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ADB-PRC Regional Knowledge Sharing Initiative

CAREC Institute Water Dialogue Series

on

Sustainable Water Governance in Central Asia Aimed Climate Vulnerabilities

as of 25th April 2022

Background

On 10 February 2022, the CAREC Institute held its first regional dialogue on sustainable water governance and management in Central Asia with key implementing partners, including Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The dialogue generated constructive discussions and practical ways forward for sustainable water governance in the region. Almost all prominent water experts echoed the need for further dialogue and targeted cooperation among all stakeholders at local, national, and regional levels. The CAREC Institute responded positively and committed to hold series of water dialogues in 2022. This is to continue discussion on various aspects of sustainable water governance and management in Central Asia and further explore possibilities for intensifying targeted collaboration.

Water has always been the intrinsic source of livelihood for all living beings worldwide. It is becoming a scarce natural resource for the inhabitants of the Central Asian region whose ongoing development and long-term sustainable prospects depend on water. The region is suffering from the numerous deteriorating environmental obstacles. The biggest one is the drying of the Aral Sea – what used to be one of the largest lakes in the world – due to mismanagement in the past. According to the recent CAREC Institute assessments, the region is facing unprecedented climate change impacts – causing draughts, sandstorms and heatwaves that adversely affect all sources of water, including the whole ecosystem of the region.¹

As a result, the region's overall development and economic growth face obstacles. To analyze the current and potential economic losses due to adverse impacts of climate change on water sources in the region, the SDC has completed a comprehensive analytical study – “Water Footprint Analysis of Central Asia”. The study offers evidence-based and in-depth explanations as well as feasible policy options to mitigate climate change challenges through sustainable water management approaches. This dialogue aims to facilitate expert discussions among the lead authors of the study, development partner experts and the CAREC region stakeholders.

Key Objectives

¹ <https://www.carecinstitute.org/publications/policy-brief-determinants-of-vulnerability-to-climate-induced-water-stress-in-carec/>

The dialogue specific objectives are:

- To facilitate **open dialogue** among **leading water management experts** on pathways to sustainable, climate adaptive water management systems in Central Asian countries;
- To **discuss, analyze and select practical implications** of Water footprint report for Central Asia
- To further explore **potential coordination mechanisms** between ADB- CAREC Water Pillar, regional projects, initiatives, and activities of both international and regional partners in Central Asia.

Expected Outcomes

The dialogue is expected to achieve the below outcomes:

- Direct and open dialogue platform is launched for interaction and commitment to sustainable water management in Central Asia.
- Regional cooperation and collaboration are promoted to translate research findings into practical actions in fostering sustainable water management in the CAREC region; and
- An enabling environment for enhanced multistakeholder collaboration is further strengthened.

Date, Mode and Target Audience

“The CAREC Institute Dialogues” is a new approach to knowledge exchange and capacity building dedicated to priority clusters of the CAREC Program Strategy. This is the second dialogue on sustainable water management in Central Asia. It is scheduled for **27 April 2022 from 15:00-17:00 Beijing time**. It will be delivered online. In addition to organizing bodies and development partner experts, it will be open to all experts and interested wider audience from across the CAREC region and beyond to listen and benefit from expert presentations and discussions. The dialogue will be recorded and uploaded on the CAREC Institute E-Learning platform as guiding digital learning materials (DLMs) – serving as the basis for further cascading knowledge support to member countries and all stakeholders in this area.

Tentative Agenda

**27 April 2022
15:00 – 17:00 PM (Beijing Time)**

14:50-15:00: Virtual Connection to the Dialogue and Webinar Rules

Group Photo

Ms. Rose Shao, Capacity Building Specialist, CAREC Institute

Opening Remarks

15:00-15:06 **Ms. Yasmin Siddiqi**, Director, Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Division, ADB

15:06-15:12 **Mr. Syed Shakeel Shah**, Director, CAREC Institute

15:12-15:18 **Dr. Guy Bonvin**, Swiss Development Agency for Development and Cooperation
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

Dialogue MC: **Dr. Iskandar Abdullaev**, Deputy Director II, CAREC Institute

Session I: **Keynote Presentation**

15:15-15:45 Water Footprint study for Central Asia: main outcomes and policy lessons by
Ioana Dobrescu- Managing Director, Water Footprint Implementation
Key Findings of “Water Footprint Analysis of Central Asia” and Practical Lessons

Session II: **Dialogue with Implementing Partners**

15:45-17:00 This is an open dialogue session with leading water sector experts from key implementing partner organizations. Each expert will be given 5-7 minutes to address the following guiding questions and engage in open dialogue with other experts, and participants.

Guiding Questions:

- *What are your takeaways of Water footprint report for Central Asia, what messages which you think are important for the region's water future?*
- *How could this study help to enhance water reforms, transformation, and activities of local institutions?*
- *What are the potential practical steps recommended in Water footprint report which could help to improve water governance and management in Central Asia region?*
- *Are there international best practices that could be replicated and rescaled in Central Asia for addressing water footprint issues? What policy options could affect the reduction of water footprint in Central Asia while keeping economic growth at scale?*
- *Has water footprint issue been incorporated in academic settings and curriculums in Central Asia? Do you think that it is necessary to integrate water footprint study in higher education curricular for providing better solutions to water productivity and efficiency in the region?*
- *What do you regard as the most pressing research and/or policy activity to promote widespread better understanding of water value in the region in the context of growing population and augmenting climate change?*

Moderator: **Mr. Shakhboz Akhmedov**, Senior Research Fellow, Knowledge and Research Networking, CAREC Institute

Distinguished Discussants:

1. **Dr. Abdulhakim Salokhidinov**, Professor, Vice Rector of National University Tashkent Institute Irrigation and Agriculture Mechanization of Engineers (TIIAME)
 2. **Mr. Kazuhiro Yoshida**, Senior Water Resources Specialist, ADB
 3. **Dr. Rakhmatullaev Shavkat**, Specialist, World Bank Water sector
 4. **Dr. Duan Weili**, Professor, Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography Chinese Academy of Sciences
 5. **Dr. Rabindra P. Osti**, Senior Water Resources Specialist, East Asia Department, ADB
 6. **Dr. Oytur Anarbekov**, Country Manager/Researcher, Regional Representative Office for Central Asia, International Water Management Institute
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Takeaways and Way Forward

Dr. Iskandar Abdullaev, Deputy Director II, CAREC Institute