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OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)**

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COUNCIL**

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**DRAFT CONCEPT OF THE SPECA STRATEGY
ON WATER, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT**

(FOR INFORMATION ONLY)

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Abbreviations

ADB – Asian Development Bank

CAEWDP - Central Asia Energy and Water Development Program

CAREC - Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation

EC-IFAS – Executive Committee of IFAS

ESCAP - United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization

GEF – Global Environment Facility

GIZ – Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, German Corporation for International Cooperation

ICSD - Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development

ICWC - International Commission for Water Coordination

IFAS - International Fund for the Saving of the Aral Sea

IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature

MFA – Ministry for Foreign Affairs

REAP – Regional Environmental Action Plan

SC – Strategy Concept

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SIC ICWC - Scientific-Information Center of the Interstate Coordination Water Commission of the Central Asia

SPECA - United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia

TWG – Thematic Working Groups

UN – United Nations

UNDAF - United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNECE - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNSDCF – United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

USAID - The United States Agency for International Development

WEE – Water Energy Environment

WG – Working Group

Annexes

Annex 1 - Selected references from national strategies, programmes etc relevant for the Strategy concept

Annex 2 - SPECA work plan for 2018-2019, Water Energy and Environment

Annex 3 – Selected references from SPECA countries' United Nation Development Assistance Frameworks relevant for the Strategy Concept

1. Executive Summary

The document outlines a proposal for a Strategy Concept (SC) for the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment (WG WEE) and how the Concept can be developed into a Strategy. It is based on the existing SPECA and the WG WEE mandate. The objective and scope of the document is presented in Section 2.

Section 3 describes the history of SPECA after the signing of the Tashkent declaration in 1998 with an emphasis on the latest developments. One of the priority areas highlighted in the Tashkent declaration is the rational and effective use of energy and water resources. The previous work and work programme of the WG WEE is described including the jointly developed regional strategy for water and energy resources published in 2004 and implementation of certain components of the strategy.

The SPECA Governing Council decided in 2015 to reinvigorate SPECA as a platform for achieving those Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets which necessitate regional cooperation. An evaluation of SPECA in 2018 highlighted weaknesses of the Programme such as lack of country ownership, an ad hoc approach, insufficient funding and impact and gave recommendations for the future of SPECA including its Working Groups.

The Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment (WG WEE) has concluded that its focus should be on SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation for all) and SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy for all) but also other environment-related SDGs. At its 22nd session in 2018 the WG WEE decided to explore opportunities to develop a new SPECA Strategy (or a strategic study) on water, energy and environment.

In Section 4 the water-energy-environment situation, cooperation frameworks and corresponding international support in the region¹ are briefly described. Costs for inaction due to limited water cooperation has been estimated to more than US\$ 4.5 billion per year for Central Asia. Climate change is an on-going process with already recorded increases of temperatures and melting of glaciers. The importance of the nexus approach in the region is stressed as the important sectors of water-food-energy-environment are interlinked. It is concluded that joint policy making across sectors and countries is important for the SPECA countries.

Relevant SDGs, in particular SDG 6 and SDG 7, country SDG prioritisation and the UN support frameworks with UN Country Teams and Regional Commissions are the themes for Section 5. Under national leadership the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) is a vehicle for identifying development solutions through an inclusive dialogue. The Cooperation Framework represents the UN development system's collective support in addressing key Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) priorities and gaps. In looking at development trends beyond national boundaries, with the support of Regional Commissions the UNSDCF should also contribute to regional, subregional and cross-border strategies and partnerships.

The Strategy Concept is outlined in Section 6 with the following main items.

Central aspects for the Strategy development, approval and implementation are:

1. Implementation of the Strategy should be flexible and possible to adapt to availability of funding.
2. Alliances and cooperation with other relevant processes and projects in the region should be developed.

¹ According to the classification of the UN Central Asia is defined as a sub-region. However, in this Strategy Concept the term region will be used for the SPECA countries except for in quotes.

3. Efforts should be made to raise the profile and understanding of the WG WEE and its Work Programme.
4. Leadership and ownership of countries is an important condition.
5. A focus on adaptation to climate change.
6. Links to the national level UNSDCFs.

An important step in the development of a new Strategy is to agree on a joint vision that gives a clear picture of what is to be achieved in the WG WEE framework.

It is proposed that the new Strategy is developed to be less ambitious in terms of analysis but oriented more on action and development of joint policies than the Regional Strategy from 2004 helping countries address regional and transboundary issues, achieving related national development objectives, including SDGs. It is suggested that the WG WEE will be more directly linked to various activities and processes (Fig. 2).

The strategy could include the following four specific objectives:

1. Improve information availability and exchange of national practices and experiences on SDG 6 and 7 implementation
2. Build capacity to understand water-energy-environment (nexus) interlinkages relevant to SDGs 6 and 7
3. Joint policy development
4. Support of specific win-win actions relevant to SDGs 6 and 7

It is concluded that there is a need for separate funding for Strategy development (fundraising on-going) and that a minimum annual budget for regular work of the WG WEE would be US\$ 150,000 to cover an annual WEE WG meeting, consultants and secretariat support.

Several partnerships for future work are proposed including CAEWDP of the World Bank and The Central Asia Nexus Dialogue project managed by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia. A new Regional Environment Action Plan (REAP) for Central Asia could also be an element of work in cooperation with the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD).

The Strategy may benefit from a phased implementation with initial efforts to reorganise its work and identify sources of funding, then focusing on outreach to raise the status of the WG before moving the focus to the technical work and policy dialogue.

Finally, the following steps are proposed for the institutional strengthening of the WG WEE:

1. A more stable and higher-level SPECA country participation.
2. Strengthened links to the SPECA Governing Council.
3. Active lead country/countries.
4. Improved cooperation and coordination between ESCAP and UNECE, and with SPECA countries.
5. Establishment of sub-groups under the WG WEE (Fig. 2).
6. Establishment of a Secretariat for the WG WEE should be considered.
7. Improved outreach of the WG WEE.
8. Implementation of a flagship project or efforts to promote the WEE WG.

2. Objective and scope of the document

This document outlines a proposal for a Strategy Concept (SC) for the SPECA Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment (WG WEE) and how this document can be developed into a strategy. The SC is based on the existing SPECA mandate with a focus on water and energy issues and environment as a cross cutting issue.

The new Strategy should:

1. Address regional and transboundary water, energy and linked environmental issues;
2. Facilitate the achievement of related national development objectives and SDGs;
3. Promote intersectoral analysis of energy and water issues, and
4. Improve water, energy and environment sector cooperation nationally and between countries.
5. Take into account emerging initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, problems related to the environment such as sand and dust storms and climate change.

The time perspective of the Strategy is suggested to be 10 years or thereabout.

The draft SC is based on the study of a broad range of documents: SPECA reports, national water, energy and environment plans of SPECA countries including national SDG plans, descriptions of international support programmes and UN Development Assistance Frameworks.

The SC also draws on the experiences of the consultant drafting this Strategy Concept from being a staff member of UNECE and closely involved in the SPECA WEE cooperation 2001-2017.

3. UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia – 20 years of cooperation

History and setting

The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) was launched in 1998 to strengthen regional cooperation in Central Asia and support its integration into the world economy. The countries participating in SPECA are presently Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The Tashkent Declaration on SPECA was signed on 26 March 1998 by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan on the one side, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on the other. The Declaration recognized the communality of economic development interests of the Central Asian States; the need for further strengthening of economic ties among Central Asian States; expressed a willingness to integrate the countries economically with Europe and Asia, and declared the intention to adopt the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

The objective of the Programme is to support the countries in developing their cooperation and creating opportunities for economic development and integration into the economies of Europe and Asia. The implementation of the Programme is based on cooperation and reciprocal benefit, transparency and equality of participating countries with the support of donor countries and international organizations.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) agreed to and have since the beginning supported activities under the Programme.

One of the priority areas identified in the Tashkent declaration was the rational and effective use of energy and water resources of Central Asia.

In accordance with the terms of reference for SPECA, the Governing Council established on the proposal of national coordinators Working Groups for each of the priority programmatic areas of SPECA and lead countries were appointed. For the area “Water and energy resources, and the environment” Kyrgyzstan was appointed as the lead country.

In 2015, the UN member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address crucial issues facing the global community. A decision was made at the 10th session of the SPECA Governing Council in Dushanbe the same year, and reinforced at the 11th session in Ganja, Azerbaijan in 2016, to reinvigorate SPECA as a platform for achieving the SDGs and corresponding targets which necessitate regional cooperation.

A study on the “Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the SPECA region” was presented to the Governing Council in 2017. The study gives an overview of the priority SDGs of the respective SPECA countries and pointed out that:

“..... the SPECA Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), the UN Country Teams and other stakeholders assess subregional cooperation as a necessary element for the overall work on implementing the SDGs. All countries and Working Groups noted that subregional cooperation is needed. This is especially the case in the areas of Water, Energy, and the Environment, Trade, and Sustainable Transport.”

