

Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia	<b>BULLETIN</b> <b>№ 2 (95)</b>	March 2023
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## Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan sign a roadmap for Kambarata-1<sup>1</sup>



According to the reports of the energy ministries of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, they signed a road map for Kambarata-1 on the Naryn River in Kyrgyzstan on January 6, 2023 in Bishkek.

The parties agreed on the main terms and conditions for the project and outlined further steps for timely commissioning of the power plant.

It was emphasized at the meeting that implementation should be fair and beneficial for all member states.

The expected launch date of Kambarata-1 will be determined after the feasibility study is completed. The Kyrgyz energy minister Taalaybek Ibraev noted that preparation activities for the construction of Kambarata-1 has already begun: roads, bridges, power lines and construction sites are under construction.

The Ministry of Energy of Uzbekistan reported that Kambarata -1 would be important for provision of electricity and water to all the three countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2023/01/07/ges/>

The capacity of the future HPP will be 1860 MW, with total reservoir volume of 5.4 billion m<sup>3</sup> and average annual output of 5.6 billion kWh.

During the visit of the President of Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan on March 2021, the countries signed an agreement on joint preparation of an investment project “Construction of Kambarata-1” and a protocol on mutual electricity supplies.

In September, during the SCO Summit in Samarkand, the presidents of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan talked on the importance of building Kambarata-1 as soon as possible.

## **Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan sign an investment agreement on the construction of Kambarata-1<sup>2</sup>**

On the eve of the visit of Uzbek President to Kyrgyzstan, the two countries signed an investment agreement on the construction of Kambarata-1 in the Jalal-Abad region. The main trilateral agreement on the project is expected to be signed in July.

The project office for Kambarata-1 is to be opened in September and the feasibility study is expected to begin in July 2024. The exact amount of the project is to be determined upon completion of the feasibility study.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2023/01/26/kambarata/>

## Declaration on comprehensive strategic partnership between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan<sup>3</sup>

(extract)



The Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan, hereinafter referred to as the Parties, based on the provisions of the Treaty on Eternal Friendship between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan of 24 December 1996 and the Declaration on strategic partnership, friendship, good neighborhood and trust between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan of 5 October 2017,

noting with satisfaction that for 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, bilateral relations between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan have reached the level of strategic partnership and continue to develop dynamically in all areas of mutual interest, affirming unwavering com-

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<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://kg.akipress.org/news:1856483>

mitment to the UN Charter and universally recognized principles and regulations of international law,

based on mutual desire to improve multifaceted bilateral contacts in political, trade and economic, investment, water and energy, transport and communication, cultural and humanitarian and other promising areas,

stating that further strengthening of friendship is in the fundamental and long-term interests of the fraternal peoples of the two states and will contribute to the prosperity of both Parties and to the strengthening of peace, stability and security in Central Asia, declare as follows:

The Parties decided to bring bilateral relations to a qualitatively new level and proclaimed the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership between them with their further promotion to a higher level.

The Parties expressed consensus in further comprehensive development of bilateral relations in the following key areas.

[...]

#### **Water and energy cooperation**

The Parties advocated integrated use of water and energy resources, emphasizing the importance of developing sustainable mechanisms for mutually beneficial cooperation, taking into account common interests and needs, in the spirit of centuries-old friendship, good neighborliness and mutual respect.

The parties have expressed readiness to buy, supply and transit natural gas and electric energy on mutually beneficial conditions.

[...]

Bishkek

27 January 2023

## **Joint statement on the results of the C5+1 Ministerial Meeting in Astana<sup>4</sup>**

**(extract)**

On February 28, the U.S. Secretary of State and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs from the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan met in Astana, Kazakhstan under the auspices of the C5+1 regional diplomatic platform.

[...]

The participants underscored the importance of C5+1 collaboration to deliver regional solutions to global challenges. They affirmed their commitment to increased engagement through the C5+1 regional diplomatic platform. They commended the coordination efforts of the C5+1 Secretariat. Through Working Groups on Economy, Energy and Environment, and Security, the C5+1 will continue to support ongoing regional activities and explore new opportunities for greater collaboration.

[...]

### **Energy and Environment Cooperation:**

In support of C5+1 energy and environment objectives, the participants:

- addressed shared C5+1 objectives, such as exchange of experience on integrated management of water resources and food security;
- expressed readiness for cooperation in the field of introducing water-saving technologies and improving skills of water experts;
- reiterated the critical need to advance their collective and country commitments to address the climate crisis;
- reaffirmed the significant potential for more regional collaboration in areas such as increasing the use of renewable energy and methane abatement;
- commended ongoing C5+1 energy programs, including USAID's Power Central Asia, which is supporting the C5 governments' national and region-

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<sup>4</sup> Source: IA «Khabar» / <https://kabar.kg/news/glavy-mid-stran-tca-i-gossekreterar-ssha-sdelali-sovmestnoe-zaiavlenie-po-itogam-ministerskoi-vstrechi-v-formate-c5-1-v-astane/>

al priorities in energy security through national market liberalization reform, clean energy development, and methane mitigation;

- recognized USAID Regional Water and Vulnerable Environment Activity (WAVE), which assesses, develops, and evaluates strategies that address the shared vulnerabilities at the nexus of Central Asia’s water, energy, and food sectors to climate change, and the importance of environmental and social safeguard measures to increase resilience to climate change;
- welcomed the Ministerial Conference on Food Security and Climate Change, to be held on March 10, 2023, in Ashgabat;
- stressed the negative consequences of Aral Sea desiccation and noted the importance of increasing cooperation for the area’s ecological restoration, including through the UN;
- expressed readiness to actively support projects to improve the climate resilience of vulnerable sectors and the transition to a low-carbon and “green” economy;
- considered efforts toward sustainable mountain development; in this regard, noted the UNGA Resolution 77/172 “Sustainable Mountain Development” proclaiming the period 2023–2027 as Five Years of Action for the Development of Mountain Regions in order to enhance the awareness of the international community of the problems of mountain countries and to give new impetus to the international community’s efforts to address the challenges and problems of mountain countries (based on OP30 of A/RES/77/122);
- discussed opportunities for the next C5+1 Climate Ministerial and Energy and Environment Working Group meeting; and,
- looked forward to working together to achieve results of the UN Conference on Water, co-hosted by Tajikistan, on March 22-24, 2023 in New York. [...]



