

«Green recovery and climate action in Central Asia»

Position of the CAN members from Central Asia

Position

2020 has become a challenge for the whole world, not only in terms of the climate crisis and natural disasters, but also in terms of the economic and social crisis provoked by the coronavirus pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that it is impossible to provide an adequate response to global challenges without joining the efforts of all sectors of society. This is a lesson that countries need to consider when they recover their economies in the near future. **Countries of Central Asia are among the most vulnerable to climate change.** Climate change affects the well-being of 72 million people, mainly in rural areas of this region. Given that agriculture is a key sector of the economy, the impacts of climate change pose a serious threat to the region's food security and resilience. Water resources, biodiversity conservation and security issues in Central Asia are among the most significant challenges currently faced by the region.

Climate Action Network Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (CAN EECCA) includes more than 50 civil society organizations, and is a part of the global coalition of more than 1,300 NGOs. The CAN EECCA members from Central Asia (CA), after a joint discussion, decided to come up with a shared position on the recovery of their countries after the crisis and the required climate action.

We address the authorities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and the international community with the purpose of proposing measures to improve the climate and social situation in the CA region, as well as to recognize the significant role of civil society as partners in this process.

We urge the countries to make more ambitious commitments in relation to the Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement

An increase in temperature even by 1.5°C will lead to irreversible changes for the environment, which will also have a significant negative impact on Central Asia. To limit global warming, the greenhouse gas emissions emitted by human activities need to be reduced by 45-60% by 2030 compared to 2010. While by 2050, the emissions should reach net zero balance.

All countries of Central Asia have prepared and submitted their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). According to the NDCs, by 2030, compared to the base year 1990, the reduction of greenhouse gases is planned as follows: in Kazakhstan by 15%; in Kyrgyzstan by 11.49%-13.45%; and in Tajikistan by 10-20%. In Turkmenistan, compared to 2010, the 19% increase in greenhouse gas emissions is expected.

The proposed country contributions will not be sufficient to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, therefore we believe that:

- It is necessary to revise the NDCs and set targets for reducing CO2 emissions by at least 20% till 2030. Ensuring a transparent and inclusive process for the development of NDCs with broaden awareness and involvement of all interested parties, especially women and youth.
- Integrate the issues related to adaptation to climate change into all economic and social strategies and development programs. To date, in some countries there is a discrepancy between the Economic Development Plans and the announced plans to reduce greenhouse gases, which should be streamlined.
- General methodological approaches should be used for the development of NDCs: determining the base year; calculating the forecasts of reduction of greenhouse gases by 2030 and by 2050.

We urge the CA countries to head for the low-carbon development

Development of environmentally friendly renewable energy sources (RES) and energy efficiency should become a national priority for all countries in the region. At the same time, it is necessary to gradually reduce dependence on fossil fuels, the combustion of which is the main cause of rapid climate change. Cities and towns that are powered by fossil fuels should develop plans for equitable energy transformation and sustainable development as soon as possible.

An effective clean energy transition process requires the following:

- Governments need to ensure the creation and development of favorable, transparent and understandable legal frameworks, economic motivation and financial incentives to support projects and programs on energy efficiency and RES.
- Governments of the CA countries as soon as possible need to stop any support and subsidies for the projects on the extraction and use of fossil fuels, as well as to redirect all public financial assets that have been invested in the fossil fuel sector. These funds should be redirected towards renewable energy sources and energy efficiency programs with a focus on supporting the most vulnerable segments of the population.
- Support and promote awareness raising and capacity building on energy efficiency and RES in small villages and towns, as well as attract regional and international partners for the exchange of knowledge, technologies and innovations, for joint scientific research.
- More actively develop sectors of economy with minimal emissions and minimal impact on the environment, introducing the circular economy and developing environmentally friendly technologies in agriculture, manufacturing industry, waste management, industrial and civil engineering and transport sectors.

We draw the attention of the governments to the fact that protection and recovery of natural ecosystems is fundamental to climate stabilization

The minimal area of natural systems required to maintain the life-supporting properties of biosphere (climate balancing, water purification, soil development) should be at least 60% of the land surface, while the area of agricultural land could be up to 30% of the area, and the area of settlements could be up to 10%. The share of natural ecosystems in the total area of Central Asian countries is decreasing.

Recent studies have shown that with existing trends in climate change, in the near future we can lose about 20% of the glacier areas, and by 2100 up to 80%. Over the past 50 years, according to some estimates, water resources have decreased by more than 3-fold: from 8,400.00 cubic meters per person in 1960 to 2,500.00 cubic meters in 2010. The state of forest areas in Central Asia is deteriorating due to the destruction of valuable and protective forests, due to an undeveloped system of accounting for forest resources, and exclusion of the communities from forest management.