An evaluation of SPECA was done in 2017-2018 (UNESCAP, 2018) and some of its conclusions relevant for this document is accounted in a section below.

To reflect its support to the implementation of the SDGs, the Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment (WG WEE) agreed at its 21st session (Astana, Kazakhstan, 14 June 2017) that it would:

- Provide a platform for supporting progress towards achieving SDGs with a focus on those directly related to water, energy and environment (including, but not limited to SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation and SDG 7 on Affordable and Clean Energy);
- Improve awareness of SPECA countries on the water-, energy- and environment-related SDGs, provide information and share best practice experiences with regard to the implementation of these SDGs, including taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs, and
- Become a platform for identification and coordination of technical issues within the scope of WG competence to further promote strengthening of mutual trust at political level.

In the conclusions of the 21st Session there was also a reference to the possibility to align SPECA WG WEE work with the new Regional Environmental Action Plan for Central Asia under development.

At its 22nd session (Astana, Kazakhstan, 9 October 2018) the WG WEE requested to explore opportunities to develop a new SPECA Strategy or a strategic study on water, energy and environment, mainstreaming SDGs and reflecting new development challenges in the SPECA region, e.g. the “Belt and Road Initiative”. Another decision of the 2018 WEE WG was that each country should nominate three focal points from each of the countries to represent water, energy and environment areas.

The following was further included in the 2018 WG WEE meeting report (partly repeating the statement from the previous session):

“In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to facilitate economic cooperation in the SPECA region as well as integration of the SPECA participating countries into the world economy for their attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Working Group shall:

- *Provide a platform for supporting progress on strategic issues related to water, energy and environment, and towards achieving the respective SDGs with a focus on the SDGs (including, but not limited to SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation and SDG 7 on Affordable and Clean Energy);*
- *Aim at improving awareness of SPECA countries on the water-, energy- and environment-related SDGs, provide information and share best practice experiences with regard to the implementation of these SDGs, including taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs. Promote consideration of energy and water cooperation opportunities and intersectoral and transboundary impacts in the SDG implementation and related action plans;*
- *Promote compliance with relevant international legal instruments, norms, guidelines, standards and recommendations in the fields of competence of the Working Group;*

- *Act as a platform for identification, development, support and coordination of technical programmes and projects within the scope of the Working Group competence thereby building capacity, promoting best practices and strengthening mutual trust at political level among the SPECA participating countries.”*

SPECA evaluation 2018

An evaluation of the SPECA framework for cooperation was published in 2018 (ESCAP, 2018). The Governing Council noted with appreciation the evaluation report submitted in the September 2018 meeting decisions

(https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/SPECA/documents/gc/session_13/Report_of_13th_SPECA_Governing_Council_final.pdf).

The evaluation stressed weaknesses of the Programme such as lack of country ownership, an ad hoc approach, and insufficient funding and impact. It concluded that:

“One way that SPECA can become more relevant is to enhance its potential as a platform for aligning policies and initiatives so that countries could achieve the SDGs through regional cooperation, especially the trans-boundary SDGs on water, environment, trade, energy etc. To do so, the Regional Commissions could support them by providing capacity building, studies, research and by coordinating better with other UN agencies also involved in supporting countries to achieve the SDGs.

SPECA, as the only organization that focuses solely on exchanges between the landlocked countries of Central Asia, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, can also become an ideal platform to coordinate policies, overcome barriers to cooperation, exchange information, commission studies and learn from each other so that they could, as a group, be in a stronger position to negotiate with and integrate into larger processes, such as for example the One Belt One Road initiative, the Eurasian Economic Union etc.”

...

“.. cooperation in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, IFAS, or a network of national trade negotiators, notably, in the perspective of WTO negotiations. As such, the rationale of SPECA is different from other existing bodies, making it unique.”

One recommendation in the evaluation is the setting up of a well-staffed and funded SPECA Secretariat. A permanent Secretariat would be of great value also for SPECA WGs but there are presently no signs that an establishment would be possible.

The evaluation further recommends to develop/improve cooperation with other international organization and donors.

The evaluation draws the following conclusions on the SPECA WGs:

“The choice and number of the TWGs may need rationalization. While it seems that the question of trade, water and energy, and transport, are key to regional integration and cooperation, requiring intense work to harmonize policies, solve conflicts, align positions regionally and globally, other TWG themes seem to have less priority relevance.”

“SPECA may need to decide on priority areas and assign to each relevant TWG a key task, such as for example the preparation of a regional strategy, conducting research and providing strategic recommendations, conducting a feasibility study, coordination of legislation and policies etc. The preparation of these outputs by dedicated experts from the countries could be facilitated by the Regional Commissions. The work of the TWGs can be done online and reporting done to the chairs

electronically, and not necessarily each time through a workshop, which could facilitate saving on budget and concentrating instead on outputs.”

Several additional conclusions on the strengths/weaknesses of SPECA and recommendations are reflected below in the analysis of the SPECA WG WEE framework and used in the conclusions for the Strategy Concept. A weakness not explicitly described in the evaluation is that SPECA is not a widely understood and acknowledged framework and much needs to be done to promote a better understanding even in the member countries.

[SPECA Regional Strategy 2004](#)

As a result of the joint work of water and energy sector representatives from all (at that time) SPECA countries and with funding from the UN Development Account the report “Strengthening Cooperation for Rational and Efficient Use of Water and Energy Resources in Central Asia” was published in 2004 (UNECE, UNESCAP 2004). The report with contributions from experts representing all SPECA countries offers a still valid analysis of the situation and describes well interrelations between the water, energy and environment sectors in the region.

The conclusions and plans outlined in the report were at some level approved in all SPECA countries but at the time the political relations and engagement in the SPECA concept were not such that the broad range of suggested cooperation projects could be launched.

Two directions of work could be initiated and have successfully developed and are still important activities in the framework of SPECA:

- Dam safety cooperation that has deepened and continues to have an impact on the national and regional levels
- Cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on the Chu and Talas rivers where solid achievements are indicated by the fact that its 25th Commission Meeting took place in 2019 after SPECA support to establish the Commission in 2006.

[SPECA Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment and its challenges](#)

The SPECA WG WEE is the only formal group in the region where representatives from water, energy and environment sectors meet. As is illustrated in this draft Strategy Concept the interlinkages between the sectors are strong and there are significant possibilities to find synergies for SPECA countries applying a transboundary and intersectoral approach. Thus, the potential of the WG WEE to facilitate progress in the region is high.

During the development of the 2004 Regional Strategy the WG (at that time called a Project Working Group) was well-funded by a UN Development Account project and was oriented towards the objectives of the project. The participation from the countries was high-level and country representation stable.

When the project was concluded and the Regional Strategy approved, however, the meetings have had a more ad hoc character. Lack of funding is one reason and it has also been a challenge that participants nominated by countries have tended to change between meetings. Less focus on specific objectives has also been a drawback as has the political situation in the region. While the draft work programme was always on the agenda the discussions have tended to be less constructive and coherent.

However, a number of cooperation projects have been part of the SPECA WEE Work Programme (Annex 2). Frequently these items were not uniquely linked to the SPECA framework but are also connected to for example to ESCAP initiatives, the UNECE Environmental Conventions, the UNECE Energy Committee, the Sustainable Energy for All initiative etc.

Examples of work programme components are:

- Regional water cooperation including on water quality
- Cooperation between Afghanistan and Tajikistan on the Panj river (upper Amu Darya) and between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on the Chu and Talas rivers
- Investments for renewable energy production
- Energy security and sustainable use of energy
- Dam safety in Central Asia
- Assessment of the Nexus in the SyrDarya basin

While the initiative to include and develop these and other areas of work in many cases came from UNECE or ESCAP, over-all the direction of work have had a good potential to improve livelihood and support development in SPECA countries. The SPECA work programme has been active and relevant but there has been marginal input and political support from the WG WEE.

The frequently strict division between sectors of expertise and mandates of WG participants is a challenge. Energy experts tend to look exclusively at problems from an energy sector perspective while irrigation, water management experts have their own sectoral viewpoint.

Another issue is the limited possibility of participants to engage in a truly open discussion about opportunities of regional cooperation. This has to do with the restricted mandate that even high-level country representatives may have had in connection with the previously difficult relationship between countries.

Fund-raising is another bottleneck for the development of work programme components. The Secretariats of the UN Regional Commissions have been actively raising funds for various projects but in most cases the WG WEE has not been involved.

Follow-up of decisions and declarations is a weak point in the SPECA process including in the WG WEE. Overall the decision making on the WG Work Programmes has tended to be of less importance for the countries and more a concern of ESCAP and UNECE.

UNECE, ESCAP and SPECA

UNECE and ESCAP have supported the SPECA process since the 1998 Tashkent Declaration and are also leading a number of activities and projects in support of the SPECA WG WEE.