## **9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group on Institutional and Legal Improvement of IFAS<sup>5</sup>**

On January 17-19, 2023, the 9th meeting of the working group on institutional and legal improvement of IFAS was held in online format.

The meeting was organized by the Executive Committee of IFAS, with the support of the World Bank's CAWEP program. The meeting was attended by members of the Working Group from the IFAS founder states, representatives of Executive Committee of IFAS and its branches, structural divisions of ICWC and ICSD. Representatives of the Kyrgyz Republic participated in the meeting as observers.

Improvement of the institutional and legal frameworks of IFAS is aimed at creating an effective and sustainable institutional mechanism capable of responding to new challenges and solving existing water, energy, environmental and socio-economic problems and issues of integrated water use and protection in the region.

On the first day of the meeting, presentations were made by country delegations on proposals for national structural divisions of IFAS and international practices on national institutions of joint mechanisms, and the best options for defining national executive bodies of IFAS in the countries were discussed.

On the second day, the number of Commissions and divisions in the Executive Committee, the SICs, and the name of the improved institutional framework were discussed.

On the third day, the Working Group heard and discussed the presentation of the fundamental financial mechanism of the improved institutional framework by Farzona Mukhitdinova, Senior Water Resources Management Specialist at the World Bank.

The meeting resulted in the adoption of the final document of the 9th meeting of the Working Group on institutional and legal improvement of IFAS.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://www.facebook.com/ec.ifas>

## **Workshop dedicated to the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of IFAS “Efficient Distribution of Water Resources in the Syr Darya River Basin in the context of Climate Change”**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2023 the Scientific-Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia (SIC ICWC) jointly with BWO Syr Darya and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) hosted a workshop titled “Efficient distribution of water resources in the Syr Darya River basin in the context of climate change”. The event was dedicated to the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS). The workshop brought together the heads and experts of BWO Syr Darya and representatives of water management organizations from the Fergana Valley.



The experts of SIC ICWC made presentations on IFAS activities, trans-boundary water cooperation, implementation of IWRM in the context of climate change, improvement of water monitoring and accounting. Available data platforms, tools and models in support for decision-making in the Syr Darya River basin as well as financial mechanisms contributing to improved water use efficiency were demonstrated.



The issues affecting the efficiency of water distribution and the measures required to eliminate existing shortcomings were identified during the panel discussions. Topics for future trainings were discussed as well.



## **Regional Workshop on Monitoring, Assessment and Information Sharing in Transboundary Basins in Central Asia**

On February 1-2, 2023, Astana hosted a Regional Workshop on Monitoring, Assessment and Information Sharing in Transboundary Basins in Central Asia. The workshop was organized by the International Water Assessment Centre (IWAC) in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe with the financial support of the German International Cooperation (GIZ) under the Green Central Asia Program.

The workshop was attended by experts from five countries of Central Asia - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, representing state bodies and national services responsible for water resources, environment and hydrometeorology, as well as specialists from research institutions, basin water management organizations and international organizations operating in the region.

The purpose of the workshop was to assist countries in studying international experience in monitoring, assessment and information sharing in transboundary basins and discussing opportunities for strengthening cooperation between Central Asian countries in the field of protection and use of water resources in transboundary basins.

The agenda of the workshop consisted of an opening session, five thematic sessions, panel discussions and a final session.

The opening remarks were addressed to the participants by the Vice-Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Caroline Milow, Program Manager of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and Julia Trombitskaya, UNECE Environment Officer.

At the thematic sessions, the following presentations and reports were presented:

- Session 1. “Existing practice of monitoring and assessment of water resources in Central Asia”.
  - Hydrological monitoring and water quality regulation system in Central Asia.
- Session 2. “Experience of cooperation on monitoring, assessment and exchange of information on water in Central Asia”.

- Cooperation in the Chu and Talas River basins within the framework of the working group on environmental protection;
- Monitoring of water resources in transboundary rivers of the Aral Sea basin using the SIC ICWC Regional Information System;
- Activities of the Kazakh-Uzbek Working group on environmental protection and water quality of the Syr Darya river;
- Outcomes of space monitoring of water resources in Kazakhstan.
- Session 3. “Guidelines for monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwaters under the Water Convention”.
  - Activities under Programme Area “Supporting monitoring, assessment and informationsharing in transboundary basins”;
  - Updated strategies for monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers, lakes and groundwater.
- Session 4. “International practice of monitoring, assessment and data exchange in transboundary basins”.
  - Lessons learned on monitoring, assessment and data exchange in the Rhine basin;
  - Transboundary data and information exchange: Finland’s experience;
  - Challenges and good practices about the exchange of data and information on transboundary groundwater, with a focus on Central Asia;
  - Exchange of data and information on Pretashkent Transboundary Aquifer;
  - Lessons learned on monitoring, assessment and data exchange in Sava Basin;
  - Lessons learned on monitoring, assessment and data exchange in the Danube River Basin.
- Session 5. “Strengthening regional cooperation on monitoring, assessment and exchange of information on water in Central Asia”.
  - Modernization of hydrometeorological services in Central Asia;
  - Project on prevention of accidental pollution of water resources in the Syr Darya River basin;
  - CAREC's experience: support for joint water quality monitoring in the Syrdarya River basin and improvement of data management in transboundary basins;

- Challenges and good practices on modernization of meteorological services, with a focus on Central Asia;
- SAPPHIRE Project - Building Smart Bridges between Devices and Institutions for more Effective Water Monitoring;
- Towards the United Nations 2023 Water Conference: objectives, process, outcomes.

