



**TA 9977-REG: Developing the CAREC Water Pillar
Second Water Pillar Working Group Meeting (virtual)
16 September 2025**

PROCEEDINGS

I. Introduction

1. In line with the CAREC 2030 strategy, agriculture and water were introduced as a new strategic pillar in 2017 to strengthen regional cooperation on water security, with an initial focus on Central Asia. A scoping report endorsed in 2021 outlined a three-block¹ framework that formed the basis for regional engagement and guided the establishment of the CAREC Water Pillar Working Group in 2023. The Working Group initially comprises representatives from the five Central Asian countries—Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—which was later expanded to include Azerbaijan and Georgia from the South Caucasus. This Working Group functions as an advisory platform to support the implementation, coordination, and development of regional projects under the Water Pillar.
2. The first meeting of the Working Group was held in Istanbul from 17 to 18 June 2024. During this meeting, each of the five Central Asian countries presented initial concepts for potential support under the first phase of the CAREC Water Pillar. These concepts were broadly categorized into two areas: climate-adaptive infrastructure projects that deliver transboundary benefits such as improved water security and irrigation efficiency, and automated monitoring systems and digital transformation initiatives designed to promote more evidence-based water management.
3. The second meeting of the CAREC Water Pillar Working Group was conducted virtually. It aimed to provide key updates on ongoing activities and to solicit feedback from participating stakeholders to guide future work. The meeting focused on reporting progress made in the pre-feasibility study for potential regional projects, presenting engagement activities related to Water–Energy Nexus Modelling, and introducing the proposed technical assistance (TA) to be implemented under the Water Pillar. Beyond information sharing, the meeting provided an opportunity to collect valuable inputs from participants to strengthen the design and implementation of upcoming activities.
4. Participants in the meeting included members of the Water Pillar Working Group, focal points from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, delegates from the Executive Committee of International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (EC-IFAS), representatives from the Asian Development

¹ Climate resilient and productive water systems (Block 1); Sustainable water resources and water services (Block 2); and Nexus solutions and cross sector learning (Block 3).

Bank, and technical assistance consultants.

II. Meeting Highlights

5. **Opening session:** Ms. Lyaziza Sabyrova, Director and ADB's Regional Head for CAREC, welcomed the participants and emphasized the pressing need for regional cooperation on water security in the context of climate change and increasing resource scarcity. She reflected on the progress made since the first Working Group meeting, noting the transition of the Water Pillar from the scoping stage to implementation. She also outlined the meeting agenda, which included updates on pre-feasibility studies, water–energy nexus modeling, and a new technical assistance initiative to support transboundary cooperation. Ms. Sabyrova acknowledged the valuable contributions of national focal points, regional experts, and ADB teams.
6. In his opening remarks, Mr. Ashkat Orazbay, Chairman of EC-IFAS, emphasized the importance of regional cooperation on transboundary water management and highlighted the alignment between IFAS's programs and the CAREC Water Pillar. He encouraged stronger collaboration with ADB on project implementation, referencing IFAS's proposals on satellite monitoring and capacity building. Mr. Orazbay also appealed for enhanced financial and technical support and expressed hope that the meeting would foster deeper partnerships to address water and climate challenges in the region.
7. Mr. Kazuhiro Yoshida, Senior Water Resources Specialist and team lead for the CAREC Water Pillar, presented the background and **development of the Water Pillar**, highlighting its progression from the 2021 Scoping Study to its current implementation phase. He emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and outlined key ongoing activities, including pre-feasibility studies, water–energy nexus modeling, and a proposed technical assistance initiative to support transboundary collaboration. The presentation also covered the broader CAREC Program, regional water challenges, and the meeting agenda, encouraging participants to engage constructively in advancing shared water security goals.
8. Mr. Tim Hannan, Team Leader at Cowater International Finland, presented the progress of the **Pre-Feasibility Study (PFS)** for three regional projects under the CAREC Water Pillar. The projects fall under two categories: climate-adaptive infrastructure projects (Category 1); and automated monitoring systems and digital transformation (Category 2). Under Category 1, Project 1 on climate change adaptation through improving irrigation efficiency in the Aral Sea Basin. It is being developed with the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and is already in advance stages of preparation. Project 2 is also under Category 1 and is on climate resiliency of improving the Bakhri Tojik for improved irrigation and energy supply in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The draft PFS for this project has been completed. Project 3 under Category 2 is centered on developing a joint automated water metering system in five Central Asia countries to support transparent and data-driven water governance is also on track.
9. This session featured constructive engagement from member countries underscoring strong regional ownership and a shared commitment to collaborative water management. The Kyrgyz Republic reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing irrigation efficiency while remaining fully aligned with existing intergovernmental agreements,

