Pressure on transboundary water is increasing around the world, and Central Asia is no exception. Sound integrated management of transboundary waters is critical to achieving food, energy, and water security, but requires enhanced regional cooperation. To facilitate regional dialogue on water and energy, CAWEP and the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (EC-IFAS) hosted a “Central Asia Regional Water Cooperation” Forum on June 6, 2022, as an integral part of the Second Dushanbe UN Water Action Decade Conference in Dushanbe, June 6–9, 2022.

The Forum explored regional and national priority development issues and opportunities relating to water. The Forum highlighted the importance of strengthening regional institutions and progressing institutional reforms. Formal statements by ministers from each of the five Central Asian countries reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening regional cooperation on water and related development issues.

Over 800 people registered for the event. In-person attendance was limited to around 220 delegates, with more
joining online. Participants included elected representatives, senior government officials, senior development partner representatives, non-government experts, and youth from across Central Asia and beyond.

In a summary of the Forum presented during the closing session of the main conference, the World Bank invited Central Asian countries to consider preparing a joint statement on cooperation to take to the mid-decade UN Water Conference in New York, in March 2023. This high-profile event would give high visibility to commitments from the region to progressing transboundary water cooperation to underpin economic development.

You can watch short video about the event here.

IFAS Institutional Structure Discussed in Almaty

The 7th meeting of the Regional Working Group (RWG) on improving the organizational structure and the contractual and legal framework of IFAS was held on June 23–24 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in hybrid format. The RWG discussions have five stages: (1) updating IFAS objectives; (2) identification of gaps; (3) recommendations for organizational structure; (4) financing; and (5) required legal framework. At the 7th meeting, the RWG, composed of representatives of the five Central Asian Aral Sea Basin countries and IFAS sub-structures, started discussions on Stage 3 of the process. Based on international examples and the results of previous meetings, the RWG discussed options for improving the IFAS institutional structure. The RWG agreed to continue deliberations on these options through bilateral exchanges, with a view to reach agreement at the next RWG meeting that is planned for early fall.
Irrigation Reforms Discussed in Uzbekistan

The World Bank team presented a policy note with recommendations for improving the irrigation and drainage sector in Uzbekistan during the consultations meetings held in Tashkent on May 24–27, 2022. The note explores the potential for a service-oriented and performance-based approach to accelerate sector transformation. The two key enablers for a service-oriented approach are: (i) scaling-up water accounting and water use monitoring technologies, and (ii) addressing human resource and political economy constraints.

Representatives from the ministries of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction, Finance, Water Resources, Agriculture, the Space Research and Technology Agency, and the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers participated in the consultations. Findings and recommendations were also discussed with development partners and international organizations, including the Delegation of the European Union to Uzbekistan, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Agence Française de Développement Agence, United Nations Development Programme, the Embassy of Switzerland, and Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

The event was arranged under CAWEP “Strengthening Irrigation Management and Reforms in Central Asia Advisory Services and Analytics” activity.

Innovative Solutions for Ruslovoye Reservoir Sedimentation

Rapid sedimentation of the Ruslovoye Reservoir is impacting effective operation of the Tuyamuyun Hydroelectric Complex in Urgench, Uzbekistan.

Cost-effective sedimentation removal and technical mitigation measures were discussed at the 5th meeting of a Technical Working Group for the transboundary demonstration project “Treatment of siltation at the Ruslovoye Reservoir of the Tuyamuyun Hydrocomplex’ on May 11–12, 2022.
The consultants – Deltares and the Tipping Point Resources Group – presented technical solutions, and the Uzbek Scientific Research Institute of Irrigation and Water Problems presented the results of reservoir sludge bioanalysis and discussed opportunities for sludge reuse. Turkmen and Uzbek specialists discussed these solutions, which, if accepted, could significantly improve hydrocomplex operations. The pilot project is also undertaking a cost-benefit analysis and developing a business plan for investors to support implementation of the proposed measures.

