



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

**DRAFT SPECA WORK PLAN FOR 2022-2023
(as of 18 November 2021)**

**(Ongoing, planned and possible UNECE and ESCAP activities in support of
the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA))**

The activities to be carried out by the SPECA Thematic Working Groups are demand-driven, focused on a limited number of priority topics and matched with available resources.

WATER, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Representatives of the SPECA participating countries agree on importance of the SPECA as a platform to address water, energy and environment in the SPECA region. The Programme is particular important as it provides an opportunity for SPECA countries to coherently address the water and energy challenges, issues that are highly interrelated and interdependent in the region. The Declaration adopted at the 10th session of the SPECA Governing Council highlighted the role of SPECA as a platform to support progress towards achieving the SDGs through, among others, capacity-building, implementation of regional projects, sharing of best practices and experience. The areas of water, energy and environment are addressed through the Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment.

Improving the regional water cooperation will remain core activity under the SPECA. Efforts will aim at empowering the countries of the region: to develop and implement mutually acceptable, long-term solutions to improve cooperation on transboundary water resources; to support SPECA countries in developing practical approaches for sustainable regional water management; and to improve capacities of regional institutions responsible for water, energy and natural resources management.

In light of the rapidly changing climate of Central Asia, regional cooperation on the energy, water, land-use nexus has potential to boost resource security, provide economic gains, improve the environment, and increase the well-being of citizens. To this end a multi-year regional project “*Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate-resilient transformation of the energy-water-land*” is proposed to operationalise the energy-water-land nexus through robust economic and financial analytical work to identify nexus opportunities and demonstrate the business case for cooperation around nexus issues at the regional and national level. Led by the OECD in cooperation with UNECE, EBRD and SIC ICWC, the project commenced a Preparatory Phase in September 2021. The main project will be launched in 2022 and have a duration of 4 years.

Integrated energy and water resource management in support of sustainable development in South-East Europe and Central Asia. The project is focused on the integrated food-energy-water resource

management to support the economic recovery from Covid-19. The beneficiary countries gained experience in applying best practices, measures, and procedures, focusing on the cross-cutting nature of energy and water resources management and the progress towards the circular economy. The beneficiary countries improved national capacities to collect consistent, coherent and reliable data related to integrated and sustainable energy and water resources management using the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources (UNFC) standards. The beneficiary countries strengthened national capacities to develop evidence-based policies and strategies for integrated water and energy resources management through the United Nations Resource Management System (UNRMS).

The project on “*Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Chu and Talas River Basins*”, funded by the Global Environmental Facility, started in 2015 and was finalized in 2018. It aimed to broaden the bilateral cooperation, including on environmental issues. UNDP and UNECE were responsible for project implementation. The project delivered a comprehensive Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and a Strategic Action Program (SAP) containing concrete actions to support transboundary cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. SAP was approved by the riparian countries in April 2021 after additional national and bilateral consultations. Design and planning of climate change adaptation activities, included in the SAP, was supported through the project “*Enhancing climate resilience and adaptive capacity in the transboundary Chu-Talas basin*” funded by the Government of Finland finalized in 2019. Several pilot adaptation measures related to ecosystem restoration, agricultural water-use efficiency and raising awareness were supported through the project.

EUWI National Policy Dialogues have been operational in Central Asia since 2008 as multi stakeholder intersectoral platforms to drive water sector reforms. Currently, the support is provided through an EU-funded regional project European Union Water Initiative NPDs in Central Asia (2019-2022), implemented in cooperation with OECD under the overall umbrella of the WECOOP programme with the objective to enhance IWRM and inter-sectoral coordination for water security at the national level in Central Asian countries to support sustainable development. Enhancing water policies at national levels and approximating them to EU standards and promoting green investments in the water sector in Central Asia are specific objectives of the project. The project is aiming at sustaining and further strengthening the ongoing inter-sectoral processes of the NPDs in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, re-establishing NPD in Turkmenistan and launching an NPD process in Uzbekistan. A robust analytical basis is substantiating policy dialogues through "policy packages" defined at the national level and focused on priorities selected by the national governments. Support to drafting legislation, reporting under SDG 6.5.2, work on water security indicators and water quality issues in a transboundary context, including with regards to preventing accidental water pollution, feature high among the priorities NPDs are currently working on.