clarifying that the objective is to make better use of allocated water rather than draw additional volumes. Tajikistan proposed a strategic and well-received suggestion to integrate related part of Projects 1 and Project 2 into a unified project package, recognizing the interlinked nature of infrastructure and the benefits of coordinated planning. This idea was positively acknowledged by both the Asian Development Bank and the Kyrgyz Republic, with agreement on the value of joint implementation and synchronized timelines. The discussion reflected a high level of mutual trust and cooperation, laying a strong foundation for advancing regional water resilience through collective action plan. The Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan representatives demonstrated their positive support and consideration for further discussion on the project proposal, together with ADB representatives. This would be subject to agreement of their higher authorities.

10. Regarding Project 3, Kazakhstan reiterated its support for the modernization of hydrological posts and expressed interest in being actively involved. Tajikistan suggested refining the list of hydroposts by excluding those already being upgraded through other initiatives. Similarly, the Kyrgyz Republic proposed adjusting the scope to focus on irrigation-relevant sites and involving appropriate national agencies. These inputs were viewed as valuable steps toward aligning project components with national priorities and ensuring practical implementation pathways.
11. The session demonstrated strong regional commitment to collaboration, with participants offering practical, forward-looking ideas to enhance project design and impact. The discussions reflected the shared enthusiasm for leveraging the CAREC Water Pillar as a platform for synchronized planning, infrastructure modernization, and digital innovation in support of water security across the region.
12. Mr. Julien Harou from the University of Manchester highlighted the increasing pressures on Central Asia's interconnected **water and energy systems**, driven by rising demand, inefficiencies in irrigation and energy use, and the accelerating impacts of climate change. He underscored that current fragmented, national-level management approaches are insufficient to address these complex and shared challenges, emphasizing the need for integrated, cross-border, and cross-sectoral solutions
13. In response, Professor Harou explained that, under ADB's leadership and support, the University of Manchester is working closely with regional partners to develop an open-source, spatially explicit water–energy systems model for Central Asia. The model is designed to enable independent yet connectable simulations of water and energy systems, with a particular focus on hydropower operations and grid integration. He emphasized that this tool will support regional stakeholders in analyzing trade-offs and synergies, optimizing infrastructure planning, and making coordinated, data-driven decisions to strengthen climate resilience and attract investment
14. Mr. Harou also presented the progress update including data collection, initial development of sectoral and integrated models, and early optimization work. He noted that calibration and validation are currently underway to ensure the reliability and robustness of model outputs. Looking ahead, he announced that a regional workshop is planned for November 2025 in Uzbekistan to present interim findings, engage stakeholders, and define the next steps. He further noted that the initiative will be supported by an ADB-led Memorandum of Understanding to promote sustained collaboration on water–energy nexus planning and regional infrastructure development.

