



# Enhancing Security in Afghanistan and Central Asia through Regional Cooperation on Water

AMU DARYA BASIN CONSULTATION REPORT



WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY

GERDA HENKEL STIFTUNG

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# Enhancing Security in Afghanistan and Central Asia through Regional Cooperation on Water

Amu Darya Basin Consultation Report

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WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY

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**This conference was jointly hosted by:**

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Group of the Progressive Alliance of  
**Socialists & Democrats**  
in the European Parliament



**The Greens | European Free Alliance**  
in the European Parliament



*This conference is organised by the EastWest Institute and Wageningen University within the framework of the Development Policy Review Network (DPRN). With a view to stimulating informed debate and discussion of issues related to the formulation and implementation of development policies, DPRN creates opportunities to promote open exchange and dialogue between scientists, policymakers, development practitioners and the business sector in the Netherlands and Flanders. For more information see [www.DPRN.nl](http://www.DPRN.nl) and [www.global-connections.nl](http://www.global-connections.nl).*

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# FOREWORD

On December 7, 2010, the EastWest Institute (EWI), the Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention, Wageningen University and the Amu Darya Basin Network within the framework of the Development Policy Review Network organized a one-day consultation, “Enhancing Security in Afghanistan and Central Asia through Regional Cooperation on Water.” The meeting, hosted by the European Parliament in Brussels, aimed to encourage regional cooperation on water between Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbors.

The meeting built on a series of high-level consultations that EWI convened in 2009 on Improving Regional Cooperation on Water, with the support of the Gerda Henkel Stiftung and EWI’s Parliamentarians Network for Conflict Prevention. Similarly, the meeting benefited from the experience and ongoing activities of the Amu Darya Basin Network ([www.amudaryabasin.net](http://www.amudaryabasin.net)), established by EWI and the Wageningen University Irrigation and Water Engineering Group in 2010 with support from the Development Policy Review Network (DPRN), Amsterdam.

Participants included experts and officials from Afghanistan, Central Asia and the international donor community, representing inter alia the European Union (the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European Parliament), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), United Nations organizations (the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the UN Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development), the World Bank, the Foreign Offices of Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Japan, the Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) Development Bank, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Stockholm International Water Institute, the Aga Khan Development Network, and leading academic and civil society organizations.

While the recommendations of the report reflect positions that were agreed upon by the participants, this report neither reflects a consensus view nor fully captures all variations of opinions expressed in the discussions. It tries to capture, however, the predominant views of the participants.

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# 1. Executive Summary

The Amu Darya is the largest river in Central Asia, crucial to the livelihoods of the 43 million people who live in the Aral Sea Basin. Fed by glacial streams from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan, the Amu Darya flows north-west through Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan towards the Aral Sea. These five countries depend greatly on the river and its tributaries for food, water and energy security. For upstream Tajikistan, the Amu Darya is an important source of hydropower, a centerpiece of that country's economy. For downstream Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the Amu Darya's waters are crucial for agricultural irrigation. Today, Afghanistan uses only a small amount of water to feed its irrigation networks, but as the country recovers from decades of conflict, it is bound to draw more water for its increasing development needs. This has caused anxiety in neighboring countries downstream.

Currently, only very limited cooperation on water use in the Amu Darya Basin exists. As the regional population rises and economic demands in the basin increase, the riparian countries are concerned they will need more water – but may get less. Due to climate change, the river's seasonal flow has already become erratic and it may diminish. Now more than ever, to prevent future conflict on water, the Amu Darya Basin needs effective mechanisms for cooperative transboundary water management.

This report's recommendations are distinguished by three crucial observations:

- The river's increasingly variable water flow and the region's growing population represent a security threat;
- An Integrated Water Resource Management approach is necessary;
- Achieving cooperation will only be possible through a focused bottom-up, basin-based approach.

In the Amu Darya Basin, water resources are not scarce – but they are increasingly unpredictable. Countries upstream and downstream lack adequate infrastructure to fully benefit from these resources. Water availability in the basin depends largely on seasonal factors that affect the river's flow, such as rain, snowfall, and melting of glaciers. With climate change, glacial retreat and early snowmelt are becoming more dramatic, which has heightened seasonal shifts of water availability. In the future, participants expect summer floods to decrease and that river discharge during winter and spring seasons will increase,

which could make it hard to meet farmers' critical need for water in the summer. In Afghanistan, spring floods have increased in volume over the past years, as have water shortages during summer and early autumn. In addition, local studies indicate that changing regional weather patterns could lead to a 10 – 15 percent reduction in water flow by 2050<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, climate change factors such as increased temperature could increase the demand for irrigation by 5 percent by 2035 and by 7-10 percent by 2050<sup>2</sup>.