The transboundary Tuyamuyun Hydrocomplex demonstration is financed by CAWEP and implemented in cooperation with the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) and the EU under ‘Central Asian Dialogue on Promoting Intersectoral Financing based on the Water-Energy-Food Relationship’ project (Phase II) to promote regional water-energy cooperation at facility level.

Land Restoration Solutions

Land degradation is a major contributor to food insecurity, as it reduces agricultural production and undermines rural livelihoods. In Kazakhstan, nearly 1 million hectares of irrigable land are not in use, and half of land that is irrigated, is degraded by soil salinization and alkalization (a process of rising pH).

On May 20, 2022, in Taraz, Kazakhstan, the CAWEP Solutions 4 Water Living Lab project presented innovative and cost-effective measures for addressing soil salinization and alkalization at an international conference on “Innovative and Practical Solutions for Accelerated Restoration of Productivity of Degraded Irrigated lands”. The CAWEP activity trialed the addition of bio-humus to the soil and treating corn plants with a bio-stimulant. The trials showed an increasing in the number of corn cobs as the bio-stimulant enhanced plant growth and increased yield, compared to the effects of conventional stimulants.

The trials, implemented in partnership with the Kazakh Scientific Research Institute of Water Economy, was a collaboration between more than 45 government officials, experts, scientists, farmers, environmental NGOs, agricultural organizations, and business entities from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Belarus.

Central Asia Knowledge Network (CAKN) Academy Promotes Open Online Education

The CAKN online academy platform was presented on June 10, at a regional conference on strengthening networking and cooperation among scientific institutes in Central Asia in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The event was hosted by CAREC and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Participants
showed great interest in the platform, as it provides a basis for knowledge sharing in Central Asia. The objective of the online academy platform is to convene a broad group of water sector actors including academia, young professionals, development partners, sector practitioners, and think-tanks, from across Central Asia. It allows actors to share international and regional practice as well as experience in teaching water engineering disciplines with a focus on linking education, research, and practice. The platform runs on Open edX, an open-source platform software.

The CAKN online academy promotes innovative online learning, including massive open online courses, and hybrid education programs. Along with the courses developed by Central Asian academics in 2021 under the CAKN, the platform offers micro-online courses developed by the Solutions for Water Living Lab project, based on the results of the pilot projects. Local and international experts and practitioners provided positive feedback on the solutions and recommendations of the completed pilot projects.

BLOGS

Central Asia: at the Confluence of Global Water Action and Climate Resilience
In connection with the Second High-Level international Water Action Decade Conference, CAWEP supported the drafting of the World Bank blog Central Asia: at the confluence of global water action and climate resilience Dushanbe conference to emphasize role of water in sustainable development authored by Jennifer Sara, Global Director of the Water Practice, and Tatiana Prokuryakova, Regional Director for Central Asia.

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**Energy Sector Reforms in the Kyrgyz Republic: Green Light Ahead**

The Bishkek International Energy Forum, convened on April 8, 2022, showcased energy sector development as a priority for the Kyrgyz authorities to create jobs and economic opportunities as well as to improve the welfare of all citizens. The World Bank blog on Energy sector reforms in the Kyrgyz Republic: Green light ahead, authored by Naveed Naqvi, Country Manager for the Kyrgyz Republic, and Sudeshna Banerjee, Energy Practice Manager for Europe and Central Asia, discusses the takeaways from the Forum and the plans to scale up support to the government’s program. CAWEP has contributed to development of the ambitious reforms described in the blog and has supported analysis of hydro and solar energy potential, development of a national renewable energy strategy, and preparation of a concept for
a competitive 100 MW solar PPP project.

Rethinking Landscape Restoration in Central Asia to Improve Lives and Livelihoods

Central Asian countries are experiencing a rapid desertification and landscape degradation, with major impacts on local livelihoods. CAWEP is supporting preparation of the Resilient Landscape Restoration Program – RESILAND CA+ – and financing assessments in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan on watershed restoration. The World Bank blog Rethinking landscape restoration in Central Asia to improve lives and livelihoods authored by Tatiana Proskuryakova and Paola Agostini, Lead Natural Resources Management Specialist, discusses effective approaches to generate income by reversing land degradation.

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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