The EU and Central Asia shape the future cooperation on environment and water

Climate change action and promotion of green economy in Central Asia are in the spotlight of the 6th European Union – Central Asia High-Level Conference held on 24-25 January 2019. The Conference confirmed the EU's continuous engagement in the region and contributed to shaping the EU's future assistance programmes for the countries of Central Asia on environment, climate change and water.

The event gathered ministers and high-ranking diplomats responsible for environment, climate change and water policies of the Central Asian countries, the European Union and the EU Member States to build upon the work done since the last High-Level Conference in Milan in 2015.

Ambassador Peter Burian, EU Special Representative for Central Asia: "I am pleased to see the cooperation between the EU and the countries of Central Asia strengthened in all areas. The EU and partners in Central Asia need to build on the new momentum in regional cooperation and advance joint efforts in addressing together common regional challenges ranging from sustainable and transboundary water management to climate change adaptation and mitigation, from improved environmental governance to the transition to a circular economy. To this end, the EU is ready to share its experiences and advanced technologies."

The conference was organised under the EU–Central Asia Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation that covers the following priority areas: environmental governance, circular economy, sustainable production and consumption, climate change and water resources management. Under the chairmanship of the European Union, the lead country of the Platform – Italy, and the host of the event – Uzbekistan, the participants exchanged views and defined the priorities for the EU – Central Asia future cooperation on a broad range of issues concerning environment, climate change and water.

Uzbekistan State Committee on Ecology and Environment Protection highlighted the formation of an absolutely new atmosphere for cooperation and the current dynamics observed in the Central Asian regional cooperation, a significant strengthening of the interaction to address the priority environmental issues of the region.

It was noted that this EU-CA cooperation platform needs to develop and implement concrete environmental projects and measures, including those that are aimed at improving the ecology, social
and economic conditions in the Aral Sea Region, supporting the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region, strengthening the regional cooperation in the framework of the IFAS, water-saving and rational use of limited transboundary water resources, attracting investment and external financial and technical assistance to implement innovative solutions for low-carbon development, reduced environmental pollution, sound management of natural resources, as well as preserving biodiversity, preventing desertification and degradation of ecosystems.

Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea reaffirmed Italy’s commitment for strengthening sound relationships with Central Asia on crucial issues like environment, climate change and water, highlighting the importance of working together with the EU for achieving a concrete sustainable development and a prosperous future in the Region, given its increasingly strategic role in the international arena.

The 6th EU - Central Asia High-Level Conference presented the results of the activities of the EU-CA Platform since 2015, expanded the mandate of the Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (WGECC), identified ways to promote investment in infrastructure to mitigate climate change, reduce pollution and to promote green and circular economy in the region. The parties defined the priority areas for further EU – CA cooperation.

Background: The Platform for Environment and Water Cooperation was established at the EU-CA High Level (Ministerial) Conference in Rome (Italy) in 2009 as the framework for the EU-CA cooperation in water and environment based on the EU Strategy for Central Asia agreed with the CA states. The EU-CA Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (WGECC), chaired by the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, assists in the identification of regional cooperation priority actions and supports the Platform by strengthening policy dialogue and cooperation at the regional level and between the EU and CA.

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