



Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC)



Annual Report



Annual Report 2015

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Dear colleagues,

I welcome you on behalf of the Board of Governors of the Central Asian Regional Environmental Center!

Established 15 years ago jointly by the countries of the region, the Commission of the European Communities and the UN Development Programme, thanks to its vigorous work CAREC has emerged into one of the leading regional organizations of international character.

The data and expertise on environmental protection within the region collected and analyzed by the Center in the course of its operations significantly expanded the thematic knowhow. CAREC accumulates knowledge to ensure effective implementation of projects based on methodologies, applied practices and approaches formulated during its target interventions. Within the frame-work of its project and pilot activities the Center endeavors all effort to forge a management regime fostering sustainable development via dynamic regional collaboration among the Central Asian countries and engagement of NGOs and civil society as key stakeholders.

Striving towards high professionalism of its staff and expanding its institutional and technical capacity, CAREC has been successfully transforming into a truly regional cooperation platform.

During the recent years, the Center’s work has undergone significant changes. CAREC’s current institutional and operational arrangement is distinguished by perseverance, efficiency and reliance, while its legal framework conforms to all international standards. Generation of new knowledge and, likewise, creation of tools and models guaranteeing effective execution of pro-jects will support CAREC in achieving its main goal – assisting environmental wellbeing and sustainable development of the Central Asia Region.

*Mr Mukhammet Durikov,
Chairperson of CAREC Board of Governors,
Acting Director of the National Institute of Deserts, Flora and Fauna
of the Ministry of Nature Conservation of Turkmenistan*

An introduction by CAREC Executive Director



CAREC Knowledge Hub and Regional Cooperation Platform

Next year the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC) will be celebrating its 15th anniversary. Since its establishment, CAREC has emerged from a purely donor-led entity into a self-sustaining and vibrant regional platform linking Central Asian countries. Since 2013, the Center has been working hard towards the ambitious goal of becoming an environmental knowledge hub in the region. The 2020 CAREC Strategic Development Plan and CAREC Change Concept became the foundation of achieving that. As of today, the Center has built up its human, institutional and technical capacity ensuring successful implementation of its mandate as a regional cooperation shop and its new role of the knowledge hub.

CAREC programmes have matured both as knowledge-generating nodes and effective project implementing tools. Thanks to forging methodological and instrumental models and approaches within the framework of its multifaceted and cross-disciplinary projects, CAREC has become a true knowledge producer. Interactions with local communities made the Center

the keeper of locally focused knowledge. Collaboration with international partners and think tanks gave it access to modern sources of cutting-edge expertise. CAREC has been making outstanding effort to provide access to know-how and information produced internally and accumulated from external sources. CAREC's Knowledge, Project & Resources Management (KPRM) Unit, the knowledge platform of the corporate web portal and the annual Central Asian Leadership Program are now the key elements of the Center's knowledge hub agenda.

CAREC has been maintaining and reinforcing its regional cooperation mandate via participation in and support of regional working groups, regional projects and collaboration with partner regional agents. The initiative pioneered in 2015 became one of the milestones of the overarching regional cooperation – regional organizations jointly formulated their vision of regional alliance and operations. The ownership of, commitment to and responsibility for the results of their joint endeavours brought regional cooperation to a totally new level.

Intellectual, technical and institutional outcomes and achievements which the Center was able to generate in 2015 are no less than striking and greatly contribute to the fulfillment of CAREC-2020 strategic plans

2015 was hallmarked by new large-scale megaprojects of multidimensional and interprogram nature. During this year, CAREC has mobilized around 25 mln USD for its interventions during the next 5 years. The Center's annual budget increased from 1-1.2 to 4-5 mln USD. Such megaprojects' philosophy also underwent significant change, and is now molded by more inclusive, structured and integrated approaches as to project planning, implementation and monitoring.

During the reporting period, CAREC has achieved notable institutional progress – organizational changes fully reflect the vision proclaimed within the corporate Change Concept. The current corporate structure is sustainable, efficient and reliable. CAREC's legal framework is up-to-date and complies with the international standards.

