledge to ensure sustainable management of water and energy resources, particularly under the challenges posed by climate change.

Regional Consultation Meeting on the Establishment of the United Nations Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin

A regional consultation meeting on a necessity and modalities for the establishment of the United Nations Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin was held from November 30 to December 1, 2024.

The meeting, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), reviewed the study prepared by ESCAP consultant based on its Resolution 79/8. Participants discussed modalities and a need for the establishment of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea basin. The event brought together representatives from the Central Asian countries, EC IFAS, and UN agencies.



Participants acknowledged the existing mechanisms for regional cooperation, such as IFAS and UN initiatives, while emphasizing the need for closer coordination to avoid duplication of efforts. Different approaches to establishing the UN Special Programme were explored, including leveraging existing platforms and developing new tools to enhance regional collaboration. It was agreed to continue the dialogue on modalities of the Programme.

Based on recommendations from the meeting, the draft document will be finalized and submitted to ESCAP so that it could present it at ESCAP's next meeting in April 2025.



Second Meeting of the Basin Dialogue in the Amu Darya River Basin and Regional Workshop on Water Quality Improvement in the Amu Darya River Basin

On December 4, 2024, the 2nd meeting of the Basin Dialogue in the Amu Darya River Basin was held in Urgench as part of the Program titled "Climate Sensitive Water Resources Management in Central Asia". D. Ziganshina and Z. Yarullina took part in the meeting on behalf of SIC ICWC.

The Program is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft for Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, with the financial support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The Program's primary goal is to build capacities of national and regional organizations responsible for water resource management in implementing climate sensitive integrated water resources management at the regional level.

Representatives of the Ministries for Foreign Affairs of Central Asian countries, relevant line ministries, and Program's international partners attended the meeting.

Objectives of the meeting included:

- Enhancing regional cooperation by developing monitoring and planning tools aligned with the principles of climate sensitive IWRM based on agreement with national authorized agencies.
- Discussing the main results of the GIZ|SDC|EU CSWRM project for 2024, proposing priorities for 2025, and getting partners' input for the project Action Plan for 2025.
- Considering proposals for joint efforts within the agreed priority area "Joint work to preserve ecosystems of the Amu Darya River basin, including zones of flow formation and dispersion".
- Discussing the concept and planning events for the International Day of the Amu Darya River in 2025.

D. Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC, presented a concept note on joint efforts within the agreed priority area in "Joint work to preserve ecosystems of the Amu Darya River basin, including zones of flow formation and dispersion". The presented concept was accepted as a baseline and approved by authorized experts from participating countries.

Following the meeting, an inception regional workshop was held to address the issues of water quality improvement in the Amu Darya River basin. Representatives of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan participated in this workshop.

It was noted during the discussion that water quality management in Central Asia countries remains ineffective and inefficient and largely neglected as the primary focus is given to water quantity and water allocation, mainly for irrigation and hydropower generation. Participants emphasized the need to enhance national policies and strengthen regional cooperation in water quality management. It was proposed to form a dedicated regional working group on water quality of the Amu Darya River.

The main goal of the regional project is to build the capacity of national and regional organizations responsible for water resource management, enabling them to coordinate water management efforts while considering the impact of climate change at both the regional and national levels.

One of the project's goals is to build the capacity of experts from regional and national organizations responsible for water quality issues in the Amu Darya River basin, focusing on comprehensive water resource management in light of climate impacts. To achieve this goal, the project will organize training sessions aimed at strengthening the capacity of nature conservation organizations in the Amu Darya River basin countries, specifically in the areas of water quality management and monitoring.

The 3rd Meeting of the Regional Working Group on a Mutually Beneficial Water and Energy Mechanism

The 3rd meeting of the Regional Working Group on the Mutually Beneficial Water-Energy Mechanism was held in Tashkent on 10 December. The meeting was supported by the "Green Central Asia" Program and the IKI "Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate resilient transformation of the energy-water-land Nexus in Central Asia" project jointly implemented by OECD, SIC ICWC and UNECE.

The 3rd meeting of the Regional Working Group aims to facilitate discussions at the technical level and to gather expert views and experiences on strengthening mutually beneficial water and energy cooperation in Central Asia and mobilizing financing for such cooperation. The main topics of discussion were:

- Recent expert analyses of water and energy cooperation.
- Opportunities to strengthen cooperation between water and energy sectors for more efficient management of natural resources in Central Asia.
- Approaches to co-planning of transboundary water and energy projects in the region

Dinara Ziganshina, Sherzod Muminov and Anatoliy Sorokin took part in the meeting on behalf of SIC ICWC.

Dr. Ziganshina, SIC ICWC Director, moderated the key sessions and presented potential approaches for strengthening financial mechanisms of water and energy cooperation in Central Asia.



Policy Consultation Workshop Strengthening Economic, Financial and Technological Aspects of Water Security in Uzbekistan

A policy consultation workshop on "Strengthening Economic, Financial and Technological Aspects of Water Security in Uzbekistan" was held in Tashkent on December 11 as part of the National Dialogue on Water in Uzbekistan, supported by the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea, the Asia Water Council (AWC) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Dinara Ziganshina and Sherzod Muminov took part in the workshop on behalf of SIC ICWC.

Mr. A. Zakhidov, Director of Department of the Uzbek Ministry of Economy and Finance led the meeting, and Mr. T. Butunbaev, First Deputy Minister of Water Management of Uzbekistan delivered a speech. OECD representatives presented the first version of the policy analysis "Strengthening Economic, Financial and Technological Aspects of Water Security in Uzbekistan" conducted by OECD and AWC for discussion with stakeholders and relevant line ministries in Uzbekistan. The main topics of the discussion were as follows:

- Assessing the enabling environment for investment in water security
- Establishing public-private partnerships to ensure water security
- Technologies for efficient water use



The 13rd Meeting of the Working Group on Institutional and Legal Improvement of IFAS

The 13rd meeting of the Working Group on Institutional and Legal Improvement of IFAS took place on December 12-13, 2024 in Almaty.

The members discussed the implementation of the Action Plan 2024 and the outcomes of bilateral consultations on the improvement of institutional framework of IFAS. SIC ICWC and CDC "Energy" reported on coordination mechanisms aimed at enhancing cooperation between the sectors under the enhanced IFAS mandate. Representative of the World Bank shared a report reviewing international experience in financing water and hydropower infrastructure.



As a result of discussions, a potential option for an updated institutional framework was proposed and will be submitted to member countries for approval. Four meetings of the Working Group are planned for 2025. These planned meetings are to finalize the work, including the preparation of constitutional documents for the renewed organization. Study tours to other river basins may also be organized.

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