

**Award Ceremony to recognize the winners and participants of
the CA Media Contest “Climate Change: The Planet’s Future is in Our Hands”**

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Welcome Speech by

Mr Johannes Stenbaek Madsen, *Chargé d’Affaires a.i.* of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan

Dear Contestants, Ladies and gentlemen,

- I am very pleased and honored to welcome you on behalf of the EU Delegation in Kazakhstan to today’s Award Ceremony where we will pay tribute to the winners and participants of the media contest “Climate Change: The Planet’s Future is in Our Hands”.
- Record-breaking temperatures, unprecedented wildfires and the Covid-19 pandemic are all warnings that we must change our relationship with nature and join efforts to address the climate crisis. While we are still fighting the pandemic, we must not forget that we are facing even bigger and more long-term challenges related to climate change.
- To implement the **EU Green Deal**, our top priority and new growth strategy announced by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, in December 2019 and in line with the EU Strategy on Central Asia adopted in June 2019, the EU continues to cooperate with Central Asian states to strengthen their capacity to deal with the impacts of climate change. We believe that climate change requires concerted actions of society as a whole. Mass media plays an indispensable role in raising awareness, shaping attitudes and influencing action. Journalists encourage people to make small but critical changes in their daily behavior and do their bit to make cities greener and switch to more environmentally friendly technologies that can help tackle environmental and climate change challenges. As the current pandemic has shown we obviously have a common interest in joining efforts to create a healthy, more resilient and sustainable future for our Planet, ourselves and future generations.
- The EU Green Deal puts a strong emphasis on supporting the **transition to clean energy** in line with a more ambitious climate policy. It also sets the principles for the EU’s commitment to its partner countries in this regard.
- The Green Deal provides a roadmap with actions to boost the efficient use of resources by moving to a **clean, circular economy** and stop climate change, revert **biodiversity** loss and cut **pollution**. It outlines **investments** needed and financing tools available, and explains how to ensure a just and inclusive transition. The Green Deal covers all sectors of the economy, notably **transport, energy, agriculture, buildings, and industries** such as steel, cement, ICT, textiles and chemicals.
- To translate the political ambition of being the world's **first climate neutral continent by 2050** into action, earlier this year the Commission also adopted the **Biodiversity Strategy** for 2030, the **Farm to Fork Strategy** for sustainable food, and the **Circular Economy Action Plan**.
- It is estimated that EUR 260 billion of additional annual investment, representing about 1.5% of 2018 GDP, will be needed to meet the objectives of the Green Deal. The magnitude of the investment challenge requires mobilizing both the public and private sector. Nonetheless, the

current and projected economical **losses resulting from climate change are considered far higher than the costs of realising the Green Deal's objectives.**

- **Key EU targets for 2030** include at least 40% cuts in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels), at least 32% share for renewable energy and at least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency. These ambitious and challenging goals clearly demonstrate that the **development towards green economy / green growth paradigm is one of the EU primary objectives.**
- Our approach to follow a long-term strategic vision of a resilient Europe is based on four pillars: (i) stepwise shift towards circular economy, (ii) increasing energy and material efficiency, (iii) a growing role of renewable energy sources and (iv) introduction of green technologies.
- It is clear that also globally, climate change, terrestrial and marine biodiversity loss, excessive use of resources and pollution on land and at sea are challenges that have to be addressed urgently. The full implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the **Paris Climate Agreement** therefore remain crucial.
- The post-COVID-19 economic recovery and the transition to a sustainable, socially just, resilient and climate neutral economy can and should go hand in hand. Over the next two years, governments around the world will seek to spend around EUR 10 trillion, which are in principle borrowed from future generations. The choices we make today will define tomorrow's future. This is why the recovery plans should be designed as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to 'build back better' and invest in an economy of the 21st century, and not in the obsolete carbon-based economy of the past century.
- Global solidarity, open and fair trade, international rules-based order, multilateralism and concerted action are crucial to avoid lapsing into fossil fuel and resource intensive recovery, thus putting people and the planet irreversibly in peril. We urge all our partners to also put in place clear, robust low-carbon policies and green national recovery strategies. This will give our societies a sense of direction and purpose, and guide investors, businesses, workers and consumers towards sustainability, which can be framed by regulations based on sustainable finance and taxonomy principles.
- As you know, the countries of Central Asia are strongly interdependent when it come to their environment, water and energy resources that are closely linked by geography and the existing infrastructure systems. The most challenging issues for Central Asia are the increasingly competing demands for water between CA states exacerbated by outdated and inefficient irrigation infrastructures causing drainage problems and increasing environmental degradation of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystem. Another challenge is the inadequate cooperation between CA countries in managing shared water resources which can have dire economic consequences, especially under the increasing threats associated with climate change. Yet another challenge is the lack of institutional capacity to translate policies into investments to upgrade the existing infrastructure. It is clear that **all these regional challenges require transboundary solutions.**
- Within the framework of its development cooperation, which since 2014 has amounted to **more than EUR 1 billion for Central Asia**, the EU promotes **sustainable economic development and a more rational use of natural resources.** The EU has **15 ongoing regional programmes** covering the sustainable use of water, energy, environment and the water-food-energy nexus for the total amount of **about €100 million.**
- Through projects like WECOOP 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. Through the cooperation it also promotes informed green investments in the relevant sectors with the ultimate goal of contributing to measurable reductions in man-made pollution.

