

The 2026-2030 Development Strategy Of The Regional Environmental Centre

for Central Asia



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FOREWARD

Batyr Mammedov

Executive Director
CAREC

This 2026-2030 Development Strategy of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia for 2026-2030 (*thereinafter 'Strategy'*) was developed in response to growing environmental challenges facing the countries of Central Asia — climate change, land degradation, decline in water resources, pollution, ecosystem vulnerability as well as the need to ensure sustainable economic growth within the region's environmental and natural limitations. The Strategy aims to unite the efforts of regional countries and international partners in advancing sustainable development goals and ensuring environmental security.

The Strategy is fully aligned with national strategies and priorities of the Central Asian countries, reflects the provisions of the current environmental programs and frameworks, including the Regional Environmental Protection Program for Sustainable Development of Central Asia, the Low-Carbon Development Strategy, Environmental Codes, Water Codes, and Environmental Protection and Climate Change Adaptation Concepts. At the same time, the Strategy of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (*CAREC*) goes hand in hand with international initiatives and commitments including the UN Agenda for 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (*SDG*), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, UN Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the priorities reflected in the Green Agenda and other initiatives.

Over the years, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia has established itself as a neutral and authoritative body recognized by all the countries in the region for its unique mandate and sustainable institutional foundation. Through its country offices, CAREC maintains close ties with national partners, accounts for local context, and ensures the sustainable implementation of projects at the local level. CAREC actively promotes innovative and digital solutions, including regional knowledge exchange platforms, environmental databases, geoinformation tools, thereby advancing the use of data analysis and artificial intelligence to facilitate evidence-based decision-making. The new Strategy is aimed at further strengthening of the CAREC's role as a regional platform connecting state agencies, academic and scientific communities, civil society, youth, and international organizations in addressing the region's overarching sustainable development goals.

CAREC extends its appreciation to the members of the Board of Governors, representing state agencies, international organizations, civil society organizations, and to its staff for their contribution to the development of this Strategy.

I am certain that CAREC's 2026-2030 Development Strategy will serve as a solid foundation for promoting sustainable development, strengthening regional solidarity, and moving toward an environmentally sustainable future in Central Asia.

INTRODUCTION

This Strategy is an updated policy document aimed at strengthening the organization's contribution to the sustainable development in Central Asia. It builds on the solid foundation laid by the previous 2021-2025 CAREC Strategy and the Concept of Interaction between CAREC and Civil Society Organizations in Central Asia 2020-2025. While preserving continuity in key approaches and tools, the Strategy reflects the changes in the regional and global agenda caused by both new challenges — climate-related, environmental, and economic — as well as the growing expectations of the founding countries, partners, and the population of the region.

The Strategy is a tool designed to channel CAREC's efforts in the areas where the role of the organization can be most beneficial, by strengthening its role as a regional platform, a source of knowledge, and a reliable partner in implementation of sustainable solutions.

The document places particular emphasis on CAREC's institutional and financial sustainability, partnership development, strengthening of the role of country offices as well

as increasing the CAREC's contribution to the implementation of projects with measurable results at local levels. The Strategy focuses on practical approaches and tools, including transboundary and intersectoral partnerships, innovation technologies, nature-based solutions, and human capital development.

The Strategy introduces a new strategic area 'Strengthening of a partnership with civil society organizations ([CSO](#)) to achieve sustainable development goals and environmental safety.' This area reflects the recognition of the key role CSOs play in promoting the environmental agenda, implementing projects at the local level, and mobilizing civic engagement. CAREC will strengthen institutional mechanisms for CSO integration, expand their participation in regional initiatives, and support the development of networks, expertise, and sustainable partnership at the national and international levels.

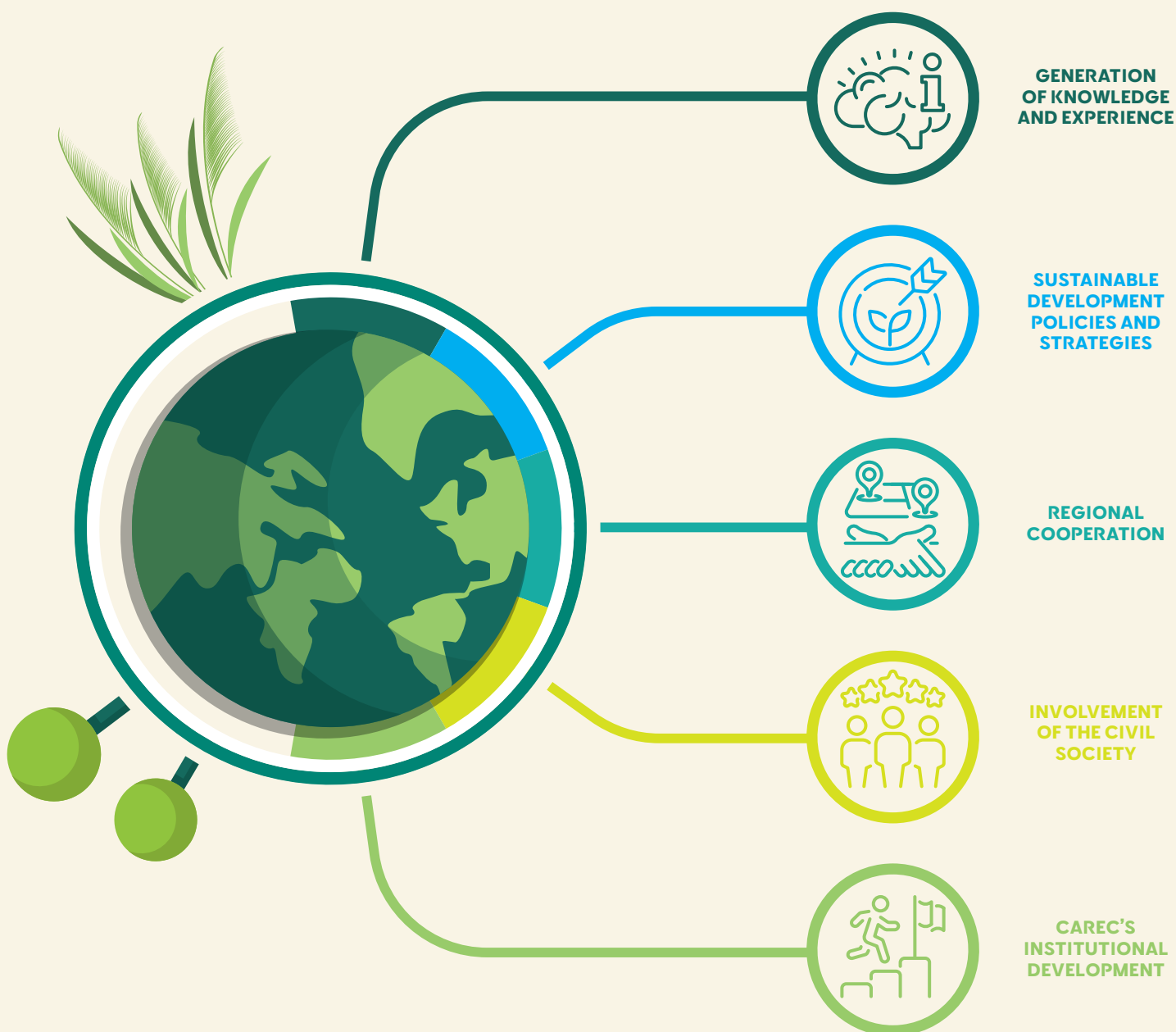
At the same time, CAREC also monitors the strategic priorities of the countries in the region and adapts its approaches to project implementation.

THE MISSION OF THE STRATEGY

Give CAREC a clear direction to follow and priorities to focus on in 2026-2030. The Strategy will help organize the work in such a way as to develop projects focused on key priorities of the countries of Central Asia, coordinated at the regional level and supported by international partners.

2026-2030 CAREC'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In 2026-2030, CAREC's work will be centered around five interrelated priorities, each comprising a goal, key focus area, and expected outcomes. Their implementation is aimed at fostering environmental sustainability, climate adaptation, the effective use of natural resources, and broad societal engagement in the sustainable development of Central Asia.



1. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION APPROACHES AND MECHANISMS

CAREC's Strategy is grounded in a partnership-based and systematic approach that combines regional vision with national priorities and focuses on sustainable transformation.

CAREC's program units draw on accumulated expert experience and focus on delivering relevant regional and global objectives. CAREC's network of country offices ensures close collaboration with partners and effective project implementation at the national level.

Together, this approach facilitates the effective delivery of project solutions and a coordinated response to key environmental and climate-related challenges facing the region.

Project activities remain the primary tool for implementing

CAREC's Strategy, guided by the priorities of the countries in the region, international commitments, and donor interests. CAREC plans to further deepen cooperation with international organizations, governments, the private sector, and civil society. CAREC's Strategy implementation mechanisms rest on a strong institutional foundation supported by local practices, a flexible project structure, sustainable partnerships, and innovative tools — all of which will enable the organization to achieve its goals and make a lasting contribution to Central Asia's environmental agenda. The Strategy will be implemented under the motto: Partnership for sustainable future of Central Asia!



