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Cooperation Among Central Asian Countries on Water

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan Discuss Water and Energy Cooperation¹

A quarterly working meeting of ministers responsible for energy and water management from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan was held in Bishkek. The meeting focused on strengthening regional coordination in water and energy cooperation.



The meeting was attended by Uzbekistan's Minister of Energy, Jurabek Mirzamakhmudov; Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Energy, Taalaibek Ibraev; and Kazakhstan's Minister of Energy, Erlan Akkenzhenov. Uzbekistan's Minister of Water Resources, Shavkat Khamraev, and Tajikistan's Minister of Energy and Water Resources, Daler Juma, participated via videoconference.

¹ Source: <https://www.uzdaily.uz/ru/ministry-tsa-obsudili-vodno-energeticheskoe-sotrudnichestvo/>

During the discussions, participants noted that the multilateral cooperation initiated in recent years by the heads of the Central Asian states has continued to strengthen, demonstrating its effectiveness across various sectors, including fuel and energy.

A key focus of the meeting was the coordination of the operation of regional water and energy systems during the growing season 2026–2027. The participants emphasized the interdependence of the region's energy infrastructure and highlighted the importance of enhanced coordination to ensure its reliable and stable operation.

Particular attention was paid to the revision of the outcomes of the autumn-winter season and measures aimed at balancing system loads and ensuring uninterrupted energy supply across the region.

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan Approve Irrigation Water Supply Schedules for the Start of the Summer Season²

On 7 May 2026, talks between the heads of the water and energy agencies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan concluded in Tashkent. The main outcome of the meeting was the signing of a trilateral protocol establishing the agreed water release volumes and schedules from the Toktogul reservoir for the following two months.

The Kazakh delegation was led by Yerlan Akkenjenov, Minister of Energy, and Nurjan Nurjigitov, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation. Kyrgyzstan was represented by Taalaybek Ibraev, Minister of Energy, while the Uzbek delegation included Jurabek Mirzamaxmudov, Minister of Energy, and Shavkat Khamraev, Minister of Water Resources.

The key issue on the agenda was ensuring an adequate water supply for the southern regions during the growing season. The signing of the protocol guarantees adherence to the agreed water release schedule for the Toktogul Hydropower Plant (HPP), reducing uncertainty for farmers at the beginning of the irrigation season. This will enable agricultural producers in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to carry out the initial stages of irrigation smoothly and efficiently.

² <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/energo/press/news/details/1215889?lang=ru>



To ensure a stable water supply throughout the remainder of the agricultural season, the parties agreed to adopt a phased approach. The next in-person meeting of the heads of the relevant agencies is scheduled for mid-June in Bishkek. During that meeting, the participants will finalize the water release schedules and agree on the volumes to be discharged during the critical irrigation months of July, August, and September.

The signing of the protocol reaffirms the effectiveness of the regional mechanism for coordinating and balancing shared water and energy resources among the participating states.

Uzbekistan–Kyrgyzstan Joint Commission on Water Management Holds Regular Meeting³

On 15 May 2026, the 8th meeting of the Joint Commission on Water Management between the Ministry of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Water Resources Service under the Ministry of Water Resources, Agriculture and Processing Industry of the Kyrgyz Republic was held in Namangan, Uzbekistan.

The meeting focused on promoting the efficient and sustainable use of shared water resources, strengthening bilateral cooperation, and implementing agreed measures on water allocation for the growing season 2026.

The Uzbek delegation was led by Shavkat Khamraev, Minister of Water Resources, and included representatives of relevant ministries and government agencies.



³ Source://gov.uz/uz/suvchi/news/view/166291

The Kyrgyz delegation was led by Almazbek Jinaliyev, Deputy Minister of Water Resources, Agriculture, and Processing Industry of the Kyrgyz Republic and Director of the Water Resources Service.



The parties emphasized that the strong spirit of friendship and mutual trust between the leaders of the two countries continues to strengthen bilateral relations, which are founded on the principles of good-neighborliness, mutual respect, and mutual trust.



The parties noted that the sincere friendship and fraternal ties between the leaders of the two countries continue to play a vital role in advancing bilateral relations, strengthening mutual trust, and fostering good-neighborly cooperation.

They also emphasized that practical cooperation in water management remains one of the key pillars of the strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Such cooperation contributes to the rational and efficient use of shared water resources, promotes regional stability, and further strengthens mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.

During the meeting, the parties reviewed the progress made in implementing previously reached agreements and noted the steady advancement of joint efforts aimed at the operation, conservation, and rehabilitation of water infrastructure.

In particular, the parties noted that, in line with the previously reached agreements, the Uzbek side had completed a number of infrastructure projects. These included dredging and rehabilitating a 5-kilometer section of the Dustlik canal located in Jalal-Abad province of the Kyrgyz Republic; dredging an 8.7-kilometer section of the PSHS collector using specialized equipment; repair and rehabilitation works on the Khila, Kampirobod, and Savoy canals; and lining a 3.9-kilometer section of the canal with concrete. These measures were recognized as a significant contribution to practical bilateral cooperation in the water sector.

The participants also welcomed the positive progress achieved in cooperation on the transboundary management and use of the Kosansoy (Orto-Tokoy) reservoir.

The meeting addressed issues related to the cross-border movement of personnel, vehicles, and specialized equipment of water management organizations to facilitate repair and rehabilitation works at water management facilities located in the border area.

The participants also discussed the operation of the Kosansoy (Orto-Tokoy) reservoir, the use of the Dustlik pumping station, and ongoing concrete lining works on the Pakhtaobod canal.

The parties reviewed and approved the plans and schedules for the rational use and distribution of shared water resources between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan for the current year.

It was emphasized that these plans will serve as the basis for regulating water supply, distribution, and use throughout the growing season.

The parties agreed to strictly comply with the approved schedules, maintain continuous monitoring of water distribution, and ensure prompt coordination among the relevant authorized water management organizations.

The meeting also included a discussion of the draft Regional Program for the Implementation of Water-Saving Technologies in the Aral Sea Basin Countries for the period 2026–2036.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, water-saving technologies have been adopted on 2.6 mln ha of agricultural land, accounting for nearly 60% of the country's irrigated area. Plans are in place to expand this coverage to 3.5 mln ha, or 80% of irrigated land, by 2028. In the Kyrgyz Republic, water-saving technologies were implemented on 2,369 ha during 2024–2025, with a further 5,270 ha planned for coverage in 2026.

The parties highlighted the broad implementation of water-saving technologies in the Republic of Uzbekistan and stressed the importance of continuing efforts in this area. The Kyrgyz side also noted the gradual expansion of water-saving technologies in its territory, including the wider adoption of drip and sprinkler irrigation systems. In addition, it proposed the establishment of a regional center in Bishkek dedicated to the promotion of energy-efficient and resource-saving technologies.

The meeting also addressed the participation of a delegation from the Kyrgyz Republic in the World Water Saving Forum, scheduled to be held in Samarkand in late September 2026.

The parties emphasized the importance of high-level participation in this international event and highlighted the value of exchanging experience in the fields of modern water-saving technologies, efficient water management, and the advancement of regional cooperation within the framework of the forum.

Following the meeting, the parties agreed to further strengthen cooperation in water management, ensure the timely and full implementation of existing agreements, and hold the ninth meeting of the Joint Commission in the Kyrgyz Republic during the upcoming growing season.

Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan Discussed Water Supply Issues in Turkistan Province⁴

Nurjan Nurjigitov, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, participated in a meeting of representatives from the water and energy agencies of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan focused on coordinating the operation regime of the Bakhri-Tojik reservoir for the period from June to August 2026.

The meeting was also attended by Daler Juma, Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan; Shavkat Khamraev, Minister of Water Resources of Uzbekistan; and Jurabek Mirzamakhmudov, Minister of Energy of Uzbekistan.

During the discussions, the parties presented proposals on the reservoir's operation regime for the upcoming growing season. Under the proposed arrangements, water will be supplied through the Dostyk interstate canal to support the irrigation needs of farmers in the Maktaaral and Zhetysai districts of the Turkestan province.

Following the meeting, the participants exchanged views and agreed to continue consultations on the remaining provisions of the draft joint protocol.

Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan Agree on the Operation Schedule for the Bakhri-Tojik Reservoir for Summer 2026⁵

On 26 May 2026, Nurjan Nurjigitov, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation of the Republic of Kazakhstan; Daler Juma, Minister of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan; and Shavkat Khamraev, Minister of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan agreed on the operation regime for the Bakhri-Tojik reservoir for the period from June to August 2026.

Following the meeting, the parties signed a trilateral protocol. In accordance with the approved operation regime for the Bakhri-Tojik reservoir, water will be supplied during the summer season to support farmers in Maktaaral and Zhetysai districts of Turkistan province in Kazakhstan.

⁴ Source: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/water/press/news/details/1221848?lang=ru>

⁵ Source: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/water/press/news/details/1228049?lang=ru>



Meeting of the Heads of Water Management and Energy Agencies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan⁶

On 20 June 2026, a regular meeting of the heads of water and energy agencies of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Republic of Uzbekistan was held in Bishkek to discuss issues of water and energy cooperation.

The Kazakh delegation was represented by Nurzhan Nurjigitov, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, and S. Zharkeshov, Deputy Minister of Energy. The Kyrgyz delegation was led by A. Rysbekov, Minister of Energy of the Kyrgyz Republic. Uzbekistan was represented by Sh. Khamraev, Minister of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan.



