International Conference of the Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia Network of Water Management Organizations (EECCA NWO)

"Transboundary Water Cooperation in the EECCA countries: Lessons Learned and Future Directions"

2-3 March 2021

Online Conference

REPORT

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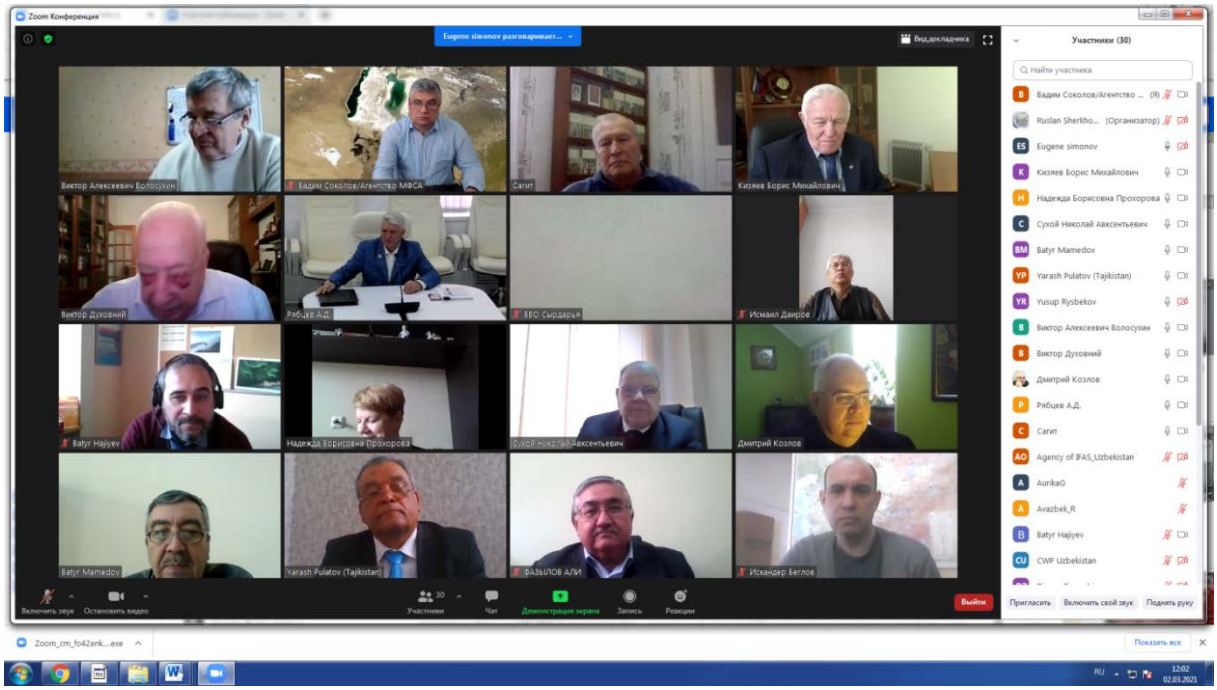
Translated into English by: O. Usmanova

For the first time the EECCA Network of Water Management Organizations held its conference on “Transboundary Water Cooperation in the EECCA countries: Lessons Learned and Future Directions” in the format of a videoconference on 2-3 March 2021. The conference was organized as part of the UNECE Project “Support to the Network of Russian Speaking Water Management Organizations” financed by the Government of the Russian Federation.

The key conference topics were:

- Water cooperation between Central Asian and neighboring countries;
- Water cooperation between the Eastern Europe and neighboring countries;
- EECCA NWO contribution to cooperation between Eastern Europe, Central Asia and neighboring countries.



The opening remarks and welcome speeches were delivered by:

- **Prof. D. Kozlov**, President of EECCA NWO
- **B. Hajiyev**, UNECE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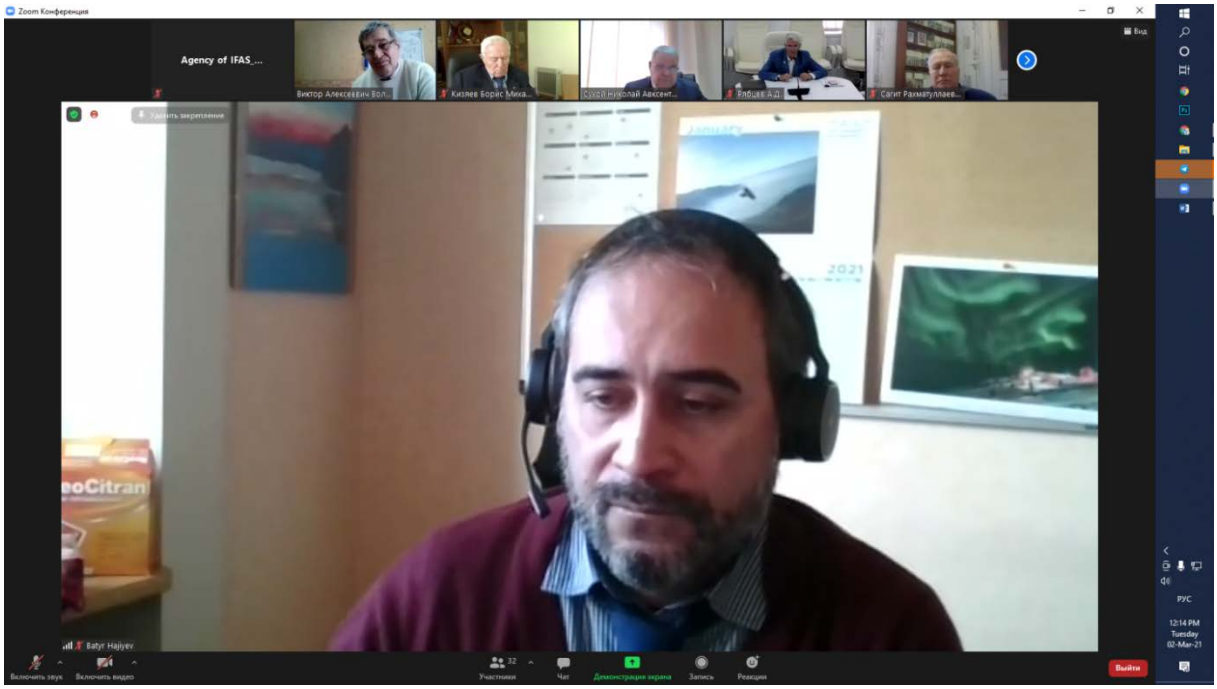
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SESSION 1:

WATER COOPERATION BETWEEN CENTRAL ASIAN AND NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Prof. V. Dukhovniy (Director, SIC ICWC) opened the session with his presentation **"Diagnostic report on water resources in Central Asia as of 2019".** Given Diagnostic report assesses changes in water and land use and management in Central Asia over the past 20 years; identifies future water challenges, development trends and needs for the long-term rational use of water resources and irrigated land; assesses the progress made with implementation of the "Fundamental Provisions of Water Management Strategy in the Aral Sea Basin". A database of key information and indicators was developed in support of the Diagnostic Report.

The Diagnostic report highlighted the key challenges of water management at the interstate level, including insufficient attention to prospective development of ICWC; the need to revisit the institutional and legal framework of ICWC to bring it in line with new trends; insufficient material and technical foundation and financing of ICWC's executive bodies, etc.

Additionally, a range of measures was recommended for the future for sustainable water security in Central Asia. The key ones included updating of irrigation norms and schedules and adoption of water conservation technology, adaptation to climate change, digitization of water management, improvement of water accounting and forecasts and others.

The report was prepared by SIC ICWC, with the involvement of leading experts from the CA countries by the request of OECD and financially supported by Germany.

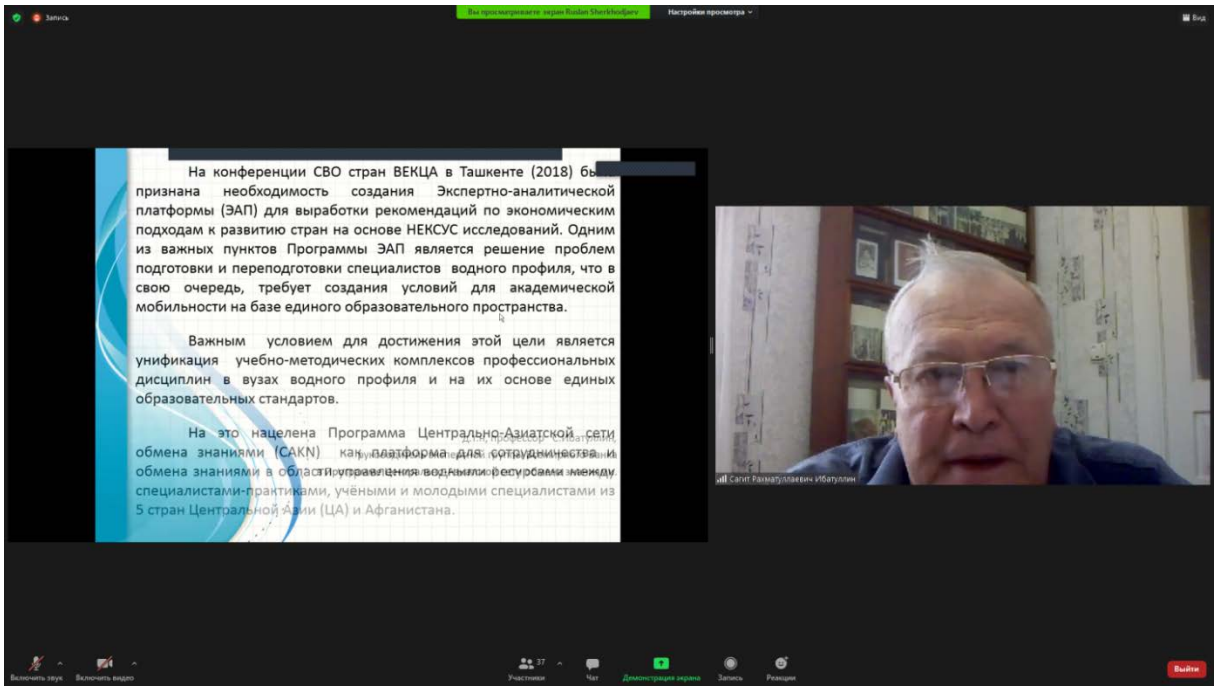
Prof. S. Ibatullin (head of the WB's expert group for the Central Asia Knowledge Network program, Kazakhstan) presented his report on **"Reconstruction of the common academic space in the water sector as an objective for the EECCA Expert Platform",** where he

noted the breach in academic ties and common educational approaches between the Central Asian countries since 1991.

