

NEWSLETTER

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Our mission

To transform water from a potential source of conflict into a driver of cooperation, peace, and sustainable socio-economic development across Central Asia.

Our Vision

A water-secure Central Asia where all people benefit from equitable access to safe and sustainable water resources, contributing to resilience, stability, and ecosystem protection.

2026 in Focus

- From frameworks to implementation - five governments advancing joint action on the ground
- First pilot basins selected on small transboundary rivers, with the Isfara leading the way
- Regional Water & Climate Vision elevated to high-level platforms - from the Astana Summit to the Dushanbe Water Process and the road to the UN Water Conference
- A new generation stepping in: regional Master's programme, young researchers, and women's leadership in water diplomacy



Blue Peace Central Asia is a regional initiative launched and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. It is implemented by IWMI and IUCN in partnership with CAREC across Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The initiative supports countries turn shared water challenges into practical cooperation, stronger institutions and joint solutions at regional and river-basin levels. The current phase runs from 2025 to 2029 and focuses on hydro-diplomacy, cooperation in transboundary basins, and building the next generation of water professionals.

Three Pillars of Action:

Following its launch and institutional groundwork in 2025, Blue Peace Central Asia entered its implementation phase in the first half of 2026. This inaugural edition presents the initiative's major achievements from January to June 2026 and highlights the priorities that will guide its work for the remainder of the year. Activities are implemented through three interlinked pillars:



Hydro-diplomacy

Supporting regional policy dialogue, institutional platforms and cooperation processes that strengthen transboundary water governance frameworks across Central Asia.



Transboundary Cooperation

Advancing basin-level cooperation through demonstration projects that showcase shared benefits and inform sustainable investment planning in small and large transboundary basins.



Capacity Building & Inclusion

Developing a diverse and skilled community of water professionals and leaders through regional partnerships, training, academic cooperation and knowledge exchange — with a strong emphasis on gender equality and youth engagement.

HYDRO-DIPLOMACY

Regional platforms, ministerial dialogue and the science-policy bridge

REGIONAL WATER AND CLIMATE VISION REACHES THE ASTANA SUMMIT



Blue Peace Central Asia session "Water Resources Management under Climate Impact", held during the Regional Environmental Summit in Astana

The Regional Environmental Summit 2026, held in Astana, Kazakhstan, from April 22 to 24, brought together more than 1,500 participants from over 30 countries to strengthen regional cooperation on climate resilience, environmental sustainability, and green development. As one of the Summit's strategic partners, Blue Peace Central Asia actively contributed to seven thematic sessions and convened two flagship discussions on climate-sensitive water resources management and sustainable financing of the water sector.

A key milestone was the presentation of the Regional Water and Climate Vision, presented by Blue Peace Central Asia initiative, a shared regional framework for addressing the growing impacts of climate change on water resources.



Signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding between CAREC and IWM

CENTRAL ASIA ADVANCES REGIONAL WATER COOPERATION AHEAD OF THE 2026 UN WATER CONFERENCE

In the context of the 4th High-Level International Conference on the Water Action Decade (Dushanbe, 25–28 May 2026), Blue Peace Central Asia supported key events of the Dushanbe Water Process, including the high-level Pre-Conference Forum "Frontiers of Transboundary Cooperation".

Key outcomes of the Pre-Conference Forum included the presentation of the Water Governance Accelerator, which brings together IWM and collaborating partners to provide governments, river basin organizations, catchment management agencies and regional bodies with on-demand scientific, economic, legal and governance expertise in one place, and the launch of the Water Frontier Dialogue as a platform for regional dialogue and knowledge exchange.



Panelists of the pre-conference forum "Frontiers of Transboundary Cooperation" in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

The events brought together ministers and senior government officials responsible for water resources from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, alongside representatives of key regional and international partners. The discussions focused on strengthening regional water cooperation, advancing practical hydro-diplomacy, and identifying opportunities for more coordinated responses to shared water challenges. Participants also explored how Central Asia's regional priorities and experience could contribute to global water policy discussions and the 2026 UN Water Conference.

HYDRO-DIPLOMACY

STRENGTHENING REGIONAL WATER COORDINATION

The 92nd meeting of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) in Dushanbe on 20 February 2026 and the 93rd meeting in Bukhara on 10 April 2026 brought together the Central Asian states to coordinate the management of the region's shared water resources.

As the region's core intergovernmental water platform, the ICWC enables countries to jointly review seasonal water availability, coordinate reservoir operations, and agree on water withdrawal limits for the Syr Darya and Amu Darya river basins. At the Dushanbe meeting, members reviewed the implementation of water withdrawal limits and reservoir operations during the non-growing season, while the Bukhara meeting approved water withdrawal limits for the coming irrigation period. The meetings also reaffirmed the established mechanism of adopting coordinated water management decisions every three months through ICWC protocols.