The regional multilateral environmental agreements with their Secretariats in UNECE have made substantive contributions and continue to contribute to projects aligned with SPECA WG WEE priorities. Two such examples are dam safety cooperation and support to bilateral cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the Chu-Talas basins. The work on the nexus outlined below is a UNECE Water Convention core activity of importance for the WG WEE work.

The organization of Forums on Energy for Sustainable Development by ESCAP and UNECE with active participation of SPECA countries provides good opportunities for contacts and capacity building on rational and efficient use of energy resources. The UNECE Group of Experts on Renewable Energy under the Committee on Sustainable Energy is an important source of substantive and policy support.

The work on the 2004 Strategy was characterised by a close cooperation between ESCAP and UNECE but after that period the cooperation has been less active. An improved cooperation and coordination between ESCAP and UNECE in support of SPECA WG WEE would facilitate the development and effective implementation of a new strategy.

4. Regional water energy environment background

Water, energy and environment in SPECA countries

Water and energy are key drivers for the socio-economic development in SPECA countries. The water and energy links between countries are most apparent among the five Central Asian states and Afghanistan sharing the Aral Sea basin. In this section the focus is on these states.

In Central Asia more than 8 million hectares of irrigated agriculture uses 90 % of available surface water and contributes around 20 percent to the GDP of the region while employing a large percentage of the population. In particular in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan hydropower is the key source of energy.

The population in the five countries of Central Asia is forecast to increase from the present 70 million to 95 million by 2050. As a result, per capita water availability could be reduced by more than 33% by 2050 compared to today's levels all else being equal.

Central Asia can be seen as a self-sufficient energy system. The region is rich with energy resources though distributed unevenly among the countries. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have significant production and additional potential of hydropower that could supply electricity to other parts of the region and even further. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are producers and considerable exporters of gas and have potential for significant oil production. Kazakhstan is rich in fossil fuel resources (coal, gas, oil) that meet domestic needs as well as for exports. There is an interest to develop cooperation in the region as suppliers, consumers and transporters.

Accelerated economic growth and job-creation is anticipated in the region, also due to increasing investment under the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. An increased demand for food, municipal water (at present about 5% of total withdrawals) and electricity is anticipated.

The basic problem for transboundary water management in the Aral Sea Basin with the main rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya is that water from the two rivers is overexploited after the expansion of an inefficient irrigation systems during Soviet times. The disappearing Aral Sea is the most visible result and there is limited access to water in parts of the basin during certain years and seasons. Water release regimes are suboptimal for hydropower as well as irrigation, a low water quality is negative for health and environment.

In a recent publication (Adelphi and CAREC, 2017) the costs of inaction due to limited water cooperation is estimated at more than US\$ 4.5 billion per year for the region in addition to environmental, social and political costs. The main costs relate to reduced agricultural productivity US\$ 1.75 billion, higher energy prices and energy insecurity US\$ 1.36 billion, and limited access to international finance US\$ 1.48 billion. US\$ 6.4 billion was lost only 2010-2014 from the collapse of the regional electricity trade.

While energy and agriculture sectors are key factors in the regional discussions on water management and release regimes, environmental issues such as protection of water-dependent ecosystems and water quality management are generally not prominent on the regional level and not sufficiently so on the national level. Poor water quality is likely to affect the health and well-being of many people. Other challenges such as sand and dust storms, sustainability of water-related ecosystems as well as related safety considerations due to insufficient safety of water reservoirs and tailing dams should be considered in the development of a new Strategy.

Lack of cooperation between the countries has hindered the identification and agreements on joint solutions providing synergies and minimising trade-offs. But the interest for a closer cooperation is now clearly expressed on the highest political levels. There is a window of opportunity that could be used to develop a regional vision, culture and mindset for water and energy cooperation.

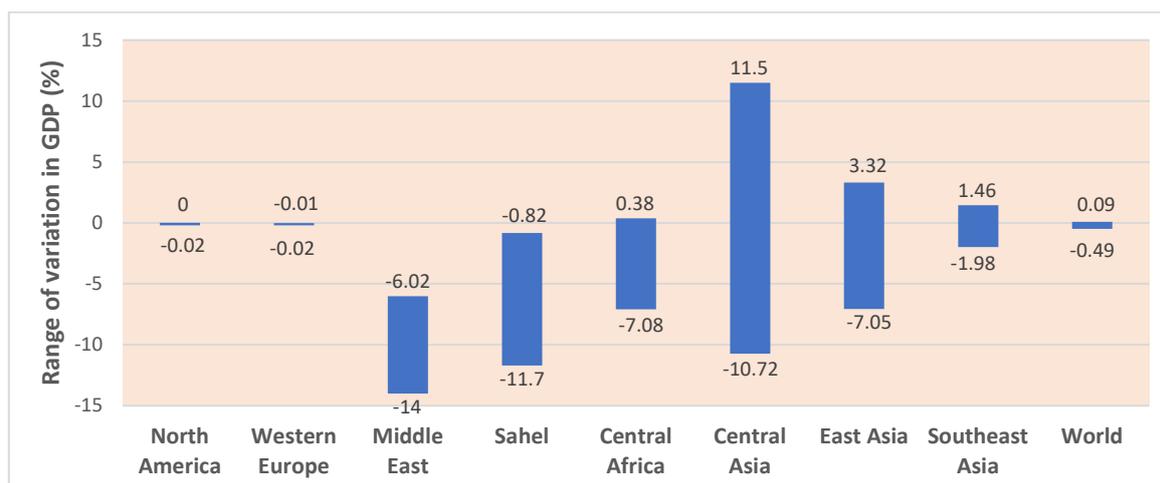
Climate change

The effects of climate change, including higher temperatures, more frequent droughts and earlier snowmelt will have a major influence on water availability in SPECA countries and thus on water and energy sectors. Rapid glacier melt is presently increasing water flows, but this effect is likely to be reversed in a few decades. Summer temperatures are increasing leading to higher consumption of water for irrigation. In a World Bank publication (World Bank Group, 2014) it is stated that: “.....the timing of peak flows of key rivers will shift towards spring with a 25% reduction in the flow during the critical summer growing season. Droughts could further push land degradation and desertification.....” Reduction in water availability is projected to occur along with a 30% increase in irrigation demand. Combined with new heat extremes that negatively affect crop productivity, substantial risks for irrigated and rain-fed agricultural systems can be expected.”

Material put together by SIC ICWC (SIC ICWC, 2016) confirms that this is an already on-going process: Since the 1980s, the warming of climate has been twice as rapid in the Aral Sea region than the world average. Summers in Central Asia tend to be shorter and hotter, while the autumn-winter period is longer and colder. The number of days with temperatures of 40 degrees or higher has doubled in the Aral Sea region over recent years.

In a global assessment by the World Bank of policy impact on GDP under climate change scenarios for 2050 (World Bank Group, 2016) Central Asia turns out to be the most sensitive region to water-related policy changes. The assessment shows that in Central Asia GDP could increase significantly in spite of climate change if appropriate policies were applied. Much of these policies are part of the WG WEE mandate.

Figure 1. Climate-related impacts on GDP in 2050, ranges of impacts determined by policies (World Bank Group, 2016)



A better understanding of the climate change processes would help to optimize policy development, and a more efficient water use and increased water storage are important to adapt to climate change. A temporary increase of water flow from glacier melting may give a window of opportunity to develop efficient adaptation policies.

Regional cooperation on adaptation to climate change is important and would fit the WG WEE mandate and may also give opportunities to attract additional funding. Climate change funds are substantial and by working together for sustainable water and energy sector solutions the SPECA countries may be able to attract important international financing.

Regional cooperation and legal frameworks

An important factor for the development of a new SPECA WEE Strategy is the political environment for cooperation. Presently the political relations between the SPECA countries are very good and there is a general openness and a positive attitude to deepening cooperation.

The countries in the region cooperate in different groupings beside SPECA, such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States (CCTS). Cooperation with Afghanistan is supported through the periodic Regional Economic Conferences for Central Asia (RECCA) and the Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process.

The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Programme is a partnership of 11 countries - with China (Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia), Georgia, Mongolia and Pakistan in addition to the 7 SPECA countries. Six multilateral development partners are part of CAREC: Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme, and the World Bank Group. With the involvement of investment banks 2001-2017 CAREC mobilized almost \$30.5 billion in transport, trade and energy infrastructure investment.

In October 2017, CAREC endorsed its long-term strategy CAREC 2030 (Asian Development Bank, 2017) with more than \$5 billion support from the Asian Development Bank. Its mission statement is "A Regional Cooperation Platform to Connect People, Policies, and Projects for Shared and Sustainable Development" and its basic principles include:

- Aligning with national strategies and supporting SDGs and COP21 decisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on. Climate Change

- Deepening policy dialogue based on CAREC's standing and ability to deliver quality knowledge services
- Integrating the role of the private sector and civil society
- Building an open, inclusive CAREC platform to support regional cooperation

The past and present engagement of CAREC in the energy sector is to some extent overlapping with the WG WEE scope of work and CAREC 2030 stresses the importance of clean and renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy trade. Previously the organization has not been very active in the water sector but CAREC 2030 aims to provide a platform to discuss water scarcity and water productivity issues and to explore transboundary water resource management.

