

STUDY ON THE VIABILITY AND MODALITIES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ARAL SEA BASIN

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Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASB	Aral Sea Basin
ASBP	Aral Sea Basin Programme
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BPCA	Blue Peace Central Asia
BWO	Basin Water Organizations
CA	Central Asia
CACCC	Central Asian Conference on Climate Change
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program
CAREC	Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia
CAWEP	Central Asia Water & Energy Program
CSD	Commission for Sustainable Development
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC IFAS	Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
ICSD	Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development
ICWC	Interstate Commission for Water Coordination
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFAS	International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
IKI	International Climate Initiative
MPHSTF	UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
REP4SD-CA	Regional Environmental Programme for Sustainable Development in Central Asia
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIC	Scientific-Information Centre
SPECA	UN Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN FCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRCCA	United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WFP	World Food Programme
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

Executive Summary

This document presents **the results of a study** on the viability and modalities of establishing the United Nations Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin, carried out in accordance with resolution 79/8 adopted on 19 May 2023 at the seventy-ninth plenary meeting of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Since their independence, Central Asian (CA) countries have established **various formats of regional cooperation** on water, environment and disasters in the Aral Sea basin, while United Nations agencies and international partners have made significant contributions toward supporting these processes.

The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and its organizations are key regional organizations that cooperate on the integrated use of water resources, environmental protection and sustainable development. Currently, discussions are underway to expand the areas of cooperation within the IFAS framework as part of ongoing efforts to enhance its activities. Potential new areas of focus include energy, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan, however, remain outside the scope of interaction within the IFAS.

United Nations organizations and other development partners provide assistance to CA countries in achieving the SDGs, including the implementation of programmes and projects on ecosystem protection and environmental restoration, water resources management, disaster risk reduction and management, adaptation to climate change, land management and sustainable agriculture, social well-being and health, inclusive and sustainable growth, water, energy, food, land and ecosystems nexus.

Overall, **most countries are satisfied** with the contribution of regional organizations, United Nations agencies and international partners toward addressing water and environmental issues through cooperation, **but note an insufficient level of cooperation on disasters** and the potential for improved cooperation on the water-energy nexus

and adaptation to climate change. The need to actively attract financing and enhance coordination of activities within the framework of IFAS and between development partners was also identified.

During the consultations, CA countries indicated their willingness to **jointly discuss the possible modalities of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin** in order to make it practical, sustainable and useful for all countries in the region, without duplicating the activities of existing organizations and programmes.

Key messages arising from consultations with authorized departments of CA countries, regional organizations, United Nations agencies and other development partners are as follows:

- The thematic areas for the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin should be formulated and agreed upon based on the results of further consultations with countries. *Two approaches for the formation of the thematic scope* can be distilled from the consultations: 1) development of a comprehensive and wide ranging programme that covers all relevant focus areas or targets the Sustainable Development Goals for the Aral Sea basin; 2) development of a narrowly focused programme in one or two areas that are most relevant for all countries in the region (preferences on climate resilience and disaster risk reduction).
- The need to take into account *the existing mechanisms of regional cooperation and regional programmes* when developing the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin. In particular, the results of the process of improving IFAS, initiated by the Heads of State, will make it possible to clarify the thematic scope of the proposed programme (so that there is no duplication with the tasks of IFAS, the Aral Sea Basin Program (ASBP) or the **Regional Environmental Programme for Sustainable Development in Central Asia (RP4SD-CA)**), as well as consider the

participation of Kyrgyzstan in this programme.

- *Emphasis on coordination*: While there are many programmes and projects being implemented in the region, there remains a need to improve coordination of efforts and monitor the effectiveness of actions to strengthen cooperation.
- *Performance-based transparent monitoring and reporting* should lay the ground for renewed interaction on pressing regional issues.
- *Specific activities* of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin should be determined depending on its thematic areas, but preference should be given to increasing research, developing new technologies, mobilizing finance, sharing information, developing and harmonizing legal and political frameworks, and implementing infrastructure projects.
- It is necessary to take into account initiatives proposed by CA countries to establish regional United Nations institutions on similar matters. For example, the initiative led by Kazakhstan to create a *UN Regional Centre for SDGs for Central Asia and Afghanistan*; by Turkmenistan to establish a *Regional Centre for Climate Change Technologies in Central Asia*; and by Uzbekistan to create a *Platform for Water Saving Technologies in Central Asia*, using the UN-Water mechanism and the establishment of the *Central Asian Climate Dialogue*.
- There is no consensus on which United Nations agency could take on *the role of the Secretariat* of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin if it is established. However, respondents frequently noted that two United Nations regional commissions, UNECE and ESCAP, could play a central role, possibly within the framework of the SPECA programme.
- Experience in the creation and operation of the *Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Human Security for the Aral Sea region under the auspices of the UN* can be useful when discussing the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin, in terms of management structure, work with partners, mechanism for competitive selection and implementation of

projects, as well as result-oriented performance monitoring.

- The UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin should focus on enhancing coordination for the mobilization and utilization of targeted and other *funding sources*, including green, climate and blended financing. This approach will allow comprehensive planning of the scale and scope of activities while ensuring transparent monitoring to assess the effectiveness of the implemented measures.

Taking into account the above key provisions, **four possible modalities for the establishment of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin are proposed**, without excluding other possible options:

1. If a comprehensive and wide-ranging approach that addresses relevant SDG priorities in the Aral Sea basin is adopted, the establishment of a UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin could be considered. This programme would take the form of a *multidimensional (umbrella) partnership between CA countries and the UN in the Aral Sea Basin* with focus on science, technology and financial cooperation. This approach implies organizational, operational and financial multidimensionality in achieving agreed targets and indicators by the CA countries, UN organizations and other development partners on the basis of a common result-oriented plan of action.
2. If a narrow thematic approach is chosen, the possibility of establishing a UN Special Programme on Climate Resilience and Disasters in the Aral Sea Basin can be considered as a *new Working Group of the SPECA programme* in close cooperation with UNDRR.
3. To optimize the implementation of two regional initiatives, merging the tasks of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin with the tasks of the UN Regional Centre for Climate Change Technology, to be established in Ashgabat, can be considered.
4. If the consent of all countries is obtained, synchronizing the activities of the UN

Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin with the updated IFAS structure, in particular in terms of attracting funding and technology, can also be considered.

The third and fourth options were proposed at a regional consultation meeting that was organized by ESCAP between 30 November and 1 December 2024, in Ashgabat, after countries were familiarized with the preliminary results of the study.

To proceed further, organizing a discussion of the feasibility of the approaches within the UN system, that are being proposed in this study and initiating the establishment of a working group comprised of Central Asian country representatives, is advised. Such discussions will allow for mutually acceptable agreements on the proposed UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin.

Introduction

The Aral Sea basin, with a total area 1,737,270 km² (excluding the Islamic Republic of Iran and China), includes most of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, four provinces of Kyrgyzstan (Batkent, Djalal-Abad, Naryn and Osh), the southern provinces of Kazakhstan (Kyzylorda and Turkistan), and northern Afghanistan. The two major rivers that feed the Aral Sea basin are the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya. The riparian countries of the Amu Darya basin are Tajikistan (with 74 per cent generated flow), Kyrgyzstan (2 per cent), Afghanistan (13.9 per cent), Uzbekistan (8.5 per cent) and Turkmenistan (1.7 per cent). The Syr Darya basin covers Kyrgyzstan (where 75.2 per cent of the flow originates), Uzbekistan (15.2 per cent), Tajikistan (2.7 per cent) and Kazakhstan (6.9 per cent).

Water, from the Aral Sea basin, is key for ensuring food, energy and environmental security for more than 60 million people who live here. This increases sectoral competition over water and puts the fragile environmental balance in peril.

Therefore, from the earliest days of independence, countries in Central Asia (CA) have built up cooperation on water and related issues. They have also called on the United Nations and the international community to provide assistance in mitigating the Aral Sea catastrophe, in particular calling for the establishment of a United Nations institute or mechanism to deal with issues related to coordinating efforts to mitigate the consequences of the drying Aral Sea.

Figure 1. Aral Sea Basin.



Source: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *FAO Aquastat Reports: Trans-boundary River Basin Overview – Aral Sea* (Rome, 2012). Available at www.fao.org/3/ca2139en/CA2139EN.pdf

Since the 48th session of the UN General Assembly in 1993, Uzbekistan has been calling on the international community to help save the Aral Sea and the surrounding region, proposing “the establishment of a special UN Commission on the Aral Sea, which, in coordination with the Governments of the region and through UN capabilities, would involve international forces and funds in solving this environmental tragedy”,¹ and developing and implementing a “concrete long-term strategy” to resolve the Aral crisis (53/1998, 54/1999). In 2018, a decision was made to establish the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region, activities of which would cover the Uzbek part of the Aral Sea and Karakalpakstan. In 2021, the UN General Assembly adopted a Special Resolution on declaring the Aral Sea region a zone of environmental innovation and technology.

Kazakhstan supported the proposal of Uzbekistan to establish a special UN forum, possibly in the form of a *UN Commission on the Aral Sea* (48/1993, 49/1994).

In 2006, in anticipation of the transfer of the IFAS chairmanship to **Kyrgyzstan**, the Kyrgyz representative urged the international community to consolidate efforts for the implementation of programmes and projects in the Aral Sea basin (61/2006).

In view of the extremely serious water problems in the Central Asian countries, **Tajikistan** proposed “the establishment, under the auspices of the United Nations, of an international mechanism to coordinate efforts to mitigate the consequences of the loss of the Aral Sea, through which a regional pilot project to achieve the Millennium Development Goals could be implemented as a matter of priority” (60a/2005).

The Dushanbe Declaration of the **Heads of CA States of 6 October 2002** stated “the need for establishing a *special UN commission* being responsible for coordination of international organizations and countries – donors activities in resolving the Aral Sea Basin problems” (CaWater-Info, 2002).

Turkmenistan proposed the creation of “a special international expert group, which in cooperation with the UN and its agencies could prepare a comprehensive international legal document on saving the Aral Sea” (65/2010), and of a *UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea basin*, which would consider the Aral Sea problem as a separate area of

UN work (73/2018, 74/2019, 75/2020).

At its ninth plenary meeting held on 19 May 2023, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) adopted **resolution 79/8 on consideration of the modalities for the establishment of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin** (see *Annex 1*). The concept and structure of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin as proposed by Turkmenistan are described in Annex 2.

The resolution proposes that ESCAP “carries out a **study**, in consultation with relevant regional and international specialized entities, as appropriate, on the necessity, viability and modalities of establishing the United Nations Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin”. This study shall examine “the feasibility of and the modalities for strengthening regional cooperation with a view to mitigating and minimizing the consequences of disasters in the water basin of the Aral Sea, without duplicating efforts”.

This paper presents the findings of the study carried out by an ESCAP consultant between April and July 2024. The document is based on the desk studies and consultations with key stakeholders organized with the assistance of the ESCAP office (see *Annexes 3 and 4* for the list of organizations and questions for consultations). The study considers the existing mechanisms of cooperation and the activities of key actors, including the UN and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), member States, and other international, regional and national organizations working in the Aral Sea basin addressing water and disaster management (Section I), and proposes possible areas for further strengthening regional cooperation through the establishment of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin (Section II).

ESCAP shared the first version of this study to the CA countries for their review and feedback as well as organized a regional consultation meeting between 30 November – 1 December 2024 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan to discuss the draft report and agree on further actions. This study has been updated following discussions at the meeting.

We would like to thank all those, who took part in consultations, for their opinions and constructive suggestions on possible approaches and modalities of the proposed UN Special Programme.

¹ See also speeches at meetings 49/1994, 50/1995, 51/1996, 53/1998, 54/1999.

I: Cooperation on water, energy, environment and disasters in the Aral Sea Basin

1.1 Cooperation on water and environment under the umbrella of International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS)

1.1.1 General information about IFAS

In February 1992, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan signed an agreement to cooperate and jointly manage the utilization and protection of water resources from interstate sources, establishing the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia (ICWC or Commission) comprising of the heads of national water authorities of the five CA countries.

The Interstate Council for problems in the Aral Sea basin (MezhGossovvet) and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) were established in 1933 and later, in 1997, merged into the single IFAS. According to the 1999 Agreement on the status of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and its organizations, IFAS consists of the:

- Board;
- Audit Commission;
- Executive Committee of IFAS (EC IFAS);
- EC IFAS branches in the Central Asian states;
- Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia (ICWC), ICWC Secretariat, Scientific-Information Center (SIC ICWC), and two basin water organizations (BWO): BWO Amu Darya and BWO Syr Darya;
- Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD), Secretariat and Scientific-Information Center at the Desert Institute of Turkmenistan (SIC ICSD).

Over more than 30 years of cooperation, the CA countries have signed numerous agreements on water, energy, environment and other matters. Through the good will of the countries and activities of regional organizations, the management of water resources in interstate sources has remained stable helping to maintain peace and order among the CA countries.

Within the ICWC, a system of coordination and decision support has been formed and includes water planning, monitoring and real-time management; operational coordination in conditions of drought and floods; joint regional projects, research and analysis; information and data exchange; joint training; publishing activity; regional and international cooperation. Active cooperation with development partners is maintained as part of regional projects (see details in *Annex 5-A* and ICWC Commission of Central Asia, n.d.).

ICSD supports cooperation between authorized national agencies in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development in the region. The 2030 Regional Environmental Programme for Sustainable Development in Central Asia (REP4SD-CA) was approved at the meeting of the IFAS Board on 22 February 2022 in Dushanbe. The REP4SD-CA is based on the ongoing processes in CA aimed at achieving the SDGs, implementing UN environmental conventions, developing green economy and adapting to climate change. REP4SD includes over 40 agreed regional cooperation priorities grouped by environmental SDGs. The Roadmap of REP4SD developed jointly with UNEP ranks highest in the priorities of implementation (see details in *Annex 5-B*).

Four Aral Sea Basin Programs (ASBP) (ASBP-1 for 1995-2001, ASBP-2 for 2002-2010, ASBP-3 for 2011-2015, and ASBP-4 since 2018) have been developed and implemented **under the umbrella of IFAS** in order to facilitate the financing of joint interstate projects and coordinate efforts between the CA countries and international partners.

The permanent executive body of IFAS is **EC IFAS**, which is hosted by the country-chairman of IFAS on a rotational basis. EC IFAS coordinates cooperation at national and international levels for the improvement of the socioeconomic and environmental situation in the Aral Sea basin (see details in *Annex 5-C*).

More detailed information on annual activities of the IFAS organizations can be found in the *Yearbook: Water in Central Asia and around the Globe* (SIC ICWC, 2024).

1.1.2 Necessity to improve the IFAS and implement programmes effectively

Having acknowledged the important contribution of IFAS toward regional cooperation, the Heads of States of CA countries have repeatedly expressed their readiness to further **improve the institutional and legal frameworks of IFAS**. This will improve its efficiency and better its interaction with financial institutions and donors to implement projects and programmes related to addressing the Aral Sea basin crisis.² While work began between 2009-2012, the results have not yet been put into action. In 2016, Kyrgyzstan froze its membership in IFAS and its bodies because it believed that the organization “did not address the hydropower aspects of water use and the needs of some of CA countries”.

