german cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Implemented by:

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Green Central Asia
Enhancing environment, climate and water resilience

ISSUE
No. 3
December 2022

Green Central Asia: Newsletter

Dear readers, partners and friends!

Looking back at the past year 2022, I would like to thank all of you for our fruitful exchange and cooperation!

The year 2022, with celebrating 30 years of diplomatic relations between Germany and Central Asia marked excellent collaboration and many good results stemming from it.We are sincerely hoping for continuation!

In retrospect, I would like to point out some important topics that have been the focus of our activity within the Green Central Asia Initiative. The most important theme of the year was strengthening regional cooperation along the thematic areas identified in the Regional Action Plan agreed by the Central Asian partner countries in 2021.

International experts were engaged and worked hard together with regional and national experts. The established regional working groups met in various formats and, fortunately, more often "in person" than in online formats. The excellent results of the working group on the development of the «Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in Central Asia» has to be highlighted and I would like to thank all members of the Central Asian state organisations participating for their time and important input. The draft Strategy was made available to the countries for final review in December 2022.

Significant attention has been paid to the topic of glacier monitoring and a Memorandum of Cooperation between the glacier research centers in each of our five partner countries and the hydrometeorological services on further joint work, creation of a political and institutional framework for the development of joint glacier monitoring and modeling was drafted. In 2023, joint expeditions, scientific conferences on glaciers and climate change, seminars, round tables, and other events will be organised at national and regional level.

In 2022, Green Central Asia started two major dialogues on a mutually beneficial water-energy cooperation mechanism, and on transboundary cooperation in the management of protected areas in Central Asia, which will both continue in 2023.

Further to note is a study tour for an exchange of experiences on climate, environment and water policy, which we organized in summer 2022. We hope that this trip provided some food for thought for future work and for the Central Asian countries to benefit from the experience of Germany.

The Green Central Asia Initiative received recognition as best practice example in German foreign climate policy at the panel session «Towards a Green Central Asia: A Preventive and Stabilising Climate Foreign Policy» at the Berlin Climate and Security Conference on October 11-12 2022.

Happy New Year 2023 and our best wishes for health, joy, prosperous work and success!

Sincerely yours,

Dr Caroline Milow and Team

Central Asian parliamentarians on climate change

On September 20, 2022, representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) and Parliamentarians of the Central Asian countries(MPs) gathered in Almaty, where Green Central Asia, together with the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC), organized the seventh meeting. The participants discussed issues related to progress in improving legislation and implementing climate policy in the countries of Central Asia, as well as issues of implementing international climate commitments. In addition, at the meeting, a draft regional statement of countries was discussed to inform the global community about the efforts of the region to implement the Paris Agreement and prepare the region for the upcoming 27th session of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP 27), which took place in November 2022 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

At the meeting, welcoming speeches were made by Mr. Kestutis Jankauskas, EU Ambassador to the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Mr. Mario-Ingo Zoos, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Participants, representatives of international organizations, and diplomatic missions accredited in Kazakhstan stressed the importance of regular dialogue.

For reference:

A dialogue between representatives of ministries of foreign affairs and parliamentarians of Central Asian countries to discuss urgent issues related to environmental management in the region and exchange knowledge, experience and best practices was initiated by the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) in 2016 with the support of the EU. Issues of climate change and strengthening intersectoral cooperation on the agenda of this dialogue platform were first voiced in 2019. With the help of the World Bank, CAREC supported the proposal of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and parliamentarians of the Central Asian countries to hold such events twice a year. Thus, six such meetings were already organized.

At the sixth meeting of the representatives of MFAs and MPs of the Central Asian Countries, in her address, Dr. Caroline Milow, Programme Manager, Green Central Asia - Transboundary dialogue on climate, environment and security in Central Asia and Afghanistan, GIZ, had noted the high importance in conducting a dialogue between these two groups and had announced GIZ's readiness to support further the work of this platform in 2022 and 2023.

Central Asia towards the UN Water Conference

Green Central Asia and other international partners contributed to the regional workshop «Central Asia on the way to the UN Water Conference 2023», organized by the Executive Committee of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) on September 20, 2022 in Tashkent.