The International Fund for the Saving of the Aral Sea (IFAS) is the main institution for regional cooperation on water and environment among the five Central Asian states. It is chaired by one of the Presidents with the chairmanship rotating. The Executive Committee of IFAS (EC-IFAS) is a key institution for the Aral Sea Basin Programmes, the fourth of which being developed presently under the Turkmen chairmanship. For the moment Kyrgyzstan has frozen its participation in IFAS and related organizations.

As part of IFAS the International Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia (ICWC) with representatives of national water authorities negotiates annual water allocations under an agreement concluded in 1992². The agreement is based on previous Soviet water allocation arrangements.

The Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD), also part of the IFAS set-up, deals with environmental and sustainable development but generally avoids interference in the water sector. A second Regional Environmental Action Plan under ICSD is under development.

The cooperation of the Central Asian states in the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia with its main office in Almaty is another vehicle for environmental cooperation for the five Central Asian states.

While IFAS and ICWC cooperation have been very important in the post-Soviet period there are also weaknesses. The legal framework is not clear about the hierarchy and mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the different subsidiary organizations. Energy and economic sectors at the national and inter-state levels that could play a positive role are not involved. Another shortcoming of the IFAS cooperation framework is that it does not include Afghanistan, an upstream Riparian of the Amu Darya River.

The IFAS Summit 24 August 2018 in Turkmenistan gave an additional impulse to the regional water cooperation. The Summit declaration - approved by Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - stressed among other things the importance of IFAS reform, the development of the Aral Sea Basin Programme 4 and joint development of water infrastructure.

There is also cooperation on environmental protection and sustainable development in the Caspian Sea region under the Teheran Convention³. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are Parties to the Convention together with Iran and Russia. There could be components in the future SPECA WG WEE work plan related to the Caspian Sea.

² Agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Republic of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan on Cooperation in Joint Management of Use and Protection of Water Resources of Interstate Sources.

³ The Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea, the Tehran Convention (<http://www.tehranconvention.org/>).

An important part of the energy cooperation between the five Central Asian states are built around the Central Asian Electricity Grid. The energy cooperation also involves Afghanistan with electricity deliveries from Tajikistan. While the mutually beneficial electricity trade has been largely discontinued for many years, the situation is now better with an increasing electricity trade between the countries. In July 2019 a declaration to establish a unified electricity market was signed in Istanbul by heads of energy companies in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

A legal framework was set up in 1998 to consider the energy concerns of upstream countries and needs of water for irrigation downstream. Annual Protocols were negotiated to regulate water-energy exchanges between upstream and downstream countries on the Syr Darya until 2006. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan certain years apply a similar energy-water exchange but overall the 1998 Agreement is presently not applied.

An alternative approach to balancing water and energy needs in the region proposed by Kazakhstan is the establishment of a water-energy consortium that would introduce economic principles in the management of energy production and water. There are also other initiatives to improve energy-water sector cooperation.

International support

Development partners are engaged in the support of mainly water and environment sectors but in some instances also on energy issues. This section provides a brief overview of this support.

The UN Secretariat and UN Agencies are active to support regional water cooperation. The UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) with its office in Ashgabad has direct contacts with MFAs in the region and makes efforts to facilitate water cooperation.

The UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is active on water and environmental issues such as dam safety, water quality, the nexus and bilateral cooperation Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan-Afghanistan. Three of the multilateral environmental agreements with Secretariats in UNECE are relevant for water cooperation in Central Asia: The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Waters and International Lakes (Water Convention) and its Protocol on Water and Health, the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) and its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, and the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.

The engagement of UNDP is mainly on the national level on a multitude of development issues including efforts to use water more efficiently. There are also broader efforts such as the UNDP regional office in Istanbul for example leading the Chu-Talas GEF International Waters project that was recently concluded.

UNESCO supports regional scientific cooperation on groundwater and activities related to glaciers. UNEP is a key partner of ICSD but concentrate on environmental issues and not so much on the water sector. FAO focus on agriculture and also with projects aiming to make water use for irrigation more efficient.

The World Bank has a broad portfolio including national investment projects to improve irrigation infrastructure, establish Water User Associations, use water more efficiently and upgrade hydromet equipment. Its Central Asia Energy and Water Development Program (CAEWD) is a framework for regional project activities supporting regional efforts including in cooperation with IFAS.

In addition to national projects Asian Development Bank (ADB) is involved in the possible establishment of a transboundary water commission between Tajikistan and Afghanistan on the Panj basin (upper Amu Darya) as part of broader support to water management reform in both countries.

Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) manages the programme Transboundary water management in Central Asia that provides (among other things) support to EC-IFAS in Ashgabad for the development of Aral Sea Basin Programme 4 and institutional reform. GIZ is also contributing to the development of a new Regional Environmental Action Programme in support of ICSD.

Switzerland supports regional and national water management programmes in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation activities fall under the Blue Peace initiative that advocates water management cooperation in various regions of the world. The three pillars of the Blue Peace Initiative in Central Asia are policy development, work in the field and with youth representatives.

Finland's water programme in the region focuses on support to the water sector in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan but components aiming to facilitate regional cooperation on water quality and to support Afghan-Tajik hydrology and environment cooperation are also included.

The USAID funded Smart Waters project is implemented by the Regional Environmental Centre. The project aims to build water sector capacity in Central Asia and Afghanistan, build working relations among water managers and specialists, and demonstrate the potential of basin management approach in smaller basins and cooperation with the academia.

The EU Commission has a working group on climate change and environment together with Central Asian states that meets regularly and discusses general climate policy as well as EU project development. The EU Water Initiative support of National Policy Dialogues in Central Asian states recently renewed is important. As UNECE is closely involved in the implementation of these dialogues there are most likely opportunities for synergies with SPECA activities.

Although there is a certain level of coordination between the most important actors supporting regional cooperation on water, energy and environment, there is room for improvement. The tendency to set up separate political processes (EU Working Group, the Berlin Process, Blue Peace etc) demand political attention from the beneficiary countries that is not always optimal.

The water-energy-environment nexus – an important concept for the region

The term “nexus” in the context of water (agriculture), energy and environment refers to the frequent interlinkages between these sector. Actions in one area have impacts on the others. In a transboundary setting this may cause friction between the riparian countries as is the case between upstream and downstream countries in Central Asia.

A nexus (or inter-sectoral) approach to managing the interlinked resources can enhance water, energy and food security by increasing efficiency, reducing trade-offs, building synergies and improving governance across sectors. It looks for policies, technologies and actions that can help to find good solutions for sectors and countries involved.

Central Asia and Afghanistan are sharing the rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya that are of great importance for the supply of water for drinking, irrigation and energy generation. It is essential to find ways to optimise use of the water resource and protecting important water-related eco-systems and water quality. By improving inter-sectoral “nexus” cooperation on the national level and between countries beneficial synergies can be identified and used.

An assessment of the nexus in the Syr Darya basin (summary in UNECE, 2015) concluded that the efficiency in the use of natural resources in the basin is limited due to a lack of cooperation and interaction between sectors and countries. Several concrete areas were identified where joint action could reduce pressure on water and other resources. Examples are improvement of water and

energy efficiency and productivity, development of markets for resource trading as well as strengthening the legal basis for transboundary cooperation.

Adoption of the nexus approach has a potential to improve resource use efficiency and security in SPECA countries. In contrast to national and sectoral approaches presently employed, cooperation involving all the countries and sectors has a potential to optimize the use of resources. Applying solutions such as improvement of efficiency in water and energy use using well-targeted economic and policy instruments at the country level can gradually build more favourable conditions for transboundary cooperation. The SPECA Regional Strategy from 2004 and initiatives including by the World Bank and USAID to discuss the optimisation of production and use of water-energy resources focused on nexus-related ideas.

There are presently some positive developments with regard to the nexus in some of the SPECA countries. The most important is probably an increased trade of electricity between countries to make use of hydropower generated during summer in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

On-going processes to support nexus-related cooperation among SPECA countries include the World Bank Central Asia Energy and Water Development Program (CAEWDP) and a project supported by the EU and implemented by the Regional Environmental Centre and IUCN: Central Asia Nexus Dialogue project: Fostering Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus Dialogue and Multi-Sector Investment.

5. SDGs and policy development

Relevant SDGs for the WG WEE

The 20th WG WEE Session concluded that:

“The Working Group will ... Provide a platform for supporting progress towards achieving SDGs with a focus on the SDGs directly related to water, energy and environment (including, but not limited to, SDG 6 and SDG 7). For cooperation efforts among SPECA countries targets 6.5, 7.1 and 7.2 are highly relevant.”