CAREC PROGRAM STRUCTURE

01.

02.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY



Support of adaptation,
emission reduction
and transition to 'green' energy

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT



Environmental policy,
monitoring and environmental
regulation



03.

04.

05.

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH



Reduction of environmental risk
for communities' health
and sustainability

SUPPORT OF WATER INITIATIVES



Effective water resource
management and regional
cooperation

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Raising of environmental
awareness through education,
outreach and youth engagement

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:

Generation of Knowledge, Experience and Evidence Base to Support Informed Decision-Making



The availability of reliable information, scientifically based approaches, and proven solutions is a cornerstone of sustainable development and effective management of water, environmental, and climate-related challenges. In the context of a rapidly changing natural and socio-economic environment, the countries of Central Asia face a growing need for systematic knowledge that enables accurate and timely management decisions. Drawing on its unique regional experience and access to international expertise, CAREC continues to develop as a reliable partner capable of transferring, preserving, and systematizing knowledge. Through this priority, CAREC will build a well-founded, accessible, and practical knowledge base encompassing key aspects of sustainable natural resource use, education for sustainable development, water and climate policy, and the relationship between the environment, public health, and quality of life.

The main goal of this priority is to provide countries of the region, national and local government agencies, the academic and expert community, and international partners with up-to-date knowledge, tested solutions, and analytical materials that facilitate informed and effective decision-making around environmental protection, educational, sustainable natural resource management and adaptation to climate change.

Expected Outcomes:



Improved accessibility and quality of environmental data and analytics for decision making.



Ensured sustainable operation and scalability of regional digital tools (including CACIP) to aggregate data on climate, water resources and biodiversity.



Expanded use of CAREC's research and analytical findings in national strategies and programs.



Strengthened analytical capabilities through the integration of cutting-edge digital solutions and artificial intelligence, enabling better provision of information to countries in the region for decision-making, adaptation, and forecasting.

This strategic priority directly addresses the needs of Central Asian countries in strengthening their scientific, digital and expert base for decision-making, particularly in the areas of climate resilience, transboundary water resource management, ecosystem service evaluation, and sanitary safety.

This area is also fully aligned with the current priorities of donors and partners in the region, including the World Bank, GEF (information systems, climate analytics), UNEP (nature based solutions, circular economy), UNICEF and WHO (water, sanitation, One Health), the European Union and UNDP, (information platforms and analytical support of the transition to Green economy).

Key Focus Areas:

1.1. Piloting, Testing and Scaling of Innovative Approaches, Methods and Technologies.

CAREC will improve implementation of river basin planning and the establishment of river basin councils along small and medium-sized transboundary river basins, with a view of expanding the scope of these activities to large basins across Central Asia. Drawing on many years of accumulated

experience, CAREC will adapt existing basin planning methods, assess institutional and technical needs, and provide support for sustainable and inclusive water resources management with the participation of all stakeholders.

Afghanistan, which largely remains isolated from the international community and development organizations including the UN, continues to represent a strategic interest for the region. In this regard, CAREC will continue to seek opportunities to engage Afghanistan as an observer.

CAREC will also explore new avenues for identifying alternative water sources and implementing innovative approaches to collecting, storing and using precipitation, meltwater, and floodwater, and will evaluate the effectiveness of these water sources.

Reforestation based on landscape diversity and international experience will remain an important focus area, including as a means to combat dust storms and manage the environment. CAREC will also focus on identifying resource-efficient solutions in agriculture and water supply.

Special attention will be paid to the implementation of energy-efficient technologies, the use of renewable energy, and the promotion of rational energy consumption practices in agriculture and the water sector. These measures aim to reduce the carbon footprint, optimize resources, and strengthen the energy security of Central Asian countries.

Within this focus area, CAREC will continue to implement regional and country components of the RESILAND CA+ program, the World Bank's flagship initiative aimed at improving landscape resilience, restoring degraded land, preserving ecosystem services, and strengthening community resilience to the impacts of climate change. Special attention will be paid to nature-based solutions, the integration of climate risk into water and land use planning, and the engagement of local communities in the development and implementation of pilot measures. Lessons learned will be used to replicate best practices in other counties and basins of the region. These approaches are particularly important in the context of supporting the priorities of national adaptation plans (NAP) of the CA countries, as well as the interests of international partners such as GCF, World Bank, and GIZ, in sustainable management and transboundary coordination of climate action.

At pilot sites, CAREC will support the introduction of ecosystem services and natural capital assessment in order to demonstrate their practical significance for sustainable development. Economic and environmental justifications will be integrated into decision-making processes at the project and policy levels.

Within the framework of the Regional Climate Action Transparency Hub, a system of indicators will be developed to monitor and evaluate adaptation measures in accordance with the Global adaptation goals and national priorities of the countries of Central Asia.

A set of projects will be implemented addressing adaptation to and mitigation of climate change impacts, including sustainable agriculture, ecosystem restoration, and the protection of vulnerable territories from climate-related risks.

In close coordination with other focus areas, CAREC will develop projects at the confluence of ecology, human health,

and veterinary science, promoting One Health principles. Water and sanitation will be treated as key factors affecting the health of the population. CAREC plans to hold events aimed at ensuring access to clean water, improving sanitary conditions, raising awareness and implementing prevention measures at the community level.

Within this focus area, CAREC will direct its efforts toward ensuring that countries in the region have access to cutting-edge technologies, promoting and providing training on the use of AI and digital solutions as cross-cutting technology tools to strengthen the analytical base, improve forecast accuracy, and support decision making in climate, water resource, and ecosystem management. These will be practical activities focused on demonstrating and deploying proven innovative solutions from global leaders based on the principles of accountability and transparency.

1.2. Knowledge Database Development.

CAREC will continue to form and develop a regional information infrastructure through specialized thematic web platforms, regular content updates, and knowledge dissemination. CAREC's information resources will be expanded with new publications, analytical reviews, research materials, methodological documents, and online-seminar recordings addressing the current challenges and needs of Central Asian countries.

A key element will be the improvement and expansion of the functionality of the Central Asia Climate Information Platform (**CACIP**), a digital resource providing centralized access to reliable climate and climate-related data. Successfully launched during the previous strategic period, the platform will continue to develop as a regional 'one window' resource for climate data, bringing together information from global, national, and local sources. In improving CACIP, CAREC will integrate external analytical tools, expand datasets through partnerships with relevant sources, enhance the user interface, and strengthen integration with other information systems and platforms across the region.

CACIP's user-friendly interface will ensure convenient navigation and centralized access to global and regional databases. The platform will serve as an information hub aggregating links to cutting-edge visualization tools, climate risk maps, and specialized analytical systems (including external

predictive analytics resources), making it easier for stakeholders to find the information they need. The platform will be a valuable tool for the scientific community, state agencies, and a wide range of stakeholders.

Using new technologies, CAREC's web resources will be enhanced with data visualization tools to clearly present project results, including their contribution to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. This will not only improve the visibility of CAREC's development projects but also improve the quality of engagement with partners and donors.

The https://riverbp.net/ru/education/trainings_platform will be expanded to include new training courses and webinars on topics of current relevance, including river basin planning, integrated water resource management (**IWRM**), the establishment and operation of river basin councils, water quality management, the Nexus approach, and the link between the environment and public health.

Additionally, CAREC's web resources will be adapted for a wide range of users, including civil society representatives, students, experts, and the general public. The platforms will provide access to successful projects, participant stories, and interactive materials, increasing CAREC's openness, recognition, and practical relevance for different user groups. CAREC's web resources will also be tailored to the priorities of the donor community, raising awareness of CAREC's achievements while also improving engagement with potential partners and investors.

As part of the ongoing development of the Eurasian River Basin Management Portal, a dedicated online space will be created for certified courses, specifically, on climate resilience, integrated into water resource management (IWRM), tailored to the needs of river basin (water management) organizations.

Consequently, the system of CAREC's web resources will become not just a knowledge base, but a living tool for interaction, training, and decision-making for experts, policymakers, academics, and civil society throughout the region.

1.3. Ensuring Decision Making and Practical Measure Implementation Processes by Means of Analytical and Practical Support.

The rapid development of artificial intelligence is driving fundamental changes in approaches to data analysis, forecast-

ing, and executive decision-making worldwide. In the face of increasingly complex climate, environmental, and socio-economic challenges, countries and international organizations increasingly rely on AI as a tool for improving the accuracy, timeliness and feasibility of decisions. Realizing these global shifts and the need to keep pace with them, CAREC considers AI an important element in modernizing analytical and expert activities, and will promote knowledge and international best practices in the use of AI for decision-making across CA countries.

CAREC will continue to build the expertise in preparation of analytical, assessment, and methodological materials that will serve as practical tools for decision-makers, as well as for a wide range of users, including civil society representatives, farmers, technical experts, and company employees. These documents will not only inform but also act as practical guidelines helping users implement effective, environmentally sustainable, and economically viable solutions.

