



# The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea Celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The Central Asian countries share two great rivers – the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya – that have long since served as a life blood for this region. Moreover, water is of vital importance both for socio-economic development and peace and stability in the region.

However, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the region faced an extraordinary environmental disaster – drying up of the Aral Sea. The Aral Sea crisis has affected adversely the lives of population in the region. Growing water scarcity and deterioration of water quality have led to degradation of soil and vegetation, catastrophic changes in flora and fauna, decline in processing fisheries, and underperformance of irrigated agriculture.

The Heads of Central Asian states at their meeting in Tashkent (4 January 1993) **decided to establish an International Fund for saving the Aral Sea** (IFAS) to halt and mitigate consequences of the Aral Sea crisis, inform the international community on the catastrophe, and mobilize funds of the five riparian states and international partners for environmental and socio-economic improvement in the region. During the Kyzylorda meeting on 26 March 1993, the Heads of State approved Regulations of IFAS.

At the time of establishment, the main purpose of IFAS was to finance and fund joint inter-state environmental and applied research projects and programs aimed at saving the Aral Sea and environmental rehabilitation in the areas affected by the Aral Sea catastrophe, as well as to address socioeconomic problems in the region.

In 1997, the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) and the Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD) became a part of IFAS. Thus, the Fund's mandate was extended to include the issues related to water management, environmental conservation and socio-economic development from the inter-state perspective.

Today, IFAS is a unique regional organization, with the extended mandate and functions to contribute to the solution of urgent problems in the region through its regional bodies and offices at the national and subnational level.

Over 30 years:

- 6 ICAS\* meetings
- 22 IFAS Board meetings
- 11 IFAS summits
- 84 ICWC meetings
- 31 ICSD meetings.

*Kazakhstan attaches particular importance to the implementation of joint hydropower projects for the mutually beneficial use of water resources of transboundary rivers...*

*We also call for increased engagement between the countries within the framework of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.*

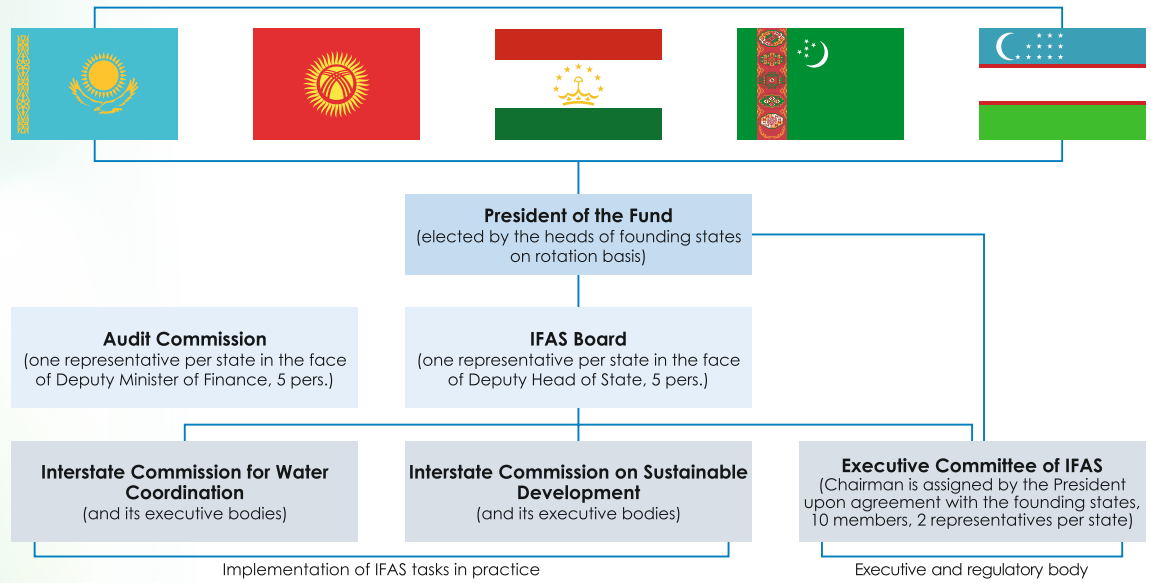
*K.K. Tokayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 21.07.2022*

