

Fostering cooperation with members of parliament and diplomats of Central Asian countries

This year marks the 15th anniversary of CAREC's operations in the Central Asian region as an organization working in the field of environment and sustainable development since its foundation in 2001. During this period, CAREC went through important milestones of its development, guided solely by its mandate - to be a regional platform for environmental cooperation in the region, to disseminate environmental knowledge and introduce the best practices in water resources and environmental management, education on sustainable development and climate change in Central Asia. Nowadays CAREC collaborated with environmental ministries and state agencies, non-governmental organizations in Central Asia and international partners and donors.

The group of multi-stakeholders that CAREC has been successfully cooperating with comprises now also Central Asian parliamentarians and diplomats – this is a recently introduced new major element of CAREC's activities in the region. This cooperation commenced within the framework of the project «Promotion dialogue for conflict prevention related to water nexus in Central Asia. Central Asia water nexus cooperation (CAWECOOP)». The project is being implemented in the framework of EU supported initiatives on water energy nexus in Central Asia and implemented by CAREC. Main partners of the project are the water and energy sector practitioners, policy makers, parliamentarians and staff of regional water-energy organizations in the Central Asian states.

This project provided an opportunity to start working more closely with the parliamentarians and diplomats of the Central Asian countries, as their potential contribution to promote inter-state confidence and enhance transnational political dialogue is an asset to the Central Asian water nexus cooperation.

In this regard, during the Anniversary events, there was held another very important event for CAREC: the first regional meeting of parliamentarians and diplomats of the Central Asian countries, on June 21, 2016. The main goal of the meeting was to discuss opportunities for the parliamentarians of Central Asian countries to actively participate in promoting the dialogue on issues related to water resources management and environmental protection in Central Asia.

The participants of the meeting were the diplomats and members of the parliament of the Central Asian countries. The meeting was held in a constructive, interactive environment. Mr. Peter Burian - EU Special Representative for Central Asia spoke about the European Union's efforts to support the water dialogue in Central Asia and the possible role of parliamentarians in this process. The meeting participants had the opportunity to share the best practices in the countries of Central Asia in the field of environmental protection and water resources management.

Following the meeting, members of the parliament and representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Central Asian countries recognized the need to organize general meetings on a regular basis. They also noted the need for establishing a mechanism for the experience exchange in the development of regulatory framework.

Particular attention was paid to the study of good legal and regulatory practices that already exist in the region promoting the establishment of inter-state cooperation. In this regard, it was proposed to maintain the so-called "working groups", which support the exchange of experience in legislative practices to improve the environment and hold meetings (roundtables) on a regular basis for ongoing dialogue. Participants proposed to involve Afghanistan in regional dialogue, as its economic development in the near future will have a

significant impact on the use of transboundary waters in Central Asia. The parliamentarians suggested a more active use of the practical aspects of the "best practices", which are under the active discussions, in the form of conducting demonstration tours, exchange visits. Parliamentarians and diplomats noted the necessity of consolidating the theoretical knowledge with practical examples that are used in the region to create and support pilot projects demonstrating "best experience" and "best practices."

The CAWECOOP project team expects that this meeting will certainly foster further fruitful work in this direction and will enhance the cooperation between the countries in the preservation of water and energy resources of Central Asia.

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