During the running year, CAREC has been taking steps to consolidate the voices and positions of NGO's as well as to enhance their role in environmental governance on local, national, regional, and international levels. The defining principle of CAREC's work is that non-governmental sector and the civil society at large should be the key sustainable development constituents. Hence, inclusive, open and participatory systems must be in place at all management levels. The Center will strive to maintain its target efforts via mandated project and pilot activities fostering corresponding governance regimes.

This report demonstrates and details CAREC's national and regional programmatic and institutional efforts implemented as per the organization's mandate. Intellectual, technical and institutional outcomes and achievements which the Center was able to generate in 2015 are no less than striking and greatly contribute to the fulfillment of CAREC-2020 strategic plans. CAREC has been active in all five Central Asian states, while its country offices have been resolute and cohesive in promoting environmental cooperation in both regional and national formats.

In the coming year of 2016, CAREC will take steps to undergo audit and registration as an international entity. As always, it will strive towards highest quality. The Center will also continue devoting its financial, institutional and other resources to support capacity building of its staff, experts and partners.

Activities devoted to CAREC's Anniversary will take place throughout the whole 2016. Their calendar is already in place and has been communicated to all partners. Their main objective will be to highlight CAREC's role and achievements in the sphere of regional environmental cooperation, present opportunities for advancing collaboration in the future and to promote the models and tools developed by CAREC.

*Dr. Iskandar Abdullaev,
Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia
Executive Director*

Highlights, changes and challenges

*«Rather than bringing technical knowledge from abroad,
capacity development is an accumulative learning by exercise.
It is not just a process of absorbing information
and skills brought by experts,
but one of assuming responsibilities
and being able to adapt existing knowledge
and to absorb new knowledge in order
to respond better to local circumstances...»*

*Advice emerging from
2015 UN-Water Zaragoza Conference
on implementation of water-related
Sustainable Development Goals*

Highlights, changes and challenges



The quote above mirrors the general approach pursued by the Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia (CAREC/Center) in its work and development. Operating in a constantly changing environment, the Center, as any other organization, is forced to respond and adapt by advancing its internal procedures and frameworks.

It will not be far-fetched to call 2015 the year of true breakthroughs and changes, as the long-term Cen-ter's efforts to fulfill its mission, forge partnerships and progress institutionally all brought about specific results.

In particular, steps to **enhance partner collaboration**, especially regional actors like the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) and Interstate Sustainable Development Committee (ISDC) helped CAREC to gain recognition of its regional mandate and capacities. As the result, the Center is now acknowledged as a professional executive agency and/or partner within the regional components of large development initiatives, such as by CAMP4ASB and CACILM II. Recognition of CAREC's potency and skills to facilitate regional processes evolved into support of its interventions and initiatives aimed at strengthening cooperation of regional organizations, launch of a special project to boost water diplomacy in Central Asia and a megaproject on building a framework linking water resources management, thematic education for professionals and development of cooperation between them and local water users in Central Asia (CA). Negotiations to assist other regional dialogues in CA are also currently underway.



Discussion on the strategic development of CAREC offices and launch mega projects, CAREC Development Day, October 2015

Highlights, changes and challenges

This year CAREC, among other things, continued its activities to foster interaction with non-profit environmental organizations as well as business. The Samsung Corporation has joined CAREC's lead, the dialogue between CAREC and the Aarhus Centers in all 5 Central Asian Countries (CAC) has been launched, advisory meetings with NGOs have taken place in all CAREC Country Offices (CO), representatives of environmental and business organizations are regularly involved in CAREC's thematic events.

CAREC is becoming increasingly **engaged in environmental conventions** in the Central Asian Region (CAR). In particular, within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN FCCC) the Center is systemically supporting the process of preparing CACs for the Conference of Parties (COP-21) scheduled to take place in Paris later this year. For example, it hosted the Central Asian Climate Change Focal Points Networking Meeting as well as organized several other regional stakeholder forums. Within the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UN CCD), CAREC drafted the first target regional report on Central Asia, supported the process of drafting Turkmenistan's national thematic report, promoted the UN CCD mainstreaming in Turkmenistan's National Action Plan to Combat Desertification, collected and presented proposals from Central Asian NGOs at the UN CCD CoP-12 in Ankara to name just a few. CAREC offered itself as a platform to coordinate the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in CA as well as to exchange information with the aim of disaster risk reduction.