Main points of discussion were: demonstration of cooperation and cohesion of the Central Asian countries in making commitments for new actions to solve water problems, familiarizing participants with the goals, objectives and principles of the UN Water Conference 2023, discussing the vision of the Central Asian countries on the topics of interactive dialogues, as well as possible voluntary commitments of the countries of the region and development partners for inclusion in the Water Action Agenda of the UN Conference.

Currently, Green Central Asia, together with five partner countries, is developing a Regional Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change as part of the implementation of the IFAS Programme of Action to assist the Aral Sea Basin Countries (ASBP-4) and in support of the Regional Environment Action Plan devised by the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development in Central Asia.

Green Central Asia and EC IFAS: Memorandum of Understanding in Action

On September 20, 2022, Green Central Asia contributed to conducting the third EC IFAS Coordination Meeting with international development partners.

At the meeting in Tashkent, issues of implementing the «Programme of Action to Assist the Countries of the Aral Sea Basin» (ASBP-4) were considered. The meeting also discussed the progress achieved in improving the organizational structure and contractual and legal framework of IFAS, the Work Plan of the IFAS Executive Committee on Cooperation with International Development Partners for 2023 in addressing water and environmental issues, as well as the further development of regional cooperation within the framework of IFAS, considering the extended presidency of the Republic of Tajikistan.

For reference:

ASBP-4 was approved on June 29, 2021, by the IFAS Board Decision, and its implementation was assigned to the Executive Committee of IFAS together with the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD).

ASBP-4 includes several projects, including investment projects that contribute to Central Asia's water, environmental, food and energy security. It also aims at implementing joint actions and future programs to tackle the Aral Sea crisis and strengthen regional cooperation through targeted activities at the national, regional, and international level.

Joining Efforts of International Organizations

Green Central Asia and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) held a high-level conference on climate change in Tashkent on December 2. The conference under the slogan «From global knowledge to local solutions: climate-resilient institutions in Central Asia» was organized in close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Water Management of the Republic of Uzbekistan as well as with the Hydrometeorological Service of Uzbekistan (Uzhydromet).

More than 140 delegates participated in an active dialogue on climate threats and called on all Central Asian states to join forces to achieve a reasonable balance between climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The first plenary session focused on measures to increase climate change and disaster resilience in Central Asia. The participants explained the climate policies of the Central Asian states regarding the security risks associated with climate change.

As a result of the second plenary session which focused on the water-energy-food-health nexus for achieving the SDGs, the participants defined the scope of actions for implementing climate change adaptation and risk reduction measures, as well as increasing climate resilience in water use and land management in the five Central Asian countries.

The main topic of the third plenary session was regional partnership and exchange through the involvement of national governments and regional intergovernmental institutions and platforms in the region.The participants noted that given the nature of climate risks and shared natural resources, climate action could be seen as an entry point for strengthened regional cooperation. In recent years, the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have made remarkable progress in climate change adaptation and achieving green growth based on natural capital. They established inter-sector cooperation on mitigation and adaptation of Climate Change resilience in managing natural resources.

For more information check out:
https://www.undp.org/uzbekistan/high-level-central-asian-dialogue-on-climate-change

Green Central Asia at the Innovation Week in Uzbekistan

The second CLIENT II Regional Stakeholder Conference for Central Asia was held in Tashkent from 18 to 19 October as part of the Uzbek Inno-Week 2022 “Green Innovations for Sustainable Development”. Green Central Asia took an active role in the event, which was attended by over 100 participants from the CLIENT II partner countries of Central Asia as well as Mongolia, Japan, Israel, and Germany.

GIZ Programme Manager Dr. Caroline Milow moderated several sessions on the conference’s second day, where panel discussions allowed government officials and international and regional projects to exchange experiences and views.

The Central Asian states are improving the framework conditions for international project measures to adapt to climate change: expanding renewable energy sources, introducing resource-saving and water-saving approaches and technologies in land use, etc.

Joint Efforts to Combat Climate Change in Central Asia

On October 18-19, in Tashkent, Green Central Asia held the 3rd Meeting of the Regional Working Group (RWG) on the Development of the «Regional Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change in Central Asia». The RWG meeting was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, representatives of environment ministries and committees of all Central Asian countries, representatives of the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD) and the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS).

