



**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF
CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)**

**20th Session of the SPECA Working Group on Water, Energy and
Environment**

(Baku, Azerbaijan, 20-21 October 2016)

REPORT

Organization and background

1. The 20th session of the SPECA Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) (hereinafter referred to as SPECA WG or WG) was held 20-21 October 2016 in Baku, Azerbaijan (see Annotated Agenda in Annex I). Twenty seven participants attended the meeting including representatives of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Representatives of ESCAP, UNECE, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, ILO and other organizations also participated in the meeting. See list of participants in Annex II.
2. Mr. Shamil Dikambaev, Kyrgyzstan, was elected to Chairperson of the session of the Working Group
3. The Working Group adopted the following Agenda:
 1. Opening of the session
 2. Election of Chairperson and adoption of the Agenda
 3. Past and future work of the Working Group
 4. Programme implementation in the area of water-energy-environment in 2016-2017
 5. Implementation of SDGs related to thematic areas of the Working Group on the national and subregional / transboundary levels
 6. Opportunities for cooperation in the SPECA region to support SDG implementation
 7. Other business
 8. Conclusions and recommendations

9. Closing of the session

Meeting elaborations

Agenda item 3: Past and future work of the Working Group

4. Representatives of UNECE and ESCAP gave an overview of the previous work of the SPECA Working Group. It was noted that the SPECA Governing Council in its Declaration of November 2015 instructed the SPECA Thematic Working Groups to:
- Follow closely the efforts of participating countries to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and offer advice and assistance within their respective mandates;
 - Pay particular attention to strengthening regional cooperation when it would enhance the ability of participating countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
 - Provide fora, as experience is gained in the achievement of relevant SDGs, for the exchange of experiences, lessons learned and good practice, as well as for mobilizing additional support for national and subregional implementation;
 - Undertake enhanced policy discussions on strategic issues, from a regional perspective; and
 - Continue overseeing the implementation of projects included in the SPECA Work Plans. Projects within the respective mandates of WGs will be included in the Work Plans upon the request of participating countries and when resources for implementation are assured.

Agenda item 4: Programme implementation in the area of water-energy-environment in 2016-2017

5. The SPECA Work Plan for 2016-2017 on Water, Energy and Environment and its ongoing and planned projects were presented by ESCAP and UNECE representatives. Kazakhstan stressed the importance of transboundary water cooperation as part of the Work Plan. Representatives of Kyrgyzstan noted that the implementation of the SPECA Work Plan is important for resolving social issues of the population, for the improvement of good neighborly relations between the countries and for building mutual trust on the political level. Tajikistan highlighted the ongoing work on the national level on the rational and efficient use of water, and also the development of hydropower in the country. The representative of Uzbekistan noted the importance for the water as well as energy sectors of the dam safety project in the SPECA Work Plan.

Agenda item 5: Implementation of SDGs related to thematic areas of the Working Group on the national and subregional / transboundary levels

6. Two presentations were made to introduce the main SDGs relevant for energy and water: by Sergey Tulinov, ESCAP, on “Tracking progress towards implementing SDG 7 (Energy) in the SPECA region” and by Bo Libert, UNECE, on “Implementation of SDG 6 (Water)”. Representatives from Turkmenistan presented in some detail the preparations in their country for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The representative of Afghanistan focused in his intervention on water management in Afghanistan including in the AmuDarya/Pyanj basin shared with Tajikistan. The willingness of Afghanistan to develop water cooperation with the

Central Asian States based on efficient water use and benefit sharing was stressed. The representative of Uzbekistan highlighted the country's effort to use water more efficiently and the decrease of area under cotton cultivation. The representative of Kyrgyzstan argued that there is a need for energy cooperation among the SPECA countries. The Executive Director of CAREC Iskandar Abdullaev accounted for the work of his organization to facilitate the achievement of the SDGs discussed during the WG meeting.

Agenda item 6: Opportunities for cooperation in the SPECA region to support SDG implementation

7. Under this Agenda item three presentations were made:
 - a. "The water-energy-environment nexus in the SyrDarya basin" (Annukka Lipponen, UNECE)
 - b. This presentation was followed up on the following day by a presentation "SyrDarya Water Resources: Identifying opportunities from a power sector perspective" (Georgios Avgerinopoulos, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm)
 - c. "The importance of an integrated energy system to ensuring a sustainable power supply in the SPECA region" (Viktor Badaker, UNECE)
8. The discussion following these presentations concluded that SPECA countries need to develop mutual trust and cooperation in the water and energy sectors. The resulting recommendations from the discussions under the different agenda items are found below in this report.