SDG 6 is to “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” and target 6.5 – “By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate”.

SDG 7 is to “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all” and target 7.1 – “By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services”, target 7.2 – “By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix”.

The 20th WG Session report also highlighted: “Supplementary to prioritized SDG 6 and SDG 7, the WG will also turn attention to related SDGs, including SDG 13 “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”, as well as SDG 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” and SDG 15 “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss””.

SDGs 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture), 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all) and 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development) are also of relevance for the continued SPECA WEE work.

National programmes and strategies

The future Strategy needs to be aligned with national programmes and strategies. In Annex 1 relevant references from national programmes, strategies and various high-level statements are found. These quotes give examples of the importance as seen from the perspective of the countries and their leaders of a rational and effective use of energy and water resources and the interdependence between water and energy use and production.

The various SDGs have different priorities in the SPECA countries but SDG 6 and 7 are generally among the most important. A thorough analysis about the national positions on the SDGs and related priorities is found in UNECE, ESCAP (2017).

UN Support to achieve SDGs

The UN Country Teams play the main role on the national level to provide strategic and policy guidance, technical backstopping, policy and operational support on the achievement of SDGs. Under national leadership the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF, renaming of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)) is a vehicle for identifying development solutions through an inclusive dialogue. The Cooperation Framework represents the UN development system's collective support in addressing key SDG priorities and gaps. In looking at development aspects beyond national boundaries, UNSDCFs should also contribute to regional, subregional and cross-border strategies and partnerships.

UN Regional Commissions serve as “policy integrators” of the 2030 Agenda at the regional level that is reflected in three functions: i) convening in support to intergovernmental platforms; ii) think tank, serving as a source of knowledge, data, statistics and analysis for countries; iii) providing policy advice and targeted capacity development to assist member states to achieve results on regional and global agreements and trans-boundary and regional issues.

ESCAP and UNECE are well equipped to support the Country Teams in bringing regional perspective during analysis and support for UNSDCF formulation. With the work of the WG WEE as a mechanism for cooperation SPECA could play an important role to complement the reasoning and analysis on the national level with regional aspects, and the other way around, national priorities on UNSDCF can feed into the SPECA Strategy development and WG activities.

The SPECA WEE WG objectives are relevant also from an UNDAF perspective as can be seen in Annex 3.

6. A new Strategy

Strategy development and implementation

The following aspects should be considered for the new SPECA WEE Strategy development and implementation:

1. Implementation of the Strategy should be flexible and possible to adapt to availability of funding.
2. Where feasible, alliances and cooperation with other relevant processes and projects in the region should be developed.
3. Efforts should be made to raise the profile and understanding of the WEE WG, its Work Programme and Strategy in the SPECA member countries and in the international community.
4. Leadership and ownership of SPECA countries should be in the centre of the attention.
5. The looming climate change with higher temperatures and changed patterns of precipitation should be a central concern in the work programme.
6. There should be links to the national level UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

Some conclusions from the SPECA evaluation (ESCAP, 2018) that should be considered in the new Strategy are:

- The most effective role of SPECA is to be a platform for exchanges of information and experiences and coordination of policies. There should be less focus on fund raising for projects and more on ways to facilitate regional dialogue and policy coordination.
- One of the biggest problems of following-up on SPECA decisions and processes is the high staff turnover in national ministries and the loss of institutional memory.
- Recommendations of the WG meetings should be concrete and a system should be developed to ensure that recommendations are followed up on properly and, when feasible, integrated into national policy frameworks.
- Some work of the WGs can be done online and reporting done to the chairs electronically, and not necessarily each time through a workshop, which could facilitate saving on budget and concentrating instead on outputs.
- Each country should appoint representatives for each WG who could interact on an ongoing basis with their counterparts in other countries and maintaining communication and interactions electronically between meetings. The representatives should also be in charge of implementing/integrating the results of the WG recommendations/projects into their national economies.
- The focus of the WEE WG efforts should be on the aspects of SDGs that can be best addressed through regional cooperation.

The vision of the new Strategy

In advance of developing a new Strategy the SPECA countries should agree on a joint vision. While the strategy is a plan, the vision is the end-result. It should give the big picture of what is to be achieved.

The Tashkent declaration stated that “rational and effective use of energy and water resources of Central Asia” is a priority area and this could be a starting point for the formulation of a vision. The new TOR for the WG further stresses the objective to achieve “progress on strategic issues related to water, energy and environment, and towards achieving the respective SDGs with a focus on the SDGs”.

It is up to the SPECA countries to discuss and agree on a vision for the Strategy but a suggestion could be: “The vision of the WG WEE Strategy is to achieve rational, effective and sustainable use of energy and water resources among the SPECA countries by improving policies and intersectoral cooperation on the regional and national levels and thus contributing to reaching SDGs 6 and 7”. The vision could be even more specific.

The discussion and agreement on the vision between the countries is a very important step in the development of the Strategy. An active and dynamic dialogue between SPECA-countries will be a good basis for the further development and implementation of the Strategy.

Organization of work and objectives for the new Strategy

The new SPECA WEE Strategy is proposed to be less ambitious in terms of analysis but more action and policy oriented than the Regional Strategy from 2004.

The work of the WG could be organised as suggested in Fig. 2. This would mean that activities would be more directly linked to the WG WEE, with instructions coming from and reporting to the Working Group.

It is proposed that the strategy include four specific objectives:

1. Improve information availability and exchange of national practise and experience on SDG 6 and 7 implementation

The WEE WG would facilitate the exchange of practise and experience on SDGs linked to water, energy and environment – and their interdependence. With an intensified dialogue and more information made available in the WG WEE, priority issues could emerge and gain prominence on the national as well as regional levels.

Activities could include:

- a. Country reporting sessions during the annual WG meetings
- b. An annual newsletter for broad distribution
- c. Information made available on the SPECA webpages of UNECE and ESCAP

2. Build capacity to understand water-energy-environment (nexus) interlinkages relevant to SDGs 6 and 7

While there is a certain level of understanding when it comes to nexus inter-linkages there is a need for a deeper and more wide-spread understanding of the nexus and the character of such interactions. Policy solutions are frequently not applied due to the lack of a full understanding and limited interaction between the sectors. Improved capacity and dialogue between sectors and countries are needed.

Activities could include:

- a. Seminars and training courses
- b. Analytical papers on issues such as national energy security
- c. Participation of SPECA countries in international fora discussing nexus interlinkages

3. Joint policy development

To strengthen regional cooperation on WEE it is an important aspect to develop joint policies as a basis for harmonised national policies and cooperation in the focus sectors.

Activities could include establishing processes to:

- a. Develop agreed positions on regional institutions for cooperation on WEE
- b. Strengthen cooperation on joint use of water infrastructure
- c. Harmonise national water and energy policy frameworks
- d. Improve the functioning of regional energy markets

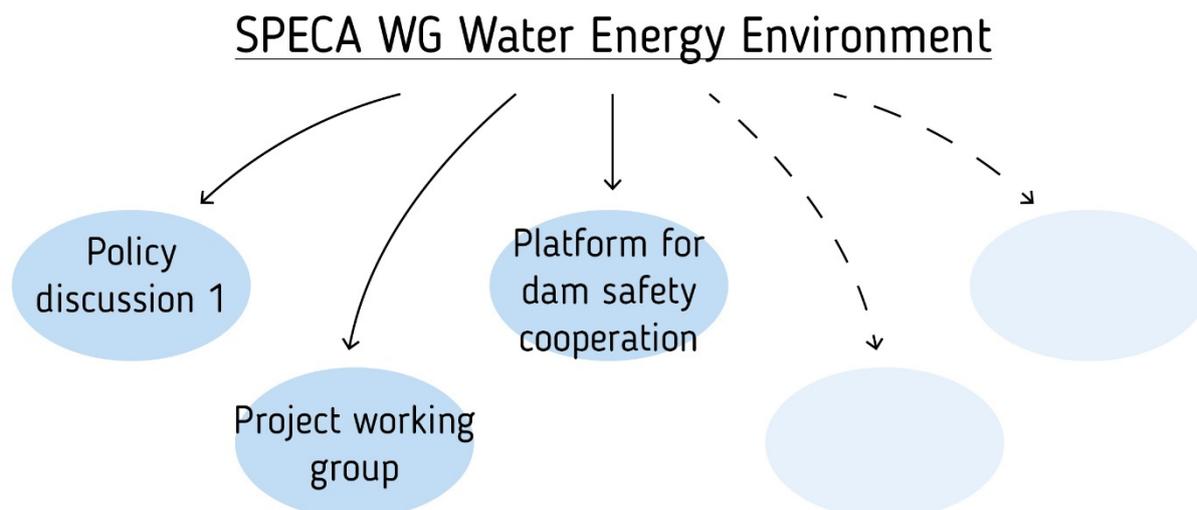
4. Support of specific win-win actions relevant to SDGs 6 and 7

The SPECA WEE programme has included several projects and actions relevant to the nexus but the involvement of the WG WEE in these activities has been limited as was pointed out in the SPECA evaluation (ESCAP, 2018). An improved dialogue within the WG on the selection, development and implementation of projects should be the objective. It is likely that selected projects within the scope of a new WEE Strategy with a strong country ownership would give life to the WG, and the other way around, links to SPECA would help to reach important project achievements.

