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# The Central Asia Nexus Dialogue Project: Fostering Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus and Multi-Sector Investment (Phase II)

## National Consultation Meetings Minutes

10.09.2020 | 10:00 – 12:00\* | Kazakhstan



15.09.2020 | 11:00 – 12:30\* | Uzbekistan



15.09.2020 | 14:00 – 15:30\* | Tajikistan



16.09.2020 | 09:00 – 10:30\* | Turkmenistan



\* Local time

## CONTEXT

The Central Asia Nexus Dialogue Project: Fostering Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus and Multi-Sector Investment (the “Nexus Project” or “Project”) has started the implementation of its second phase (2020-2023) building on the results achieved during the first phase (2016-2019). The Nexus Project is implemented by the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) with the financial support by the European Union (EU). This Project is part of the Global Nexus Regional Dialogues Programme covering five regions<sup>1</sup> of the world that is co-funded by the EU and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The purpose of the National Consultation Meetings was to present the multi-sectoral approach to the planning and designing of projects to invest in relevant infrastructure to achieve water, energy and food security (WEF) in Central Asia, as well as to engage national line ministries and other stakeholders in the project implementation.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings were held online in an interactive discussion format.

## INTRODUCTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

In all countries, the meetings began with the introduction of participants. All the participants had the opportunity to introduce themselves and give a brief overview of their activities.

The total number of participants was 80 people. Please see the List of Participants below (Annex 1).

## WELCOME SPEECHES<sup>2</sup>:

### Greetings from the European Union Delegations in Central Asia:

- **Snejana Popova, Project Officer, Delegation of the European Union to Kazakhstan:**  
Ms Popova greeted the participants and presented the EU’s new geopolitical priorities set out along the five pillars: 1) **green deals**; 2) **digitalization**; 3) **sustainable growth and jobs**; 4) **migration partnerships**; and 5) **governance, peace and security**. The EU’s cooperation with Central Asian countries is based on the EU’s Strategy on Central Asia that calls for strengthening regional cooperation. As the countries of Central Asia are closely interrelated with respect to their environment, water and energy resources, **strong regional cooperation is essential for sustainable development of the region**. The EU promotes **the Nexus approach as a fundamental shift from a purely sectoral approach to integrated cross-sector solutions**. The EU’s support for the region in the framework of its development cooperation amounted to more than **EUR 1 billion since 2014**. At present, the EU has **15 ongoing regional programmes** covering the sustainable use of water, energy, environment for the **total amount of about EUR 100 million**. Through projects like WELOOP, CAWEP<sup>3</sup> and NEXUS, the EU works together with its Central Asian partner countries to enhance national environmental, climate change and water policies to approximate them to EU standards, as well as to promote informed green investments in the relevant sectors to build a resilient economy to the benefit of the people living in the region.
- **Doniyor Kuchkarov, Project Manager, Delegation of the European Union to Uzbekistan:**  
Mr Kuchkarov greeted the participants and spoke about the ongoing actions to implement the EU Strategy and the road map for the development of Uzbekistan. He particularly noted that

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<sup>1</sup> Latin America (LA), Niger Basin Region (NBA), Southern Africa (SA), Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Central Asia (CA).

<sup>2</sup> The speakers are listed in the order of the meetings held in the beneficiary countries.

<sup>3</sup> Water and Energy Program for Central Asia, a multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank.

despite the great work carried out by the European Union and other international donors, the main work should be done by the countries themselves, as only efforts based on regional leadership and national responsibility could lead to sustainable long-term solutions.

- **Mr Giuseppe Aristei, Programme Manager, Delegation of the European Union to Tajikistan:**

Mr Aristei greeted all the participants and highlighted the important role played by the European Union in the region's comprehensive development through the ongoing programs and the establishment of transboundary intersectoral dialogues.

- **Mr Ilya Ikonnikov, Expert to facilitate the implementation of DEVCO projects, Delegation of the European Union to Turkmenistan:**

Mr Ikonnikov welcomed the participants and stressed the importance of the Central Asian countries' transition to a "green economy", especially in the light of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Transition to a clean circular economy is essential for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### **Greetings from CAREC representatives:**

- **Lyudmila Kiktenko, Program Manager, CAREC:**

Ms Kiktenko thanked all those who gathered for their participation, called for active participation in the discussion, announced the meeting agenda and wished a productive and interesting meeting.