These adverse effects of climate change will become all the more significant in coming years, as the population in the basin increases. It is expected to reach a total of 60 million around 2025, an increase of almost 50% over today's numbers and four times the population of the 1960s.

With the strain on water resources bound to increase, riparian countries of the Amu Darya should work towards Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) in the basin, in order to maximize the economic and social benefits of water resource development in a coordinated and equitable manner that ensures long-term sustainability of water use. An IWRM approach would help basin countries balance competing demands for water use between the agricultural, industrial and hydropower sectors, and between upstream and downstream users.

Recognizing the need to act, national and multilateral donors stand ready to devote considerable financial means to support management in the basin. This represents a real window of opportunity – one that can be used to create better, more cooperative transboundary water management in the Amu Darya Basin.

## Against that backdrop, participants made the following recommendations:

- **Start with a bottom-up, basin-level approach:** All too often, bilateral and multilateral political, legal and economic agreements are framed as the starting point for change. In Central Asia, it is more realistic to see these broad agreements as end-points. A case in point are the existing legal instruments for the basin, which generally too broadly-defined to be effective. In addition, signatory states are often not able to comply with them. Most importantly, Afghanistan is entirely absent from these instru-

1 ENVSEC. 2009. Environment and Security in the Amu Darya River Basin. Draft report. UNEP, UNDP, UNECE, OSCE, REC, NATO. p 18.

2 ENVSEC. 2009. Environment and Security in the Amu Darya River Basin. Draft report. UNEP, UNDP, UNECE, OSCE, REC, NATO. p 18.





ments, which poses a significant problem, as it is the Amu Darya's second largest contributor. Therefore, the first steps for improving and integrating water management need to be taken at the local level of villages, and at the level of districts and provinces.

- **Trust-building among the riparian states is vital, and must begin with the experts directly engaged in local water management:** Donors, governments and stakeholders should work to improve direct communication and practical cooperation between local experts from different countries, creating forums in which participants can jointly build technical skills and share best practices.
- **Everyone can win! Water sharing should be seen as benefit sharing:** Countries of the Amu Darya Basin should develop mutually-beneficial economic plans based on water-related projects. With a dialogue on strategic investments, downstream countries could, for instance, invest in hydropower projects upstream, giving everyone a stake in a plant's success. Such downstream-upstream investments could be a key to regional water security.

- **Reinvigorate existing multilateral frameworks for cooperation:** These include the Economic Cooperation Organization, the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), the Interstate Coordinating Water Commission (ICWC), the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation program (CAREC) and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan RECCA. In order to effectively build cooperation on water management, these groups must increase participation and set focused agendas based on economic development in the basin
- **Create a sustained advocacy effort at the national government level:** To complement local efforts, substantially increased, targeted advocacy efforts by informed local and international experts and donor agencies should be directed at governments in the basin. Such advocacy must specifically target basin based cooperation and might include the introduction of conditionalities of donor aid where appropriate.

## 2. Discussion Report

### Challenges and Conflicting Interests

The Amu Darya Basin lacks effective institutional frameworks for regional cooperation and convincing legal rules. Riparian countries tend to look at developing their water resources through a strictly national lens. This puts downstream countries, which focus on agricultural development, in competition with upstream countries, which focus on hydropower development.

Tensions between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan over the construction of the Rogun dam have intensified. Uzbekistan has raised objections to Tajikistan's and Kyrgyzstan's plans to build hydropower stations, citing seismological and environmental risks. Meanwhile, downstream riparian states like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan that want to be more independent are building their own reservoirs, apparently without consulting other basin countries.

It is crucial for regional security that Afghanistan be better integrated into its Central Asian neighborhood. Continued turmoil has diminished Afghanistan's water infrastructure and decimated its capacity in water management from all angles - human, technical, institutional and organizational. As a result, Afghanistan perceives its position as weak and is hesitant to engage in cross-border cooperation on shared water resources. But as the major upstream country, Afghanistan's participation is crucial to creating cooperative and effective transboundary water management.

### The Need for a Basin-focused Debate on Energy and Agricultural Development

#### Energy needs and water consumption

Currently, only about 8% of the Amu Darya Basin's hydropower potential has been developed, while almost 90% of its water is being used for agriculture<sup>3</sup>. With demographic growth and development, there is a great need

to better balance agricultural and hydro-energy demands on available water resources and to create innovative approaches that look at the basin as a whole.