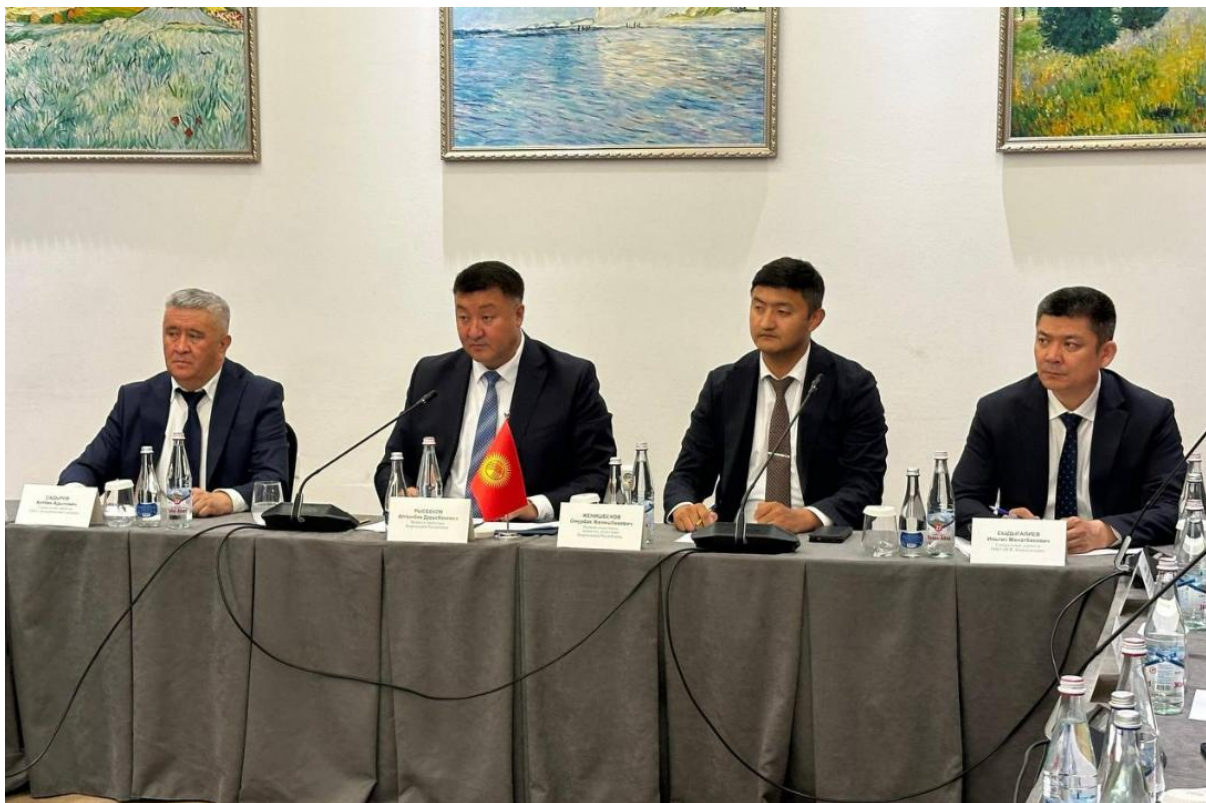
During the meeting, the parties reviewed the current water and energy situation in the region and agreed on specific measures to ensure the required water releases during the growing season, as well as the mutual supply of electricity. Following the discussions, the parties signed the relevant protocol.

⁶ Source: <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/water/press/news/details/1244638?lang=ru>

The parties noted the favorable hydrological conditions in the region and expressed confidence that the growing season 2026 would be successfully completed for all parties.

The parties agreed to hold their next meeting in August 2026.







International and Regional Events

Integrated Transboundary Water Management and the Water Convention in Cameroon

On 28-30 April, Yaoundé, Republic of Cameroon hosted two pivotal events: a national workshop to launch the implementation of the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), and a regional capacity-building seminar on integrated transboundary water management for Central African nations. These sessions were designed to strengthen the expertise of state actors and stakeholders in international water law, transboundary water cooperation, and the practical application of the 1992 Water Convention within the Central African context.



Over three days, participants engaged in discussions covering: strategic and legal frameworks of transboundary cooperation; foundations and fundamental elements of international water law; the role of the 1992 Water Convention; compliance monitoring, dispute resolution, and the functions of the Implementation Committee; negotiation strategies for water agreements and institutional frameworks; tools and guidelines for drafting and operationalizing agreements; integrating the climate agenda into transboundary water cooperation; financing mobilization; regional perspectives on accelerating transboundary cooperation in Central Africa.

A key highlight was the exchange of experiences regarding accession to the Convention and the initial steps of national-level implementation across Africa. Discussions touched upon the current status of regional agreements, the challenges of moving from "paper" agreements to actual enforcement, and prac-

tical tools for treaty preparation. The level of engagement underscored a shift in interest from purely legal obligations toward application: negotiating processes, interagency coordination, effective institutional designs, and aligning international commitments with the immediate needs of specific countries and basins.

Dr. Dinara Ziganshina participated in the event in her capacity as Chair of the Implementation Committee of the Water Convention. She delivered a keynote on the fundamentals of international water law and detailed the role of the Implementation Committee as a non-confrontational, consultative mechanism. She emphasized its mission to support states in meeting their obligations, foster a deeper understanding of procedural and institutional requirements, and develop practical pathways for implementation.



Cameroon: The Transboundary Water Context. The timing of these events in Cameroon is particularly significant. While the country possesses vast water resources, they are unevenly distributed: the north and northeast are far more vulnerable to water stress than the humid southern regions. Cameroon spans several transboundary basins, including the Senegal, Lake Chad, Niger, and Congo, as well as various coastal catchments. Current challenges include: spatial disparity of water resources, exacerbating northern vulnerability; escalating climate risks, specifically droughts and floods; water quality degradation from agricultural runoff, industrial waste, and untreated wastewater; the need for more robust coordination between national authorities, local structures, and transboundary institutions. In the Lake Chad Basin, water issues are inextricably linked to regional stability, livelihoods, migration, and security. To bolster its legal and institutional framework, Cameroon acceded to both the 1992 Water

Convention and the 1997 Watercourses Convention in 2022.

A case of particular interest was the Sanaga River, Cameroon's primary hydroelectric artery. The 420 MW **Nachtigal Amont** project, located near Yaoundé, has provided approximately 30% of the nation's energy since 2025. As the country's largest hydropower plant, it is a cornerstone of national energy security. For Central Asian observers, the project serves as a prime example of a large-scale water-energy asset realized through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and international financing, involving the Government of Cameroon, EDF, IFC, Africa50, STOA, and other financial institutions.

Nachtigal has earned global acclaim, including the 2018 PFI Global Multilateral Deal of the Year and the 2024 Best Energy Project award at the Africa Investments Forum. However, the project also demonstrates that large-scale hydropower requires more than engineering and financial prowess; it demands sophisticated basin management, environmental flow considerations, community engagement, and transparent grievance/compensation mechanisms.

Key Conclusions and Takeaways

- **Demand for applied international water law:** There is a strong regional appetite for practical guidance on how substantive norms, procedural duties, and institutional mechanisms interact. Participants valued "lived" examples -such as notification procedures, data exchange, impact assessments, and joint bodies - over abstract theory. The Water Convention is increasingly viewed as a tool for risk mitigation and trust-building. Notable interest was shown in the Implementation Committee's advisory role, specifically regarding Côte d'Ivoire's request for advice in its relations with Ghana concerning water quality.
- **The data gap:** The lack of reliable monitoring and information systems remains a sensitive bottleneck for Central Africa. Participants stressed that a deficit in comparable, regularly updated, and mutually recognized hydrological data hinders joint planning. This "information poverty" undermines flood/drought warnings, infrastructure planning, and overall trust between basin states.
- **Lessons from joint bodies:** Discussions highlighted the diverse institutional landscapes in Central and West Africa: ABAKIR (Kagera River Basin Commission) - a vital coordinating body, notable for the fact that water infrastructure remained protected from attack even during periods of armed tension between member states; Niger Basin Authority (NBA) - praised for its high level of legal detail, specifically its five annexes to the Niger Water Charter; CICOS (Congo-Ubangi-Sangha) - demonstrated the importance of sustainable mechanisms for balancing navigation, usage, and protection; Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) - highlighted as a

body whose mandate transcends.

- **Water financing and the economic value of water.** The discussions placed a strategic focus on water financing, the economic value of water, and the urgent need for more resilient financial mechanisms to operationalize transboundary water agreements and basin-wide programs. Participants emphasized that legal obligations and institutional frameworks alone cannot guarantee practical results without the backing of long-term, predictable funding. In this context, various resource mobilization strategies were examined, including the use of national budgets, climate finance, international financial institutions (IFIs), donor-led initiatives, and public-private partnerships (PPP). For both Central African and Central Asian nations, this issue is of particular importance as they seek to move away from fragmented, project-based funding toward more systemic models. Such models are essential for the sustained support of basin organizations, joint initiatives, and integrated information-analytical systems.
- **The nexus between water, climate, security, and development.** A recurring theme throughout the three-day event was the deepening nexus between the water agenda, climate change, security, ecosystem resilience, and long-term development. The discussions underscored that transboundary water cooperation is increasingly viewed not merely as a legal or technical matter, but as a vital instrument for enhancing climate resilience, preventing conflict, protecting ecosystems, mobilizing investment, and strengthening regional stability. Participants placed particular emphasis on the need to integrate climate risks, adaptation measures, nature-based solutions (NbS), and sustainable financial mechanisms into transboundary agreements, basin programs, and national strategies. This conclusion carries significant practical weight for Central Asia, where sustainable water cooperation demands a holistic approach – one that simultaneously balances legal obligations, climate risks, energy interests, ecosystem requirements, and socio-economic development.

5th Istanbul Water Forum

The 5th Istanbul Water Forum was held in Istanbul on 5–6 May 2026 under the overarching theme of strengthening water sustainability and moving from innovation to practical action. The Forum brought together representatives of governments, international organizations, river basin institutions, the scientific and expert community, financial institutions, and civil society to discuss key chal-

lenges on the global and regional water agenda.

Director of SIC ICWC, D. Ziganshina, participated in the Forum and delivered a presentation on inclusive water dialogue, partnership, trust, and the role of information systems in strengthening cooperation.