On the first day of the workshop, the group work was organized to discuss cases for the new publication “Good practices and lessons learned in transboundary data exchange”.

On the second day, following thematic sessions, the group work was conducted to discuss the prospects for development of regional cooperation on monitoring, assessment and information sharing on water in Central Asia.

**As a result of discussions, the participants of the workshop decided the following:**

1. express gratitude to the Green Central Asia Program of the German International Cooperation (GIZ), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the International Water Assessment Centre for organizing the workshop;
2. note the relevance of studying international experience in monitoring, assessment and information sharing for the development of joint actions and a common vision for the use of water resources in Central Asia;
3. note the relevance of using the publication “Strategies for Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters” (Updated Edition), prepared under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, as a methodological tool for developing cooperation between the countries of Central Asia on the protection and use of water resources;
4. note changes in hydrological conditions and water needs that require a joint assessment of their dynamics, and development of a transparent exchange of data and information, automated monitoring and modeling;
5. emphasize the relevance of long-term regional efforts to develop monitoring, assessment and information sharing on water resources, providing measures to harmonize methodologies and standards for data collection, formation of a regional network for monitoring the quality of transboundary waters, creation of effective organizational, legal and financial mechanisms for regular exchange of data in transboundary basins;
6. note the need to develop basin agreements or other arrangements for monitoring, assessment and information sharing on transboundary water bod-

- ies, including mechanisms for implementation of joint monitoring programs and regular data exchange;
7. recommend the governments of Central Asian countries to study the possibilities of creating a sustainable regional information system for the exchange of data and information on the quality of transboundary waters, considering the possibility of its integration with existing databases on water resources in the region;
  8. note the need to develop joint measures to create systems for prompt notification of pollution of transboundary waters and response to them;
  9. emphasize the relevance of developing measures to introduce hydrobiological monitoring and monitoring of the quality of bottom sediments on transboundary rivers;
  10. note the need for a joint inventory of existing or potential sources of pollution of transboundary water bodies in the region;
  11. note the need to develop joint measures for climate change adaptation;
  12. request international organizations to assist the countries of Central Asia in capacity building, including: (1) conducting educational seminars, trainings, workshops and other events on hydrological monitoring and cooperation on water quality in Central Asia; (2) development of joint methodological manuals for the analysis, processing and visualization of monitoring data;
  13. note the need for active high-level participation of the countries of Central Asia, as well as the stakeholders of the region, in the 2023 UN Water Conference in order to draw international attention to the achievements and needs of the region.



## The Conference “Transformative Futures or Water Security”

The conference “Transformative Futures for Water Security” was organized by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) in February 15-17, 2023 in Cape Town, South Africa. 185 experts from 55 countries and 144 organizations were involved in this event.



The objectives of the “Transformative Futures for Water Security (TFWS) Initiative are:

- build joint commitments to science-based action on water security across policy, development, business and science constituencies;
- amplify the effectiveness of water research and innovation for building water security;
- strengthen the innovation system for water security;
- map stakeholder priorities for water systems science from across constituencies and sectors, to create co-ownership of the future agenda for water research and innovation.

The conference is raising the ambition for water and bridging the gaps between science, policy and action. It aims to ensure water research and innovation better serve the acceleration of access to clean water and sanitation for all (SDG 6).

The welcoming reports were made at the plenary session as well as presentations on transformative futures for water security, stakeholders' perspectives and the results of the exchange of views across sectoral regional dialogues. Then, in groups, participants defined the missions and priorities of TFWS. Presentations on the challenges and shortcomings were also made by groups in the water sector and the overall mission of the Transformative Futures for Water Security Initiative was formed. The next steps were discussed at the final session.

Sherzod Muminov, Deputy Director of SIC ICWC, took part in the conference. He shared the experience of SIC ICWC in water security assessment at the level of administrative provinces of countries. The methodology involves focusing on the specifics of provinces-based management and tracking progress based on the indicators established in national strategies and plans. The methodology and results of the pilot research in Khorezm, Navoi and Samarkand provinces of Uzbekistan raised the interests of the participants since the available assessments of water security were based on national level only.



## 10<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum Kick-off Meeting and the 82nd World Water Council Board of Governors' Meeting

The 10<sup>th</sup> WWF Kick-off meeting took place in Jakarta, Indonesia on 15-16 February 2023. The meeting, which brought together 1400 representatives of governments, international organizations, research institutions and academia, civil society and youth, was co-organized by the Indonesian Government and the World Water Council.