In 2018, work on improving IFAS resumed. Currently, a Working Group consisting of assigned representatives of all CA countries and IFAS bodies works on developing proposals to improve the institutional and legal frameworks of IFAS with the ultimate aim to establish an effective and sustainable institutional mechanism of cooperation. By July 2024, members of the Working Group had agreed on the geographical scope (Aral Sea basin) and four areas for cooperation including water, energy, environment and socioeconomic development, with the ultimate aim of the improved IFAS to strengthen and further regional cooperation in water, energy, environment and socioeconomic spheres for sustainable development of riparian countries in the Aral Sea basin. Matters related to improving water-energy coordination is also under discussion. The proposed solutions include establishing a joint water-energy commission or holding joint meetings between water and energy commissions.

Another area that needs improvement within IFAS is the **mobilization of funds and implementation of regional programmes**, such as ASBP and REP4SD. According to the *Final report of EC IFAS in Tajikistan for 2020-2023*, “the Executive Committee of IFAS sought through the creation of a coordination mechanism, providing for regular meetings with international development partners, to establish coordination and interaction between the countries of the region, IFAS structural subdivisions and development partners on the implementation of projects and programmes corresponding to the

goals and objectives of ASBP-4. In this context, three meetings with donors, and numerous bilateral and multilateral meetings were held and produced some results. Nevertheless, to achieve the desired result, strong cooperation and mobilization of efforts of all the parties involved, their readiness to share comprehensive data, as well as the necessary capacity for processing, analysis and preparation of reports and recommendations are needed”.

Within the current chairmanship of Kazakhstan in IFAS, focus is also on implementing ASBP-4 and organizing its efficient monitoring.

1.1.3 IFAS and the United Nations

Over 30 years, IFAS has worked with UN agencies in different modes, including implementing regional projects and organizing conferences.

In the **Memorandum of Understanding signed between UNECE, ESCAP and IFAS** on 3 June 2004, the Parties agreed that they “will collaborate, within their mandates and areas of expertise, on targeted activities on thematic programme areas and in the field of capacity building, drawing upon the relative strengths of each organization”. In particular, it was agreed that the Regional Commissions and IFAS will make appropriate arrangements to jointly undertake programme and project planning and review (p. 2.2) and that this joint exercise will take place at least once in two years, or as mutually agreed upon by the Parties, in order to prioritize and formulate plans for specific activities to be carried out within specified time-frames (p. 2.3).

Several **resolutions of the UN General Assembly regarding IFAS** have been adopted based on initiatives of CA countries: “Observer status for the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in the General Assembly” (A/RES/63/133 of 11 December 2008); on cooperation between the United Nations and IFAS (A/RES/72/273 of 12 April 2018, A/RES/73/297 of 28 May 2019, A/RES/75/266 of 3 March 2021); “Declaring the Aral Sea region a zone of ecological innovations and technologies” (A/RES/75/278 of 21 May 2021).

In 2013, as chairman of the IFAS, Uzbekistan disseminated an official UNGA document on the twentieth anniversary of IFAS (A/67/884). During its chairmanship, Turkmenistan made a proposal to hold the summit of the Heads of the Founder States of IFAS together with specialized international organizations, such as UNDP, UNEP and UNRCCA, in 2018 (72/2017). That time,

² Joint Statement adopted on 28 April 2009.

Turkmenistan had proposed an initiative to create a UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin, which would consider the Aral Sea problem as a separate area of UN work (speeches at UNGA sessions 73/2018, 74/2019, 75/2020).

1.2 Cooperation on disasters

The Heads of States of CA countries identified strengthening regional cooperation in the areas of climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction and emergency response as priorities³ Within these spheres, countries cooperate via different platforms.

The World Bank and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in partnership with other international bodies, initiated the Central Asia and Caucasus Disaster Risk Management Initiative (CAC DRMI), which aligns with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA) (World Bank, ISDR, and CAREC, n.d.). In 2019, the World Bank and its partners organized the first regional scientific and technical council meeting on emergency situations. The council comprises scientists and government officials working on a range of disaster-risk issues including natural disasters, hydrometeorology and climate change in Central Asia (World Bank, 2019).

The Regional Council was supported by the **EU-funded Strengthening Financial Resilience and Accelerating Risk Reduction in Central Asia programme (2019-2023)**, which was managed by the World Bank and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), in close coordination with the Center of Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction, based in Almaty (GFDRR and World Bank, 2022).⁴

The Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction (CESDRR) (2024) was established by the Governments of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on 17 May 2013. The two States founded the Center, being aware of the danger posed by emergency situations, taking into account the need for concerted action in the prevention and elimination of emergencies and their consequences, recognizing that cooperation in this field will contribute to safety and sustainable development, and supporting the efforts of the United Nations and other international organizations to enhance

regional cooperation, based on the principles of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005 – 2015 (CESDRR, n.d.).

The strategic areas of Center’s activity are to:

- strengthen regional and international cooperation in the area of disaster risk reduction, emergency prevention and recovery;
- increase the safety of population and territories of State Parties through improved institutional and legal frameworks, mechanisms, strategies, policies and management practices of disaster risk and emergency management;
- consolidate efforts of all concerned Parties and mobilize investments in disaster risk reduction and emergency prevention;
- increase readiness toward effective emergency response, rescue and humanitarian operations, and reconstruction and recovery;
- ensure gradual institutional development and capacity-building of the Center.

Between 2019-2022, CESDRR implemented the EU-funded initiative “Strengthening Disaster Resilience and Accelerating Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia” (UNDRR, 2023a). As a result of the initiative, the Strategy for Development of Cooperation of Countries of Central Asia in Disaster Risk Reduction for 2022 – 2030 was developed and approved at the ministerial level in 2021. Additionally, regional for-meetings of the heads of emergency authorities of CA countries were organized annually (see details in *Annex 6-B*).

1.3 Activities of the UN agencies in the Aral Sea basin

Numerous UN agencies deal with water, environment, climate change and disaster issues in Central Asia within the scope of their mandates and expertise. A summary of activities of key UN agencies is provided below (see details in *Annex 7*).

1.3.1 Regional commissions and

³ See, for example, the Joint Statement following the Fifth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of Central Asia States, Dushanbe, 13-14 September 2023.

⁴ The Programme has a budget of €4.6 million (including a €4.3 million contribution from the European Union and €300.000 of

co-financing from GFDRR). The Programme spans from July 2019 until 31 December 2023.

SPECA

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

The UNECE, as a multilateral platform, facilitates greater economic integration and cooperation among its 56 member States and promotes sustainable development and economic prosperity through: policy dialogue, negotiation of international legal instruments, development of regulations and norms, exchange and application of best practices, economic and technical expertise, and technical cooperation for countries with economies in transition.

The key thematic areas of UNECE are: environment, transport, statistics, sustainable energy, trade, forests, housing and land management, population, economic cooperation and integration. The activities of UNECE range from adaptation to climate change, disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and water management.

UNECE serves as the Secretariat for the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and the Protocol on Water and Health.

As part of its activities in Central Asia, UNECE assisted in developing a regional water information system, improving the institutional and legal frameworks of IFAS (2009-2012), implementing projects on water quality, building cooperation on dam safety, and assisting in the analysis of water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus in the Syr Darya river basin.

Currently, UNECE is a member of the project consortium under the IKI-supported project “Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate-resilient transformation of the energy-water-land nexus in Central Asia” (see details in *Annex 7-A*).

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

ESCAP provides technical assistance in the region, focusing on advising governments, capacity-building and summarizing regional lessons and information through meetings, publications and international communication networks.

Focus areas include: macroeconomic policy and financing for development, trade and investment, transport, social development, environment and development, information communication technology and disaster risk reduction, statistics,

and energy. ESCAP promotes regional and subregional cooperation and capacity-building for sustainable development of natural resources, focusing on energy and water, and contributes toward the enhancement of national capacities for environmentally-friendly sustainable development.

United Nations Special Programme for the Economics of Central Asia (SPECA)

SPECA was established by the Tashkent Declaration on 26 March 1998 (UNECE, n.d.c.; n.d.b.) and includes Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The UNECE and ESCAP coordinate SPECA.

The objectives of SPECA are to facilitate economic cooperation in the SPECA region, integrate the SPECA participating States into the world economy and provide a platform for cross-border cooperation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (UNECE and ESCAP, 2023).

SPECA’s areas of work cover: 1) gender and the SDGs; 2) innovation and technology for sustainable development; 3) statistics; 4) trade; 5) sustainable transport, transit and connectivity; and 6) water, energy and environment.

The SPECA Governing Council is the supreme management body, comprising of high level national coordinators such as Vice Prime Ministers or Ministers from SPECA countries, and UNECE and ESCAP Executive Secretaries (UNECE, n.d.a.). The SPECA Governing Council has six subsidiary bodies on programme thematic areas.

The **Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment** (WG on WEE) is a platform for strategic issues related to water, energy and environment and the achievement of the SDGs (SDG 6 “Clean Water and Sanitation”, SDG 7 “Affordable and Clean Energy”, etc.) (UNECE, n.d.d.). In 2024, the WG on WEE produced the document *Strengthening Cooperation for Rational and Efficient Use of Water and Energy Resources in Central Asia* (UNECE and ESCAP, 2004). The Working Group plays a key role in developing cooperation in dam safety, including institutional cooperation in the use of waterworks facilities along the Chu and Talas rivers between the Governments of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (see details in *Annex 7-B*).

1.3.2 Programme and funds

United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP)

UNDP and UNEP, along with UNICEF and the WFP, are actively engaged in their respective areas of focus in Central Asia.

UNDP focusses its work in three key areas, sustainable development, democratic governance and peace building, and resilience to climate change and disasters (see details in *Annex 7-C*).

UNEP’s mandate includes protecting natural sites, combatting environmental hazards, promoting sound nature use, establishing an international information service for environmental monitoring and developing an international legal instrument for environmental actions (see details in *Annex 7-D*).

UNICEF works to advocate for the protection of children’s rights, to help meet their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential (see details in *Annex 7-E*).

WFP focusses its efforts on delivering emergency assistance, relief and rehabilitation, development aid and special operations (see details in *Annex 7-F*).

UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan (MPHSTF)

The MPHSTF for the Aral Sea Region was established under the aegis of the United Nations in 2018, in Uzbekistan. The MPHSTF provides an integrated platform to develop international cooperation and mobilize funds from donor communities for the implementation of practical actions and comprehensive measures aimed at improving the environmental and socioeconomic situation in the Aral Sea region and promoting joint efforts on achieving the SDGs. Based on the features of the region, the main directions of the MPHSTF Strategy are to ensure environmental, economic, food, social and health securities (see details in *Annex 7-G*).

1.3.3 Specialized Agencies

Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and World Bank (WB)

The United Nations specialized agencies include FAO, IFAD, UNESCO, WMO and the WB Group. Their activities are explained in details in *Annexes 7-H-L*. Information on the two large programmes of the WB and FAO are provided below.

Central Asia Water and Energy Program (CAWEP)

The Central Asia Water & Energy Program (CAWEP) was established as a partnership between the World Bank, the European Union, Switzerland (through SECO) and the United Kingdom in 2009 (World Bank Group, 2024). The Program’s objective is to promote regional cooperation for a more resilient and better integrated water and energy management under a changing climate. The Program is structured around three pillars: 1) energy security; 2) energy-water linkages; and 3) water security, and covers three components: a) data and diagnostic analysis; b) institutions, capacity and dialogue; and c) investment support.

CAWEP partners with and supports governments, national and regional organizations, civil society organizations and development partners. CAWEP cooperates with other development and financing partners to enhance the impact in meeting its objectives and to leverage investments by others.

Together with CAREC, the Executive Committee of IFAS implemented the Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Program for Aral Sea Basin (CAMP4ASB, 2016-2023), with the financial support of the World Bank and the Green Climate Fund. The aim of the project is to address common problems and challenges related to the effects of climate change in Central Asian countries including to provide technical assistance in creating a unified regional analytical platform for ensuring climate-sustainable development of the region, promote investment in agricultural production, land management, and strengthen access to improved knowledge and data in the field of climate change. The Central Asia Climate Change Conference (CACCC) is organized annually and the participation of the Central Asian countries in the COP conferences is supported as part of the Program.

Water-Land Nexus in Central Asia programme (CAWLN): Global Environment Facility (GEF)/Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

In early 2024, as part of the “Water-Land Nexus in Central Asia” (CAWLN) programme, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) approved financing for 7

projects (\$26 million) to restore ecosystems, improve natural resources management and enhance resilience (FAO, 2024). The programme will be implemented by FAO. From the seven projects, the three projects listed below will have a regional focus:

- Coordinated Approach for Land Restoration in Vulnerable Ecosystems of Central Asia – all 5 Central Asian countries;
- Strengthening Integrated Water Management in Amu Darya, Zarafshon and Panj river basins – Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan;
- Strengthening Integrated Water Management in Syr Darya and Narin river basins – Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

1.3.4 Regional centre and offices

United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)

The UNRCCA is a special political mission of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) that was established in 2007, in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, upon the initiative of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (UNRCCA, 2024). The Centre develops common initiatives to address regional challenges to peace, security and development in its Programmes of Action that are designed in consultation with the Governments of Central Asian states. One of the key focal areas of UNRCCA is the management of common natural resources and environmental protection.

Since its establishment, UNRCCA has implemented four Programmes of Action. The current Programme of Action for 2021-2025 focuses on five key priority areas, which correspond to the Centre's mandate: (1) Promoting preventive diplomacy among the Governments of Central Asia; (2) Monitoring and early warning in support of conflict prevention; (3) Building partnerships for prevention, including with regional and subregional organizations; (4) Strengthening the United Nations preventive diplomacy in Central Asia; and (5) Encouraging cooperation and interaction between Central Asia and Afghanistan. (UNRCCA, n.d.) (see *details in Annex 7-M*).

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, n.d.a.) was established in December 1999 to facilitate the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/RES/54/219). This is the lead agency within the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster risk reduction, which coordinates the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sendai Framework (2015-2030) (United World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015).

In Central Asia, UNDRR implemented the EU-funded initiative "Strengthening Disaster Resilience and Accelerating Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Asia" (2019-2022) (UNDRR, 2023a), with the Strategy for Development of Cooperation of Countries of Central Asia in Disaster Risk Reduction for 2022 – 2030 being one of its results (UNDRR, 2021) (see *details in Annex 7-N*).

1.4 Programmes with other partners

1.4.1 EU-Central Asia Platform on Environment and Water Cooperation

With Italy as the lead country, the **EU-Central Asia Platform on Environment and Water Cooperation** was established in 2009 as the reference framework for the cooperation between EU and Central Asian countries in the field of environment, water and climate change (WECOOP, 2024).

The EU renewed the project European Union – Central Asia Water, Environment and Climate Change Cooperation (WECOOP) in 2019. The project aims to enhance environment, climate change and water policies in Central Asia by aligning them with EU standards and promote green investments in relevant sectors with the aim of contributing to measurable reductions in man-made pollution, including carbon dioxide emissions. Activities of the project include support to the EU-Central Asia Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation and the EU-Central Asia Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (WGECC). The objective of WGECC is to enable and facilitate policy dialogue between the EU and CA countries and within the CA region to enhance cooperation, as well as to support progress on environment and climate change issues. The WGECC meetings define common priorities for exchange and sharing experiences.