In her presentation, she emphasized that, for Central Asia, data sharing and the introduction of modern technologies are not only matters of digitalization, but also essential elements in building a culture of cooperation. Particular attention was paid to the need to create favorable conditions for data exchange at both national and regional levels, including the development of modern monitoring systems, improved data comparability and reliability, joint management of information platforms, and strengthened professional trust among institutions and expert communities.

It was noted that data alone cannot solve problems if the legal, institutional, technical, and human capacities necessary for its effective use are lacking. Therefore, information systems should be viewed not only as technological tools, but also as mechanisms for fostering trust, transparency, and shared responsibility for the future of water resources.

In addition, D. Ziganshina participated in a session dedicated to preparations for the 11th World Water Forum, where she briefed participants on progress under Theme 4, “Water Governance and Diplomacy.” In her presentation, she outlined the current progress of the thematic process, identified key areas for further coordination, and emphasized the importance of aligning efforts among regional and global water initiatives.

A session on financing the water sector attracted particular interest during the forum. Participants discussed new approaches to mobilizing financial resources, including restructuring countries’ debt obligations under more favora-

ble terms and redirecting the resulting savings toward socially significant and water management projects. Initiatives aimed at engaging corporations, charitable organizations, and innovative platforms in advancing the water agenda were also presented.

Notable examples included UNOPS’s “Blueing the Black Sea” initiative, which seeks to combat water pollution through innovative solutions, as well as findings from the AIIB report *Where Water Flows*, highlighting investment opportunities in the water sector, including financing for nature-based infrastructure. Discussions also underscored the transboundary and interregional interlinkages of hydrological and climatic processes: changes occurring in one region, including Turkey and the Black Sea basin, may influence precipitation patterns, water regimes, and climatic conditions in other regions, including Russia and Central Asia.

An important outcome of the Forum was its role as a platform for coordinating preparations for several major international water events: the 2026 UN Water Conference in UAE, the 11th World Water Forum in Riyadh in March 2027, and the IWRA World Water Congress in Istanbul in 2027. This approach positioned the Istanbul Forum not as a standalone event, but as an important step toward shaping a more coherent, action-oriented, and inclusive global water agenda.

Participation in the 5th Istanbul Water Forum provided an opportunity to share Central Asia’s experience in water diplomacy, data exchange, and regional cooperation, while also contributing to discussions on future international processes aimed at strengthening water security, sustainable development, and cooperation at all levels.

Roundtable on “Water Diplomacy and Opportunities for Regional Cooperation”

On 1 May, a roundtable discussion titled “Water Diplomacy and Opportunities for Regional Cooperation” was held at the National Research University “Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers” (TI-IAME). The event, initiated by the “People’s Diplomats” Club under the SCO Center for Public Diplomacy in Uzbekistan, brought together young scientists, water experts, and students to discuss innovative approaches to transboundary water management in Central Asia.



The roundtable was opened by Dr. Prof. Abdulkhakim Salokhiddinov, Vice Rector of TIAME, and Kobiljon Sobirov, Director of the SCO Center for Public Diplomacy in Uzbekistan. The discussion featured leading experts, including Iskandar Abdullaev, Senior Researcher at the Central Asian Office of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), and Fazilat Abdullaeva, Head of the Training Center of SIC ICWC.

The speakers emphasized that currently water resources have become an issue of strategic importance and security. For Central Asia, effective and equitable water management remains a key foundation for interstate stability and sustainable development.

During the discussion, participants highlighted several key issues:

- **Institutional framework:** The importance of implementing international legal mechanisms and applying modern scientific approaches to water management.
- **Role of public diplomacy:** Kobiljon Sobirov underlined the significance of water diplomacy in strengthening mutual trust among the countries of the region and presented the environmental initiatives of the SCO Center for Public Diplomacy.
- **Scientific potential of youth:** Participants discussed opportunities for launching joint educational programs aimed at training a new generation

of experts on water diplomacy and water negotiations.

The roundtable also served as a platform for presenting practical solutions. Young researchers presented innovative ideas and scientific developments aimed at promoting environmental sustainability and balancing the interests of all countries sharing transboundary river basins.

Outcomes of the UN Global Workshop on the Use of New Technologies and Innovations for Monitoring, Assessment, and Data Sharing in Transboundary Basins

On 5–6 May 2026, a global workshop on the use of advanced technologies and innovations for monitoring, assessment, and data sharing in transboundary river basins was held under the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). The workshop was organized in cooperation with Finland and Senegal, with financial support from the European Union.

The event brought together leading experts and representatives from organizations including GEF IW:LEARN, International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Joint Research Centre (JRC), United Nations Environment Programme’s Global Monitoring for Freshwater Resources (UNEP GEMS/Water), World Bank, and World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Fazilat Abdullaeva represented SIC ICWC at the workshop.

In her presentation “Creating Enabling Conditions for Data Exchange and Technology Adoption in Central Asia,” Ms. Abdullaeva emphasized that sustainable regional data exchange is impossible without strengthening national monitoring systems. She noted that harmonized standards and common analytical products are not merely technical tools, but also a foundation of trust essential for ensuring water security and adapting to climate change.

Participants discussed a number of strategic aspects of water management, including:

- **Gap analysis:** identifying priority monitoring needs in line with SDG 6.5.2;
- **Case studies:** scaling up successful innovative approaches in transboundary river basins;
- **Science–policy dialogue:** overcoming barriers to technology adoption

and attracting investment;

- **Comprehensive approaches:** applying “source-to-sea” principles and the water–energy–food–ecosystem (WEFE) nexus.

During the discussions, participants stressed the importance of implementing technological innovations within integrated basin-wide approaches, including the “source-to-sea” concept, the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus, as well as collaborative water management supported by strong legal and institutional frameworks for cooperation. According to experts, such approaches can help ensure the consistency and long-term sustainability of monitoring and data-sharing systems across both hydrological and political boundaries.



The participants reaffirmed the importance of strengthening regional cooperation, promoting the exchange of knowledge and best practices, and accelerating practical implementation.

The outcomes of the workshop will contribute to preparations for the 2026 UN Water Conference (UAE, 2–4 December 2026), particularly within the framework of Interactive Dialogue D (“Water for Cooperation”) and Interactive Dialogue F (“Investments for Water”).

Participation of SIC ICWC in the 21st Meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment under the UN Water Convention

On 7 May, the 21st meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment under the United Nations Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Fazilat Abdullaeva represented SIC ICWC at the meeting.

During the session, participants discussed strategic initiatives for the 2025–2026 period, with particular focus on the following areas:

- **Preparations for the 2026 UN Water Conference:** Participants reviewed preparations for the Conference to be held in UAE in December 2026, in particular for the interactive dialogue “Water for Cooperation.”

- **Global monitoring and reporting:** Participants analyzed progress under the fourth reporting cycle for SDG 6.5.2 on transboundary water cooperation. Particular attention was paid to the implementation of innovative monitoring and data-sharing technologies discussed during the recent global workshop.

- **Methodological support:** The meeting reviewed the draft publication Policy Guidance Note on Conjunctive Water Management in Transboundary Basins.

The agenda also included the approval of the report from the previous meeting and the collection of comments on the draft publication Policy Guidance Note on Conjunctive Water Management in Transboundary Basins.

Representatives of the countries across the region shared their experiences in implementing SDG 6.5.2. While acknowledging the progress achieved, delegates also highlighted persistent barriers to effective transboundary cooperation, including: (1) the lack of comparable data; and (2) limited financial and technical resources for regular information exchange.

Armenia’s experience was presented as a successful example of regional cooperation. Its systematic approach to monitoring SDG 6.5.2 contributed to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Georgia on cooperation regarding the Khrami-Debed River on 3 December 2025. The agreement established a legal framework for water sharing.

Participants identified several key success factors:

- **Institutional mechanisms:** In 2017, an intersectoral working group was established involving the Ministry of Environment of Armenia and the Center

for Monitoring and Hydrometeorology of Georgia to support monitoring of SDG 6.5.1 and 6.5.2. The mechanism improved data quality and strengthened national coordination.

- **Application of UN methodologies:** Strict adherence to UNECE and UNESCO reporting standards.

- **Technical assistance:** Successful implementation of EU-supported initiatives, including EUWI+ and EU4Environment, contributed to the modernization of laboratories and enabled joint field studies in line with the EU Water Framework Directive.

- **National dialogue platform:** Active use of the UNECE-supported consultation platform facilitated coordination on the technical and legal aspects of cooperation.

The meeting reaffirmed the importance of further harmonizing monitoring methodologies and strengthening technical support to countries in order to advance the objectives of the Water Convention. SIC ICWC continues actively contributing to these efforts, supporting enhanced water cooperation in Central Asia and beyond.

Fourth High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028

From 25 to 28 May 2026, the Fourth High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028 was held in Dushanbe.

The main objective of the Fourth Dushanbe Conference on the Water Decade of Action was to provide a platform for strengthening collective efforts, supporting the implementation of voluntary commitments reflected in the Water Action Agenda of the United Nations Water Conference, fostering new partnerships, and accelerating action toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda.

The conference also aimed to facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovative solutions, strengthen cooperation among stakeholders, enhance the role of water resources in sustainable development, raise awareness, and mobilize political commitment to accelerate progress toward water-related goals under the 2030 Agenda.

The conference was attended by high-level representatives of UN Member States and UN entities, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society organizations, women's and youth groups, indigenous peoples, local communities, local authorities, academic institutions, the scientific community, and other stakeholders.

**Speech by the President of Tajikistan, Leader of the Nation,
His Excellency Emomali Rahmon, at the Fourth High-Level
International Conference on the International Decade for
Action: “Water for Sustainable Development, 2018–2028”**

Dear Excellencies,

Heads of delegations,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to sincerely welcome each of you to the ancient land of Tajikistan!

We are proud that today, within the framework of the Dushanbe Water Process, the Fourth High-Level International Conference on the «International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development, 2018–2028» is being held.