The upstream countries, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have abundant hydropower potential, whereas the downstream countries -- Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan -- have significant reserves of oil, gas and coal. In the Soviet Union, these natural resources were managed on a regional basis. The hydraulic infrastructure systems in upstream Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were operated primarily for irrigation to accommodate the agricultural needs of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In return, the downstream countries supplied upstream countries with fossil fuels to fulfill their energy needs.

Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, the scope of regional exchanges declined as the basin countries focused on pursuing national economic interests. When downstream countries introduced world market prices for gas and coal, upstream countries were forced to increase electricity generation from reservoirs, causing a sharp reduction in available water downstream. Barter agreements of the late 1990s to address the situation were generally unsuccessful due to a lack of trust between the parties and effective barter mechanisms. At the same time, there is also a lack of inter-state consultation on planned infrastructure development projects and their potential impact and benefits.

Basin countries must look at the water and energy sectors holistically, with a perspective that extends beyond narrow national interests. There is a case to be made for a regional energy market better tailored to avoid competition between energy and irrigation needs.

Barter agreements in which downstream countries buy cheap electricity in the summer from the water rich upstream countries, who in turn buy hydrocarbons for energy in winter from the fossil fuel rich downstream, have so far proven ineffective in the region. Better mechanisms for cooperation need to be developed in that regard. The investment of downstream states in upstream water infrastructure projects (vested interest) should be encouraged.

#### Water use efficiency

Irrigated agriculture plays an important role in the economies of Central Asian countries. Due to its arid climate, the Aral Sea basin devotes 90% of its surface water use to agricultural irrigation. However, management of that irrigation is highly inefficient, as about 50-60% of

<sup>3</sup> Data presented in the reporting from the Energy working group of the December 7, 2010 consultation.

Energy availability in the Aral Sea basin					
Countries	Fossil fuel, MTOE			Total fossil fuel, MTOE	Hydro potential, TWh/year
	Coal	Crude oil	Gas		
Kazakhstan	24300	1100	1500	26900	27
Kyrgyzstan	580	6	5	591	163
Tajikistan	500	2	5	507	317
Turkmenistan	0	75	2252	2327	2
Uzbekistan	2851	82	1476	4409	15

Source: World Bank. 2009. River Basin Management in Central Asia: Challenges and Opportunities. Presented at Water Week, February 19, 2009  
MTOE: Metric Tons of Oil Equivalent; TWh/year: TerraWatt hour (equivalent of one billion KiloWatt hour) per year.

water is lost before reaching the fields<sup>4</sup>. This is caused by outdated irrigation and drainage systems, high soil salinity and water logging. The Central Asia Human Development Report of 2005 shows that the Central Asian region loses 3% of the region's GDP per year due to lowered agricultural yields that result from poor water management.<sup>5</sup>

All riparian states in the Amu Darya Basin share an interest in making their irrigation systems more efficient. But to succeed, these states must work together – something that will only be possible once they view water management as a basin-based rather than narrow national goal. To improve irrigation in the basin, stakeholder nations should work together to expand their capacity for water management. Sharing best practices, with the help of the donor community, would be an important step forward.

Development plans designed and implemented in the region must include benchmarks for increased efficiency of the agricultural sector and inter-sector cooperation. All stakeholder nations should promote innovations in the agricultural sector that would allow water resources to be used more economically.

According to participants, 31% of irrigated areas in Uzbekistan and 45% in Turkmenistan are used for cotton production, a highly water-intensive crop that remains the centerpiece of the agricultural economy in the downstream area of the Amu Darya Basin. Member states need an open debate about the potential reduction of dependency on the agricultural sector, and notably on water-intensive crops. To foster sustainable agricultural development in

this arid basin, stakeholders should aim to pool resources to jointly research alternative cultivation methods, investigating new, less water-intensive crop choices and perhaps crop genetics.

Improved institutional regulation and technical control should be considered to reduce water consumption. For instance, the current cotton quota in Uzbekistan has not increased water use efficiency, as the price yield is set for minimum production, no matter how much water was squandered in the process.

## Inefficient Legal Instruments

Water regulations governing regional water use are characterized by a mixture of binding instruments and numerous semi-formal arrangements commonly referred to as “soft law.” **The fragmented nature and sheer number of these instruments** hinder their efficiency. Any consideration of further laws should start with a **basin-wide review of these instruments and aim to include Afghanistan.**

Arrangements so far include regional agreements of a general nature and bilateral agreements on practical issues relating to specific shared water resources, none of which incorporate Afghanistan.

Recent agreements on regional water include:

- **1992 Almaty Agreement:** Agreement between the governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan on the joint protection and common management of interstate water resources.

<sup>4</sup> Environment and Security in the Amu Darya River Basin. Draft report. ENVSEC.2009.