1.4.2 Green Central Asia

In 2020, the German Foreign Office launched the Green Central Asia initiative, to enhance

environment, climate and water resilience (Green Central Asia, 2024a).⁵ The aim of Green Central Asia is to improve access to information and conduct appropriate risk analyses to enable participating countries to assess the impact of climate change more accurately and take preventive measures. Actions taken as part of the initiative include:

- Adoption of the Regional Action Plan for a joint political dialogue on climate, environment and security (Green Central Asia, 2024c);
- Ongoing regional programmes: (1) Climate Risk Management in Central Asia (GIZ, 2022–2026) aimed at improving transboundary climate and disaster risk management in the region (GIZ, n.d.); (2) Climate-Sensitive Water Resources Management (BMZ, SDC, GIZ) to strengthen national and regional organizations responsible for water management and to implement climate-sensitive integrated water resources management at the regional and basin level (Green Central Asia, 2024b);
- Support the Regional Working Group on discussing mutually beneficial mechanisms of water-energy cooperation;
- Development of the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Central Asia was by the countries of the region, and approved and presented at UNFCCC COP-28 (December 2) (CAREC, 2023).

1.4.3 Blue Peace Central Asia (BPCA)

Blue Peace Central Asia (BPCA) (2024) is a dialogue platform in Central Asia that aims to promote the exchange of information on commonly-identified regional priorities related to water, including joint management of infrastructure, data-sharing and water quality. BPCA promotes water cooperation in the region to address questions related to increasing competing interests in water, fostering the understanding of the region as interdependent and supporting common solutions on water for the benefit of all.

The key pillars of BPCA include:

- a diplomatic and policy pillar, that supports riparian states in their dialogue to jointly and

systemically manage the shared large river basins;

- an operational pillar, to enhance trust between riparian states by supporting evidence-based dialogues and providing knowledge resources to implement concrete solutions (e.g. project “Cryospheric Climate Services for Improved Adaptation”/CICADA) (University of Fribourg, n.d.);
- a youth pillar, geared towards strengthening the youth of Central Asia as agents of change, and preparing the next generation of water professionals specializing in issues related to river basins.

1.4.4 Regional IKI project “Energy, Water and Land-use Nexus in Central Asia”

The five-year project, Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate-resilient transformation of the Energy, water and land-use nexus in Central Asia, supported by the Government of Germany, as part of the 2020 International Climate Initiative (IKI), was launched in 2023. The project is implemented by a consortium led by the OECD in cooperation with UNECE, SIC ICWC, EBRD and FAO.

The project aims to address the water-energy-land use nexus across economic sectors and natural resource management identifying synergies and opportunities for mainstreaming ‘nexus solutions’ to build climate resilience. The project will support Central Asian countries by strengthening the planning processes and adopting a whole-of-government approach to address socioeconomic and environmental challenges (OECD, n.d.).

1.4.5 Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program (CAREC) Water pillar

The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program (CAREC) is a partnership of 11 countries and development partners working together to promote development through cooperation, leading to accelerated economic growth and poverty reduction. ADB provides technical assistance to the CAREC Program.

The CAREC water pillar was established in 2020. In 2021, the framework for the CAREC water pillar was

⁵ In the context of German engagement on climate change and security within the UN and support to the new EU-Central Asia Strategy of June 2019.

developed and endorsed at the Ministerial conference. In 2022, the “Scoping Report” of the CAREC water pillar was prepared which included an extensive list of potential regional projects under three main blocks:

- Climate resilient and productive water systems;
- Sustainable water resources and water services;
- Nexus solutions and cross sector learning.

In 2023, the CAREC Water Pillar Working Group was established as an advisory and consultative body to provide guidance on the implementation and future direction of the water pillar and on the development of regional projects, including coordination with other regional initiatives (Sadeghi, n.d.).

In June 2024, the working group had its first meeting, where it discussed potential areas for ADB’s investment in the above three blocks.

1.5 Conclusions: Current status of cooperation and future tasks

Central Asian countries have established various modalities of cooperation on water and disaster management (Sections 1.1. and 1.2), and UN agencies and other international partners are making considerable contributions toward supporting these efforts (Sections 1.3 and 1.4.).

In terms of geographical scope, most regional organizations, UN agencies and other partners work at both regional and national levels. Under the umbrella of IFAS, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan are not participants in the interactions.

Thematically, the activities of IFAS bodies cover matters pertaining to the integrated use of water resources, environmental conservation and sustainable development. Under the umbrella of IFAS, potential expansion of areas of cooperation are under discussion to include energy, climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

The activities of UN agencies focus on assisting CA countries toward the achievement of the SDGs. The main thematic areas include ecosystem protection and environmental restoration, water management, disaster risk reduction and management, adaptation to climate change, land management and sustainable agriculture, social welfare and health, inclusive and sustainable growth, water-energy-food-land-ecosystem nexus. **Other development partners** also work in similar areas.

As part of the assistance provided by UN agencies and other international partners, the main areas of focus are developing regional and international cooperation, improving legal and policy frameworks, building capacity and raising public awareness, and implementing pilot projects.

Most organizations work in the **modality** of long-term country framework programmes (basic project terms extend to 2030 in most cases), national and regional projects (basic terms – up to 5 years), as outlined in earlier sections. Country and regional programmes and projects have been developed and agreed upon through extensive consultations with countries, taking into account their specific needs, and programme objectives and mandates of organizations. Meetings with development partners have been organized for coordination of activities.

Future tasks identified during consultations

Consultations with authorized agencies of the CA countries, regional organizations, UN agencies and other development partners have resulted in the following:

- General satisfaction with the contribution made by regional organizations, UN agencies and international partners related to cooperation on water and environment;
- Insufficient cooperation on disaster management and the need to improve cooperation on water-energy and adaptation to climate change;
- Dissatisfaction with the degree of mobilization of financing and coordination both within IFAS and between development partners;
- The need to consider the existing mechanisms of regional cooperation and regional programmes as leading actors in the development of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin.

II: Key provisions and conditions for establishing a UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin

Thanks to the political will of the Heads of State, a favourable climate has been created for regional cooperation in CA in recent years. This is reflected through the mutual support of the countries for each other's initiatives and in their shared understanding of current regional challenges. Consultations have demonstrated the readiness of CA countries to jointly discuss the initiative proposed by Turkmenistan on the establishment of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin, ensuring that the Special Programme is feasible, sustainable and useful for all the countries in the region without duplicating the activities of existing organizations and programmes.

2.1 Two approaches for the programme's thematic scope

The common opinion was that the scope of the Special Programme should be formulated following further consultations with the countries. However, two approaches for shaping the programme's thematic scope were identified during the consultations: 1) developing a comprehensive and wide-ranging thematic programme on all relevant matters or aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals in the region; 2) developing a narrowly focused programme on one or two topics of interest for all the countries.

2.1.1 A comprehensive and wide-ranging programme

During the consultations, some of the respondents noted that a holistic problem-solving approach must be considered instead of limiting the focus to water and disaster-related problems. They highlighted that the issues related to strengthening regional cooperation, including with the involvement of UN and other international partners, were outlined in the adopted regional programmes and joint statements of the Heads of State, and should be the starting point for discussions on the potential thematic scope of the Special Programme.

In this context, based on the joint statements of the Heads of States in CA (Tajikistan, Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, 2023) other documents and the results of consultations, the following potential focus areas have been identified:

- *Environmental protection and ecosystem management*: focus on ecosystem restoration across the Aral Sea basin, including efforts on biodiversity conservation, glacier and snowfield protection, rehabilitation of damaged territories, recultivation of uranium tailings and sustainable management of natural resources;
- *Integrated and sound use of water and regional resources* to achieve water, energy and food security in CA: adopt an integrated water resources management approach to improve efficiency in water use, support sustainable agricultural practices and ensure equitable water allocation between riparian countries;
- *Sustainable land management*: promote sustainable land use and soil protection, and combat soil degradation;
- *Climate change mitigation and adaptation in all economic sectors*;
- *Disaster risk reduction and management*: joint actions for disaster mitigation, including droughts, floods, landslides and sand storms prevailing in the Aral Sea basin;
- *Health and social welfare*: promote health initiatives to support livelihoods through projects including resilient development, provision of population with clean drinking water;
- *Economic diversification, green economy and sustainable development*: facilitate economic diversification to reduce dependence on resource-intensive sectors; promote sustainable tourism, encourage use of renewables and invest in other green economy sectors.

Given that the above-mentioned topics are, in some

way, the subject of regional cooperation and involvement of the UN and other development partners, particular attention should nonetheless be given to the coordination of actions.

2.1.2 A programme focused on one or two key areas

Some respondents advocated for choosing one or two focal areas that are most relevant for all the countries in the region. This, in their opinion, should not duplicate the ongoing programmes (such as ASBP) but rather focus on key areas for intensive work, with the involvement of UN mechanisms.

Focus area: Climate resilience and disasters

It was noted that adaptation and disaster risk reduction could become the central focal area of the proposed UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin. The respondents referred to the outcomes of the meeting of the Heads of State in September 2023 in Dushanbe, where they stated that only coordinated actions of the region's countries, particularly under umbrella of improved IFAS, would facilitate efforts aimed at climate resilience (CaWater-Info, 2024).

This focus area requires careful coordination with the authorized national agencies (MES, hydromets), the IFAS (under its mandate and ASBP projects), ICSD (projects under REP4SD), the GIZ "Green Central Asia" programme (in terms of implementing the "Regional Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change in Central Asia") and the World Bank, which renders assistance in disaster and adaptation programmes. It was noted that depending on the modality of the Special Programme, it might be appropriate to consider participation of Afghanistan in the programme with focus on climate resilience and natural disasters. The intentions of countries to establish regional UN climate centres were cited in support of this approach (Section 2. 6).

While climate adaptation is widely addressed through regional activities, collaborative efforts to reduce the risks of water-related natural disasters are not well-established in the Aral Sea basin. The Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction established by Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyzstan has not yet reached regional coverage or the required level of engagement. Meanwhile, the need for "continued urgency" in effective early warning systems for natural disasters at the transboundary level and strengthening "regional

collaborative efforts, including pooled funds and technical support" has been emphasized in the *Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (UNDRR, 2023b).

Focus area: Water and other resources conservation

Water and other resource conservation issues have been frequently identified as key focal areas for the Special Programme.

2.2 Focus on better coordination

While there are a number of programmes and projects being implemented in the region, there is a need to improve coordination among partners and monitor the effectiveness of the programmes in order to strengthen cooperation. The need to improve coordination mechanisms of projects was highlighted during the consultative meetings.

For example, none of the ongoing regional projects are completely consistent with the priority projects outlined in ASBP-4, and there is no appropriate coordination with authorized IFAS agencies in this regard.

There is also a lack of a common mechanism to coordinate the activities of UN agencies in the Aral Sea basin or Central Asia on water and related matters. Some coordination is provided by the CAWEP, but it is insufficient (World Bank Group, 2024). The possibility of establishing a Central Asia office of UN-Water with a focus on the Aral Sea basin or the larger CA region was suggested, though this will not solve the coordination problems in other areas.

Inefficient coordination at the national level was attributed to the fact that each programme or thematic area is regulated by different ministries. For example, the activities of ICSD or its REP4SD programme are regulated by environmental agencies, SPECA economic ministries, emergency ministries for disasters, and so on.

2.3 New realities – new pragmatic approach: performance-based, systemic and transparent

Over the past 30 years, CA countries and international partners have collaborated on many of the above-mentioned issues, but work has generally remained fragmented. Many respondents supported the idea of expanding cooperation with

¹ Sample Footnote

the UN and other development partners to make it more consistent, coordinated and structured, with thorough performance-based monitoring of results and commitments by both parties.

Renewed cooperation on topical regional issues should be based on the results orientation of all efforts, with transparent monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

The respondents mentioned the following:

"In general, UN regional offices and other development partners make efforts to address certain issues but not problems. Projects and programmes focus on narrow, specific issues rather than problems, and results are reported at meetings, without States assessing their impact on the ground".

"It is necessary to choose priorities and the right approach to achieve them in order to see the effectiveness of contributions, no matter how large or small".

Therefore, it was proposed to agree on a list of concrete indicators for selected thematic areas of the Special Programme, and the need to approve and evaluate all efforts and projects, on the basis of their actual contribution to the achievement of these indicators, was highlighted. For example, the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan is creating a portfolio of sustainable investments that will include projects that have contributed to the list of agreed sustainability indicators. This can be used at the regional level.

Since IFAS has similar functions in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the ASBP, mechanisms for interaction and elimination of duplication should be developed.

2.4 Geographical scope of the Special Programme

Most interviewees agreed with the proposed geographical scope of the Special Programme, i.e. the Aral Sea basin, although some focus can be given to the region outside the basin as well. Additionally, the whole basin area should be considered, starting from the catchment area and glaciers to river deltas and the Aral Sea region (Prearalie). This does not exclude the need for

targeted support addressing the most acute problems in the region.

It was emphasized that involvement of Afghanistan as a riparian country of the Aral Sea basin should be the subject of separate discussions. Proposals made by some of the leaders of CA States can be used to begin such a dialogue. For example, the President of Kazakhstan proposed the establishment of a UN Regional Centre on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Central Asia and Afghanistan (Kazakhstan, Official Website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023). The President of Uzbekistan urged the inclusion of representatives from Afghanistan in the regional dialogue on water-sharing. The UNRCCA has a political mandate to work on Afghanistan, but lacks sufficient resources and thematic expertise to lead this process alone.

The focus on climate and environmental problems in Afghanistan has been highlighted at the global level as well. The independent assessment on Afghanistan made in late 2023 following the Security Council resolution 2679 recommended "expanding international cooperation and assistance in areas that advance regional and global priorities, including in the fields of climate adaptation and response and transboundary natural resource management" (S/2023/856). The Afghanistan Water Platform, jointly chaired by United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)⁶ and the World Bank, was established in February 2024 to set the stage for a coordinated and efficient approach to addressing the water crisis in Afghanistan.

2.5 Main activities of the Special Programme

The specific activities of the Special Programme will depend on its thematic areas. Among other things, it was proposed to analyse the progress of SDG achievement in the region, assess the results of implementation of ASBPs and other programmes and, based on this analysis, establish a list of necessary activities.

As mentioned above, all activities under the Special Programme should lead to the achievement of agreed and prioritized SDG indicators or other indicators, and that are specific to the Central Asian

⁶ The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is a UN Special Political Mission tasked with assisting the people of

Afghanistan. UNAMA was established on 28 March 2002 by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1401.

context.

The following potential activities were noted:

- Research and adoption of new technologies and innovations (possibly, in the science, engineering, technology and innovation (SETI) areas);
- Capacity-building and technical assistance, including knowledge- and experience-sharing with other basins and regions, starting from education to vocational training and implementation of projects and programmes on the base of SDGs;
- Mobilization of resources and coordination of efforts to achieve common goals;
- Public awareness and stakeholder involvement;
- Development and harmonization of legal and policy frameworks to support sustainable management of the Aral Sea basin and implementation of the programme's objectives;
- Implementation of infrastructure projects;
- Policy dialogue.