This conference will help to shape our shared commitment to strengthen cooperation and accelerate action to address one of the most pressing issues of our time.

We highly appreciate your active participation and contribution to advancing the global water agenda

Dear participants,

In recent years, Tajikistan has taken a series of practical measures to place water at the center of the international development agenda.

In this regard, our country has made continuous efforts through its initiatives in the field of water, which have always been supported by the United Nations General Assembly.

At the heart of our efforts is the issue of improving the status and value of water, the invaluable resource of life.

Tajikistan continues to advocate for a balanced, inclusive, and results-oriented approach.

The proclamation of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sus-

tainable Development” stands as a clear testament to our collective efforts in this direction.

Moreover, the successful holding of the historic United Nations Water Conference in 2023, hosted by Tajikistan and the Netherlands, clearly demonstrated the need for global commitments to accelerate actions on water.



Within the framework of the Dushanbe Water Process, we continue our efforts to create an inclusive and transparent international platform, and today, this conference, as a tradition, brings together governments and other stakeholders from around the world to advance the implementation of water-related commitments.

It should be recognized that despite the progress made on water, the world still faces a number of challenges that continue to impede progress toward the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6.

Billions of people currently lack access to safe drinking water and sanitation services, with nearly 4 billion people experiencing severe water shortages for at least one month each year.

Current trends indicate that these challenges will intensify significantly in the future.

According to new expert research, the world's demand for drinking water will increase by at least 25 percent by 2050, requiring the production of 50 percent more food for the growing population.

At the same time, almost half of the world's urban population will face water shortages.

New and rapidly growing sectors, including "green" industries, urban development, food production, and digital infrastructure, will further increase water demand.

These trends redouble the need for a transition to water-efficient technologies, efficient resource management, and better coordination of water, energy, and food policies.

Moreover, the impact of climate change, including droughts, floods, rapid glacier melting, and rising sea levels, is further exacerbating the current situation.

This reality continues to place additional pressure on already fragile systems.

These indicators are not mere predictions but a serious warning and a call to action for each of us.

Dear participants,

To address related problems, Tajikistan is also taking necessary measures at the national and regional levels.

Under the Water Sector Reform Program, the legal and institutional framework for the phased implementation of integrated water resources management has been significantly strengthened, and key infrastructure has been modernized, which is already improving the efficiency and sustainability of water use.

To accelerate progress toward the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 in our country, the National Water Strategy for the Period up to 2040 and the State Program for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation for 2025–2029 have been adopted.

These documents identify long-term priorities and specific measures for the development of the water sector.

We intend to ensure the full implementation of integrated water resources management at the national and basin levels by 2030, and to establish a modern, science-based, sustainable, and efficient system.

Simultaneously, we are committed to ensuring access to centralized water supply for at least 90 percent of the population by 2040.

Through this measure, we are determined to guarantee access to clean drinking water for every citizen.

At the same time, Tajikistan plans to scale up water-saving technologies by more than forty times, making the efficient use of this invaluable resource a key tool for climate change adaptation.

Furthermore, we aim to extend the digitalization of water management to 80 percent by 2040, thereby ensuring transparency, efficiency, and sustainability of related decision-making.

Dear friends,

We attach particular importance to the development of transboundary cooperation in the water sector.

We will continue to strive to further strengthen trust, partnership, and constructive dialogue in Central Asia on addressing critical water issues.

Tajikistan views the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea as a helpful regional platform for discussing and resolving a range of water issues for sustainable development.

In this regard, and taking into account the current challenges and needs of the countries of the region, we support the structural improvement of this Fund and the establishment of an Interstate Energy Commission for Central Asia within its framework.

This commission could serve as an important tool for strengthening regional cooperation and ensuring sustainable development of the Aral Sea basin.

Dear audience,

In recent years, the International Decade for Action on Water and the Water Action Agenda have provided a solid foundation for addressing water-related challenges.

Nevertheless, we continue to encounter significant obstacles in tackling these challenges for the well-being of the planet both now and in the future.

To overcome these obstacles, significant initiatives are being taken around the world at the national, regional, and global levels, which should strengthen unity and cooperation on water.

In this regard, we require balanced, effective, and inclusive efforts that encompass our shared interests.

Tajikistan believes that in order to expand these efforts and implement them, there is a need to move to a new stage of global cooperation in the water sector.

In this regard, we propose the establishment of a “Dushanbe Water Framework.”

This framework can strengthen ongoing processes on water and provide a favorable basis for coordination and integration of joint efforts to achieve practical results.

Dear audience,

We are approaching the concluding phase of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development.”

It is necessary to start thinking now about the global water agenda after 2030.

Our actions in this direction should be built on the achievements of the Decade, the Water Action Agenda, and the experience of the Dushanbe Water Process, and should be directed at addressing the growing challenges related to water.

I would like to recall that we are preparing to host a series of important global water summits, including the United Nations Water Conference in 2026 and the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in 2027.

Concurrently, in 2028, the city of Dushanbe will serve as the host for the United Nations Water Conference, concluding the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development.”

I believe that the results of these conferences will contribute to the formation of the World Water Agenda after 2030.

In this process, achieving practical results, sustainable financing, water policy integration with climate and energy, food and environmental systems, as well as strengthening regional and international cooperation should be key themes of the New Water Agenda.

In this context, the “Dushanbe Water Framework” will become the engine for promoting the post-2030 World Water Agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our success on this path depends, above all, on reliable cooperation, a shared understanding of problems, and finding solutions to them.

Let us seize the opportunities of today’s conference as a turning point in addressing water issues.

We all have an important shared responsibility: to manage the planet’s invaluable treasure, namely water resources, wisely and effectively for present and future generations

Dear audience,

In conclusion, I would like to announce that we have established the International Water Award of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan with the aim of promoting and strengthening water diplomacy and uniting the efforts of the international community for a sustainable and secure future.

This award is intended to recognize outstanding contributions to the development of international cooperation, scientific research, sustainable water policy, and the promotion of effective solutions to global water problems.

At the same time, we decided to establish the International Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna) Award in Medicine.

This award, in line with Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 6, aims to recognize outstanding contributions and achievements in the development of international cooperation, scientific achievements, and the promotion of sustainable policies in the aforementioned areas.

Thank you for your attention.

SIC ICWC Participation in the Conference

A Dialogue on Transboundary Waters “International Law and Solutions to Regional Water Challenges: Focus on Central Asia”

On 23 May 2026, a Dialogue on Transboundary Waters titled “International Law and Solutions to Regional Water Challenges: Focus on Central Asia” was held in Dushanbe. The event took place at the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan as part of the Blue Peace Central Asia initiative. It brought together representatives of basin organizations, national agencies, as well as academic and expert communities from across the region.

The SIC ICWC served as one of the co-organizers of the Dialogue, with support from the IKI project “Regional Mechanism for a Low-Carbon and Climate -Resilient Transformation of the Energy-Water-Land Nexus in Central Asia (IKI-Nexus) The Center also played an active role in shaping the substantive program of the event.

During the session on freshwater systems in international water law and multilateral environmental agreements, D. Ziganshina presented a report on sur-

face water management from the perspective of international law. The presentation addressed key principles such as equitable and reasonable use, prevention of significant harm, data exchange, notification and consultation procedures, environmental impact assessment, ecosystem protection, and the role of joint institutions.



Particular attention was given to the understanding that surface waters—including rivers, tributaries, lakes, wetlands, floodplains, and deltas—function as interconnected hydrological systems. In this context, international law was presented as a practical tool for fostering a sustainable culture of interstate cooperation, reconciling interests, supporting informed decision-making, and preventing disputes.



The SIC ICWC also presented publications based on the results of a study of the Amu Darya River basin ecosystems, conducted with support from GIZ as part of the basin dialogues. In particular, the materials provide detailed information on the participating countries' implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, the conservation of wetlands, and the development of specially protected natural areas as key elements of sustainable transboundary basin management.

During the second session, regional examples of the practical implementation of transboundary water cooperation were presented. In particular, Bakhrom Gaforzoda, Head of the Secretariat of the National Commission on Irrigation and Drainage under the Agency for Land Reclamation and Irrigation of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, delivered a presentation on the development and modernization of water management infrastructure. Among other topics, he discussed the feasibility study prepared for the Vangi–Torukh project (Isfara River), which was carried out with support from the IKI-Nexus project, highlighting the importance of such studies in enhancing the sustainability and efficiency of water management infrastructure.

The Dialogue also featured regional case studies on the development and modernization of water management infrastructure, the protection of mountain ecosystems, the prevention of land degradation, and issues related to groundwater. Following the discussions, participants emphasized the need to further strengthen the practical knowledge and skills of basin-level specialists.

Forum “Frontiers of Transboundary Cooperation: Innovations and Actions for Water for Sustainable Development”

On 25 May 2026, a pre-conference forum titled “Frontiers of Transboundary Cooperation: Innovations and Actions for Water for Sustainable Development” was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

The event focused on practical solutions to strengthen transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia, including adaptation to climate change, digitalization of the water sector, development of basin organizations, water conservation, improvement of data systems, and the region’s engagement in the global water agenda.

SIC ICWC participated in the pre-conference forum with the support of the IKI project “Regional Mechanisms for a Low-Carbon and Climate-Resilient Transformation of the Energy-Water-Land Nexus in Central Asia (IKI-Nexus). Representatives of SIC ICWC took part in discussions on regional cooperation, digital transformation in the water sector, basin-level coordination, and the promotion of Central Asian experience in global water forums.

The first session featured a high-level dialogue among water sector leaders from Central Asian countries. Participants discussed priorities of transboundary water cooperation, measures for adapting to climate change, the development of digital tools, and ways to enhance the effectiveness of river basin organizations.