Water training and re-training requires that conditions be created for academic mobility on the base of the common education space in CA. In this context, it is important to harmonize teaching methods in water educational institutions and come to uniform educational standards.

This is one of objectives of the Central Asian Knowledge Network (CAKN) program serving as a platform for cooperation and knowledge exchange among practitioners, academicians and young professionals in the area of water resource management in five Central Asia countries and Afghanistan. It is to gradually harmonize curricula to contribute to mutual recognition of diplomas, student mobility and labor mobility in the Central Asia region.

In this context, the key objectives are: a) improving teaching of water disciplines in Central Asia and contributing to regional integration of academician and practitioner communities; b) fulfilling plans for the establishment of the regional academic, educational and scientific space; c) harmonizing curricula on water disciplines.



A.D. Ryabtsev (Kazgiprovodkhoz, Kazakhstan) in his report **"Transboundary water cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia"** demonstrated the history of cooperation between the two countries and all stages of collaboration on the Ural and Irtysh basins.

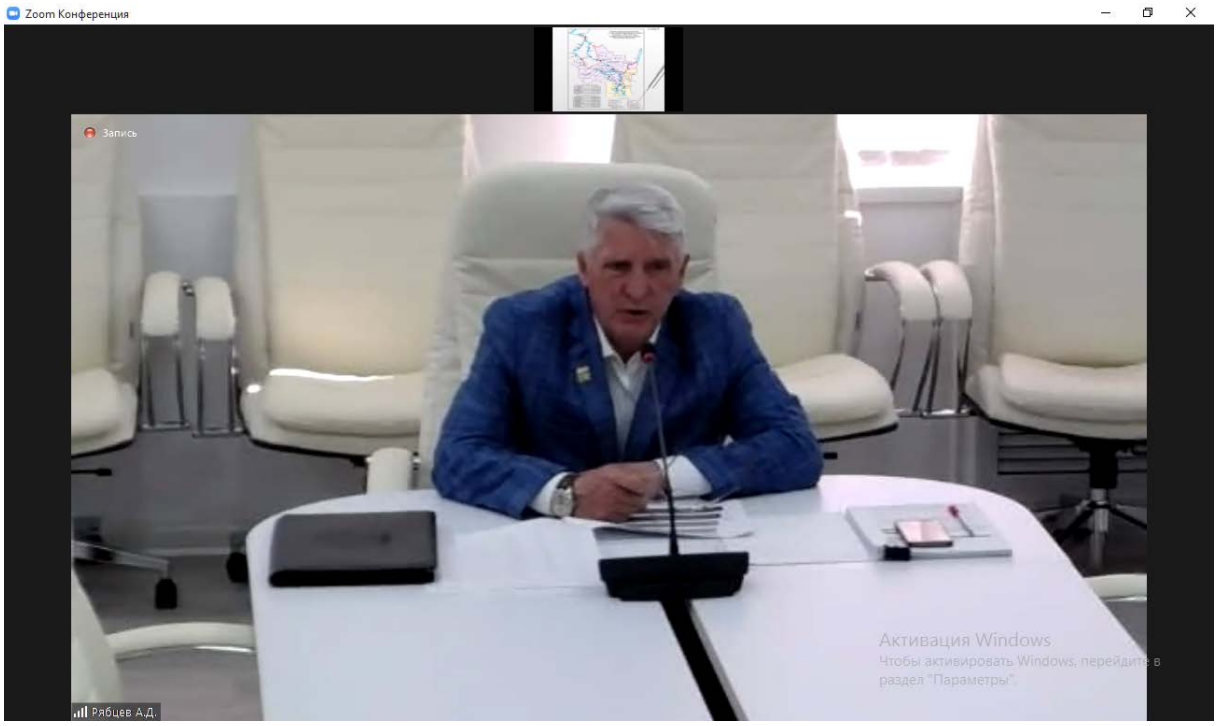
In particular, he noted the activities of the permanent Russian-Kazakh commission chaired by two representatives from Russia and Kazakhstan. The Commission meets once a year alternately in one of the states.

The Ural River basin is one of the most water short basins. Here, economy was developed based on available raw material resources and the needs of the regional economy and the country as a whole; however, the water factor was not duly taken into account in this development.

As a result, the current water demand well exceeds the available water resources, especially in low-water years. This is accompanied by intensive water pollution in the Ural basin.

For the last 2-3 years, Kazakhstan put forward an initiative to establish an Irtysh Water-Energy Consortium to address comprehensively the issues of water and energy use in the Irtysh basin.

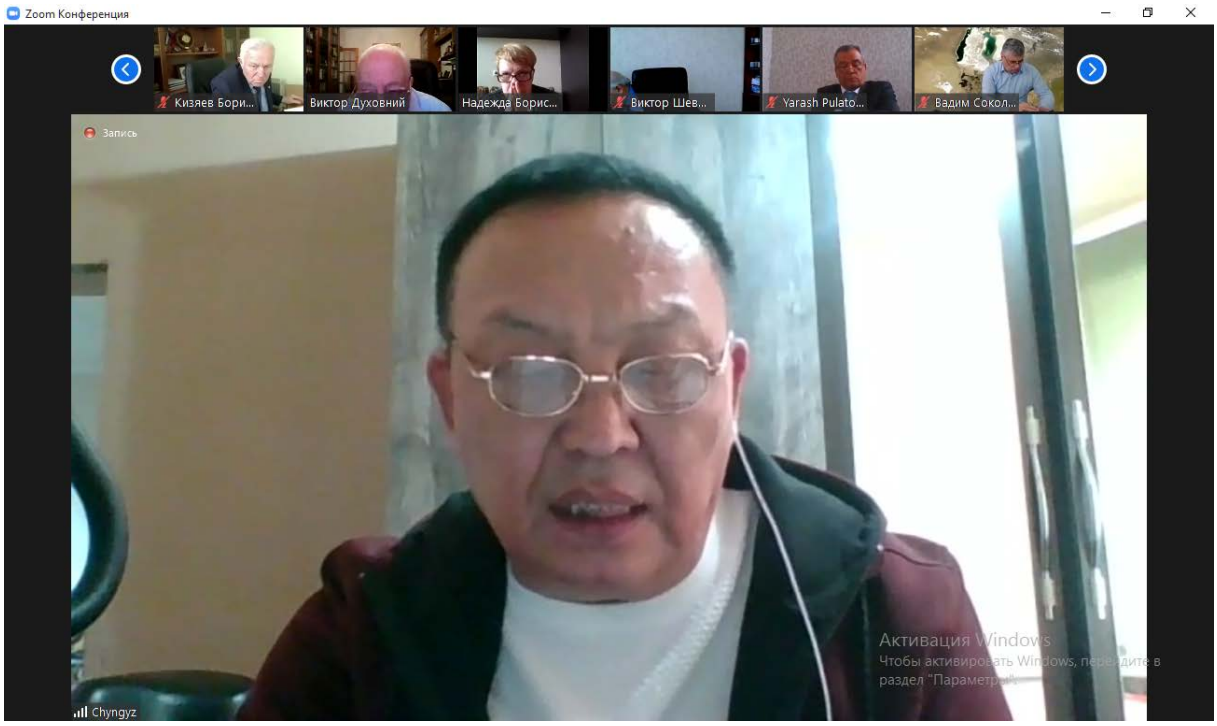
He also paid special attention to the project of excess flow transfer from the Ob River to Central Asia. Time has shown that discontinuation of work on the project has contributed to retard in regional development along the proposed canal route by decades. In this context, he proposed re-starting additional studies, environmental expertise, and further economic studies - both in Russia and in the Central Asian countries - with account of new geopolitical situation.



Ch.M. Uzakbayev (expert, Kyrgyzstan) in his presentation on **"Transboundary cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan"** noted rich experience that the Central Asian countries had in maintaining interstate water relations in the Aral Sea basin and in electric power sharing, the positive outcomes of which had been recognized by the countries. One of the past key achievements was the conflict-free water allocation between the countries in the region over the last 30 years.

The established effective mechanism has made an invaluable contribution to the preservation of peace and stability in Central Asia. However, Kyrgyzstan's ill-considered, short-sighted withdrawal from the membership in IFAS and other regional organizations has exacerbated an already vulnerable situation on this issue. It is hoped that the new leadership of the country will realize and draw necessary conclusions to change the situation as a whole.

The reporter also noted certain simplification of activities of the Chu-Talas Water Commission that were reduced to management issues at last meetings. The matters of long-term planning and further deepening of interstate cooperation have not been considered.