At the second RWG meeting, which was held on July 7, in Tashkent, the structure and format of the Regional Strategy were agreed upon. According to this, international experts prepared a preliminary draft of the Strategy, which was sent to state-authorized bodies and national experts for comments and remarks in December 2022.

Based on the decision of the RWG and the proposals of the national accounts, a regional expert of Green Central Asia will prepare an updated version of the Strategy.

For reference:

The regional strategy aims at developing a mechanism for cooperation among Central Asian countries to overcome the negative effects of climate change and implement adaptation measures.

Objectives of the strategy:

- Strengthen regional coordination on adaptation to climate change
- Development of mechanisms for the development and implementation of adaptation projects/programs and fundraising
- Improving adaptation capacity through accumulation, knowledge exchange and scientific cooperation
- Development of climate monitoring, information exchange and forecasting systems

Glaciers are the focus of Green Central Asia

On September 27-28, Green Central Asia brought together experts in Tashkent at a working group meeting on glacier monitoring, modelling - coordination and cooperation among the five Central Asian partner countries, represented by the following institutions: the Republic of Kazakhstan - Central Asian Regional Glaciological Center; Kyrgyz Republic - Central Asian Institute of Applied Geosciences; the Republic of Tajikistan - State Scientific Center on Glaciers under the National Academy of Sciences; the Republic of Uzbekistan - Hydrometeorological Center of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

On the basis of reports prepared by national experts and proposals for the regional working group, a draft document was drawn up, a Memorandum between research centres for the study of glaciers in each country and hydrometeorological services of the Central Asian countries on further joint work, creating a policy and institutional framework for the development of joint monitoring and modelling of glaciers.

The discussion of the topic of glacier monitoring continued on December 1, in Tashkent at the second meeting of the regional working group in hybrid format. The agenda included a discussion of strengthening mutual support and establishing climate and glaciological cooperation in Central Asia.

Cooperation implies projects aimed at strengthening the institutional and personnel potential in the joint monitoring of glaciers in Central Asia, such as joint expeditions, scientific conferences on glaciers and climate change, conferences, workshops, round tables, and other events at the national and regional levels.

The program and methodology for preparing a joint scientific expedition to the Tuyuksu Glacier in Kazakhstan in August 2023 were agreed upon at the meeting.

The working group also preliminarily agreed on the readiness of the parties to consider and sign a memorandum of cooperation between the Central Asian glaciological centres. The draft memorandum has been sent to all Central Asian countries for additions and comments. And the prepared national reports are collected in the collection of materials, which will soon be published on the website of «Green Central Asia». (www.greencentralasia.org)

Start of the Regional Dialogue on transboundary cooperation on management of protected areas in Central Asia

On October 25, 2022, “Green Central Asia”, together with the GIZ regional programs “Integrative and Climate-sensitive Land Use in Central Asia” and “Ecologically oriented regional development in the Aral Sea region”, held a regional dialogue on “Transboundary Cooperation on Management of Protected Areas in Central Asia”.

The dialogue brought together in Tashkent the representatives of the five Central Asian Ministries of Foreign Affairs, relevant state sectoral ministries/departments on protected natural areas, and forestry.

The event benefited from interventions made by several international organizations such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Michael Succow Foundation (MSF, Germany), Fauna & Flora International (FFI), Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, and the Nature Conservation Union of Germany (NABU).

Numerous issues were discussed in joint work on identifying and studying ecological migration corridors and the harmful effects of fences on migratory species; on the commitments and their implementation arising from the Conventions related to Biodiversity; on the possibility of creating a transboundary protected area between the countries of Central Asia, especially in places where national protected areas have already been established near state borders.

As a result of the dialogue, consensus was reached on further cooperation by combining efforts in the sustainable management of protected areas on state borders. The dialogue will be accompanied by tailor made training for the partner countries delivered by the international specialized organisations such as IUCN in 2023.

German Foreign Minister Baerbock received information about water management in Uzbekistan

Green Central Asia was honoured to meet with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock during her visit to Uzbekistan. During this visit on November 2, she visited the Bad Bad irrigation canal in the Bulungur District of Samarkand Region. This canal was rehabilitated in 2011 with the support of the project «Transboundary Water Resources Management in Central Asia» on behalf of the German Foreign Office in the framework of a pilot project aimed at building confidence.