*Tajikistan, ..., during its presidency in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea, will continue its efforts to deepen and expand cross-border water cooperation in Central Asia.*

*E.Sh. Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, 22.03.2023*

\* ICAS – Inter-state Council on the Aral Sea basin problems

## COUNCIL OF THE HEADS OF STATE IN CENTRAL ASIA FOR THE ARAL SEA



## Record of achievements

The Fund has been serving to the people of Central Asia by providing a platform for dialogue and cooperation for as long as 30 years. IFAS achieved tangible results contributing to socio-economic development and enhanced cooperation in the region, as well as to bi- and multi-lateral relations with development partners.

Its activity facilitated formation of new inter-state relations in the region. The key achievements of the countries under umbrella of IFAS are:

- **Establishment and maintenance of a unique high-level platform to bring together the Central Asian countries**, with the aim of resolving the Aral Sea crisis and improving efficiency and sustainability of natural resource, including water, management as the basis of regional cooperation. Those issues are in the continuous focus of the Heads of State since the presidency of the Fund is taken by one of the Heads of Founder-States. Over 30 years, the presidents of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan took the presidency twice, and 11 IFAS summits were held. And the next meeting of the Heads of State is to take place in Dushanbe on 14-15 September 2023.

- **Provision of an effective mechanism for the transboundary Amu Darya and the Syr Darya water management**, also through operational management and monitoring of shared water resources, supported by scientific instruments and decision support tools. 84 ICWC meetings were held over 30 years. Over 1500 people work in ICWC executive bodies and their territorial branches. They provide daily water management to the benefit of all stakeholders.

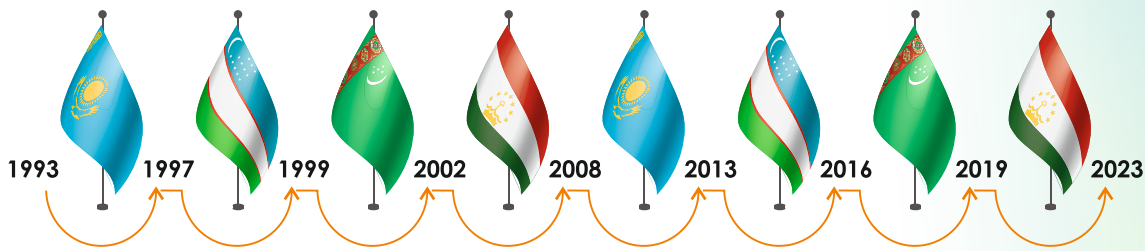
*We think that there is a need to ensure a coherent approach by all the countries in the region and the international organizations and donors to overcome the Aral Sea crisis and the whole range of environmental problems in Central Asia.*

*G. M. Berdimukhamedov,  
President of Turkmenistan,  
28.04.2009*

*The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea is the only regional organization in Central Asia that passed the severe stress test, and today it may become the effective mechanism for cooperation between our countries...*

*Sh.M. Mirziyoyev,  
President of the Republic of Uzbekistan,  
24.08.2018*

## Location of Executive Committee of IFAS by Country and Year



○ **Coordination of environmental and sustainable development issues among the Central Asian countries**, also thanks to ICSD and jointly implemented regional programs. In 2022, the 2030 Regional Environmental Program for Sustainable Development in Central Asia was approved, with the aim of achieving SDGs and implementing UN environmental conventions, developing green economy and adapting to climate change.

○ **Development and implementation of four Aral Sea Basin programs**, contribution to environmental and socio-economic improvement in the basin inhabited by 60 million people. Dozens of regional and national projects aimed at the improvement of water management, water supply, sanitation, hygiene and health, the enhancement of irrigation productivity and efficiency, the strengthening of hydrometeorological services and the overall improvement of environmental sustainability in the riparian countries of the Aral Sea basin were implemented. Moreover, most of the projects were financed from national country budgets.