<sup>5</sup> “Bringing Down Barriers: Regional Cooperation for Human Development and Human Security.” *Central Asia Human Development Report*. UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Bratislava, Slovakia. UNDP, 2005.

The participation of regional stakeholder nations in existing regional conventions						
Convention	Afghanistan	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
<b>1992 Water</b> – UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (* 2003 Amendment to allow accession by countries outside the UNECE region, not in force yet)	? *	✓	-	-	-	✓
<b>1991 Espoo</b> – UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context	-	✓	✓	signed	-	-
<b>1992 Industrial Accidents</b> – UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents	-	✓	-	-	-	-
<b>1998 Aarhus</b> – UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
<b>1992 CIS Environmental Interaction</b> – Agreement on Interaction in the field of ecology and the environmental protection	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>1998 CIS Transboundary Watercourses</b> – Agreement on the Main Principles of Interactions in the field of Rational Use and Protection of Transboundary Watercourses of the CIS	-	signed	-	✓	-	-
<b>1998 CIS Informational Cooperation</b> – Agreement on Informational Cooperation in the field of Ecology and the Environmental Protection	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-

Source: Presentation by D. Ziganshina, December 7, 2010, Brussels, Consultation on Enhancing Security in Afghanistan and Central Asia through Regional Cooperation on Water

- **1993 Kzyl-Orda Agreement:** Agreement between the governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan on joint activities addressing the Aral Sea crisis and environmental restoration in the impacted zone, and encouraging social and economic development of the Aral Sea region.
- **1996:** Agreement between the governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan on the use of energy and water resources, construction and exploitation of gas pipelines of Central Asia.
- **1996:** Agreement between the governments of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan on cooperation on operating and maintaining transboundary infrastructure.
- **1998, Syr Darya Agreement** (supposed to be annually negotiated – and only covering the Naryn, a major headwater stream located in Kyrgyzstan): Agreement between the governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and the Republic of Uzbekistan on the use of water and energy resources of the Syr Darya Basin.
- **1998 Environmental Cooperation Agreement:** Agreement between the governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Uzbekistan on cooperation on environmental sustainability.
- **1999 Parallel Operation Agreement:** Agreement between the governments of the Republics of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan on the parallel operation of the energy systems of Central Asia.
- **1999 International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) Status Agreement:** Agreement between the governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan on

The participation of regional stakeholder nations in existing global conventions						
Convention	Afghanistan	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
<b>1997 UN Watercourses</b> – Convention on the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses 21 contracting states - 14 short of the number required for entry into force	-	-	-	-	-	✓
<b>1971 Ramsar</b> – Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>1992 CBD</b> – UN Convention on Biological Diversity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>1992 UNFCCC</b> – UN Framework Convention on Climate Change	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>1992 Desertification</b> – UN Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Presentation by D. Ziganshina, 7 December 2010, Brussels, Consultation on Enhancing Security in Afghanistan and Central Asia through Regional Cooperation on Water

the status of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) and its organizations.

- **2006 Convention (not completely ratified): The Framework Convention between the governments of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan on Environmental Protection for Sustainable Development in Central Asia.**
- Draft Agreements under Aral Sea Basin Programs:
  - 1994 – ASBP-1
  - 2002 – ASBP-2
  - 2010 – ASBP-3

In addition to being fragmented and exclusive of Afghanistan, these legal instruments are often further weakened by the **lack of compliance by signatory states**. This is rarely a willful act. It is more often a result of a signatory's lack of capacity to comply and commit. **Legal capacity building and better data exchange as a basic prerequisite is required.**

In the framework of the Berlin Water Process, the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (EC IFAS) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) are running a project called "Regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources management in Central Asia." This project aims

to facilitate the implementation of decisions taken by the heads of Central Asian states by strengthening the legal frameworks in their region. It also develops the capacity of regional institutions in Central Asian countries to achieve cooperation on shared water resources. It aims to modernize institutional arrangements among Central Asian countries. Stakeholder countries and the donor community should aim for more national **capacity building in the analysis and application of international law along these lines.**

As the tables indicate, there are a number of existing legal instruments for cooperation between Afghanistan and Central Asian states. Future developments may allow the inclusion of Afghanistan into the 1992 UNECE<sup>6</sup> and 1997 UN Conventions. However, to implement and comply with these legal instruments, Afghanistan and its neighbors will require well-developed procedural and institutional systems. This highlights the need for enhancing institutional and procedural capacity in these countries.

<sup>6</sup> In 2003, the UNECE Water Convention (Helsinki, 17 March 1992) was amended to allow accession by countries outside the UNECE region, thus inviting the rest of the world to use the Convention's legal framework and to benefit from its experience. Once the amendment enters into force, this will be of particular importance for countries that border the UNECE region, such as Afghanistan, China and the Islamic Republic of Iran (<http://www.unece.org/env/water/text/text.htm>).