Agenda item 7: Other business

9. The Chairperson suggested holding the next session of the WG during the EXPO-2017 "Future Energy" in Astana as part of 8th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development, 12-14 June 2017.

Agenda item 8: Conclusions and recommendations

10. The WG adopted the below recommendations of the meeting and also the procedure for the approval of the full meeting report. The full draft meeting report will be prepared by the UNECE and ESCAP secretariats, presented to the meeting chairman, and thereafter distributed to meeting participants for comments before its final approval.

Recommendations

11. The participants of the 20th session of the SPECA WG underscored the importance of the adoption in 2015 by the United Nations at the highest political level the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including SDGs.
12. The participants acknowledged the importance of SPECA both in strengthening regional cooperation and a deeper integration of the region in global economy. The participants have also stated a huge potential of the WG in facilitation of the achievement of SDGs in SPECA countries.

13. With regard to the future role of the WG it was agreed that the Working Group will:
- a. Provide a platform for supporting progress towards achieving SDGs with a focus on the SDGs directly related to water, energy and environment (including, but not limited to, SDG 6 and SDG 7). For cooperation efforts among SPECA countries targets 6.5, 7.1 and 7.2 are highly relevant. The main instrument for this support is the SPECA Work Plan for 2016-2017.
 - b. Improve awareness of SPECA countries on the water-, energy- and environment-related SDGs, provide information and share best practice experiences with regard to the implementation of these SDGs, including taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs.
 - c. Become a platform for identification and coordination of technical and economic issues within the scope of WG competence. This might further promote strengthening of mutual trust at political level.

14. More specifically the WG concluded that:

- a. SDG 6 and SDG 7 are very closely interlinked which is demonstrated by assessments of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus. Therefore, an intersectoral approach to implementing the SDGs, conscious of the interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs, is necessary.
- b. While developing their National Action Plans to meet SDG 6 and SDG 7, SPECA countries should pay attention to transboundary impacts and energy as well as water cooperation opportunities and consider their impact on the potential of the country's energy resources, food production and the environment.
- c. Supplementary to prioritized SDG 6 and SDG 7, the WG will also turn attention to related SDGs, including SDG 13 "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts", as well as SDG 14 "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development" and SDG 15 "Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss".
- d. Over the medium and potentially long-term perspective, in some countries fossil fuels will continue to be a major energy source, and other countries will rely on their hydropower potential. At the same time, it is necessary to move towards a more sustainable energy system based on diversified energy sources, including new and renewable energy sources, and complemented by efforts to increase energy efficiency. Clean coal technologies, broader use of renewable sources of energy, and increase of hydropower capacities can make a significant contribution towards increasing sustainability.
- e. The conjunctive operation of thermal power plants and hydropower plants has good merits and could be a feasible option for transboundary cooperation to achieve sustainable power supply. It could be enhanced through strategic partnerships with all stakeholders, including the governments, international development partners, funding agencies/banks and the private sector. In that context, participants appreciated the initiative of UNECE in developing cooperation and synergies to promote technical assistance projects in Central Asia.
- f. The WG took notice of outcomes of the Workshop on Challenges and Prospects for Regional Electricity Cooperation and Trade in Central Asia and the Caucasus, jointly organized by ESCAP and Electric Power Council of the CIS on the

sidelines of the 7th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development. The WG recommended incorporating electricity interconnection issues in SPECA countries in the Work Plan for 2016-2017.

- g. The WG also endorsed the work of ESCAP on capacity-building and monitoring of progress made by SPECA countries towards sustainable energy development, along with tracking of the existing regulatory framework.
- h. In response to the conclusions of the SyrDarya nexus assessment, the WG agreed to include in the SPECA Work Plan for 2016-2017 identification and evaluation of possible measures for more sustainable use of water and energy resources (such as resource use efficiency), as well as exchanging experience on such measures and on intersectoral coordination. Furthermore, taking into account the conclusions of the 7th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development, the WG, with the assistance of UNECE, ESCAP and relevant partners, agreed to explore how to take into account opportunities of renewable energy generation as well as an efficient use and protection of water resources and the environment while developing energy policies and investment plans.