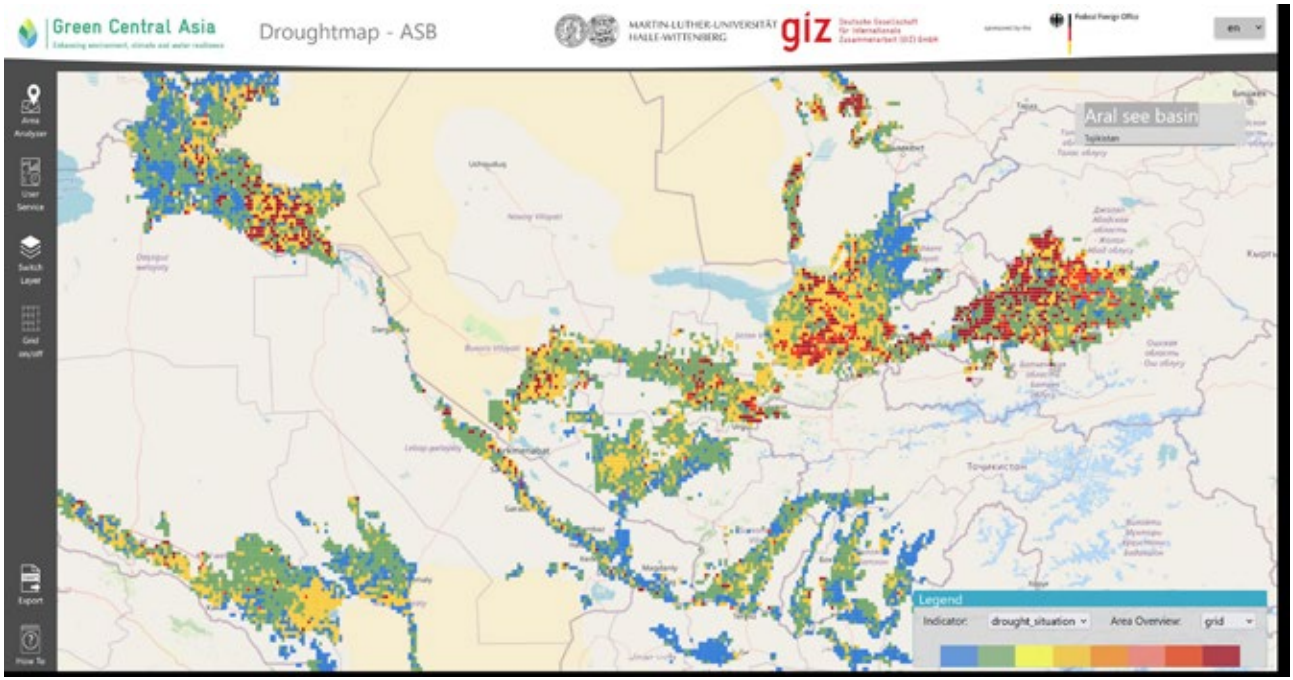
The main water intake structure of the canal was rebuilt and electrified, the canal was repaired, and the local water managers were supported with training and respective technical equipment. After the rehabilitation work, water supply and water use efficiency increased, and water loss decreased significantly from 40 % to 7-10 %. The capacity of the head water intake structure increased from 8 m3/s to 15 m3/s. The Ministry of Water Resources of Uzbekistan took excellent care of the canal and to date maintained everything in working order.

Foreign Minister Baerbock met with the Deputy Water Minister of Uzbekistan, Mr. Karshiyev, at the canal, where he briefed about water management under conditions of climate change. Mr. Karshiyev explained Uzbekistan's approach to the national water sector reform, as well as to regional, transboundary water cooperation, especially in regard to the collaboration with the upstream countries Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan along the two big rivers of the region.

The complicated Central Asian irrigation system on the two major rivers (Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya) was explained to Ms. Baerbock by help of schematic maps of the Aral Sea Basin and the canal itself.

Foreign Minister Baerbock informed that the Foreign Office would continue its support to Central Asia and Uzbekistan on water resources management and would convene a major climate conference in close cooperation with OSCE in March 2023.