2.6 Consideration of new initiatives involving the United Nations as proposed by the CA countries

The CA countries have proposed several initiatives to establish regional organizations on topical issues under the United Nations umbrella. Some of respondents proposed examining the possibility of taking into account these initiatives when developing the Special Programme on the Aral Sea Basin.

Since 2014, **Kazakhstan** has been advocating for the establishment of a *UN Regional Centre on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Central Asia and Afghanistan in Almaty* "to address a pressing regional agenda that includes climate change, the Aral Sea, rational use of water resources, border delimitation, combating extremism and expanding intra-regional trade" (Kazakhstan, Official Website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022 and 2023). The initiative of Kazakhstan to open the *Central Asia Project Office on Climate Change and Green Energy* in Almaty has also been repeatedly expressed (Kazakhstan, Official Website of the President of the

Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023).

As an important step towards a strategic approach to environmental problems in Central Asia, **Turkmenistan** proposed establishing a specialized organization - a *Regional Centre for Climate Change Technologies in Central Asia* in Ashgabat, which would work on climate issues in a substantive and systematic manner (Turkmenistan, 2023).

Uzbekistan proposed establishing a *Water Saving Technologies Platform in Central Asia*, using the UN-Water mechanism and introducing the *Central Asian Climate Dialogue* (Review.UZ, 2023). Establishment of the *Regional climate technologies hub for the Aral Sea Region* has been planned as well.

The initiatives advocated by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on water and related issues are global in scope. For example, **Kyrgyzstan** advocated for the creation of a *broad coalition of mountainous countries*, with climate adaptation and the transition to a green economy being among the main priorities of this future coalition (United Nations General Debate, 2023). **Tajikistan** pushed for *global water initiatives* and proposed to establish an *International fund for glacier preservation under the auspices of the United Nations* (Tajikistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

2.7 The role of Central Asian countries

Central Asian countries should play a leading role in establishing and implementing the Special Programme. In particular, it was suggested that a Supervisory Council and executive committees be established to coordinate activities. The implementation mechanism of the Special Programme at the country level, between countries and with the UN agency/curator should be developed, thereby clearly charting out the role of each actor in the implementation of the Programme.

2.8 The role of IFAS

Representatives of IFAS member countries and many development partners described IFAS as the main platform for cooperation in CA and expressed their willingness to continue working in this format. It was hoped that Kyrgyzstan would soon "unfreeze" its participation in IFAS, also given the willingness of the countries to discuss the inclusion of energy in the IFAS system. Some interviewees noted that the Special Programme could provide a mechanism to

include Afghanistan in the areas covered by IFAS.

The main directions and objectives of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin proposed by Turkmenistan emphasize the strengthening of cooperation between IFAS and the UN through regular consultations, research and conferences, exchange of experience, development of new and implementation of current programmes (see details in *Annex 2*).

During consultations, respondents expressed solidarity that such activities are necessary and relevant, emphasizing the implementation of already adopted UN resolutions on IFAS. At the same time, most respondents expressed the opinion that such work does not require the establishment of a UN Special Programme, but can and should be carried out under the existing mandates of IFAS bodies, UN resolutions and agreements with individual UN agencies. The observer status of IFAS at the UN should be strengthened in practice. Among other things, greater involvement of the United Nations in the implementation of UN GA resolutions related to the region was welcomed.

It was generally agreed that it would be advisable to discuss the establishment of a UN special programme focusing on IFAS after the completion of the IFAS improvement process initiated by the Heads of State. Such an approach would allow defining more clearly the thematic scope of the proposed programme (to avoid duplication with the tasks of IFAS, as well as ASBP, REP4SD) and the participation of Kyrgyzstan in the programme.

It was highlighted that without a thorough assessment of the efficacy of all ASBP programmes and the efficiency of the use of funds, it would be challenging to determine the best course of action, including the potential involvement of the UN. It was proposed that the implementation of ASBP and other regional programmes should be primarily the responsibility of the countries themselves and regional organizations established by them. Delegating these responsibilities to the UN is not a viable solution.

Some interviewees indicated that this matter could be addressed during the meetings of the Working Group on IFAS improvement, provided that all the CA countries agree.

2.9 The role of the United Nations

There is no consensus among respondents as to which UN agency could assume the role of Secretariat for the Special Programme, should it be established. As noted, the following factors should be considered in this regard:

- Expertise in the selected thematic scope of the Programme;
- Available human resources and funds as many UN agencies have experienced limited financing in the recent years;
- Mandate to operate throughout the region and offices available in the region;
- Mandate to coordinate activities of UN agencies if such a task is set;
- Mandate and expertise on a broad range of topics if such an option for the programme is selected..

The majority of interviewees highlighted the potential for the two UN regional commissions, UNECE and ESCAP, to assume a pivotal role in the Special Programme, given their current scope of operations and mandates. This is particularly relevant given that UNECE and ESCAP jointly administer the SPECA program and have a memorandum of cooperation with EC IFAS.

The ongoing SPECA program has been highly effective in the region, particularly during its initial phase when there was a stronger focus on water and energy. Currently, the SPECA program operates in numerous focus areas. The SPECA has the Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment, and its work can be strengthened through mobilization of additional financing.

Such financing can be mobilized within the recently established SPECA Trust Fund. The SPECA Trust Fund will operate as a UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), in line with the Terms of Reference of SPECA adopted on 23 November 2023. The SPECA Multilateral Trust Fund will provide financial support to projects related to addressing economic development and regional integration in the context of global trends such as climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. The emphasis will be on strengthening the interconnectedness of the countries of the SPECA region and on harnessing the positive transformative forces that are necessary to achieve the strategic goals of the programme. The fund is already open for contributions and is expected to be financed by

¹ Sample Footnote

voluntary contributions from SPECA participating States, donors and partners (UN News, 2024).

Depending on a chosen thematic scope of the Special Programme, it would be required to involve specialized agencies of the United Nations on Water and Disasters, UN-Water, which coordinates all UN work on water, UNEP and UNESCO that now work on glaciers and other topical issues, and others.

2.10 The role of the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund (MPHSTF)

The UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund (MPHSTF) for the Aral Sea region was established to provide an integrated platform for the development of international cooperation and mobilize funds from donor communities for the implementation of practical actions and comprehensive measures aimed at improving the environmental and socioeconomic situation in the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan and for promoting joint efforts on SDGs. MPHSTF projects are practical and oriented at addressing the immediate needs of people.

The establishment of MPHSTF does not contradict the IFAS agreements, and it is not intended to extend the mandate of the former to the entire Aral Sea basin, which would entail a duplication of the IFAS mandate. Having two funds with similar tasks operating concurrently does not appear to be expedient.

With interest expressed from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, a potential avenue for exploration could be the expansion of MPHSTF activities to the Aral Sea region in the Dashaguz province of Turkmenistan and adjacent areas of Kazakhstan.

Meanwhile, the experiences gained in the creation and functioning of MPHSTF can be leveraged to inform discussions around the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin. This includes management structure, partner engagement, mechanism of competitive selection and implementation of projects, as well as result-oriented monitoring of the effectiveness of the implemented programmes.

2.11 Funding

One of the key considerations for the establishment

of the Special Programme is the source of its funding. The amount of funding will depend on the scope of issues to be addressed and the commitment of the involved partners to contribute in a systematic and sustainable manner.

In light of the prevailing geopolitical and economic circumstances, the availability of funding for UN activities has been constrained in recent years. The CA countries have not yet indicated their willingness to provide financing for the Special Programme. The issue of limited financial resources may impact the Programme's ambition when it comes to effective and comprehensive coverage of all identified thematic areas, and there may not be sufficient financial resources to finance large infrastructure projects.

During the consultations, it was noted that the most effective way to address the current problems is to adopt appropriate technologies and new approaches. These solutions are not always costly, as demonstrated by past experience.⁷ The experience of the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund on Human Security for the Aral Sea Region shows that small but well-targeted projects can often achieve better results in meeting immediate needs.

Accordingly, the Special Programme could play a pivotal role in coordinating the mobilization and utilization of trust and other funds, as well as attracting green, climate and mixed forms of financing to allow better planning of the scale and scope of activities with transparent monitoring of the effectiveness of measures taken.

⁷ It was a view that “the Programme should not invest, it should pilot effective tools and innovations”.

III: Possible modalities for establishing a Special Programme

This section proposes two modalities for the possible establishment of the Special Programme, taking into account the preferences expressed by the participants in the consultations, without excluding other possible options.

Multidimensional (umbrella) partnership between CA countries and the UN in the Aral Sea Basin

If a comprehensive and wide-ranging approach that covers a wide range of SDG issues in the Aral Sea basin is chosen, it is proposed to consider the possibility of establishing a UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin in the format of a *multidimensional (umbrella) partnership between CA countries and the UN in the Aral Sea Basin*.

This approach implies organizational, operational and financial multidimensionality in achieving agreed targets and indicators by CA countries, UN organizations and other development partners on the basis of a common result-oriented programme of action.

Organizational multidimensionality implies participation of all stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Special Programme, taking into account their mandate, expertise and resources. It seems important not to create the Special Programme with one office, but to have a department or a responsible person supervising the activities of the Special Programme in each office of UN organizations - partners of the programme in Central Asia or the Aral Sea basin. Individual agreements should be reached with IFAS organizations and other partners on participation in the Special Programme within their mandates.

Operational multidimensionality (or multivectorness) will emphasize targeted projects in hotspots (environmental disaster

zones or other country-defined zones), technical assistance activities, infrastructure projects and policy dialogues or missions. This will allow for targeting specific problems and requests with an overall integrated approach, giving due consideration to the contributions of both large and small projects.

Financial multidimensionality implies multiple choices in the use of trust and other funds, attraction of mixed forms of financing, which will make it possible to better plan the scale and scope of activities with transparent monitoring of the effectiveness of measures taken.

A *common performance-based action plan* should be the basis for more integrated and consistent engagement and transparent monitoring of actions and achievements. As one respondent noted: "It is most important to create a platform for demonstration and discussion of results and for decision on the implementation of next steps in most effective and cost-effective way".

It is proposed to discuss the triad "Science, Technologies, Finances" as focus areas of the Special Programme's activities, since the need for research, new technologies and fundraising, including for infrastructure projects, was among the priorities of the majority of respondents.

Such an approach will allow achieving the goal of Turkmenistan "to consider the Aral Sea problem as a separate area of UN work",⁸ by **building a new modality and architecture of relations** on relevant issues for the Aral Sea basin, without duplicating the functions of existing regional organizations and programmes. Under this approach, everyone will contribute to its implementation, while transparent monitoring will allow avoiding duplication and assessing the effectiveness of actions. In such modality, the proposed Special Programme will be integrated with existing regional organizations and

⁸ Statements at the United Nations General Assembly No 3/2018,

74/2019, 75/2020.

coordination platforms, filling gaps and ensuring better coordination, and will be coordinated by the UN together with the CA States, drawing on the support and contribution from other international organizations.

UN Special Programme on Climate Resilience and Disasters in the Aral Sea basin

If a narrow thematic approach is chosen, it is proposed to consider the possibility of establishing the UN Special Programme on Climate Resilience and Disasters in the Aral Sea Basin as a *new Working Group of the SPECA programme*.

All countries of the Aral Sea basin, including Afghanistan, are members of SPECA. The CA countries view the activities of the SPECA programme, coordinated by UNECE and ESCAP, positively. SPECA allows for the possibility of creating auxiliary working bodies in the thematic areas of the programme. The CA countries have experience working together within the framework of SPECA, including on water resources, energy and the environment. The establishment of a SPECA Trust Fund under the management of the UN is being discussed in order to mobilize and attract financial support from potential partners for the implementation of regional assistance projects in SPECA member States.

Given the thematic focus of the Special Programme, the active involvement of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) will also be required, as well as close coordination with other partners working on adaptation and disaster issues.

It is proposed to consider “Science, Technology, Finance” as the focus of the Special Programme’s activities. These areas were identified as priorities during the consultations and were also recommended in the *Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* (UNDRR, 2023b).

Additional options proposed at the regional consultative meeting

At the Regional consultative meeting that was organized between 30 November - 1 December 2024 in Ashgabat, to discuss the draft report and agree on further actions, two additional options for the

possible format of establishing the UN Special Programme were proposed:

1. To optimize efforts to implement landmark regional initiatives, it was proposed to consider the option of *merging the tasks of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea basin with the tasks of the Regional Center for Climate Technologies in Central Asia* being created in Ashgabat.
2. If the consent of all countries is obtained, it is possible to consider the option of *synchronizing the activities of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin with the updated IFAS structure*, in particular in terms of attracting funding and technology.

Conclusion and recommendations

Consultations with authorized agencies of CA countries, regional organizations, United Nations agencies and other development partners revealed the following:

- Overall satisfaction with the contribution of regional organizations, United Nations agencies and international partners toward cooperation on water and environment issues;
- Lack of cooperation on disasters and the need to improve cooperation on water-energy issues and climate adaptation;
- Dissatisfaction with the level of fundraising and coordination both within IFAS and among development partners;
- The need to take into account existing mechanisms of regional cooperation and regional programmes when developing the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin. In particular, the outcomes of the IFAS improvement process initiated by the Heads of States will help to define the thematic scope of the proposed programme more clearly (to avoid duplication with the tasks of IFAS, as well as ASBP, REP4SD) and the participation of Kyrgyzstan in the programme;
- Readiness of the countries to jointly discuss the initiative proposed by Turkmenistan on

¹ Sample Footnote

the establishment of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin to make it feasible, sustainable, useful for all countries of the region, while avoiding duplication with the activities of existing organizations and programmes.

ESCAP is invited to consider organizing such discussions with all stakeholders based on the findings of this study. It would also be beneficial to organize discussions on the feasibility of the approaches proposed in this study within the UN system.

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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Seventy-ninth session
Agenda item 4 (d)

**Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific on 19 May 2023**

79/8. Consideration of the modalities for the establishment of the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea basin

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 73/226 of 20 December 2018 on the midterm comprehensive review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028, and recognizing that the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030¹ contributes to the achievement of the objectives of the International Decade for Action,

Acknowledging the interlinkages among the Sustainable Development Goals² and that such interlinkages drive progress in the achievement of all the Goals and related targets,

Acknowledging also that the negative humanitarian, environmental and socioeconomic consequences of the Aral Sea basin tragedy go well beyond the region,

Taking note of General Assembly resolutions 72/273 of 12 April 2018, 73/297 of 28 May 2019 and 75/266 of 3 March 2021 on cooperation between the United Nations and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, as well as Assembly resolution 75/278 of 18 May 2021 on declaring the Aral Sea region a zone of ecological innovations and technologies,

Recalling with appreciation the joint communiqué adopted by the Heads of State of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan during a meeting of the Council of Heads of the Founding States of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, held in the Avaza national tourist area in Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan, on 24 August 2018,³ and recalling also the creation of the multi-partner human security trust fund for the Aral Sea region under the auspices of the United Nations,

¹ General Assembly resolution 69/283, annex II.

² See General Assembly resolution 70/1.

³ A/73/444, annex.