Acknowledgement

15- The participants of 20th session of the SPECA WG expressed appreciation to the Government of Azerbaijan for contributing to the organization of this meeting.

Adoption of the Report

16. The SPECA Working Group adopted its report on 15 January 2017.

United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)
20th Session of the Thematic Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment

(20-21 October 2016, Baku, Azerbaijan)

ANNOTATED AGENDA

1. Opening of the Session

Welcome by host representative (Azerbaijan), UNECE and ESCAP

2. Election of Chairman and adoption of the Agenda of the Meeting

3. Past and future work of the Working Group

UNECE and ESCAP representatives account for previous history of the Working Group including the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project “Rational and Efficient Use of Water and Energy Resources in Central Asia”, as well as decisions taken by the SPECA Governing Council in 2015.

4. Programme implementation in the area of water-energy-environment in 2016-2017

- Presentations of UNECE and ESCAP projects
- Information from SPECA countries
- Information from other international organizations

5. Implementation of SDGs related to thematic areas of the Working Group on the national and subregional/transboundary levels

- Tracking progress towards implementing SDG 7 (Energy) in SPECA region (Sergey Tulinov)
- Implementation of SDG 6 (Water) (Bo Libert)
- What is planned by countries?
- What is planned by intergovernmental organizations (IGOs)/partners?
- Discussion: How can SDGs be more efficiently implemented by cross border/subregional cooperation?

6. Opportunities for cooperation in the SPECA region to support SDG implementation

- The water-energy-environment nexus in the SyrDarya basin (Annukka Lipponen)
- The importance of an integrated energy system to ensuring a sustainable power supply in the SPECA region (Viktor Badaker)
- Discussion

7. Other business

- Next meeting
- Other issues

8. Conclusions and recommendations

9. Closing of the session

United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)

20th Session of the Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment

(Baku, Azerbaijan, 20-21 October 2016)

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
(Left column Russian)**

Countries

АФГАНИСТАН		AFGHANISTAN	Contacts
1.	Г-н Ур Рахман Вайс Технический Консультант/Руководитель проектов по построению дамб, Министерство Энергетики и Водных ресурсов	Mr. Ur Rahman Wais Technical Advisor/ Team Leader of Dams Projects, Ministry of Energy and Water	Darulaman Road, Sanatoryam, Kabul, Afghanistan Mobile. +93(0)786018966 E-mail: wais7676@gmail.com
КАЗАХСТАН		KAZAKHSTAN	Contacts
2.	Г-н Маулит Абенев Директор, ТОО «Пауэр Инжиниринг»	Mr. Maulit Abenov Director, Power Engineering LTD	Auezov street 175, office 3, Almaty, Kazakhstan Phone: +7 727 391 1152 Fax: +7 727 275 5617 E-mail: maulit55@gmail.com
3.	Г-н Даулетияр Сейтимбетов Заместитель председателя, Комитет по водным ресурсам МСХ РК	Mr. Dauletıyar Seitembetov Deputy Chairman of the Water Committee	Orinbor, 8, 010000 Astana, Kazakhstan Phone: +7 7172 749242 Mobile: +7 701 555 0975 E-mail: daul05@mail.ru
4.	Г-н Герман Трофимов Профессор, Алматинский Университет Энергетики и Связи	Mr. German Trofimov Professor , Almaty University of Power Engineering and Communication	126 Baytursynova str., 050013, Almaty, Kazakhstan Phone: +7(727)2925740 Mobile: + 7 777 222 44 00 E-mail: depenergy@mail.ru
КЫРГЫЗСТАН		KYRGYZSTAN	Contacts
5.	Г-н Шамиль Дикамбаев Заведующий лабораторией, старший научный сотрудник, Научный технический центр Кыргызстана «Энергия»	Mr. Shamil Dikambaev Head of the Laboratory, Senior research worker, Kyrgyz Science Technical Centre "Energy"	Akhunbaev, 119, 720055 Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan Phone: +996 312 511700 Mobile: +99677597644 E-mail: chnelly-tvn@mail.ru

