

# Strengthening the Regional Institutional Framework for IWRM in Central Asia



**Region**  
Central Asia

**Partners**  
Five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and other development partners

**Background information**  
In 2014, the first Conference on IWRM with delegations from the five countries took place in Basel. A follow-up conference was held in Astana, Kazakhstan, in June 2017.

**Project target**  
Central Asia moves forward towards sustainable and equitable transboundary water management in a changing climate whereby the people in the region benefit from water security, peace, stability and sustainable development through increased resilience and intergovernmental dialogue.

**Beneficiaries**  
Transboundary water management institutions, environmental bodies, young water professionals, water users, overall population.

**Costs**  
CHF 6,000,000

**Duration**  
09.2014 – 12.2020

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In response to the explicit demand of the five Central Asian States, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation aims to facilitate transboundary water resources cooperation through the establishment of a High Level Dialogue Platform, the promotion of sustainable water practices in transboundary water basins as well as capacity-building of a new generation of water professionals. This line of action is consistent with Switzerland's "Blue Peace" approach and already implemented elsewhere at a regional and global level.

The transboundary basins of Central Asia cover an extensive area and are home to about 60 million inhabitants. The water shared by the five riparian countries is fundamental for both their people and the economy they depend upon. Unsustainable water use, insufficient transnational cooperation and opposing national interests have contributed to a climate of distrust among the countries in the region. The current centralized transboundary water cooperation framework proved to be inefficient. A dialogue to shift from a national administrative approach to a transboundary hydrographic water management basis is therefore necessary. In this regard, the Central Asian countries are increasingly aware of the cost of unsustainable water management as well as the effect of climate change and its impact on the environment and their societies. Switzerland, recognised as a credible and neutral actor, is as such well placed to provide concomitantly quality expertise and honest brokerage without a hidden agenda in order to facilitate dialogue on transboundary water cooperation.

Through two Swiss-supported high-level events bringing together for the first time representatives from Foreign and Water Ministries and Parliaments (Basel I Conference in November 2014 and Astana Conference within the World Expo in June 2017) and the deployment of a Swiss Special Envoy for Water in Central Asia, the five countries clearly expressed the need for the establishment of an informal **High Level Dialogue Platform** in Central Asia to exchange on commonly-identified regional priorities, notably

on: 1) transparent sharing of hydrometeorology data and joint use of forecast modelling among riparian countries to prevent water-related disasters and adapt to climate change; 2) investment in and joint management of transboundary water infrastructure; and 3) adoption of water quality standards and monitoring, and water efficiency interventions.

In parallel to the High Level Dialogue Platform, a **Programme of strategic actions** at operational and regional level is being developed in order to facilitate an evidence-based dialogue at the political level and to ensure an effective and sustainable transboundary water management. To this end, authorities in selected water basins will adopt and replicate smart water practices based on the three priority areas listed above, which were jointly agreed upon during the Basel I conference.

The third pillar of intervention consists of strengthening the role of the **next generation of professionals in the water sector**, the so-called Water Champions, to influence and benefit from negotiated solutions in regional water management and cooperation. Their knowledge and skills will be enhanced by means of youth-led workshops as well as online trainings and summer schools.



Additional information  
[www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/countries/central-asia.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/countries/central-asia.html)