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Environmental Performance Reviews

TAJIKISTAN - 2012

highlights

The economy of Tajikistan has developed steadily since the last Environmental Performance Review (EPR) (2002), and the country's economic situation has improved markedly. Careful fiscal management has kept the budget deficit low and the exchange rate has been very stable. Foreign debt is at a reasonable, low level compared with the earlier period.

Tajikistan's gross domestic product (GDP) growth over the past 10 years has been very robust, averaging an 8.2 per cent increase per year. However, the international economic crisis that began in 2008 has hit Tajikistan's economy, cutting its GDP growth to 3.4 per cent in 2009. The consumer price index (CPI), which was 38.6 per cent in 2001, fell to 6.4 per cent in 2009, a very moderate figure compared with the wild inflation figures the country posted in the 1990s, when the highest annual CPI was over 2,100 per cent.

About three quarters of Tajikistan's total export earnings are derived from cotton, electricity and aluminium, a figure that has been almost constant for the past 10 years. The industrial sector is dominated by aluminium production. The Tursunzade aluminium plant is one of the largest in the world and the aluminium industry, producing 348,000 tons of aluminium in 2009, accounts for about 40 per cent of Tajikistan's total industrial output.

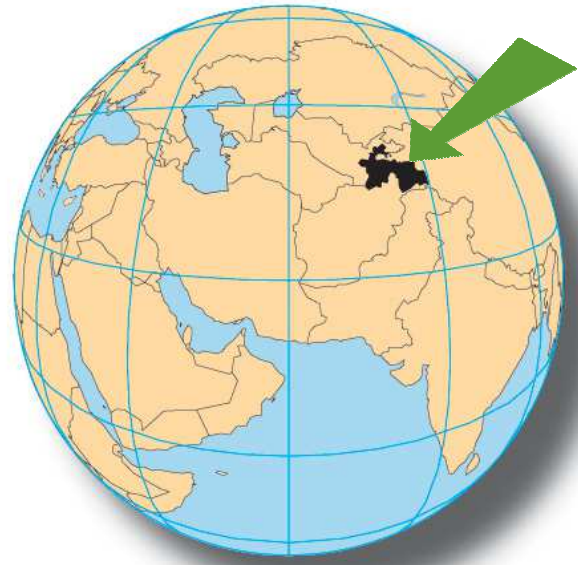
Almost all aluminium is exported. In 2009, aluminium brought in 58.4 per cent of the export earnings, consuming some 40 per cent of the country's annual electricity production. Lack of diversification and reliance on a few export products make Tajikistan vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity prices and terms of trade.

Tajikistan has not been very successful in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), and the cumulative FDI level is low. However, the situation has improved during the past five years, as FDI inflows have picked up.