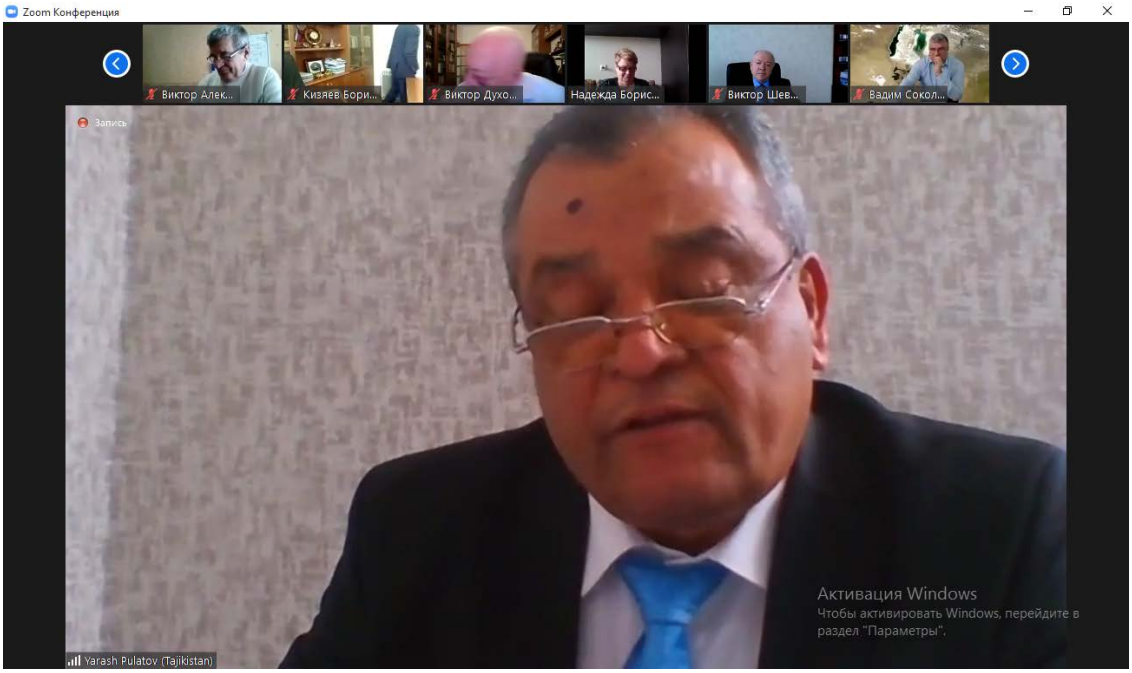
Prof. **Ya.E. Pulatov** (Institute of water problems, hydropower and environment, Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan) addressed in details and analyzed the issue of cooperation with neighboring countries – Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan – in his presentation **"Interstate water cooperation between Tajikistan and neighboring countries"**.

Water relations between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan develop in the spirit of good neighborly cooperation. Water in the Isfara River basin is shared according to the earlier Protocol 1982 approved by the former Ministry of Water Management of USSR and includes Uzbekistan also. However, there are some problems between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in terms of cooperation and water sharing in this basin. Those include water scarcity, the use of water as a means of pressure, non-fulfillment of earlier agreed arrangements on water sharing, and outdated water infrastructure.

Cooperation with Afghanistan has become particularly active over the last 15 years. It is based on the "Cooperation Agreement between the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of Tajikistan on water development and management along the Panj and the Amu Darya" signed on the 25th of October 2010 in Kabul. It is to reach transboudary cooperation sustainability through modernization of the hydrometeorological base (reconstruction of existing measuring stations and construction of new ones), exchange of information on water policy, initiation of multilateral negotiations to set a plan of actions for the establishment of a mechanism of transboundary water management and an intergovernmental scheme of water security in river basins, and mobilization of international support to regional water strategy.

Water relations and water sharing between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is a special issue. Cooperation is based on almost dozen agreements and other documents. In 2018, a Joint Working Group on integrated use of water resources in interstate (transboundary) rivers was established between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The group regularly negotiates on joint operation of interstate water structures. At present, water relations between the two countries

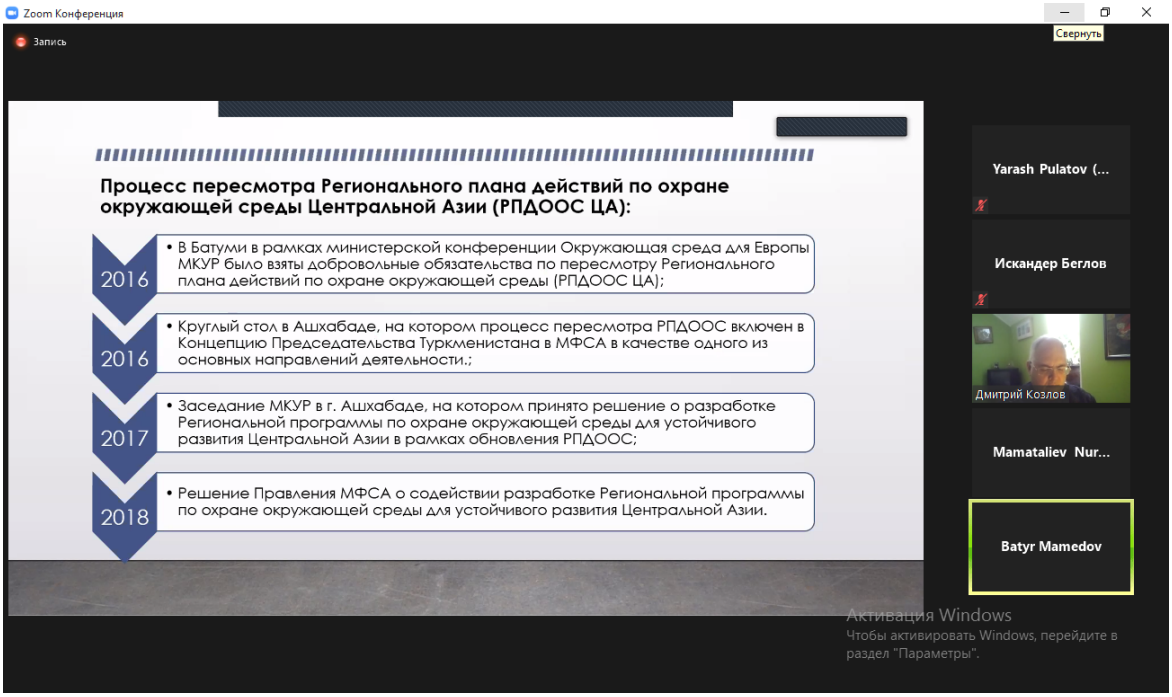
show positive dynamics, which is mirrored in the support by Uzbekistan of Roghun construction, conflict-free joint operation of large irrigation systems and Farkhad HPP, and the joint construction of a hydropower plant on the Zarafshan River.

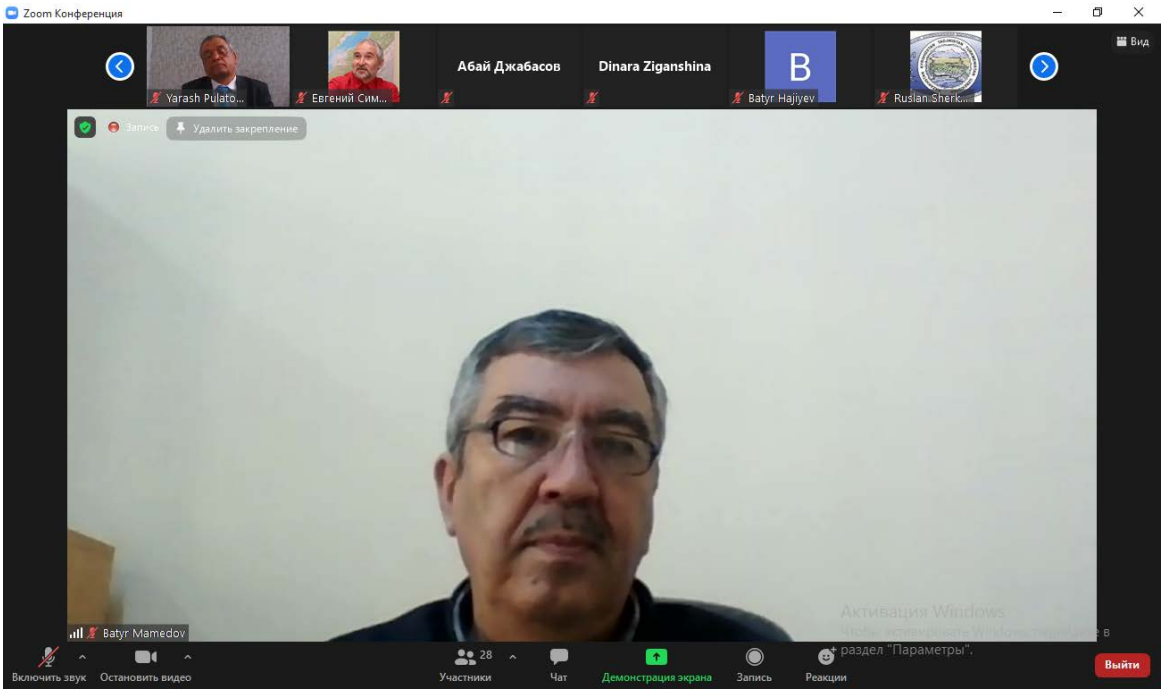


B.K. Mamedov (ICSD Secretariat, Turkmenistan) in presentation **"Regional environmental cooperation in Central Asia"** showed that the activity of ICSD in strengthening regional cooperation in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development was focused on implementation of the Regional Environmental Action Plan for Central Asia (REAP). However, long-term activities under REAP ended back in 2012, the plan itself failed to respond to urgent environmental issues and the implementation institutions established have lost their functions. That is why a new updated version of the Plan is needed for the period up to 2030.