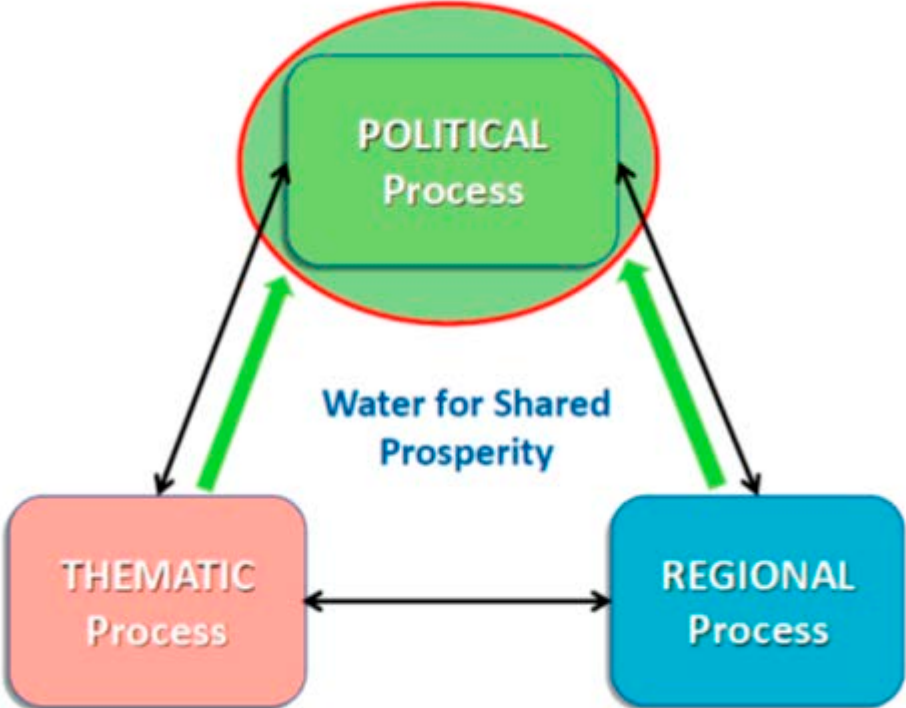


Welcoming speeches were delivered by Mr. Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Chair of National Organizing Committee, Coordinating Minister of Maritime and Investment Affairs of Indonesia, Mr. Loic Fauchon, Co-Chair of the International Steering Committee, President of WWC, Mr. Heru Budi Hartono, Governor of Jakarta, and Mr. Wayan Koster, Governor of Bali. Governor Koster stressed that the people of Indonesia traditionally glorified water and recognized its religious value and underlined the historical water management system in Ba-

li – *subak* – acknowledged as the UNESCO world heritage. Mr. Sultan Rahimzoda, Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan to the Water and Climate Coalition Leaders, spoke on the need for stronger water agenda and commitments and noted that the 10<sup>th</sup> Forum will provide an opportunity to review progress made in the Water Action Decade. At the Opening Ceremony of the meeting, the Government of Indonesia, WWC and UNESCO signed a memorandum of understanding or letter of intent on cooperation in holding the 10th World Water Forum.

Mr. Benedito Braga, Honorary President of WWC, presented the 10<sup>th</sup> WWF to be held on 18-24 May 2024 in Bali. The theme – water for shared prosperity. The idea is to manage water together with the aim of prosperity for all through: integrated management, continuous innovation, latest technologies, active participation of all stakeholders, sharing of interests, and incorporation of local wisdom. The 10th Forum will not be an ordinary event but a platform to engage all stakeholders as early as since the process of preparation to the Forum. This would result in collective actions for response, based on common understanding of shared prosperity. The Forum is expected to bring together more than 30,000 participants from 172 countries.

The 10th edition of WWF will consist of political, thematic and regional processes that will supplement each other.





Given Forum will focus on political segment to shift from declarations and statements of the previous Forums to political commitments.

Objectives of the political process are to facilitate better understanding of water cross sectoral dimension of political decisions, catalyze interaction between all levels of decision-making actors on the importance of water issues, bring more political commitment that can lead to action on the ground and support practical solutions to water challenges. As a result, it is expected to create a long lasting platform for political dialogue for water. Political process is to be enriched by technical content generated in the thematic process.

Political process of the 10<sup>th</sup> WWF will include the following segments: heads of state (influencing national and international political agenda), ministerial (committing to action), parliamentarian (producing legal frameworks), local authority (local water priorities), and basin authority (stimulate effective water governance at the basin level).

Eric Tardieu, Secretary General of INBO, Vice President of WWC, presenting the basin segment, underlined that basin organizations are real actors in the process of achievement of water-related SDGs. Thus, it is necessary to mobilize basin organizations, reinforce upstream-downstream integration and facilitate water resources allocation. In this context, he called for joining the Dakar action plan initiated during the 9<sup>th</sup> WWF and already having more than 70 signatories. The Dakar action plan aims to accelerate the achievement of water-related SDGs by making concrete commitments for river, lake and aquifer ba-

sins.

The thematic process, which is to ensure shift from debate to action, will focus on 6 proposed themes: water for humans and nature; water security and prosperity; disaster risk reduction and management; cooperation and hydro-diplomacy; knowledge and innovations, on which 5-6 topics will be elaborated to form Forum's thematic sessions.

Representative of SIC ICWC, Oygul Usmanova took part in the breakout session on cooperation and hydro-diplomacy. While briefly speaking on the main challenges of the Central Asia region she underlined a need for clearly defined mechanisms of transboundary water cooperation, including economic mechanisms, and the importance of building trust among all parties, also through open data and information exchange.

The final version of thematic framework is to be ready by April 2023, followed by expression of interests of all working groups and establishment of topic coordination groups that will continue working on thematic sessions.

As expected, thematic sessions will be identified at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stakeholder meeting on 18-19 September 2023 in Bali. The outcomes of this process will include concrete policy measures, solutions, action plans, commitments, and mobilization of public and private stakeholders inside and outside the water community.

The regional process will facilitate development and mobilization of actions to solve regional water challenges and find solutions from regional perspectives. Preliminary, the regional process includes the Mediterranean and the Asia Pacific regions, with sub-regional groups, and the organizers expressed their readiness to increase representation of regions through the call for expression of interest from other regions and sub-regions.

During the kick-off meeting, the Mentimeter interactive platform (menti.com) was used also to give voice to every stakeholder on the Forum's theme, main topics and key words among which priorities were selected.

The 82nd WWC Board meeting was held on 17-18 February. The new Board of Governors, where SIC ICWC was elected during the WWC General Assembly in December 2022, was presented during the meeting, and issues on the agenda were addressed and discussed by the Board's members.

O. Usmanova

## **An Informal Plenary Meeting of the 77<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly<sup>6</sup>**

The event was organized on February 7 upon initiative of the H.E. Mr. Csaba Korosi, President of the General Assembly. Members States, Observers of the General Assembly and ECOSOC<sup>7</sup> accredited NGOs were invited to the informal meeting.

The meeting was convened to hear briefings from eminent scientists and academics focused on science-based evidence in support of sustainable solutions. In the course of the informal meeting it was demonstrated that the ongoing UN's transformation program should benefit from science-based evidence and be based on political wisdom of key actors in this process. Efforts taken to meet global challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, etc. showed the clear evidence that science may play a role in decision making on complex issues. Science may support decisions for the Members to contribute to the UN 2023 Water Conference, the pandemic preparedness negotiations as well as the SDG Summit.