15. Mr. Kazuhiro Yoshida presented the **concept for a new regional technical assistance (TA) initiative** designed to move the CAREC Water Pillar from planning into implementation. Building on the foundation of earlier efforts—including the initial TA that established the Water Pillar and launched pre-feasibility studies and regional modeling—the proposed initiative responds to growing climate challenges and the need for deeper regional cooperation.
16. Mr. Yoshida emphasized that the new technical assistance will serve as a catalyst for action—helping member countries to strengthen institutions, modernize water management systems, and generate the knowledge needed for climate-smart investments. Key components include continued support to the CAREC Water Pillar Working Group, the integration of cutting-edge digital tools like GIS, remote sensing, and early warning systems, and the expansion of water–energy nexus modeling to support more informed, regional decision making.
17. The TA also aims to identify and assess regionally significant investment opportunities, support project preparation, and facilitate regional knowledge exchange. It aligns with national strategies and broader CAREC goals, positioning countries for improved transboundary cooperation, climate resilience, and investment readiness. Implementation is planned for October 2025 to September 2027.
18. Approaching the final presentation **“Reflections and Next Steps”**, Mr. Kazuhiro Yoshida provided a clear and forward-looking summary of the ongoing progress and next steps under the CAREC Water Pillar. He emphasized that pre-feasibility studies for regional water-related projects are advancing at different stages across member countries, with draft completions expected in the coming months. Coordination between Cowater International, ADB, and national agencies remains strong, helping to ensure alignment and timely delivery.
19. Mr. Yoshida also shared that the integrated water–energy system model is now operational, with calibration and validation underway. A regional workshop is planned for November 2025 in Uzbekistan to showcase the model’s application and engage stakeholders in scenario planning. He also outlined the upcoming technical assistance initiative, which is being finalized for approval, with recruitment of the implementing firm expected in early 2026. To maintain momentum and strengthen collaboration, the next in-person meeting of the CAREC Water Pillar Working Group is tentatively scheduled for April–May 2026 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. He concluded the session by reaffirming the Water Pillar’s long-term vision: to support institutional strengthening, system modernization, a pipeline of regional investments, and improved water governance and climate resilience across CAREC member countries.
20. In her **closing remarks**, Ms. Yasmin Siddiqi, Director Agriculture, Food, Nature and Rural development sector, reaffirmed that the CAREC Water Pillar is a long-term platform for regional cooperation rather than a one-time effort. She emphasized that regional cooperation is no longer an option but a necessity to effectively address shared water and climate challenges. Ms. Siddiqi highlighted the significant progress achieved so far, including advancements in regional project preparation, water–energy nexus modeling, and the development of new technical assistance to support climate-resilient water management.

21. She underscored the importance of cooperation, transparent information sharing, and integrated planning to tackle escalating climate and water issues. Ms. Siddiqi also noted that the Water Pillar supports broader CAREC objectives, such as food and energy security, while complementing national water programs across member countries.
22. Expressing gratitude to all participants, partners, and organizers for their valuable contributions, she expressed optimism about the breakthrough progress as the first regional project under the Water Pillar moves forward.

**Regional TA 9977: Developing the Central Asia Regional Economic
Cooperation (CAREC) Water Pillar
Second Water Pillar Working Group Meeting (VIRTUAL)
16 September 2025
Agenda**

Time	Topic
<p>12:30-12:40 p.m. <i>(Baku, Tbilisi)</i></p> <p>1:30-1:40 p.m. <i>(Ashgabat, Astana, Dushanbe and Tashkent)</i></p> <p>2:30-2:40 p.m. <i>(Bishkek)</i></p>	<p>Welcome and Opening Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ms. Lyaziza Sabyrova</i> <i>Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration Unit, Central and West Asia Department, ADB</i> • <i>Mr. Amb. Askhat Orazbay</i> <i>Chairman, Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (EC IFAS)</i>
<p>12:40-12:50 p.m. <i>(Baku, Tbilisi)</i></p> <p>1:40-1:50 p.m. <i>(Ashgabat, Astana, Dushanbe and Tashkent)</i></p> <p>2:40-2:50 p.m. <i>(Bishkek)</i></p>	<p>Background to Developing the CAREC Water Pillar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mr. Kazuhiro Yoshida</i> <i>Team leader/focal for the CAREC Water Pillar, Senior Water Resources Specialist, SD2-AFNR</i>
Part I Central Asia	
<p>12:50-1:30 p.m. <i>(Baku, Tbilisi)</i></p> <p>1:50-2:30 p.m. <i>(Ashgabat, Astana, Dushanbe and Tashkent)</i></p> <p>2:50-3:30 p.m. <i>(Bishkek)</i></p>	<p>Progress Report of the pre-feasibility study for potential regional projects <i>Presenter: TA Consultants (Cowater International Finland)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mr. Tim Hannan, Team Leader</i> <p>Discussion: Q&A <i>Moderator: Mr. Takatoshi Kawamoto</i> <i>Water Resources Specialist (SD2-AFNR)</i></p>
<p>1:30-2:05 p.m. <i>(Baku, Tbilisi)</i></p> <p>2:30-3:05 p.m. <i>(Ashgabat, Astana, Dushanbe and Tashkent)</i></p> <p>3:30-4:05 p.m. <i>(Bishkek)</i></p>	<p>Water-Energy Nexus Modelling <i>Presenters: TA Consultants (University of Manchester)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dr. Julien Harou, Water-Energy Planning Specialist</i> • <i>Dr. Jose Gonzalez, Water-Energy Modelling Specialist</i> <p>Discussion: Q&A <i>Moderator: Mr. Kazuhiro Yoshida</i></p>
<p>2:05-2:15 p.m. <i>(Baku, Tbilisi)</i></p> <p>3:05-3:15 p.m. <i>(Ashgabat, Astana, Dushanbe and Tashkent)</i></p> <p>4:05-4:15 p.m. <i>(Bishkek)</i></p>	Break
Part II Central Asia and South Caucasus	
<p>2:25-2:50 p.m. <i>(Baku, Tbilisi)</i></p>	<p>Presentation on proposed technical assistance under the CAREC Water Pillar</p>