○ **Raising of greater awareness on the Aral Sea problem and environmental situation in this region recognized as the ecological catastrophe that drew attention of scholars, journalists and development partners from all over the world.** In 2008, IFAS was granted the status of observer at the UN General Assembly and since then the UNGA has adopted a number of resolutions related to IFAS and the Aral Sea basin.

○ **Preservation and restoration of a portion of the Aral Sea – Northern (Smaller) Aral Sea.** As a result of implementation of water management projects, flows reaching the Northern Aral increased from 350 m<sup>3</sup>/s to 700 m<sup>3</sup>/s, the sea area extended from 2,414 km<sup>2</sup> to 3,288 km<sup>2</sup>, the water volume augmented from 15.6 km<sup>3</sup> to 27.1 km<sup>3</sup>, and the water salinity decreased from 23 to 17 g/l.

○ **Mitigation of environmental disaster of the Aral Sea drying up**, including through a widescale afforestation on an area of more than 1.7 Mha in Uzbekistan and 337 thousand ha

*The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea established by the Heads of our region's states in 1993 is a unique organization, which has been already operating for as long as 30 years. Over this period of time, the IFAS agencies have contributed to successful solution of water, environmental and socio-economic matters. Activities under umbrella of this credible organization demonstrate that the CA countries have common approaches to contemporary regional- and global scale problems and challenges.*

*K. Rasulzoda,  
Prime-Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan,  
28.11.2022*

*Support from the side of the Heads of CA states indicates to their deep understanding of the key role of joint water management for development of the countries, the well-being of their people and for keeping peace and stability in the region.*

*S.R. Ibatullin,  
Chairman of EC IFAS in Kazakhstan during  
2008-2013*

*IFAS is not only a unique organization for solution of complex water and environmental matters but also a kind of school for high-qualified professionals who make an invaluable contribution to the development of the countries and the Central Asian region as a whole.*

*S.N. Rahimzoda,  
Chairman of EC IFAS since 2019*





*In this complex regional context, we need to search jointly for new approaches and new actions to improve and develop water cooperation.*

*Sustainable development of our countries is not possible without coordinated transboundary water management.*

*It is critical to form a solid legal and regulatory framework for relevant joint actions.*

*N.K. Kipshakbaev,  
Honorary ICWC member from  
Kazakhstan*



*While recalling the years of my service as the water minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, I would like to note that our task was to ensure that activity of the Aral Fund contributed to formation of qualitatively new inter-state relations in the region, to enhancement of regional cooperation, and to peaceful resolution of complex water-related matters.*

*M. Zulpuev,  
Honorary ICWC member from  
Kyrgyzstan*



*We, all the countries in the region, are doomed to share one water and depend on each other – and this is more reliable ground to build trust and friendly political and economic relations.*

*R.A. Giniyatullin,  
Honorary ICWC member from  
Uzbekistan*



in Kazakhstan. This lowers the wind transfer of harmful substances and the rate of land degradation.

○ **Biodiversity restoration and preservation.** Thanks to water management and environmental efforts, the fish catch increased from 0.4 thousand tons to 8 thousand tons a year in the Northern Sea. Eight nature reserves, two national nature parks, one biosphere reserve, including the Republican Rare Species Center "Gazelle", and the Barsakelmes state nature reserve are operational in the Northern Aral region. The IFAS organizations in Uzbekistan together with partners regularly monitor wetlands in the South Aral region, and inclusion of Sudochie Lake in the Ramsar list of wetlands in May 2023 marks a major result of this work.

○ **Socio-economic improvement in the Aral Sea region,** including through implementation of social projects and programs to supply the population with clean drinking water and the programs for comprehensive economic and social development of surrounding regions.

## Looking forward

For years, IFAS acted as the only regional organization bringing all the five Central Asian countries together and was instrumental in enhancing regional cooperation to deal with complex water-related and environmental challenges.

For IFAS to continue serving as the main platform for inter-state collaboration and contribute to sustainable development in the region, the presidents of the Central Asian countries have committed to further institutional and legal improvement of the Fund.