The briefings were held in three sessions on Economics of Water; Shared Waters: Climate, Conflict and Cooperation; and Early Warning for Pandemic Preparedness.

During the first session, it was demonstrated that all communities and nations are hydrologically intertwined – not just by rivers and the surface water, but also through atmospheric moisture flows. Practices in any one region impact rainfall in others. Unchecked, the crisis of global water will endanger all the SDGs. Putting global water on a stable and equitable footing must therefore be a collective responsibility.

The Global Commission on the Economics of Water (GCEW), established in May 2022, presented key points of its first report to be officially launched at the UN 2023 Water Conference. It proposed broad transformations in the way we value and manage water to achieve collective goals, incorporating a central role for science and in line with Agenda 2030, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the Convention for Global Biodiversity.

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<sup>6</sup> Based on UN information / [www.un.org/pga/77/wp-content/uploads/sites/105/2023/01/Information-Note-Science-based-Evidence-in-support-of-Sustainable-Solutions.pdf](http://www.un.org/pga/77/wp-content/uploads/sites/105/2023/01/Information-Note-Science-based-Evidence-in-support-of-Sustainable-Solutions.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> ECOSOC - The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations is one of the main organs of the United Nations, which coordinates cooperation in the economic and social fields of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

GCEW showed the criticality of the Water Action Agenda; highlighted the need for the global water cycle to be managed as a global common good and safeguarded through effective multilateralism; and illustrated the shifts in governance that would open up major new opportunities for innovation and investment in more efficient, just and sustainable use of water at all levels.

The second session “Shared Waters: Climate, Conflict and Cooperation” demonstrated that climate is water and wise management of water is conflict management. To ensure that needs of the people and ecosystems that rely on this critical resource are met effectively, a comprehensive understanding of both water science and water diplomacy is required. To prevent water conflicts, it is necessary to unite efforts in development of international water law and water diplomacy, backed by evidence-based capacity-building, and environmental peacebuilding.

Dinara Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC reported on the role of the international water law and diplomacy at this session. She underlined that international law makes a valuable contribution to peaceful settlement of water issues by outlining due conduct and providing procedures of cooperation (information exchange, monitoring, joint assessments, notification on planned actions). However, it is necessary to further strengthen the implementation of international water norms and develop the international water law in line with imperatives of our time. For effective implementation of international treaties, strong actions are required from the side of states and bodies of water and environmental conventions to increase coordination and integrated implementation. It is important to raise legal awareness through training and joint research and promote the value of water as a tool of peace and stability on UN stages.

The participants of the session made the following recommendations:

- More widely recognize and demonstrate the benefits of water cooperation;
- Support institutions involved in prevention, mitigation and settlements of conflicts related to water sharing;
- Create an evidence-based system for understanding and monitoring of water conflict risks and extending cooperation (global cooperation on water science and diplomacy).

The third session “The challenges and opportunities in creating an early warning system for global pandemics” showed that without adequate foresight, biological risks will continue to translate into global shocks in the post-pandemic world. Climate and environmental stressors will intensify these shocks



but these can be predicted to a large degree. Therefore, the world needs science-informed responses that will be based on early warning systems that leverage modern logistics of data, democratization of AI tools. Today we still can capitalize on new technological developments and create a platform for better management of future disease outbreaks.

Finally, the update on the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report prepared by a group of independent scientists was presented. It provides decision-makers with the latest input of science in support of the preparations for and the political declaration of the SDG Summit at the end of 2023.

# **2023 Conference for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the UN Decade for Action on Water and Sanitation (2018-2028)<sup>8</sup>**

## **General**

The UN 2023 Water Conference, formally known as the 2023 Conference for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the UN Decade for Action on Water and Sanitation (2018-2028), was held on March 22-24 in New York City. It aimed to raise awareness on the global water crisis and decide on concerted action at the international level.

The three-day conference featured an opening and closing ceremony, six plenary meetings and five multi-stakeholder interactive dialogues.

The Conference was attended by the heads of state and government of Botswana, Bolivia, Iraq, Slovenia, Liberia, the Chairman of the Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tuvalu, Namibia, the vice-premiers of Barbados, Cuba, Congo, Montenegro, Ethiopia, Vietnam, official delegations of UN member states, including 11 delegations headed by ministers, as well as heads and representatives of 100 regional and international organizations.

The President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon and the King of the Netherlands Willem-Alexander co-chaired the conference.

The President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, the King of the Netherlands, Willem-Alexander, the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, the President of the UN General Assembly, Chaba Koroshi and President of the UN Economic and Social Commission, Luchesara Stoeva, as well as the President of Bolivia, Luis Alberto Arce, the President of Iraq, Abdul Latif Rashid, the President of the Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zelika Svyanovich, the President of Botswana, Masisi Mokgweetsi, and the President of

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<sup>8</sup> Sources:

Curtain raiser: Here is what we can expect from the upcoming UN 2023 Water Conference // <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/water/curtain-raiser-here-is-what-we-can-expect-from-the-upcoming-un-2023-water-conference-88019>

Президент Республики Таджикистан Эмомали Рахмон принял участие и выступил на открытии Конференции ООН // <https://khovar.tj/rus/2023/03/prezident-respubliki-tadzhikistan-emomali-rahmon-prinyal-uchastie-i-vystupil-na-konferentsii-oon-po-srednesrochnomu-vseobemlyushhemu-obzoru-tselej-mezhdunarodnogo-desyatiletija-dejstvij-voda-dlya-usto/>

Slovenia, Natasha Pirc Musar addressed the plenary session.