N. Nurzhigitov, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation of the Republic of Kazakhstan spoke about the development of the water information system, ongoing water conservation measures, and the importance of fostering a culture of water-saving through educational and awareness-raising initiatives. He also emphasized the importance of joint regional solutions. In particular, with the support of GIZ, ten gauging stations are currently being automated in transboundary sites between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

D. Shoimzoda, Deputy Minister of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan, outlined priority areas for joint work, including improving the operations of the IFAS, developing the region’s hydropower potential, mobilizing investments for water management organizations, digitalization of the BWO Amu Darya and BWO Syr Darya, as well as strengthening scientific and educational capacity in the water sector.



Sh. Khamraev, Minister of Water Management of the Republic of Uzbekistan, presented Uzbekistan's experience in implementing water-saving measures, advancing digitalization, and consistent reforms in the water sector in recent years. Particular attention was paid to the transfer of the IFAS chairmanship to Uzbekistan, the implementation of the Decade of Action for Sustainable Water Management 2026–2036, and the need to make regional water cooperation more sustainable, modern, and predictable.

A. Dzhailoubaev, Deputy Director of the Water Resources Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, emphasized the importance of moving from legal and diplomatic discussions to practical measures based on science-driven and results-oriented initiatives. He highlighted the need to establish strong national-level water governance as a foundation for effective regional cooperation, as well as the Kyrgyz Republic's responsible and predictable engagement in international water relations. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of pragmatic, science-based, and sensitive dialogue on key issues of regional water cooperation.

The next session focused on Central Asia's engagement in global water processes and was moderated by the Director of SIC ICWC, D. Ziganshina, co-coordinator of the "Water Governance and Diplomacy" theme at the 11th World Water Forum. The discussion focused on how Central Asia's experience in transboundary water cooperation can be effectively presented on the global water agenda, including the UN 2026 Water Conference, the 11th World Water Forum, the World Bank's Water Forward initiative, and other international pro-

cesses.

During the session, participants emphasized that Central Asia has accumulated significant experience in water sharing, operation of basin organizations, data development, and the strengthening of legal and institutional frameworks. Additional areas highlighted included climate change adaptation and the search for a balanced approach between water, energy, food, and environmental. It was noted that this experience can make an important contribution to global discussions on water cooperation, sustainability, and conflict prevention.

Participation of SIC ICWC in the pre-conference forum is also linked to its role in coordinating Theme 4, “Water Governance and Diplomacy,” as part of the preparations for the 11th World Water Forum. In this context, the pre-conference forum served as an important platform for discussing which regional practices, lessons, and proposals from Central Asia could be integrated into international processes and presented to a broader global audience.



During the World Bank’s session on digitalization for a sustainable water economy and decision-support tools, SIC ICWC presented its work on developing modeling and analytical approaches for water assessment and scenario planning. In particular, the presentation highlighted the results and potential applications of the WEAP и LEAP models, as well as the modeling and decision-support tools being developed under the IKI Nexus project. These include optimization and simulation models for hydropower cascade operations, flow distribution systems, and tools for assessing water-energy coordination scenarios.

Subsequent sessions of the pre-conference forum addressed issues related to the water sector's adaptation to climate change and water scarcity, digitalization for a sustainable water economy, institutional cooperation, and basin-level coordination. Particular attention was paid to water accounting, monitoring, modeling, forecasting, and decision-support systems, as well as to both formal and informal cooperation mechanisms at the basin level.

Following the discussions, participants noted the need to further strengthen regional dialogue, develop digital and science-based tools, support basin organizations, expand education and awareness-raising programs on water conservation, and more actively promote Central Asia's experience within the global water agenda.

SIC ICWC will continue promoting expert and intergovernmental dialogue, building the capacity of regional institutions, and advancing practical solutions for sustainable and predictable transboundary water cooperation in Central Asia.

Forum "Nexus Approach in Central Asian Region – Science – Policy - Practice"

On 25 May 2026, the Institute of Water Problems, Hydropower and Ecology of the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan hosted the thematic forum "NEXUS Approach in Central Asian Region: Science-Policy-Practice" in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The event was organized as part of the 4th High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018–2028.

The Forum was organized by the Centre for Sustainable Solutions with Practical Hydrogeology (CSSPH, United Kingdom) in close cooperation with the Agency for Land Reclamation and Irrigation and the Head Department for Geology of the Republic of Tajikistan. The event was co-chaired and coordinated by Shammie Puri, Director of CSSPH; Anatoly Krutov, International Consultant on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM); Bakhrom Gaforzoda, Secretary of the National Commission on Irrigation and Drainage of Tajikistan; and Abdumajid Salimov of the Head Department of Geology.

The Forum was moderated by Aminjon Gulakhmadov, Director of the Institute of Water Problems, Hydropower and Ecology.

The plenary session featured keynote presentations by leading international experts, including Sonja Köppel, Secretary of the UNECE Water Conven-

tion (Geneva, Switzerland); Akhdiya Kurbonova, Climate Policy Manager for Central Asia at the British Embassy; John Mark Church of UNECE; and other distinguished experts.

In her presentation, Sonja Köppel highlighted the persistent systemic gap between the management of surface water and groundwater. She emphasized that water systems worldwide are under unprecedented pressure:

- nearly 75% of the global population lives in areas experiencing water insecurity, while many river basins are already operating beyond their hydrological limits.
- Climate change is further disrupting the water cycle, leading to more frequent droughts, floods, and extreme weather events. As a result, hydrological conditions are becoming increasingly unstable and difficult to predict.
- Groundwater currently accounts for approximately 50% of domestic water use and more than 40% of irrigation worldwide. However, it is increasingly being relied upon to compensate for declining surface water resources.
- Surface water and groundwater continue to be managed largely in isolation. Fragmented governance, unregulated abstraction, and the limited application of conjunctive management approaches contribute to resource overexploitation, operational inefficiencies, and heightened systemic risks.
- Only a limited number of transboundary water agreements fully incorporate the principle of integrated surface and groundwater management, underscoring the need for urgent changes.

Ms. Köppel also presented the results of the third reporting cycle for SDG 6.5.2 (2023), which measures the proportion of transboundary waters covered by operational cooperation arrangements. Of the 153 UN Member States that share transboundary waters, only 43 have operational agreements covering 90% or more of their shared rivers, lakes, and aquifers, compared to 30 countries in 2020. More than 20 countries still lack any operational agreements on transboundary waters. The greatest progress has been achieved in Europe, North America, and sub-Saharan Africa, while Latin America and Asia require more intensive efforts to strengthen transboundary water cooperation. Monitoring SDG 6.5.2 since 2017 has generated positive outcomes by encouraging follow-up actions, helping countries identify data gaps, and significantly improving the quality and comprehensiveness of national reports by 2023.

During the Forum, G. Khamdamova, expert from SIC ICWC, delivered a presentation “Science in the Service of Water Policy in Central Asia.” The presentation outlined the Center’s key research findings on integrated water resources management in the transboundary Syr Darya and Amu Darya River basins. Particular attention was paid to the role of scientific evidence, analytical tools, and decision-support systems in shaping regional water policy, including issues related to surface–groundwater interactions and climate change adaptation.



Following the presentations, participants engaged in a panel discussion focused on developing practical recommendations and identifying mechanisms for future action. The discussion revealed broad consensus on several priorities, including the transition from unregulated water use to integrated management of surface water and groundwater, the strengthening of cross-sectoral coordination, and improved transparency and accessibility of data at the transboundary basin level.

The Forum concluded with three key messages:

- Groundwater should be recognized as a strategic, shared, and climate-resilient resource in the Syr Darya and Amu Darya basins;
- Integrated management of surface water and groundwater provides a practical pathway for reducing tensions among irrigation, hydropower generation, and municipal water supply sectors;

- Data transparency, shared modelling platforms, and stronger basin institutions are essential for the cooperative and sustainable management of the region's water resources.

Forum “Women and Water– 2026”

On 25 May 2026, the International Forum “Women and Water – 2026” was held as part of the Fourth High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028. The Forum brought together representatives of governments, international organizations, financial institutions, academia, and civil society to discuss the role of women in water management, climate resilience, and international cooperation. The Scientific-Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (SIC ICWC) was represented by Oygul Usmanova.

The Forum was organized by the Committee on Women and Family Affairs under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan in cooperation with the UN Women Tajikistan.



In her opening remarks, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan Dilrabo Mansuri emphasized that the current water crisis has a distinct gen-

der dimension. Every day, women and children around the world spend an estimated 200 million hours collecting water for household needs - a figure increasingly recognized as an indicator of global social inequality. She stressed that effective responses to global water challenges are impossible without the full engagement of women in decision-making processes and water governance.

Participants noted that the global water crisis, exacerbated by climate change, growing water demand, environmental degradation, and inefficient water management, disproportionately affects women and girls. At the same time, women remain underrepresented in leadership and technical positions within the water sector, despite their significant contribution to community resilience and natural resource management.

The first session of the Forum focused on strengthening women's economic empowerment through improved access to finance, innovation, and modern technologies. Experts discussed climate financing mechanisms, which currently do not virtually integrate gender equality issues, as well as support for women-led initiatives, digital transformation in the water sector, and the use of AI to enhance water management efficiency.

Particular attention was paid to women's participation in water governance and public policymaking. Participants highlighted the need to remove persistent gender barriers, expand leadership opportunities for women, and strengthen their role in decision-making processes at local, national, and international levels.

During the session on women's participation in water governance, Oygul Usmanova, speaking on behalf of the Women in Water Diplomacy Network, presented the findings of a regional assessment of the gender gap in Central Asia's water sector. The study revealed continuing challenges related to women's participation in decision-making, career advancement, and access to professional development opportunities. The findings underscored the need for stronger implementation of gender-responsive policies and expanded opportunities for women professionals across the water sector.

A separate session was devoted to transboundary water cooperation, glacier preservation, scientific collaboration, and social cohesion. Participants emphasized that effective water management requires an integrated approach based on international partnerships, scientific knowledge, and the active engagement of local communities.



