



## 8<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

7-8 June 2018 / Tashkent



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## SUMMARY BY THE CHAIR

The 8th Meeting of the Working Group on Environment and Climate Change in the framework of the EU-CA Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation took place on 7 and 8 June 2018 in Tashkent.

Over one hundred participants from five Central Asian States, including civil society, the European Union, international and regional organisations and international financial institutions attended the Meeting, chaired by Mr Massimo Cozzone, Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea and vice-chaired by Mr Bakhrom Kuchkarov, State Committee for Ecology and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan.



The Meeting was opened with welcoming notes by Mr. Massimo Cozzone, Mr. Bakhrom Kuchkarov, Mr. Radoslaw Darski, Head of Political Section, EU Delegation to Uzbekistan, Mr. Piotr Byczkowski, Central Asia Division, EEAS, Ms. Helge Zeitler, Deputy Head of Unit, Bilateral and Regional Environmental Cooperation, DG ENV, Mr. Giovanni Brunelli, Head of Division, International Affairs, Ministry for the Environment Land and Sea, Italy.



Progress and achievements in EU-CA regional cooperation and EU and CA policies in the area of environment and climate change since the 7th Meeting of the Working Group were discussed in the course of the two days' meeting. The Meeting focused on the progress in improving knowledge about the IFIs' requirements and the process of preparing bankable projects, tailor-made support to Central Asian countries and, finally, perspectives of future developments, including the upcoming High Level Conference. A total of 38 presentations were discussed in the four sessions of the Meeting.



During **Session 1** chaired by Ms. Helge Zeitler, Deputy Head of Unit, Bilateral and Regional Environmental Cooperation, DG ENV, the overview of recent developments in EU-CA regional cooperation was given. The European Commission presented latest developments on environment in the EU, notably on circular economy, the EU plastic strategy, water reuse and sustainable finance. It also presented developments on climate action, including the clean mobility package, EU funding for climate action and EU objectives for the 24th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2018. The CA countries presented their recent and future developments in the area of environment and climate action. The session further included a discussion on sustainable infrastructure for delivering Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the EU funded project "Central Asia Nexus Dialogue: Fostering Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus Dialogue and Multi-sector investment in Central Asia".



During **Session 2** chaired by Mr. Johannes Stenbaek Madsen, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Kazakhstan, issues related to the improvement of access by CA countries to IFIs investments as well as progress in the tailor-made support to CA countries were discussed. Despite the difference in the degree of sophistication and enforcement of the national legal systems, all countries' interventions stressed the need to increase the capacity of national experts and institutions, the need for the establishment of a sustainable experts' training system;

development or transfer of state of the art environmental technologies and 'know-how', adopting best practices in household solid waste management and air quality management based on the EU-member states experience and expertise, as well as technical support with preparation of investment projects. Further steps towards the prioritisation and formulation of investment and technical assistance projects tackling issues of regional importance in environment and climate change were discussed. It was agreed, that WECOOP2 expert team will keep working with the CA countries in identifying perspective project ideas in priority areas and, within the scope of the project, will either help formulating concept proposals or, when possible, will directly answer to countries' requests.



**Session 3** was chaired by Ms. Alessandra Fidanza, Ministry for the Environment Land and Sea/Sogesid, Italy. This session focused on the improvement of knowledge about the IFI requirements and the process of bankable project preparation. The on-line Guide for Investors (IG) and the Regional Knowledge Centre (RKC) on the Web Platform for CA were presented. The purpose, objectives, key points and future developments of IG and RKC were briefly discussed and agreed. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was presented as a powerful tool to support the setting up of broad sustainability and feasibility frameworks and, at the same time, to overcome EIA's limitations. The importance of SEA to promote sustainable and environmentally sound infrastructure development was discussed. UNECE presented an update on a pilot project in Kazakhstan on strengthening environmental assessment systems by integrating modern SEA and EIA procedures. The World Bank and UNECE presented options and approaches related to the preparation of bankable projects for financing climate change adaptation in transboundary river basins. Lessons learned and experience in the unlocking finance for private sector engagement and green technologies promotion by NGOs from CA countries were discussed. The following IFI requirements for processing of bankable projects were underlined: the application of SEA and EIA according to UNECE Espoo Convention and SEA Protocol standards, including stakeholder engagement; for EU funded projects, the need for SEA and EIA to be carried out according to EU directives, the application, where possible, of European standards and best available techniques; the consideration of cumulative impacts when preparing project proposals; the establishment of a due diligence system from the project design phase onwards; the integration into one document only of local and international documentation for project proposals to be submitted to IFIs for evaluation (no differentiation for local and international audience).



