



United Nations

# UNECE Weekly

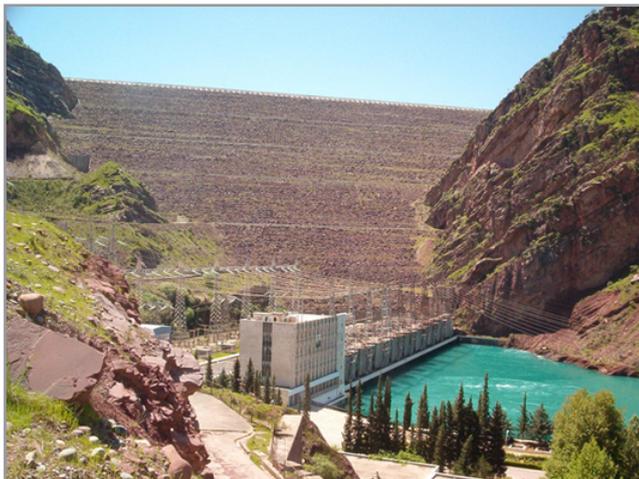
Economic Commission for Europe

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## Water Unites in Almaty

*German Government and UNECE present the Berlin Water Process, part of the EU Strategy for Central Asia*

Water management is the most sensitive issue facing Central Asia with regard to regional cooperation, which, if not addressed properly could develop into a serious threat for the entire region in the medium-term. The region is having to cope with a range of water-related challenges all at once: the shrinking Aral Sea, upstream and downstream countries in discord over release regimes and distribution, competing energy and irrigation sectors, deteriorating water ecosystems and foreseen negative impacts of climate change. Last year's



exceptionally cold winter resulted in these problems becoming a compound (food, energy, and water) "crisis", which was averted at the last minute.

The water issues are regional in nature and therefore cooperation at the regional level is critical if efficient progress and solutions are to be found. With this in mind, a special international conference, *Water Unites—Strengthening Regional Cooperation on Water Management in Central Asia* (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 17–18 November), was organized by the Government of Germany, UNECE, the Executive Committee for the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (EC-IFAS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The event – hosted by the Kazakh Executive Board of IFAS and the Government of Kazakhstan – was a follow-up to the first "Water Unites" conference (Berlin, 1 April 2008), which saw the launch of the "Berlin Water Process". The Process is an important part of the water and environment pillar of the European Union's Central Asia Strategy, which is coordinated by Italy and will be officially launched on 3 December in Ashgabat.

The conference importantly made a much needed step towards developing a comprehensive regional programme to address the water and energy crisis in Central Asia. The discussions offered a solid foundation for further constructive cooperation between the countries of the region, the various United Nations organizations and other members of the international development community.



## United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia

### Knowledge-based Development

UNECE organized the Inauguration Session of the *SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development* in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 12 November, which was established to expand the mandate of the previous Project Working Group on Information and Communication Technologies.

Held in cooperation with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies of Azerbaijan, the inauguration session was attended by senior delegates from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and a representative from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation as an observer.

The newly created Project Working Group could become a useful forum for exchange of experience and best practice as well as capacity-building in such areas as: economic competitiveness and innovative development, attracting financial resources in support of innovative sectors of economy, commercialization and protection of intellectual property rights and public-private partnerships. The Group will build on the work already accomplished by its predecessor.



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## SPECA

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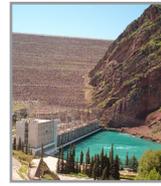
### Capacity-building Seminar on Information and Communication Technology Policy and Legal Issues

On 13 and 14 November, UNECE organized a Regional Capacity-building Seminar on Information and Communication Technology Policy and Legal Issues – with Special Reference to eCommerce Development. Held also in Baku, in cooperation with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies of Azerbaijan, the Seminar was attended by senior policymakers and experts from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The objective was to enhance awareness of the legal requirements to foster eCommerce development in the SPECA member countries, and to support the capacity-building of senior policymakers attending the inauguration session of the Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development and other national representatives and experts in Azerbaijan.