They also recognized the importance of regional youth in protecting water and nature so that to mobilize the younger generation in the efforts to deal with contemporary challenges and threats.

In this pivotal year, the region's countries make every effort to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fund and lay a solid foundation to strengthen and multiply the achieved results in the future.



## IFAS veterans, who passed away:

On this anniversary we are recalling people, who made a notable contribution to formation and development of IFAS and who passed away. They all are vital for their time and history of the Fund.

*In this context, first of all, we recall presidents of the region's countries, who are no longer with us. They were among the founders of IFAS and made a significant contribution to development of the inter-state water relations under umbrella of the Fund.*

### Kazakhstan

**Uzakbay K. Karamanov** – Director, Executive Board of IFAS in the Republic of Kazakhstan

**Almabek N. Nurushev** – Director, Executive Board of IFAS in the Republic of Kazakhstan, member of EC IFAS

### Tajikistan

**Asadullo G. Gulomov** – Member of the IFAS Board

**Ismat E. Eshmirzoev** – Member of the IFAS Board

**Khuseyn D. Achilov** – Director of the Tajik branch of EC IFAS

**Sharif N. Mazokhirov** – Director of the Tajik branch of EC IFAS

**Begmurod U. Makhmaliev** – Director of the Tajik branch of EC IFAS

**Kurbonmad K. Abdulkhayrov** – Chief expert of the Tajik branch of EC IFAS

**Davlatbek M. Maksudov** – Minister of Land Reclamation and Water Management, member of ICWC

**Khomid Usmon Khasanzoda** – Deputy Minister of Land Reclamation and Water Resources

**Anvar M. Zoirov** – Deputy Minister of Land Reclamation and Water Resources

**Safarali B. Barotov** – BWO Amu Darya

**Abduvokhid Yo. Karimov** – Minister of Nature Protection, member of ICSD

**Talbak O. Salimov** – Chairman of the Committee for Environmental Protection, member of ICSD

**Zaynalobudin V. Kobuliev** – Director, Institute of Water Problems, Hydropower and Ecology; member of ICSD

**Djalil Dj. Bezrukov** – Director of the Tajik branch of SIC ICSD

### Uzbekistan

**Abdurakhim A. Djalalov** – Member of the IFAS Board, First Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources of Uzbekistan

**Viktor A. Dukhovniy** – Technical Director of IFAS Board, Director of SIC ICWC

**Yuriy V. Bobko** – First Deputy Chairman of EC ICAS, Technical Director of EC ICAS

**Ospan K. Karimsakov** – Director, Nukus branch of EC IFAS

**Rashit M. Koshekov** – Director, Nukus branch of EC IFAS

### Turkmenistan

**Paltamed E. Esenov** – Director, SIC ICSD

**Irina Dj. Mamieva** – Scientific Secretary, SIC ICSD

**Kurbangeldi B. Balliev** – Representative of Turkmenistan to EC IFAS, Head of Department, SIC ICSD

**Beki A. Annaev** – Head of ICSD Secretariat

**Sukhanberdi M. Melyaev** – Director, Dashoguz branch of EC IFAS

**Murat Koshekbayev** – Director, Dashoguz branch of EC IFAS

### Kyrgyzstan

**Meyrajdin Z. Zulpuev** – Minister of Water Resources

**Temir A. Kulumbaev** – First Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Nature Protection

**Kadirbek D. Bozov** – Representative of Kyrgyzstan to EC IFAS

**Karimsher A. Abdimomunov** – Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources, Deputy Prime Minister

**Telman S. Sarbaev** – Director, "Kyrgyzgiprovodkhoz" Institute

**Dyushen M. Mamatkanov** – Director, Institute of Water Problems and Hydropower

## Greetings and Congratulations

*The Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development congratulates the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea with its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary!*

Over this period of time, huge efforts were made to strengthen water and environmental cooperation in the Aral Sea basin that enabled the Central Asian states to embark on a path of sustainable development and improved social well-being.