Activities could include:

- a. Safety of dams including the establishment of a formal platform for cooperation
- b. Renewable energy development
- c. Joint efforts to attract climate change funds

Figure 2. Organization of work under the WG WEE. Arrows indicate instructions from and reporting back to the WG.



Resource needs

As is concluded by the SPECA evaluation the need for additional and sustained funding of SPECA is obvious.

The present basic level of funding from the Russian Federation and funding for SPECA-related projects is not enough for the additional efforts needed to develop the WEE WG Strategy according to this Strategy Concept. On-going fundraising may help to resolve this issue.

The minimum annual budget needed to implement the Strategy should as a minimum include the funding of:

- An annual WEE WG meeting
- International and national consultants
- Secretariat support for administration and organization of meetings

The minimum annual funding is estimated to about US\$ 150,000 including provision of in-kind services. The sources of funding can be from different organizations and of different kinds. It cannot be expected that a long-term plan for this level of funding or higher can be set up year one.

It is crucial that UNECE and ESCAP help to raise these funds and in addition provide Secretariat and substantive support. Meetings and consultants can be jointly financed with other international organizations where cooperation can be established. For the long-term sustainability of the WG WEE, funding from SPECA member countries is needed. This source of funding may be difficult to identify at this point but is important in the longer term also as a factor to raise the country ownership.

UNCTs could also help to raise additional funds in those cases where there is a direct link between national interests and the need for regional, transboundary cooperation.

If this level of minimum funding cannot be raised the question may be asked if the WG WEE has a basis for further constructive work.

Partnerships for the new strategy

Coordination and cooperation with the following processes and partners would be appropriate for the work of the SPECA WG WEE under the future strategy. As has been pointed out above cooperation with UN Country Teams to forge links between national and subregional levels of the UNSDCFs is particularly important.

CAEWDP of the World Bank promotes energy and water security through regional cooperation. The programme is active and has significant resources at its disposal.

The Central Asia Nexus Dialogue project: Fostering Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus Dialogue and Multi-Sector Investment managed by the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia in partnership with IUCN. The project presently supports development of regional investment programme in the framework of a new “Aral Sea Basin Program” by fostering multi-sectoral dialogue and cooperation nationally and regionally.

A new Regional Environment Action Plan (REAP) for Central Asia is under development under ICSD with support from GIZ. The draft REAP is focused on SDG implementation. The bottleneck here is the non-participation of Kyrgyzstan and that Afghanistan and Azerbaijan are not part of ICSD.

There are also other potential partners for the SPECA WG WEE Strategy development and implementation that could be looked at closer during Strategy development.

Strategy outline, development and implementation

The Strategy is proposed to broadly follow the outline of this document. Section 6 “A new Strategy” should be considerably extended to allow for a deeper analysis and description of the Strategy.

It is important that the SPECA WEE Strategy is developed in close cooperation with the member countries. An effective process was applied in the 2004 Regional Strategy development with various drafts being brought home to Capitals for comments and approval after the consecutive regional meetings. As a result, the Regional Strategy was approved at one or another political level in all countries. A similar process should be applied in this case.

It is likely that the Strategy would benefit from a phased implementation with initial efforts to reorganise its work and identify sources of funding, then focusing on outreach to decision makers, experts and the public to raise the understanding and status of the WG before moving the focus to the technical work and policy dialogue. These tentative phases should be overlapping but it is likely that focusing on different challenges at different times may be constructive.

Institutional strengthening and outreach

The WG WEE has quite a few challenges regarding its status and standing in the SPECA countries and also in relation to other organizations, processes and projects in the region. A few suggestions aiming to strengthen the WG WEE as an institution and giving it a better position to develop and implement a new strategy are:

1. The participation in the WG WEE of the SPECA countries should be stable and close to decision making levels in the institutions they are representing. An important role of country representatives is to facilitate contacts and dialogue with decision makers in the Capitals. Officially nominated participants should have a permanent status and be able to participate in more than individual meetings. One of the representatives should have a coordinating role on the national level.
2. Links to the SPECA Governing Council should be strengthened and it should be presented with the opportunity to make relevant decisions in the interest of the SPECA countries.

3. The importance of the lead country (countries) should be stressed. If there is a willingness from the Kyrgyz side to continue the chairing of the WG this would most likely be positive. There is also an option that two countries are nominated to co-chair the WG WEE. This could be positive for the country level support of the WG but may lead to additional bureaucracy and administration.
4. ESCAP and UNECE should develop their dialogue and finetune their division of work in support of the Strategy and the WG WEE. The two organizations should be in regular contact with the chair on the implementation of the work programme and for the preparation of meetings. ESCAP and UNECE Secretariats should use opportunities to consult when possible with SPECA country representatives and other involved staff, and with representatives of donors and international organizations. The Almaty office of ESCAP and UNECE should find ways to support the WG.
5. Separate sub-groups could be established under the WG WEE with responsibility for separate work areas. This would make it possible to bring in specialists for focused discussions on the resolution of specific problems. See Fig. 2.
6. The establishment of a country-based Secretariat for the WG WEE should be considered.
7. The outreach of the WG WEE should be improved. Press releases on various activities should be issued. SPECA participation in relevant non-SPECA meetings would be positive.
8. During the development of the strategy a flagship project or effort should be designed that could be used to advertise the WEE WG.

7. References and Literature

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Annex 1. Selected references from national strategies, programmes etc relevant for the Strategy Concept

AFGHANISTAN

RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY

<https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/sites/default/files/Afghanistan-Renewable-Energy-Policy-English-and-Dari.pdf>

«Renewable energy being an environmentally benign sector, its role in facilitating low carbon growth of a country's economy in Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA) needs to be recognized and acknowledged at all levels of decision making and planning for energy sector including its positive relationship with climate change issues. This will ensure the integration of REN into mainstream energy sector. Further, REN also needs to be integrated with energy efficiency (EE) at all levels of project cycle (i.e. project conceptualization, designing, and implementation) to maximize its benefits.»

Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) FINAL REPORT

<http://afghanwaters.net/en/afghanistan-national-development-strategy-final-report/>

«The strategic vision and goal for the water sector is to improve the livelihoods of the Afghan people of present and future generations by providing:

- better access to safe drinking water,
- enhanced household food security,
- protection from the negative effects of droughts and floods,
- sustainable development and management of water resources,

.....»

AZERBAIJAN

“AZERBAIJAN 2020: LOOK INTO THE FUTURE” CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

https://president.az/files/future_en.pdf

«...the expansion of opportunities to use alternative and renewable energy sources.....

.....it is planned to bring the amount of energy used for the production of one unit of GDP and the amount of carbon dioxide in line with the appropriate indicator of member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.....»

PRESENTATION OF THE PRESIDENT OF AZERBAIJAN AT A CONFERENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF COTTON CULTIVATION (26 March 2018 in the city of Barda)

<https://en.president.az/articles/27563>

«....It is unavoidable to use the experience of countries that have reached great successes in the area of agriculture with regard to the rational use of water.....»

KAZAKHSTAN

Concept for the transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to a “green economy”.

https://greenkaz.org/images/for_news/pdf/npa/koncepciya-po-perehodu.pdf

«.....already today there is a task to change state policies rapidly. The Strategy-2050 and other strategic programmatic documents set ambitious goals:

For electricity production: the share of alternative and renewable electro energy should reach 50% in 2050;

For energy efficiency the task is to decrease the energy intensity of the GDP by 10% to 2015 and by 25% to 2020 compared to the 2008 baseline;

For water resources the task is to address the issues of drinking water supplies to populations by 2020 and supplying water for agriculture by 2040;

In agriculture the task is to raise the productivity of agricultural land 1.5 times until 2020.

To reach these goals, significant changes in the present direction of economic development in Kazakhstan are needed, and as a result the country will be able to restore the water and land resources until 2030 and to a large degree compare itself to average standards of use efficiency of natural capital in countries of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and similar developed countries.»

KYRGYZSTAN

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC for 2018-2040

www.president.kg/sys/media/download/52135/

«Task 7.11. Modernization and implementation of energy-efficient technologies.

Implementation of energy efficiency and saving programmes.....

.....