Taking note of the outcomes of the international consultations on the development of the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea basin⁴ held in Ashgabat on 18 December 2019, with the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, and relevant stakeholders,

1. *Invites* its members and associate members, donor countries, multilateral financial institutions, relevant agencies and organizations of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental and regional organizations, as appropriate, to continue their efforts within their respective mandates to consider the modalities for the establishment of the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea basin;

2. *Recognizes* the need to promote regional and international cooperation to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of disasters in the water basin of the Aral Sea, in collaboration with relevant specialized international organizations;

3. *Proposes* that a study be carried out, in consultation with relevant regional and international specialized entities, as appropriate, on the necessity, viability and modalities of establishing the United Nations special programme for the Aral Sea basin;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To commission the above-mentioned study, as appropriate, in collaboration with relevant specialized entities, in accordance with their respective mandates and subject to the availability of resources, on the feasibility of and the modalities for strengthening regional cooperation with a view to mitigating and minimizing the consequences of disasters in the water basin of the Aral Sea, without duplicating efforts;

(b) To facilitate the organization of a workshop on preventing and mitigating natural disasters in the water basin of the Aral Sea with the relevant organizations that have the necessary technical expertise in the matter, as appropriate and subject to the availability of resources;

(c) To report to the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its eighty-first session on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*9th plenary meeting
19 May 2023*

⁴ A/74/644.

Annex 2. The United Nations Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin put forward by Turkmenistan⁹

Development of the draft concept of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin shall lead to consolidation of efforts of the region's countries and the international community to combat the consequences of the Aral Sea environmental crisis in the current realities.

Key areas and objectives of the UN Special Programme for the Aral Sea Basin

1. Intensification of IFAS-UN cooperation on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Aral Sea Basin region as concerns water management in the context of climate change

- Conduct regular consultations of the IFAS Executive Committee with the UN through relevant international and regional platforms, including consultations between the Secretary General and heads of regional organizations;
- Prepare periodic reports on IFAS activities to be presented at the annual session of the UN General Assembly, including on cooperation in the implementation of SDGs.

2. Formulation and implementation of long-term strategic tasks on water management and environmental protection in Central Asia, with the involvement of international partners

- Jointly with international partners, implement the Regional Environmental Program for Sustainable Development (REP4SD) in Central Asia;
- Boost scientific research aimed at mitigating the negative impact of the Aral Sea environmental crisis;
- Develop a special cooperation programme for solving problems of inland water bodies (on the example of IFAS experience in improving the situation in the Aral Sea basin).

3. Improvement of environmental situation in the Aral Sea region by implementing projects and programmes in partnership with international organizations and financing institutions

- Hold regional meetings among the Central Asian experts and international partners on the implementation of ASBP-4;
- Improve the legal and institutional framework of IFAS to enhance cooperation between the CA countries on integrated water management and environmental protection for mobilization of investments.

4. Raising awareness on the Aral Sea problems in the current realities

⁹ <https://kazaral.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/16-%D0%90%D0%BA%D0%BC%D1%83%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%B2-%D0%A1%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%8F-%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%BC%D0%B0-%D0%9E%D0%9E%D0%9D-%D0%B4%D0%BB%D1%8F-%D0%90%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B0-%D0%B8-%D0%BC%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%83%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B8.pdf>

- Produce information products (brochures, films, news show, etc.) on the Aral Sea problem jointly with the UN specialized agencies.
 - Hold various information events (lectures, reports, exhibitions) on the Aral Sea problem at the UN Headquarters in New York;
 - Produce information products (brochures, films, news show, etc.) on the Aral Sea problem jointly with the UN specialized agencies.
5. Establishment of a special platform for multilateral cooperation on solving problems of inland water bodies based on IFAS experience in improving the situation in the Aral Sea Basin
- Hold an international conference on the issues related to solving problems of inland water resources on the example of the Aral Sea basin;
 - Establish a global platform for exchange of experience and practices on inland water resources.

Annex 3. List of organizations consulted

Kyrgyz Republic

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Water Resource Service at the Ministry of Water Resources, Agriculture and Processing Industry

Republic of Kazakhstan

- Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation

Republic of Tajikistan

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Energy and Water Resources
- Committee for Environmental Conservation
- Agency for Hydrometeorology at the Committee for Environmental Conservation
- SIC ICSD in Tajikistan

Turkmenistan

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan
- State Committee for Water Resources of Turkmenistan

Republic of Uzbekistan

- Ministry of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change
- SIC ICSD in Uzbekistan
- Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region
- GEF Agency of IFAS

Other organizations

- Executive Committee of IFAS
- UNECE
- UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia

Annex 4. A list of questions for consultations

Questions for discussion:

On unaddressed challenges

- What are the key challenges related to water and disasters in the Aral Sea basin that require a more extensive cooperation, including on the UN level, to be adequately addressed?

On the existing regional organisations and programmes

- Is the mandate and capacity of the IFAS and its organisations sufficient to mitigate and minimize the consequences of water and disasters related issues in the Aral Sea basin?
- Would you consider it appropriate and relevant to discuss the possibilities for a stronger institutional cooperation between the UN and the IFAS in the ongoing process of the IFAS improvement?
- How would you assess the substantive scope and implementation of the Aral Sea Basin Programm? Do you see opportunities for the UN to play a bigger role in its design and implementation or transforming the ASBP into the UN ASBP?
- How would you assess the results of joint work of UNECE, ESCAP and IFAS over 20 years as part of the 2004 Memorandum of Understanding?

On the ongoing activities of the UN agencies and programmes

- Are you overall satisfied with contribution of the UN agencies and other development partners to regional cooperation on water and disasters related issues in the Aral Sea basin?
- What is your take on the design and activities of the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan? Would you support the expansion of its mandate and activities to the entire Aral Sea basin?
- What is your take on the design and activities of the UN Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)? Would you support the expansion of its mandate and activities to the entire Aral Sea basin?

On the UN special programme

- Do you see the need for a UN special programme to improve the coordination and strengthen regional cooperation with a view to mitigating and minimizing the consequences of water and disasters related in the Aral Sea basin?
- If the UN special programme on the Aral Sea basin is to be established,
 - what its thematic focus should be?
 - what its geographical scope should be? (Central Asia, the Aral Sea Basin riparian countries?)
 - what its main activities might look like?
 - which UN agency, commission should take a lead in administering it?
 - what would be the role of the nation-states?

Annex 5. Regional organizations under umbrella of IFAS

A. Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia (ICWC)

The Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia (ICWC) is a regional body of the Central Asian states to deal with transboundary water management, use and protection in the Aral Sea basin and to implement joint programs following the principles of collegiality and mutual respect of interests. The Commission was established on 18 February 1992. ICWC represented by five water ministers or deputy ministers on parity basis is a body of the five governments that entrusted the functions of water management and maintenance of the sustainability of natural processes in transboundary water to their respective water ministries (agencies).

Mandate	
The ICWC shall:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> determine water policy in the region, elaborate its key directions taking into account all economic branch needs, integrated and rational use of water resources, and long-term regional water supply program and measures for its implementation; elaborate and approve annually water use limits/quotas for each republic and the region as a whole, schedules for reservoir operation regimes, correct the former according to updated forecasts, depending on actual water availability and current water-related conditions. 	
Geographical scope	
Central Asia	
Thematic focus	
Key focus:	Water resources management
Related areas:	Ecosystem protection and environmental restoration. Land management and sustainable agriculture Natural disaster risk reduction and management Adaptation to climate change
Key activities and programs:	
Types of activity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> determining a common water policy and elaborating its key directions; planning and approving the water use limits, operation regimes of large reservoirs and controlling water allocation; developing and implementing environmental programs; preparing recommendations on the development of a single pricing policy and potential losses compensation mechanisms, as well as on legal framework of shared water use; coordinating implementation of large water infrastructural work and sharing existing capacities in national water sectors; creating a common information base on water resources, establishing joint monitoring of irrigated land and adjacent areas and general hydro-meteorological support; coordinating joint research efforts for scientific and technical support to address regional water issues and implement the designed schemes; facilitating corporate affairs in promoting water-conservation technologies and other advanced measures contributing to better water use;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing joint programs for emergency and disaster prevention and relief.
Programs	The Aral Sea Basin Assistance Program (ASBP) is the main long-term program of action in the region for sustainable development, including water resources management and environmental protection.

B. Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD)

The Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD) was established by the decision of the Interstate Council for the Aral Sea Basin in 1993. It is entrusted with the mission of coordination and management of regional cooperation in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development of the CA states.

Mandate	
Coordination and management of regional cooperation in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development of the CA states	
Geographical scope	
Central Asia	
Thematic focus	
Key focus:	Ecosystem protection and environmental restoration
Related areas:	Land management and sustainable agriculture Adaptation to climate change Social welfare and health Inclusive and sustainable growth
Key activities and programs:	
Types of activity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> organizing and coordinating elaboration of a regional strategy for sustainable development, programs and plans for sustainable development; managing regional programs, action plans and projects on environmental protection and sustainable development; organizing expertise and developing regional projects; coordinating actions in fulfilling CA commitments on environmental conventions with a transboundary component; facilitating unification of legal norms and methodologies on environmental protection; promoting the interstate exchange of information and developing a regional information bank on environmental protection and sustainable development.
Programs	The Aral Sea Basin Assistance Program (ASBP) is the main long-term program of action in the region for sustainable development, including water resources management and environmental protection. Regional Environmental Program for Sustainable Development (REP4SD) in Central Asia 2020–2030 is a framework program setting the priority areas of regional environmental cooperation until 2030.

C. Executive Committee of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea

The Executive Committee (EC) is a permanent executive body of [IFAS](#). EC IFAS is located rotationally in the country that chairs the Fund. Activity of the EC IFAS is guided by the Regulations approved by the President of IFAS every time when EC changes its location.

¹ Sample Footnote

Mandate	
Coordinate cooperation at national and international levels to improve the environmental and socio-economic situation in the Aral Sea Basin	
Geographical scope	
Central Asia	
Thematic focus	
Environmental improvement in the areas affected by the Aral Sea catastrophe and addressing of socio-economic problems in the region	
Key focus:	Water management, ecosystem protection and environmental restoration
Related areas:	Land management and sustainable agriculture Natural disaster risk reduction and management Adaptation to climate change Social welfare and health Inclusive and sustainable growth
Key activities and programs:	
Types of activity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring the implementation of decisions of Council of Heads of State-founders implementing programs and projects aimed at solving problems in the Aral Sea basin coordinating the activities of branches of the Executive Committee located in the territories of the IFAS founding states; promoting the work of ICWC and ICSD; expanding cooperation with international organizations, donor countries, environmental and other funds to boost environmental activities; mobilizing funds and managing projects and programs; preparing documents and meetings of the IFAS Board, as well as conferences and meetings of the Heads of State-founders on the Aral Sea.
Programs	The Aral Sea Basin Assistance Program (ASBP) is the main long-term program of action in the region for sustainable development, including water resources management and environmental protection.

¹ Sample Footnote

Annex 6. Other regional organizations

A. Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC)

The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia ([CAREC](#)) is an independent, non-political and non-for-profit international organization with regional mandate to assist the Central Asian governments, regional and international stakeholders in addressing environmental and sustainability challenges across Central Asian region and Afghanistan. CAREC was established in 2001 by a joint decision of all five Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), European Union and UNDP, following the resolution of the IV Pan-European Conference held in 1998, Aarhus (Denmark).

Mandate	
Assist the Central Asian governments, regional and international stakeholders in addressing environmental and sustainability challenges across Central Asian region and Afghanistan.	
Geographical scope	
Central Asia and Afghanistan	
Thematic focus	
Addressing environmental and sustainability challenges across Central Asian region and Afghanistan.	
Key focus:	Ecosystem protection and environmental restoration Water management Adaptation to climate change Social welfare and health Inclusive and sustainable growth
Related areas:	Land management and sustainable agriculture Natural disaster risk reduction and management
Key activities, projects and programs:	
Types of activity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to promote intersectoral dialogue among national- and local-level authorities, NGO's, local communities, the private sector and donor organizations on issues of environmental sustainability in the Central Asian region; to build capacity of accessing international expertise, knowledge, best practices and advanced technologies in the sphere of environmental management and sustainable development, and their application in Central Asian states; to enhance the role of the civil society in sustainable development activities in Central Asia.
Projects	National projects https://carececo.org/main/activity/projects/ Regional projects https://carececo.org/main/activity/projects/
Programs	<p>"Health and Environment" program - to identify the correlation between human health and environmental factors in the Central Asian region as well as to assist in reducing the burden of environmental hazards on the Central Asian population health.</p> <p>Environmental Management program (EMP) - to advance and showcase best approaches to sustainable management of natural resources; support national strategies, regional initiatives and dialogue between state and non-governmental organizations in the field of environmental management; and assist Central Asian countries in the fulfillment of their obligations within the framework of multilateral environmental agreements.</p>

	Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Program Water Initiatives Support Program Education for Sustainable Development program
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B. Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction

Mandate	
The Center is established: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to ensure effective mechanisms to decrease the risk of emergencies, to mitigate the consequences of emergencies, to organize a joint response through agreed measures of the Parties, and to stimulate regional and international cooperation. 	
Geographical scope	
Central Asia	
Thematic focus	
Key focus:	Disaster risk reduction and management
Related areas:	Ecosystem protection and environmental restoration Water management Adaptation to climate change
Key activities and programs:	
Types of activity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and monitoring Regional and international cooperation Legal and policy framework development Capacity building and technical assistance Awareness raising and stakeholder mobilization
Projects and programs:	
Projects:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDRR project - component to strengthen the Center's expertise in strengthening regional cooperation (by providing the Center with three DRR experts to strengthen regional coordination with the emergency agencies of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) CESDRR / OSCE Project "Improving the methodology and practice of monitoring and disaster risk assessment using innovative ICT" UNDP Project – "Strengthening the capacity of integrated risk management in the Kyrgyz Republic and regional cooperation in Central Asia" GIZ Project "Climate risk Management in Central Asia" UNDP in Kazakhstan "Creation of a drought response system based on drought monitoring and forecasting", etc.
Programs	Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in Central Asia and South Caucasus region

Annex 7. Key UN agencies addressing water and disasters

A. Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), one of five¹⁰ regional commissions of the United Nations, was set up in 1947. UNECE includes 56 member States in Europe, North America and Asia. However, all interested United Nations member States may participate in the work of UNECE. All the countries maintain dialog and cooperation on economic and sectoral matters under the UNECE auspices. The headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland.