Leveraging its accumulated experience, regional knowledge, and established partner relations, CAREC will expand the range of services it offers, including assistance in formulating project proposals and developing pilot projects for the practical testing of new solutions and technologies. Special attention will be paid to the accessibility and practical value of all materials. Documents will be prepared in a clear and accessible format, with clear recommendations and action steps tailored to different user categories from politicians and managers to civil society organization representatives, farmers, and field specialists.

CAREC will continue to develop and improve skills of drafting each document, including organization of internal meetings and external workshops on how to draft documents, visualize data and apply modern approaches to knowledge communication.

1.4. Organization of training events for capacity building and practical application of new approaches.

CAREC will continue its systematic work to build the capacities of key stakeholders, including staff members of sectoral ministries and relevant agencies, representatives of non-governmental organizations, academic and expert communities, and media, as well as women's networks, youth groups, and business representatives. Training events will be aimed at developing practical skills in using modern tools, technol-

ogies, and approaches in sustainable natural resource management and response to climate challenges.

Special attention will be given to the following:



Measurement, reporting and monitoring of national climate goals and commitments, including those based on international methodologies;



Greenhouse gas inventory to ensure data transparency;



The use of integrated water resource management and river basing planning at different management levels;



The use of economic tools such as ecosystem service assessment, cost-benefit analysis, and the calculation of the cost of inaction ;



Adoption of new digital, analytical, and online tools in the sphere of environment, sustainable land use, water security, and climate change adaptation;



Introduction of sustainable consumption and production practices (SCPP), strengthening of the 'circular' economy in CA countries;



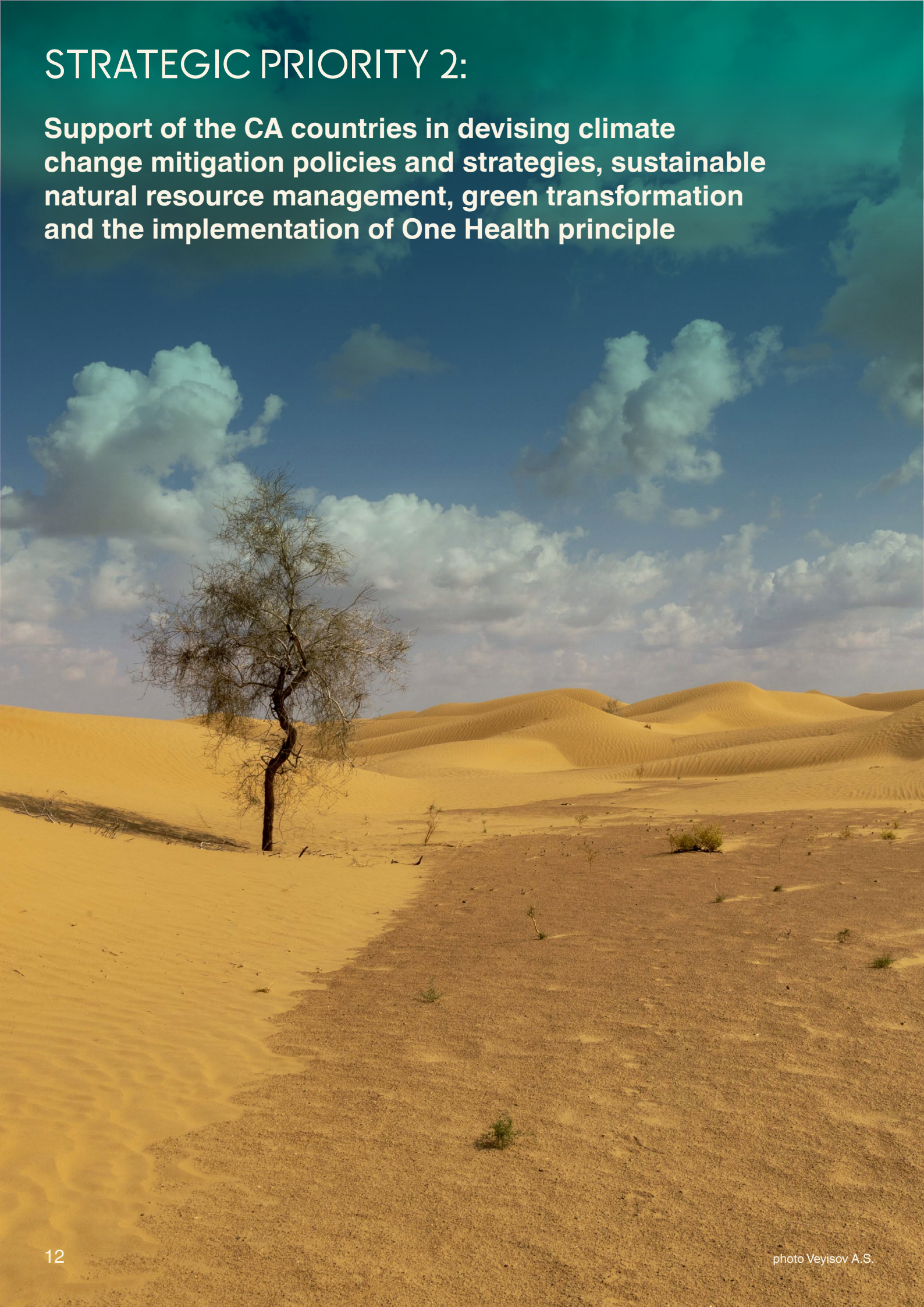
Ecosystem-based approaches to health protection by introducing ecosystem restoration and preservation practices that contribute to health risk reduction;

All training workshops will be designed with consideration of country priorities and participants' preparation level, and will include practical examples and simulation of real-life scenarios. Training materials will be published on CAREC's relevant information portals freely accessible to all stakeholders.

Regional cooperation among Central Asian countries will also be strengthened through the development of horizontal links, exchange of practical experience, and joint training. Special attention will be given to organizing internships, study tours, and professional visits for specialists across different sectors. These forms of interaction will help strengthen professional competencies, promote dissemination of cutting-edge solutions, and foster a regional community of practitioners united by shared approaches to addressing environmental and climate challenges.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:

Support of the CA countries in devising climate change mitigation policies and strategies, sustainable natural resource management, green transformation and the implementation of One Health principle



Climate change, the degradation of natural resources, and growing environmental risks are increasingly compelling the countries of Central Asia to transition to sustainable environmental management. At the same time, the existence of well thought-through, comprehensive, and coordinated regional policies that reflect national priorities remains the most important prerequisite for successfully tackling these challenges. With extensive experience in dialogue facilitation, solution development, and regional initiative support, CAREC plays a key role in assisting the countries of the region in this process. The emphasis is placed not only on environment and land use issues, but also on close ties between education, health, sanitary safety, and quality of life, particularly in the context of climate change.

The goal of this priority is to provide methodological, technical, and expert assistance to the countries of Central Asia in their effort to devise and implement environment-driven regional strategies and policies. This encompasses not only assistance with adaptation and climate change mitigation, but also a transition to sustainable land use models, integration of international commitments into national programs, and awareness-raising and engagement of a wide range of stakeholders.

Expected outcomes:



Tools for integrating green economy principles and climate adaptation are developed and implemented.



Institutional preparedness of the CA countries to implement climate commitments is improved.



Cross-sectoral cooperation on climate change and One Health is strengthened.

CAREC will continue to support the countries in achieving the goals defined in the national low carbon development strategies, nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and other climate-related documents. This will be achieved by facilitation of fund raising for projects aimed at capacity building, by technical assistance, and the development of practical mechanisms for implementing climate commitments.

Support will be provided based on national priorities of each country, within the overall framework of CAREC's program initiatives and mandate. The main emphasis will be placed on practical knowledge application, institutional capacity building, and the strengthening of cross-sectoral cooperation across the region.

Key Focus Areas:

2.1. Landscape preservation and restoration.

As a regional organization, CAREC facilitates regional dialogue, develops regional online databases, and devises regional policies and guidelines to harmonize efforts of CA countries in preserving and restoring landscapes, including degraded lands, forest ecosystems, and pastures. These measures will take into account not only environmental but also socioeconomic aspects, including sustainable agriculture and the engagement of local communities, and will be implemented primarily through national executive authorities and partner structures across the region. These mea-

sures are aligned with programs of donors like the World Bank, GEF, FAO and RESILAND CA+, and support implementation of regional commitments under UNCCD and SDG.

2.2. Promotion of the understanding of the ties between the environment, public health and veterinary

Special attention will be given to strengthening understanding the ties between the state of the environment and human and animal health. The growing prevalence of zoonotic infections, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), deteriorating food security, and the impacts of climate change require a comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach. In this regard, CAREC will implement an integrated 'One Health' approach, globally recognized as an effective tool for preventing and responding to transboundary sanitary-epidemiological and biological threats.

Acting as a regional coordinator and Secretariat of the One-Health Program in Central Asia, CAREC will support the development of national and regional mechanisms for cooperation between key sectors, including public health, veterinary science, environmental protection, agriculture, and sanitary and phytosanitary control.

