



CENTRAL ASIA REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION PROGRAM FIRST MEETING OF WATER PILLAR WORKING GROUP

17-18 June 2024

CVK Park Bosphorus Hotel
Istanbul, Türkiye

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



1. The first meeting of the CAREC Water Pillar Working Group was convened to consider potential areas of investment by ADB under the Water Pillar. This meeting was a follow-up of the initial discussions held at a regional consultation held in November 2022 and the framework set out in the Water Pillar scoping report. In parallel to the meeting, consultations were held with the national designated authorities of the Green Climate Fund from CAREC countries to formulate a major new initiative on Glaciers to Farms (G2F).

2. The working group meeting was guided by insights from lead international experts working in state-of-the-art technologies and approaches relevant to climate and water security. They included advances in technology to improve water productivity, integrated approaches to water-energy planning, modernizing irrigation systems, benefit sharing in

a transboundary context, and nature-based solutions. Linkages with the CAREC Climate Change and examples of recent country climate change assessments emphasized the importance of incorporating a transformative climate dimension to Water Pillar initiatives.

3. The CAREC Water Pillar aims to add value to an environment of ongoing national and regional programs supported by a variety of development partners. Among those presented at the meeting were programs of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), the Green Climate Fund, Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development, International Fund for Agricultural Development, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and the German and Swiss governments (GIZ and SDC).

4. Each of the five countries from Central Asia presented initial concepts for consideration under the first phase of CAREC Water Pillar support. They can be categorized under two groups, one on climate adaptive infrastructure projects that bring benefits to more than one country, e.g., on water security and irrigation efficiency, and the second on automated monitoring systems and digital transformation as a means of promoting more evidence-based management procedures. Several of the initiatives made reference to proposed projects under the Aral Sea Basin Programme 4 of IFAS.

5. Overall, the concepts presented to the meeting provide a promising basis for further design of the CAREC Water Pillar investments. Points to emphasize in subsequent stages of developing the project concepts include the importance of a transformative climate agenda, including both mitigation and adaptation dimensions; agreement among countries on the shared benefits; enabling reforms in the regulatory and institutional environments; capacity building for climate resilience and modern water management systems and; an emphasis on cost sharing for sustainable operation and maintenance.

Next steps

6. Further consultations on proposed projects and co-benefits will be undertaken during upcoming visits of ADB specialists to the region through field visits and discussions with representatives from key agencies, including CAREC focal points. Technical assistance resources are available to undertake pre-feasibility level assessments of project concepts that meet funding criteria.