## Developmental Considerations

### Generating shared and reliable data

To ensure progress in transboundary water cooperation in the Amu Darya Basin, data sharing among the states is a priority. One must not overlook the fact that important data and information are often dispersed, heterogeneous and incomplete and therefore rarely comparable or conducive to making objective policy decisions. At the same time, a plethora of public, semi-public and private institutes produce data without sufficient means and guidelines for exchanging, gathering, standardizing, and optimally using that data. Better data sharing must therefore be accompanied by efforts to improve data quality, coherence and comparability.

In the context of data sharing, donors and states must work to construct mutual measurement stations along shared rivers. Currently, neither Central Asia nor Afghanistan has records and registration of their dams. Small and large dam registration is necessary for water management in the region. This will also facilitate the data sharing measurements, upstream-downstream communication, and can considerably contribute to the formulation of bilateral and multilateral agreements that enjoy ownership and are implemented.

**Basin countries experts need to enhance their cooperation notably with regard to water resources monitoring.** Institutions and experts in hydrology, glaciology, water quality, flood risk reduction and forecast should consider developing a network with adequate technical means and skills. The Scientific-Information Center of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia (SIC-ICWC) can serve as a model in that regard. It has developed a broad range of water management related know-how and technologies appropriate to adapt to the Central Asian region and apply in Afghanistan. SIC-ICWC has trained thousands of senior and mid-level staff in the Central Asian water sector.

### Developing capacity is a first step, maintaining the capacity is an important second one

Brain drain in Central Asia constitutes a significant challenge. **The water action networks may help reduce the loss of talent from the region. Some experts propose creating a regional selection mechanism to jointly educate and train junior and mid-level experts and**

**policymakers within the same river basins.** By forging strong personal connections and building shared technical skills among young experts, such a mechanism could considerably contribute to more regional cooperation.

There are many capacity-building activities in Central Asia and Afghanistan, but all too often, these efforts are ad hoc and uncoordinated. There is rarely long-term planning based on the desired impacts of capacity building projects, and few consider how to eventually integrate skilled individuals into institutions in their home countries.

Capacity development activities should target different levels, including: academic exchange of students in water-related fields; the retraining of practitioners, scientists, and experts; research grants for experts; professional exchange and training of national experts in international institutions. The region also needs academic, research and policy centers where skills of local experts can be developed, and where regional exchange can be operated.

### Difficulties connecting policymakers and experts

**Policy development and implementation processes are often short-term and operational in nature. The research community, on the other hand, is mostly driven by the need for credibility based on evidence gained through longer term analysis of trends. Linking experts and policymakers would overcome these differences in perspectives.**

Policymakers need evidence and substantive frameworks on which to base policy decisions. Without a firm basis in research, policies tend to be weak, ineffective and prone to frequent change. It is imperative that research makes sense to policymakers, and so should be directed to filling in information and analysis gaps at the policymaking level.

Scientific experts also need to make sure that their research readily invites policymakers who are eager to draw operational conclusions from it. A great deal of policy relevant research is performed in the water sector, and there is plenty of active campaigning by water experts in the scientific community vis-à-vis policymakers, not only to obtain information on policy priorities but also to advocate and influence water policies. Yet the crucial involvement of policy makers is often missing.

To fill the connection and interaction gap between experts and policymakers, members of the Amu Darya Basin Network have proposed to establish a Regional Center of Excellence. It would act as a hub for gathering and distributing knowledge to help improve regional cooperation on water in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Such a Regional Center of Excellence on Water would be the go-to point for all regional and international policymakers, government officials, scientists, researchers and other interested individuals for:

- A publicly available, up-to-date interdisciplinary collection of data analysis and interpretation;
- Relevant scientific and policy relevant research;
- Capacity development programs related to sustainable use of and cooperation on shared water resources in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

The center would serve as a focal point for the development of regionally shared approaches to crucial issues of water security. Such a center would have some overlapping functions with existing bodies for data collection and training capacity, including the Scientific-Information Center of Interstate Coordination Water Commission of Central Asia (SIC-ICWC). Nevertheless, such ideas should be further developed to explore the specific needs of the region in this context.

## Lack of Donor Coordination

Major donors who support water cooperation in the Amu Darya Basin coordinate with each other to some extent, yet a lack of communication about goals, objectives and ongoing projects persists<sup>7</sup>.