To integrate the updated REAP into the system of regional CA cooperation and effectively use the limited resources, it is necessary to: (1) strengthen coordination mechanisms, taking into account lessons from other regional strategies, programs and initiatives (CAI, ASBP, etc.), (2) take into account national development plans (achievement of SDGs, adaptation to climate change, "green" economy, etc.) and (3) ensure synergy with the UN environmental conventions.

Also, as part of the updated REAP, it is necessary to provide for the development of a set of political, scientific, technological, investment, and other measures, with the involvement of international organizations, to ensure concrete solutions are made for environmental and socio-economic problems in the region.





V. Sokolov (IFAS Agency for Implementation of the Aral Sea Basin and GEF Projects, Uzbekistan) with his report **"Cooperation for solving problems in the South Aral region under umbrella of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea"** presented the history of establishing a joint Central Asian platform – the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea (IFAS). The primary objective for IFAS is to reduce the devastating impact of the Aral Sea crisis on the environment and the lives of millions of people in the Aral Sea region, including through well-designed, well-targeted and adequately financed projects.

After 25 years of operation, IFAS has turned to be ineffective for mobilization of investments and implementation of regional programs. It failed to ensure meaningful contributions from the states. Having realized the poor performance of IFAS, since 2016, Uzbekistan has started

activating parallel and alternative mechanisms to address the growing problems in the Aral Sea region. Thus, Uzbekistan initiated the UN-supported Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region and has been implementing a number of state programs to address the consequences of the Aral Sea tragedy.

Prof. V.A. Dukhovny (Director SIC ICWC) in his report titled **"Aral Sea Basin as an example of IWRM"** noted that as early as in the Soviet period, the Master Plan (Scheme) of Integrated Water Resource Use in the Aral Sea Basin was developed and elaborated the principles of effective water planning, regulation, allocation and use that are characteristic to IWRM.

The basin approach to water management within hydrographic boundaries, enshrined in the 1993 Agreement, paragraph 1, has been successfully implemented in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and is included in the document of the Regional Water Strategy.

Accounting and use of all kinds of water, such as surface water, groundwater and return water, has been put into practice.

Cross-sectoral (horizontal) integration (the so called nexus) of water management and use is enshrined in the 1998 Syr Darya Agreement.

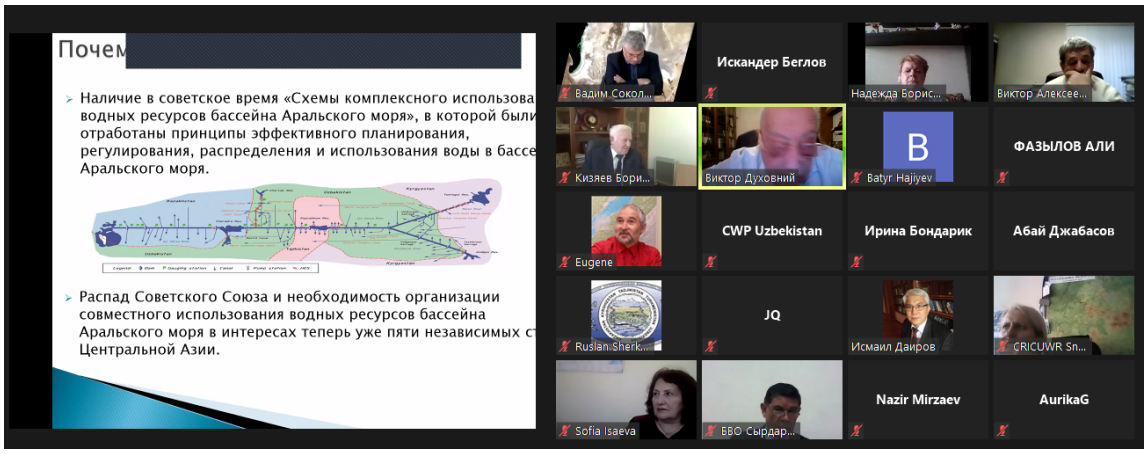
The principle of coordination at different levels of the water management hierarchy is implemented through schedules of water distribution by basin administrations, based on which annual and seasonal plans are drafted for lower levels of the hierarchy.

Public participation in decision making is ensured to avoid hydro-egoism. When adopting IWRM in Kazakhstan and implementing the IWRM-Fergana Project in the Fergana Valley, basin and water councils were widely established and became a reliable mechanism for more efficient water use.

The principle of consideration of nature demands in transboundary basins was reflected in 1992 Agreement, article 5.

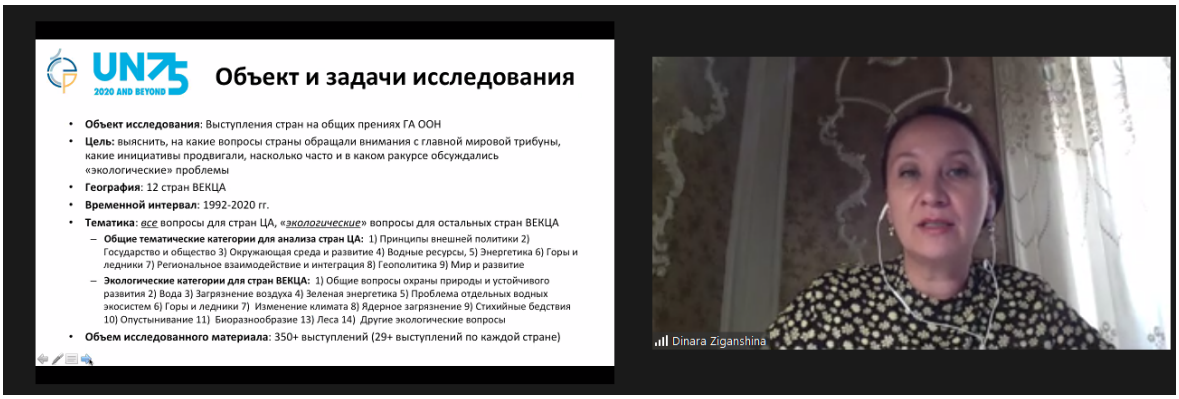
Orientation to water conservation and water productivity runs through the Regional water strategy. Thanks to measures taken in the IWRM-Fergana Project, 250 Mm^3/year of water were saved with the inputs of US$11 million only.

Openness and transparency of the water management system are provided for in 1992 Agreement, article 5 and in many provisions of the Regional water strategy.



D. Ziganshina (Deputy Director, SIC ICWC) and **A. Galustyan** (UNECE consultant) presented the **"Coverage of environmental issues in speeches of the EECCA countries at UN GA over 1992-2020".** On the occasion of the UN 75th anniversary, the speeches of EECCA countries were reviewed in terms of their environmental focus at general debates of the UN General Assembly. The objective of this study is to identify how frequently and in what perspective the EECCA countries addressed nature use, environmental conservation and transboundary cooperation issues from the high UN tribune.

Preliminary results of the study identified priority issues of nature use and environmental conservation, as well as the areas to which more attention should be paid. In particular, it was noted that the EECCA countries have extensive experience in environmental conservation activities and cooperation that should be highlighted from the UN GA tribune. Those activities include, among others, the protection of nature reserves in Russia and transboundary water cooperation, especially under umbrella of the UNECE Water Convention.

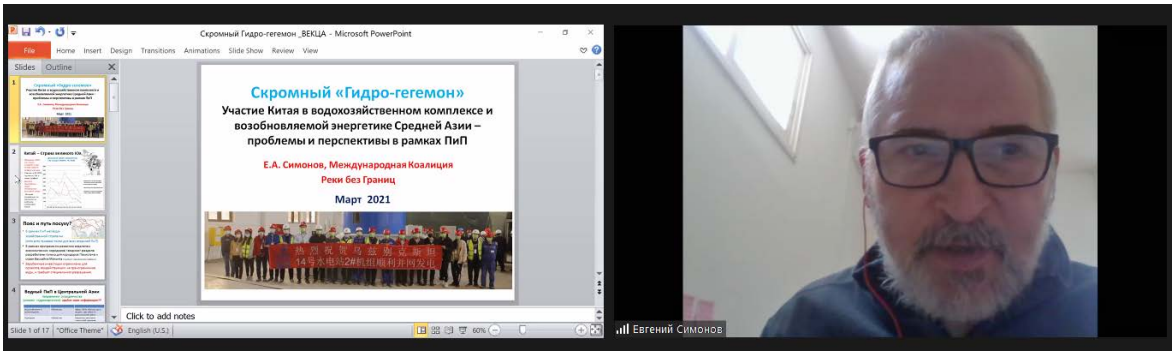


E. Simonov (Rivers without Boundaries Coalition) "**'Modest water hegemon': China's involvement in water management and renewables in Central Asia – challenges and prospects".** The "One Belt, One Road" Initiative still lacks the water strategy, although similar strategies are available for almost all other sectors.

At present, water cooperation between the CA countries and China covers, besides hydropower, such fields as water supply and sanitation and irrigation but these are small in scale. China participates in 23 out of 53 hydropower projects identified in the region and is also an absolute leader in accompanied projects (e.g. construction of a road, transmission lines and cement factories for Roghun HPP). The lack of investments in new HPPs in Tajikistan

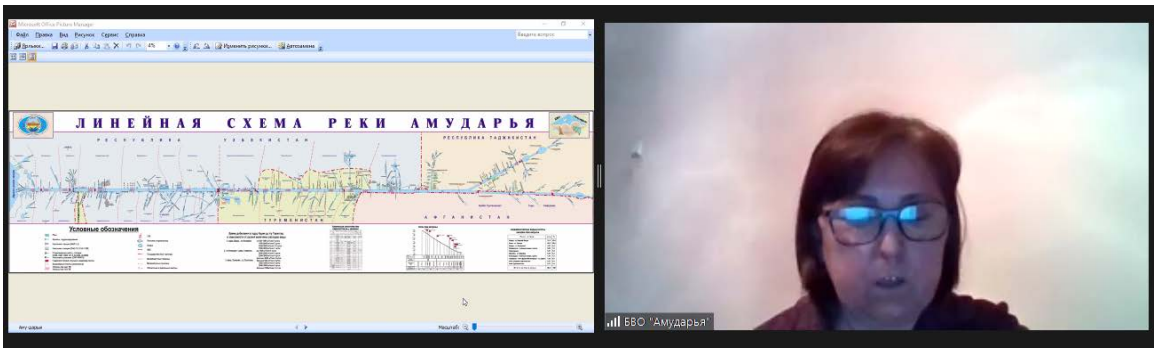
and particularly Kyrgyzstan is explained by national debts, environmental, management and production culture problems, as well as by geopolitical risks.