A key outcome of the Forum was the adoption of the Dushanbe Declaration on Women and Water, which outlined recommendations for advancing gender equality in the water sector, strengthening women’s participation in decision-making, expanding access to finance and innovation, and enhancing international and regional cooperation on water and climate change. The Forum also officially launched the Women and Water Partnership Network and initiated the development of a joint regional action plan on gender-responsive water governance in Central Asia.

Workshop on “Promoting Collaboration over Shared Waters: Concepts and Approaches for Building Trust and Co-operation”

A workshop “Promoting Collaboration over Shared Waters: Concepts and Approaches for Building Trust and Co-operation” was held in Dushanbe on 22-24 May.

Ahead of the Fourth High-Level International Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028, a workshop “Promoting Collaboration over Shared Waters: Concepts and Ap-

proaches for Building Trust and Co-operation” was held in Dushanbe on 22-24 May.

The workshop was co-organized by the OSCE Office of the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA), the UN University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH), the Blue Peace Central Asia project, and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAR-EC). The event brought together members of the Women in Water Management in Central Asia and Afghanistan Network. Oygul Usmanova and Gulnoza Khamdamova from the Scientific-Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (SIC ICWC) of Central Asia actively participated in the workshop.



The primary goal of the workshop was to equip network members with the tools to leverage evidence-based data for policymaking, foster constructive dialogue, and co-create recommendations for sustainable regional water management.

Experts from UNU-INWEH aligned the workshop's goals with major global milestones, including the upcoming 2026 UN Water Conference. Drawing on case studies from the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Americas, participants explored analytical tools and proven methodologies for international water negotiations.

Interactive sessions led by the OSCE focused on turning dialogue into policy, sharpening participants' skills in active listening, finding common ground, and drafting policy documents.



A core focus was evidence-based policy design. Representatives from CAREC and network members from across Central Asia presented findings from a comprehensive gender assessment funded by Blue Peace Central Asia. SIC ICWC's Oygul Usmanova shared critical insights on addressing the gender gap in Uzbekistan's water sector, spanning from specialized education to high-level decision-making.

The final days focused on action. Working in groups, participants tackled two critical tracks: inclusivity for water security and data sharing to support co-operation.

The concrete outcomes of these sessions - a set of policy messages and recommendations - will be elevated to the global stage, served as inputs for both the Dushanbe Water Conference and the UN Water Conference in December 2026.



The workshop concluded with a reception celebrating Women in Water Diplomacy, hosted by UNU-INWEH in honor of its 30th anniversary. The event gathered network members, government officials, UN representatives, and international experts. Keynote remarks were delivered by the Rector of the UN University and UN Under-Secretary-General, Professor Tshilidzi Marwala, alongside a representative for the Deputy Prime Minister of Tajikistan, Dirlabo Mansuri.

The evening highlighted the workshop's final outputs on data sharing and inclusive water security, capping off a successful week of regional empowerment.

Regional Drought Dialogue “Translating Drought Risk and Resilience Assessment Results into Regional Priorities and an Action Plan”

On 29 May 2026, SIC ICWC participated in the Regional Drought Dialogue “Translating Drought Risk and Resilience Assessment Results into Regional Priorities and an Action Plan” held in Dushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan.

The event was organized by the World Bank under the Central Asia Water and Energy Program (CAWEP) in cooperation with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and regional partners.

Participants included representatives of regional organizations in Central Asia, international projects and programs addressing climate change, drought,

water, and sustainable development issues, as well as specialized research and analytical institutions with regional mandates, development partners, and donor organizations. SIC ICWC was represented by Zulfiya Yarullina.

The dialogue was held immediately following the Dushanbe High-Level Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” 2018–2028, enabling the participation of key regional stakeholders, development partners, and technical organizations already present in Dushanbe.

The Regional Dialogue was organized within the framework of the Drought Risk and Resilience Assessment (DRRA) project. The objective was to promote a regional approach to drought risk assessment, strengthen resilience, and identify common priorities for future action. Unlike national drought dialogues, which focus on country-specific challenges, the regional event addressed issues requiring interstate and interagency coordination.





During the event, participants were presented with a regional drought profile highlighting key trends, major risk factors, and potential areas for regional cooperation. The findings of a long-term assessment of drought impact on the environment, based on data collected across Central Asia, were also shared.

A central component of the dialogue was group work involving representatives of regional organizations and internationally funded projects with a regional focus. These discussions aimed to develop practical proposals for regional cooperation in drought monitoring, information exchange, institutional coordination, financing, capacity building, and joint measures to enhance drought resilience.

As a result of the discussions, participants established a common understanding of regional drought-related challenges, identified priority areas for cooperation, and developed draft proposals for further integrating regional approaches into the DRRA process and related partnership initiatives.



SIC ICWC presented proposals on priority areas of work related to the drought impacts on the region's ecosystems, which are particularly vulnerable to drought conditions. The Center also emphasized the importance of strengthening public awareness of drought risks and their consequences.

Overall, the dialogue provided a solid foundation for enhanced cooperation among regional organizations and international partners working to strengthen drought resilience across Central Asia.

SIC ICWC Participated in the Inception Workshop on the Project “Strengthening Water Resource Governance and Resilience to Climate Change in the Aral Sea Region”

On 26 May 2026, an inception workshop for the Project “Strengthening Water Resource Governance and Resilience to Climate Change in the Aral Sea Region” was held in Tashkent.

The workshop brought together representatives of national and regional government agencies, international organizations, farmer associations, water in-

stitutions, and development partners to discuss approaches to project implementation, expected outcomes, and opportunities for cooperation.



The \$4.6 million initiative is to be implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, with financial support from the Government of Japan. The project aims to strengthen climate-resilient water

management, modernize irrigation infrastructure, introduce digital water monitoring systems, and support sustainable livelihoods in the Aral Sea region.

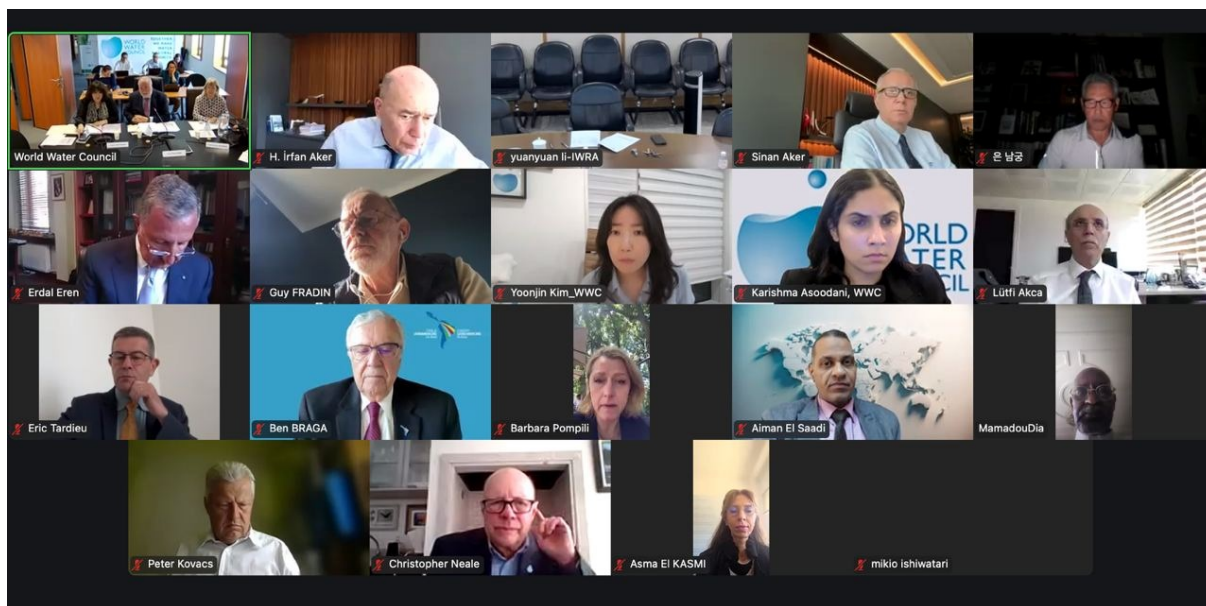
The initiative contributes to the implementation of Uzbekistan’s national priorities outlined in the Concept for the Development of the Water Sector for 2020–2030 and the “Uzbekistan–2030” Strategy. These policy frameworks aim to improve the efficiency of land and water use, modernize water infrastructure, and expand the application of water-saving technologies throughout the country.

The project also supports the broader vision of transforming the Aral Sea region into a hub for environmental innovation and technology through climate change adaptation, digitalization, and sustainable community development.

During the workshop, participants discussed planned activities for 2026, mechanisms of coordination among project partners, and opportunities for strengthening cooperation in support of sustainable and inclusive water management in the region.

The 93rd Board of Governors Meeting of the World Water Council

The 93rd Board of Governors meeting of the World Water Council (WWC) was held online on 3 June 2026.



During the meeting, members of the Board reviewed the Council's current activities and discussed preparations for the 11th World Water Forum, scheduled to take place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2027. Attention was also paid to the upcoming 2nd Stakeholder Consultation Meeting. This meeting represents a key milestone in the preparatory process for the 11th World Water Forum and will be held on 28-29 June 2026, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. It will bring together members of the international water community to shape the Forum's agenda and foster collaboration on joint solutions to pressing global water challenges.

The WWC activity report also highlighted a recent meeting with the Uzbek delegation on the sidelines of an event in Istanbul. Discussions focused on the ways to boost Uzbekistan's engagement with the World Water Council and expand cooperation, in particular through participation in the preparatory process for the 11th World Water Forum, showcasing national and regional expertise in water cooperation and strengthening dialogue with the international water community.

Hydrodiplomatic action through bilateral meetings



With the Uzbek ministerial delegation



With the Minister of Environment of Kosovo

With HE Retno Marsudi, the Minister of Water Resources of Egypt Prof. Dr Sewilam, and HE Deputy Minister El Shaibani



WWC Board Members representing SIC ICWC, D. Ziganshina and O. Usmanova, took part in the meeting.