The second edition ESCAP Executive Training on Environment and Development is being organized by the Environment and Development Division (EDD) to inform and support dialogue among senior policy- and decision makers on the current environment and development situation in the Asia-Pacific. The training will also highlight five “big-ticket” thematic drivers that will heavily influence opportunities for realizing the best possible scenario for the future of the environment in Asia and the Pacific: Raising Climate Ambition, Safeguarding Ecosystems Health, Clean Air for All, Cities for a Sustainable Future, and Environmental Governance. Building on the success and the content of ESCAP’s first Executive Training that took place in November 2020, this year’s training will continue to provide tools and methodologies to address evolving trends and challenges of long-term environmental and development issues the Asia-Pacific region faces to attain the best possible outcome for the environment. The training will also touch upon putting in place green COVID recovery plans. This five-day virtual training programme will take place from 29 November to 3 December 2021. All ESCAP member States from Central Asia are invited to participate. The training will also be held in 2023.

A workshop on sustainable mechanization for climate smart agriculture with particular focus on Central Asia will be held in 2022-2023, under the auspices of the ESCAP's Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization (CSAM). Agriculture, in many parts of Central Asia is suffering from water scarcity and land degradation and is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change such as droughts and floods, soil erosion and loss and waste in the food value chain. In this context, climate smart mechanization and related technologies could help in strengthening the resilience of agricultural producers and local communities including smallholder farmers, and in enhancing value chain development, thus contributing towards transforming food systems in the subregion. The workshop will enable a better understanding of the role of climate smart mechanization in the Central Asian context, promote adoption of suitable climate smart mechanization technologies and practices, and support knowledge sharing and regional/subregional networking.

A feasibility study on the application of carbon market instruments in Central Asia was conducted jointly by the UNFCCC, ESCAP and the Asian Development Bank. To this end, a Regional Dialogue for Carbon Pricing instruments (REdiCAP) for Central Asia was held on 25-26 February 2021. It revealed the growing interest of Central Asian countries in carbon pricing instruments as several countries are now considering establishing a carbon pricing system by 2030. The dialogue touched upon 1) the results of the pre-dialogue research and interviews and 2) the preliminary roadmap developed to promote carbon pricing in Central Asia. During the dialogue, opportunities for training using a carbon pricing simulation tool were also presented with a possibility to provide Russian translation to participants. In addition, a summary report of the dialogue was developed in Russian language, which provides not only an overview of the current status and trends in the use of carbon pricing tools within the broader climate policy architecture, but also recommendations for ways to promote their use in the five Central Asian countries. In 2022, there are opportunities for engagement in simulation exercises of carbon pricing impact on GHG emissions.

Through the cooperation between UNFCCC and ESCAP, a Needs Based Financing (NBF) strategy for Central Asia and South Caucasus is being developed. So far, a technical assessment report has been written and is currently going through a validation process. In addition, bilateral consultations are being held to identify the scope of the NBF strategy. This initiative is expected to be finalized in 2022 and will continue beyond COP26. A meeting with the Central and Development Banks is planned with support from the Asian Development Bank and other partners and the project was presented at the SONCA subregional preparatory meeting for APFSD9. The Strategy will be finalised in 2022.

A Development Account project on “strengthening sustainable management of natural resources with the Food-Water-Energy nexus approach to support post-COVID-19 recovery and build resilience in Central Asia, Middle East and Africa” is under development, to be implemented by UNECE, UNESCWA, UNECA, UNEP, UN-University, WHO and ESCAP. The project aims to support the safe provisioning of food, water, energy and raw materials to selected beneficiary countries that are particularly at risk given the exacerbation of climate challenges. It is designed to strengthen natural resource management by harnessing the interlinkages of food-energy-water nexus and by promoting multilateral cooperation at regional and inter-regional levels for socio-economic recovery. The work is expected to contribute to improving the capacities of selected countries in Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa to ensure more sustainable use and management of natural resources with a food-water-energy nexus approach, which will include aspects related to: 1) Food security and sustainable production and consumption patterns; 2) Water, sanitation and hygiene; and 3) Ensuring energy and raw material supply chains.