In the future, China will try to increase its market share in modernization of HPPs and hydraulic structures, construction of water supply and sanitation systems (in the context of "smart cities"), as well as in promotion of water-saving agriculture. It is expected that solar and wind power plants, rather than hydroelectric power plants, will dominate among China's new low-carbon energy projects in Central Asia.



G. Tilyavova reported on behalf of **M.Ya. Makhramov** (Head, BWO Amu Darya) on **"How to bring BWO Amu Darya operations in line with IWRM principles"**. The reporter said that the basin approach has been used since 1987, when the Basin Water Authority for inter-republican water distribution was established and then renamed into Basin Water Organization Amu Darya.

The reported underlined that participation of all stakeholders was the only way to achieve the long-term consensus and agreement in the river basin. However, to this end, water users and the staff of water-management organizations should recognize that sustainability of the resource is a common problem and all of them should aim to save it, while neglecting their momentary benefits. Also, the meaningful transboundary dialog and the international water convention-based cooperation are needed.

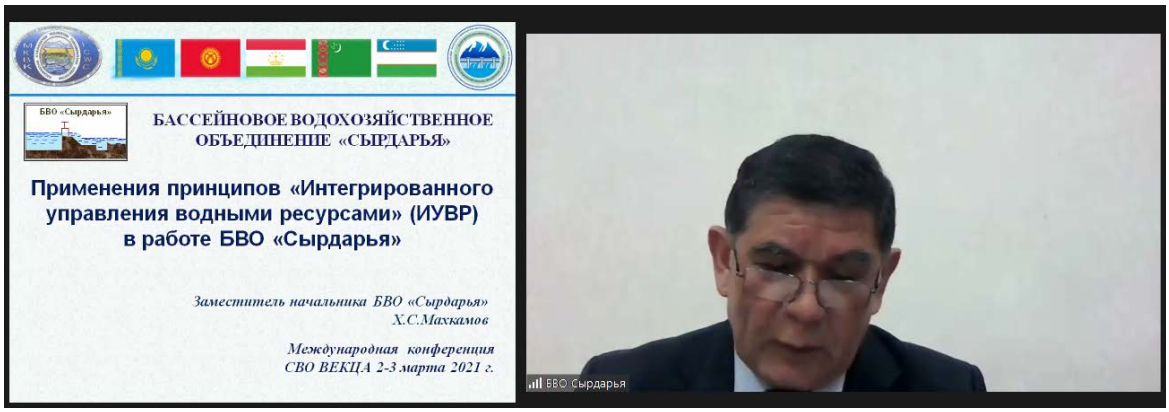


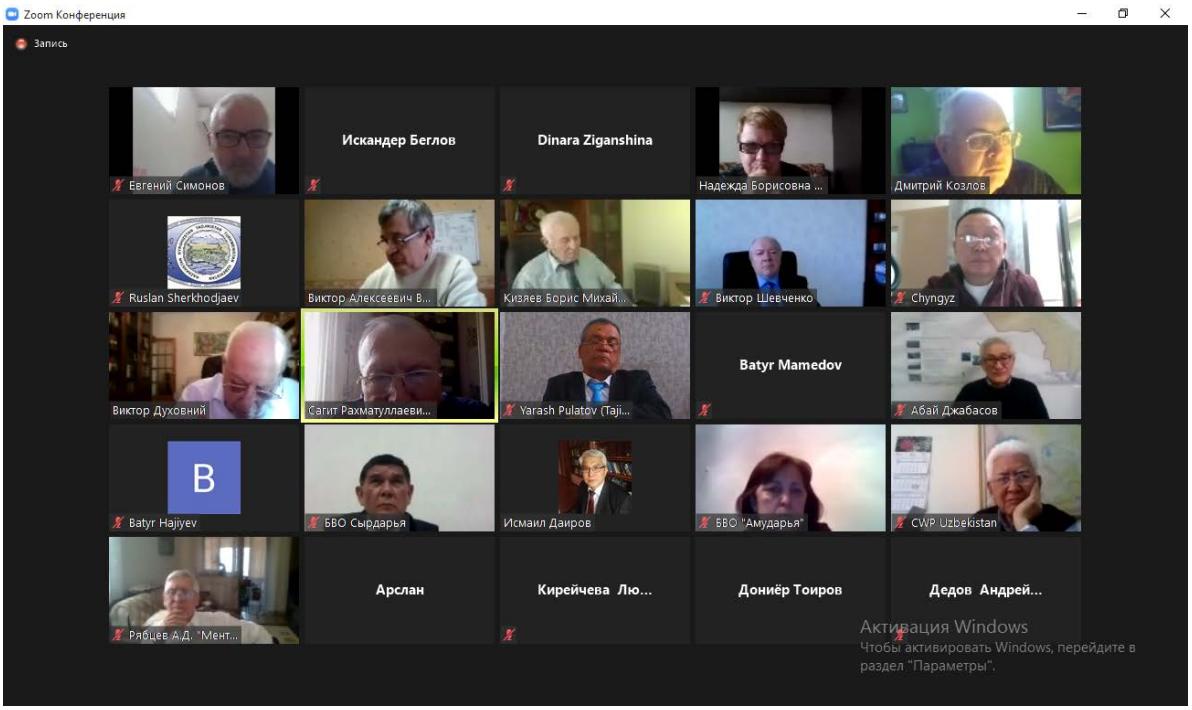
Kh. Makhkamov (BWO Syr Darya) **"How to bring BWO Syr Darya operations in line with IWRM principles":** the integrated water resource management mechanism has been laid in the core of BWO's operations from the beginning. In practice, this mean that when developing the operation schedule of the Naryn-SyrDarya cascade of reservoirs, BWO Syr Darya takes into account the forecast made by UzHydromet and the Coordination Dispatching

Center “Energy” and the requests of user countries. The operation schedules of the cascade and water withdrawal limits (quotas) are considered collectively and approved by authorized representatives of all concerned states at ICWC meetings. In case of unfavorable climatic conditions (low-water periods), appropriate corrections are made and submitted for approval to all concerned states.

Recently, negotiation of bi- and trilateral protocols between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the format of “additional water releases from reservoirs in exchange for electric power” has been practiced. This is a forced measure caused by low-water and related water shortage during the growing season.

For more accurate water monitoring and better transparency of transboundary water distribution, BWO Syr Darya initiated joint – together with representatives of water user states - measurements of water at key gauging stations along the Syr Darya River, hydroschemes and interstate canals.



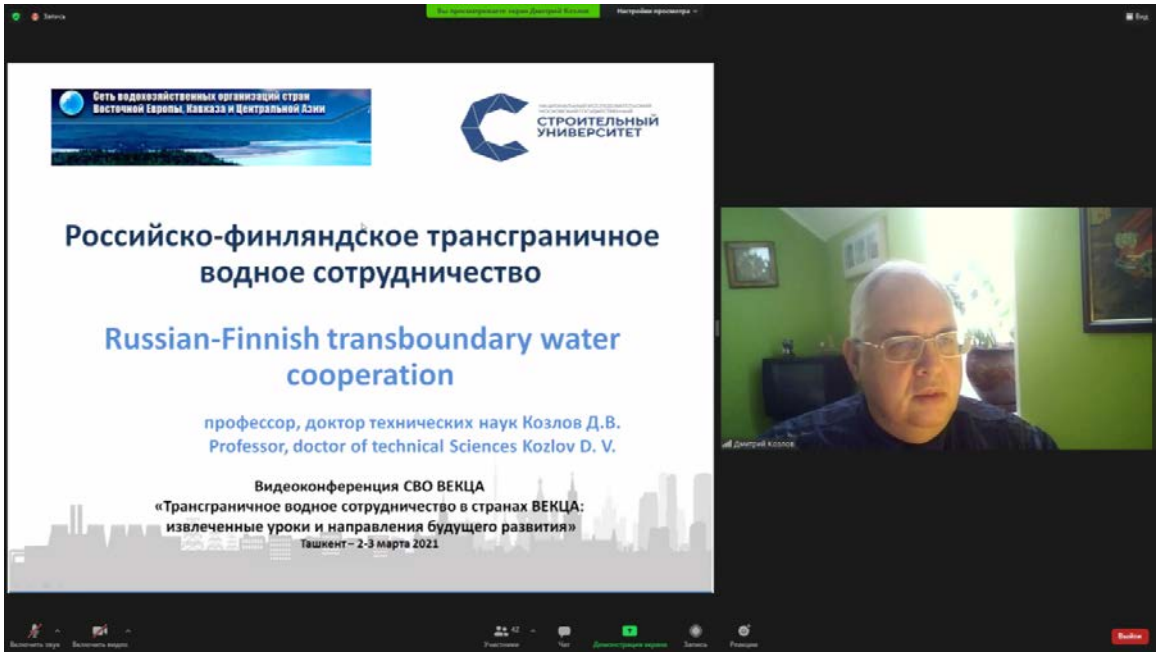


SESSION 2:
WATER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EASTERN EUROPE AND NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

Prof. **D. Kozlov** (President of EECCA NWO, Russia) made the presentation on **"Russian-Finland transboundary water cooperation".** He underlined that the Russian-Finland cooperation is one of rare successful examples of conflict-free relations in the world practices of water sharing.