Mandate	
UNECE as a multilateral platform facilitates greater economic integration and cooperation among its fifty-six member States and promotes sustainable development and economic prosperity through: policy dialogue, negotiation of international legal instruments, development of regulations and norms, exchange and application of best practices as well as economic and technical expertise, technical cooperation for countries with economies in transition.	
Geographical scope	
Kazakhstan (31.01.1994), Kyrgyzstan (30.07.1993), Tajikistan (12.12.1994), Turkmenistan (30.07.1993), Uzbekistan (30.07.1993) – UNECE members	
Thematic focus	
Environmental policy, transport, statistics, sustainable energy, trade, forests, housing and land management, population, economic cooperation and integration	
Key focus:	Environmental protection, adaptation to climate change, disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and water management
Related areas:	<p>Land management and sustainable agriculture: develops recommendations and programs for sustainable land use and management, including on agriculture, combatting land degradation, mobilization of investments in agroindustry and improvement of food security (working party on land administration https://unece.org/DAM/hlm/WPLA/publications/WPLA_Brochure_2_-_ENG.pdf)</p> <p>Social welfare and health: supports the countries in formulating and implementing of social welfare and health policies and programs, including by developing health standards, supporting actions on infectious diseases and better access to quality healthcare services.</p> <p>Inclusive and sustainable growth: assists the countries by developing policies on sustainable development, creating new jobs, developing infrastructure, and improving access to education and technologies https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/SPECA/documents/ecf/2019/2019_SP_ECA_Economic_Forum_Background_Paper_English.pdf).</p>
Projects and programs:	
National projects	Joint UNDP and UNECE Project “Master Planning and Innovative Financial Solutions to Support the Yashil Makon Initiative of the Republic of Uzbekistan”
Regional projects	«Water Quality in Central Asia»; «Capacity building for cooperation on dam safety in CA», « Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate-resilient

¹⁰ The others are the: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

	transformation of the energy-water-land Nexus in Central Asia» and others
Programs	UNECE serves as a Secretariat for the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) and the Protocol on Water and Health; coordinates in partnership with UNESCAP the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia ¹¹ (SPECA). The working mechanism of SPECA is its thematic working groups, including on water, energy and environment; UNECE takes active part in implementation of ASBP and REP4SD; supports the Secretariat of the Chu-Talas Water Commission and the national water policy dialogues.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations, was set up in 1947. It provides technical assistance, focusing on advising governments, capacity building and summarizing regional lessons and information through meetings, publications and international communication networks. The headquarters is in Bangkok, Thailand. It is a member of the [UN Sustainable Development Group](#).

Mandate	
ESCAP promotes inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in the Asia-Pacific region and prioritizes the implementation of the SDGs.	
Geographical scope	
Kazakhstan (31.07.1992), Kyrgyzstan (31.07.1992), Tajikistan (31.07.1992), Turkmenistan (31.07.1992), Uzbekistan (31.07.1992) – ESCAP members.	
The subregional office for North and Central Asia is based in Almaty, Kazakhstan.	
Afghanistan participates in the work of the subregional office as a member of SPECA	
Thematic focus	
ESCAP promotes regional and subregional cooperation and capacity building for sustainable development of natural resources, focusing on energy and water, and contributes to enhancement of national capacities for environmentally friendly development.	
Key focus:	Macroeconomic policy and financing for development; trade and investment; transport; social development ; environment and development ; information communication technology and disaster risk reduction ; statistics; energy .
Related areas:	Water management: assists the member countries in the development of water management strategies, facilitates development of international cooperation mechanisms for effective water use and protection (members of UN-Water; contributes to World Water Development Report; adopted at its 79 th session a resolution on the establishment of the UN special programme for the Aral Sea basin). Land management and sustainable agriculture: promotes sustainable

¹¹ SPECA was launched in 1998 to strengthen subregional cooperation in Central Asia and its integration into the world economy. The countries of SPECA are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

	agriculture. Adaptation to climate change
Projects and programs:	
Regional projects	“Strengthening institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on land accounts in Central Asia” (ESCAP/RF) “Research on Assessment of Drought Problems and Drought Monitoring Models in Central Asia”
Programs	SPECA Work Plan for 2024-2025

C. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

[UNDP](#) is based on the merging of the United Nations Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance, created in 1949, and the United Nations Special Fund, established in 1958. UNDP, as we know it now, was established in 1966 by the General Assembly of the United Nations. As the lead United Nations agency on international development, UNDP works in 170 countries and territories. It helps countries develop policies, leadership skills, partnerships and institutional capabilities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP advocates for change, and connect countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. The headquarters are located in New York, USA. UNDP is a part of the [United Nations Sustainable Development Group](#).

Mandate	
UNDP’s mandate is to end poverty, build democratic governance, rule of law, promote and protect human rights, and help countries to transit to low-carbon development and more sound nature use to increase resilience to climate change and natural disasters.	
Geographical scope	
UNDP works with (1) CA countries under umbrella of the regional network for Europe and CA (Regional office in Istanbul) and under country programs (see below); (2) Afghanistan under umbrella of the Regional Asia and Pacific network (Regional office in Bangkok). UNDP has its offices in every CA country.	
Thematic focus	
Activities of UNDP are focused in three key area: (1) sustainable development, (2) democratic governance and peace building, (3) resilience to climate change and disasters.	
Key focus:	Environmental protection, inclusive and sustainable growth, democratic governance and peace building, adaptation to climate change, disaster risk reduction and management
Related areas:	Water management: UNDP incorporates water management into its work, including programs on clean drinking water, sustainable water use and aquatic ecosystem protection. Land management and sustainable agriculture: projects on land management and sustainable agriculture development, including training of farmers, introduction of innovating farming methods and support to agricultural communities. Social welfare and health: programs on social development, including education, job placement, health and poverty eradication.
Projects and programs:	
National	Turkmenistan “Conservation and sustainable management of land

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projects	resources and high nature value ecosystems in the Aral Sea Basin for multiple benefits” (2022-2026); “Developing a national adaptation planning process in Turkmenistan” (2021-2024); “Partnering for SDG acceleration, Phase II” (2018-2024), etc.; Uzbekistan “Project for Supporting Self-Reliance through Climate Resilient Agriculture in the Aral Sea Region” (2023-2025); “Global Biodiversity Framework – Early Action Support” (2021-2023), etc.
Regional projects	UNDP/GEF “Conservation and sustainable management of land resources and high nature value ecosystems in the Aral Sea Basin for multiple benefits”
Programs	<p>The UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025 is grounded in UNDP’s continued commitment to <i>eradicating poverty</i>, accompanying countries in their pathways towards the SDGs and working towards the <i>Paris Agreement</i>. UNDP will be accompanying countries towards the SDGs through country programmes, driven by <i>national development choices</i>, and with poverty eradication at their core.</p> <p><u>Country programs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Kazakhstan UNDP is active since 1993. UNDP activities in this country are governed by the Country Programme Document 2021-2025 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Kazakhstan for 2021-2025 that correspond to strategic priorities of the Government of Kazakhstan outlined in the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, the Strategic Plan 2025 and other key documents of sectoral development. UNDP will focus on key four areas in Kazakhstan: (1) addressing social vulnerabilities and inequalities; (2) rebuilding trust of citizens through more effective and accountable institutions, free of corruption; (3) fostering high-productivity, diversified and knowledge-based economic growth; (4) supporting climate and disaster resilience and nature-based, low-carbon growth. - In Kyrgyzstan UNDP activity is governed by the Country Programme Document for the Kyrgyz Republic 2023-2027, with the following focus areas: (1) green economic transformation and inclusive development; (2) accelerating climate action and nature-based solutions for protecting fragile ecosystems; (3) strengthening inclusive, accountable and democratic governance; (4) strengthening the health system. - In Tajikistan UNDP through the Country Programme Document for Tajikistan for 2023-2026 will directly contribute to three of the four connected outcomes of UNSDCF: i) sustainable, inclusive, and green economic growth; ii) integrated management of climate and environmental risk and iii) people-centred governance and rule of law. - UNDP in Turkmenistan is governed by the Country Programme Document for 2021-2025 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, 2021-2025 that are in line with the strategic priorities of the Government of Turkmenistan outlined in the Presidential Programme for Socio-Economic Development of Turkmenistan, 2019-2025. The strategic priorities include: (1) people-centred governance and the rule of law; (2) all-inclusive, green and sustainable economic growth; (3) good quality, inclusive and affordable health, education and social protection systems. Among the outcomes

¹ Sample Footnote

	<p>are: effective measures for disaster risk reduction, adaptation and mitigation of climate change, transition to green economy.</p> <p>- In Uzbekistan, UNDP has been working since 1993. The focus areas in Uzbekistan are reflected in the UNDP Country Programme Document for Uzbekistan for 2021-2025 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, 2021-2025. These are also in line with the national SDGs and the Uzbekistan’s development strategy 2017-2021. The three current focus areas are the inclusive and democratic governance, inclusive and sustainable growth, and climate and disaster resilience.</p> <p>- In Afghanistan UNDP provided basic livelihoods and temporary employment for Afghan men and women; market access for smallholder farmers and traders; and access to clean and affordable energy for poor households and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). UNDP also supported health services by providing access to primary health care and supporting health facilities. UNDP’s aid also covered poverty and inequality, governance, sustainability, environment, energy, gender equality, innovation and digitalization.</p> <p>The Spotlight Initiative Regional Programme for Central Asia and Afghanistan - ending sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices</p>
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D. UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

[UNEP](#) was founded in 1972 following the UNGA resolution 2997. UNEP is the leading global authority on the environment, which determines the global environmental agenda, promotes the **environmental dimension of sustainable development** within the UN and the leading advocate for the environment. Since 5 June 1973 the World Environment Day has been commemorated annually under umbrella of UNEP, raising awareness about critical environmental issues. UNEP works closely with its 193 Member States and representatives from civil society, businesses, and other major groups and stakeholders to address environmental challenges through the [UN Environment Assembly](#), the world’s highest-level decision-making body on the environment. UNEP is a member of the [UN Sustainable Development Group](#). The headquarters is in Nairobi, Kenya.

Mandate
Following the UNGA Resolution A/RES/2997(XXVII) of 15 December 1972, the UNEP’s mandate includes the protection of natural sites, combatting environmental hazards, promotion of sound nature use, establishment of an international information service for environmental monitoring, and development of an international legal instrument for environmental actions.
Geographical scope
UNEP works at the regional, sub-regional and national levels (including under the “Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building” in the Asia-Pacific region to provide systematic and targeted capacity-building for integrated environmental assessments and action plans on current and emerging issues).
Afghanistan – Asia-Pacific region, South Asia sub-region
CA countries – Europe. Also, the Almaty Office was opened in 2015 and is UNEP’s focal point in Europe for environmental cooperation with Central Asian countries.
Thematic focus

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The UNEP’s [medium-term strategy for 2022–2025](#), the United Nations Environment Programme strategy for 2022–2025 to tackle climate change, loss of nature and pollution outlines how UNEP will strengthen the environmental dimension, focusing on the root causes of three planetary crises – **climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution**.

A **Memorandum of Understanding** was signed between the **SCO Secretariat and UNEP** on 1 March 2024. Given that 2024 has been declared the SCO Year of Ecology, UNEP will provide additional technical and legal support to the countries of the SCO region in addressing environmental challenges such as **climate change, biodiversity and water pollution**, and hopes to further deepen cooperation between the two sides.

Key focus:	Ecosystem protection and environmental restoration, adaptation to climate change
Related areas:	
Projects and programs:	
Regional projects	Capacity development and technology transfer to improve the generation and use of data and information in support of monitoring the environment in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, 2019-2024 , environmental policy, decision making); Climate change action in developing countries with fragile mountainous ecosystems (2014-2019).
Programs	One Planet, One Future: Joining Efforts for Environmental Sustainability

E. International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

The United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund ([UNICEF](#)) was established in 1946. UNICEF works with all its partners towards the attainment of the **sustainable human development goals** adopted by the world community and the realization of the vision of peace and social progress enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. UNICEF is a member of the [UN Sustainable Development Group](#). The headquarters is in New York, USA.

Mandate	
UNICEF is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to advocate for the protection of children’s rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF aims, through its country programmes, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social and economic development of their communities.	
Geographical scope	
CA countries – Europe and Central Asia region Regional office for Europe and Central Asia	
Thematic focus	
UNICEF works with the United Nations and its agencies to make sure that children are on the global agenda. UNICEF strikes a balance between thorough research and practical solutions for children.	
Key focus:	Disaster risk reduction and management, inclusive and sustainable growth
Related areas:	Ecosystem protection and environmental restoration (<i>access to drinking water, sanitation, hygiene, climate-resilient water supply</i>) Water management Adaptation to climate change Social welfare and health
Projects and programs:	

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National projects	Turkmenistan’s Healthy Mother, Healthy Child, Healthy Future national strategy for 2021-2025 developed with the UNICEF’s support
Regional projects	
Programs	<p>UNICEF’s Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, the first of two sequential plans towards 2030, will guide synchronized action towards an <i>inclusive recovery from COVID-19, acceleration towards the achievement of the SDGs and the attainment of a society in which every child is included, without discrimination, and has agency, opportunity and their rights fulfilled.</i></p> <p>Country programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergency Disaster Risk Reduction Support to Organizations and Vulnerable Communities program - Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF’s Country Programme 2023 – 2027 aims to reach the most disadvantaged children. UNICEF works across sectors of child protection, health, social policy, early childhood development and education, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), response in emergencies, climate change and disaster risk preparedness, children with disabilities and youth. <p>UNICEF Disaster Risk Reduction Program in Kyrgyzstan “Health and social impacts of air pollution on children and women in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan” Health and Child Survival in Tajikistan (including water supply, hygiene and sanitation) Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action (including Uzbekistan)</p>

F. World Food Programme (WFP)

The World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) was established in 1961 as a UN food assistance body. WFP is a member of the [UN Sustainable Development Group](#). The headquarters is in Rome, Italy.

Mandate
<p>The World Food Programme is the largest humanitarian agency saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity, for people recovering from conflict, disasters and the impact of climate change.</p> <p>WFP efforts focus on delivering emergency assistance, relief and rehabilitation, development aid and special operations.</p> <p>In emergencies, WFP provides relief for victims of armed conflicts, natural and manmade disasters.</p>
Geographical scope
<p>WFP has a presence in over 120 countries and territories.</p> <p>WFP established a Logistics Hub for assistance to Afghanistan in Termez city, Uzbekistan in 2021.</p>
Thematic focus
<p>WFP: 1) saves and changes lives, 2) delivers assistance, and 3) creates favorable conditions. Favorable priorities: relief for population; gender equality; food issues; environmental</p>

¹ Sample Footnote

sustainability.	
Key focus:	WFP together with research institutes develops climate risk profiles for highly vulnerable countries. WFP will study thoroughly costs, benefits and impacts of different programs to reduce, mitigate and transfer the risks. Assistance in sound nature management : a) environmental protection and soil conservation, runoff collection, flood control (improvement of agro-ecological productivity of territories and reduction of biodiversity losses); b) rehabilitation of irrigation systems and drinking water sources for household, agricultural, fishery and livestock needs; c) forestry improvement (protective forests, seed collection,... removal of debris in agricultural areas after floods and landslides); d) enhancement of sustainability by building national capacities in disaster risk management Disaster risk reduction and management
Related areas:	Water management Land management and sustainable agriculture Adaptation to climate change Social welfare and health
Projects and programs:	
National projects	WFP has been active in Tajikistan since 1993 . WFP and the Government of Tajikistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to deepen their cooperation on addressing food and nutrition security. This MoU lays the groundwork for WFP's Tajikistan Country Strategic Plan (CSP) for 2023–2026, which aligns with the country's national goals of improving food security and nutrition, strengthening capacities, and providing technical support to the Government's social protection programs.
Regional projects	
Programs	WFP strategic plan (2022-2025)

G. UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund (MPHSTF) for the Aral Sea region

During the [UN Summit on Sustainable Development](#) (25-27 September 2015, New York) the Republic of Uzbekistan put forward an initiative to create a special Trust Fund for the Aral Sea under the auspices of the United Nations, which was to serve as a unique *single platform for uniting international donors communities' efforts and mobilization of their resources* within the assistance framework to the Aral Sea region by implementing complex measures directed towards the improvement of the ecological and socio-economic situation in the Aral Sea region. The [UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region in Uzbekistan \(MPHSTF\)](#) was officially launched in the UN Headquarters on November 27, 2018.¹²

The MPHSTF operates based on contributions of the Government, bi-lateral or multi-lateral donors, International Financial Institutions, foundations and the private sector.