The EU, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Swiss Development Cooperation, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), and USAID need more effective coordination and prioritization of their water management programs and policies. There are good examples of improved donor coordination in the Amu Darya Basin, but much remains to be done. At the same time, better donor coordination must be complemented by coordination between aid recipients.

**A potential tool for increased donor coordination is the Aral Sea Basin Programme (ASBP)**, the main development program in the region aiming at long term sustainability. ASBP's program areas include water resource management and environmental protection. The third Aral Sea Basin Program, ASBP-3, offers an opportunity for IFAS member states to more effectively merge national and regional efforts to improve the region's socio-economic situation and achieve environmental sustainability in the basin. EC IFAS, the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea could enhance donor coordination in monitoring and evaluation, as well as information exchange and research. It is a hopeful sign that when ASBP-3 was presented in Almaty in December 2010, donors and implementing agencies recognized the need to work together and raise coordination to a higher level.

Equally, major donors such as EU, World Bank, ADB, SDC, GIZ, and USAID have expressed their wish to see EC IFAS take a central role in donor coordination at the regional level, as it has the expertise and mandate to coordinate donor support to the ASBP-3. Another positive example of coordination among donors is **UNDP's Central Asia Water Sector Coordination Initiative (CAWSCI) platform**. The goal of the platform is to map activities of the various international and regional partners involved in the Central Asian water sector with the aim of supporting information exchange, thus facilitating coordination amongst partners, projects and processes. In the long-term vision, CAWSCI will become a synchronized

<sup>7</sup> Detailed information can be found about donors' activities and coordination in: Central Asia Development Assistance Coordination Matrix 4th Ministerial Conference on Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation\_Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. CAREC, 2005.



water sector platform with complementary interventions that ultimately add value for Central Asian countries and populations, with jointly defined scopes, work divisions, roles and responsibilities among international and regional actors. It will also facilitate concrete collaboration in selected projects, processes or initiatives.

As recommended by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Coordination and Development (OECD DAC), **it is important to build partnerships among donors and developing countries.** Donor coordination at the level of partner countries, Central Asian states and Afghanistan is a valuable and necessary way to make cooperation more effective and achieve development goals. However, **a major obstacle is that Afghanistan is not part of the Central Asian region of major donors and organizations.** For instance, Afghanistan is not eligible to join some existing regional conventions, as it is not part of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe UNECE or the CIS.

The examples mentioned above show that important first steps towards donor coordination have been undertaken. Donors should build on these, creating more integrated policies and programs that would also encourage better coordination and cooperation among recipient countries.

### 3. Recommendations for improved regional water cooperation

#### Start small, keep it simple, keep it river basin based

Capacity development initiatives exist, but they need to be designed “bottom-up.” Solutions do not begin with regional agreements. Rather, they are the end result of an incremental process started at the lowest levels, thematically and geographically. To improve regional cooperation on water between Afghanistan and Central Asia, stakeholders need to target experts from different relevant sectors of all riparian states of the Amu Darya. It is important to begin by sharing knowledge and developing joint skills. As a first step, such a process should on discussing technical issues, thereby incrementally building trust.

Third actor involvement can help reduce potential sensitivity to this process. The donor community can

help by facilitating such a gathering of experts, farmers, civil society organizations, practitioners and scientists. Participation of UN agencies, independent conveners such as the EastWest Institute and networks such as the Amu Darya Basin Network would be useful.

The final success of any expert or donor activities rely on the strengthening of political will for cooperation and coordination. Initiatives at the political level through dialogue, lobbying and advocacy should be encouraged to complement management and development work.

#### Use existing and functional multilateral frameworks to foster cooperation

With its current membership, **the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)** includes ten countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. ECO thus spans an area of eight million square kilometers in a strategic location and includes a population of more than 400 million people, a significant number of whom are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods: Agriculture accounts for an average of slightly more than 20 percent of the GDP of all member states of the ECO region, and employs nearly 40% of its population.

**The region would benefit greatly from sharing experiences under the ECO umbrella with other regional and international peers.** With its unique membership, including all the riparian states of the Amu Darya Basin, ECO provides an exceptional platform for exploring enhanced regional cooperation on water.

The ECO Secretary General has called for closer cooperation with the European Union on establishing the ECO Centre for Efficient Utilization of Water in the agricultural sector. The European Union was invited to help provide technical and financial support for participatory irrigation and water management initiatives on a wide variety of topics: improved involvement of all water users; integrated service provisions for enhanced land and water productivity; resource conservation methods and technologies; integrated water resources management; and, irrigation charging and cost recovery for financial sustainability of irrigation systems for all ECO member countries. These approaches should be taken up pro-actively by member states.

