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Water and power problems in Central Asia

Conflict of power, irrigation, and nature interests in various river basins all over the world has its own specificity and is settled in different ways. Because of high-capacity hydropower systems in upstream and huge irrigated areas in the large river basins in Central Asia, there occurs a need to search for compromise between hydropower and irrigation. The necessary consideration of nature demand for water makes this issue more complicated. As a solution of problem related to relations between irrigation and power sectors, it was proposed to establish an International Water-Power Consortium (IWPC).

First developments of an idea on establishment of IWPC refer to the Decision of 24.07.1997 of the Interstate Council of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, according to which a Concept on principles of cooperation in establishing international consortiums between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan was developed and approved by the Council in 12.12.1997.

The idea of establishing the International Water-Power Consortium (IWPC) was fixed in the Agreement of 17.03.1998 on the use of water and power resources in the Syrdarya river basin between the Governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan (Tajikistan joined the agreement in 1999). According to Article 8, «until IWPC and its executive bodies are established», the regional water management body – water management organization (BWO) “Syrdarya” should be responsible for maintenance of regimes for water releases from reservoirs, while energy flows should be kept by the regional energy body – United Control Center (UCC) “Energiya”.

Based on conclusions of Inter-governmental Commissions (IGC) in 1997-1998, the Council of the Prime Ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan and later of Tajikistan made a number of decisions on the establishment of IWPC. Thus in March 1998, the Council charged the IGC with the following:

- prepare draft Inter-governmental Agreement on the establishment of IWPC and submit it to the Council of the Prime Ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

By the decision of the Council of 26.06.1998, IGC was charged with:

- development of IWPC By-laws by 01.09.1998,
- preparation of Foundation Agreement by 20.09.1998,
- and submit those documents for consideration at the next meeting of the Council.

However, those decisions were not fulfilled. But due to initiatives of the President of Kazakhstan N.Nazarbayev and financial support of the World Bank in 1998-2008, interest in establishment of IWPC has not been lost. Recently the Russian Federation has shown an active interest in IWPC.

At present, a concept on establishment of IWPC is available. The concept was approved by the Council of the Heads of Member-States of Central Asian Cooperation Organization, and a number of draft Inter-state Agreements (ISA) on establishment of IWPC has been developed.

The main shortcoming of the current draft IISA is neglect of a role of the regional water management bodies, particularly of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) in Central Asia and of its executive bodies, such as BWO Syrdarya and BWO Amudarya.

It is supposed that IWPC would not replace ICWC and its bodies on water management, but should become a financial and insurance mechanism, which would help to improve effectiveness of

water and power use in the Syrdarya river basin and, in the future, as Turkmenistan would be involved in IWPC, in the Amudarya river basin as well.

At the same time, a single Direction for Hydropower stations in Central Asia should be created and managed jointly by Central Asian states – members of the Agreement on the establishment of IWPC. The Russian Federation could take part in this project on the basis of share participation.