Online Meeting with Hydrometeorological Service of Turkmenistan



Within the frame of developing a drought monitoring tool for the Aral Sea Basin, on November 14, partners from Turkmenistan and the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg met to discuss main aspects of cooperation.

Experts, representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection of Turkmenistan, the Deputy Head of the Department of Environmental Protection and Hydrometeorology and the Head of the Agrometeorological Department of the State and Hydrometeorological Service discussed the main aspects of this tool together with Prof. Dr. Christopher Conrad. The project partners were strongly interested in how data would be provided and processed. Based on remote-sensing data, calculated vegetation indices, and soil moisture data from the ground, the tool will be implemented to monitor the drought situation in the irrigated agricultural areas of the Aral Sea Basin.

Facing climatic changes and lacking precipitation, the region faces increasing agricultural challenges. The tool offers possibilities for decision-making and sustainable water management by governmental agencies. The need for regular meetings to achieve maximum sustainability and optimal use at the regional level was also noted.

EU-Central Asia: common history and challenges – Introduction of the regional Team Europe Initiative on Water, Energy and Climate Change

On November 18, 2022, in Samarkand, Green Central Asia took part in the European Union-Central Asia Connectivity Conference: Global Gateway for Sustainable Development.

The conference was attended by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice President of the European Commission Josep Borrell, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tileuberdi, the Tajik Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhriddin, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Vladimir Norov, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan Aybek Moldogaziev and the Turkmen Deputy Foreign Minister Vepa Hajiyev.

At the meeting, the leaders of the foreign policy agencies discussed the current state and prospects of mutual relations between the two regions in the political-diplomatic, trade-economic, and other spheres.

During the conference, issues related to sustainable connectivity, creating opportunities for expanding and deepening interregional ties in digitalization, strengthening transport routes, water-energy and environmental protection were discussed.

Further, the work of the Conference continued over the course of three thematic panel sessions, where experts discussed in detail the possibilities and ways to strengthen the connectivity between Central Asia and the European Union. The Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on Water, Energy and Climate change in Central Asia was officially launched and introduced to the participants.

The Samarkand Conference on EU-Central Asia Connectivity - The Global Gateway provided a platform for intra- and inter-regional dialogue on standard solutions that will help translate into reality the objectives of sustainability, prosperity and regional cooperation outlined in the EU Strategy for Central Asia.

For reference:

As part of global efforts to help mitigate the socio-economic impact of the new geopolitical context, the EU and the countries of Central Asia are working together to support Central Asian countries' drive to modernise, boost investment, digitalise, facilitate trade within and beyond the region and diversify their transport routes.

Germany's Green Central Asia Initiative is part of the Team Europe Initiative on Water, Energy and Climate Change in Central Asia.

The Central Asian Regional Ramsar Initiative: Outcomes and Plans

On December 2, members of the Ramsar Regional Initiative of Central Asia (RRI-CA) gathered in Almaty to summarize the results of 2022.

In August 2022, “Green Central Asia” commissioned the Regional Environmental Center of Central Asia (CAREC) and launched the project «Innovative approach for sustainable and wise use of Ramsar / potentially Ramsar sites in Central Asia through partnership and collaboration» to support the further development of the existing platform of the Ramsar Regional Initiative Network in Central Asia. This platform’s aim is to promote sustainable local partnerships for the conservation of Ramsar Sites/ Potentially Ramsar Sites through collaboration and cooperation in Central Asia.

During the meeting, expert reviews of the problems of Ramsar/Potentially Ramsar lands in Central Asia were heard, and general issues for partnership development were selected. In addition, comments and suggestions were received from RRI-CA members on the concept of holding a competition to collect innovative ideas for promoting smart resource management and sustainable conservation of pilot Ramsar lands through local partnerships.

Sustainability and wise use of wetland resources is the main priority of this and a subsequent project in 2023 related to wetland conservation.

At the end of the meeting, the participants determined a preliminary work plan for 2023 by the Resolution adopted at the “Conference of Parties” held in November 2022.

Questions to the expert

Abror Gafurov is a hydrologist with a focus on mountain hydrology. His research tasks include hydrological modelling in Central Asia and application of remote sensing data in hydrology.