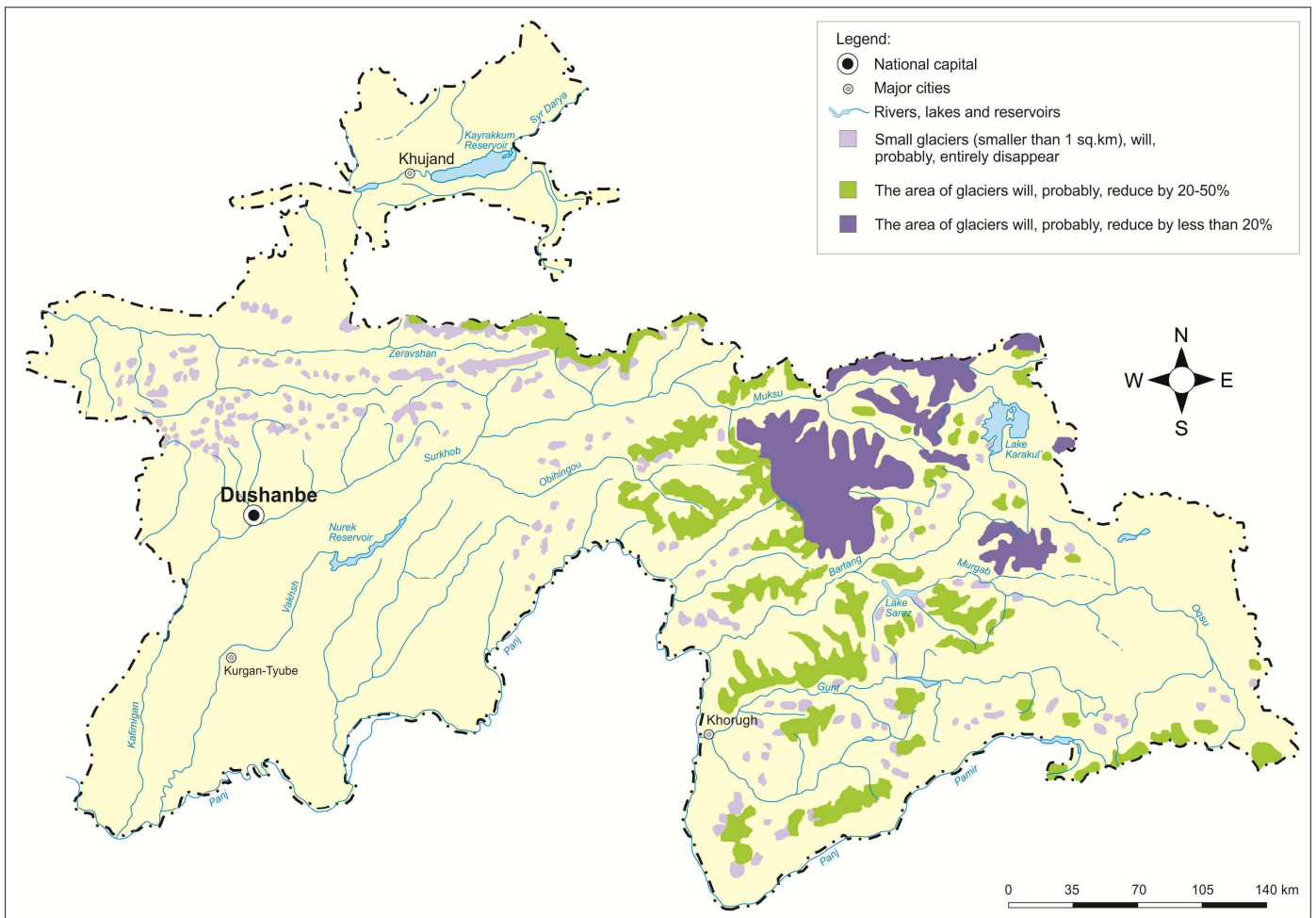
Environmental governance

The policy framework for environmental protection in Tajikistan has changed significantly since 2002. A number of new policy documents on environmental protection and sustainable development have been adopted, as well as some sectoral policy documents that include environment-related provisions.

Several multilateral environmental agreements ratified by Tajikistan have also been incorporated in its legal system. Environmentally related provisions can also be found in several sectoral laws, including in energy, tourism, transport and urban planning and construction. Yet, for many environmental strategies, programmes and plans, financing has not been secured, and therefore most of them have not been implemented.



A number of institutional changes have weakened the country's ability to manage environmental challenges. In 2004, the Ministry of Nature Protection was abolished. Today it is the Committee on Environmental Protection under the Government that is responsible for environmental protection in Tajikistan.



Environmental information

Since 2002, the environmental monitoring set-up and the management of environmental information more generally have not undergone the needed changes. The current monitoring system does not provide sufficient and reliable data on background ambient air and water pollution. There have, so far, been no significant investments to expand the existing monitoring network and to modernize equipment for air and water monitoring, sampling and testing.

The last state of the environment report was published in 2005.



