

Prospects for the development of water diplomacy in Central Asia discussed in Tashkent



On 10 April, an international scientific and practical conference titled “Water Diplomacy in Central Asia: Trust, Dialogue and Multilateral Cooperation for Sustainable Development” took place in Tashkent.

The forum brought together experts from strategic institutes and water management bodies of Central Asian countries and Afghanistan, as well as leading specialists from Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and representatives of regional and international organizations.

For the first time, a delegation from Afghanistan participated in a multilateral dialogue with the Central Asian countries.

Experts from the Central Asian states emphasized in their remarks the critical importance of the conference’s agenda and the need to strengthen cooperation in the water sector as a key factor for ensuring sustainable development in the region.

It was noted that water diplomacy is not only a mechanism for addressing current challenges and preventing water-related conflicts, but should also serve as a long-term strategy for establishing a continuous process of interstate engagement that promotes sustainability and regional stability.

Dinara Duishenkul kyzy, Deputy Director of the National Institute for Strategic Initiatives under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, stressed that in the face of accelerating climate change, water scarcity, and increasing demand for water in agriculture and energy, it is essential to strengthen the collective responsibility of all countries in the region and to advance water diplomacy as a means of developing mechanisms for multilateral cooperation and forging unified approaches to managing



transboundary water resources.



Albina Prniyazova, a doctoral researcher at the Institute of Diplomacy of the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, noted that effective management of rivers and reservoirs at the regional level is a key factor in fostering cooperation and stability among nations.

At the same time, experts pointed out that Central Asia has accumulated substantial experience in water resource management and has developed effective practices of water diplomacy, enabling mutually beneficial solutions in the water sector.



Begench Mommadov, head of the Garagumderiyasuwhodjalyk Association of the State Water Resources Committee of Turkmenistan, remarked that the countries of Central Asia have gained unique experience in jointly addressing transboundary water use issues, an approach that has received international recognition.

“Practice shows that sustainable solutions are only possible through consensus, mutual understanding, and respect for the interests of all parties,” he stated.

The Turkmen expert highlighted the importance of the recent conference in particular. “Forums like this one, which bring together experts to discuss pressing issues of water diplomacy and share best practices, create a solid foundation for aligning positions and fostering productive cooperation in addressing transboundary water challenges,” he concluded.



In turn, Dauren Aben, Head of the International Security Department at the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (KazISS), emphasized that “regular meetings of regional leaders contribute to the development of unified integration approaches and help achieve shared goals in managing transboundary water resources.”

“The resolution of issues related to the rational use of water and energy resources based on mutually acceptable approaches among regional countries will determine the region’s future economic

development, environmental stability, and food security,” the expert underlined.

Meanwhile, representatives from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan — countries that play a key role in shaping the regional water balance — stated that their countries will not create obstacles for their neighbors in the distribution of water resources.



Rustam Abdullaev, head of department at the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of Tajikistan, said: “Tajikistan, as the holder of the region’s largest water resources, recognizes not only its responsibility but also its potential for joint progress. The country has always stood for strengthening good-neighborly relations, mutual respect, and consideration of each other’s interests in matters of water and energy cooperation.” He emphasized that “water has transformed from a source of tension into a catalyst for cooperation capable of laying a solid foundation for stability and sustainable development.”

Echoing this sentiment, a representative from Kyrgyzstan emphasized that as a country located in the upper reaches of the region’s transboundary rivers, Kyrgyzstan understands its responsibility for the rational use of water resources and advocates for constructive dialogue on the issue.

The importance of advancing the scientific foundation of water diplomacy in the region was also emphasized. Janara Baytugolova, Vice-Rector for Academic and International Affairs of the Diplomatic Academy under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, noted that “a master’s program in water diplomacy and water resources management is being implemented at the Academy in collaboration with international donors.”

To date, six modules have been developed in this area.

All Central Asian experts welcomed Afghanistan’s participation in the event and stressed the importance of involving the country in the region’s water and climate dialogue. They noted that Afghanistan should play a role in developing optimal cooperation scenarios and in ensuring balanced distribution of transboundary water resources. In the experts’ view, this would help increase the effectiveness of regional management and coordination in the water sector.

The event was organized by the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (ISMI) and was attended by over 100 participants from more than 10 countries, including representatives from the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, and the Scientific Information Center of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination.

Partners of ISMI in organizing the conference included the Ministry of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), the International Water Management Institute, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

Source