- **Shahnoza Umarova, Director of CAREC Country Office in Uzbekistan, Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan:**

Ms Umarova thanked everybody for participation on behalf of CAREC Executive Director Mr, Zafar Makhmudov, spoke about the Nexus concept and approach, and presented general information about the Project.

- **Vaysidin Saidov, Director of CAREC Country Office in Tajikistan, Project Coordinator in Tajikistan:**

Mr Saidov greeted all the participants and expressed gratitude to the representatives of the European Union Delegation present. He recalled the importance of the Project in the development of the countries and the region as a whole. He cited a quote from the 2016 speech of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, which highlighted the country's role on the international arena in reducing risks from climate change and ensuring water, energy and food security in the region.

- **Irana Bagirova, Director of CAREC Country Office in Turkmenistan, Project Coordinator in Turkmenistan:**

Ms Bagirova welcomed all those present and thanked them for their participation. She gave brief information on the second phase of the Nexus Project and congratulated everyone on its beginning. She also spoke about the partners who actively participated in the first phase of the Project.

#### **Greetings from national representatives:**

- **Ikhom Zhurayev, Representative of the Ministry of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan:**

Mr Zhurayev welcomed all those present and expressed his gratitude to the European Union for its support. He outlined the importance of implementing the second phase of the Project in the current environment of continuous climate change. He noted the participation of international partners, state and municipal bodies of Uzbekistan, as well as CAREC's contribution to the project implementation. Mr Zhurayev once again confirmed the interest in the implementation of the transboundary small-scale demonstration project on the Tuyamuyun hydro complex proposed by the Ministry of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan and elaborated on its technical specifications and regional significance for the riparian countries, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

- **Mahmad Safarov, Deputy Director of the Hydrometeorology Agency, Environmental Protection Committee under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan:**

Mr Safarov thanked the EU representatives for the support and organization of the meeting. He spoke about the laws adopted in Tajikistan aimed at the country's strategic development in the following directions: food, energy, communications, industrialization. He noted that Tajikistan has developed and adopted a national strategy for adaptation to climate change, designed for the period up to 2030.

- **Baigeldy Baidjanov, Head of the Water Use Division at the State Committee on Water Management in Turkmenistan:**

Mr Baidzhanov greeted all the participants, expressing his gratitude to them for participating and for organizing the meeting on behalf of the State Committee on Water Management. He highlighted the long and productive cooperation between CAREC, the Committee and the EU within the first phase of the Project, and also noted the importance of the Nexus Project for all parties.

## PRESENTATIONS

To present a common vision and uniform approach to the project implementation, the same presentations were used at all national meetings. Given that Ms Lyudmila Kiktenko, Project Manager, could not attend the meeting in Turkmenistan, her address was pre-recorded and played for the participants.

Below are the key elements of the presentations:

- **Lyudmila Kiktenko, Program Manager, CAREC:**
  - A brief description of the work done and results achieved under the first phase of the Project which was implemented by CAREC in partnership with IUCN<sup>4</sup> and EC IFAS<sup>5</sup> from 2016-2019 in four CA countries<sup>6</sup>;
  - A detailed description of the goals, objectives, funding sources and opportunities for stakeholder partnership and involvement of the academic community of Central Asia in the second phase of the Project to be implemented by CAREC in 2020-2023;

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<sup>4</sup> International Union for Conservation of Nature.

<sup>5</sup> Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.

<sup>6</sup> Kyrgyzstan did not take part in the first phase of the project due to its 'frozen' membership in the IFAS.

- The beneficiary countries of the Project during its first phase repeatedly noted the need and importance of implementing joint cross-border projects, developing institutional frameworks and building capacity of the expert community for institutional implementation of the Nexus approach at the national and regional levels;
  - Ms Kiktenko briefly outlined the planned actions, especially in the pilot territories with the involvement of experts from the World Bank and the academic community of Central Asia.
- **Aksulu Kushanova, Energy Investment Specialist, CAREC:**
    - A long list of projects (4 transboundary and 5 national) proposed by the countries for implementation in the second phase as small demonstration projects was presented, noting that these projects are part of large-scale regional investment project ideas that were developed during the first phase. During her presentation, Ms Kushanova provided a brief description of the demonstration projects and their significance for water, energy and food security at the regional and national levels, including their challenges;
    - The criteria for selecting demonstration projects from the long list were agreed as follows: i) support and commitment of the concerned riparian countries; ii) strong water, energy and food sector nexus potential and its impact; iii) potential for application of analytical tools/tasks; iv) potential interest of the host country to further attract investment for the implementation of the demonstration project. **The four demonstration projects (1 transboundary and 3 national) will be selected by the Nexus Regional Steering Committee at its first meeting in late October 2020.**
    - A list of analytical works to be carried out around 4 small-scale demonstration projects during the second phase was also presented.