Inception Workshop of the Central Asia Water and Land Nexus (CAWLN) Programme

On 2-3 June 2026, the Inception Workshop of the Central Asia Water and Land Nexus (CAWLN) Programme was held in Samarkand. This initiative aims at ecosystem restoration, improved natural resource management and increased resilience to external impacts.

The programme is being implemented under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The programme's objective is to promote a transformative approach to transboundary water use at the regional level, as well as to modernize national management practices to foster sustainable agricultural development, conserve biodiversity, and achieve the SDGs. The CAWLN framework comprises seven child projects covering both national and regional levels of cooperation.



The event brought together representatives of relevant government agencies from Central Asian countries, regional organizations, implementing partners, child project coordinators, and international experts. The main purpose of the meeting was to officially launch the Programme, agree on its overall concept, management mechanisms, and monitoring and reporting systems, as well as to identify priorities for the first year of implementation.

The participants discussed the following in detail:

- The Programme framework and GEF requirements regarding the implementation and monitoring;
- Issues related to environmental and social safeguards, gender mainstreaming, and risk management;
- Preparation of annual work plans and budgets, as well as the alignment of performance indicators.

Particular attention was paid to strengthening coordination between the national and regional components of the Programme. Following the meetings, the parties established communication channels and agreed on next steps for launching practical initiatives.

SIC ICWC of Central Asia jointly with UNECE and national consultants from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan is engaged in implementation of the regional project “Strengthening Integrated Water Management in Amu Darya, Zarafshon, and Panj River Basins” specifically Component 1: “Creating an Enabling Environment for Integrated Water and Land Resources Management in the Amu Darya, Zarafshon, and Panj River Basins.”

This Component includes:

1. Preparation of a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and a Strategic Action Program (SAP).
2. Development of National Action Plans (NAPs).
3. Strengthening the capacity of relevant institutions to implement the water-land nexus approach.

A. Galustyan, representative of SIC ICWC, and T. Kutonova, expert from UNECE, delivered a joint presentation in which they outlined the goals, objectives, and expected outcomes of Component 1, as well as the action plan for the first year.

Participation of SIC ICWC in the CAWLN Programme is to contribute largely to the development of regional cooperation, promote further the integrated water management, and enhance environmental resilience of transboundary river basins in Central Asia.

The Second Meeting of the Termez Dialogue on Connectivity between Central and South Asia

On 4 June 2026, Tashkent hosted the second meeting of the Termez Dialogue on Connectivity between Central and South Asia under the theme “Peace, Connectivity and Resilience: Shaping the Foundations of Shared Prosperity.”

The event was as a follow up of Uzbekistan’s efforts to promote interregional cooperation, strengthen trust, and enhance practical connectivity between Central and South Asia. The Dialogue aimed to move beyond conceptual discussions of shared challenges toward identifying practical areas of cooperation capable of delivering tangible benefits for the states, economies, and societies of both regions.

The meeting brought together representatives of government institutions, international and regional organizations, the diplomatic corps, think tanks, expert communities, and development partners. The high level of participation reflected the growing recognition of the Termez Dialogue as an inclusive platform for discussing peace, sustainable development, economic connectivity, climate adaptation, and humanitarian cooperation.



The opening ceremony and plenary session focused on political dialogue and economic connectivity as foundations for sustainable regional development. Participants emphasized that trust does not emerge in the abstract; rather, it is

built through regular dialogue, predictability, practical cooperation, and a shared commitment to stability.

Particular attention was paid to trade, transport, logistics, and energy as key drivers of closer ties between Central and South Asia. Participants noted that pragmatic economic connectivity can help reduce barriers, expand markets, strengthen supply-chain resilience, and create long-term incentives for cooperation among states. Annual trade turnover between Central and South Asian countries has already reached USD 13 billion.

Special attention was also devoted to the role of Afghanistan as a natural bridge between Central and South Asia. Participants stressed that sustainable interregional connectivity cannot be achieved without the gradual integration of Afghanistan into economic, transport, humanitarian, and climate-related processes. Discussions therefore focused not only on Afghanistan's transit potential and market access opportunities but also on the broader objective of creating a framework of practical cooperation, trust, and shared interests in stability around the country. Such an approach allows Afghanistan to be viewed not as a source of risk, but as an essential component of a future architecture of peace, connectivity, and sustainable development linking the two regions.

The first thematic session "Joint Climate Adaptation and Strengthening Environmental Resilience" examined common climate and environmental challenges facing Central and South Asia, their implications for water, food, and energy security, and the need to develop early-warning systems, data-sharing mechanisms, climate finance instruments, and joint adaptation initiatives.

In her presentation, Ms. D.R. Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC of Central Asia, presented the key findings of a study on the climate resilience of water infrastructure in the Syr Darya River Basin. The study was conducted with the support of GIZ and in cooperation with national experts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan within the framework of the Syr Darya Basin Dialogue.

The presentation highlighted that climate change is revealing a new level of interdependence among regions, with water, energy, food, and environmental security becoming increasingly interconnected. Using the Syr Darya River Basin as an example, she emphasized that resilience depends not merely on individual infrastructure but on the coordinated functioning of the entire system—including infrastructure, data, forecasting capabilities, operational rules, digital monitoring, and interstate coordination. In this context, climate adaptation should be viewed as part of a broader agenda aimed at strengthening regional stability, trust, and practical interdependence.

The second thematic session focused on cultural and humanitarian cooperation as a foundation for trust and mutual understanding. Participants dis-

cussed the role of education, science, culture, youth exchanges, tourism, and human capital development in strengthening societal ties between Central and South Asia. It was underscored that economic initiatives require a strong social and humanitarian underpinning, and that sustainable cooperation cannot be achieved without mutual knowledge, respect, and trust among societies.

At the conclusion of the meeting, participants noted that the Termez Dialogue is emerging as an important platform for integrating the political, economic, climate, and humanitarian dimensions of interregional cooperation. Its unique value lies in providing a venue not only for discussing long-term strategic objectives but also for identifying practical mechanisms for their implementation.

A key takeaway from the event was that building trust remains the central challenge for both Central and South Asia. In this regard, the most effective instruments for fostering trust are pragmatic cooperation, economic connectivity, joint risk management, and concrete projects that generate mutual benefits while reinforcing a shared space of peace, resilience, and prosperity.

Seminar for a Regional Working Group on Water Quality

On 3-4 June 2026, in Shymkent, Republic of Kazakhstan, representatives of SIC ICWC took part in a seminar held for the Regional Working Group on Water Quality (RWG-WQ).

The event was organized as part of the Blue Peace Central Asia project by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in partnership with the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC), with financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The project aims to facilitate evidence-based policy dialogue and promote equitable, climate-resilient management of shared water resources in Central Asia, with particular attention to water quality issues.

The seminar brought together representatives of environmental and water management agencies from the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan (online), and the Republic of Uzbekistan (online). SIC ICWC was represented by Zulfiya Yarullina and Matluba Rakhimova.

The main objective of the seminar was to identify priority areas for implementation of the RWG-WQ strategic agenda, which focuses on the development of a flexible, risk-based methodology for monitoring and assessing the condition of surface waters.



During the seminar, participants became familiar with the water quality monitoring systems of Switzerland and Central Asian countries. International experts presented experiences of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River. Discussions focused on the parameters currently used by Central Asian countries for surface water monitoring and on identifying the most representative indicators to support the development of a harmonized regional monitoring approach. Participants also learned about the Swiss methodology for comprehensive water assessment, which combines analytical evaluation of water samples with visual assessment of water body conditions.

As a result of the group discussions, participants developed a preliminary list of water quality monitoring parameters that was considered acceptable to all participating countries.

On the second day, participants visited the laboratory of the Turkistan provincial branch of the RSE “Kazhydromet”. The program also included a field trip to the Badam River, where participants conducted a visual assessment of the water body's condition and performed rapid water quality analysis using portable equipment.

The proposed methodology for visual assessment is simple and practical, incorporating indicators such as sediment load, water turbidity and color, presence of foam and odor, vegetation, and visible wastes. This approach can be applied to any water body and serves as a valuable complement to hydrochemical analysis.

The program continued with a field visit to two monitoring sites on the Syr Darya River in Turkistan province, where participants collected water samples and carried out a visual assessment of water quality using the agreed methodology.

В процессе поездки специалистами службы Казгидромет был осуществлён отбор проб воды на химический анализ. Отобранные пробы, через представителей НИЦ МКВК так же были переданы для анализа в Узгидромет.

According to a local hydraulic engineer, the river discharge was approximately 540 m³/s at the time of the visit at the Kokbulak gauging station. Joint control measurements of river discharge are conducted every five days by representatives of relevant water management authorities of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

During the field visit, experts from KazHydromet collected water samples for subsequent laboratory analysis. The collected samples were also transferred to UzHydromet for analysis through representatives of SIC ICWC.

In addition, rapid analysis of selected indicators was made using portable devices. Measured values included water temperature (20.5–21.2°C), salinity (727–730 mg/L), turbidity (110–127 NTU), and dissolved oxygen (6.93–7.35 mg/L). Based on the results of rapid analysis at two gauging stations, water quality in the Syr Darya River generally complied with established standards, with the exception of elevated turbidity levels, which were attributed to recent heavy rainfall.

Gender Technical Working Group Meeting

On 12 June, the Ministry of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan hosted the fifth Gender Technical Working Group Meeting on implementation of the Gender Concept for the Water Sector. of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The meeting brought together representatives of national ministries and agencies, international organizations, and development partners, including the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and

the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). SIC ICWC was represented by Dinara Ziganshina, who moderated the meeting, and Oygul Usmanova.

The main objective of the meeting was to discuss the progress achieved in implementing the Gender Concept and to explore opportunities for developing new partnerships for gender mainstreaming in water management.

