



Green Central Asia: Enhancing environment, climate and water resilience

Conference summary

28 January 2020 | Federal Foreign Office | Berlin

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Human-induced climate change is not only an environmental phenomenon, but also one of the main security threats of the 21st century. Desertification, rising sea levels, more frequent weather extremes and the growing risk of environmental disasters are increasingly depriving people all over the world of their livelihoods. Climate change is therefore becoming an ever-greater risk multiplier that threatens the stability of societies, nation-states and entire regions.

Climate change also poses growing security risks in Central Asia and Afghanistan, where it has a particularly severe impact on glaciers and on natural resources such as water, land and soil. This has consequences for food security, water availability, a healthy habitat for flora and fauna, and thus, consequently, the stability of the region as a whole.

As part of a preventive and stabilising foreign policy, the Federal Foreign Office in January 2020 launched **Green Central Asia**, a regional initiative on climate and security in Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – and Afghanistan. Green Central Asia will support the implementation of the European Union (EU)'s new strategy on Central Asia, which was adopted by the European Council on 17 June 2019. Among other issues, this strategy focuses on strengthening countries' resilience to internal and external risks such as climate and environmental factors.

The aim of Green Central Asia is to create better access to information and risk analyses in order to enable countries to assess the impact of climate change more accurately and to take preventive measures. At the same time, dialogues and workshops will increase decision-makers' capacities to address climate-change related security risks adequately at the national and regional levels. Scientific collaboration will support the expansion of national expertise, with the aim of identifying adequate solutions to the challenges posed by climate change. A high-level political dialogue on the nexus between climate change and security, as relevant to foreign policy, will actively support the implementation of Green Central Asia.

To launch the Green Central Asia initiative, the German Federal Foreign Office hosted a conference at the German Federal Foreign Office in Berlin on 28 January 2020.

The Conference was opened by Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Germany, H.E. Mr Heiko Maas, and the High Representative of the European Union, H.E. Mr Josep Borrell.¹ It brought together the foreign ministers of the Central Asian states and Afghanistan, as well as more than 250 participants from governments, international organisations, the private sector, civil society, and the scientific community to discuss the climate and security challenges facing Central Asian countries and Afghanistan, and how the Green Central Asia initiative can contribute to addressing them. During the conference, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and Afghanistan signed a **Joint Declaration of Intent** on cooperation in the field of climate and security in Central Asia and Afghanistan within the framework of Green Central Asia.²

¹ The full text of the speeches by Mr. Maas and Mr. Borrell is available [on the conference website](#).

² The full text of the Joint Declaration of Intent is available [here](#).





KEY MESSAGES

While the discussions touched on a wide range of issues, some **key messages** stand out:

- Central Asia and Afghanistan are '**hot spots**' where the impacts of climate change will be particularly palpable. These impacts threaten to result in severe economic, development and environmental losses, to bring about instability and potentially fuel violence and conflict.
- Climate change and security challenges know no borders; this is particularly true in the Central Asian region, which has strong historical, geographical, political, trade, and socio-cultural ties. Therefore, to be effective, responses require **regional cooperation**.
- There is strong positive momentum for regional cooperation in Central Asia and Afghanistan, as demonstrated by several successful joint actions, projects and initiatives. However, a **common regional strategy**, with the support of international actors, could help make successes more systematic. **Mutual trust** is essential for this.
- Germany and the EU have a **long history of collaboration** with Central Asia and Afghanistan. The new Green Central Asia initiative should build upon and reinforce these positive relationships, focusing on capacity- and institution-building, investments in science and research, supporting innovation and technology, and contributing to fostering open dialogue and mutual trust across sectors, stakeholders and countries in the region and beyond.

I. OPENING KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

Keynote addresses:

- **H.E. Mr Heiko Maas**, German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
- **H.E. Mr Josep Borrell**, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

The opening keynotes all highlighted the importance of preventative action to address the risks that climate change impacts could pose to international peace and security, and called on the international community to act more decisively in the face of these mounting threats.

In his opening remarks, German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, **H.E. Heiko Maas**, noted the special vulnerability of the states of Central Asia and Afghanistan to the impacts of climate change, as the desiccation of the Aral Sea and the increased frequency of extreme weather events in recent years have demonstrated. When people's livelihoods are at stake, conflicts are inevitable. It is important to identify risks earlier and invest in the resilience of those affected. He noted that the challenges of climate change know no borders. Therefore, national responses no longer suffice.