6.	Г-н Алайбек Обозов Профессор кафедры возобновляемых энергетических ресурсов, Государственный Технический Университет Кыргызстана	Mr. Alaibek Obozov Professor, Renewable Energy Sources Department, Kyrgyz State Technical University	66 Mira avenue, 720044 Bishkek Kyrgyzstan Phone: +996 312 541 452 Fax: +996 312 541 452 E-mail: obozov-a@mail.ru
	ТАДЖИКИСТАН	TAJIKISTAN	Contacts
7.	Г-н Сорбони Холмухамадзода Начальник отдела электроэнергетики, Министерство Энергетических и Водных ресурсов	Mr. Sorboni Kholmuhamadzoda Head of Department of Electric Power, Ministry of Energy and Water Resources	Shamsi 5/1, 734064 Dushanbe, Tajikistan Phone: +992 372 35 98 17 Mobile: +992 907 40 42 42 Fax: +992 372 35 98 24 E-mail: sorbon_89@inbox.ru
8.	Г-н Музафар Салимов Руководитель отдела международных связей, Комитет по охране окружающей среды при Правительстве Республики Таджикистан	Mr. Muzafar Salimov Head of International Relations Sector, The Committee on Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan	Shamsi 5/1, 734064 Dushanbe, Tajikistan Phone: +99237 2362561 Mobile: +992 938887007 Fax: +99237 2362561 E-mail: muzafar.salimov61@mail.ru
	ТУРКМЕНИСТАН	TURKMENISTAN	Contacts
9.	Г-н Мерген Юсупов Ведущий специалист отдела международных отношений и планирования, Государственный комитет по охране окружающей среды и земельных ресурсов Туркменистана	Mr. Mergen Yusupov The head specialist of International relations and planning department, State Committee on environment protection and land resources of Turkmenistan	Saryhanov, 744000 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan Phone: +99312447853 Mobile: +99365569948 Fax: +99312447855 E-mail: mergen.yusupov@gmail.com
10.	Г-н Сейтгулы Ойлягулыев Ведущий специалист отдела механики и водный агрегатов, Министерство сельского и водного хозяйства Туркменистана	Mr. Seyitguly Ovylyagulyyev Head specialist of Mechanics and water aggregates department, Ministry of agriculture and water economy of Turkmenistan	154, 14 Bitarap Turkmenistan avenue, 744000 Ashgabat, Turkmenistan Phone: +99312448372 Mobile: +99364044906 Fax: +99312448379 E-mail: seyitguly.ovlyagulyyev@gmail.com
	УЗБЕКИСТАН	UZBEKISTAN	Contacts
11.	Г-н Рахимджан Бабаходжаев Руководитель кафедры «Тепловая Энергетика», Государственный Технический Университет Ташкента	Mr. Rakhimjan Babakhodjaev Head of Chair "Thermal power engineering", Tashkent State Technical University	University street 2, 100095 Tashkent, Uzbekistan Phone: +99871 246 5677 Mobile: +998 94 658 7945 Fax: +99871 246 5677 E-mail: rachimjan@mail.ru , rachimjan@rambler.ru

12.	Г-н Ромэн Захидов Начальник отдела, Институт электроэнергетики Академии Наук	Mr. Roman Zakhidov Head of the Department, Academy of Sciences, Institute of Power Engineering of Academy of Sciences	Kizil Suv 101, 100056 Tashkent, Uzbekistan Phone: + 998 71 262 09 21 (office) Mobile: + 998 93 527 7925 Fax: + 99871 262 0919 E-mail: rzakhidov@mail.ru
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Experts

13.	Г-н Владимир Волосский Консультант по энергетике	Mr. Vladimir Voloskiy Energy Consultant	9, Leninsky prospect, 119991, Moscow, Russia Phone: + 79857683888 (office) Mobile: + 71956323258 Fax: + 74953607560 E-mail: vvoloski@mail.ru
14.	Г-жа Айдара Альжанова Консультант ЕЭК ООН	Ms. Aidara Alzhanova UNECE Consultant	Mobile: + 77 0 122 531 00 E-mail: aida.k.alzhanova@gmail.com
15.	Г-н Мартин Смутны Консультант ЕЭК ООН, Секретариат Конвенции Эспо по ОВОС, координатор Зеленого Проекта в Восточном Регионе	Mr. Martin Smutny UNECE Consultant, Espoo Convention Secretariat, EaP Green Project Coordinator	Mobile: + 420 724 110 779 E-mail: martin.smutny@unece.org