2.3. Climate-related disaster risk mitigation.

Climate risk mitigation will also be a priority. In line with the main objectives of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), CAREC will continue to assess vulnerabilities to climate-related disasters, including droughts and dust storms, and will assist countries in developing national and local adaptation plans. The creation of an online catalogue of climate-related disasters at the regional level will serve as an important tool and catalyst for mitigating risks related to climate disasters.

2.4. Promoting Compliance with International Environmental Conventions.

Where needed, CAREC will provide methodological and organizational assistance to the countries of the region on issues related to implementation of international environmental conventions, including UNFCCC, the Ramsar Convention, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Convention to Combat Desertification, and the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions. Within its capacities and mandate, CAREC can facilitate experience exchange, coordination of activities between countries, and the dissemination of information and best practices aimed at harmonizing approaches. CAREC will also provide expert support to Central Asian countries in the preparation and updating of their NDCs, including the alignment of national priorities, stakeholder engagement, and integration with climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. Such support will promote greater coordination among Central Asian countries in international environmental processes and improve transparency in the fulfillment of their respective commitments.

2.5. Climate finance capacity building.

In the context of growing demand for access to international financial mechanisms, CAREC will provide expert and methodological assistance to the countries of Central Asia in developing a more systematic approach to mobilizing climate resources. Although CAREC does not develop investment projects or receive direct funding for these purposes from countries or inter-

national funds, it can assist with the analysis of climate-related risks, preliminary design of project ideas, assessment of funding potential, and exchange of best practices where needed.

Within the framework of existing resources and programs, CAREC intends to strengthen cooperation with national coordination structures, development banks, and international partners, and to support capacity building of government and non-governmental organizations in preparing project applications. The countries of the region will play a key role in defining their own priorities and drafting applications to mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund, and others.

2.6. Promoting the role of women in sustainable development.

Gender equality is a cross-cutting principle underpinning all of CAREC's activities and is integrated into all programs, projects, and internal policies of the organization. By embedding gender perspectives across all areas of work and by supporting women's networks and platforms, CAREC creates opportunities for developing leadership skills and promoting the active participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels, from local to regional.

Particular emphasis is placed on expanding the role of women in environmental and climate initiatives, water resource management, climate change adaptation, and the promotion of water diplomacy. CAREC considers the participation of women a key factor in project sustainability, the strengthening of inclusion, and the improvement of the effectiveness of implemented solutions.

Gender and women's participation indicators are reflected in CAREC's project documents and programs, making it possible to track results and ensure the practical application of gender principles across the organization's activities.

2.7. Involvement of academic institutions.

CAREC will continue to strengthen cooperation with academic institutions across the region, promoting mutual integration and the exchange of experience. Special attention will be given to joint research and the development of educational programs and courses on sustainable development, climate change, the environment, public health, and hygiene. This work will promote a systemic knowledge transfer and the development of a new generation of experts with cross-disciplinary competencies, capable of working effectively in a cross-sectoral environment.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:

Development of the regional cooperation based on national priorities and experience, with an emphasis on joint decision-making



In the coming strategic period, CAREC will focus its efforts on transforming existing dialogue platforms into practice-oriented mechanisms of regional cooperation. These will serve as a tool for aligning approaches, improving transparency, strengthening trust, and monitoring the implementation of previously agreed initiatives. Despite differences in national strategies and institutional capacities, the countries of Central Asia face common environmental challenges and possess significant shared experience that can serve as a foundation for consolidated regional decision-making.

CAREC will also develop systematic cooperation with the existing regional structures, including ICSD, IFAS, and other sustainable development and natural resource management organizations. Such cooperation will help ensure a more coordinated approach, better experience exchange, and stronger support for local initiatives at the regional level.

Regional events coordinated by CAREC will go beyond information exchange, becoming platforms for progress review, commitment-setting, mutual learning, and the scaling of successful sustainable and transboundary cooperation practices.

In the context of rapid climate and technological change, the digital and informational integration of the region is becoming increasingly relevant. Fragmented monitoring systems and limited exchange of data, research findings, and analytics hinder effective responses to transboundary climate and environmental threats. Despite shared climate challenges and common transboundary risks, the Central Asian countries remain poorly integrated in the area of monitoring, modelling, and data sharing.

Informational integration of the region is essential for strengthening Central Asia's climate resilience.. CAREC's digital platforms, such as CACIP, can play a key role as a unified digital platform enabling data and knowledge exchange and providing shared access to analytical tools. The creation of a shared digital information space, based on the principle of openness, trust and data and knowledge exchange, must become a cornerstone of regional cooperation, as it will strengthen regional cohesion and the effectiveness of adaptation policy.

This priority addresses the need of Central Asian countries to develop coordinated policies on transboundary challenges spanning climate, water, health, and digital sovereignty. These areas are fully aligned with the agenda of international partners, including the EU, OSCE, ADB, UNECE in regional diplomacy, water and climate cooperation), UNDP, UNEP, FAO in sustainable data management, ecosystem restoration, transboundary platforms, GCF, the World Bank, and GEF in climate monitoring digitalization and joint regional applications. Regional digital platforms can also provide infrastructural support for new regional programs and coalitions, and serve as a means for the region to engage actively in global forums.

The goal of this priority is to transform CAREC's regional events and activities into platforms of practical cooperation that not only facilitate knowledge exchange but also generate sustainable solutions and mechanisms for joint regional program implementation. This approach represents a shift away from the format of 'technical' conferences toward sustained regional dialogue aimed at achieving measurable outcomes.

Expected outcomes:



Sustainable regional platforms established on key environmental issues.



Expanded participation of Central Asian countries in joint projects and initiatives.



Strengthened regional trust and knowledge exchange between countries and stakeholders.

CAREC's regional dialogue processes and activities on digital information integration will be aimed at uniting the countries of the region around shared goals such as climate resilience, ecosystem restoration, water resource management, public health, and education. The approach is based on regional integration, a strengthened role for the private sector, an expanded range of stakeholders, and a focus on joint action.

Key Focus Areas:

3.1. Organization of the Annual Central Asia Climate Change Conference (CACCC).

The Central Asia Climate Change Conference is an annual mechanism for coordinating regional efforts to promote climate-resilient development. CAREC provides organizational, analytical, and policy support, with a focus on ensuring that the Conference not only takes stock of progress but also serves as a basis for coordinating the positions of Central Asian countries, sharing achievements, identifying gaps, and facilitating joint decision-making. The Conference will continue to serve as a platform for presenting a unified regional vision at global climate forums, including the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties, as well as a means of advancing joint projects and initiatives on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

3.2. Organization of annual One Health/Health and Environment conferences.

In parallel, CAREC will hold an annual specialized conference dedicated to the One Health (One Health/Health and Environment), bringing together experts in ecology, public health, veterinary science, hygiene, sanitation, and sustainable natural resource use.. The conference will serve as a focal point for cross-sectoral dialogue, where participants can discuss the relationship between environmental conditions and public health risks, identify systematic gaps, and develop coordinated responses to shared challenges in line with the One Health concept. Special emphasis will be placed on the

development of evidence-based strategies, early response mechanisms, exchange of best practices, and transboundary cooperation.

3.3. Implementation of the Central Asian Leadership Program (CALP) on environment for sustainable development.

The leadership program organized by CAREC will continue to develop a new generation of professionals with knowledge and skills in sustainable development, climate diplomacy, transboundary water cooperation, and natural resource management. Special emphasis is placed on engaging both young experts and government officials, academics, and civil society representatives who are poised to become drivers of change in the region.. Program participants not only receive training but also build a strong alumni network capable of taking collective action at the regional level.

3.4. Organization of thematic regional dialogues.

Thematic dialogues focused on developing practical solutions to key challenges will be an important element of CAREC's regional work. Topics will range from the restoration of resilient landscapes and combatting land degradation to improving integrated water resource management practices, including water quality monitoring and cooperation between water management agencies. A dedicated dialogue will address the modernization of environmental education, both formal and informal, and the development of core sustainable development skills across different population groups.. Another focus area will explore the relationship between the environment and public health, including disease prevention, hygiene, and sanitary infrastructure in the context of climate change.

Through these initiatives, CAREC will build a coherent system of regional interaction, ensuring the joint advancement of strategic decisions based on scientific evidence, best practices, and the shared interests of the countries in the region.

3.5. Strengthening regional digital-information integration.

CAREC considers the strengthening of digital tools as an important driver of sustainable development in the region. Special emphasis will be placed not only on the modernization of existing platforms, primarily CACIP, but also on the creation of new technological platforms for data and knowledge processing, exchange, and dissemination, as well as the integration of geoinformation systems, predictive analytics, and currently isolated databases. Expanding the digital infrastructure will enable countries in the region to draw on shared data for risk assessment, adaptation planning, and joint strategy development.

A key tool in this regard is the Central Asia Climate Information Portal, which should continue to evolve as a region-

al digital hub — an aggregator of not only climate related but also broader environmental data — ensuring the collection and exchange of information between countries and reflecting CAREC's regional role and activities in the digital space.

