

Recommendations of the WG

The participants of the 20th Session of the Thematic Working Group on Energy, Water and Environment (WG) of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) underscored the importance of the adoption in 2015 by the United Nations at the highest political level the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The participants acknowledged the importance of SPECA both in strengthening regional cooperation and a deeper integration of the region in global economy. The participants have also stated a huge potential of the WG in facilitation of the achievement of SDGs in SPECA countries.

With regard to the future role of the WG it was agreed that the WG will:

1. 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. The main instrument for this support is the SPECA work plan 2016-2017.
2. 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.
3. Become a platform for identification and coordination of technical issues within the scope of WG competence. This might further promote strengthening of mutual trust at political level.

More specifically the WG concluded that:

4. SDG 6 and SDG 7 are very closely interlinked which is demonstrated by assessments of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus. Therefore, an intersectoral approach to implementing the SDGs, conscious of the interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs, is necessary.
5. While developing their National Action Plans to meet SDG 6 and SDG 7, SPECA countries should pay attention to transboundary impacts and energy as well as water cooperation opportunities and consider their impact on the potential of the country's energy resources, food production and the environment.
6. 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".
7. Over the medium and potentially long term perspective, in some countries fossil fuels will continue to be a major energy source, and other countries will rely on their hydropower potential. At the same time it is necessary to move towards a more sustainable energy system based on diversified energy sources, including new and renewable energy sources, and complemented by efforts to increase energy efficiency. Clean coal technologies, broader use of renewable sources of energy, and increase of hydropower capacities can make a significant contribution towards increasing sustainability.

8. The conjunctive operation of thermal power plants and hydropower plants has good merits and could be a feasible option for transboundary cooperation to achieve sustainable power supply. It could be enhanced through strategic partnerships with all stakeholders, including the governments, international development partners, funding agencies/banks and the private sector. In that context, participants appreciated the initiative of UNECE in developing cooperation and synergies to promote technical assistance projects in Central Asia.
9. The WG took notice of outcomes of the workshop on Challenges and Prospects for Regional Electricity Cooperation and Trade in Central Asia and the Caucasus, jointly organized by UN ESCAP and Electric Power Council of the CIS on the sidelines of the 7th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development. The WG recommended incorporating electricity interconnection issues in SPECA countries in the work plan 2016-2017.
10. The WG also endorsed the work of UN ESCAP on capacity building and monitoring of progress made by SPECA countries towards sustainable energy development, along with tracking of the existing regulatory framework.
11. In response to the conclusions of the Syr Darya nexus assessment the WG agreed to include in the SPECA work plan 2016-2017, identification and evaluation of possible measures for more sustainable use of water and energy resources (such as resource use efficiency), as well as exchanging experience on such measures and on intersectoral coordination. Furthermore, taking into account the conclusions of the 7th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development., the WG, with the assistance of UNECE, UN ESCAP and relevant partners, agreed to explore how to take into account opportunities of renewable energy generation as well as an efficient use and protection of water resources and the environment while developing energy policies and investment plans.