ESCAP has developed and deployed the *national expert Sustainable Development Goal tool for energy planning (NEXSTEP)*. The tool enables the creation of national road maps on Sustainable Development Goal 7 intended to support policymakers in developing integrated policies and strategies

to achieve the Goal 7 targets and the emissions reduction targets set by member States in their nationally determined contributions. The methodology for NEXSTEP combines technical, economic and policy analysis to design a package of policies that will enable the achievement of the Goal 7 and emissions reduction targets. The key steps comprise the following: (a) Energy and emissions modelling are used to estimate the optimal share of energy sources under a range of scenarios, and to identify the technological interventions needed to achieve those shares; (b) Economic analysis is used to identify and assess the economically feasible options/interventions; (c) Multiple-criteria decision analysis is used to evaluate policy options and identify those that are feasible for implementation in the national context. Users interface with the tool through an online portal (<https://nexstepenergy.org>), which allows users to define additional scenarios, set optimization criteria and review the results of modelling. The NEXSTEP has been currently under implementation for Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Starting from 2022 two other SPECA countries will join the NEXSTEP project: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

ESCAP has developed the *Asia Pacific Energy Portal* (asiapacificenergy.org) as an online hub for energy statistics, energy policies and energy infrastructure maps for all member States in Asia-Pacific. The portal is open source, has a user-friendly interface and provides interactive data visualizations that help member States make data-driven decisions around SDG 7. Currently it is the largest energy knowledge platform in the region and the largest spatial database specializing in energy infrastructure in Asia-Pacific. It is offered in two languages English and Russian to facilitate its use in SPECA countries. In 2022, the Portal will provide an updated national energy profiles for all SPECA countries in English and Russian.

The project on *Energy transition to achieve SDG7 – Capacity-building for countries in North and Central Asia to develop decarbonization strategies in the energy sector*. This project focuses on energy transition by increasing the capacity of energy authorities/electric utilities and other relevant stakeholders in North and Central Asia to develop decarbonization strategies and transition pathways in the energy sector. These strategies will include measures to increase the deployment of renewable energy and enhance energy efficiency by upgrading and replacing power generation plants and transmission and distribution infrastructure and the reduction of losses, as well as the implementation of energy efficient technologies in the power sector. It will do so in the form of a virtual training workshop and a set of online learning materials to be posted on the Asia-Pacific Energy Portal (asiapacificenergy.org). The project activities will be implemented in close collaboration with the subregional partner organizations: Eurasian Economic Commission and the CIS Electric Power Council. The first training workshop under the project has been scheduled for December 2021.

WATER, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT		
Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe	Budget
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
Organization of regular sessions of the SPECA WG	One per year	UNECE and ESCAP regular budget and extrabudgetary funds
Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Chu and Talas River Basins	2022 - 2023	Ongoing discussions on a second phase of a project funded by Global

		Environmental Facility
EUWI National Policy Dialogues in Central Asia	2022	Funded from the European Union
Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate-resilient transformation of the energy-water-land Nexus in Central Asia (preparatory phase)	2022	IKI – 300K
Integrated energy and water resource management in support of sustainable development in South-East Europe and Central Asia	2021	This project will be completed by December 2021
ESCAP Executive Training on Environment and Development include a dedicated session on Safeguarding Ecosystem's Health. It is open to all ESCAP member States	2022-2023	ESCAP core funds
Workshop on sustainable mechanization for climate smart agriculture with particular focus on Central Asia	2022 - 2023	ESCAP extrabudgetary funds (multi-donor funds of CSAM)
Central Asia Dialogue on Carbon Pricing and development of a road map	2021 - 2022	Joint UNFCCC/ ESCAP/ADB
Needs Based Financing strategy for Central Asia and South Caucasus. The Strategy to be finalised in 2022.	2020 - 2022	UNFCCC-led with support from ESCAP
Strengthening sustainable management of natural resources with the Food-Water-Energy nexus approach to support post-COVID-19 recovery and build resilience in Central Asia, Middle East and Africa (TBC)	2022 - 2023	DA 14 th tranche (TBC)
Asia-Pacific Energy Portal - one-stop online shop for up-to-date energy statistics, policy documents and infrastructure	2022	Funded by the Russian Federation
Energy transition to achieve SDG7 – Capacity-building for countries in North and Central Asia to develop decarbonization strategies in the energy sector	2021 - 2022	ESCAP core funds
Strengthening energy policies of Countries with Special Needs to build back better from COVID-19	2022	DA 14 th tranche (TBC)