The Russian-Finland cooperation in the area of flow regulation and water quality control in border water bodies has been lasting for over fifty years. Such cooperation covers the following fields: hydropower; flow regulation; construction; protection of water bodies; navigation; logging and fisheries; aquatic tourism and recreation. However, the joint Finland-Russian commission on the use of border water systems does not have its own budget and permanent staff. It is characteristic that the cooperation is not limited by interactions between formal agencies only but rather involves all stakeholders and concerned institutions.

Management of water regime in border water systems and emergencies in river basins play an important role in the interstate cooperation. In the recent years, joint activities were focused on removal of risks caused by floods and droughts, assessment of climate change impacts, as well as on the improvement of status of water bodies.



Acad. **B. Kizyaev** (VNIIGiM, Russia), **"On water supply to Crimea"**.

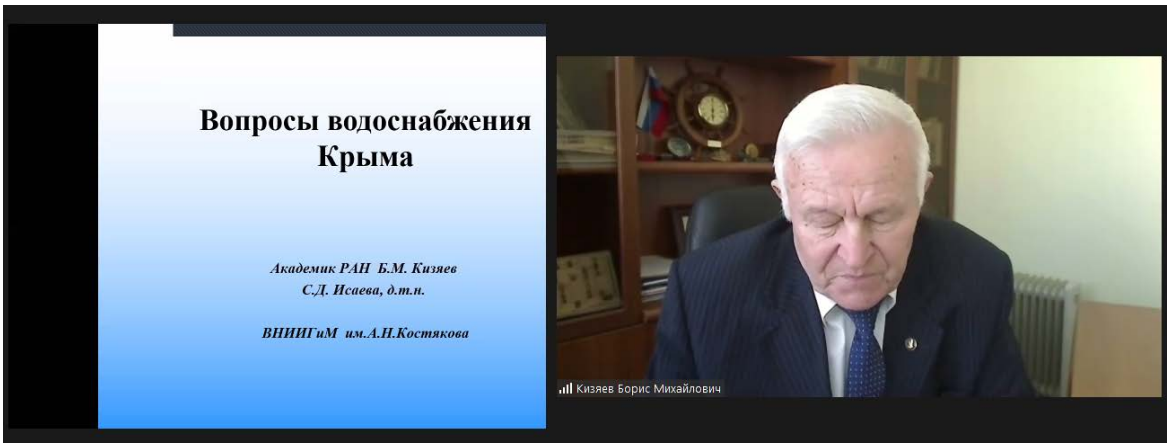
The dry conditions of 2020 have increased the current water shortage and made the water supply of the Crimea's population more problematic. Until 2014, the supply of drinking and irrigation water has been provided through the North Crimean Canal, which was built in 1961-1971.

At present, the Crimea is water insecure: 0.41 thousand m^3/year of water is available per capita in the Crimea, given the UNECE's norm of over 1.7 thousand m^3/year per capita.

In October 2020, a Comprehensive plan for the achievement of reliable water supply in the Crimea and Sevastopol for 2021-2024 was adopted to increase available water supply of the Crimea in the current circumstances. It is planned to transfer 60 thousand m^3/day from the Salgir River to the Intermountain hydroscheme to supply water for Simferopol. Intensive construction of an intake structure on the Belbek River is ongoing to divert water to Sevastopol. This intake is to divert additional 50 thousand m^3/day as early as since March 2021. It is also planned to take appropriate measures to reduce losses in water-supply networks that would free additional 27.86 thousand m^3/day.

As to surface water management, it is proposed to connect, via water lines, all Crimean reservoirs to create a single system, which, instead of discharging floodwater, redistributes water, accumulates water and ensures multiyear regulation of surface water. This idea is of interest.

The key focus in strategic planning and ensuring water security in the Crimea should be placed on an increased use of groundwater, combined use of surface water and groundwater, and tapping of additional water sources through water conservation, desalination, and treated wastewater re-use.



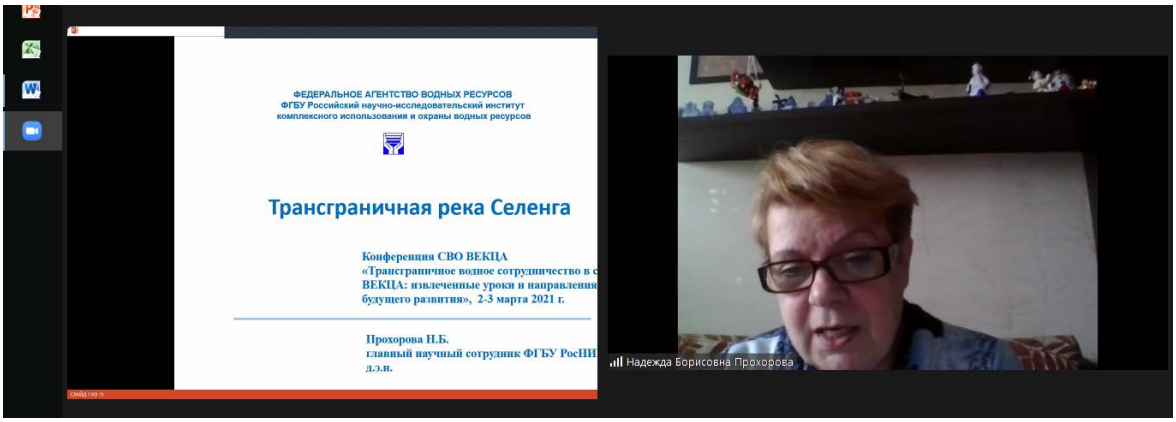
Prof. **N. Prokhorova** (FGBU RosNIIVH, Russia), **“The transboundary Selenga River”.**

In 1995, the Governments of the Russian Federation and Mongolia signed an agreement on the protection and use of transboundary water. Besides bilateral measures for rational protection and use of transboundary water, the Agreement also provides for organization of interaction on the prevention of harmful effects during high-water and flood periods.

Nature use in the Selenga River basin is bounded by environmental restrictions within the Baikal nature area that influence the development and specifics of economic activity.

In the recent years, one of key issues has been the planned construction of Shuran HPP and Orkhon diversion structure in Mongolia. Environmental activists in the both countries are concerned about potential environmental effects of such construction for the Lake Baikal’s ecosystem.

Currently, the situation in the transboundary section point along the Selenga River is characterized as stable.



S.A. Dubenok (Central Research Institute for Integrated Water Use, Belarus) in her report on **"Integrated water management in the Dnepr-Pripyat"** described the river basin management activities of the Institute.

Over 2008-2014, the Institute developed Master plans of multipurpose water use and protection for the river basins of Neman, Dnieper and Western Dvina. Since the new version of the Water Code has been put in effect, river basin management plans has started to be developed on the basis of the Master Plans. The Institute drafted river basin management plans for the Dnieper, the Western Bug and the Prypyats' within the republican boundaries over the period of 2015-2017.

In 2018, the Dnieper River Basin management plan was finalized as part of the European Union's Water Initiative for Eastern Partnership (EUWI+).

The finalized plan was approved at a meeting of the Dnieper Basin Council in October 2018.

E. Simonov (Daurskiy State Nature Reserve, Russia) **“Transboundary risks of adaptation strategies and country climate obligations (Russia-Mongolia case-study)”.**

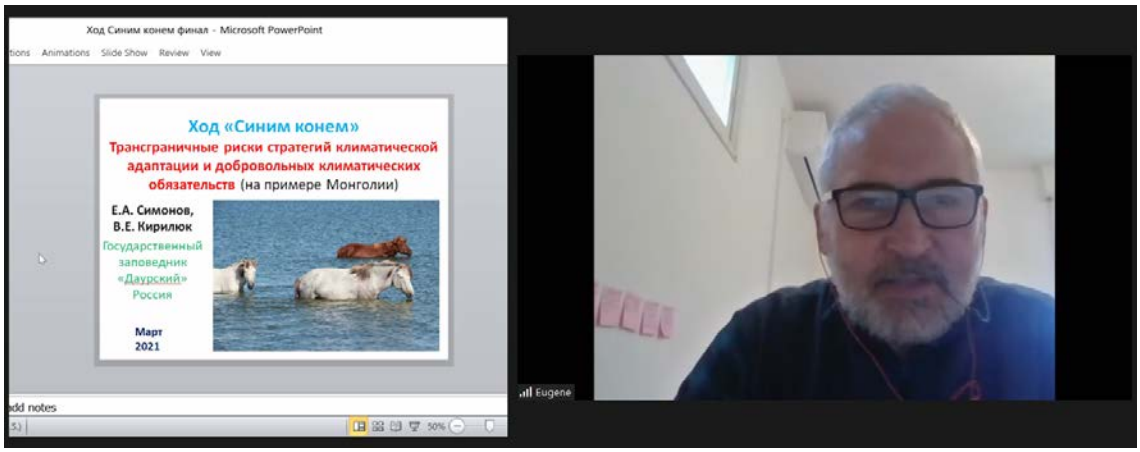
The lack of joint plans of shared basin management based on the latest environmental and hydrological research prompts riparian countries to unilateral actions for water accumulation and use within their respective boundaries, while ignoring environmental consequences of such practice. The countries often present such projects as voluntary commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Construction of a dam (and a reservoir) on the Ulza river demonstrates the negative example in this respect. Such construction poses a direct threat to Tore lakes and the transboundary World Heritage site “The Landscapes of Dauria” as a whole. Tore lakes remain one of the last important places in global migratory routes for water fowls and semiaquatic birds.