Donor partners: the Government of Uzbekistan, the Government Norway, the European Union, the Government of Finland, the Government of the Republic of Korea, the Alwaleed Philanthropies Initiative, the Government of Japan, the Government of RF, and the Government of German.

UN participating organizations: UNICEF, UNDP, FAO, WHO, UNFPA, UNODC, UNESCO.

National partners: Ministries and departments of Uzbekistan.

¹² The issue on the establishment of the special UN Commission on the Aral Sea has been addressed in Uzbekistan's statements at UNGA starting from 1993 (48/1993, 49/1994, 50/1995, 51/1996, 53/1998, 54/1999, 55/2000).

The Fund’s Strategy aims at building the resilience of communities affected by the Aral Sea disaster through the achievement of the following outcomes: (1) the stress on local communities due to the deteriorating environmental situation reduced; (2) the employment and income generation opportunities for local communities increased; (3) local community access to affordable and healthy food and clean drinking water secured; (4) the overall health of the local population improved and healthy lifestyle promoted; (5) the living conditions of local populations improved, with particular focus on vulnerable groups such as women, children and youth.

Mandate	
Provide a single platform for cooperation at national and international levels to solve environmental and socio-economic needs of communities living in the Aral Sea region and to speed up joint efforts for the achievement of global Sustainable Development Goals.	
Geographical scope	
Uzbekistan	
Thematic focus	
Solving environmental, economic, food, social, and health security problems in the most vulnerable areas of the Aral Sea region by piloting innovative methods to solving environmental problems, improving access of the affected rural population to basic services, and reducing poverty.	
Key focus:	Environmental conservation, climate adaptation, social welfare and health, inclusive and sustainable growth
Related areas:	Land management and sustainable agriculture, water management, disaster risk reduction
Projects and programs:	
National projects	<p>(1) “Addressing the urgent human insecurities in the Aral Sea region through promoting sustainable rural development” (September 2019 - August 2021, UNDP, UNESCO, \$1.5 million), aimed at a comprehensive solution to address environmental issues, facilitate access to basic services, improve living standards and develop sustainable tourism.</p> <p>(2) “Improvement the quality of perinatal care service to most vulnerable mothers and newborns” (August 2019 - April 2021, UNFPA, UNICEF, \$1.6 million), aimed to ensure the population’s access to perinatal services through infrastructure improvement and provision of essential equipment to medical facilities and increase the quality of maternal and newborn health care services.</p> <p>(3) “Towards universal health coverage and security in Karakalpakstan” (January 2021 - September 2023, \$1.61 million), aimed to assess the health system of the Republic of Karakalpakstan for universal health coverage</p> <p>(4) and others (see reporting on https://www.aral.mptf.uz/site/media.html#tab_reports_and_docs).</p>

H. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

[FAO](#) established in 1945 is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger, increase nutrition, achieve food security and improve living conditions for

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rural communities all over the world. FAO is a member of the [UN Sustainable Development Group](#). The headquarters is in Rome, Italy.

Mandate	
<p>Raising levels of nutrition and standards of living of the peoples; securing improvements in the efficiency of the production and distribution of all food and agricultural products; bettering the condition of rural populations; and thus contributing towards an expanding world economy and ensuring humanity's freedom from hunger.</p>	
Geographical scope	
<p>Afghanistan and CA countries joined FAO. FAO has no special dedicated program for the Aral Sea Basin. FAO works with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the CA countries through its Regional Office in Europe and CA and separately with each of countries under its country programs. - Afghanistan through its Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and under its country program 	
Thematic focus	
<p>FAO Strategic Framework Program (2022-2031) seeks to support the 2030 Agenda through the four betters: (1) better production, (2) better nutrition, (3) better environment, and (4) better life.</p>	
Key focus:	Sustainable agriculture development, food security, improvement of rural living standards, sustainable nature use
Related areas:	<p>Water management. FAO applies a comprehensive approach to water management, focusing its efforts on policy development, education, technical assistance, research and partnerships. FAO has developed:</p> <p>AQUASTAT – a global information system on water resources and agricultural water management. It collects, analyses and provides free access to over 180 variables and indicators by country from 1960.</p> <p>WaPOR – a portal to monitor water productivity through open access of remotely sensed derived data.</p> <p>Disaster risk reduction and management Adaptation to climate change Social welfare and health</p>
Projects and programs:	
National projects	https://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/en/
Regional projects	https://www.fao.org/in-action/cacilm-2/en/
Programs	<p>FAO's activities in the world, including Europe and Central Asia, are guided by the Strategic Framework Program for 2022-2031 aimed to support the 2030 Agenda. In this Program FAO formulates its vision of sustainable and safe food for all.</p> <p><u>Regional programs:</u></p> <p>The programme work of FAO in Europe and Central Asia for 2022–2023 articulates Organization's work in countries and regionally¹³.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific hosts the OCOP (One Country, One Product Initiative) Regional Knowledge Platform. Priorities: (1) Strengthened food and nutrition security; (2) Improved income and

¹³ guided by the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–2031

livelihoods; (3) Improved sustainable and inclusive value chains through better production, processing, marketing, and consumption; (4) Increased climate resilience and environmental sustainability; (5) Strengthened partnerships.

Country programs:

- the Afghanistan country programme [2017-2021](#) is one of FAO's largest in the Asia and Pacific region (it covers household food and livelihood security; animal health and transboundary diseases; small-scale integrated dairy schemes; irrigation rehabilitation and water management; value chain development; soil mapping and national agriculture ecological zoning; and development of research policy and strategy).
- active work is underway to launch in 2024 the **Kazakhstan**-FAO country partnership program until 2025 (focused on seed production and land degradation).
- the FAO Country Programming Framework for the **Kyrgyz Republic** for 2023-2027 (the Program outlines priority areas of FAO's work in the country to achieve SDGs and the goals of the National Development Program of Kyrgyzstan until 2026. The priority areas concern the improvement of food security and nutrition, promotion of organic agriculture, digitalization, boosting of agricultural development, improvement of household resilience, improvement of environmental protection, sustainable natural resource management and climate change adaptation).
- the FAO Country Programming Framework for Tajikistan for [2016-2017](#) and [2019-2021](#)(priority areas: (1) enhancing national food and nutritional security and safety, including a focus on the provision of technical and managerial support to value chain; (2) supporting sustainable management of natural resources and improved resilience to climate change, including efforts to strengthen the policy-enabling environment and promote innovative and multisectoral approaches; (3) boosting sustainable agricultural productivity and competitiveness).
- the Framework Program for Cooperation for 2021–2025 between the Government of **Turkmenistan** and FAO (supporting the agri-food sector: (1) data collection and analysis, particularly for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); (2) promoting a more productive, efficient and digitalized agriculture with enhanced export potential; (3) assistance in disaster prevention and response; and (4) sustainable management of natural resources).
- the FAO Country Programming Framework for **Uzbekistan** for 2021-2025 (to assist Uzbekistan achieve its national strategic priorities on transformation of food systems. Priority areas: Inclusive human capital development leading to health, well-being and resilient

	<p>prosperity; Sustainable, climate-responsible and resilient development).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FAO's Global Action on One Country One Priority Product (OCOP) project launched in Uzbekistan as a pilot country (2022). It aims to build more sustainable food value chains, support family and smallholder farmers to be profitable and improve their livelihoods, minimize the use of chemical inputs and natural resources, reduce food loss and waste, and limit the negative impacts on the environment.
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I. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

[IFAD](#) is an international financial institution and specialized United Nations agency based in Rome. IFAD is focused on and dedicated to transforming agriculture, rural economies and food systems in developing countries. IFAD was founded in 1977. It is comprised of the Governing council (held annually) and the Executive Board (18 members and 18 deputies for a three-year term of office). IFAD catalyzes investments to increase agricultural production and incomes for poor rural households in developing countries. IFAD is a member of the [UN Sustainable Development Group](#).

Mandate	
IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. IFAD catalyzes public and private investments in agriculture and rural development. IFAD will ensure that poor rural people have better access to, and the skills and organization they need to take advantage of: natural resources, especially secure access to land and water, and improved natural resource management and conservation practices; improved agricultural technologies and effective production services; a broad range of financial services; transparent and competitive markets for agricultural inputs and produce; opportunities for rural off-farm employment and enterprise development; local and national policy and programming processes.	
Geographical scope	
Member countries divided into 5 regions: Afghanistan refers to the Asia and Pacific region . Kyrgyzstan , Tajikistan and Uzbekistan refer to Near East, North Africa, Europe and Central Asia . Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are not members of IFAD.	
Thematic focus	
Building sustainable agriculture and rural areas in developing countries to increase food security and improve living standards of rural population.	
Key focus:	Land management and sustainable agriculture . The Fund finances the projects that contribute to sustainable land management, including soil and water conservation, and resilient agrarian production.
Related areas:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem protection and environmental restoration – IFAD implements projects aimed at sustainable land management and ecosystem protection to strengthen resilience to climate change and improve management of natural resources; • Water management - By working closely with rural communities, IFAD is helping to improve the allocation and management of water resources,

¹ Sample Footnote

	<p>invests in water infrastructure and technology for small-scale irrigation schemes and domestic water supply;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster risk reduction and management – IFAD is involved in projects aimed at disaster risk reduction and adaptation, including through the improvement of water management and agricultural practices; • Adaptation to climate change – IFAD promotes measures on adaptation to climate change, including projects building resilience of small holders. IFAD is also an executing agency of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and of the Green Climate Fund (GCF). These are among the main financial mechanisms for addressing the intertwined issues of poverty alleviation, sustainable ecosystem management and climate change adaptation and mitigation; • Social welfare and health – IFAD’s activities in the sphere of health are not mentioned directly but the Fund’s work on improvement of food security and poverty alleviation indirectly contribute to better social welfare of rural population • Inclusive and sustainable growth – IFAD supports sustainable growth through a range of initiatives aimed at improving the livelihoods of rural communities, supporting smallholder farmers and increasing access to markets.
Projects and programs:	
National projects	https://www.ifad.org/en/programme-and-project-documents?mode=search&catCountries=39091000
Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP) – is IFAD’s flagship programme for channeling climate finance to small-scale farmers. It is being implemented in three phases: (1) ASAP1 (2012-2025): addresses the challenges posed by climate change by providing climate-resilient agricultural practices, technologies and financing to small-scale farmers; (2) ASAP2 (2017-2025): provides technical assistance on policy and operational issues; (3) ASAP+ (since 2021): builds on the previous phases to address climate-driven food insecurity and empowers the most vulnerable small-scale producers and communities. IFAD helps small-scale farmers in developing countries adapt to climate change and build resilient livelihoods by providing them with knowledge, skills and technology. We promote practices that mitigate the emissions of greenhouse gases and support knowledge-sharing to foster the development of new approaches and technologies. - Social, Environmental and Climate Assessment Procedures (SECAP) outline how to manage risks and impacts, and integrate priorities into IFAD investments to achieve better development outcomes through: (1) environmental, social and climate due diligence; (2) clear procedures to integrate IFAD priorities (environment, gender, nutrition, youth) and marginalized people into projects; (3) commitment to work with borrowing countries to build their national systems for managing risks and enhancing development opportunities; (4) timely stakeholder engagement and functional grievance redress mechanisms. - Republic of Uzbekistan Country strategic opportunities programme 2023–2027. The overarching goal of the Programme is “to sustainably

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	<p>increase rural prosperity and improve livelihoods of small-scale producers”. Three strategic objectives underpin the Programme: (1) increased resilience and productivity of small-scale producers; (2) improved access for small-scale producers to viable food systems and agricultural markets; (3) enhanced enabling environment for inclusive rural transformation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Republic of Tajikistan Country Strategic Opportunities Programme 2019-2024. The overall goal of this programme is to contribute to the reduction of rural poverty and the enhancement of national food security in rural Tajikistan. This goal will be achieved through two complementary strategic objectives: (1) promotion of inclusive agricultural-based rural economic growth in poor rural communities; (2) enhancement of smallholder producers’ resilience to climate change. - Kyrgyz Republic Country Strategic Opportunities Programme 2018-2022 aims to support inclusive rural transformation that enables smallholders to reduce poverty and strengthen livelihood resilience. This goal is to be achieved through two inter-related strategic objectives: (1) increase smallholders’ equitable and sustainable returns; and (2) enhance smallholders’ resilience to climate change (results review).
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J. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

[UNESCO](#) was established on 16 November 1945. Its membership includes 194 members and 12 associated members. All member states have founded National commissions of UNESCO. The governing bodies of UNESCO are the General Conference (meets every two years) and the Executive Board (meets biannually, 58 members). UNESCO is a member of the [UN Sustainable Development Group](#). The organization is based in Paris, France.

Mandate

UNESCO’s mandate is outlined in its Constitution adopted on 16 November 1945. “The purpose of the Organization is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.”

UNESCO fulfils five main functions:

- Supports prospective research (explore which forms of education, science, culture and communications are needed in tomorrow’s world);
- Maintains, increases and diffuses the knowledge (based on scientific research and education);
- Regulatory activity (formulation and adoption of international instruments and mandatory recommendations);
- Offers expert services to member states to formulate their development policies and develop projects as part of technical cooperation;
- Exchanges specialized information.

Geographical scope

UNESCO [member states](#) are grouped into 5 regions: [Afghanistan](#) (member since 1948),

[Kyrgyzstan](#) (since 1992), [Turkmenistan](#) (since 1993) and [Uzbekistan](#) (since 1993) refer to the Asia and Pacific region; [Kazakhstan](#) (since 1992) and [Tajikistan](#) (since 1993) belong to the Asia and Pacific and the Europe and Northern America regions.

Thematic focus

The kea activities focus in five programme areas: education, sciences, culture, freedom of expression and protection of cultural heritage.