The **World Bank's** work in Afghanistan and Central Asia includes programs in irrigation and drainage rehabilitation, water supply and sanitation, weather and climate,

rural development, the urban water sector, the regional energy sector, river basin development at national level.

Currently, the World Bank's new approaches and instruments encompass regional energy trade, climate change and disaster risk management, including proposed feasibility studies and assessments for additional power generation for export, Central Asian Regional Electricity Market studies, climate change adaptation in the Amu Darya River Basin, the Central Asia Energy-Water Development Program (CAEWDP), and the proposed modernization of hydro-meteorological stations.

**The Asian Development Bank's** regional cooperation strategy program for Central Asia focuses on energy, transport, and trade facilitation projects to secure better access to outside markets and to link the region to neighboring economies. The regional cooperation program also forges partnerships with other development partners.

One of the ADB-supported initiatives is the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program, which was created in 1997. It includes Afghanistan and the five Central Asian states, as well as Azerbaijan, China, Mongolia and Pakistan. With a budget over 13 billion USD, CAREC aims to promote economic cooperation among its members in areas related to transport, trade, and energy.

The UNECE is actively engaged in the region through **Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)** that was launched in 1998, and through regional environmental conventions. The SPECA aims to strengthen sub-regional cooperation in Central Asia through reinforcing legal framework on water and energy, strengthening national and regional institutions, and monitoring and protection of water and energy resources. The member countries of SPECA are Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The UNECE regional conventions are important tools in providing legal framework for addressing issues of transboundary character. On a national level, the UNECE in collaboration with EU Water Initiative is implementing National Policy Dialogues on Integrated Water Resources Management and Water Sanitation and Supply in Central Asian states. At present, these policy dialogues have been carried out in Kyrgyzstan, and initiated in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

NATO's partnership structures and cooperation programs offer a multilateral framework for security dialogue and opportunities for practical bilateral cooperation in areas related to defense and security, disaster preparedness, scientific and environmental collaboration, and rais-

ing public awareness of the benefits of NATO's activities in the region.

## Improve regional cooperation through existing processes

In May 2010, a new **Center for Regional Cooperation was established at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan** tasked with building the capacity of the Afghan government to lead, coordinate and deliver on regional cooperation with its neighbors, with a focus on regional economic development. The Center will work closely with regional forums and organizations such as the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, ECO and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

On the eve of the July 2010 Kabul conference, the Afghan Foreign Ministry hosted a regional conference of representatives from regional bodies, including the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Islamic Development Bank and others. The meeting discussed a coordination mechanism to improve regional cooperation. The meeting agreed to establish a **high-level core group of key regional bodies**, which will ensure high-level coordination of the Afghan component of regional cooperation frameworks among participants; reduce technical hurdles to such cooperation; and mobilize sufficient resources to meet program commitments.

The RECCA IV conference in December 2010 welcomed the establishment of the Center for Regional Cooperation, which serves as the RECCA Secretariat. At the same RECCA IV conference, participants recommended identifying existing mechanisms or forums capable of developing a regional research and policy framework for agriculture. Technical experts would need to share information on best practices and discuss issues of importance for the agricultural sector, including long-term approaches to population growth. However, the RECCA IV and the newly established CRC do not tackle transboundary water as an area for regional cooperation. This remains a major gap in Afghan foreign policy and an obstacle towards its inclusion in regional processes.

## Target the donor community before they lose interest

The international community is currently devoting unprecedented attention and funds towards Afghanistan's development, including considerable aid packages for the water sector. **Afghanistan and Amu Darya Basin stakeholders should harness donor interest to move more determinedly towards cooperative, efficient transboundary water management.** The Asian Development Bank, World Bank, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the French Foreign Office, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, UNDP, UNECE, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the KfW Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Islamic Development Bank, the European Commission and many other organizations are active in the region.

In 2010, the **Russian Federation** offered a USD 300,000 grant for projects on strengthening the economic potential of Afghanistan and the development of a dialogue on energy between Afghanistan and Central Asia. Russia has expressed the desire to cooperate closely with the UN Economic Commission for Europe on this topic, notably for the implementation of projects related to **integrated water resource management in the Amu Darya Basin, including Afghanistan.**

**Japan** is committed to rebuilding Afghanistan and has committed 5 billion USD over a five year period from 2009-2014. It dedicated a 16 million USD grant to partner with FAO for a program aimed to enhance food security by raising agricultural production and productivity. At an operational level, the program seeks to expand irrigation coverage. The project's main components include: water conservation and utilization at river valley level; irrigation rehabilitation; community-based micro hydropower schemes to generate 500 KW of electricity; and, capacity development for the Ministry of Energy and Water to design and implement irrigation and water resource development programs.