Dr. Abror Gafurov

CAWa-Green Project Coordination
Department 4: Geosystems
Section 4.4: Hydrology
Helmholtz Centre Potsdam
GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences
Telegrafenberg, C4
14473 Potsdam
Germany

Phone: +49-331-288-1816
Fax: +49-331-288-1570
Email: gafurov@gfz-potsdam.de
www.gfz-potsdam.de
www.cawa-project.net

What do you answer someone who denies climate change?

Observed temperature values over the last 100 years or more show a significant increase of temperature in the entire world. We as human being have a significant contribution to climate change due to intensified industrialization in the last decades. We have already seen negative impacts of climate change in many parts of the world. The frequency of drought events has increased, many flash-flood events are being observed and glaciers in the mountains are degrading. These are clear evidence signs of climate change, and we cannot anymore neglect it.

Initial assessments at the UN climate summit were disappointing. «We are on the highway to climate hell» (UN Secretary General António Guterres). If you could order political decision makers of the world concerning climate and water availability – What would be your first order for them?

Quantification of the impact of climate change on natural resources such as water. We still do not fully understand the impact of climate change on different natural processes. Here, science can contribute with sound research studies. Thus, my recommendation to policy makers would be to narrow the existing gap between science and policy level. Science can help us to better understand and quantify the impact of climate change that can be considered by the policy level in the adaptation process to climate change. Sustainable adaptation measures to climate change require sound scientific analysis of expected impact of climate variability to natural resources.

Water availability in Central Asia is most affected by climate change. You are working on forecast models. Please explain in simple words how a forecast model works and how this knowledge helps us!

Forecast models can be statistical or physically based. In Central Asia, mainly statistical forecast models of water availability are used. These models are based on data about precipita-tion and snow in the mountains. Central Asian National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS) still use statistical forecast models of water availability that were developed during the Soviet time. Due to climate change, these models that are developed 30-40 years ago do not always lead to good results because of changing hydrological processes. Considering this drawback, we have developed a new model MODSNOW that is dedicated to assessing water availability in Central Asia. This is an operational tool that uses MODIS satellite snow cover data in wintertime as a predictor of water availability in the summer months. This tool uses instead of observed precipitation or snow depth data, the remote sensing-based snow cover data as a predictor for hydrological forecasting. The accumulation of snow in the winter can very well explain the variability of water availability in the summer months. The MODSNOW tool is currently operational and in use by all five Central Asian hydrometeorological services.

You are a scientist: if you could wish something from policy makers – What would it be?

Considering the green growth in the development pathway of Central Asian countries can contribute to lessen the temperature warming in the future. We can no longer allow to follow the past development strategy that is based on significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions to be introduced into the atmosphere. We should think of most environmentally friendly technology and minimize the greenhouse gas emissions in the future. We cannot wait until the nature punishes us significantly, when we might not be able to adapt to climate change in a short period of time. Therefore, we should minimize the greenhouse gas emissions and also consider optimal adaptation measures to climate change in Central Asia.

Which website is the first one you open in the morning?

www.spiegel.de

Which book is the one that most moved you and you recommend our readers?

"Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen Covey.

What is your favourite movie?

Avatar, Gifted

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1–2 February 2023	Regional Workshop on Monitoring, Assessment, and Information Exchange in Transboundary Basins of Central Asia
22-23 February 2023	Silk Road of Knowledge, online
22-24 February 2023	The EU-Central Asia Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation, Seventh EU–Central Asia High-Level Conference, Rome, Italy

10 March 2023	Regional (International) Conference on Food Security and Climate Change organized by the Government of Turkmenistan and FAO/UN, Turkmenistan
22-24 March 2023	The UN Water Conference, New-York, USA

Published by

Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Green Central Asia: Transboundary dialogue on climate, environment and security in Central Asia and Afghanistan
Address: 100128 Uzbekistan, Tashkent,
401 Labzak 1A, 4th floor
T. +998 71 241 40 48
www.giz.de / www.greencentralasia.org

Design — Mukhabbat Kamalova, Tashkent

Photo credits — GIZ

Cover pictures — Almaty, by Alexandr Nikolayenko, GIZ

Authors — GIZ

On behalf of — German Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt)
Division 408: Climate change geopolitics, climate and security, water diplomacy

In cooperation with

GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.