Dam construction is a part of the Blue Horse Infrastructure Project: dams are planned at 33 section sites along 12 largest Mongolian rivers for collection of rain, snow and flood water, as well as for “water diversion to the Gobi region”, where surface water is scanty and mining industry is developed. The Governmental action plan (2021-2025) adopted after elections includes a number of reservoir projects (on the Khovd, Orkhon, Ongi, and Kherlen rivers).

The Blue Horse Project threatens two World Heritage sites, four wetlands in the Ramsar Convention’s list, four UNESCO’s biosphere reserves and all large natural river ecosystems in Mongolia (mainly, transboundary ones).

If Mongolia may construct such a dam on the small Ulza River without bilateral negotiations with Russia and an assessment of impact on a UNESCO World Heritage site, the same construction can be repeated in Onon, Kherlen, Egiyin-gol, Selenga and any other transbounsdary basins. The Blue Horse Project aggravates the already existing contradictions between the neighboring countries and hampers formation of a joint system for shared basin management.

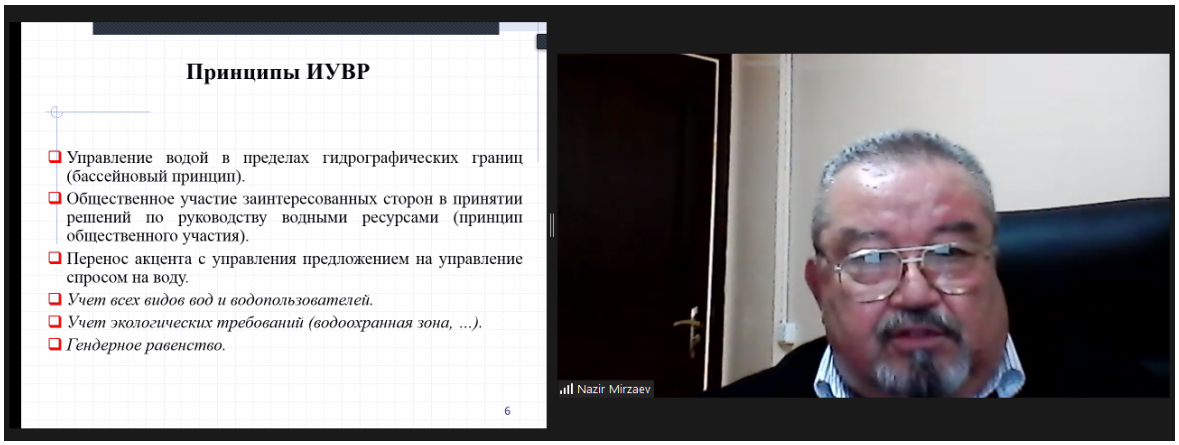


SESSION 3:

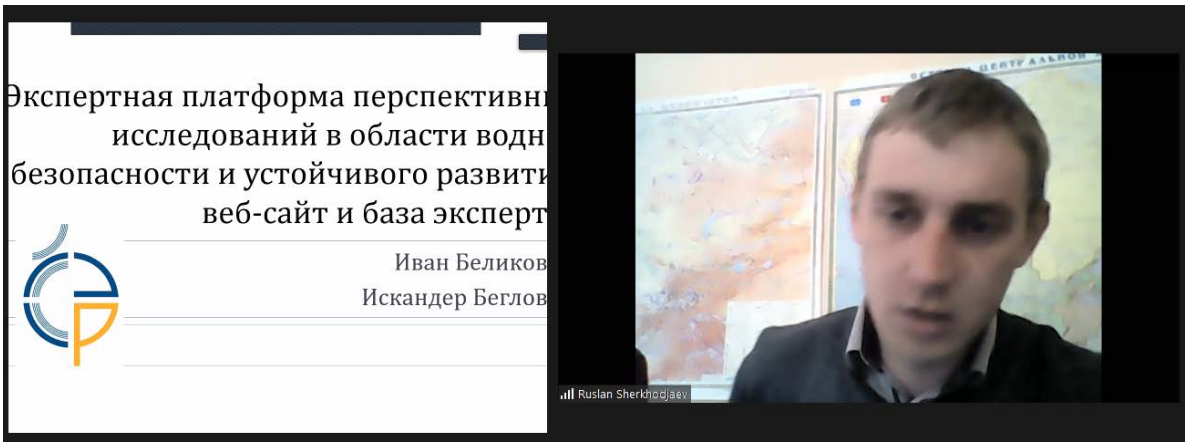
EECCA NWO CONTRIBUTION TO COOPERATION BETWEEN EASTERN EUROPE, CENTRAL ASIA AND NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

N.N. Mirzaev (SIC ICWC) in his presentation titled **"Experience in implementation of IWRM: IWRM-Fergana Project"** discussed lessons learnt from implementation of IWRM in the territories of three countries in the Fergana Valley. Through low-cost (as compared to investments in capital construction) institutional, operational, and cognitive measures, the project showed realistic improvements in water delivery and use and reduced water-related conflicts at the border of provinces.

For successful and sustainable IWRM, strong political will of country leadership is needed to ensure favorable environment. Implementation of IWRM should also go hand in hand with such a tool as strategic planning.



The report of **I. Belikov** and **I. Beglov** (UNECE consultants) titled **"Expert Platform on Water Security, Sustainable Development, and Future Studies: website and experts' database"** demonstrated new tools of the newly formed Expert Platform on water security, sustainable development and future studies, such as the new web-site and the experts' database.



Extracts from the reports:

Prof. D. Kozlov:

"We continue our communication irrespective of the format"

"The implemented model of Russian-Finnish long-term cooperation will be useful for other countries and regions that share border water"

Prof. S. Ibatullin:

"Water training and re-training requires that conditions be created for academic mobility on the base of a common education space in CA. In this context, it is important to harmonize teaching methods in water educational institutions and come to uniform educational standards."

Ch. Uzakbayev:

"One of the past key achievements is the conflict-free water allocation between the countries in the region over the last 30 years."

"The established [by water professionals] effective mechanism has made an invaluable contribution to the preservation of peace and stability in Central Asia."

D. Ziganshina, A. Galustyan:

"The EECCA countries have extensive experience in environmental conservation activities and cooperation that should be highlighted from the UN GA tribune."

G. Tilyavova:

"The meaningful transboundary dialog and the international water convention-based cooperation are needed."

Kh. Makhkamov:

"The integrated mechanism of water resource management has been laid in the core of BWO's operations from the very beginning and is successfully practiced will all riparian countries."

"BWO Syr Darya maintains continuous open dialog with water leaders of state-users to discuss operational circumstances and take joint measures, depending on the current situation."

RESOLUTION
EECCA NWO International Conference
“Transboundary Water Cooperation in the EECCA countries: Lessons Learned and Future Directions”

An international videoconference of the EECCA Network of Water Management Organizations was held on 2-3 March 2021. The participants addressed the current issues of transboundary water cooperation, summed up annual results and discussed future tasks of the Network.

Following the discussion, the Conference’s participants identified the next key points and recommendations.

1. Increasing competing water uses of sectors and countries combined with the impact of climate change make close cooperation and **collaboration at national, basin, transboundary and international levels** imperative. Comprehensive and systemic measures for rational and optimal water and land use, including digitization and automation of hydraulic structures and application of water-saving technologies become particularly important. To give additional momentum to cooperation in the field of water and sustainable development, it is proposed to start developing **strategic documents**, including the Regional Program of Rational Water Use in Central Asia and apply to the Eurasian Economic Union’s (EAEU) leadership with the proposal in favor of developing a Water Strategy of EAEU countries up to 2050.

2. Having heard the case-studies of bilateral cooperation in river basins of EECCA countries, the participants noted the positive value of such cooperation in solving operational issues of water management and emphasized the importance of developing **basin-wide cooperation** for coordinated use and development of shared water resources.

3. Taking into account increased frequency and intensity of extreme hydrological phenomena, including floods and low water, as well as imminent water shortage, the participants take the view that they could apply to the governments of the Russian Federation and the Central Asian countries about expediency of **a new view on re-distribution** of surplus flood water of Siberian rivers to the regions of southern Siberia and Central Asia.

4. The participants expressed concern over the problem of **sustainable water supply in Crimea** and called on Russia and Ukraine to make maximum efforts to ensure the right of the population to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation and to respect the relevant economic, social and cultural rights of Crimean residents.

5. While expressing serious concern about the shortage of qualified personnel in the water sector, the participants emphasized the urgent need for **coordination of activities on training, retraining and professional development in the sector**. In particular, it was decided to exchange experience within the Network in unification of educational and methodical base and preparation of specialized courses. Successful implementation of the Central Asian Knowledge Network’s Program for methodological base development was

noted and could be of use for EECCA NWO in part of developing a common water educational space and academic mobility. In this context, it would be expedient to form a Training and Methodological Expert Group to develop water training standards in EECCA countries. It is suggested to consider the possibility of establishing a virtual international water education academy to build capacities of water professionals in EECCA countries. The next Network's conference is suggested to be held on the theme "Water Education: Challenges and Prospects" in late 2021 or early 2022.

6. Working with **youth** as the main driving force of the countries' development is recognized as one of future strategic directions of the Network. Young people should be central in initiating new sustainable approaches to water management and in promoting cooperation between the countries. Consider it necessary to involve young professionals in the Network's activity and form a group of future water leaders. Apply to UNECE with the request to support this proposal next year, including financial support.