For these reasons, Germany has made the security impacts of climate change a priority of its Presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and supports the Group of Friends on Climate and Security, of which Afghanistan is already a member. The Green Central Asia initiative represents Germany's commitment to the sustainable development and growth of the region, and will be aligned with and complement the EU Strategy for Central Asia. It is intended to contribute to fostering partnerships between politics, businesses, civil society and research. The initiative, he said, will serve to connect Central Asian countries and Afghanistan and contribute to expanding infrastructure and investments in economy and education, which are all essential conditions for peace and prosperity. This conference is part of a broader process that will continue with the



Second Berlin Climate and Security Conference in June 2020, to which all Central Asian countries and Afghanistan are invited.

The High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, **H.E. Josep Borrell**, emphasised that climate change is one of the most urgent areas for collective action at the global level. Europe has committed to becoming the first climate neutral continent by 2050, but it cannot act alone. Regional, cooperative solutions are needed. This is especially the case for the Central Asian countries and Afghanistan, which have already been hit hard by climate change, with the Aral Sea shrinking, water flows diminishing, and land degradation increasing. Emphasising and building on the positive dynamics of growth and cooperation in the region, the EU relaunched its Strategy on Central Asia in 2019. The new EU Strategy for Central Asia will be aligned with the Green Central Asia initiative, with the goal of stepping up science-based collaborative solutions across the regions.



H.E. Josep Borrell giving his opening speech at the Green Central Asia Conference. | © Jan Rottler/adelphi

II. CLIMATE CHANGE AND SECURITY – CHALLENGES FOR CENTRAL ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN

Panel discussion: “Climate change and security – challenges for Central Asia”

Key note: Prof. Dr. Johan Rockström, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)

Panellists:

- **H.E. Mr Niels Annen**, Minister of State of the Federal Republic of Germany
- **H.E. Mr Mukhtar Tileuberdi**, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan
- **H.E. Mr Chingiz Aidarbekov**, Foreign Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic
- **H.E. Mr Sirojiddin Muhriddin**, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan
- **H.E. Mr Rashid Meredov**, Foreign Minister of the Turkmenistan
- **H.E. Mr Abdulaziz Kamilov**, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- **H.E. Mr Mirwais Nab**, Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Moderator: Ms Katrina Sichel

The first panel brought together the foreign ministers of Central Asia and Afghanistan to discuss the challenges facing their countries, their experience with the Berlin Process (2008-2020) and what they expected from the new programme, Green Central Asia. Ms Katrina Sichel moderated the panel.

Johan Rockström of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) started the panel by remarking that business, politics, and civil society worldwide now understand that climate change is a multiplier of security risks. Science tells us that Central Asia is among the ‘hot spot’ regions that are being and will be hit hard by

climate change. Central Asia has already warmed more than the global average. Current models predict that temperatures in the region could increase by 3-5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century, causing glaciers to melt, and more droughts and extreme weather events to occur.

In his presentation, Rockström emphasised that water security is a top priority risk. While water supplies are not yet significantly shrinking, it is important to realise that the region is currently experiencing a 'grace period': droughts and higher temperatures have sped up the melting of glaciers, which is replenishing rivers and currently substituting for the lack of rainfall. However, the supply of water frozen in glaciers is not unlimited, and once that freshwater is no longer available, the region could suffer severe water insecurity. Both upstream countries, which rely on hydropower, and downstream countries, which depend on irrigation, will be affected. More collaboration is needed to understand the challenges, but also to identify the solutions. Science and research have a key role to play. It is important to collect more social, economic and climate change data, and to ensure these will be shared collaboratively in the future. Climate change needs to be understood as a challenge for development, but also as an opportunity for collaboration.

Germany's Minister of State **Niels Annen** noted that climate change has so far not been on top of the agenda for Central Asia and Afghanistan. Yet the challenges it poses to security and economic development demand greater investment and mutual trust. Mutual trust in turn requires that the interests of all affected states are properly considered and addressed. Cross-border cooperation and dialogue are essential ingredients to tackle the challenge of climate change. Germany's Water Initiative for Central Asia has already contributed to strengthening regional cooperation. The Green Central Asian initiative will build on this success and explore the potential of different processes to make water management even more effective, while also fostering dialogue over climate and security and advocating for climate and environmental protection and sustainable economic development. Minister Annen underlined that Germany sees the countries of the region as important, equal partners.

The Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, **H.E. Mukhtar Tileuberdi**, welcomed the Green Central Asia initiative, remarking how well it fits with Kazakhstan's commitment and strategy to addressing environmental security. He highlighted Kazakhstan's progress in developing a green economy by building a model for technological innovation, green growth, and the efficient use of resources, while respecting its commitments under the Paris Agreement. He stressed Kazakhstan's willingness to cooperate with Germany and its Central Asian neighbours to advance climate action, and noted that only close cooperation between all countries will allow them to form a steady basis for sustainable development and green growth.

The Foreign Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, **H.E. Chingiz Aidarbekov**, noted that the impacts of climate change on the environment, economy and society are already visible in Central Asia and will bring severe economic losses to the whole region. Glacier melting is especially worrying, as it will reduce water availability and agricultural yields. Assessments suggest that hydroelectric power, agriculture and healthcare will be the most negatively impacted, suffering billions of dollars in losses. Minister Aidarbekov emphasised that the Kyrgyz Republic is committed to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and has recently ratified the Paris Agreement. He pointed to cooperation with Kazakhstan on the management of shared water basins as a bright spot and underlined his country's



H.E. Chingiz Aidarbekov speaking at the Green Central Asia Conference. | © Jan Rottler/adelphi



interest in working with a reformed IFAS, concluding that more investment in adaptation is required to secure the country's continued and future success.

The Foreign Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, **H.E. Mr Sirojiddin Muhridin**, opened his statement by discussing climate change's increasing impacts on Tajikistan. Natural disasters such as avalanches, droughts, and floods have increased by 25 percent. Water pollution and deforestation are also hindering economic growth, while most of the country's power comes from hydroelectricity. In this context, the efficient use of freshwater is vital for Tajikistan to achieve the SDGs. The Tajik government will host the second International High-Level Conference on International Decade for Action on Water in Tajikistan on June 18-20 2020. That is not the only cooperative initiative: Minister Muhridin also called for greater cooperation after national disasters and encouraged all Central Asian states to improve their transport networks and wastewater facilities as well as preserve forests and the ecosystem benefits they provide. He added that the Green Central Asia initiative could strengthen practical efforts on water management.

The Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkmenistan, **H.E. Mr Rashid Meredov**, underlined that sustainable development in Central Asia is directly related to environmental protection and the efficient use of natural resources—and that the legal and political framework for this is crucial. Turkmenistan is taking a number of steps to increase resilience, centred on the Turkmen National Strategy for Climate Change adopted in 2019, which emphasises the importance of creating high-tech industries. Turkmenistan also has a green belt programme to address land degradation – with 19 million trees already planted – and a programme to improve irrigation that has revived thousands of acres of land. In 2021, the country will team up with UNCCD to organize an international scientific forum in Central Asia. Minister Meredov noted the need to promote ongoing projects under the Berlin process as well as the new GCA process, for which he identified several priority areas: a regional strategy for protecting the climate; better-integrated management of water resources; and more green belts in the Aral Sea region. The minister concluded by underlining the importance of regional consensus. Close cooperation over centuries has shaped the interdependence of Central Asian states, and today there is a strong need to unite these efforts with international structures.

The Foreign Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, **H.E. Abdulaziz Kamilov**, underlined that Uzbekistan has worked with the EU for a long time to help it prepare a new Central Asian strategy. What the region needs now is a new strategic approach to overcome climate change impacts, as current challenges could become serious threats to global security. Minister Kamilov paid special attention to the Aral Sea and its shortage of water resources. Uzbekistan is committed to restoring 2.5 million acres of forest in the region and has declared it a zone of environmental innovation. He thanked the EU for its contribution to the Aral Sea trust fund, and welcomed Afghanistan's involvement in transboundary projects. With regard to implementing the GCA, Minister Kamilov emphasised the importance of taking into account the implementation of previous water initiatives in Central Asia. Only by building on past work could the new programme reach its full potential.

The Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, **H.E. Mirwais Nab**, explained the close ties that linked Afghanistan with its Central Asian neighbours. Historical links, a desire for increased trade and movement, and infrastructure connect all states. In the face of climate change, water resource management is an area where links to neighbouring states are becoming more and more important. For Afghanistan, Minister Nab said, climate change is not a future threat but a day-to-day reality: between 1990 and 2015, Afghanistan lost 12 percent of its glacier cover, most of that within the last five years. As in so many countries, climate change acts as a threat multiplier. Drought contributes to social conflict, and there is increasing competition for water and energy resources. He emphasized the effective cooperation that Afghanistan has with Tajikistan when it comes to sharing hydro-meteorological data, and urged that this type of cooperation to be expanded to other countries in the region. In conclusion, Mr Nab underlined the need to address the socio-economic impacts of climate change in the region and collectively develop and implement joint projects.





III. CLIMATE SECURITY RISKS AND RESPONSE CAPACITIES IN CENTRAL ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN

Panel discussion: “Climate security risks and response capacities in Central Asia and Afghanistan”

Key note: Mr Dan Smith, Director, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Panellists:

- **Mr Mavlon Kazakov**, Executive Director of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) in Tajikistan
- **Mr Batyr Mammedov**, Director of the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development, Turkmenistan
- **Mr Vadim Sokolov**, Director of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Agency, Uzbekistan
- **Mr Marco Keiner**, Director, Environment Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
- **H.E. Amb. Guy Bonvin**, Special Envoy for Water in Central Asia, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

Moderator: Ms **Caroline Milow**, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

This panel reflected on the predecessor program to Green Central Asia, the Berlin process, discussing its achievements as well as remaining challenges. Ms Caroline Milow moderated the panel.

The Director of SIPRI, **Dan Smith**, summarised what the available research tells us about climate change and designing solutions to climate problems: the impacts of climate change cross borders, and therefore the issue is geopolitical and requires an international response. What is more, the impacts are unevenly distributed, which means that all environmental problems are social, economic and political. In terms of solutions, knowledge-based approaches offer the best chance for success. This knowledge, however, cannot operate in silos. Successful actions must be integrative and cross-sectoral. Finally, these collective problems require collective solutions. Advocates of “my country first” will get nowhere, Smith said. Countries have to work together, for a climate-secure world is a more peaceful world.

The Executive Director of the IFAS in Tajikistan, **Mavlon Kazakov**, spoke next about his experience protecting water and the environment in Central Asia. With Tajikistan poised to take over the presidency of IFAS, the country will play a critical role in shaping a collective Central Asian response. Mr Kazakov emphasized he hoped to reach a consensus on how to expand the competencies of the organisation. In terms of climate threats, the risk of natural disasters is pressing. He pointed out that 90 percent of Tajikistan is mountainous and thus at risk of landslides and avalanches. The Montreal Protocol, he said, is a good example of collective action on environmental issues, which is required to meet today's challenges.



Dan Smith and Mavlon Kazakov on the panel at the Green Central Asia Conference. | © Jan Rottler/adelphi





The Director of the Scientific Information Centre of the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (Turkmenistan), **Batyr Mammedov**, spoke about the comprehensive Turkmen strategy for climate change, which includes measures for reducing drought and desertification. Turkmenistan was the first Central Asian country to submit its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) report and created a regional centre for technology and climate change. This is part of a long effort in the country to improve water and climate resilience: it started combatting desertification as early as the 1960s. With more than 90 percent of its waters transboundary in nature, Turkmenistan has to cooperate to achieve the SDGs, Mammedov said.

The Director of the GEF Agency, Uzbekistan, **Vadim Sokolov**, described how the approach to regional cooperation has changed in recent years. The main direction of Uzbek foreign policy is to strengthen cooperation with neighbours and to reach reasonable compromises. There are now bilateral groups with all neighbours on water cooperation. One issue that cannot be avoided is funding: water-related infrastructure maintenance and construction cost money. Green Central Asia, he suggested, could support cooperation and joint research to find proper economic mechanisms for the water and environmental sectors. There is also a need to increase the capacity of IFAS; Mr Sokolov hoped that the Kyrgyz Republic would join IFAS activities. He emphasised that the states of Central Asia have different rooms but all inhabited one house—with just one system for water supply.

The Swiss Special Envoy for Water in Central Asia, **H.E. Amb. Guy Bonvin**, lamented that structural weaknesses are reducing water efficiency in Central Asia. There are bilateral agreements regarding water, but it would be beneficial to take a more holistic view. However, there are now clearly positive signs. Amb. Bonvin mentioned the possibility of cooperation between GCA and Switzerland's Blue Peace initiative. He also reflected on the commonalities between some Central Asian partners and Switzerland, a mountainous country facing strong climate impacts such as glacier melt and reliant on cooperation with neighbours.