Efforts will also be undertaken to develop a concept for the CAREC Digital Climate Lab, a virtual platform designed to expand the exchange of data and analytics. The Lab will serve as a platform for identifying, demonstrating, and adapting existing cutting-edge digital solutions from global leaders, including artificial intelligence tools, to support decision-making in the interest of Central Asian countries.

Digital infrastructure expansion will be combined with human capital development: regional experts, analysts, government officials, and civil society representatives will be granted access to state-of-the-art digital tools and training in their use. This will help strengthen data analysis, improve cross-sectoral and country-level coordination, and foster a robust expert community across the region.

3.6. Interparliamentary cooperation platform development.

CAREC will develop the 'Dialogue of Parliamentarians of Central Asia' initiative as a sustainable platform of political support for regional initiatives on sustainable development, waste management, water resources, and climate change. The platform will ensure the engagement of legislative bodies in decision-making process, improve transparency, strengthen cross-agency coordination, and promote coordinated initiatives within the framework of regional and global dialogue. Parliamentary forums and the preparation of analytical materials will be held on a regular basis, alongside the expansion of the parliamentary network supporting the environmental agenda across the region.

3.7. Strengthening cooperation with regional institutions.

CAREC will seek opportunities to elevate its cooperation with the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (EC IFAS) and the Intergovernmental Commission on Sustainable Development. With over 25 years of experience in development project implementation, CAREC is well positioned to become an indispensable partner to these intergovernmental organizations — which carry out a political function in Central Asia — for the technical implementation of regional activities.

The Regional Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction (CESDRR) will become a new regional partner for CAREC. The two organizations will combine their expertise and capabilities to develop and promote the use of a regional catalogue of mudslide and flood events, as well as a regional roadmap for mitigating the impact of mudslides and flash floods in Central Asia.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4:

Strengthening Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals and Environmental Safety



CAREC views civil society organizations (CSOs) as key partners in promoting sustainable development, addressing environmental challenges, and shaping an inclusive regional agenda. Strengthening dialogue, expanding CSO engagement in the development and implementation of environmental initiatives, building their capacities, and fostering cooperation with government agencies will contribute to the effective implementation of CAREC's Development Strategy for 2026-2030.

As part of this initiative, CAREC will seek to participate in public councils and advisory committees under state agencies, providing expert opinion and ensuring that public perspectives are reflected in the process of environmental policy development and implementation. CAREC will also support the capacity-building of CSOs and facilitate their involvement in decision-making processes related to environmental protection and sustainable development. In addition, cooperation with the private sector is considered an important element of partnership with CSOs, aimed at promoting green technologies, corporate responsibility, and joint initiatives in the field of sustainable development.

The goal of this priority is to strengthen sustainable and constructive engagement with CSOs in Central Asia in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development. CAREC will continue to promote CSO involvement in regional dialogues, knowledge exchange, and the development of coordinated solutions. CAREC seeks to create an enabling environment in which civil society can actively contribute to the environmental agenda and advance sustainable approaches at the regional level.

Expected outcomes:



Improved participation of CSOs in the implementation of environmental initiatives.



Expanded regional networks and youth platforms on sustainable development.



Strengthened role of CSOs in public monitoring and advocacy for environmental policy.

Special emphasis will be placed on expanding CSO involvement in CAREC's strategic, expert, and communication platforms, and on reinforcing their role as local advocates for practical solutions.

Key Focus Areas:

4.1. Institutional partnership for a wider and more sustainable CSOs' involvement in CAREC's regional initiatives.

CAREC views CSOs as an integral part of its institutional ecosystem. As part of this initiative, CAREC will continue to engage CSO representatives in advisory groups, Board of Governors meetings, and strategic forums. Regular dialogues and consultations between CAREC and CSO are planned, particularly at the level of country offices (Annex 3). This approach will not only ensure that the needs and initiatives of the civil sector are duly considered, but will also strengthen trust and deepen CSO engagement in decision making at the regional level.

4.2. Promoting the dissemination of environmental knowledge and practices through the involvement of CSOs.

CSOs maintain an extensive network of contacts and possess a unique capacity to work directly with local communities, farmers, small and medium-sized enterprises, and local authorities. CAREC will also engage CSOs in project implementation, donor negotiations, and the dissemination of environmental information and sustainable natural resource management practices.

CAREC plans to implement information campaigns, educational and research initiatives, awareness-raising events, and communication projects through active CSO participation. Digital tools, including social media, knowledge exchange platforms, multimedia products, and local mass media, will also be utilized, with due consideration given to linguistic and cultural specificities of the countries of the region. In this way, CSOs serve as an effective channel for delivering CAREC's expert and project materials directly to end users at the local level.

4.3. Development of joint project activities and demonstration of initiatives.

CAREC and CSOs will pursue joint projects in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development, including through participation in grant competitions and international tenders. Collaboration will be central to this effort, enabling the demonstration of effective solutions in areas such as water management, reforestation, waste management, sustainable agriculture, and community climate resilience. Joint projects will not only help to scale best practices but will also strengthen CSOs' professional capacity, expand the geographic reach of their activities, and increase access to additional sources of funding.

4.4. Strengthening of the CSOs' role in dialogues, platform-based work and resource mobilization.

Where possible, CAREC will support CSO involvement in regional and international forums, negotiations, and conferences, including within the framework of the Rio Conventions and other key processes. Both organizational and content-based support will be provided, including guidance on and facilitation of coalition-building.

Special emphasis will be placed on integrating CSOs into CAREC's platform mechanisms, such as CACIP, CALP, and others. The joint advancement of interests within the donor community will be another important priority — both for CSOs and for CAREC — encompassing information sharing on grant opportunities, joint presentations, and support for CSO representatives in international dialogues.

CAREC's country offices will play a central role in this process by maintaining regular engagement with CSOs in their respective countries, coordinating this work, and fostering the development of a three-party CSO-Government-CAREC partnership.

In addition, CAREC will promote the participation of non-governmental organizations in the development and implementation of regional initiatives and programs, ensuring their involvement at all stages — from the generation of ideas to the evaluation of results. This will help strengthen horizontal linkages between CSOs, increase transparency in project implementation, and expand public support for the Regional Environmental Agenda.

Partnership and collaboration with civil society organizations represent a central thread running throughout

CAREC's 2026-2030 Development Strategy. The commitment is reflected not only

in the definition of objectives and implementation measures, but also in approaches to regional cooperation, human capital development, communications, project implementation, and long-term sustainability. The Strategy is based on the recognition that sustainable development goals in Central Asia cannot be achieved without the active participation and strengthened role of CSOs as full-fledged partners.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5:

Strengthening of institutional mechanisms and management systems within CAREC for effective implementation of the Strategy



Effective implementation of strategic objectives is impossible without a sustainable, transparent, and flexible internal management system. In light of an expanding mandate and growing expectations from member countries and partners, CAREC will continue to strengthen its institutional framework and management mechanisms. This priority reflects the organization's commitment to the professionalization of processes, enhancement of accountability, and completion of ongoing reforms to ensure a stable foundation for the long-term implementation of CAREC's mission.

The goal of this priority is to ensure sustainability and manageability of CAREC as a regional organization through modernization of internal processes, increased transparency, strengthened collaboration with the Board of Governors (BG), and the development of country offices, as well as through completion of institutional reforms initiated during the previous strategic cycle.

Expected outcomes:



Increased financial sustainability and diversified sources of funding for CAREC



Strengthened organizational and staffing capabilities of country offices.



Adopted quality control and implementation monitoring system for the Strategy.

This work is aimed at building a professional, ethically robust, and strategy-oriented management that will allow CAREC to adapt to new challenges, meet the expectations of founding states and donors, and fulfill its commitments at the highest organizational level.

Key Focus Areas:

5.1. Institutional strengthening.

The Board of Governors (BG) plays a key role in CAREC's strategic development. In the upcoming period, CAREC will foster constructive cooperation with the BG, drawing on its support in addressing key strategic challenges related to funding of CAREC's initiatives. In particular, members of the Board of Governors will actively represent CAREC's interests on international platforms, and engage with donors, and undertake the following responsibilities:



Participate in the development and coordination of development strategies, policies, program priorities;



Participate in discussions of focus areas and key initiatives;



Analyze and evaluate reports on project results and independent assessment conclusions;



Ensure political and institutional ties with national agencies and international organizations, creating a political 'window of opportunity' for implementation of initiatives;



Assist in coordinating joint initiatives, platforms, and regional positions;



Ensure compliance with the principles of neutrality, transparency, and regional balance.

In order to enhance BG's effectiveness, functions, obligations, and standards of conduct will be defined in consultation with Board members. Upon joining the Board, each member will be formally informed of and agree to these standards. Both BG members and CAREC staff are expected to adhere to the organization's policy and regulations.

As part of institutional strengthening, special attention will be paid to the role of the country offices, which are central in implementation of the Strategy at the national level. The country offices ensure the adaptation of regional initiatives to the national context, promote the practical implementation of solutions, and maintain communications with state agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, and other partners to support the successful implementation of regional projects. Country offices play an active role in expanding the project portfolio, preparing project applications and advancing new initiatives. Communications with the head office will be strengthened during preparation of project applications in order to build the capacities of country offices, including the involvement of subject-matter experts from CAREC's head office. This will ensure synergy, improve the quality of project proposals, and reinforce the position of country offices within the project implementation system.