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY

The annual sessions of the Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity serve as an effective cooperation mechanism to address the specific problems of transit transport from, in and through SPECA countries. Improvement of international transport infrastructure and services will facilitate further integration of SPECA countries into the world economy.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY

Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe	Budget
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
Seminar of the 27th Session of the SPECA Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity	October – November 2022	Budget for the projects will be defined at the next meeting of the TWG on SSTC on 24-25 November 2021.
Meeting of the TWG on STTC	October – November 2022	
Seminar of the 28th Session of the SPECA Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity	October – November 2023	
Meeting of the TWG on STTC	October – November 2023	

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to support its participating countries in developing subregional economic cooperation, integrating their economies into the world economy, and attaining the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the WG on Trade fosters subregional cooperation to promote national and regional development of sustainable trade in the SPECA participating countries. To achieve this through subregional cooperation, the Working Group: (i) Provides a platform for supporting progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through subregional cooperation in trade and trade facilitation with a focus on SDGs directly related to trade development, notably SDG 17 on partnerships, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (ii) Assists in improving the awareness of SPECA countries on the trade-related SDGs; helps provide information and share best practice experiences, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (iii) Promotes policy dialogue to support: trade policy cooperation among the SPECA countries and their trade negotiators; trade facilitation; aligning positions on sustainable trade, dealing with non-tariff measures, and investment policies; and (iv) Provides analysis and capacity-building in the areas of trade facilitation, sustainable trade development, regulatory harmonization, agricultural quality standards, elimination of non-tariff barriers to trade, investment, and other areas, including identification of funding modalities for SPECA activities.

The thematic orientation of the activities of the Working Group on Trade includes: (i) sustainable trade development among the countries in the region and with the main trading partners; (ii) trade facilitation and promotion of trade facilitation norms, standards and best practice recommendations; (iii) public-private cooperation for trade facilitation; (iv) regulatory harmonization, market surveillance and risk management; (v) agricultural commercial quality standards; (vi) investment and

trade development; and (vii) other areas of competence of UNECE and ESCAP related to the development of trade, regional markets and harmonization of standards in these areas. The deliverables of the WG on Trade focus on five areas: (i) trade policy cooperation, including on the WTO negotiations; (ii) implementation of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy; (iii) implementation of the SPECA Principles for Sustainable Trade; (iv) non-tariff measures and barriers to trade; and (v) digitalization of multimodal transport information exchange. The latter is an area, on which the WG is just starting to work.

TRADE DEVELOPMENT		
Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe	Budget
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities will be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners could expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities		
Enhancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through strategic cooperation among the SPECA countries (this is an overall project in support of the SPECA process, where trade is the subject of one of the segments)	2020 - 2022	US\$ 250,000
UNDA COVID-19 connectivity response project (Trade and Transport Connectivity in the Age of Pandemics: https://unttf.org) – segments dedicated to the support for the Regional SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy and the UN/CEFACT standards for the digitalization of multimodal transport data and document exchange	May 2020 – March 2022	US\$ 477,000 (UNECE overall budget in support of many activities)
Building Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Trade in the SPECA subregion	September 2021 – December 2024	US\$ 249,370
Strengthening the capacity of the Central Asian countries to implement trade facilitation measures and better integrate into the international rules-based trading system	January 2021 – December 2022	US\$ 160,350
UN Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation (RPTC)	January - December 2021	US\$ 40,000

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Capacity-building on policy options and practical instruments to promote innovation and technology for sustainable development

Objectives: To strengthen the national capacity of the SPECA countries to advance knowledge-based development by developing relevant substantive skills, increasing the organizational

capacity of the institutions involved, promoting regional cooperation and fostering investment in modern infrastructure.