The Director of the Environment Division of UNECE, **Mr Marco Keiner**, underlined the need to break down silos and think across policy fields. IFAS, he said, is a good example of this. Various UN bodies are also supporting stronger regional cooperation, e.g. in the framework of river basin commissions. For example, UNECE has undertaken many activities on water and climate resilience, from awareness raising at the political level to supporting a convention on air pollution to increasing industrial safety.

Participants in the audience Q&A included **Mr Akmyradov Magtymguly**, a senior advisor in the Turkmen Foreign Ministry. Mr Magtymguly praised the Green Central Asia initiative, adding his voice to those who described the nations of Central Asia as “living in the same house.” Turkmenistan, he said, has launched several promising initiatives during its presidency of IFAS, including a regional centre for combined heat and power technology. The concrete projects developed in the framework of Green Central Asia should build on this work, rather than “reinventing the wheel”.

The GIZ's **Caroline Milow**, who moderated the session, summed up the contributions from the panellists and audience members, highlighting their calls for education and training, the need for joint monitoring and scientific work, and the broader need for creating synergies. Working across sectors is vital, she noted.





IV. GREEN CENTRAL ASIA – ENHANCING ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE, AND WATER RESILIENCE

Panel discussion: “Outlook ‘Green Central Asia’ – Enhancing environment, climate and water resilience”

Key note: Mr Miguel Berger, Director General for Economic Affairs and Sustainable Development, Federal Foreign Office

Panellists:

- **Mr Fazlullah Akhtar**, Infrastructure Expert, Office of the Chief Advisor to the President of Afghanistan
- **Mr Ysmaiyl Dairov**, Director, Regional Mountain Centre, Kyrgyz Republic
- **Mr Bolat Bekniyaz**, Director of IFAS in the Republic of Kazakhstan
- **H.E. Amb. Peter Burian**, EU Special Representative for Central Asia
- **H.E. Ms Nathalia Gherman**, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Central Asia, Head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)

Moderator: Ms Susanne Schmeier, IHE Delft Institute for Water Education

This panel looked ahead to the new Green Central Asia program, the regional initiative on climate and security in Central Asia and Afghanistan starting in 2020. Participants discussed potential climate-related conflicts and security issues in the region and possible actions to prevent conflict, as well as potential cooperation between the UN and EU on disaster risk reduction and efforts to increase water resilience in the region.

The Director General for Economic Affairs and Sustainable Development of the Foreign Office, **Mr Miguel Berger**, opened the panel by highlighting the importance of adopting a cross-sectoral approach to building resilience to climate and security risks, taking into account the links between water, energy, food security and migration. He stressed the need for more scientific cooperation and data sharing in an open and transparent way.

The Director of IFAS in the Republic of Kazakhstan, **Bolat Bekniyaz**, stressed IFAS’ important achievements in rehabilitating the northern Aral Sea. This positive story of the Aral Sea shows that success is possible, although several problems remain, such as the one of salinization, which is having very grave health consequences for the population of the area. He noted that environmental issues could be addressed with the technologies that are already available, but that this requires research and joint action, as well as financial and technical support from international actors such as the EU and the World Bank.

The Director of the Regional Mountain Centre, **Ysmaiyl Dairov**, shared the results of a recent regional assessment of climate change impacts on the mountains of Central Asia. The study mirrors PIK’s findings that Central Asia will experience disproportionately larger temperature rises. This means that adaptation will be essential, requiring finance, data and science. He pointed out that there are many initiatives underway in the Central Asian region, but that these need to be more strongly



Bolat Bekniyaz at the panel at the Green Central Asia Conference. | © Jan Rottler/adelphi

connected under an umbrella structure that combines national priorities. To add value, the GCA initiative needs to work in tandem with other initiatives, such as those implemented by the EU, as well as China's Belt and Road initiative.

Mr Fazlullah Akhtar, Infrastructure Expert at the Office of the Chief Advisor to the President of Afghanistan, noted how, over the past 40 years, war has destroyed a lot of the relevant infrastructure in the country. Today, Afghanistan faces many development challenges, which climate change impacts are exacerbating. If not addressed, these could lead to migration and further instability for the region as a whole. He called on institutions in neighbouring countries and EU partners to help Afghanistan address these challenges by developing intellectual capacity and conducting relevant research. He closed by expressing his hopes that the Green Central Asia initiative will be conducive to more capacity- and institution-building, as well as infrastructure and finance for Afghanistan.