7. The participants noted the importance of efforts of EECCA NWO and SIC ICWC in developing the **Expert Platform** for water security, sustainable development and future studies in the EECCA region and neighboring countries. Particularly they noted development of the Platform's web-site (cawater-info.net/expert-platform/) and the database of experts, as well as joint work of experts on the "Diagnostic Report on Rational Use of Water Resources in Central Asia as of 2019" and in the review of speeches of EECCA countries at the UN General Assembly over the period from 1992 to 2020. It was suggested to apply to concerned countries and international partners to support multidisciplinary research within the framework of the Expert Platform.

8. Since China's "Belt and Road" Initiative can have a substantial influence on economic, socio-environmental and geopolitical conditions of EECCA countries' development, it is recommended for members of EECCA NWO to consider carefully the **water component of the initiative**. Exchange of information on countries' cooperation with Chinese organizations and companies will help to better plan future cooperation, avoid unnecessary risks and identify beneficial areas for collaboration.

9. In the context of the **risks posed by adaptation projects in Russian and Mongolian river basins**, the following was recommended:

- Apply to authorized bodies responsible for transboundary water basins in Russia and Mongolia with the recommendation to suspend construction of a dam on the Ulza River until a joint comprehensive environmental and economic impact assessment is made and the public discussion of the project assessment results is completed in the two countries. Recommend analyzing alternative ways to meet water demands in the context of changing climate and cyclical water fluctuations.
- Apply to the UNESCO World Heritage Center and Committee, the advisory bodies of the World Heritage Convention, and the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands with a recommendation to urgently consider threats to a world heritage site under the title "Landscapes of Dauria" and call for immediate EIA of a dam project on the Ulza River with the project suspended until the Convention bodies review the assessment.
- Apply to the Mongolian Government with a proposal to conduct a strategic environmental assessment of the "Blue Horse" (Huh Mor) Project for its impact on river ecosystems and economy, as well as on water sharing mechanisms in

transboundary basins. Recommend the Government of Mongolia to hold consultations with neighboring countries (PRC and Russia) on the development of joint adaptation programs in the transboundary basins of Ulza-Torey Lakes, Khalkhingol-Kerulen-Argun, Selenga-Baikal, Bulgan, etc.

- Apply to UNDP, the International Adaptation Fund, the Secretariat and relevant bodies of the Framework Convention on Climate Change with the recommendation on the need to conduct a systematic comprehensive socio-environmental assessment of water management measures proposed by countries as part of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) for mitigation and adaptation under the Paris Agreement, especially projects in transboundary basins. Recommend disseminating those contributions among all riparian countries of transboundary basins for evaluation and opinions. Submit information on the Ulza and Selenga River projects that require such assessments at international level to the above mentioned bodies as examples.
- Recommend that UNECE support the use of the Water Convention's tools and impact assessments for the hydraulic projects submitted as part of a pilot project on climate adaptation in Dauria basins.

10. The participants were pleased to note the **effective and fruitful activity of EECCA NWO over more than 12 years**. With the support of UNECE, the Government of the Russian Federation, SIC ICWC and the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), this activity contributed to regular exchange of ideas, information and best practices in various water-related aspects and maintained professional unity and mutual understanding between experts and countries in the region. In 2020, despite the quarantine restrictions, the Network collaborated with the Expert platform of future studies with mutual benefits.

The following achievements of the Network can be highlighted over 2019-2020:

- organization and holding of the international conference of EECCA NWO on the theme “Science and Innovations for Water Security” (23-24 September 2019, Yekaterinburg, Russia);
- participation of EECCA NWO members in the meeting of the ICID Working Group on Irrigation and Drainage in the States under Socio-Economic Transformation, WG-IDSST (28 October 2020 via video-conference) and in the meeting of the INBO International Liaison Bureau (3 November 2020 via video-conference);
- issue of information and research publications. The recent ones included: the collection of EECCA NWO papers “Science and Innovations for Water Security” (volumes 1 and 2); the collection “Selected transboundary water agreements signed between European and Asian states over 1992-2019”; Water Yearbook: Central Asia and around the Globe that presented short reviews of key water-related developments and events over the past year;
- preparation and dissemination of a weekly digest “Water management, irrigation and environment in Central Asia”;
- further development of the Central Asian knowledge portal - CAWater-Info portal (cawater-info.net) – as a component of the set of unified tools for implementation of IWRM, adapted to specific conditions in river basins with different degrees of water shortage in arid and semi-arid zones in EECCA countries;
- further development of the E-Atlas of water-management and environmental organizations in EECCA countries;

- support to establishment of the regional Expert platform on water security, sustainable development and future studies and to multidisciplinary research and exchange.

11. It was noted important to strengthen efforts of the Network in the following key areas:

- further development of the information space on water management, land reclamation, and nature conservation, including exchange of best practices, experience and knowledge in the area of management;
- initiation of joint multidisciplinary research on water security and sustainable development;
- organization of training workshops, study-tours and webinars to share experience and information on research and technological base developments and innovation application in water sectors of the EECCA countries, as well as implementation of joint projects;
- attraction of basin organizations and the youth to the Network's activity.

12. While appreciating an **invaluable contribution of UNECE, the Russian Government, SIC ICWC and INBO** to the development of EECCA NWO, which has proven to be a useful platform for communication, knowledge sharing and joint research on water and sustainable development, the participants apply to UNECE and the Russian Government to continue support of the Network's activity in the future.

Annex 1

AGENDA
International Conference of the Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia Network of Water Management Organizations (EECCA NWO)
"Transboundary Water Cooperation in the EECCA countries: Lessons Learned and Future Directions"

2-3 March 2021

Online Conference

Tashkent time (Moscow time)	2 March 2021
Opening	
12.00-12.15 (10.00-10.15)	Welcome speeches: • D. Kozlov, President of EECCA NWO • B. Hajiyev, UNECE
Session "Water cooperation between Central Asian and neighboring countries" *Moderator: Prof. D. Kozlov*	
12.15-12.30 (10.15-10.30)	Prof. **V. Dukhovniy** (SIC ICWC) – Diagnostic report on water resources in Central Asia as of 2019
12.30-12.45	Prof. **S. Ibatullin** (International Training Center for the Safety of Hydraulic Structures, Kazakhstan) – Reconstruction of

(10.30-10.45)	the common academic space in the water sector as an objective for the EECCA Expert Platform
12.45-13.00 (10.45-11.00)	**A. Ryabtsev** (Kazakhstan) – Transboundary water cooperation between Kazakhstan and Russia
13.00-13.15 (11.00-11.15)	**Ch. Uzakbayev** (Kyrgyzstan) – Cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan *tbc*
13.15-13.30 (11.15-11.30)	Prof. **Ya. Pulatov** (Tajikistan) – Interstate water cooperation between Tajikistan and neighboring countries
13.30-13.45 (11.30-11.45)	**B. Mamedov** (Turkmenistan) – Regional environmental cooperation in Central Asia
13.45-14.00 (11.45-12.00)	**V. Sokolov (**IFAS Agency for Implementation of the Aral Sea Basin and GEF Projects, Uzbekistan) – Cooperation for solving problems in the South Aral region under umbrella of the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea
14.00-14.15 (12.00-12.15)	Prof. **V. Dukhovniy** (SIC ICWC) – Aral Sea Basin as an example of IWRM
14.15-14.30 (12.15-12.30)	**D. Ziganshina** (SIC ICWC), **A. Galustyan** (UNECE consultant) – Coverage of environmental issues in speeches of the EECCA countries at UN GA over 1992-2020
14.30-14.45 (12.30-12.45)	**Ye. Simonov** (Rivers without Boundaries Coalition) – 'Modest water hegemon'»: China's involvement in water management and renewables in Central Asia – challenges and prospects
14.45-15.00 (12.45-13.00)	**G. Tilyavova** (BWO Amu Darya) – How to bring BWO Amu Darya operations in line with IWRM principles

15.00-15.15 (13.00-13.15)	**Kh. Makhkamov** (BWO Syr Darya) – How to bring BWO Syr Darya operations in line with IWRM principles
15.15-15.45 (13.15-13.45)	*Discussion*

Tashkent time (Moscow time)	3 March 2021
Session "Water cooperation between the Eastern Europe and neighboring countries" *Moderator: V. Sokolov*	
12.00-12.15 (10.00-10.15)	**D. Kozlov** (EECCA NWO President, Russia) – Russian-Finland transboundary water cooperation
12.15-12.30 (10.15-10.30)	**B. Kizyaev** (VNIIGiM, Russia) – On water supply to Crimea
12.30-12.45 (10.30-10.45)	**N. Prokhorova** (FGBU RosNIIVH, Russia) – The transboundary Selenga River
12.45-13.00 (10.45-11.00)	**S. Dubenok** (Central Research Institute for Integrated Water Use, Belarus) – Integrated water management in the Dnepr-Pripyat basin
13.00-13.15 (11.00-11.15)	**Ye. Simonov** (State Biosphere Nature Reserve "Daurskiy", Russia) – Transboundary risks of adaptation strategies and country climate obligations (Russia-Mongolia case-study)
13.15-14.00	*Discussion*

(11.15-12.00)	
Session "EECCA NWO contribution to cooperation between Eastern Europe, Central Asia and neighboring countries" *Moderator: V. Sokolov*	
14.00-14.15 (12.00-12.15)	**N. Mirzaev** (SIC ICWC) – Experience in implementation of IWRM: IWRM-Fergana Project
14.15-14.30 (12.15-12.30)	**I.V. Belikov** (UNECE consultant) –Expert Platform on Water Security, Sustainable Development, and Future Studies: website and experts' database
14.30- (12.30-)	**Wrap-up**

Join to Zoom-conference:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89440636913?pwd=c0tMTE13cE51RWJhdHR3UUMyd1B6Zz09

(ID: 894 4063 6913 Access code: 8685664)

Annex 2

List of participants EECCA NWO Conference

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