5.2. Human resource management.

The purpose of this activity is to establish a personnel management system that supports the development of a professional and motivated team at CAREC. An effective HR system must ensure the achievement of organizational objectives, reduced staff turnover, a strengthened corporate culture, and increased employee engagement and competencies at all levels.

To achieve these goals, CAREC will improve its HR policy, continue its regular employee evaluation system, and standardize staff training and development processes. In particular, the employee development plan will be improved to include clearly defined objectives, implementation timelines, responsible individuals, and expected outcomes. Preparation of this plan will become an annual responsibility of the HR manager, and its implementation will be reviewed by the management team.

The development and implementation of measures to reduce staff turnover will be a key priority. These measures will be informed by an analysis of the reasons for departures, competitive remuneration, and the availability of career development opportunities within the organization. CAREC will monitor the implementation of the relevant strategy on a regular basis.

The training needs assessment procedure will be supplemented by a staff feedback collection mechanism. The annual training plan will cover two key areas : 1) project cycle and budget management, procurement and expert engagement procedures, business ethics and conflict of interest prevention, as well as cybersecurity and digital skills; and 2) development of the professional competencies specific to each employee's role and specialization, for example Google tools, AI applications in project-related activities, analytical tools, online platforms, and design software.

Through these measures, CAREC will establish a modern, strategy-oriented human resource management system

capable of ensuring organizational resilience in a rapidly changing context.

5.3. Improving financial resource management efficiency.

The goal of this focus area is to enhance CAREC's financial management system in full alignment, with international standards, donor requirements, and the organization's internal objectives. The main focus will be given to optimizing the financial management structure, harmonizing internal regulatory documents, implementing modern digital accounting and budgeting tools, and mitigating financial and operational risks..

One of the key steps will be the completion of the transition to the updated 3.0 version of the 1C accounting system with the implementation of the Bitrix module. This will enable the consolidation of budgeting and financial accounting processes on a unified digital platform. The introduction of standardized project budget templates will facilitate the automation of planning, approval, execution, and control processes, while improving transparency at all stages of the financial cycle.

Taken together, these measures will result in the establishment of a modern, sustainable, and manageable financial administration system. This system will allow CAREC to effectively manage the project portfolio, minimize financial risks and strengthen institutional sustainability in the long run.

5.4. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system development.

The development of a unified system of monitoring and evaluation (M&E), which will consolidate information and statistics across all projects of all CAREC's organizational units, is a key prerequisite for understanding the organization's performance and its contribution to global sustainable development goals, regional and national priorities, and CAREC's own strategic goals. The goal of this initiative is to create an automated, user-friendly system capable of not only collecting and storing project data and outcomes, but also generating project profiles, analytical reports, and infographics on CAREC's work.

Going forward, the system will be expanded to incorporate business analytics and automated data visualization tools. This will enable real-time tracking of key project performance indicators, the generation of visual reports for donors and management, and timely identification of deviations from project deadlines or budgets.

In addition, an internal corporate culture will be cultivated among staff, with a focus on the systematic documentation, analysis, and recording of project results.

Special emphasis will be placed on integrating the M&E platform with the existing 1C financial system. This will enable a direct comparison of progress toward CAREC's strategic goals with financial flows and project outcomes, significantly enhancing analytical capabilities for managerial decision-making.

In parallel, a dedicated training program will be established to support employees in learning the new system and improving overall proficiency in monitoring and evaluation. This training will be incorporated into the annual professional development program.

5.5. Ensuring CAREC's financial sustainability.

Financial sustainability is one of the key prerequisites for the effective and long-term implementation of CAREC's mandate. The goal of this focus area is to establish a reliable, flexible, and balanced financial model that ensures the organization's operational stability, consistent fulfillment of commitments, and the independent achievement of strategic priorities.

To this end, CAREC plans to develop new revenue streams tailored to different types of clients, partners, and financial mechanisms. Sustainability in this context is understood not only as a budgetary sufficiency, but as the organization's ability to promptly respond to external changes while maintaining the quality of projects and institutional activities.

As part of this focus area, a comprehensive assessment of potential funding sources consistent with the organization's mandate and values will be conducted. This assessment will encompass both national and international donor programs, as well as private and mixed partnership arrangements, including, but not limited to, commissioned research, program support, and consulting services.

Based on the findings, a Road Map for the diversification of funding sources will be developed, identifying potential partners, their priorities and requirements, and areas where CAREC can offer its services. Special attention will be given to the analysis of risks and opportunities related to the diversification of sources of funding.

Given the growing competition over donor resources and the increasing presence of other international organizations in the region, CAREC will improve the quality of its project proposals and work to consolidate its position as the leading regional operator. In this regard, continued engagement with the BG will be of particular importance, specifically with respect to strategic support, assistance in advancing project initiatives at the country level, and coordination of key priorities. This will ensure a more coordinated approach to the mobilization of resources and strengthen the organization's long-term international sustainability.

3. COLLABORATION PROPOSALS FROM COUNTRIES

In order to better account for the specific nature and needs of the countries of the region, CAREC adapts its approaches and initiatives in line with national priorities. This approach strengthens the practical relevance of CAREC's activities and facilitates targeted work with state agencies, scientific institutions, NGOs, and local practitioners. As part of the 2026–2030 Strategy, CAREC will continue to provide support, promote the exchange of experience, and strengthen partnerships across the countries of Central Asia.

The Republic of Kazakhstan



CAREC will continue strategic collaboration with Kazakhstan, given the country's active role in promoting the regional environmental agenda. Kazakhstan regards CAREC as a key partner in developing a regional initiative portfolio and implementing climate-related projects in collaboration with the Green Climate Fund. In addition, CAREC will support the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan in organizing the Regional Environmental Summit scheduled for 2026. The Summit will serve as an important platform for the exchange of experience and discussion of joint decisions in the areas of sustainable natural resource use, climate change adaptation, and the strengthening of cross-country cooperation in the region. Thematically, it is proposed that the next CACCC focus on the practical implementation of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) by the countries of Central Asia and practical the engagement of the private sector in the climate agenda.

CSO cooperation plans

More than 400 environmental NGOs operate in Kazakhstan, which play an important role in environmental protection. Strategic areas of cooperation include:



Environmental education and public awareness raising on environmental challenges and solutions



Participation in the development of an environmental legislation, including expert review and advocacy for environmentally significant draft laws.



Biodiversity conservation, including support for specially protected natural areas and the implementation of rare species preservation projects.



Addressing climate change through greenhouse gas emissions and climate change adaptation measures.

The most active NGOs such as Ecoforum, the Association of Environmental Organizations of Kazakhstan, and the Green Economy Coalition, coordinate their efforts to ensure effective engagement with state agencies and the business community.

The Republic of Uzbekistan

Institutional development of environmental policy, reclamation of degraded lands, and the expansion of transboundary cooperation remain priorities for Uzbekistan. As part of the Resilient CA+ project, CAREC plans to support the drafting of the Environmental and Forest Codes of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as an Environmental Code for the countries of Central Asia. A technology for the restoration of highland pasture restoration on forest reserve lands will be developed and piloted. To strengthen regional ties, a cross-border Friendship Garden tree nursery is to be established across the three countries of the Ferghana valley — Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. In addition, CAREC will support the promotion of new project proposals aimed at the practical application and the achievement of sustainable results.

CSO cooperation plans

According to the Ministry of Justice of Uzbekistan and open registries, approximately 120-150 environmental NGOs are registered in the country, encompassing organizations focused on nature conservation, rational water use, climate adaptation, youth engagement, gender initiatives, and support for farmers and local communities.

The action plan going forward is structured around three key areas:



Development of a partnership network of NGOs and the creation of a sustainable 'interaction ecosystem'.



NGO capacity building through training, involvement in existing projects, and advisory support.



Integration of NGOs into CAREC's practical activities and future projects of the ADB, the WB, Islamic Development Bank, and other donors.

This approach combines concrete, resource-efficient steps with a long-term strategy for strengthening civic engagement.



The Kyrgyz Republic



The Kyrgyz Republic places strong importance on regional cooperation, and CAREC remains one of its principal platforms for this purpose. Meanwhile, it is proposed to strengthen the positioning and expand the representation of Central Asian countries among the key personnel of CAREC. Given the distinctive role that CACCC plays in the regional environmental agenda, the Kyrgyz Republic has expressed readiness to host the next conference in 2027, alongside the Mountain Summit, marking the first time the country will do so. As noted by the leadership of the national environmental agency, a regularly convened CACCC can serve as a significant platform for the region, strengthening both cooperation among Central Asian countries and CAREC's own role in the regional processes. Particular emphasis is placed on CAREC's role in consolidating the voice of Central Asian countries in international forums, most notable at the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC.

CSO cooperation plans

More than 100 environmental NGOs operate in Kyrgyzstan across a number of key areas:



Environmental education and awareness raising — lectures, workshops, events, campaigns, particularly targeting school and university students and youth, contributing to improved environmental culture among the population.