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Central Asia and Head of UNRCCA, **H.E. Nathalia Gherman**, praised the timeliness of the Green Central Asia initiative, which should build on the current momentum of cooperation between Central Asian states and Afghanistan. She also lauded the work done by IFAS as well as governments in the region to improve communication on issues such as climate action and transboundary water management. The UN, through various programmes and agencies, has played an important support role in building trust and political will, consolidating climate and water-related institutions and legal frameworks, and reinforcing partnerships. Going forward, she stressed how important it is that the Central Asian states continue pursuing their commitments under the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030 and engage women and young people in these debates. Development partners such as the UN, the EU, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and GIZ need to work together on future action to address climate and security-related challenges in the region.



Nathalia Gherman speaking on the panel at the Green Central Asia Conference. | © Jan Rottler/adelphi

The EU Special Representative for Central Asia, **H.E. Amb. Peter Burian**, praised Germany's long-term commitment to climate security globally, as well as in Central Asia specifically. Germany's efforts, together with those of the EU and other partners, have been – and will continue to be – essential to building stronger partnerships that help ensure people in the region are better prepared to withstand climate-related shocks. In particular, collaboration is needed to produce evidence-based research to define the best strategies to tackle climate and security risks. He noted that institution building in the region has made much progress, as expressed in the commitments to reforming IFAS. Afghanistan needs to be included fully into solutions for the region; it should be seen as an opportunity, rather than as a threat, for connectivity and jointly managing shared resources. Ambassador Burian concluded that the Green Central Asia initiative should help link existing programs and projects, share lessons learned from other countries and regions facing similar challenges, and support cooperation on water and the environment.

In the following open discussion, **Ms Dinara Ziganshina** of the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination in Central Asia highlighted that cooperation should be underpinned by data transparency – the Berlin Process has facilitated progress in terms of using remote sensing and field data to track water use in Central Asia. The Green Central Asia initiative should continue developing the scientific track of work that the Berlin Process had so effectively contributed to, as well as support building capacity for interdisciplinary research in the region.

Ms Jamal Annaglyjova of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) stressed the importance of land-based solutions in Central Asian countries and Afghanistan, which could be more effective than technological solutions. She also highlighted how important it was that Central Asia have a stronger voice within the United Nations Framework Conventions on Climate Change and the UNCCD.

The moderator, **Ms Susanne Schmeier** of IHE Delft, closed the panel by noting that climate change is already forcing Central Asian countries and Afghanistan to engage with each other and build trust. Trust, she noted, is multi-faceted and requires joint investments and projects, with the support of the international community, in order to help people in the region become more resilient to climatic as well as other socio-economic and environmental changes. She expressed her hope that the Green Central Asia initiative could become the “umbrella” that helps make the various efforts mutually reinforcing.

V. WHAT’S NEXT FOR GREEN CENTRAL ASIA?

In his closing remarks, **Mr Miguel Berger** of the German Foreign Office underlined Germany’s commitment to fostering dialogue and cooperation with Central Asian states and Afghanistan, as well as with other relevant bilateral and multilateral actors such as the EU and the UN. He shared two key takeaway messages from the conference. First, he noted that existing science and research clearly showed the complexity of climate and security-related dynamics in the region. However, the contributions in the panels had also demonstrated that concrete initiatives and joint action could help manage the risks. Second, he applauded the openness to cooperation expressed by all the Central Asian participants, including Afghanistan, which would be vital for addressing cross-boundary challenges such as climate change effectively. Germany and EU’s initiatives in Central Asia offered a new framework to support these efforts.

In the coming months, he affirmed, Germany would work with Central Asian states, Afghanistan, the EU and other relevant actors to put together an action plan that would transform some of the suggestions and proposals made during the conference into concrete actions. Looking ahead, he drew attention to the **Second Berlin Climate and Security Conference**, ahead of Germany’s Presidency of the UNSC in June 2020, which would offer a key moment for multilateral diplomacy to address some of the concrete challenges climate change posed in Central Asia and beyond.



Ministers and other high representatives who attended the Green Central Asia Conference. | © Jan Rottler/adelphi