<p>3:25–3:50 p.m. <i>(Ashgabat, Astana, Dushanbe and Tashkent)</i></p> <p>4:25–4:50 p.m. <i>(Bishkek)</i></p>	<p><i>Presenter:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mr. Kazuhiro Yoshida</i> <p>Discussion: Q&A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Moderator: Mr. Muhammad Ali</i> <i>Technical Assistance Coordinator for the CAREC Water Pillar</i>
<p>2:50-3:00 p.m. <i>(Baku, Tbilisi)</i></p> <p>3:50–4:00 p.m. <i>(Ashgabat, Astana, Dushanbe and Tashkent)</i></p> <p>4:50–5:00 p.m. <i>(Bishkek)</i></p>	<p>Reflections and Next Steps, including next meeting in person in KZA</p> <p><i>Facilitators:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) <i>Mr. Kazuhiro Yoshida</i> (ii) <i>KAZ representative (TBD)</i>
<p>3:00-3:05 p.m. <i>(Baku, Tbilisi)</i></p> <p>4:00–4:05 p.m. <i>(Ashgabat, Astana, Dushanbe and Tashkent)</i></p> <p>5:00–5:05 p.m. <i>(Bishkek)</i></p>	<p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ms. Yasmin Siddiqi.</i> <i>Director, Agriculture, Food, Nature, and Rural Development Sector Office (SD2-AFNR), ADB</i>



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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Azerbaijan

1. Mr. Orkhan Bayramov - Advisor of International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, Member CAREC Water Pillar Working Group

Georgia

2. Ms. Mari Tinikashvili, Senior Specialist of Hydro Amelioration and Land Management Division, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture

Kazakhstan

3. Mr. Tursynbek Islam, Chief Expert of the Water Cooperation Division for Central Asia, Department of International Cooperation

Kyrgyz Republic

4. Ms. Zhyldyzkhan Ashymbaeva, Head of the Technical Policy and Investment Division, Ministry of Water Resources, Agriculture and Processing Industry
5. Mr. Nurlan Nabiev, Project Implementation Unit Head, Water Resources Services, Ministry of Water Resources, Agriculture and Processing Industry

Tajikistan

6. Mr. Daler Abdurazoqzada, Head of Water Policy Department, Ministry of Energy and Water Resources

Turkmenistan

7. Mr. Tirkesh Nurgaldiyev, Head of Water Management Department, State Committee for Water Management, CAREC Water Pillar Working Group member
8. Mr. Saparmyrat Charyyev, Senior Specialist of Digital Technology and Information Security Department, State Committee for Water Management, CAREC Water Pillar Working Group member

Uzbekistan

9. Mr. Khurshid Olimjonovich Lapasov, Director of the Center for Water Sector Reforms

Regional Organizations

10. Mr. Ashkat Orazbay, Chairman of the Executive Committee for International Fund for Aral Sea (EC-IFAS)
11. Ms. Saule Shalmaganbetova, Head of the Information and Analytical Department, IFAS