International organizations

	ЕЭК ООН	UNECE	Contacts
16.	Г-н Андрей Васильев Заместитель Исполнительного Секретаря, ЕЭК ООН	Mr. Andrey Vasilyev Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE	Palais des Nations 8-14, Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland Phone: +41 22 917 42 21 Fax: +41 22 917 0036 E-mail: Andrey.Vasilyev@unece.org
17.	Г-н Бо Либерт Региональный советник, Отдел по окружающей среде, жилищному вопросу и землепользованию, ЕЭК ООН	Mr. Bo Libert Regional Adviser, Environment Division, UNECE	Palais des Nations 8-14, Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland Phone (+4122) 917 23 96 Fax. 917 06 21 Mobile: (+4179) 444 6026/4180 E-mail: Bo.libert@unece.org
18.	Г-н Виктор Бадакер Сотрудник по экономическим вопросам, Отдел устойчивой энергетики, ЕЭК ООН	Mr. Viktor Badaker Economic Affairs Officer, Sustainable Energy Division, UNECE	Palais des Nations 8-14, Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland Phone: +41 22 917 24 43 Fax: +41 22 917 00 38 E-mail: viktor.badaker@unece.org
19.	Г-жа Аннукка Липпонен Сотрудник по экологическим вопросам, ЕЭК ООН	Ms. Annukka Lipponen Environmental Affairs Officer, UNECE	Palais des Nations 8-14, Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland Phone: +41 22 917 2666 Fax: +41 22 917 0107 E-mail: Annukka.Lipponen@unece.org

	ЭСКАТО	ESCAP	Contacts
20.	Г-н Сергей Тулинов Сотрудник по экономическим вопросам, Отдел энергетики, ЭСКАТО	Mr. Sergey Tulinov Economic Affairs Officer, Energy Division, ESCAP	United Nations Building, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue, 10200 Bangkok, Thailand Phone: +66 2 288 1620 Fax: +66 2 288 059 E-mail: tulinov@un.org
21.	Г-н Игорь Литвинюк Консультант, Отдел энергетики, ЭСКАТО	Mr. Igor Litvinyuk Consultant, Energy Division, ESCAP	United Nations Building, Rajdamnern Nok Avenue, 10200 Bangkok, Thailand Phone: +6622881326 E-mail: litvinyuk@un.org

Other organizations

22.	Г-н Джордж Баума Руководитель группы, Региональный центр ПРООН для Европы и СНГ в Стамбуле	Mr. George Bouma Team Leader, UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and CIS	11 Istiklal Street, Abide-I, Hurriyet Cd., KEY Playa 34381 Sisli Istanbul, Turkey E-mail: George.Bouma@undp.org
23.	Г-н Искандар Абдуллаев Исподнительный директор, Региональный экологический центр для Центральной Азии	Mr. Iskandar Abdullaev Executive Director, The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia	Orbiat 1-40, 050043 Almaty, Kazakhstan Phone: +7 727 265 4333 Fax: +7 727 270 5337 E-mail: iabdullaev@carececo.org , ashulgauova@carececo.org
24.	Г-н Георгиос Авгеринопулос Инженер-исследователь в Королевском Технологическом Институте	Mr. Georgios Avgerinopoulos Research Engineer at Royal Institute of Technology (KTN)	Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden Phone: +46735672037 E-mail: Georgios.Avgerinopoulos@desa.kth.se
25.	Г-н Махир Алиев Региональный координатор, Европейское региональное бюро Программы Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде (ЮНЕП) Международный экологический центр	Mr. Mahir Aliyev Regional Coordinator, Regional Office for Europe, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) International Environment House	11-13 Chemin des Anemones Geneva, Switzerland E-mail: Mahir.Aliyev@unep.org , leila.urekenova@unep.org
26.	Г-н Йосухико Камакура Старший технический сотрудник, Департамент секторальной политики в области нефти, газа, химической и энергетической промышленности, МОТ	Mr. Yosuhiko Kamakura Senior Technical Officer, Oil, Gas, Chemical and Energy Industries Sectoral Policies Department, ILO	Route des Morillons 4, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland Phone: +41 22 799 84 34 Mobile: +41 79 756 86 94 Fax: +41 22 799 70 50 E-mail: kamakura@ilo.org
27.	Г-жа Наташа Ковачевич Исполнительный Директор, НПО Green Home	Ms. Natasa Kovacevic Executive Director, Green Home	Dalmatinska 78, Podgorica, Montenegro Phone/Fax: +382 20 609 375 Mobile: +382 67 605 060 E-mail: natasa.kovacevic@greenhome.co.me