Key focus:	Sustainable development through education, science, culture and communication
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Related areas:	<p>Within the selected tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem protection and environmental restoration – UNESCO actively works in this area through its Man and Biosphere Program and biodiversity projects. • Water management – Man and Biosphere Program and Intergovernmental Hydrological Program address the water issues. • Land management and sustainable agriculture – sustainable rural development programs and projects • Disaster risk reduction and management – UNESCO is engaged in international efforts on disaster risk reduction through its educational and science programs. • Adaptation to climate change – this area also falls into the scope of UNESCO’s activities, especially in the context of its education for sustainable development programs. • Social welfare and health – this is not among the key areas of activity but UNESCO addresses social welfare issues through educational programs. • Inclusive and sustainable growth – through infrastructure development, support of small- and medium-scale enterprises, and encouragement of innovations and entrepreneurship
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Projects and programs:

National projects	https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/project-second-steering-committee-meeting
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Regional projects	<p>Project “Reducing vulnerabilities of populations in the Central Asia region from glacier lake outburst floods in a changing climate” (GLOFCA) includes both a research component to assess and map risks, design and installation of early warning systems and the broad activities on education and raising awareness of local vulnerable communities.</p> <p>Project “Vision for the Aral Sea Basin”</p>
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Programs	<p>UNESCO works to build the scientific knowledge base to help countries manage their water resources in a sustainable way through the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) and the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), through leading the UN-wide World Water Development Report and through numerous Centres and Chairs on water around the world.</p> <p>The UNESCO Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP), founded in 1975 following the International Hydrological Decade (1965-1974), is the only intergovernmental cooperation programme of the UN system dedicated to water research and management, and related education and</p>
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	<p>capacity development.</p> <p>It is aimed at addressing national, regional and global water challenges and building a sustainable and resilient society by expanding the scientific understanding of water, improving technical capabilities, and enhancing education. IHP develops tools and strategies to prevent inter- and intrastate water conflicts.</p> <p>IHP addresses such challenges as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water resources in the context of global climate change; • Watersheds and aquifers; • Hydrology of human settlements; • Water and society; • Water education. <p>UNESCO established the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP) in 2000 in response to a call from the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to produce a UN system-wide periodic global overview of the status, use and management of freshwater resources.</p> <p>The Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme is an intergovernmental scientific programme that aims to establish a scientific basis for enhancing the relationship between people and their environments.</p> <p>International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGCP): serves as a knowledge hub of UNESCO to facilitate international scientific cooperation in the geosciences. The IGCP mission includes promoting sustainable use of natural resources, advancing new initiatives related to geo-diversity and geo-heritage and geohazards risk mitigation. The International Geoscience Programme (IGCP) has partnered with the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) to bring together thousands of Earth scientists from 150 countries to work on the improved ways to assess energy and mineral resources, enriching the geoscience database and reducing disaster risks.</p>
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UNESCO publication "Aral Sea and Aral Sea Region"
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260741>.

K. World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

[WMO](#) is a specialized agency of the United Nations whose mandate covers weather, climate and water resources. It was founded in 1950. Its main goal is to facilitate international cooperation in the development of meteorology and the exchange of information and technology related to weather, climate, hydrology and related environmental fields. As of 2023, WMO has 193 Members, including 187 Member States and 6 Territories, maintaining their own meteorological services. WMO also assists National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) to establish and maintain systems for acquiring and disseminating accurate and timely information. WMO is a member of the [UN Sustainable Development Group](#). The organization is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

[WMO](#) supports the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by providing data and models and hosting and co-sponsoring the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC](#)), the World Climate Research Programme ([WCRP](#)), and the Global Climate Observing System ([GCOS](#)).

Mandate

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[WMO](#) works to facilitate worldwide cooperation in the design and delivery of meteorological services, foster the rapid exchange of meteorological information, advance the standardization of meteorological data, build cooperation between meteorological and hydrological services, encourage research and training in meteorology, and expand the use of meteorology to benefit other sectors such as aviation, shipping, agriculture and water management.

Geographical scope

WMO member states are grouped into 6 [regions](#). [Afghanistan](#) (member since 11 October 1956), [Kyrgyzstan](#) (18 August 1994), [Tajikistan](#) (10 August 1993), [Turkmenistan](#) (3 January 1993) and [Uzbekistan](#) (22 December 1992) fall into the Asia region (2), while [Kazakhstan](#) (4 May 1993) refers to the Asia (2) and Europe (4) regions.

Thematic focus

Study and monitoring of atmosphere, ocean and hydrosphere, and development of climate actions.

Key focus:	Ensuring sustainable development by providing meteorological and climate information, which includes studying and monitoring of climate changes, adaptation to climate change, prevention and management of natural disasters, provision of meteorological services. WMO actively deals with water management through its hydrological programs and projects.
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Related areas:	<p>As part of respective tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem protection and environmental restoration – indirectly addressed through WMO’s contribution to better environmental management and reduction of disasters related to weather conditions and climate change but is not a direct objective. • Land management and sustainable agriculture – WMO does not directly deal with land management but its activity in meteorology and climate has an impact on agriculture and resilient land use through weather data and forecasts. • Social welfare and health. • Inclusive and sustainable growth – through the provision of information and services.
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Projects and programs:

National projects	https://wmo.int/projects/uzbekistan-climate-data-restoration-project https://wmo.int/projects/afghanistan-hydromet-early-warning-services-resilience
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Regional projects	https://community.wmo.int/en/swfp-central-asia
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Programs	<p>WMO Strategic Plan 2020-2030 was adopted by the Eighteenth World Meteorological Congress, in June 2019, while the WMO Strategic Plan 2024-2027, at the nineteenth session of the World Meteorological Congress in May 2023. The Strategic Plan reaffirms the WMO’s overarching priorities: (1) Enhance preparedness and reduce loss of life, critical infrastructure and livelihood from hydrometeorological extremes; (2) Support climate-smart decision making for building or enhancing the adaptive capacity and resilience to climate risk; (3) Enhance the socioeconomic value of weather, climate, hydrological and related environmental services.</p>
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	<p>The key goals of the Plan are as follows: Goal 1: Better serve societal needs: delivering, authoritative, accessible, user-oriented and fit-for-purpose information and services; Goal 2: Enhance Earth system observations and predictions: Strengthening the technical foundation for the future; Goal 3: Advance targeted research: Leveraging leadership in science to improve understanding of the Earth system for enhanced services; Goal 4: Close the capacity gap on weather, climate, hydrological and related environmental services: Enhancing service delivery capacity of developing countries to ensure availability of essential information and services needed by governments, economic sectors and citizens; Goal 5: Strategic realignment of WMO structure and programmes for effective policy- and decision-making and implementation.</p> <p>Global Hydrological Status and Outlook System (HydroSOS) will monitor and predict global, regional and national freshwater hydrological conditions. HydroSOS is the basis of the Early Warnings for All initiative about hydrological catastrophes and, thus, supports local resilience and preparedness.</p> <p>Global Multi-hazard Alert System (GMAS).</p> <p>Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) is a mechanism to fund projects in least developed countries and small island developing states to establish climate risk and early warning systems.</p>
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WMO published the brochure [“Aral Sea: Water, Climate and Environmental Change in Central Asia”](#) by Michael H. Glantz and Igor S. Zonn

L. World Bank Group

The World Bank Group is comprised of five institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development ([IBRD](#) lends to governments of middle-income and creditworthy low-income countries.), the International Finance Corporation ([IFC](#) supports the private sector growth in developing countries by financing investment and providing advisory services), the International Development Association ([IDA](#) provides interest-free loans and grants to governments of the poorest countries) are the specialized UN agencies; the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes ([ICSID](#) provides international facilities for conciliation and arbitration of investment disputes) and Multilateral investment guarantee agency ([MIGA](#) offers political risk insurance (guarantees) to investors and lenders in developing countries) are not specialized agencies. The headquarters are located in Washington, DC, USA.

Mandate	
To end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity on a livable planet.	
Geographical scope	
Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan refer to the Europe and Central Asia group	
Thematic focus	
The WB Group works in all key development areas. It provides a wide range of financial products and technical assistance and assists countries to share innovative knowledge and solutions to problems they encounter and implement them in practice.	
Key focus:	As part of respective tasks of the World Bank Group:

¹ Sample Footnote

Related areas:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem protection and environmental restoration: IBRD and IDA often finance the projects aimed at ecosystem restoration, biodiversity protection and sustainable nature use. • Water management: IDA and IBRD provide funds and expertise to improve water management, including water supply and sanitation projects. • Land management and sustainable agriculture: The agricultural and land management support programs financed by IDA and IBRD aim to improve productivity and sustainability of the agrarian sector. • Disaster risk reduction and management: MIGA and IBRD are involved in projects that contribute to disaster risk mitigation and enhanced preparedness. • Adaptation to climate change: The projects on adaptation to and mitigation of climate change are the key for all divisions of the World Bank Group. • Social welfare and health: IBRD and IDA work on projects aimed to improve health, education and social care. • Inclusive and sustainable growth: IBRD, IDA, IFC support projects of the private sector that contribute to economic growth and new jobs.
Projects and programs:	
National projects	https://projects.vsemirnyjbank.org/en/projects-operations/projects-list?countrycode_exact=KZ&title=%D0%9A%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B0%D1%85%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD&os=0
Regional projects	Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Program for Aral Sea Basin (CAMP4ASB) Central Asia Hydrometeorology Modernization Project (CAHMP), others see on https://projects.vsemirnyjbank.org/en/projects-operations/projects-list?countrycode_exact=7C&title=%D0%A6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%8F%20%D0%90%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%8F&os=0
Programs	Central Asia Water and Energy Program (CAWEP) Kazakhstan -World Bank Group Country Partnership Framework 2020-2025 is fully aligned with the government’s reform program, as well as Kazakhstan’s 2050 development strategy to promote inclusive growth, strengthen human capital, secure sustainable and low-carbon growth. Tajikistan –World Bank Group Country Partnership Framework 2019-2023 is aligned with the National Development Strategy of Tajikistan. Country Partnership Framework with the Kyrgyz Republic for 2024-2028. Country Partnership Framework with Uzbekistan for 2022-2026.

M. United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)

The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia ([UNRCCA](#)) is a special political mission of the United Nations Organization established in 2007 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan upon the initiative of the five Central Asian states.

UNRCCA and EC IFAS [signed](#) the Memorandum of Understanding to organize cooperation on development of mechanisms for monitoring and preventive response to environmental

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threats in the Aral Sea Basin (Ashgabat, March 2010).

Mandate	
The Centre is mandated : (1) to liaise with the Governments of the region on issues relevant to preventive diplomacy; (2) to provide monitoring and analysis; (3) to maintain contact with OSCE, CIS, SCO and other regional organizations; (4) to provide an overall framework and leadership for the preventive activities of the UN country teams in the region; (5) to maintain close contact with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to ensure a comprehensive and integrated analysis of the situation in the region.	
Geographical scope	
Central Asia (all CA countries) Afghanistan	
Thematic focus	
The Centre develops common initiatives to address regional challenges to peace, security, and development in its Programmes of Action designed in consultations with the Governments of Central Asian states. One of UNRCCA activity areas is the management of common natural resources and environmental protection.	
Key focus:	Among the identified thematic focus: ecosystem protection and environmental restoration, water management, including water diplomacy, adaptation to climate change, disaster risk reduction and management
Related areas:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land management and sustainable agriculture – no direct mentioning but the natural resource management initiatives may indirectly include land aspects. • Social welfare and health – holds workshops and trainings that may indirectly impact social welfare through enhanced community resilience to natural and anthropogenic threats. • Inclusive and sustainable growth – UNRCCA activities have a visible focus on sustainable development. This includes modernization of regional legislation and cooperation in such spheres as water and climate that contributes to sustainable regional development.
Projects and programs:	
Programs	Since the establishment, UNRCCA implemented four Programmes of Action . The current Programme of Action for 2021-2025 focuses on five key priority areas, which correspond to the Centre's mandate: 1) Promoting preventive diplomacy among the Governments of Central Asia; (2) Monitoring and early warning in support of conflict prevention; (3) Building partnerships for prevention, including with regional and sub-regional organizations; (4) Strengthening the United Nations preventive diplomacy in Central Asia; (5) Encouraging cooperation and interaction between Central Asia and Afghanistan.

N. United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

[The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) was established in 1999 to facilitate the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (resolution [A/RES/54/219](#)). UNDRR helps decision makers across the globe better understand and act on risk. UNDRR works globally towards the prevention of new disaster risks and the reduction of

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existing risk. UNDRR is a member of the UN Sustainable Development Group. The organization is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

UNDRR is a part of the [UN Secretariat](#) and the lead agency within the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster risk reduction, which coordinates the implementation, follow-up and review of the [Sendai Framework](#) (2015-2030).

Mandate	
The UNDRR's mandate was defined by UNGA resolutions, the major of which is "...to serve as the focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster reduction and to ensure synergies among the disaster-reduction activities of the United Nations system and regional organizations and activities in socio-economic and humanitarian fields" (item 6, A/RES/56/195).	
Geographical scope	
Central Asia (Kazakhstan , Kyrgyzstan , Tajikistan , Turkmenistan , Uzbekistan) – regional office for Europe and Central Asia Afghanistan – regional office for Asia and the Pacific	
Thematic focus	
The focus areas include activities on DRR for adaptation to climate change, increased investments in DRR, construction of disaster resilient cities, schools and hospitals, strengthened international system of DRR.	
Key focus:	Disaster risk reduction and management
Related areas:	<p>These tasks are important but secondary and closely linked to the main task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem protection and environmental restoration – through integrated approaches including research, development of strategies, implementation of recovery programs and facilitation of international cooperation • Water management – through measures to decrease water-related disaster risk and development of water management strategies in the context of sustainable development • Land management and sustainable agriculture – develops disaster risk-informed methods for sustainable farming. Contributes to drought and other natural disaster action plans, promotes resilient agriculture • Social welfare and health - programs for enhanced people's disaster preparedness, including education; cooperates with local authorities and humanitarian organizations to help people affected by disasters and restore social infrastructure • Inclusive and sustainable growth – analyzes risks and supports member countries in elaborating strategies for resilient development
Projects and programs:	
Regional projects	The "Strengthening Disaster Resilience and Accelerating Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

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	<p>in Central Asia” initiative¹⁴ was funded by the European Union and implemented by UNDRR over the period 2019-2023. The project was implemented in partnership with national governments, CESDRR, CIMA Research Foundation, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, IFRC, UNDP, UNECE and other concerned parties and technical experts.</p> <p>Among the key achievements is the first sub-regional Strategy for Development of Cooperation of Countries of Central Asia in Disaster Risk Reduction for 2022 – 2030, which was agreed by ministers in 2021 and followed by annual action plans and the organization of the annual Regional Forum – Meeting of Heads of Emergency Authorities of Central Asian Countries in 2020, 2021 and 2022.</p> <p>At the national and local levels, this initiative contributed to strengthened risk management systems and application of risk assessment tools to increase disaster preparedness and resilience in all five countries. In total, 65 disaster-prone communities across the region were supported to build their resilience, with over 50,000 people benefiting from the project directly.</p>
Programs	<p>The UNDRR Strategic Framework 2022-2025; UNDRR’s Work Programme for 2024-25</p> <p>These programs set out the following strategic objectives: Objective 1: countries use quality information and analysis to reduce risks and inform development decisions; Objective 2: Disaster risk reduction governance strengthened at global, regional, national and local levels; Objective 3: Catalyze investment and action in disaster risk reduction through partnerships and engagement with stakeholders; Objective 4: Mobilize governments and other stakeholders through advocacy and knowledge sharing to make disaster risk reduction central to sustainable development.</p>

¹⁴ Final report www.undrr.org/publication/strengthening-disaster-resilience-and-accelerating-implementation-sendai-framework;

Press release www.undrr.org/media/85958/download?startDownload=true;

Flyer www.undrr.org/media/86035/download?startDownload=true



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