Nature conservation, biodiversity, and wildlife — animal protection, species monitoring, anti-poaching efforts, establishment of protected areas, and rehabilitation of injured or affected animals.



Environmental monitoring and waste management — evaluation and management of chemical waste, medical waste, hazardous materials, obsolete pesticides, and other pollutants.



Sustainable development and 'green economy' — promotion of 'green' practices, organic agriculture, and sustainable use of natural resources.



Research, policy and legislative work, and partnerships — many organizations collaborate with international organizations and state agencies, implement internationally scoped projects, participate in environmental policy development, conduct research, and engage in experience-sharing.



Republic of Tajikistan

The current cooperation between CAREC and the Republic of Tajikistan is being implemented within the framework of two World Bank projects — Resiland_TJ and One Health — in which CAREC serves as Regional Secretariat. Moreover, the Resiland_Tj project also provided co-funding for CACCC-2025 in Ashgabat. The kick-off conference for the One Health project was held in Dushanbe and was attended by representatives of the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Veterinary Affairs, and Ecology from across Central Asia, as well as international organizations. In this regard, the Tajik side recommends that CAREC pursue diversification of its funding sources and give due consideration to donor priorities. An additional proposal is to support CAREC’s country offices by engaging them in the implementation of the World Bank’s initiatives referenced above.

CSO cooperation plans

CSOs are key agents of change at the local and national levels. This plan defines a strategy and specific actions to strengthen partnership with environmental NGOs in Tajikistan, aimed at capacity building, increased involvement in decision-making, and joint project implementation. The work will be carried out across four interconnected areas:

-  Capacity building and knowledge exchange
-  Facilitation of the dialogue and decision-making
-  Joint projects and initiatives
-  Youth and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)



Turkmenistan



In partnership with Turkmenistan, CAREC plans to focus its efforts on several priority areas. Subject to resource availability and in coordination with national partners, the possibility of organizing a regional conference on desertification and degraded land reclamation will be explored. CAREC will facilitate knowledge and practical experience transfer between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in areas including the operation of the greenhouse gas emissions trading system, the development and implementation of a Forest Code, and the introduction of climate-resilient solutions within existing projects on climate change adaptation and forest ecosystem restoration.

During the Resiland CA+ project implementation in Turkmenistan, special emphasis will be placed on practical solutions for the effective prevention of land degradation, sustainable land use, and the recovery of degraded areas. Special attention will also be given to human resource development: CAREC plans to organize two-to-three month internships for experts from Turkmenistan and other countries of the region, during which young specialists will have the opportunity to acquire project management skills, engage in analytical and research activities on current environmental issues, and gain hands-on experience working within an international organization.

CSO cooperation plans

This Action plan has been devised with the purpose of systematically developing NGO activities in Turkmenistan in the field of environmental protection, strengthening international partnerships, improving the environmental culture of the population, and introducing sustainable environmental practice. The main areas of cooperation are:

-  Environmental policy and legal framework
-  Water resource management and desertification control
-  Climate change and sustainable development
-  Waste management and circular economy development
-  Biodiversity conservation
-  Environmental education and public engagement
-  International cooperation

4. CONCLUSION

The 2026-2030 CAREC Development Strategy is not merely a conceptual document, but a practical and pragmatic tool designed to guide CAREC's day-to-day operations in a rapidly changing institutional and regional environment. It defines a strategic course of action in the context of increasing geopolitical instability, deepening environmental challenges, and the growing need to transform approaches to sustainable governance in Central Asia.



The Strategy also lays the groundwork for systemic engagement with international and national partners. By virtue of its clearly defined priorities and expected results, it can serve as a reference document in preparation for joint funding applications, the formation of coalitions, and the alignment of partner programs in the region.

This Strategy is designed to strengthen CAREC's capacity to act proactively, adapt flexibly to new conditions, and serve as a bridge between countries in the region, donors, the expert community, and civil society organizations. It reflects CAREC's ambitions to be a modern, dynamic, and results-oriented organization — one capable of responding promptly to the needs of participating countries and international partners, while upholding its regional mandate and the neutral status.

As a project-oriented organization, CAREC uses the Strategy as a 'coordination framework' linking its five programs with the priorities of member countries and donors. This will ensure the alignment of not only the project portfolio but also with the regional mandate and the organization's institutional sustainability.

A Results and Resources Framework (RRF) was developed with the support of the UNDP office in Kazakhstan (Annex 3), which includes the goals, indicators, expected results, and estimated expenses required for achieving the objectives set out in accordance with the Strategy's priorities. For a proj-

ect-based organization such as CAREC, whose activities are directly contingent on the availability of active projects, the development of such a 'macro-level plan' with indicative funding requirements, represented a significant undertaking. The necessary funding is to be mobilized through financial contributions and support from international partners and the donor community over the next five years.

The Strategy is further aimed at ensuring continuity and maximizing the impact of initiatives already implemented by CAREC. It creates opportunities to develop new programs and project solutions based on the principles of cross-sectoral sustainability and regional solidarity. In this context, the document will serve as a basis for the development and coordination of initiatives directed at strengthening environmental sustainability, effective natural resource management, green economy development, and improving the quality of life of the region's population.

CAREC regards this Strategy as a living document, one that can and should be updated as new realities, challenges, and opportunities emerge. Throughout its implementation, particular attention will be paid to maintaining an open dialogue with partners, conducting regular progress monitoring, facilitating knowledge exchange, and incorporating stakeholder feedback. It is only through genuine cooperation that we can ensure sustainable and balanced development of the region — one that meets both the needs of the present and the challenges of the future.

ANNEX 1. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS CAREC STRATEGIES

Since its inception, CAREC has implemented three development strategies, each of which contributed to the changes and achievements necessary at the time. Namely:

2001-2008 Strategic Plan

Implemented with the support of the institutional grant of the European Union and small auxiliary projects. The goal of this period was to facilitate the development of the Central Asia Sustainable Development initiative (SDI), which was proposed by the CA countries through ICSD at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 in Johannesburg. Activities of CAREC and its program areas were synchronized with the SDI priorities, namely: environmental management, strengthening the role of the civil society, promoting education for sustainable development, and climate change. Therefore, CAREC was actively working with state agencies and environmental non-government organizations. A separate grant program for NGOs was implemented.

2009-2012 Development Strategy

Was implemented during the cessation of funding by the European Union. Transformation of CAREC into a project management organization became a forced strategic focus: diversification of sources of funding, development of an expertise for professional implementation of grant projects, building recognition, development of services and knowledge products. The focus on survival and project implementation caused widespread dissatisfaction in the targeted group during the initial period. Without the usual support,

partners from state agencies and NGOs accused CAREC of a failure to adhere to its mission and implement CAI. Nonetheless, the main goal of the period was to learn how to make money in order to ensure continuity of CAREC's activities.

2013 CAREC Concept of Change and 2014-2020 Strategic Plan Concept

Were aimed to structure the work with donors and implementation of projects in such a way as to ensure that CAREC could come back to implementing its mission, namely – to facilitate cooperation in addressing environmental challenges in Central Asia at the national and regional levels between non-government organizations (NGOs), state agencies, entrepreneurs, local government bodies, and other stakeholders to ensure free information exchange, assistance to environmental NGOs, and other stakeholders, to improve participation of the public in the decision making process and thus to further develop democratic civil societies in Central Asia.

CAREC aligned project activities with priorities of the countries in the region and launched key cross-sectoral dialogue platforms, including Ecoforum, Climate Change Conference, Leadership Program as well as the platforms for regional organizations, parliamentarians, diplomats, scientists and water dialogues. It also initiated an 'Environment for Central Asia' process to unite ASBP and REP4SD CA efforts. It gained experience of implementing large long-term regional projects.

photo Veyisov A.S.

