

CLIMATE SECURITY DIALOGUE BRIEF



CLIMATE SECURITY DIALOGUE SERIES

CLIMATE CHANGE IN CENTRAL ASIA BERLIN, FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE 20 JUNE 2011

Summary

The countries of Central Asia will be severely affected by climate change. In particular, the nexus of climate change, water availability, and energy security is a critical challenge for social and political stability in the region.

On 20 June, experts from Central Asia, Germany, and various international organisations gathered to discuss the security implications of climate change for the region. The Dialogue was organised by the German Federal Foreign Office in cooperation with adelphi, the KlimaCampus Research Group "Climate Change and Security" (CLISEC) at the University of Hamburg, and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy Hamburg (IFSH).

The Dialogue highlighted several methods of coping with climate change challenges, such as regional cooperation and, especially better coordination of existing initiatives. In addition, a gradual widening of existing cooperation frameworks to include important neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan may be necessary in the future.

Background

On the international level, the debate on the security implications of climate change has gained great momentum over the past years. Today, climate change poses one of the key challenges for global economic development and human well-being and may put international peace and security at risk.

For historic reasons, water and energy infrastructures in Central Asia are designed as if the region were one, cohesive country. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Central Asia's countries strived for autonomy with diverging political, economic, and social developments. Due to low resource efficiency and insufficient governance and coordination, the region is not adequately prepared to address the challenges of climate change. For example, the retreat of the Himalayan glaciers will negatively affect water, food, and energy security.

Several regional cooperation mechanisms have been established to address the transboundary challenges of prudent water resources management. Among others, the German Federal Foreign Office launched the German Central Asia Water Initiative to improve regional coordination and cooperation.

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Against this backdrop, the Climate Security Dialogue Series on 20th June 2011 focused on »Climate Change in Central Asia: Interlinkages between Water and Energy Security Trends«. The Dialogue sought to find answers to the following key questions:

- How does regional cooperation, such as the **German Central Asia Water Initiative**, need to evolve further with regard to climate change?
- How could German and European Union foreign policy contribute in **improving societal resilience and regional stability**?
- What are the key steps to be taken in the short and medium term?



"Water is a critical issue for social stability"

Iskandar Abdullaev

Cooperation Challenges

The Climate Change and Security Dialogue on Central Asia clearly highlighted that Central Asian water, food, and energy issues are tightly interlinked and have a direct impact on the livelihoods of the area's populations.

Mountain ecosystems – in particular the Himalayan glaciers – are vital to water availability for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Glacial melting is accelerating due to climate change, as Ysmail Dairov from the Regional Mountain Centre for Central Asia pointed out. Water runoff could be reduced by half or more

in the coming decades. Afghanistan thereby contributes around 25 percent of the Amur Dayan river basin flowing through Central Asia, which is vital for Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Once the situation in Afghanistan stabilises and economic development result in increased water-use, this will put additional pressures on water availability.

Water scarcity, which is already an issue in the region, is the consequence of inefficient water use and insufficient coordination. Iskandar Abdullaev pointed out that a sufficient amount of water is available, but after the end of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries each sought national autonomy. The area's original Soviet-time infrastructure, which treated the region as one whole, was never designed to accommodate five different countries with different priorities and needs. As a consequence, local level disputes over water and natural resources have the potential to quickly escalate to the regional level and lead to frictions and conflict. The German-funded Transboundary Water Management Programme for Central Asia (TWMCA), therefore, addresses all levels – from grass-roots to regional -- to develop an integrated, sustainable, and peaceful approach to water use in Central Asia.



"Large quantities of Central Asian waters are coming through Afghanistan"

Ysmail Dairov

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The TWMCA is one of many regional cooperation initiatives on water and other issues. Coordination among the various activities and organisations remains insufficient, leading to duplication of effort and unintentional competition. Successful regional cooperation needs to take into account the political and cultural specificities of the region, as Munira Aminova from the Free University of Brussels pointed out. This, however, is rarely done. As a consequence, the initiatives often have only limited ownership within the region and, accordingly, cannot increase long-term confidence building and cooperation.



"Effective regional cooperation requires mutual respect and trust"

Munira Aminova

Even though there are many initiatives, significant gaps in coverage remain. For instance, there is no economic cooperation agreement in which all five countries in Central Asia participate, despite the fact that water and energy are mainly used for economic purposes and competing economic policies lead to water competition. As Heinrich Wyes mentioned, large potential for renewable energy exists in Central Asia, particularly solar and wind power, which are hardly tapped but have the potential to reduce pressure on hydropower. Rather sooner than later, regional cooperation needs to evolve thematically from

focussing on energy or water to addressing the water-energy-climate nexus.

Thematically and geographically, widening of regional cooperation requires a careful approach: First, the absorptive capacity of national authorities is limited considering the multiplicity of issues which need to be tackled. Second, given the difficult political relations among Central Asian countries, adding Afghanistan into the mix presents an additional challenge. Yet given the rapidly emerging challenges of climate change, Heinrich Wyes stated that there is a need to "be bold".

Key Messages

The challenges of climate change, demography, and ongoing economic development necessitate adaptation of existing regional cooperation. The participants identified a set of recommendations to the international community on how regional cooperation needs to be improved in Central Asia:

- **Assessment:** A thorough analysis of existing regional structures and institutions on their capacity to actually build trust and increase resilience in Central Asia, in light of climate threats.
- **Coordination:** A platform needs to be created to improve coordination among regional cooperation arrangements, as well as share data and information.
- **Thematic widening:** It is necessary to go beyond a single-sector approach for regional cooperation. Instead, the water-climate-energy nexus needs to be addressed comprehensively.
- **Geographic widening:** Gradually and in the long-term, Central Asian cooperation mechanisms need to include Afghanistan, which plays a key role in Central Asian water security. Given the country's difficult political situation, clear guidance need to be defined on how this could be achieved.

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- **Conscious approach:** Regional cooperation and support of external stakeholders needs to take into account national and cultural sensitivities in order to be effective, as well as increase trust and ownership.
- **Renewable energy:** Central Asia has large renewable energy potential beyond hydropower, in particular solar and wind power. These resources need to be systematically exploited to improve energy security and reduce pressure on water resources.
- **Multi-stakeholder dialogue:** Innovative governance models are necessary to increase adaptive capacity and resilience of societies. Developing these, in return, will require a multi-level dialogue from the local to the regional level.
- **Building on existing initiatives:** Though many challenges need to be tackled, existing structures should be used and the creation of new ones avoided. A possible starting point could be a technical expert meeting at an existing organisation, such as the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, and then a gradual increase in the number and level of political participants.



*"Time is critical, so be bold."
Heinrich Wyes*

About the Dialogue Series

The Climate Security Dialogue Series provides a forum for discussing the impacts of shifting climate in times of political, economic, and demographic transformations. Linking political, practical, and scientific expertise, the Dialogues aim to identify necessary regional cooperation constellations and measures to minimise negative implications for development, livelihoods, and peace.

The Climate Security Dialogues Series was initiated by adelphi in Berlin, the KlimaCampus Research Group "Climate Change and Security" (CLISEC) at the University of Hamburg, and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy Hamburg (IFSH), in cooperation with and supported by the German Federal Foreign Office.

Past Dialogues addressed the South Mediterranean, and forthcoming Dialogues in 2011 will address South Asia and Latin America. Visit www.ecc-platform.org for more information.

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