In his opening speech, the President of Tajikistan, underlined the following, in particular:

*Today's conference should be recorded in the history for promoting the clear understanding of the sphere's challenges and exploring effective and executive solutions.*

*We need to make joint efforts to achieve specific results and follow up the agreements reached with a view to decently meeting the expectations of the international community.*

*With this in mind and with a view to monitoring the implementation of our commitments constantly, I would like to propose to arrange the next United Nations Water Conference in Tajikistan at the end of the Decade of Action in 2028.<sup>9</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Full speech of the President of Tajikistan at the opening ceremony is available on <https://eng.khovar.tj/2023/03/speech-by-president-emomali-rahmon-at-the-opening-ceremony-of-the-un-conference-on-midterm-comprehensive-review-of-implementation-of-the-un-decade-for-action-on-water-and-sanitation/>

At the closing ceremony on March 24, the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, the President of the UN General Assembly, Chaba Koroshi, the Chairman of UN-Water, Gilbert F. Hounbo, and the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon took the floor.

In his closing speech the President of Tajikistan said that:

*These three days were empowering: we brought the world to New York, now we can bring water action to the world. All your commitments are registered in the Water Action Agenda, we will validate, and evaluate for scaling and replication as the backbone for the follow-up process.*

*The Water Action Agenda will have to get a concrete follow-up in the three key upcoming UN Summits: the SDG Summit 2023, the Summit of the Future 2024, and the World Social Summit 2025, and through the annual HLPF, COP's and other UN processes and of course the Dushanbe Water Process.<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> Full statement of the President of Tajikistan at the closing ceremony is available on: <http://president.tj/ru/node/30308>

## High-level side event “Central Asia: Commitments for Water Action Agenda”

The Executive Committee of IFAS with the support of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the World Bank organized a High-level side event “Central Asia: Commitments for Water Action Agenda.”



The main objectives of the high-level side event were to demonstrate the solidarity of the region in jointly addressing water issues to achieve water-energy-food-environmental security in Central Asia in the context of climate change and other challenges, including via innovative, transformational, and action-oriented commitments at the regional and national levels, and establish new and strengthen already existing partnerships for fulfilment of regional commitments.

The participants of the Conference were informed about the commitments made by the Central Asian region regarding the implementation of the Water Action Agenda. The Joint Statement comprising commitments of the Central Asian countries was also presented.

On behalf of the President of Tajikistan and the President of IFAS, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, Mr. Sirojiddin Muhriddin, Global Director of Global Water Practice from the World Bank Mr. Saroj Kumar Jha, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Li Junhua, EU Special Representative for Central Asia, Ms. Terhi Hakala, Presi-

dent of the World Water Council, Mr. Loic Fauchon, and other representatives of CA countries and development partners took the floor during the Conference.

National commitments of the Central Asian countries were presented by Ms. Zulfiya Suleimenova, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Kazakhstan, Mr. Jamshed Shoimzoda, First Deputy Minister of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan, Mr. Durdy Gendzhiev, Chairman of the State Committee of Water Resources of Turkmenistan, and Mr. Azimjon Nazarov, First Deputy Minister of Water Management of Uzbekistan.

## **Joint Statement of the Central Asian States at the UN 2023 Water Conference**

The comprehensive rapprochement of the Central Asian states is due to the dictates of time and fully meets the fundamental interests of the fraternal peoples. Ensuring sustainable development, stability and security of the region is a common task that makes us responsible to future generations.

Water resources play a key role in achieving sustainable development in Central Asia, and transboundary water cooperation is an essential component in ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the region. Effectively established water cooperation can become a catalyst for development, and the lack of such cooperation can cause serious risks and costs that can adversely affect the overall economic and social situation.

Meanwhile, new challenges, such as the impact of climate change, glaciers shrinking in volume and area, financial and economic crises of recent years, emerging epidemiological diseases, in particular COVID-19, require closer cooperation from the Central Asian countries to reliably provide water to the population, various sectors of economy and natural objects. Along with this, significant population growth is expected, which will lead to an increase in water demand by 1% annually and will be about 30% by 2050, from now.

A particular concern is the ecological catastrophe of the drying up of the Aral Sea, which resulted in the formation of 5.5 million hectares of deserts that have a negative impact on human health and the state of ecosystems throughout the region.

These challenges, coupled with the growing demand for water, energy and food resources, require decisive action to be taken to ensure the rational use of the water resources of the Aral Sea Basin.

The countries of Central Asia have always adhered to the position of developing comprehensive cooperation on water and energy issues in the region on the principles of good neighborhood, mutual respect, support and mutual consideration of the interests of all parties.

The UN Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028 (hereinafter referred to as the UN 2023 Water Conference) is the second UN conference dedicated to water resources, after the conference in Mar del Plata in 1977 and provides a unique opportunity to catalyze and accelerate actions towards achieving SDG6 and other internationally agreed water-related goals and targets.

Central Asia uses the platform of the UN 2023 Water Conference to inform the world community about the existing problems in the region and attract attention and resources to solve them, as well as to demonstrate the solidarity of the countries of the region on issues related to water resources, the readiness to jointly combat today's and future challenges, including through appropriate commitments at the national and regional levels.

In this regard, the Parties declare the following:

1. Water is fundamental to all aspects of life and the UN 2023 Water Conference provides a unique opportunity to take further concerted actions to address water issues at all levels.
2. Countries of Central Asia recognize the importance and actuality of the Conference for addressing water-related issues and express their willingness to contribute to its success.
3. The states of the region recognize that urgent and effective actions are needed to achieve SDG 6 and other internationally agreed water goals and therefore express their willingness to make the following commitments at the regional and national levels as a contribution to the outcome of the Conference - Water Action Agenda:

### **3.1. Regional level:**

3.1.1. Cooperation, especially in the field of water resources, is a key factor in solving existing problems and challenges, as well as ensuring peace, stability and development in the region, and therefore the countries of Central Asia re-

affirm their commitment to further strengthening regional cooperation to achieve sustainable development.

3.1.2. Regional institutions are important tools for mutually beneficial cooperation, and in this regard, the parties will make every effort to strengthen their potential. In this context, the parties are committed to accelerating the improvement of the organizational structure and legal framework of IFAS, taking into account the interests of all countries in the region.