For further protection and recovery of ecosystems the following is required:

- Incorporate the forest, rangeland and ecosystem management issues in the National Development Strategies, taking into account their importance for poverty reduction, natural disaster risks, water regulation and adaptation to climate change in Central Asia.
- Focus efforts on recovery and preservation of natural ecosystems, as well as on preservation and expansion of urban green areas;
- In the UN negotiation process, the delegations of the Central Asia countries should defend the position of inadmissibility of using forest plantations as the 'offsets' of industrial emissions.
- Abandon the support of large agricultural holdings, as well as the initiatives aimed at supporting mono-plantations and industrial livestock production, such as (REDD, REDD+ and others).

We express concern about the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which ignores the provisions of the EU Green Deal, the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the EU climate targets and efforts to reduce the impact of EU trade on forests, and could lead to further environmental degradation in Central Asia and in the world in general.

We believe in importance to strengthen the efforts on adaptation to climate change in Central Asia region

The CA countries are stepping up their adaptation planning activities, and are gradually transitioning from individual adaptation projects to a systematic approach in which adaptation measures are part of coordinated national adaptation plans. In recent years, the National Adaptation Strategies and Action Plans have been developed; the issues of adaptation to climate change are one of the main priorities in the new Regional Environmental Protection Plan for Sustainable Development of Central Asia (REPP for SD CA).

For effective adaptation in the Central Asia region, the following is required:

- Develop socially oriented indicators of programs and strategies for adaptation to climate change. The issues of negative impacts of climate change on people, farms, agricultural producers, vulnerable communities, as well as the socio-economic consequences of these impacts should be at the forefront of Climate Strategies and Action Plans.
- Establish, with participation of civil society, a reliable and sustainable system for monitoring and evaluation of the achievements of strategic programs and projects on adaptation to climate change.
- Dissemination of information about risks and opportunities to different social groups should be an integral part of any strategy.
- Provide direct support to vulnerable small-scale farms, female and youth entrepreneurs, to people residing in rural and exposed to climate risk areas in order to mitigate risks to agriculture, ensure food security in a changing environment, and address water and energy problems.
- Comprehensively explore the experience and knowledge of local communities. Adaptation solutions offered by local communities are often more valuable than the high-tech, certified and costly solutions based on the practice of large agricultural producers.
- In the UN negotiation process the delegations of Central Asia countries should support the development of the compensatory 'loss and damage' mechanism, and develop climate insurance mechanisms at the national level.

We support equitable climate investments and financing for adaptation

In recent years, financing for the introduction of climate-resilient technologies has been widely spread in the countries of Central Asia through microfinance organizations and banks. Investments from International Development Banks have been attracted to implement national and regional projects. During the recovery from the economic crisis after the pandemic, it is important to give priority to projects that will enable sustainable development of the countries of the region, which will further reduce the threat to the food security of the countries, to the level of poverty and to well-being in the region.

For the further development of climate finance in the Central Asia region, the following is required:

- Facilitate the effectiveness of climate investments of the Multilateral Development Banks through improving the transparency and accountability of national and regional projects and programs.
- Support initiatives for public monitoring of climate investment programs where the stakeholders and the public can monitor compliance of the program reporting with the expected outcomes.

- Improve access of vulnerable groups and households to Green finance and lending. Green funding should be directed to the most vulnerable communities, taking into account gender sensitivity. This requires a correction of the approach to climate micro-crediting, a decrease in interest rates, an expansion of the list of loans and available adaptation technologies.
- Provide financial support to those programs, businesses, processes and sectors that facilitate the reduction of environmental pressure and pollution, conserve resources and support a gradual transition to a circular economy.

We call for a greater role for the public in climate decision-making, initiative implementation and monitoring of climate finance

Today, we are witnessing a poor involvement of the public of Central Asian countries in decision-making and a decrease in the role of civil society in the development of the state.

Europe has developed effective tools for public participation, such as the Aarhus Convention, to serve as an example of joint efforts of the governments of the region and civil society organizations. Public engagement provides an opportunity to make effective, transparent and inclusive decisions that will have a positive effect on the entire country.

The region already has examples of effective multilateral cooperation in the development and implementation of government programs, in the development of national papers and reports. An example is public participation in the discussion and implementation of the pilot Program on adaptation to climate change in Tajikistan, the activities of the Climate Dialogue Platform in Kyrgyzstan, etc.

To raise the role of public in monitoring and decision-making processes, the following is required:

- Develop and implement specific measures to support civil society and mechanisms for public participation in decision-making.
- Ensure transparency and openness for stakeholder participation in development and implementation of national climate change policies.
- In order to reduce climate risks and improve environmental sustainability, the governments in the region need to improve cooperation with those civil society organizations (CSOs) that work with poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable people.
- Expand the practice of developing the mechanisms for systemic interaction (dialogue platforms, working groups) between people and those government bodies that implement climate and environmental policies, which is an important task of the current times.



Climate Action Network Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia includes 55 NGOs from the region and is a part of the bigger network of more than 1300 CSOs

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