Task 7.19. Rational management of water resources

A complex approach to water management at all levels, if needed on the basis of transboundary water cooperation and development of systems for basin water management in the country. Technologies for an efficient use of water resources will be implemented to substantially increase the water use coefficient including an active use of opportunities given by water reservoirs and basins for daily and 10-day regulation.....»

Presentation of the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan E. Abdyldayev in the 70th anniversary session of the UN General Assembly in New York 27 September 2015 «Providing an impulse to the realization of and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals relating to water problems»

<https://ca-news.org/print:1100090>

«Talking about the issue of water resources management including its transboundary aspects, from the side of the Kyrgyz the efficiency of the so-called Nexus approach «water – energy – food - environment» that gives a balanced reflection of the interests of all important sectors of the economy and society was high-lighted. In this relation the head of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs stressed that the keeping the intersectoral balance in the context of the nexus approach also needs to be the basis for the development of inter-state cooperation on issues of joint water use.»

TAJIKISTAN

Reform programme 2016-2025 for the water sector in the Republic of Tajikistan

<http://www.eecca-water.net/content/view/7692/1/lang,russian/>

«...cooperation of different sub-sectors to provide the population with full access to high-quality water and sanitation services, to make available water for irrigation, hydropower, the environment and other water users...»

Voluntary National Overview IMPROVING WELL-BEING THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) IN THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF TAJIKISTAN

<http://www.pbo.tj/ru/activity/workshops/seminar-po-tsur/%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D1%>

[8B%D0%B9%20%D0%9D%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D1%8B%D0%B9%20%D0%9E%D0%B1%D0%B7%D0%BE%D1%80.pdf](https://untj.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NationalReport-RU.pdf)

«...demands the application of effective inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms for achieving an agreed, complex development and implementation of policies....».

NATIONAL REPORT on the implementation of strategic documents of the country in the context of Sustainable Development Goals

<https://untj.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NationalReport-RU.pdf>

«The issue of an efficient use of energy and water resources in the region today needs to be viewed not only in the context of adaptation to climate change but also with regard to an adequate transboundary water cooperation in the region that will minimise the negative impact on the environment.»

Article of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan in the journal «Chronicle of the UN» under the title of «Water for sustainable development»

28 March 2018

<http://medt.tj/ru/news/novosti-ministerstva-ekonomiki/568-statya-prezidenta-respubliki-tadzhikistan-v-zhurnale-khronika-oon-pod-nazvaniem-voda-dlya-ustojchivogo-razvitiya>

«Thirdly, the move to «green development» and the nexus approach. Without doubt, water resources, as a source of renewable energy, has an important and worthy place in the development of green growth, the concept of which provides for the gradual elimination of the use of non-renewable energy sources from the economy.. Today hydropower provides about 20% of global production of electricity, while the available resources and capabilities allow to significantly increase this indicator. Of course, taking into account the increase of the population and the need to increase production of food, electricity and to cover other needs, it is also necessary to apply a complex and integrated approach. In this context, the transition to an integrated management of water resources and the application of a «nexus» approach is very important to reach these objectives.»

TURKMENISTAN

THE CONCEPT OF THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF TURKMENISTAN FOR THE CONFERENCE ON THE ENERGY CHARTER IN 2018

<https://www.mfa.gov.tm/ru/energy/news/86>

«Turkmenistan stresses the importance of energy efficiency and energy savings..... ...the objective economic interests, the reality of international partnership in connection with the necessity of a careful relation to natural resources and their efficient use. Turkmenistan is prepared for a further broadening and activating the cooperation with states and international structures with the objective to minimize ecological risks while extracting energy resources, introducing effective technologies for protection and applying modern management solutions. »

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT OF TURKMENISTAN AT THE INTERNATIONAL HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE «WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT»

(20 June 2018, Dushanbe, Tajikistan)

<https://www.mfa.gov.tm/ru/articles/276>

« Therefore, the issues of conservation and rational use of water resources are among the most important ones not only for our people, but also one of the most pressing challenges of our time. It is not an exaggeration to say that global processes, the prospects for ensuring lasting peace, stability, development and well-being on the planet today largely depend on their decision.

The water problem, including its political, economic, social aspects, needs an international consensus and consolidation of efforts of the states on a platform of a common worldview. Local interests and

advantages should give place to the understanding of truly global goals and priorities, the development of a unified strategy of water action with a long-term perspective.

We are convinced that in order to cope with such tasks a close coordination with the UN on the basis of the Sustainable Development Goals is needed».

UZBEKISTAN

Quote of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev from the IFAS Summit 24 August 2018: «it is necessary to drastically raise the level of regional cooperation on the issues of water savings, control and rational use of transboundary water resources.»

In the message to the Parliament 22 December 2017 the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Miromonovich Mirziyoyev gave a task to the energy experts of the country: «To raise the efficiency of the use of energy resources we will need to reform the energy sector and develop a concrete strategy in this direction».

ORDINANCE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN ABOUT A PROGRAMME OF MEASURES FOR THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF HYDROENERGY IN 2017-2021

<http://lex.uz/docs/3219734>

«In order to achieve a logical increase of the use of renewable sources of energy, the establishment on this basis of new environmentally clean generating capacities, providing technical and technological reequipment of existing hydroelectric stations using modern technology, efficient management of water resources taking into account an intensive application of advanced international experience, and also a better balance of energy resources and provision on this basis satisfying better the needs of companies and the population of electricity:

1. Define priority directions of the further development of hydropower in the republic.

Consistent creation of new and modernisation of existing generating capacities of electricity on the basis of a broad use of renewable, environmentally clean energy sources;

Provision of a broad stimulation of a careful approach to the water potential of the republic, protection of existing flora and fauna when constructing hydrotechnical installations, and also an efficient management of water resources; »

Annex 2 - SPECA work plan for 2018-2019, Water, Energy and Environment

UNECE
United Nations Economic
Commission for Europe



ESCAP
United Nations Economic and Social
Commission for Asia and the Pacific

**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA
(SPECA)**

SPECA WORK PLAN FOR 2018-2019

(Ongoing, planned and possible UNECE and ESCAP activities in support of the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA))

The activities to be carried out by the SPECA Thematic Working Groups are demand-driven, focused on a limited number of priority topics and matched with available resources.

WATER, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Representatives of the SPECA participating countries agree on importance of the SPECA as a platform to address water, energy and environment in the SPECA region. The Programme is particular important as it provides an opportunity for SPECA countries to coherently address the water and energy challenges, issues that are highly interrelated and interdependent in the region. The Declaration adopted at the 10th session of the SPECA Governing Council highlighted the role of SPECA as a platform to support progress towards achieving the SDGs through, among others, capacity-building, implementation of regional projects, sharing of best practices and experience. The areas of water, energy and environment are addressed through the Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment. The areas covered by the Group include promotion and facilitation of integrated water resource management; improving national and transboundary water and water quality management challenges, strengthening dam safety national policies and strategies.

The 3rd phase of the UNECE Project on capacity-building for cooperation on dam safety will aim at strengthening national and regional capacities of Central Asia countries for development and implementation of the institutional, regulatory and technical frameworks for dam safety. It will also continue building on previous phases of the project, contributing to: improving legislation, conducting training sessions, strengthening transboundary cooperation and safer operations of individual dams.

Building on success of previous years the UNECE project on Strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the upper Amu Darya River basin will continue strengthening long-term transboundary cooperation over the Pyanj River. It will contribute to the practical implementation of the existing cooperation frameworks on hydrology and environment.

Improving the regional water cooperation will remain core activity under the SPECA. Efforts will aim at empowering the countries of the region: to develop and implement mutually acceptable, long-term solutions to improve cooperation on transboundary water resources; to support SPECA countries in developing practical approaches for sustainable regional water management; and to improve capacities of regional institutions responsible for water management.

Within the foreseen perspective, fossil fuels in several SPECA countries will continue to dominate energy balances, while other countries will remain reliant on hydropower. At the same time, the necessity to accelerate a move towards a more sustainable energy system based on diversified energy mix was widely acknowledged. Widespread adoption of clean coal technologies, broader use of renewable sources of energy, increase energy efficiency, and hydropower capacities' upgrades can make a significant contribution towards increasing sustainability.

The implementation of the UNECE project "Application of biogas technology model for rural areas in Kyrgyzstan" will introduce a cost-effective green technology biogas model in the rural area of Kyrgyzstan. The project delivers concrete renewable energy solutions for rural application and targets the rural community near the Kant town in Kyrgyzstan. The outcome of the project will be conveyed through capacity-building workshops on small-scale renewable energy solutions in Central Asian countries to improve knowledge of experts from SPECA countries.

Identification of best practices, measures and procedures relevant to prepare a sustainable energy transition, with a particular focus on the cross-cutting nature of energy efficiency, renewable energy and energy access will assist Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan in development of their national action plans for energy for sustainable development. It will be done through the project "Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia" and will help to convert national plans into effective national policy frameworks.