3.1.3. The implementation of joint projects is an important component of solving water problems and strengthening confidence-building measures, in connection with which the countries of the region express their readiness to develop and implement joint projects and programs, attract foreign investment in the leading sectors of the economies of the states of the region, including for the implementation of the Program of Action for assistance to the countries of the Aral Sea Basin (ASBP-4) and the Regional Environmental Program for Sustainable Development in Central Asia (REP4SD-CA).

3.1.4. The Parties emphasize the importance of expanding interaction and coordination in the field of the climate agenda, careful attitude to natural resources, conservation of glaciers and water resources in general, building a low-carbon economy, introducing resource-saving and "green" technologies, including the development of renewable energy sources, and express their readiness for joint activities in these directions.

3.1.5. The countries of the region are committed to jointly resist the Aral Sea crisis and its negative consequences, as well as to take specific measures to comprehensively address the problems associated with improving the socio-economic and environmental situation in the Aral Sea basin, especially in areas prone to the ecological crisis.

## **3.2. National level:**

3.2.1. The countries of the region will continue joint actions on the integrated management and rational use of water resources and environmental protection in the Aral Sea basin.

3.2.2. The countries of the region will intensify work on the introduction of water-resource-saving and innovative technologies.

3.2.3. The parties will continue activities for the afforestation of territories, including in the Aral Sea zone.

3.2.4. The Parties consider water diplomacy as a political and diplomatic form of multilateral cooperation.



4. The countries of Central Asia recognize the importance of constant interaction and support of development partners to strengthen cooperation in ensuring the sustainable development of the region and the efforts of regional institutions to involve partners on a systematic basis. The readiness of development partners to continue active and constructive joint work with national governments on this common agenda to improve the living conditions of the population of the region is welcomed.

5. The Parties emphasize that 2023 is also important for the region in connection with the 30th anniversary of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea - the main regional institution that ensures mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of water resources and environmental protection. Based on this, the states of the region intend to widely use this event in order to demonstrate the unity of the region in managing water resources and solving existing water problems and conclude the results of the Fund's activities for this period within the framework of the IFAS Summit in September 2023 in Dushanbe.

6. The states of Central Asia are committed to mutual understanding and comprehensive mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of water resources and express their readiness to work together to implement the commitments made within the framework of the UN 2023 Water Conference at all levels.

*23 March 2023, UN,  
New York*

## **SIC ICWC at the UN Water Conference**

### **Shortly before the UN Water Conference, SIC ICWC made commitment to advance evidence-based transboundary water cooperation**

To advance transboundary water cooperation and peaceful water allocation the Central Asian countries work together under the umbrella of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) in Central Asia. SIC ICWC as an executive body of the Commission fosters transboundary water cooperation and promotes sustainable water management in Central Asia through information collection and dissemination, knowledge production, capacity development, communication, research and expert advice.

Under the proposed initiative, SIC ICWC commits to work closely with the Central Asian countries and other partners to advance evidence-based transboundary water cooperation.

The proposed initiative has three specific objectives:

1. **Data and Knowledge:** Establishing robust evidence and knowledge base on transboundary waters in Central Asia
2. **Capacity:** Strengthening capacities of relevant actors in evidence-based water related decision-making and monitoring
3. **Influence and Awareness:** Increasing research-policy interface in water related fields

To meet these objectives, SIC ICWC will:

Produce new knowledge and research in support of regional policy dialogue on the sustainable use, management and protection of water resources in the context of climate change, including on resource use efficiency, improved water and land productivity, water-energy-food-ecosystem nexus, economic mechanisms, legal frameworks, social and cultural implications;

Renovate databases, information systems and tools in support of monitoring and forecasting of water resources use and water security assessment;

Strengthen capacities by providing tailored and needs-based trainings for different target groups, including on using data and evidence-based research outputs in decision making and planning processes;

Build the community of experts and practitioners from different disciplines and fields, with a particular focus on young professionals and women.

The expected impact of the initiative is to promote inclusive and evidence-based decision making on water related issues in Central Asia with a view of enhanced implementation of related SDG.

The impact is expected to lead to:

Increased supply of data and knowledge to inform decision-making, planning and negotiations in support of regional water dialogues and sustainable water management;

Increased understanding of the benefits of regional cooperation and sustainable water management coming from evidence base research and data;

Enhanced standing and capacity of regional organisations such as the ICWC to act as an operative mechanism of transboundary cooperation;

Strengthen capacities of water professionals to understand the needs of other sectors and work in a multilateral environment;

Enhanced partnership among experts and professionals from multiple disciplines and sectors at different levels to work together on water security and sustainable development in the context of regional and global water challenges.

Partners: Branches of SIC ICWC in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, national water authorities in five Central Asian states, Basin Water Organizations (BWO AmuDarya and BWO SyrDarya).

## **Side-event “Water and Heritage: Connecting Past, Present and Future”**

Just before the UN Water Conference, on March 20-21, 2023, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and partners organized in New York the two-day side event “Water and Heritage: Connecting Past, Present and Future”. The goal was to demonstrate that commitments for action should always be rooted in the past as it holds the value of water-related material, conceptual and spiritual 'assets' built up over millennia.

The participants discussed conceptual and scientific approaches to valuing water and heritage, as well as the role of culture in the past, present and future of sustainable water systems. Examples of ‘live’ heritage were cited from different regions and geographical backgrounds.

D.R. Ziganshina, Director of SIC ICWC, spoke about the unique cultural, technical and scientific water heritage in Central Asia. The particular treatment of water is embedded in religion and traditions of the people inhabiting this arid region since immemorial times. In the Middle Ages, the Silk Road, housing Central Asia in its heart, played an important role in developing water infrastructure since most of its routes crossed dry steppes. The people built ‘sardoba’, covered storage tanks to collect rainwater during rainy periods and meltwater in winter. Besides expanding trade links and water infrastructure, development of the Silk Road also fostered international communication and dialogue, as well as scientific exchanges.