Zorkul Strict Nature Reserve, Pamir

Climate change

Tajikistan's environmental management, economic activity and social welfare face major challenges due to the country's vulnerability to climate change impacts. Water-related climate change impacts in Tajikistan are already visible because the national economy and critical infrastructure and services



*Timur Dara Lake in Karatag Valley,
Central Tajikistan*

depend largely on glacier and snowpack-fed river basins.

Over 90 per cent of energy generation is from glacier-fed hydropower plants. Agricultural irrigation accounts for the biggest share of water use in the country by far. Floods caused by glacier melting and heavy rains can result in contamination of water resources.

Biodiversity

Tajikistan is rich in flora and fauna. In particular, there are more than 1,100 endemic plant species of considerable global conservation interest and which harbour significant genetic resources. On the other hand, with less than 3 per cent of the country's territory covered by forests, Tajikistan currently has the lowest forest coverage in Central Asia.

The biodiversity and natural resources of Tajikistan have traditionally been used in various ways, including fuelwood and timber production; hunting; grazing; and the collection of wild plants for medicinal as well as other purposes. A high percentage of the population (20–80 per cent in various regions), and particularly of the rural poor, depend on various natural resources for at least part of the livelihoods and/or cash income.

In addition, there are other pressures and threats to biodiversity that are not connected to the direct

consumption of resources. These include climate change, land degradation/desertification, habitat destruction for the construction of infrastructure, conversion of natural ecosystems to agricultural land, introduction of alien and invasive species and environmental pollution. These threats may increase in the future.

Water management

The irrigation and drainage network consists of 45,000 kilometres (km) of conduits, most of them open channels and only 298 km of pipes. For cross-regional water transport, five main pipes are in operation. Most of the installations have been in use for nearly 50 years and are obsolete due to lack of adequate repair and maintenance. For instance, 30 per cent of the network pumps have deteriorated and suffer from power failure.

Tajikistan has abundant water resources, but its water sector infrastructure is in a poor state. Only some 60 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water. The functioning of the water supply and sewerage systems is, moreover, frequently interrupted by power outages. There is considerable scope for the improvement of national water governance, which is currently split between various Government bodies. None of these bodies has the sufficient competences or mandate to design and execute a countrywide water strategy.

Waste management

Waste management in Tajikistan is receiving more attention since the first EPR. The system of municipal solid waste collection, transportation and disposal is improving in the capital, Dushanbe, as are the disposal practices, by concentrating waste at a single disposal site.

However, the landfill does not meet international sanitary norms and standards. Moreover, rural areas, which represent some 75 per cent of the population, are mostly not covered by municipal waste collection services.

Approximately, 54.8 million tons of waste from past uranium mining operations are still located in unsecured sites in northern Tajikistan, a number of them close to Khujand, the country's second-largest city.

Human health and environment

In the past decade improvements have been made in public health in Tajikistan, including in the areas of maternal and child mortality and the spread of communicable diseases. Overall trends in life expectancy have also been improving over the past decade. However, the health-care system in Tajikistan is still burdened by problems typically experienced in transition periods and malnutrition is still a concern in Tajikistan, despite some overall improvements.

The occurrence of water-borne diseases in Tajikistan remains high, although there has been some improvement. There was a notable incidence of viral hepatitis in the period from 2003 to 2009. The main cause of water-borne diseases is the poor quality of drinking water and the lack of adequate sanitation, particularly in rural areas, where the majority of the population lives. Approximately 85 per cent of the population living in rural areas use water for drinking water purposes from open surface sources, and only 58 per cent of the population has piped drinking water.

The second EPR of Tajikistan was carried out in 2010–2011. Recommendations to the country were adopted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Committee on Environmental Policy in May 2011.

The EPR Programme assesses a country's efforts to reduce its overall pollution burden, manage its natural resources in a sustainable way, integrate environmental and socio-economic policies and strengthen cooperation with the international community.

The most recent reviews include: Uzbekistan (2010), Georgia (2010), Azerbaijan (2011), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (2011).



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