**Session 4**, chaired by Mr Massimo Cozzone, Ministry for the Environment Land and Sea, Italy, was focused on the next steps and future developments. Future activities of WECOOP2 project and the EU vision and perspectives of the further development of EU-CA cooperation were presented. An updated version of the ToR for this Working Group will be circulated, possibly by July 2018, and the CA countries will consider these according to their internal procedures.

The possible extension of the scope of the WG to water issues was discussed, the new proposal for the ToR will include such option. In this regard however, it was highlighted that the work done by the UNECE on the National Policy Dialogues has been of great value for the countries, and therefore should be continued.

It was also agreed that:

- the meeting to discuss inter-sectorial cooperation will take place in Almaty in July;
- a workshop for "clinic" review will take place in Almaty in September.

Uzbek delegation confirmed the Country's proposal to host the next High Level Conference. The participants welcomed and accepted the proposal and agreed, as a tentative date, the second half of January 2019.



Representatives of EU and CA countries then expressed their vision about the next steps to be undertaken, future developments and the role of the EU-CA Working Group on Environment and Climate Change and WECOOP project:

- it was stressed that there is a need for a number of capacity building exercises on countries level, which can be performed already during WECOOP2 life time, or at least the project could draft concept notes for such exercises;
- several countries underlined the need to address regional priorities, but at the same time individual countries' needs;
- regarding the possible continuation of WECOOP2, CA countries suggested to continue using the abbreviation WECOOP, as by now it became regionally recognisable;
- it was agreed by the majority of the speakers that civil society organisations shall be kept involved in the EU-CA cooperation on environment and climate change;
- participants agreed that the EU-CA Working Group on Environment and Climate Change should have a Steering Committee. It was proposed that CSOs have an observer status in this Committee and are represented by one member. It also should have a mechanism, allowing longer-term membership in the Group for the representatives of the CA countries, thus preserving institutional memory and making the Group stronger; appointed members should be able to speak on behalf of their organizations.

It was agreed that no further meeting of the WG will be held before the High Level Conference, as activities will be focussed on the preparations of deliverables for the Conference.

The meeting ended with closing remarks by the Chair and vice Chair, by Johannes Stenbaek Madsen (EU DEL Astana), Andreja Skerl (European Commission), and Ambassador of Italy H.E. Andrea Bertozzi.

## NEXT STEPS

The following priorities for action have been proposed for 2018-2019 within the framework of the EU-CA Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation:

### End of June 2018

- CA countries to agree on the appropriate dates of the High Level Conference

### 12-13 July 2018, Almaty

Inter-sectorial Cooperation Meeting will take place in Almaty to discuss options to:

- promote dialogue on the implementation of integrated water resources management at the national and transboundary levels,
- strengthen intersectoral cooperation between countries at the regional level,
- promote the interconnection of water, energy, food, health and the environment;

### July 2018

- Completion of WECOOP expert group team site visits to CA Countries;
- IMELS will circulate draft new ToR for the EU-CA Working Group on Environment and Climate Change with proposals to:
  - enhance its work by ensuring long-term membership,
  - enlarge the mandate to address water issues, maintaining the UNECE role for the National Policy Dialogues,
  - establish a Steering Committee;

### End of July 2018

- CA countries to nominate their representatives to the High Level Conference

### September 2018, Almaty

- EU-CA joint regional workshop with country specific break-out sessions with IFIs ("clinic") to agree on selected environmental project concepts for further consideration by IFIs or other donors

### Last week of January 2019 (tentative)

- Tashkent: EU-CA High Level Conference

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