

Quarterly Newsletter

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CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES DISCUSSED AT THE CONFERENCE IN DUSHANBE



Climate Change Issues Discussed at the Conference in Dushanbe

Central Asia is particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of a rapidly changing climate—it is an arid, landlocked, snow-fed region with most of its water originating in glaciers of upstream mountains and neighboring countries that has a largely agrarian economy, aging infrastructure, and high population growth. Although the countries of the region – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – have distinct landscapes, natural climatic conditions, development priorities, and the transboundary nature of climate change expose each Central Asian nation to novel risks.

To address these risks, governments in the region and development partners need to tackle strategic challenges, including transitioning towards carbon neutrality and climate resilience through low-carbon, climate resilient development; renovating and upgrading the climate resilience of water, energy, and food infrastructure; strengthening the capacity of local communities; and implementing progressive regulatory and institutional reforms to attract needed investments. Doing so will require regional cooperation and unprecedented economic and social transformations.

With this in mind on May 16-17, the [5th Central Asia Climate Change Conference](#) brought together key stakeholders to discuss water, energy, food, and environmental sustainability in the context of a changing climate across Central Asia. More than 300 conference participants discussed progress by Central Asian countries on climate mitigation and adaptation action, relevant initiatives to achieve cross-sectoral climate resilience, and platforms available for regional cooperation.

The conference consisted of 6 main and 11 parallel sessions. CAWEP held separate sessions on water and energy security within the conference. These sessions shed light on the program's work on water and energy security throughout its third phase, which commenced in 2019. CAWEP showcased a range of initiatives aimed at enhancing irrigation performance, improving water supply and sanitation services through energy efficiency measures and strengthened governance, enhancing cooperation for shared hydraulic infrastructure, implementing collaborative approaches to flood forecasting and early warnings, and adopting landscape management strategies to minimize the impact on water and energy supplies. The session on promoting low carbon development and energy security discussed key challenges faced by the region in term of decarbonization and energy security, and how countries could benefit from increased regional cooperation on this agenda.

The Central Asia Climate Change Conference held this year made a remarkable effort to amplify the voices of youth and mass media representatives from across the region. Recognizing the significance of intergenerational dialogue and the power of media platforms in raising awareness about climate change, the conference dedicated specific spaces for engaging young participants, media professionals, experts, policymakers, and other stakeholders. To provide valuable insights and foster meaningful discussions, two specialized trainings were organized during the conference. One training targeted the youth, equipping them with comprehensive knowledge about climate change issues. The other training focused on regional media representatives, empowering them to effectively communicate climate-related stories to their audiences.

The conference went beyond knowledge exchange; it emphasized the role of youth and mass media in driving climate action. By incorporating their perspectives and engaging them in meaningful discussions, the conference embraced a more inclusive and collaborative approach to address the pressing challenges of climate change in Central Asia.

The conference was organized by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) in partnership with the "Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Program for the Aral Sea Basin" (CAMP4ASB), CAWEP, "Central Asia Nexus Dialogue Project: Fostering Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus and Multi-Sector Investment" (NEXUS), the Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, and PROGREEN.



Water Experts of Central Asia Learned Best Water Practices in Vienna

To foster capacity building, collaboration, and knowledge exchange, CAWEP took a significant step by organizing a study tour and knowledge exchange event between water experts from Central Asia and the Danube region. The event, held from May 2-6, 2023, in Vienna and various regions of Austria, was expertly facilitated by the [Danube Water Program](#) (DWP), a collaboration between the World Bank and the [International Association of Water Service Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area](#) (IAWD).

The primary goal of this event was to support water sector reforms in Central Asian countries by facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience on crucial issues affecting the sustainability of water supply and sanitation services. Key focus areas included raising awareness and building capacity for resilient water practices, strengthening policies and regulations for risk-informed planning, and enhancing water use efficiency at national and basin levels. By sharing practical experiences and insights, the event aimed to demonstrate the tangible benefits of adopting new approaches in the water sector.

The participants, comprising representatives from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and the World Bank, engaged in comprehensive discussions on best practices in water management. The topics covered included transboundary water cooperation, improving water supply and sanitation efficiency, effective drought management, and enhancing rural water supply management.

This capacity building and knowledge exchange event provided a unique platform for water experts to share their experiences, learn from one another, and establish valuable connections. By bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise, the event paved the way for enhanced collaboration and the adoption of innovative strategies in the water sector. Ultimately, it aimed to contribute to the sustainable

development and management of water resources in Central Asia, ensuring a more secure and resilient future for all.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE FUTURE THROUGH STRONG REGIONAL INSTITUTION HELD IN DUSHANBE



International Conference on Sustainable Future through Strong Regional Institution Held in Dushanbe

The International Conference "Central Asia: Towards Sustainable Future through Strong Regional Institution" took place in Dushanbe between June 5-6, 2023, commemorating the 30th anniversary of the [International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea](#) (IFAS). The conference aimed to highlight IFAS as a unique platform for water, energy, and environmental cooperation in Central Asia, reflecting on past achievements, discussing current areas of cooperation, and developing a program for the future vision.