Rationale: The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Organization of a regional/subregional capacity-building event on innovation and technology for sustainable development, possibly in conjunction with an annual session of the WG on ITSD;
- (ii) Participation of experts from SPECA countries in UNECE policy-oriented meetings and capacity-building events on promoting knowledge-based development for policymakers and practitioners; and
- (iii) Policy advisory services and other events promoting innovation and technology for sustainable development at the request of Governments of the SPECA countries on priority topics, e.g., business incubators, accelerators and innovative high-growth enterprises.

Implementation of UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews of selected countries

Objectives: To increase the role of innovation in promoting further economic development of the SPECA countries.

Rationale: The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities: Undertaking Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews and capacity-building support to implementation of policy recommendations in selected countries of the SPECA region (envisaged for 2021-2023).

Support to SPECA countries to foster innovation to deliver the SDGs

Objectives: Policy advisory support to SPECA countries to stimulate the private and public sector innovation required to deliver the SDGs.

Rationale: The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of UNECE extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Capacity-building activities upon request from SPECA countries, for example on integrating innovation policies into national strategies for sustainable development and supporting participation of SPECA countries in wider UN initiatives in support of Agenda 2030; and
- (ii) Development of a SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development, identifying innovative joint initiatives between SPECA countries with potential to support delivery of Agenda 2030 within the subregion and support to innovation policy benchmarking among

the SPECA countries.

Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Action Plan 2022-2026

Objectives: Strengthening institutions to enhance regional cooperation and strengthen connectivity through implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway action plan 2022-2026.

Rationale: The activities are in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. Implementation is subject to the availability of ESCAP extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from SPECA countries in the implementation of the Action plan for 2022-2026 of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway platform (AP-IS);
- (ii) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials and private sector) from SPECA countries in the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Committee meetings on 25 November 2021 and in 2022-2023;
- (iii) Participation in the discussions and meetings on establish the Digital Solutions Center for Sustainable Development (DSC SD) in Central Asia including the development of the roadmap for DSC SD;
- (iv) Participation of stakeholders (policymakers, senior officials, and private sector) from SPECA countries to the Expert Group Meetings and Subregional Capacity Development Workshop (planned in Kazakhstan) and National workshops;
- (v) Partnership development to support fibre-optic cable co-deployment capitalizing on opportunities created by infrastructure sharing and co-deployment;
- (vi) Facilitation of mobilisation of investment for Operation Models of Trans-Border Terrestrial Cable Networks for the Implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway to foster building of consensus on cross-border, cross-sectoral fibre optic co-deployment; and
- (vii) Monitoring of implementation of the AP-IS action plan 2022-2026

Enhancing national capacities to use ICT for socio-economic development

Objectives: To enhance the capacities of policymakers, government officials and other relevant stakeholders to promote, adopt and utilize ICT for achieving national sustainable development goals.

Rationale: The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in its Terms of Reference. The activities will be funded through the extrabudgetary resources of APCICT and APCTT and co-funding mobilized through national and subregional partners. Implementation is subject to the availability of APCICT and APCTT funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Conduct capacity-building workshops on APCICT's flagship ICT for development programmes;
- (ii) Development of localized versions of the APCICT training modules, targeted at SPECA countries;
- (iii) Provide advisory services to SPECA countries in areas related to ICT for socio-economic development, subject to funding and resource availability; and
- (iv) Conduct capacity-building workshops on the application of ICT tools for renewable energy resource assessments at the national level in SPECA countries, subject to funding and resource availability (APCTT).

Capacity development on the utilization of ICT and geospatial information for disaster risk reduction

Objectives: Develop knowledge-based tools for disaster risk management and strengthen resilience into development policy and planning of SPECA countries.

Rationale: The project contributes to the objectives of the WG on ITSD as specified in the Terms of Reference, in particular to objective of knowledge-based disaster risk reduction and management. Implementation will be financed from the ESCAP extrabudgetary funds.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Assist SPECA countries to use tailored operational tools and geospatial information platform for drought monitoring and early warning.
- (ii) ESCAP provides continued support on disaster risk reduction by promoting innovative technology applications including ICT and geospatial information.
- (iii) Support SPECA countries, upon request, to enhance capacity on forest fire monitoring through applications of geospatial information.