Supporting SPECA countries in tracking progress towards the achievement of SDG 7 will remain one of the key activities of the Working Group. Information and data on sustainable energy indicators, policies and energy infrastructure development in SPECA countries will be further updated and presented from the ESCAP the Asia-Pacific Energy Portal - a "one stop shop" aggregator of open-access energy information for the region. It is a web-based, interactive information platform designed to increase the accessibility and use of Asia-Pacific regional energy information to support research, analysis, and, ultimately, informed decision-making. The English and Russian versions of the Portal interface are available.

The activities to promote transboundary power trade and interconnection in SPECA region will be continued in 2018-2019 with focus on in-depth analysis to assess social, economic, and environmental benefits of better power interconnection and revitalization of the Unified Electric Power System of Central Asia.

A pilot project conducted in Tajikistan in December 2016 by the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) with support from ESCAP, looked at promoting an integrated approach to the Sustainable Development Goal planning, focusing on SDG 6 on water and sanitation and its interlinkages with other SDGs at the target level. The pilot project used a new ESCAP analytical tool using the system thinking approach. The comprehensive methodology assisted policymakers in mapping the linkages between the SDGs, mapping the institutional architecture and stakeholders for the implementation of these SDGs. This led to the identification of leverage points for effective and impactful interventions at the policy level, namely Water Quality (SDG 6.3) and Water Governance (SDG 6.a).

The project on “Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Chu and Talas River Basins”, funded by the Global Environmental Facility, started in 2015. It aims to broaden the bilateral cooperation, including on environmental issues. UNDP and UNECE are responsible for project implementation. The project delivered a comprehensive Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and developing a Strategic Action Program (SAP) containing concrete actions to support transboundary cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Design and planning of climate change adaptation activities, included in the SAP, are supported through the project “Enhancing climate resilience and adaptive capacity in the transboundary Chu-Talas basin” funded by the Government of Finland. A number of pilot adaptation measures related to ecosystem restoration and agricultural water-use efficiency are supported through the project with the aim to perform costs-benefits analysis and compile important lessons.

WATER, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe	Budget
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
Organization of regular sessions of the SPECA WG	One per year	UNECE and ESCAP regular budget and extrabudgetary funds
Capacity building for cooperation on dam safety in Central Asia (phase 3)	2017-2020	US\$ 302,000 (Funded by Russia)
Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Chu and Talas River Basins	2015-2018	US\$ 1,000,000 (Funded by Global Environmental Facility)
Enhancing climate resilience and adaptive capacity in the transboundary Chu-Talas basin	2015-2018	Euro 330,000 (Funded by Finland)
Regional dialogue and cooperation on water resources management in Central Asia	2017-2018	USD 100,000 (being mobilized)
Water quality in Central Asia	2015-2018	Euro 175,000 (Funded by Finland)
Strengthening cooperation on hydrology and environment between Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the Upper Amu Darya River basin	2017-2020	US\$ 160,000 (Funded by Russia)
Promoting Renewable Energy Investments for Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Development	2014-2018	UNDA project
Strengthening cooperation on energy security and sustainable use of energy in North and Central Asia	2014-2018	Funded by the Russian Federation
Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (Beneficiary countries: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan)	2016-2018	UNDA project US\$ 188,000 (per country)
Application of biogas technology model for rural areas in Kyrgyzstan	2017-2018	USD 100,000 (Funded by Russia)
Promoting an integrated approach to the Sustainable Development Goal planning, focusing on Goal 6 on water and sanitation, in SPECA countries (in cooperation with ICWC	2018-2019	ESCAP extrabudgetary funds (to be confirmed)

Annex 3. Selected references from SPECA countries' United Nation Development Assistance Frameworks relevant for the Strategy Concept

United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Afghanistan 2015 - 2019

https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/afghanistan_undaf_2015-2019.pdf

"....irrigated agriculture, live-stock herders and dry land farmers are considered most susceptible to climate change impacts, weather hazards and changes in ecosystem services. Urgent climate change adaptation priorities are improved water management and efficiency of use, land and water management at watershed level, agro-meteorological observations, and adaptive rangeland management."

"If the natural resource base, including land, water, ecosystems and minerals are managed properly, and an effective enabling environment including legal, policy and strategic frameworks exist in the country, the natural resource, environment and energy sectors will flourish. This could be instrumental in reducing poverty, avoiding conflict and building peace as well as reducing the drug economy and human suffering particularly of women, children and people with disabilities."

Azerbaijan Partnership Framework UNAPF 2016-2020

[https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Executive%20Board/2015/Second-regular/English/DPDCPAZE3_UNAPF%20\(2016-2020\)_FINAL%20\(for%20signing\)_ENG.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/Executive%20Board/2015/Second-regular/English/DPDCPAZE3_UNAPF%20(2016-2020)_FINAL%20(for%20signing)_ENG.pdf)

"This will include a focus on improving the effectiveness of relevant institutions for sustainable management of natural resources, including forests, water, land and biodiversity. Moreover, energy and climate change are central to sustainable development efforts, affecting all aspects -- social, economic, and environmental -- including livelihoods, access to water, agricultural productivity, health, population levels, education, and gender-related issues. Rapidly increasing energy demand in Azerbaijan calls for accelerated efforts to develop renewable energy sources and enhanced energy efficiency."

"Outcome 3.1: By 2020, sustainable development policies and legislation are in place, are better implemented and coordinated in compliance with multilateral environmental agreements, recognize social and health linkages, and address issues of environment and natural resource management, energy efficiency and renewable energy, climate change, and resilience to hazards and disasters."

Partnership Framework for Development, Kazakhstan, 2016-2020

<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/kazakhstan/un/publications/Partnership%20Framework.pdf>

"...to improve sustainable water management, promoting modernization of environmental governance and fostering a 'green' transition at local levels. It will help mobilize scientific resources, both national and international, to further support the sustainable use of natural resources and promote disaster mitigation."

"Given the energy sector's centrality to sustainable development efforts, from a social, economic and environmental standpoint, UNCT support will aim to help promote best practices and technologies for energy management and efficiency, including in industry."

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the Kyrgyz Republic 2018-2022

<https://www.undp.org/content/dam/unct/kyrgyzstan/docs/Library/UNDAF%2018052017%20eng%20fin.pdf>

“UN programme support will also contribute to Government efforts to achieve several related SDGs and targets:

6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity

6.5 By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate

.....

7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

7.3 By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency

7.a By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency”

United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Tajikistan 2016-2020

https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/operact/Technical_Cooperation/Delivering_as_One/UNDAF_country_files/UNDAF_files_2015-2020/Tajikistan-UNDAF_2016-2020-Eng_final.pdf

“The priorities remain achieving energy security, ensuring food security and increasing transport and infrastructure connectivity. These critical goals would be achieved by ongoing reforms in agriculture; increasing efficiency and productivity in both land and water resource use;”

“UNCT will work with the Government of Tajikistan and other key stakeholders to identify, and implement, opportunities to enable growth of a green economy and development of ‘green jobs’ linked to energy efficiency; renewable energy; sustainable natural resource management and cultural heritage”

Government of Turkmenistan and United Nations Partnership Framework for Development 2016-2020, Progress Report 2018

https://turkmenistan.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/Report_Full2018_Revised_18Apr_Final.pdf

“Strategic Area 3 -Environmental Sustainability and Energy Efficiency

In 2018, work in this area focused on:

-Energy efficiency and renewable energy for sustainable water management in Turkmenistan

-Supporting climate resilient livelihoods in agricultural communities in drought prone areas of Turkmenistan

.....”

United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the Republic of Uzbekistan 2016–2020

https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/operact/Technical_Cooperation/Delivering_as_One/UNDAF_country_files/UNDAF_files_2015-2020/Uzbekistan-UNDAF-2016-2020-Final.pdf

“Decreasing energy intensity levels, using best practices of developed countries, ensuring an efficient and effective use of non-renewable energy, and introducing energy-saving technologies”

“National priorities:

Improved energy efficiency and sustainable development (“green economy”):

- Improve the energy efficiency of the economy through the introduction of modern technologies and promotion of clean energy sources.
 - Promote tools and instruments for efficient use of natural resources (land, water, biodiversity)
 - Help people adapt to climate change, including those living in the Aral Sea area
-”

“Based on the stated priorities and United Nations System’s comparative advantages, the collaboration between the Government and the United Nations System will encompass:

- a) Integrating the principles of sustainable development into national legislation and policymaking and elaborating evidence-based policies to promote sustainable development
- b) Further improving the efficiency of use of land and water resources for sustainable agricultural development and food security
- c) Climate change mitigation and adaptation, climate risk management and disaster risk reduction
- d) Further improving energy efficiency and promoting access to energy
- e) Biodiversity conservation”

“Collaboration also will cover increasing energy efficiency across all sectors, through measures on both the supply and demand sides, and diversification of energy generation through the wider use of renewables to meet the growing energy demand, including in such sectors as housing and urban development.”

management of water resources;”