The three-day conference included interactive dialogue sessions and involved more than 500 participants from IFAS founding states, government bodies, international organizations, academia, and civil society. The opening ceremony was attended by high-ranking representatives, including the President of Tajikistan, the President of IFAS, and delegates from development partners.

One of the cooperation workshops planned as part of the Conference under the broad theme of "Towards the SDG agenda of 2030: a role of IFAS in promoting regional sustainable development agenda" focused on setting a path for building a stronger institutional and legal framework for improved IFAS. This workshop was co-organized by the IFAS Executive Committee (EC IFAS) and the CAWEP on June 7, and provided a platform for participants to share knowledge, experiences, and best practices regarding

the history and future of regional water and environmental cooperation towards Sustainable Development Goals and foster collaborative reflection ideas to address key questions and challenges related to the improvement of the institutional and legal framework of IFAS in delivering its significant mandate in promoting regional sustainable development.

IFAS WORKING GROUP VISITED MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION



IFAS Working Group Visited Mekong River Commission

While EC IFAS is going through structural reforms, which takes incremental steps, CAWEP and other donors supported the study tour of the Working Group on the Improvement of the IFAS Institutional Framework from the five Central Asian countries, to the [Mekong River Commission](#) (MRC) on April 1-7, 2023. The MRC is an intergovernmental organization for regional dialogue and cooperation in the Lower Mekong River Basin, established in 1995 based on the Mekong Agreement between Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, and Viet Nam. The organization serves as a regional platform for water diplomacy and a knowledge hub of water resources management for sustainable development of the region, the experience that EC IFAS Working Group can use to improve the organizational structure and legal framework of the organization and representatives of structural divisions of IFAS.

The Working Group members participated as observers in the International Conference organized by MRC on the occasion of the 4th MRC Summit in Vientiane. The International Conference brought together experts from the Mekong riparian countries as well as from other basins around the world to discuss topics such as avoiding and minimizing transboundary impacts through cooperation, data and information

solutions for cooperative cascade management, private sector engagement and AI on transboundary basin management.

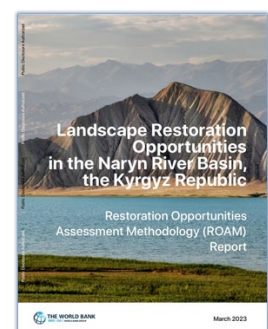
In addition to attending the conference, the participants had the opportunity to hold separate meetings with the MRC Secretariat, where they gained valuable lessons from the MRC's institutional reform processes spanning over 60 years of riparian cooperation. The discussions focused on budgeting, data exchange, basin planning, monitoring mechanisms, and coordination between national and basin-level entities within the Commission. A visit to the Nam Ngum 1 dam site and hydropower plant provided insights into the coordination of national hydropower development and operation with the MRC and its national committees, as well as tributary basin management.

The visit to the MRC offered the participants knowledge and information on cross-border cooperation and the MRC's history and experiences, which can inform their discussions and contribute to reaching agreements on improving the organizational structure and legal framework of IFAS. Furthermore, the participants convened their 10th Working Group Meeting during April 5 and 6, where they deliberated on potential reforms that would benefit all Central Asian countries. Overall, this visit and engagement with the MRC played a pivotal role in expanding the Working Group's understanding and paving the way for mutually beneficial reforms within IFAS.

PUBLICATIONS

Read the [Landscape Restoration Opportunities in the Naryn River Basin, the Kyrgyz Republic: Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology \(ROAM\) Report](#) that outlines the main results of a study based on the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) conducted in the Naryn River Basin in the Kyrgyz Republic. This assessment identifies degraded forest and pasture areas, considers the potential correlation between land degradation and sedimentation in hydropower reservoirs, and proposes feasible and effective landscape restoration measures for the Naryn River Basin.

The study also presents several recommendations to fast-track the implementation of proposed interventions for the Naryn River Basin and scale up to other degraded areas throughout the country. It is a part of the World Bank's flagship RESILAND CA+ Regional Landscape Restoration Program (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan) that seeks to reverse land degradation and increase resilience in Central Asia. This publication was produced with financial support from the [Central Asia Water and Energy Program](#); [PROGREEN](#); and [The Program for Asia Connectivity and Trade](#) (PACT).



MULTIMEDIA

CAWEP organized a capacity-building study tour to Vienna, Austria for water experts from across Central Asia. This initiative facilitated valuable knowledge exchanges and discussions with counterparts from the Danube Water Program so participants could learn best practices concerning water supply and sanitation efficiency, drought management, rural water supply management, water management, as well as transboundary water cooperation. Watch [the video](#) to

learn why such exchanges matter and what officials from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan gained from it.



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CAWEP funds initiatives that improve water and energy management, strengthen national and regional institutions, and facilitate regional dialogue on water and energy security.

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