12. Ms. Gaukhar Meldebekova, Specialist of the Information and Analytical Department, IFAS

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

13. Ms. Lyaziza Sabyrova, Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration, CWRC, CWRD
14. Ms. Yasmin Siddiqi, Director Agriculture, Food, Nature and Rural Development, (SD2-AFNR)
15. Mr. Begzod Djalilov, Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRC, CWRD
16. Mr. Kazuhiro Yoshida, Senior Water Resources Specialist, Agriculture, Food, Nature, and Rural Development Sector Office (SD2-AFNR)
17. Mr. Serder Charyyev, Principal Country Coordination Officer, Turkmenistan Resident Mission
18. Mr. Akmal Nartayev, Principal Financial Management Specialist, PPFD
19. Mr. Yukihiro Shibuya, Principal Safeguard Specialist, Uzbekistan Resident Mission
20. Ms. Ganjina Fazilova, Project Officer, Tajikistan Resident Mission
21. Mr. Bokhodir Rozikhodjaev, Project Officer (SD2-AFNR), Uzbekistan Resident Mission
22. Mr. Arystan T. Galiyev, Senior Project Officer (AFNR), Kazakhstan Resident Mission
23. Ms. Yagut Ertenliche, Senior Project Officer (SD2-AFNR), Azerbaijan Resident Mission
24. Mr. Annrou R. Ramos, Climate Change Officer, CCSD
25. Ms. Dorteia C. Lazaro, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, CAREC Unit Head, CWRC, CWRD
26. Mr. Kristian Rosbach, Senior Economist, CWRC
27. Ms. Altyнай Aarapova, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRD, CWRC
28. Ms. Avtandil Tskhvitava, Principal Project Officer, Georgia Resident Mission
29. Ms. Marie Stephanie Igaya, Senior Project Officer (SD2-AFNR)
30. Mr. Zaur Bostanov, Associate Project Officer (SD2 - AFNR), Kyrgyz Resident Mission
31. Mr. Takatoshi Kawamoto, Water Resource Specialist, (SD2-AFNR)
32. Mr. Nicholas James Beale, Operations Assistant, (SD2-AFNR)

ADB/CAREC Consultants

33. Mr. Ashraf Kuliyyev, Advisor to the CAREC National Focal Point for Azerbaijan
34. Ms. Ekaterine Koroshinadze, Senior Regional Cooperation Coordinator for Georgia
35. Mr. Diyar Tassym, Advisor to the CAREC National Focal Point for Kazakhstan
36. Mr. Taalaibek Bektashev, Advisor to the CAREC National Focal Point for Kyrgyz Republic
37. Ms. Aidana Berdybekova, Senior Regional Cooperation Coordinator for Kyrgyz Republic
38. Mr. Khiloldin Sobitov, Regional Cooperation Coordinator for Tajikistan
39. Mr. Durdy Ilamanov, Advisor to the CAREC National Focal Point for Turkmenistan
40. Mr. Umid Khudoyberdiev, Regional Cooperation Coordinator for Uzbekistan
41. Ms. Guldana Sadykova, Senior Regional Cooperation Coordinator for Kazakhstan
42. Mr. Diyar Tassym, Advisor to the CAREC National Focal Point for Kazakhstan
43. Mr. Rustam Aminjanov, Advisor to the CAREC National Focal Point for Tajikistan
44. Mr. Charles Danvel Aldelmita, CAREC Secretariat Logistics Coordinator
45. Mr. Tim Hannan, Team Leader, Cowater International Finland
46. Mr. Ilmari Saarilehto, Project Planning and M&E Specialist, Cowater International Finland
47. Mr. Julian Harou, Water Energy Planning Specialist, University of Manchester
48. Mr. Jose Gonzalez, Water-Energy Modeling Specialist, University of Manchester

49. Mr. Nadir Safaev, Advisor to the CAREC National Focal Point for Uzbekistan
50. Mr. Matteo Mode, Climate Change Consultant, CWRD
51. Mr. Muhammad Ali, Technical Assistance Coordinator for the CAREC Water Pillar

Interpreters

52. Mr. Rustam Sataev
53. Ms. Svetlana Chirkova