## DISCUSSION<sup>7</sup>

### Kazakhstan - 10 September 2020 | 10:00 - 12:00 Almaty time:

- **Ainur Kokpbayeva, Head of Climate Change Adaptation, Climate Policy and Green Technology Department, GCF Focal Point, Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan:**
  - [Q]: Have demo projects been selected for the project or are they about to be selected?
  - [A]: 4 demonstration projects (1 transboundary and 3 national) will be selected/approved during the first meeting of the Nexus Regional Steering Committee in late October 2020.
- **Bakhyt Esekina, Director, Scientific and Educational Centre “Green Academy”:**
  - [Q]: Which indicators are planned to be used in socio-economic and other analyses?
  - [A]: The indicators will be defined and developed for each of the 4 small-scale demonstration projects after they are approved by the Nexus Regional Steering Committee at its first meeting in late October 2020.
  - [Q]: At what stage will the procurement start to engage national experts?
  - [A]: After the first meeting of the Nexus Regional Steering Committee in late October 2020, during which 4 small-scale demonstration projects will be approved, CAREC's project team will be able to proceed directly to project implementation and begin the procurement.

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<sup>7</sup> Tags by category: [Q] - question, [A] - answer, [C] - comments.

- [C]: Ms Esekina suggested to develop and apply the similar indicators. She noted the need for careful consideration of this issue, taking into account the OECD experience.
  - [C from the Project team]: The OECD report was received from the Green Academy and is being studied by the CAREC project specialist. The OECD experience will be considered for use in developing indicators for socio-economic analysis and other areas of research on demonstration projects, if applicable.
- **Saltanat Kuzganova, Chief Expert of the Department of Project Management of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan:**
    - [Q]: What results were achieved in the first phase of the Project?
    - [A]: The following results were achieved in the first phase of the Project:
      - The WEF Nexus approach successfully introduced in Central Asia;
      - Intersectoral working groups established to promote and pilot the application of the WEF Nexus approach at the national level;
      - 30 national experts involved in the development and promotion of the WEF Nexus approach in Central Asia;
      - The WEF Nexus approach integrated into regional programmes “Aral Sea Basin Programme-4” and the “Regional Environmental Action Plan for Central Asia”;
      - 3 WEF Nexus pilot projects implemented, one in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan each;
      - 10 analytical studies on the WEF Nexus approach produced and published;
      - Investment portfolio with 8 regional WEF Nexus investment ideas prepared by interested developers and formally supported by the Central Asian countries;
      - 10 transboundary and national facilities from the WEF Nexus investment portfolio proposed by national entities to be included in Phase II of the EU Nexus Project (2020-2023).
- **Vitaly Salnikov, Dean of the Geography and Environmental Management Department, Kazakh National University named after Al-Farabi:**
    - [Q]: What role does the academic community have in this project?
    - [A]: Participation of the academic community is welcome in the development of analytical assignments through demonstration projects and analytical work on the multisectoral Nexus approach in collaboration with the Global Nexus Secretariat. In this regard, the Project has engaged leading academics in the First National Consultation Meeting in order to involve the academic network prior to the actual project implementation and to take into account the suggestions and interest of scientists.
    - [C]: Mr Salnikov expressed willingness to collaborate in the project implementation process and to provide expertise and a site for research. He also offered to familiarize the project team with the multi-criteria method created by his colleague from Oxford as an optimal approach to data analysis.
- **Aidar Kapassov, Chairman, Public Association "Human Health Institute":**
    - [Q]: What role does the non-governmental sector have in the project?
    - [A]: Representatives of the non-governmental sector are invited as experts to the Project’s public events to share experiences on a multi-sectoral approach with all interested parties. The Project does not envision any specific activities for NGOs.

