

## Preface

### **Dear readers,**

The seventh edition of the Water Yearbook: Central Asia and Around the Globe is now available, featuring key events, initiatives, and achievements in 2023 across 17 dedicated thematic sections.

A landmark event in the region in 2023 was the 30th anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), a unique intergovernmental organization fostering water and environmental cooperation among Central Asian countries. To commemorate this milestone, an [international conference](#) titled "Central Asia: Towards Sustainable Future through a Strong Regional Institution" was held in Dushanbe in June. The conference served to showcase the Fund's achievements and define key priorities for future cooperation (see [2023 Calendar of Events](#)). Throughout the year, a series of national and regional events was organized to raise awareness about the critical issues facing the Aral Sea basin. The Council of Heads of IFAS Founding States convened to discuss strategies for strengthening IFAS's role and enhancing its international profile. During the meeting held in Dushanbe on September 15, the chairmanship of IFAS was transferred to the Republic of Kazakhstan for the 2024-2026 term.

Numerous meetings and activities were undertaken to strengthen bi- and multilateral cooperation. These included meetings of the IFAS Board, the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC), and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD), along with the work of various bi- and trilateral working groups and commissions (See [IFAS and other regional organizations in Central Asia; Cooperation between the Countries of Central Asia on Water and Other Matters](#)).

The [UN 2023 Water Conference](#) was a landmark event held in New York from March 22-24. This conference, the second of its kind, resulted in over 700 [voluntary commitments](#) from governments and stakeholders worldwide. Notably, the Central Asian countries at the conference [reaffirmed](#) their dedication to collaborative actions ([Section 6.1](#)).

The Yearbook highlights significant water developments in Central Asian countries ([Section 5](#)) and globally ([Section 11](#)), while also documenting the activities of the United Nations and other international development partners ([Sections 6-8](#)). The Yearbook also systematizes the information on education and training programs ([Section 9](#)) and highlights innovative approaches in water, energy, and agriculture, along with the activities of research institutions within the EECCA region ([Section 10](#)).

The [Thematic Reviews](#) provide insights into climate change, progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and global and Central Asian developments in green hydrogen.

In concluding, we express our gratitude to all contributors to this edition. We hope this Yearbook will serve as a valuable resource for practitioners, researchers, and anyone interested in advancing sustainable water management in the region and globally.

*Editorial Team*