With the goal of fully involving Afghanistan, the **Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of France** has underscored its continued interest in reshaping frameworks for regional cooperation on water in Central Asia. Since France is assuming the presidency of the G8 and the G20 over the next two years, this presents a considerable opportunity to give the subject increased attention in the international community. The adoption of regional and

cross-border cooperation as a priority area at the 2010 G8 summit in Canada presents additional opportunities in that regard.

The French government is committed to seizing the unprecedented diplomatic momentum for international water security, as demonstrated by the UN General Assembly's recognition of access to clean water as a human right. France will be hosting the 2012 World Water Forum in Marseille. Building on the experiences of the previous World Water Forum in Istanbul, it will aim for maximum participation of Central Asian and Afghan experts and policymakers.

France's commitment to exploring new frameworks for Central Asian and Afghan regional water cooperation is marked by its multi-year financial support in the amount of 800,000 Euros to a UNECE pilot study on developing capacity for transboundary water data collection and analysis in the Dnjestr, Syr Darya and Amu Darya basins, including Afghanistan.

The **European Union** is one of the most important donors in Afghanistan and has defined rural development as one of three focal areas of the European Commission's assistance. Since 2004, the European Commission has contributed close to 100 million Euros to Afghanistan for water management and irrigation. On a policy level, the EU has provided support to the development of the water law, as signed by the Afghan President in 2009, thus laying the foundation for integrated water resources management.

In Central Asia, the 2007 "EU Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia" led to the creation of the Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation, including a Working Group on Water Management, which also reserves a platform for coordination. The 2010 Joint Progress Report by the Council of the EU and the European Commission identified greater emphasis on the water and energy nexus, and cooperation with Afghanistan, as two of four key priority areas. From the European perspective, the inclusion of Afghanistan in regional water dialogue and, gradually, into cooperation structures is a logical step. However, the European Union does not want to propose a blueprint model for such cooperation, but rather assume the role of facilitator. It acts as a long-term partner providing expertise, building on a vast experience in solving issues related to transboundary rivers like the Danube .

The Berlin Water Process is an integral part of the water and environment pillar of the EU Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia. It is financed by the **German Federal Foreign Office**, and executed by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit

(GTZ). The process has three key components that relate to improving regional cooperation on water: fostering regional institutional capacity; strengthening transboundary river basin management; and implementing national pilot projects, including inter-sectoral capacity development. Although Afghanistan is not formally part of the program, Afghan experts are already participating in some of its activities and further integration is planned for the next years.

The staying power of the **World Bank** as donor in the region is exemplary. The World Bank has had a continued interest in the water sector in Central Asia since 1993. With an active portfolio of 1.5 billion USD globally, this donor actor carries a great deal of expertise in the water sector, from the Nile Basin to the Mekong, and the Danube to the Baltic. It has played an important role in facilitating the Indus River Treaty between India and Pakistan, and continues to enable feasibility studies of water infrastructure works with transboundary impacts.

The World Bank has spent close to 40 million USD on the water sector in Central Asia since 1995. However, the yields from this active engagement are rather limited. Lessons learned on the part of the World Bank include the recognition of the weakness of regional institutions, and

the overestimation of the power of such institutions. When it comes to the water sector policies, national authorities remain in the driver's seat. As a result, there is a strong case to be made for the World Bank to develop strategic scenarios country by country, with simulations sector by sector, instead of focusing on empowering relatively weak regional institutions. This would allow for well-developed ideas to make it into national budgets, thus providing necessary financial resources for change and progress.

The Central Asian population's dependency on agriculture is so large that it poses real economic risks. This is why the World Bank advocates a transformation of rural space to generate more variable economic activities and reduce regional dependence less on agriculture.

The World Bank also advocates the improvement of storage and regulatory facilities to help control water release and ensure protection from drought and flood. Moreover, it aims to help facilitate the exchange of data and expertise, with an eye toward reducing the detrimental impacts of climate change. The World Bank is currently working to develop a multi-donor fund that includes USAID and the UNECE, among others, to strengthen the Energy Coordination Committee within the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program (CAREC).

## Appendix 1: Speakers

Dr. Iskandar Abdullaev, Regional advisor, Transboundary Water Management in Central Asia (Programme), German Technical Cooperation GTZ

Mr. Guy Alaerts, Program Team Leader for the Water Sector, World Bank

Dr. Reza Ardakanian, Director, UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development

Mr. Thijs Berman, MEP (Netherlands), Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament.

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Mr. Mohammad Naim Eqrar, Head of Geology Department, National Hydrological Committee of Afghanistan (NHCA)

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Ms. Dinara Ziganshina, PhD student, UNESCO Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science



## Appendix 2: Participants

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