**Uzbekistan - September 15, 2020 | 11:00 - 12:30 Tashkent time:**

- **Hasan Khasanov, Head of Department of International Cooperation, Uzbekhydroenergo JSC, Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Uzbekistan:**
  - [C]: Mr Khasanov proposed to include as a pilot project the construction of micro hydropower plants in the transboundary territory, detailing that the cost of equipment for such stations starts from EUR 50,000.
- **Akmal Karimov, Head of the Department of Ecology and Water Resources Management, Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Mechanization of Agriculture Engineers:**
  - [C]: Mr Karimov asked to consider the possibility of including an analytical component in the small hydropower plant construction project (technical expertise, efficiency assessment, methods of technical and technological improvement). Also, he noted the need for an additional information meeting on the methodology of analysis of pilot facilities and strengthening the involvement of the academic community in the processes of analysis and compilation of analytics.

### **Tajikistan - 15 September 2020 | 14:00 - 15:30 Dushanbe time:**

- **Rustam Babajanov, Head of the Department of Institutional Research and Social Sector of Economy, Institute of Economics and Demography of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan:**
  - [C]: Mr Babajanov introduced a proposal to include the most appropriate aspects of the Nexus project in the Medium-Term Development Program of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021-2025. These actions will make it possible to include the Nexus project in the government's action matrix and attract attention of the Tajikistan Donor Coordination Council. He called upon his colleagues not to be solely focused on environmental issues, but to consider other intersectoral tasks. He noted the importance of opening a Khujand - Tashkent - Shymkent transport corridor.
  - [C]: Mr Babajanov also indicated the need to develop a uniform regulation for the hydroelectric power plant performance criteria, which can be developed based on the analysis of data from the Nexus pilot projects.
- **Rustam Abdullaev, Chief Specialist, Department of Water and Energy Policy, Development of Science and Technologies, Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan:**
  - [C]: Mr Abdullaev clarified that the Farkhad water reservoir should be excluded from the list of the proposed small-scale demonstration projects, as it requires preliminary government approval.
  - [C]: Mr Abdullaev proposed to distribute the Project's funds rationally and equally among the beneficiary countries during the second phase of the Project.
- **Dilshod Umarov, Executive Director, Tajik Research Institute of Hydraulic Engineering and Reclamation:**
  - [C]: Mr Umarov suggested to introduce a technical component into the project plan to demonstrate the actions performed more clearly. He highlighted the importance of practical results. He pointed out the necessity to develop a unified technical normative document to regulate the modernization of water management facilities in Central Asian countries.
- **Mahmad Safarov, Deputy Director of the Hydrometeorological Agency, Environmental Protection Committee under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan:**

- [C]: Mr Safarov noted the need to implement demonstration projects in all 5 countries of Central Asia to ensure fair distribution of project resources and asked to pay attention to project sustainability. He mentioned the importance and urgency of climate change issues, speaking about the projects of Tajikistan on adaptation to climate change.

### **Turkmenistan - 16 September 2020 | 09:00 - 10:30 Ashgabat time:**

- **Batyr Mamedov, Head of the Secretariat, Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development, IFAS**

- [Q]: How were demonstration projects selected for the second phase of the project?
- [A]: The beneficiary countries are invited to present their proposed demonstration projects for implementation in the second phase of the Project at the First Meeting of the Regional Steering Committee in late October 2020. 4 demonstration projects (1 transboundary and 3 national) will be selected/approved according to the above-mentioned criteria.

- [Q]: Who is nominated from Turkmenistan to the RSC?

- [A]: At present, a response is expected from the State Committee for Water Management of Turkmenistan regarding nomination to the Regional Steering Committee.

- [C]: Mr Mamedov noted the ongoing analytical work to assess the agricultural potential of “*takyr*s” in Central Asia with the support of the World Bank. It was proposed to support the socio-economic assessment of “*takyr*s” and “*sardobs*” with the support of the project and/or Global Nexus Secretariat.

In response, the Project team also shared that the pilot project on “*sardobs*” implemented during the first phase was presented to the Global Nexus Regional Dialogues Programme in early 2020 and received appreciation among 5 regions. In addition, the Global Nexus Secretariat assessed the pilot project against developed Nexus criteria and confirmed the high Nexus interlinkages. The Global Nexus Secretariat intends to utilize the results of this pilot project for the development of the methodology for conducting the cost and benefit analysis for Nexus projects during the second phase.