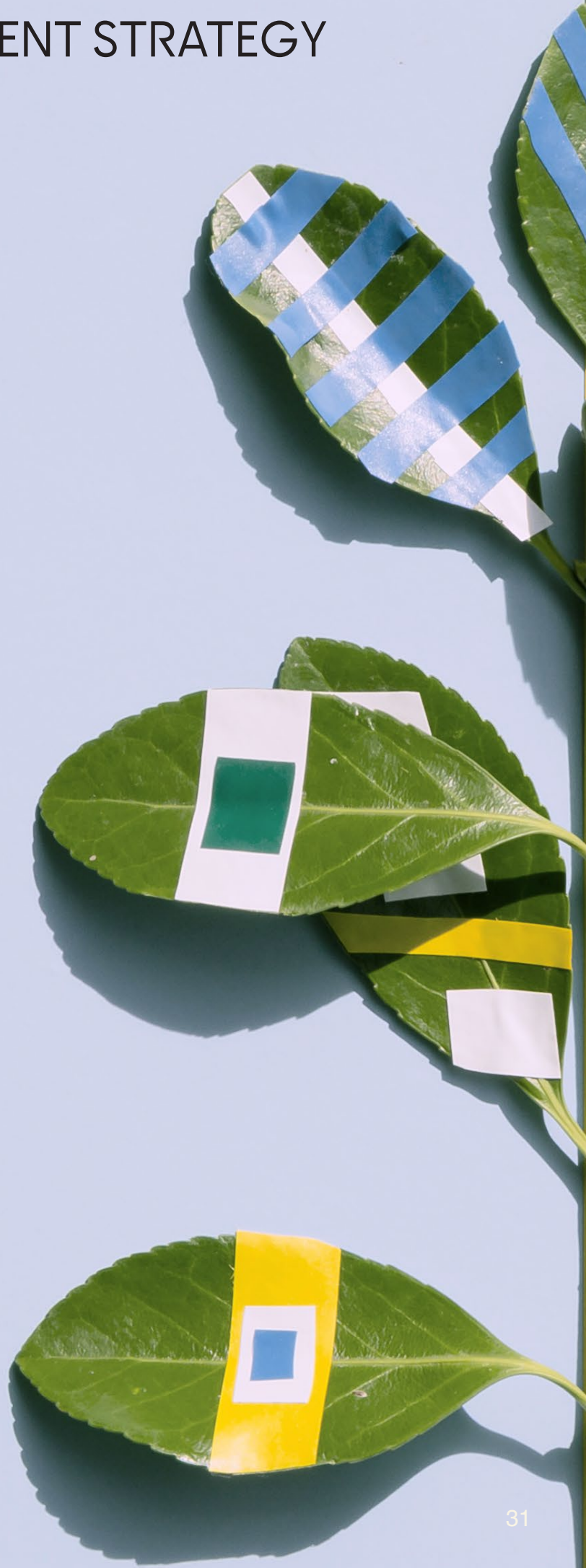


2020-2025 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The implementation period of the CAREC's 2020-2025 Strategy coincided with the implementation of a large-scale regional CAMP4ASB program funded by the World Bank. This gave CAREC an opportunity to not only strengthen its institutional and programmatic areas, but also to take an active part in implementation of practical climatic solutions at the regional level. As part of this program, CAREC coordinated the knowledge exchange, capacity building as well as support of pilot initiatives in the countries of Central Asia, which contributed to strengthening its role as a reliable partner in the regional climate agenda and confirmed CAREC's ability to implement large international projects in line with countries' priorities.

Along with CAMP4ASB, other significant initiatives were also implemented over this period, including Smart Waters and Blue Peace Central Asia projects to promote regional water cooperation, NEXUS, REAP, aimed at introducing sustainable consumption and production patterns (SCP) among small businesses in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Recath and others, aimed at strengthening cooperation on the region's water, energy, and climate agenda. These projects reflect a wide range of CAREC's activities within the existing strategy and confirm the active role it plays in promoting sustainable development in Central Asia.

The strategy calls for strengthening of CAREC's role as a regional center of knowledge and a platform for exchange of experience, development of cross-sectoral and transboundary dialogue on priority environmental issues, implementation of programs aimed at climate change adaptation and natural resource sustainable management. Digitalization and the development of new online tools to facilitate access to environmental information and education played a key role. In addition, considerable attention was paid to improving internal effectiveness, refining management mechanisms, and transitioning to a more sustainable financial model, capable of sustaining the activities of the organization in the long run.



ANNEX 2.

SUMMARY TABLE OF PRIORITIES, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

	Strategic Priority	Goals
1	Knowledge, experience and evidence base generation to support informed decision-making	Regional and national capacity building for evidence-based decision-making
2	Support of the CA countries in devising climate change mitigation policies and strategies, sustainable natural resource management, green transformation and implementation of One Health principles	Promoting climate adaptation, sustainable resource management, and environmental restoration
3	Development of the regional cooperation based on national priorities and experience with an emphasis on joint decision making	Creating conditions for sustainable cooperation and exchange of experience in the region
4	Strengthening of a partnership with civil society organizations to achieve the sustainable development goals and environmental safety	Increasing involvement in decision-making and sustainable development
5	Strengthening of institutional mechanisms and management systems within CAREC for effective implementation of the Strategy	Diversification of resources and strengthening of organizational effectiveness

Key tasks/ focus areas

Indicators

- Analytics and monitoring
- Digital platform and database development
- Increased access to environmental information

- Number of analytical products
- Number of platform users

- Supporting implementation of green technologies and nature-based solutions
- Supporting agri-environmental practices

- The number of programs and strategies implemented with CAREC's assistance

- Regional platforms and initiatives
- Joint projects and events
- Increased involvement of CSOs and youth
- Interparliamentary Dialogue Platform

- The number of joint initiatives and participating countries

- ESD programs
- Support of CSOs
- Regional youth initiatives

- The number of participants and project coverage

- Partnerships with donors and the private sector
- Commercialization of services
- Development of country offices

- Increased budget, coverage and a larger number of projects

ANNEX 3.

RESULTS AND RESOURCES FRAMEWORK (RRF)

Indicators

1

Strategic priorities (SP)

Knowledge, experience and evidence base generation to support informed decision-making

Goals

Strengthen regional and national capacity building for evidence-based decision-making in the field of climate change, water, ecosystems and health

- The number of national strategies/ programs that use CAREC's products
- The number of active users of CAREC's digital platforms (by country and sector)
- The share of CAREC's projects that use data analysis tools and AI
- The number of trained experts (by gender)

2

Strategic priorities (SP)

Support of the CA countries in developing climate change mitigation policies and strategies, natural resource sustainable management, green transformation and implementation of one health principles

Goals

Facilitate climate change adaptation, sustainable natural resource management and environment restoration

- The number of active cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms
- The number of political tools, developed with CAREC's support
- The number of designed project concepts
- The share of women among beneficiaries and participants

2026-2030 CAREC's Development Strategy

Final Outcome: Improving environmental sustainability, climate adaptation and natural resource management in the countries of Central Asia based on regional cooperation, actual data, digital innovations and inclusive partnerships.

Outcomes

Expected amount of expenses over a 5-year period *

1.1	Innovative and pilot solutions tested and scaled up	–
1.2	Strengthened digital and information infrastructure	600 000 US Dollars: upgrades and introduction of CAREC's digital platforms
1.3	Ensured analytical and practical support in decision-making	100 000 US Dollars
1.4	Increased capacity of key stakeholders	45 000 US Dollars for training of experts
1.5	Use of AI tools in decision-making	–
2.1	Policies on landscape restoration and resource management supported	120 000 US Dollars
2.2	'One Health' approach institutionalized	110 000 US Dollars
2.3	Strengthened mitigation risks related to climate change	100 000 US Dollars
2.4	Support of implementation of international conventions	60 000 US Dollars
2.5	Improved climate finance capabilities	35 000 US Dollars for training on climate finance
2.6	Gender equality integrated into all programs	–
2.7	Expanded interaction with academic institutions	45 000 US Dollars

3

Strategic priorities (SP)

Development of regional cooperation based on national priorities and experience, with a focus on joint solutions development

Goals

Create conditions for sustainable cooperation and experience exchange in the region

- The number of conferences and dialogues and parliamentary events
- Digital Climate Lab operations
- The number of CA Leadership Program graduates
- The number of recommendations adopted

4

Strategic priorities (SP)

Strengthening of the partnership with civil society organizations to achieve sustainable development goals and environmental safety

Goals

Increase engagement in environmental protection and sustainable development decision-making

- The number of civil society organizations (CSOs) that are active on CAREC's platforms
- The number of joint initiatives/projects (CAREC-CSOs)

5

Strategic priorities (SP)

Strengthening of institutional mechanisms and management systems within CAREC for effective Strategy implementation

Goals

Diversify resources and strengthen organizational effectiveness

- The share of diversified sources of funding
- The level of staff turnover
- A functioning M&E platform
- Full implementation of 1C 3.0 and Bitrix

* We expect to raise this amount through donor communities during the 2026-2030 CAREC's Development Strategy implementation period.

Outcomes

Expected amount of expenses over a 5-year period *

3.1	Conducted regional conferences	5 CACCC 1 500 000 US Dollars
3.2	Implemented leadership programs	5 CALP 250 000 US Dollars
3.3	Conducted thematic regional dialogues	80 000 US Dollars
3.4	Strengthened digital integration of the region	The goal is achieved by implementing activity 1.2.
3.5	Developed interparliamentary interaction platform	80 000 US Dollars
3.6	Enhanced cooperation with regional institutes	–
4.1	Expanded institutional involvement of CSOs	–
4.2	Environmental knowledge is distributed through CSOs	45 000 US Dollars
4.3	Implemented joint demonstration project	120 000 US Dollars
4.4	Strengthened resource mobilization with participation of CSOs	–
5.1	Enhanced governance and role of the Board of Governors	10 BG meetings (twice a year) 120 000 US Dollars
5.2	Modernized human resource management system	15 000 US Dollars to improve the personnel management
5.3	Improved financial management	20 000 US Dollars to improve 1C and Bitrix software and staff's knowledge
5.4	An integrated M&E system implemented	–
5.5	Ensured financial sustainability	25 000 US Dollars to implement the M&E system

3 470 000 US Dollars