Strengthen institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia

Objectives: Enhance the institutional capacity of Central Asian countries to integrate geospatial and statistical information.

Rationale: The project is in line with the objectives of the WG on ITSD to support drought management and land-related SDG challenges including disaster risk reduction as specified in its Terms of Reference.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Conduct assessment of country profile on drought monitoring and land accounts with a diagnostic tool and template (patterned after ESCAP's environment statistics diagnostic tool) to identify policy priorities, available information, data sources, stakeholders and institutional mechanisms necessary to develop or strengthen the land accounts.
- (ii) Organize an inception regional workshop and expert group meetings to discuss preliminary

estimates of assessment on drought monitoring and land accounts in the Central Asia region, and assist capacity-building on using the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and the framework for integration of the geospatial and statistical information;

- (iii) Organize high-level policy meeting in February 2022 to share key findings and methodologies to assess land use-related SDGs implementations.

Capacity development to reduce and mitigate disaster risks in endorheic (inland) water basins in Central Asia

Objectives: Strengthen disaster risk reduction and management for the Aral Basin in Central Asia through analytics, sharing of best practices, and regional cooperation efforts.

Rationale: Understanding the risk drivers of water-related disasters in inland water-basins including the impacts of climate change through advances in earth observation, digital elevation modeling, geospatial techniques and high-resolution climate modeling can support development of regional cooperation processes that could significantly address the Aral Sea catastrophe from multi-sectoral risk management perspectives.

Proposed activities:

- (i) Prepare a literature review, risk modelling, assessing the latest scientific evidence on the Aral Sea Crisis using a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach.
- (ii) Prepare an integrated risk assessment of the Basin using the latest advances in hydrological modelling, digital elevation modelling and socio-economic modelling to demonstrate the impact of the Aral Sea Crisis on economies and populations.
- (iii) Organize a capacity development workshop on preventing and mitigating natural disaster of endorheic (inland) water basins and prepare an outcome report to submit to ESCAP at its seventy-eight session.

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT		
Name of Project/Activity	Lead Executive Agency	Timeframe
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
Capacity-building on policy options and practical instruments to promote knowledge-based development	UNECE	2021 - 2023
Implementation of the UNECE project on Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews of selected countries	UNECE	2021 - 2023
Support to SPECA countries to foster innovation to deliver the SDGs	UNECE	October 2021 - December 2023
Implementation of ESCAP activities in support to the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway action plan 2022-2026	ESCAP	October 2021 - December 2023
Enhancing national capacities to use ICT for socio-economic development and on e-resilience	ESCAP	October 2021 - December 2023
Capacity development on the utilization of ICT and GIS for disaster risk reduction	ESCAP	October 2021 - December

		2023
Strengthen institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia	ESCAP	October 2021 - December 2023
Capacity development to reduce and mitigate disaster risks in endorheic (inland) water basins in Central Asia	ESCAP	October 2021 - December 2023

GENDER AND SDGs

In line with the overall objective of the Programme to facilitate economic cooperation in the countries of the SPECA region as well as integration of the SPECA participating countries into the world economy for their attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Working Group on Gender and SDGs works in the area of gender mainstreaming and transformative policies as follows:

- (a) Non-discriminatory labour market policies in the course of hiring and work environment free of discrimination and exploitation;
- (b) Policies to promote the participation of women in public and private companies;
- (c) Policies to prevent stereotypes in education and research to advance the participation of women in R&D sectors; and
- (d) Policies for building support systems for women entrepreneurship development.

Noting the progress and challenges in the implementation of programmes and strategies to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women – SDG 5 as well as in the cross-cutting areas of the SDGs, the participants from the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs reiterate the need to continue the exchange of experience and best practices within the SPECA countries.

GENDER AND SDGs	
Name of Activity	Timeframe
Ongoing and planned activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.	
Provide technical assistance to SPECA countries in strengthening the care economy and enhancing women's economic empowerment	2022 - 2023
Capacity-building workshops for women entrepreneurs on women's economic empowerment and the use of information and communication technologies for the countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus (2 online or face-to-face trainings depending on the situation in the countries related to COVID-19)	2022 - 2023