### **SUMMING UP**

- **Snejana Popova, Project Officer, Delegation of the European Union to Kazakhstan:**

- Ms Popova briefly explained why the EU supports such projects as Nexus, articulating that the main goal is to contribute to the improvement of national public administration and strategic planning systems. She provided some details about the EU’s support to “green” projects in the light of the Green Deal, the EU’s new comprehensive strategy for sustainable growth. About EUR 20 million has been already earmarked by the European Commission for supporting the preparation and financing of bankable projects under a thematic blending facility in the five regions covered by the Global Nexus Regional Dialogues Programme. This work should be carried out by the Lead Financial Institution to be selected from among those eligible under the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) Blending Framework procedure for thematic initiatives. Ms Popova also noted the fundamental role that relevant line ministries in the beneficiary countries should play in the process of institutionalizing the Nexus approach and identifying and developing bankable projects to be proposed for financing under the thematic blending facility.

- **Tatiana Leonova, Regional Development Adviser, World Bank**



- Ms Leonova noted that she watched with interest the implementation of the Project’s first phase, in particular the discussion at the Closing Conference held last autumn in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. She very closely followed the presentation of the results of the first phase and expectations for the second phase of the Project. She noted the importance of combining both intellectual and financial efforts in the development of analytical materials and the joint search for innovative technical solutions to those problems that are identified in the nine proposed demonstration projects under consideration by RSC members. She mentioned the importance of implementing a “soft component” and finding innovative intersectoral approaches.
- Ms Leonova also noted the important objectives of the second phase of the Project: a comprehensive analysis to find effective innovative solutions that can be more economically correct. She spoke about the implementation of innovative approaches under the Water and Energy Program for Central Asia (CAWEP).
- **Shynar Toilybayeva, Director of CAREC Country Office in Kazakhstan, Project Coordinator in Kazakhstan**
  - Ms Toilybayeva thanked everyone for participation. She highlighted the support given to the Project by the EU and the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. She personally thanked all the participants of the meeting and wished success in the implementation of the Project.
- **Bolat Bekniyaz, Director of IFAS Executive Board in Kazakhstan**
  - Mr Bekniyaz emphasized the peculiarity of the Nexus approach in terms of its advantage as a "cross-sectoral dialogue" and welcomed the start of the second phase implementation. He expressed confidence that the Project should become a successful innovative example for other countries.
- **Serik Bekmaganbetov, Authorized representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the Executive Committee of IFAS**
  - Mr Bekmaganbetov thanked everyone for their active participation and interest in the Nexus Project. Taking into account the previous work done by the Project in its first phase, he expressed his interest in the second phase stressing the importance of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) scheme and cross-border cooperation. He noted that the positive experience gained during the implementation of the Project will need to be applied in practice in all Central Asian countries, including the advanced European technologies and investment.
- **Irana Bagirova, Director of CAREC Country Office in Turkmenistan, Project Coordinator in Turkmenistan**
  - Ms Bagirova noted that currently the package of the project’s documents with the national components is being formed for the submission to the Ministry of Finance and Economy. She requested the participants to send their comments or suggestions for cooperation by email before the package is submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Economy.
- **Lyudmila Kiktenko, Program Manager, CAREC**
  - Ms Kiktenko invited the participants to send their wishes, comments and observations on the meeting by e-mail. She reiterated the importance of looking for synergies in cooperation with other projects.

## CONCLUSION

The following main points of the meetings are noteworthy:

- The representative of the Republic of Tajikistan requested to exclude "Farkhad water reservoir" from the long list of proposed small-scale demonstration projects due to the need of having this proposed project initially approved at the governmental level and requested to ensure the equal allocation of the grant funds among the beneficiary countries;
- Representatives of the Central Asia academic society expressed their interest in participating in the Nexus project implementation in their countries and noted readiness to share the accumulated knowledge and existing academic platforms with the Project team;
- Representatives of the WEF line ministries expressed support for promoting the Nexus approach at the national level and its integration into decision-making processes;
- Representatives of the ICWC Secretariat and the World Bank spoke about the ongoing World Bank supported study on "*takyr*s" in Turkmenistan and proposed to consider a possibility to carry out the social and economic analysis for "*sardobs*" and "*takyr*s" with the support of the Nexus Project or GNS;
- Representatives of the European Union Delegation to Central Asian countries expressed their interest in joining the implementation of the Project (Phase II) and readiness to support the Project team and its initiatives by providing technical assistance and sharing experience and knowledge;
- The World Bank representative noted that once the final list of small-scale demonstration projects is approved by the Nexus RSC, the World Bank project team stands ready to discuss the activities for co-financing under the selected demonstration projects to promote the innovative solutions and involve the academic community of Central Asia.

### Annex 1: List of the participants

Name	Position	Contacts
<b>KAZAKHSTAN</b>		
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