In 2015, CAREC took all effort to **streamline participation of Central Asian countries in international processes**. In particular, it supported CACs preparation for the upcoming Paris CoP and the Covenant of Mayors Initiative in Central Asia, assisted in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), mobilized and trained members of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Working Groups within the framework of promoting the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) and environmental indicators. CAREC reports at international forums, such as the 5th High-Level Meeting on EU and CA Environmental and Water Cooperation in Milan, Geo Berlin and Water and Good Neighbourhood conferences in Berlin, World Water Week in Stockholm, World Water Forum in Seoul, etc. promote dissemination of knowledge about Central Asia as well as generate new development opportunities.

Gradually and steadily, CAREC expands its agenda in Afghanistan. In 2015, the number of Afghan participants in the annual Central Asian Leadership Program hosted by CAREC has increased twofold. The year 2015 was also marked by the launch of a large-scale USAID-sponsored 5-year Smart Waters Project, which includes setting up a project office in Afghanistan to implement project interventions comparable to these planned for Central Asian countries.

Highlights, changes and challenges



Implementation of **pilot technical projects** is an integral component of advancing new and more efficient technologies and rational approaches to using natural resources on the local level. Examples of such projects executed in 2015 are numerous: installation of an automated water-accounting system with a built-in water-efficient irrigation scheme, drip irrigation systems, solar fruit dryers, procurement of tractors for joint cleaning of irrigational canals in remote mountainous areas, etc. It should be noted that such actions in transboundary watersheds via small basin councils (SBC) promote constructive relations between communities of riparian states and mitigate conflicts. In order to promote new technologies and rational consumption of natural resources along the national vertical and regional horizontal axes, CAREC has been organizing demo-tours to pilot areas, and in this sense 2015 was no exception.



Participants of the 1st Meeting of Regional Organizations. Almaty, May 2015

CAREC is becoming increasingly engaged in environmental conventions in the Central Asian Region (CAR). In particular, within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN FCCC) the Center is systemically supporting the process of preparing CACs for the Conference of Parties (COP-21) scheduled to take place in Paris later this year

Highlights, changes and challenges

The projects described above and models applied within the framework of their execution are **received by local partners with gratitude**. Thus, during 2015 CAREC was awarded several appreciation diplomas and thank-you letters on behalf of national partners, like the Ministry of Agriculture & Reclamation of Kyrgyzstan “for contribution to the development and strengthening of cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in the sphere of water resources use in Chu-Talas transboundary river basin”, Ministry for Nature Protection of Turkmenistan for assisting its ISDC chairmanship.

Strengthening the role of regional organizations and platforms in Central Asia.

In 2015, special attention was paid to forging a joint platform for regional organizations to allow long-term consolidated planning, furthering coordinated regional and national interventions and shared contacts with the donor community.

In this respect, in 2015 the Center aided the organization and holding of the 1st ISDC Meeting in Turkmenistan and upgrading of its webpage. Jointly with the IFAS Executive Council, 2 two-day meetings of regional organizations were held in Almaty and brought together representatives of IFAS Executive Council, ICWC Information Research Center, ISDC Information Research Center, ICWC Secretariat, RCH, Amu Darya and Syr Darya Basin Water Management Organizations, and CAREC. The closing sessions of both events served as platforms allowing dialogue, information and news exchange among regional and international actors as well as provided them with an opportunity to discuss joint actions. As the result of the first meeting, the participants agreed on priority cooperation avenues and, likewise, the need to develop a long-term regional vision and build the capacity of their staff. The second meeting allowed the delegates to learn about CAREC's experience of managing regional projects, including from the financial perspective, opportunities for effective coordination of their interventions in 5 CACs and interactions with donors.