Shavkat Khamraev, Minister of Water Resources of Uzbekistan, during the 92nd meeting of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Dushanbe

Blue Peace Central Asia initiative supported both meetings, helping ensure that this long-standing regional mechanism continues to provide a trusted platform for dialogue, coordinated decision-making, and practical transboundary water cooperation.

ALIGNING WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

The Regional Working Group on Water Quality - which brings together government agencies, hydrometeorological services, universities, and water quality experts from across Central Asia — met in Astana, Kazakhstan in December 2025 under the Blue Peace Central Asia initiative. Participants agreed on priority parameters for joint monitoring and carried out a joint sampling exercise at hydroposts on the Syr Darya River.

Joint sampling is cooperation in its most concrete form: specialists from different countries generating one dataset that all of them trust. It is the foundation on which comparable reporting and transboundary pollution accounting can be built. A water quality study tour to Switzerland, planned for September 2026, will connect the region's specialists with Swiss experience in monitoring and laboratory practice.

ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS TAKE ROOT

Following the first Regional E-flow Workshop, the concept of environmental flows - ensuring that rivers retain the water they need to sustain life and ecosystems - is moving from seminar rooms into national frameworks.



SDC Representative highlights the role of environmental flows in sustaining river ecosystems

In 2025, Kazakhstan became the first country in Central Asia with a national methodology for environmental flows. Uzbekistan formally established a national working group on environmental flows, to which initiative will contribute. The Kyrgyz Republic included e-flows in the new edition of its Water Code. Three countries, three different instruments, one direction: rivers recognised not only as resources to allocate, but as ecosystems to sustain.

TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION

Small transboundary tributaries: from selection to assessment

THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC AND TAJIKISTAN ADVANCE BILATERAL WATER COOPERATION

On March 6, 2026, representatives of the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan met in Bishkek for a session of the Joint Kyrgyz-Tajik Water Management Commission, reaffirming their shared commitment to strengthening cooperation on transboundary water resources.

Supported by the Blue Peace Central Asia initiative, the meeting provided an important platform to advance dialogue, review ongoing collaboration, and identify practical steps for sustainable water management.

The discussions highlighted the value of sustained bilateral engagement, technical cooperation, and institutional dialogue in building trust and promoting joint solutions for shared river basins. The meeting reflects the continued commitment of both countries to strengthening water cooperation and contributing to long-term regional stability and sustainable development.

One of the key outcomes of the meeting was the confirmation of the Ak-Suu River, also known as the Isfara River, as a pilot basin for demonstrating shared benefits of transboundary water cooperation at the sub-basin level under Blue Peace Central Asia.



BPCA field mission across the Batken region, the Kyrgyz Republic, engaging with local water specialists

FROM DIALOGUE TO BENEFIT-SHARING

The Fifth Meeting of the Joint Turkmen–Uzbek Intergovernmental Commission on Water Management Issues brought together senior government officials from both countries in Khiva, Uzbekistan, to strengthen cooperation on the sustainable management of shared water resources. Discussions focused on modernizing water management through improved water monitoring and accounting, climate change adaptation, efficient water use.

The meeting concluded with the signing of the Protocol of the Fifth Joint Commission Meeting, reaffirming both countries' commitment to regular bilateral dialogue and closer institutional cooperation. By strengthening coordination on shared water resources and promoting practical cooperation, the Commission continues to play an important role in enhancing regional water security, climate resilience, and long-term sustainable development.



Signing ceremony of the Protocol of the fifth joint commission meeting, Khiva, Uzbekistan

FIRST BASIN-WIDE FIELD MISSION

Closing the half-year, a BPCA expert team travelled from Osh and Batken in the Kyrgyz Republic, through Isfara city and Khujand in Tajikistan, to Besharyk district and Fergana in Uzbekistan.

The team consulted district, basin and territorial water managers in all three riparian countries and visited hydrological posts the monitoring stations whose data make joint management possible.

The mission's findings will feed a comprehensive basin assessment, shaping the pilot activities, investment planning and benefit-sharing options to be developed under the initiative.

CAPACITY BUILDING & INCLUSION

Education, youth and women's leadership in water diplomacy

REGIONAL MASTER'S IN WATER DIPLOMACY TAKES SHAPE



Signing Ceremony for the Memorandum of Cooperation on Water Diplomacy with Leading Kyrgyz Universities

In the first half of 2026, Blue Peace Central Asia signed trilateral memoranda of understanding in Almaty with partner universities from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan, to establish a regional Master's programme in water diplomacy.

Building on these partnerships, universities across the region advanced a common educational architecture for the programme. The structure of ten teaching modules was agreed, covering topics from international water law to negotiation practice.

The programme aims to prepare future water professionals and diplomats through a common regional curriculum, promoting regional cooperation, student mobility, and professional networks from the start of their careers.



A selfie to close the first Women Water Week forum, held as part of Tashkent Water Week 2026.