- As you know, all five Central Asian countries have signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. To mitigate and adapt to climate changes, the EU supports the Central Asian partner countries in their implementation of this Agreement, which sets out a global framework to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.
- Before I conclude my speech, I want to thank the WECOOP Project Team for the initiative to hold this media contest, as the media is one of the best ways to raise awareness on climate change. In fact, our colleagues from other EU Delegations in the region who have participated in the evaluation of your materials have already given us very positive feedback about the awareness that the contest raised as well as its potential for fostering positive changes in policy-making and practical implementation.
- We all know that journalism has a great power to transform the world for the better. Journalists provide people with the information they need to make well-informed decisions about their lives, their behaviors and habits, their communities, their societies, and their governments.
- Journalists that address the environment/climate change topics are advocates for changes to improve the quality of the Planet, as effective storytelling can change the world. Journalists can encourage people to make small changes to their daily behavior and inspire them to do their bit to make the cities greener, live more sustainably, and switch to environmentally friendly technologies in order to tackle environment and climate change challenges.
- The WECOOP team, as the organizer of this media contest, has reported that 44 journalists representing media outlets from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan with total potential audience of more than 60 million people took part in the contest.

Dear journalists,

- We would like to encourage you to continue your valuable research and report on climate and environment issues for our common sustainable future.
- And now, **I am pleased to award you with the certificates of appreciation in recognition of your participation in this media contest** and what is more important of your contribution to the dialogue and raising awareness about environment and climate change. (The digital certificates of appreciation are shared on the screen).
- The Contest Committee has reviewed 110 journalistic materials that were submitted for the contest. The main evaluation criteria included the following:
 - compliance with the theme;
 - understanding and in-depth elucidation of the subject;
 - accuracy and reliability of information;
 - professional level of presenting the material, style and beauty of the language (wording);
 - compliance with ethical principles of journalism.

- Based on these criteria, the Contest Committee has identified not *two* as was originally planned, **but *three winners*** who will get the main prize – participation in the study tour to the Czech Republic to get introduced to the best available techniques. The tour will be organized by WECOOP once the COVID-19 epidemiological situation allows it to do so, preliminary in autumn 2020.
- And as the culmination of our event, I now have the ultimate honor to announce the winners:
 - Mr Almas Mussabekov – Atameken Business Channel (Kazakhstan) with the material titled “The global economy will lose \$10 bln annually, if the world average temperature increases by 2 degrees”
 - Mr Zhanat Tukpiyev from Kazpravda newspaper (Kazakhstan) with the material titled “Plastic bag? – No, thank you.”: Life without plastic, or How we are destroying the planet
 - Mr Ermek Aktanov from Birinchi Public Radio (Kyrgyzstan) with the material titled Glaciers and climate
- I want to wish you all to stay healthy and continue your important work to raise awareness on environment and climate change. Together we can help save our Planet and make it a better place for future generations!