Another example of the region's heritage is the development of the Golodnaya (Hunger) Steppe. The technical, managerial and socio-economic approaches applied to development of this Steppe are an example of integrated land development, i.e. entire settlements and cities were built around the irrigation system. Establishment of the Central Asian Irrigation Research Institute (SANIIRI) in 1924 provided a scientific basis for modernization and implementation of innovative approaches to land development. The nationwide construction of the Big Fergana Canal, where 160 thousand people dug a 350-km canal for 45 days by the local khashar method (voluntary unpaid labor), is also indicative.

Undoubtedly, when citing the positive examples of water development, one should not forget about tragic lessons such as the Aral Sea disaster. The future is built on both positive and negative lessons of regional heritage. The regional water heritage is described in details in the publication “Water: Past, Present and Future”, V.A. Dukhovniy and J. de Schutter.

## **Water Diplomacy Symposium 2023: A Global Experience Exchange Organized on the side of the 2023 UN Water Conference**

The Women in Water Diplomacy Network in partnership with the Environmental Law Institute, the Stockholm International Water Institute, the International Joint Commission, the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the University of Arizona convened the Symposium on March 21. The objective of this event was to enable experience and good practice exchange amongst participating water diplomats.

Water diplomats from the Americas, Africa, and Asia, including indigenous water leaders, focused on critical themes of importance to transboundary basins globally, and fragile and conflict sensitive basins in particular. The participants exchanged on the tools of water diplomacy for all scales, effective consultation and community engagement in water diplomacy processes, managing for uncertainty in an era of climate change.

Director of SIC ICWC, D. Ziganshina spoke at the session on data exchange and decision support. In particular, she underlined the role that reliable and evidence-based information plays in transboundary water management.

### **Roundtable “Water Security and Hydro-diplomacy: Turning the Spotlight on Knowledge-Sharing, Accelerating Cooperative Action, and Role of Multilateral Forums”**

The roundtable event was organized by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the Stimson Center on March 21.

One of the key ideas that was advocated during KAS-Stimson’s recent International Hydro-diplomacy conference in Brussels was that Track-II meetings and dialogues pave the way for an open and candid discussion between governments and other important stakeholders like civil society organizations on urgent challenges pertaining to shared natural resources like rivers. A critical element of track-II hydro-diplomacy would thus be to explore how we unearth politically charged issues and feed them into broader areas of global cooperation backed by multi-lateral forums.

The aim was to discuss such key ideas with a broader expert community and to allow for a candid discussion on the crucial theme of Water for Cooperation: Transboundary and International Water Cooperation, Cross-Sectoral Coop-

eration, including Scientific Cooperation, and Water Across the 2030 Agenda (SDG 6.5, 6.b and SDGs 16, 17).

Director of SIC ICWC, D. Ziganshina raised transboundary water cooperation aspects on example of Central Asia.

### **Interactive dialogue: Water for sustainable development: valuing water, water-energy-food nexus and sustainable economic and urban development**

Interactive dialogue 2: Water for sustainable development: valuing water, water-energy-food nexus and sustainable economic and urban development was held on 22 March 2023 as part of the UN Water Conference. The issues were addressed through the lens of the accelerators of the Sustainable Development Goal 6 Global Acceleration Framework.

Director of SIC ICWC, D. Ziganshina spoke at the session on water, energy and food nexus. In particular, she told on the results of extensive consultation process on nexus issues with key stakeholders from Central Asia organized in preparation to a new IKI project funded by Germany.

She underlined that CA countries are increasingly aware of the importance of cross-sectoral cooperation, but there is demand for concrete and practical tools to operationalize it in practice, including in planning at various levels. There is need for more compelling evidence, targeted capacity development, multidisciplinary research and workable financing mechanisms to promote Nexus investments and engage with the private sector.

Learning from the best practices across the globe it is essential to build on local knowledge and home-grown institutions and platforms such as ICWC and IFAS that celebrate 30 years anniversary this year on March 26.

## **High level event “Integrated Water Resources Management at Basin Level: Benefits of This Nexus Approach to Accelerate the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals”**

The high level event “Integrated Water Resources Management at basin level: benefits of this nexus approach to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals” organized by the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO) and France was also held on 22 March in the UNHQ.

President of the World Water Council, Mr. Loic Fauchon took the floor with the keynote speech. The event in particular showcased the Dakar Action Plan for River, Lake and Aquifer Basins adopted at the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar in March 2022 and already joined by 95 organizations. The Dakar Action Plan was registered in the Water Action Agenda.

Representatives of basin organizations, including on the Mekong, Rhine, Congo-Ubangi-Sangha river basins and the Aral Sea basin discussed how integrated water resources management was contributing to achieve water-related SDGs. In particular, they underlined the role of cross-sectoral integration, nexus considerations and adaptation to climate change at basin level.

Citing the ICWC activities, Director of SIC ICWC, D. Ziganshina told on the role of basin organizations in fostering climate adaptation in water management.

## **Special event “The Economics of Water: Transforming Governance to Secure a Sustainable, Just and Prosperous Future”**

Objective of this special event held on 23 March was to highlight the need for the global water cycle to be managed as a global common good and illustrate the shifts in economic thinking and governance and repurposed tools of collaboration that will open up major opportunities for innovation and investment in more efficient, just and inclusive, and sustainable use of water, from the local to the global. Major groups, including scientific and technological community, local authorities, children and youth, private sector and industry were represented throughout the event.

The special event took place in the form of an open dialogue, chaired by the Global Commission on the Economics of Water (GCEW). Csaba Korosi, President of the UN General Assembly and Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the UN opened the session and provided key remarks. Repre-

representatives of major groups presented their views on the issues addressed by the GCEW. Deputy Director of SIC ICWC, Sh. Muminov took part in the session.

Finally, it was decided to initiate a series of Societal Dialogues to inform the work of the GCEW and to socialise the conceptual frameworks and solutions globally. Some of the themes that will be addressed in the Societal Dialogues include: science, food systems, trade, finance, labour and regional efforts (LAC and Africa).



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