Staff capacity building remains one of the major corporate priorities. During 2015, a number of internal thematic trainings, e.g. a seminar on Sustainable Development Goals and CAREC's role in promoting them in Central Asia, took place

Highlights, changes and challenges



Realizing the importance of executing development projects based on **fundamental scientific knowledge**, in 2015 the Center continued to expand its intellectual capacity and linkages with academic and research entities. To this end, CAREC carries on active investigation and mainstreaming of various economic techniques and models of valuating ecosystem services (ES) targeting their subsequent integration on different levels – from regional/basin to national. The Center also assists capacity building of its academic partners by way of designing new training/ educational modules and enhancing teacher qualifications. This is vital to ensure comprehension of human-driven effects on nature by the young generation and academic professionals alike.

Professional and research competencies of CAREC staff also continue growing. This year, they published more than 15 thematic papers on most urgent environmental issues (see the list in Appendix 1).

During the reporting period, the Center also took further steps to enhance its corporate online platform (www.carececo.org), which – aside from information on CAREC's projects and activities – includes several thematic websites (www.riverb.net, www.iwebtempus.kz, www.led-ca.net and www.caeelp.org). 2015 saw the launch of their English-language versions. In addition, CAREC has been supporting the GlZ Knowledge Link Initiative (KLINK) uniting a wide spectrum of organizations and their expertise on natural resources management in Central Asia.

The corporate achievements described above became possible thanks to **CAREC's institutional development** and enhancement of its internal systems and processes – the Center's regional mandate and nature of interventions call for continual improvement of operation mechanisms.

In 2015, CAREC also proceeded with amending its structure to optimize staff duties and reduce its non-expert (administrative) workforce. To ensure strategic orientation of its progress and sustainability of internal reforms CAREC restored its Public Advisory Board as well as established an Advisory Group, the latter responsible for such issues as development and mobilization of resources, implementation of regional megaprojects and educational programs, training and capacity building. Two new divisions – Knowledge, Project & Resources Management Unit and CAREC Activities Support Unit – were built into CAREC framework.

Staff capacity building remains one of the major corporate priorities. During 2015, a number of internal thematic trainings, e.g. a seminar on Sustainable Development Goals and CAREC's role in promoting them in Central Asia, took place. Several employees of CAREC Head Office (HO) and COs took part in international educational programs at Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO) in Halle (Germany), European Academy for Taxes, Economy and Law (Berlin), International Center of Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), Beijing Normal University, Aberystwith University (the UK) as well as participated in several UNEP programs and the Kazakh-American Free University (KAFU) International Leadership Program.

During the reporting period, CAREC was able to secure office space for all its country offices on the premises of its national partners, updated all its internal guidelines and procedures, including these related to accounting, knowledge management, public relations, project execution, partnerships, mobilization of resources, human resources, procurement, etc.

Progress review

CAREC is becoming increasingly perceived not only as an innovation in the institutional sense, but also as a recognized platform supporting regional collaboration, initiating and implementing advanced projects in Central Asia, and as an incubator of breakthrough programs, novel knowledge and skills.

In the course of 2015, the Center has worked on 27 projects, 17 of which were of regional character. Out of their total number, 13 projects were launched this year in partnership with the USAID, German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), Federal Environment Protection Department of Switzerland (FOEN), OSCE, UNEP, UNDP, WB, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Samsung Electronics Central Eurasia Company (see the list of projects in Appendix 1).

In 2015, CAREC continued its environmental and development interventions on all levels based on multilateral cooperation, promoted introduction of knowledge-based tools ensuring effective interaction of partners in the CAR within 5 thematic programmes:

- I. environmental management and policy;
- II. water initiatives support;
- III. climate change and sustainable energy;
- IV. education for sustainable development;
- V. health and environment.

The Health & Environment Programme launched this year is just starting its fully-fledged operation in the following thematic areas: water sanitation and hygiene, climate change, air pollution (see appropriate section below).



The 1st meeting of regional organizations, CAREC Head office, May 2015

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_16404