WOMEN WATER WEEK IN TASHKENT

On March 25-26, the First Women Water Week, organized by the Ministry of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan in collaboration with international partners, brought together around 80 women professionals from across Uzbekistan's water sector to strengthen leadership, professional networks, and knowledge on gender-responsive water governance. As a part of Tashkent Water Week, the event was supported by Blue Peace Central Asia and other partners, providing a platform for women from government institutions, research organizations, and basin authorities to exchange experiences, build new partnerships, and enhance their role in water governance.



"Women's leadership — water sustainability": participants of the first Women Water Week forum, Tashkent Water Week 2026

BUILDING SKILLS FOR WATER COOPERATION

Ahead of the Fourth International Conference on the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", a three-day seminar on strengthening cooperation over shared water resources was held in Dushanbe from 22–24 May. Organised by the OSCE, UNU-INWEH and the CAREC within the initiative, the seminar brought together members of the Women in Water Diplomacy Network and young professionals from the Drops of the Future initiative.

Participants explored the role of science, data and inclusive approaches in water negotiations, including findings from a gender gap assessment in the water sector. The discussions culminated in the joint development of policy recommendations to inform the conference and contribute to broader international discussions on transboundary water cooperation.

CAPACITY BUILDING & INCLUSION

WOMEN IN WATER DIPLOMACY

A new cohort of the Regional Network “Women in Water Resources Management in Central Asia and Afghanistan” was selected in the first half of 2026, bringing together more than 30 women professionals and extending a growing regional network built on mentorship, peer exchange, and international engagement.

The network connects women professionals from ministries, water agencies, and environmental institutions - practitioners already working on water, environment and climate, now supported to step into leadership and representation roles.



Members of the Regional Network “Women in Water Resources Management in Central Asia and Afghanistan”

In parallel, Women’s Network of Central Asia and the South Caucasus is working on a regional gender gap assessment, under the Blue Peace Central Asia initiative, bringing together evidence on women’s participation in water management across the region.

The assessment provides advocacy efforts with something they often lack: robust evidence. Its findings will be disseminated through policy dialogues, targeted stakeholder briefings and accessible knowledge products, helping partners identify priorities, inform future interventions and track progress over time.



YOUNG RESEARCHERS COMPETITION AND YOUTH INCUBATOR LAUNCHED



Participants of the 15th Central Asian Leadership Programme in Almaty, Kazakhstan

In June 2026, Blue Peace Central Asia launched two regional programmes to involve young professionals in addressing the region’s water challenges.

The Research Competition for Young Scientists: Water Solutions invited researchers aged 20–44 from Central Asia and Afghanistan to submit applied research addressing pressing water issues, with a focus on practical solutions for basin organizations, government agencies, and local communities.

At the same time, Blue Peace Central Asia opened applications for the Regional Youth Water Solutions Incubator, supporting young innovators in developing practical ideas and leadership skills for the water sector. Together, the two programmes provide complementary pathways through applied research and innovation, helping build a new generation of water professionals and strengthen regional cooperation.

Two regional calls opened concrete entry points for young researchers and innovators from Central Asia and Afghanistan to engage in regional water cooperation, strengthening the human capital on which the region’s water future depends. By investing in applied research, innovation, and leadership, Blue Peace Central Asia is helping build a diverse pipeline of water professionals equipped to develop practical solutions, foster cross-border collaboration, and contribute to more resilient water governance.

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TURNING CHALLENGES INTO COOPERATION

Identifying shared benefits among Central Asian countries is key to strengthening cooperation on water resources. Science-based solutions, combined with regional dialogue, provide the foundation for equitable, sustainable, and climate-resilient water management. Our task is to ensure that this foundation is owned by the region itself — by its institutions, its experts, and its next generation of water leaders

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Barbara Janusz-Pawletta,
IWMI Regional Representative, Central Asia

**LOOKING AHEAD**

Representatives of SDC, IWMI, IUCN and CAREC reviewed January-June results and endorsed strategic priorities for the months ahead on July 2, 2026. The second half of 2026 will see the initiative deepen its basin-level work, with the completion of the Isfara basin assessment, the development of investment planning and benefit-sharing options, and the selection of a second pilot basin for small transboundary tributaries.

A water quality study tour to Switzerland in September will connect the region's specialists with Swiss monitoring and laboratory practice, while a high-level Blue Peace Middle East delegation visit will link Central Asia to the wider global community of water cooperation.

The initiative will also support Central Asia's contribution to the 2026 UN Water Conference, and the third Steering Committee, together with the Regional Advisory Committee, will be held in person.

Our Partners

The results of the first half of 2026 reflect sustained collaboration among the governments of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; regional institutions including the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC); the implementing consortium of IWMI, IUCN and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC); partner initiatives including GIZ (CSWRM) and the World Bank (CAWEP); UNECE; national academies and universities across the region - under the continued support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).



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Feruza Alikulova

Blue Peace Central Asia, IWMI

Contact

www.bluepeace-centralasia.ch

info@bluepeace-centralasia.ch

+998 94 550 0445