



ROLE OF CAREC IN STRENGTHENING REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

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ANNOTATION

This article analyzes the role of the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) in strengthening regional environmental cooperation. The article states that since 2001 CAREC has developed into a regional organization, promoting environmental cooperation and sustainable development in the Central Asia region. The article highlights the efforts of CAREC in strengthening regional cooperation on environmental protection in Central Asia. Dialogue at a technical level is the projects of the center. Dialogue at the level of decision-makers is a platform of parliamentarians and MFA representations. The next level is the annual Central Asian International Environmental Forum.

KEYWORDS: *Aral Sea, Central Asian region, The Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development, The Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia, The Regional Environmental Action Plan, Aral Sea Basin Program.*

DISCUSSION

The environmental problems of the Central Asian region are diverse. They arose in the region due to the active influence of man on nature: here more than 100 years ago they began to intensively develop natural resources, developing the economy, agriculture, and energy. The Aral Sea disaster is one of the global environmental problems. In addition, biodiversity is declining - the wealth of nature is decreasing. Strong land degradation is occurring. In this area, the population has been irrigating for five thousand years. Climate change is a new challenge.

It is well known that the ideas of sustainable development imply balanced economic, environmental and social development to improve the quality of life of both present and future generations. These ideas have gained great understanding and support in the countries of Central Asia. In the Central Asian region, various regional environmental initiatives are underway, such as the development of the Aral Sea Basin Program (ASBP), The Regional Environmental Action Plan (EAPA), supported by regional organizations such as the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the

Aral Sea (IFAS)), The Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD), the Interstate Coordination Water Commission (ICWC) and the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC).

The Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) is a leading regional center for knowledge in the field of environment and sustainable development, recognized by national, regional and international partners. This organization was established in 2001 by the governments of five Central Asian countries, as well as by the European Union and UNDP in accordance with the decision of the 4th Pan-European Conference, held in 1998 in Aarhus, Denmark [1, p. 3].

Since its inception, promoting environmental cooperation and sustainable development in the Central Asia region, CAREC has developed into a regional organization. Until 2008, CAREC received direct targeted grants to support activities. The European Union and other international organizations supported the



development of CAREC as a regional platform for environmental cooperation. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations and international agencies see CAREC as a professional and reliable partner.

One of the main challenges for the organization in 2013 was the transition from a design organization to a regional one. The transition specifically to a regional cooperation platform, to an organization that really contributes to the development of the region, not only fulfills specific project orders. In the period from 2013 to 2018, CAREC created a number of dialogue platforms with the aim of expanding cooperation on various environmental issues: Central Asian International Environmental Forum, Central -Asian Conference on Climate Change, Meetings of Parliamentarians and Foreign Ministry Representatives. It is also worth noting that from a large number of pilot projects, CAREC switched to the implementation of large-scale system projects.

In the period from 2014 to 2019, CAREC implemented the Aarhus Convention, including within the framework of the developed "Concept for working with NGOs". At the end of 2019 - the beginning of 2020. CAREC has begun the development of a new "Concept for Interaction with CSOs in Central Asia for the period 2020-2025".

CAREC also contributes to the implementation of the Aarhus Convention indirectly and as follows:

- Through the organization of annual regional conferences and forums;
- on climate change, where issues of access to climate information, solutions and financing are raised;
- Water management, which discusses the issue of water quality, data availability and information exchange;
- to fulfill the obligations of various environmental conventions, where access to information is a priority;
- on the greening of the economy, which indicates the relationship of the environment and sustainable development;
- Through the joint implementation of pilot projects as part of large projects;
- By inviting representatives of the CSOs of Central Asia as speakers, moderators and facilitators of national regional events.

In recent years, CAREC has been implementing 4 mega-projects: "Water, Education and Cooperation", CAMP4ASB, Nexus Dialogues in Central Asia, UzWaterAware. In addition, in the past period, a large project of the European Union on water cooperation in Central Asia WECOOP was implemented.

The main objective of the Nexus project was to increase understanding of the relationship between "water-energy-food" security (EEP), promote a multi-sectoral approach and cooperation between the countries of Central Asia (CA), and develop an investment portfolio of EEP Nexus projects ideas. Small-scale projects implemented in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan contributed to piloting the practical application of the EEP Nexus approach, in particular, in the multifunctional operation of dams, ensuring sustainable access to water in desert pastures and promoting investment in energy saving at pumping stations [3, p. 25].

Separately, it is worth noting the efforts of CAREC in strengthening regional cooperation on environmental protection in Central Asia. The dialogue continues at all levels. Dialogue at a technical level is the center's projects. Dialogue at the level of decision-makers is a platform of parliamentarians and representative offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The next level is the annual Central Asian International Environmental Forum. Every year, in one of the countries of Central Asia, an environmental forum is held on a rotational basis, which brings together scientists, decision-makers, government departments and NGOs.

On March 15, 2018, the first working consultative meeting of the heads of state of Central Asia was held in Astana. The presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the speaker of the parliament of Turkmenistan sat down at the negotiating table to discuss the most pressing problems of the region.

And on August 24, 2018, the first summit of the heads of the founding states of IFAS was held in Turkmenistan in nine years. The meeting was attended by the presidents of all five countries of Central Asia. As a result of an open dialogue between the presidents of the countries, a communiqué was signed that drew attention to acute shortcomings in the work to improve the condition of the Aral Sea basin.

In the light of the changing political situation in the region, the role of CAREC has intensified over the past year. Together with international partners, state bodies, local authorities and civil society of Central Asia, CAREC organized a large number of significant events. From June 5 to 8, 2018, one of the largest environmental events in the region, the Central Asian International Environmental Forum (CAMEF), was successfully held in Tashkent.

Another important large-scale event of CAREC was the first Central Asian Conference on Climate Change, held on January 24-25, 2018 in Almaty.

On March 21, 2018, CAREC and the IFAS Executive Committee held a joint event on the



sidelines of the 8th World Water Forum (Brazil), the largest water event in the world. CAREC also facilitated the participation of the Central Asian delegation in other global events: at the 6th Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum and the 13th Ramsar Conference of Parties.

On September 16-25, 2019, the 10th anniversary of the Central Asian Environment Leadership Program for Sustainable Development in Almaty was held, the agenda of which was related to the theme of the "green" economy, water management, water diplomacy, green energy and gender equality.

In general, Central Asian governments see CAREC as a unique platform that allows them to participate in international environmental processes, increase their ability to gain access to international financing mechanisms in the field of climate change and biodiversity, and assist in promoting such regional environmental management models. as the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (EC IFAS) and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD).

Inquiries from donors, government agencies, and civil society organizations in Central Asian countries emphasize the need for structural strengthening of the catalytic and coordinating role of CAREC in this area.

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