Participants had an opportunity to discuss and exchange best practices on legal issues in five distinct areas: legal infrastructure, legal certainty, legal security, legal protection and legal deterrence against cyber crimes. \*

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## Water unites in Almaty

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The event was opened by UNECE Acting Executive Secretary, Paolo Garonna, who underlined that Central Asia could be at a tipping point thanks to concurrent positive developments seeing enhanced cooperation between Central Asian countries, United Nations organizations, the EU and local institutions. In this potentially new scenario, the UNECE Convention for the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) should be the basic reference for a reformed cooperation framework on transboundary waters.

Speakers included Kori Udovicki (UNDP), who delivered a keynote address on the Central Asia Regional Risk Assessment currently being prepared by UNDP, and Hedi Wegener, Head of the Bundestag's German-Central Asian Parliamentary Group, who introduced the main objectives and activities of the "Berlin Water Process".

Participants heard reports from the Environment and Security Partnership on the environmental risks in the eastern Caspian Sea region and on a proposed international framework to coordinate international assistance in integrated water resources management. The discussion focused on possible steps to modernize the legal foundation for water management and bolster water-related institutions in Central Asia on the basis of the framework and experiences of the UNECE Water Convention. \*

For more information visit [http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/Almaty\\_conference.htm](http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/Almaty_conference.htm) or contact: Bo Libert ([bo.libert@unece.org](mailto:bo.libert@unece.org)).

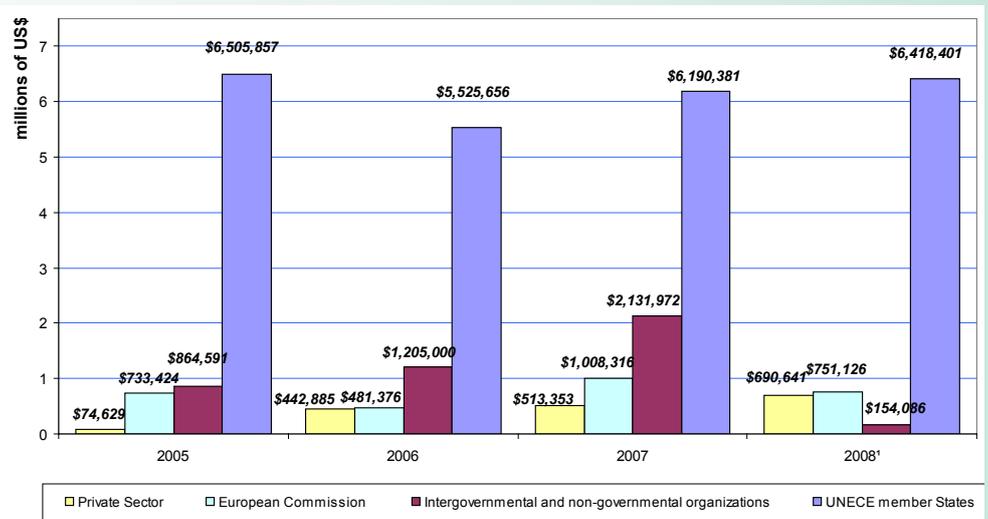
## Facts and Figures

UNECE extrabudgetary resources are primarily used to finance technical cooperation activities, in particular advisory services; capacity-building workshops, seminars, training courses and study tours; and technical cooperation projects. The main goal of these activities is to improve the national capacities of countries with economies in transition of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and South-East Europe to implement UNECE legally binding instruments and other global and regional standards.

Eighteen UNECE member States with economies in transition are eligible for Official Development Assistance. Over the last four years, almost 90% of UNECE extrabudgetary resources have been used in support of these countries.

Overall, member States have been UNECE's most important donors, providing almost 63% of the total extrabudgetary resources in 2007. Contributions from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations reached 21.6%, while the European Commission had a 10% share in 2007. The private sector has also been increasingly active over the last four years, providing 5.2% of the total amount in 2007. \*

### Extrabudgetary contributions received by UNECE in 2005-2008



<sup>1</sup> As at 19 September 2008  
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