During the meeting, Farzona Khashimova, representative of the international non-governmental organization ACTED, presented an assessment of progress on the Action Plan to the IGender Concept. The evaluation revealed that nearly 40% of the planned activities were completed during the first year of implementation.

Significant progress has been made in establishing the institutional framework required for implementing the Concept. In particular, gender coordinators have been appointed; 13 local gender trainers have been trained; individuals responsible for implementing and monitoring the Action Plan have been designated; gender considerations have been integrated into the activities of the Ministry of Water Resources and its subdivisions; and a system for monitoring key indicators has been launched to track implementation progress.

Positive results have also been achieved in the area of women's capacity building. In particular, women's participation in water diplomacy and international cooperation has expanded through relevant international platforms and the "Women in Water Diplomacy" network, including with the support of SIC ICWC. Considerable attention has also been devoted to the training and professional development of women through the implementation of grant-funded educational programs.

At the same time, the assessment identified several areas where significant gaps remain. These include the gender budgeting mechanisms, the systematic collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data, the expansion of women's engagement in water allocation at the local level, and the integration of gender considerations into climate change adaptation measures. Furthermore, it was noted that the existing monitoring system does not yet provide a sufficient basis for objectively assessing the actual impact of the measures being implemented.

In this context, participants emphasized the need to move beyond predominantly quantitative performance indicators and place greater focus on qualitative indicators that capture tangible changes and outcomes. During the discussion, participants highlighted the importance of developing a unified system of indicators, a common methodology, and standardized tools for collecting gender-disaggregated data, both within the Ministry of Water Resources and at the national level.

The recommendations voiced during the meeting included:

- Establishing a unified digital system for monitoring the implementation of the Gender Concept, along with an open online platform for publishing progress and results;
- Introducing mechanisms to assess the impact of projects and initiatives on women's quality of life, economic empowerment, and income levels;
- Developing a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of gender budgeting;
- Developing gender indicators;
- Conducting regular gender audits;
- Strengthening mentoring and leadership development programs for women and expanding their participation in water diplomacy;
- Intensifying efforts to promote water-saving technologies among women and support women-led entrepreneurship in the water sector;
- Preparing and publishing an annual national report on the state of gender equality in the water sector.

The second part of the meeting focused on coordinating regional efforts on gender mainstreaming in the water sector. It was proposed that the “GWA-NET Central Asia” initiative's website supported by SIC ICWC and established in 2007 with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank could be used as a common platform.

At the conclusion of the meeting, participants highly appreciated the outcomes of the session and unanimously called for further strengthening coordination mechanisms to support the implementation of the Gender Concept. Particular emphasis was placed on expanding cooperation with other ministries and government agencies beyond the Ministry of Water Resources.

Seminar: “The Aral Sea: Financial Aspects of the Water Crisis and the Future of Central Asia”⁷

On 11 June 2026, the Center for Water Resources Research at the Institute of Natural Resource Economics and Climate Change of the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE University) held a water seminar

⁷ Source: <https://we.hse.ru/climate/waterseminar/news/1170061330.html>
<https://aral.uz/wp/2026/06/15/seminar-11-june/>

dedicated to the consequences of the Aral Sea crisis, water resource management challenges, and prospects for sustainable development in Central Asia. Experts discussed the environmental, socioeconomic, and institutional dimensions of one of the greatest environmental disasters of our time, as well as measures aimed at restoring the ecosystems of the Aral Sea region.

The seminar was moderated by Anastasia Likhacheva, Dean of the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs at HSE University and Director of the Center for Water Resources Research at the Institute of Natural Resource Economics and Climate Change.

Dinara Ziganshina, Director of the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (SIC ICWC), presented the results of studies on water resources management and the adaptation of regional water infrastructure to climate change. According to her, the Aral Sea crisis is not only an environmental challenge but also a consequence of long-standing institutional issues related to water use and governance. Particular attention is currently being given to preserving the ecosystems of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins, as well as modernizing water infrastructure in response to the impacts of climate change.

Daria Ilyina, Project Director at the Institute for Macroeconomic and Regional Research under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, presented a socioeconomic analysis of the consequences of the Aral Sea's degradation.

She noted that over several decades, the Aral Sea had shrunk to approximately one-twentieth of its original size, while the Aralkum desert, covering about six million hectares, had emerged on the dried-up lake bed. According to the expert, this environmental disaster has had a profound impact on public health, employment, poverty, and the region's food and water security. Among the most severe consequences of the crisis, she highlighted the destruction of ecosystems, the collapse of the fishing industry, increasingly frequent salt and dust storms, and a significant decline in the quality of life for communities across the Aral Sea region.

Vadim Sokolov, Vice President of the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) and Manager for Relations with International Organizations at the IFAS Agency in Uzbekistan, spoke about measures aimed at restoring the region. He noted that in recent years, Uzbekistan has been implementing a large-scale program to reforest the dried seabed of the Aral Sea, with the goal of reducing the intensity of dust and salt storms and improving the environmental situation.

According to Sokolov, the sustainable development of the Aral Sea region requires a comprehensive approach that includes the restoration of natural eco-

systems, improvement of living conditions for local communities, expansion of international cooperation, and mobilization of financial resources for environmental and infrastructure projects.

Vladislav Polyinin, Director of the Institute of Water Problems at the Russian Academy of Sciences, also delivered remarks at the seminar. He proposed conducting joint analytical research to evaluate the benefits Central Asia has derived from irrigation development, as well as to assess the economic losses associated with the disappearance of the Aral Sea.

The seminar participants agreed that addressing the consequences of the Aral Sea crisis requires stronger regional cooperation, improved water resource management mechanisms, and expanded international support for sustainable development initiatives in Central Asia.

Afghanistan–Central Asia Think Tank Forum

From 15 to 18 June 2026, D. Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC, participated in the first Afghanistan–Central Asia Think Tank Forum at the invitation of the International Institute of Central Asia. The Forum was held on 16 June 2026 in Kabul.



The Forum “The Strategic Role of Think Tanks in Promoting Regional Cooperation,” was organized by the Center for Strategic Studies under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. It brought together representatives of research institutions from Afghanistan, the countries of Central Asia, and Azerbaijan.

Discussions focused on strengthening cooperation among think tanks, promoting regional stability and connectivity, and advancing trade, economic cooperation, transportation, and energy projects. Particular attention was given to the role of the expert community in developing practical policy solutions, enhancing strategic foresight, and improving early warning systems.



Speaking during the panel discussion, D. Ziganshina emphasized that sustainable regional connectivity depends not only on the development of transport corridors, power transmission lines, and trade routes.

"Today, we talk a great deal about bridges and connectivity. Yet every bridge requires a solid foundation and reliable supports on both sides. In a regional context, these supports include effective natural resource management, modern infrastructure, high-quality data, a skilled workforce, and the capacity to consider the climate risks," she noted..

In this context, participants emphasized that environmental, climate, and water issues are assuming an increasingly important place in the dialogue among Central Asian countries. Afghan partners also highlighted climate change, water scarcity, and environmental degradation as shared challenges affecting food security, agricultural development, transport connectivity, and the sustainability of regional economies.

It was further noted that the countries of Central Asia are already implementing large-scale reforms aimed at improving water-use efficiency, adopting water-saving technologies, modernizing irrigation infrastructure, strengthening

digital water accounting systems, and enhancing adaptation to climate change.

Using Uzbekistan as an example, the outcomes of comprehensive reforms in the water sector were highlighted. Water-saving technologies have been adopted on approximately 2.6 Mha, representing nearly 60% of the country's irrigated land, and are estimated to save about 2.5 billion m³ of water annually. The combined impact of these technologies, together with the modernization of canals and pumping stations, digitalization of water management, and improvements in water accounting, is estimated to generate annual water savings exceeding 10 billion m³. By 2030, this figure is projected to increase to 15 billion m³.

It was also noted that, in 2026, Uzbekistan was selected by UN-Water as one of the countries to showcase progress towards achieving SDG 6. This selection reflects international recognition of the comprehensive and systemic reforms being implemented to promote sustainable water management.

During her presentation, D. Ziganshina proposed several practical areas for strengthening expert cooperation between Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries. These include conducting joint climate and water assessments in the Amu Darya River basin; establishing regular technical dialogues on hydrological data, droughts, snow cover, floods, and dust storms; and undertaking collaborative research on irrigation, land reclamation, water conservation, and riverbank protection.

Particular attention was paid to the need to develop applied project proposals aimed at strengthening water accounting systems, early warning, promoting climate-smart agriculture, land reclamation, and supporting riverbank protection measures.

In the context of Afghanistan's water infrastructure, particular attention was given to the Qosh Tepa canal. It was emphasized that the project is of considerable importance for the country's socioeconomic development and, at the same time, requires professional support in the areas of basin planning, water-use assessment, salinity management, riverbank protection, and the integration of climate risk considerations. Such an approach would help reduce uncertainty, promote technical dialogue, and identify areas for international assistance that could contribute both to Afghanistan's development and the sustainability of the Amu Darya River basin as a whole.

The working program also included meetings at the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Kabul and the Consulate General of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Mazar-i-Sharif. During these meetings, participants exchanged views on regional stability and prospects for strengthening connectivity between Central and South Asia.

Educational cooperation emerged as another promising area for engage-

ment. During meetings with representatives of the Kardan University in Kabul, students and faculty members of the Political Science and International Relations program expressed interest in expanding academic exchanges with universities in Central Asia through joint lectures, online seminars, and collaborative research initiatives.



The cultural program of the visit included tours of the Babur Garden (Bagh-e-Babur) in Kabul and the Blue Mosque complex in Mazar-i-Sharif. These visits underscored the shared historical and cultural heritage of the peoples of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan as an important foundation for mutual trust, humanitarian cooperation, and good-neighborly relations.

SIC ICWC expressed its readiness to develop joint research projects with Afghan and Central Asian experts as part of the Expert Platform for Water Security, Sustainable Development and Future established as a follow up to the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan.

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