Greater socio-economic and environmental problems in the context of climate change require further coordinated and joint actions from us. We are sure that IFAS and its agencies will continue serving as the key platform for dialogue among the Central Asian countries.

*Z.B. Suleimenova,  
Chairman, Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development under IFAS, Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, Republic of Kazakhstan*

The International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea has the noble mission of facilitating multisectoral cooperation in Central Asia at the national and regional level to solve water, environmental and socio-economic matters, with the ultimate aim of achieving sustainable development in our region.

For 30 years, IFAS has achieved positive results at national, regional and international level. We are confident that our inter-state cooperation aimed at solving water, energy, environment and socio-economic development matters in the Aral Sea basin will continue to be developed and strengthened under umbrella of the improved IFAS.

*D.Sh. Dzhuma,  
Minister of Energy and Water Resources, Republic of Tajikistan*

The significant role of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea is deserving of special mention. This is the only and unique inter-state organization in Central Asia that was established by the region's countries to take joint practical actions for implementation of promising programs and projects aimed at the improvement of the water, environmental and socio-economic situation in the Aral Sea basin and the environmental rehabilitation in the Aral Sea region.

The Republic of Uzbekistan views the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea as a universal platform for joint initiatives, programs and projects to mitigate the Aral Sea crisis.

Uzbekistan, as a regular member of IFAS, actively supports the Fund and will continue contributing to its activity to respond to all current challenges faced by the region.

*Sh.R. Khamraev,  
Minister of Water Management, Republic of Uzbekistan*

*The Scientific-Information Center and its branches in the Central Asian countries congratulate the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea with its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary!*

The Central Asian countries have common history and culture and close economic, educational and environmental standards that precondition commitment of the countries to regional collaboration. For natural and geographic factors, most environmental problems in Central Asia are of transboundary nature or common for majority of countries in the region, and, consequently, the Central Asian countries can solve them effectively by the united efforts only.

The Interstate Commission for Sustainable Development and its working body – the Scientific-Information Center – offer a promising space with great potential for solution of regional environmental problems, mitigation of climate and future threats such as droughts, land degradation, and biodiversity losses. The current important task is to mitigate the negative impacts on the environment and lives of million people in the Aral Sea region.

The issue of climate change is global and mitigation and adaptation measures are becoming increasingly urgent. Currently every country feels the destructive impacts of climate change. Unfortunately, these negative changes pose a serious threat for sustainable development in the Central Asian countries.

In this context, the Regional Environmental Program for Sustainable Development in Central Asia was developed under ICSD coordination and approved by the Board of IFAS. The Program is to enhance the regional dialogue for gradual improvement of social, environmental and economic conditions in the Central Asian region.

*M. Durikov,  
Director, SIC ICSD under IFAS*

30 years is a short time from the historical point of view unless these are 30 years of joint life or activity dedicated to the issues of vital importance. IFAS has managed to create a platform of “living” interaction, which had both successes and challenges remained. Support by the Heads of state, the extended network of executive agencies, dedication of high-class professionals, and understanding of the importance of science for decision making (few world's basin organizations have scientific-information centers!) are among the undisputable advantages of the IFAS system.

*D.R. Ziganshina,  
Director, SIC ICWC*

Congratulations to the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea on the milestone of its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary! IFAS plays an essential role in Central Asia, as regional cooperation and shared water management are central pillars for a sustainable use of water as the fundamental resource of human life. The EU strongly supports regionally integrated water management as a source for peace, stability and prosperity. We look forward to the continued cooperation with the IFAS.

*Ambassador Terhi Hakala,  
European Union Special Representative for Central Asia*

IFAS is a unique platform that was created by CA countries to overcome the challenges of the individual independent states over management of the shared water resources. I am delighted to hear that the countries of the region intend to further improve effectiveness of this platform to ensure its fit to address the challenges and current realities.

*Saroj Kumar Jha,  
Global Director for the World Bank Group's Water Global Practice*

For the past 30 years IFAS has been instrumental in addressing the complex interplay of water use and management across many sectors in Central Asia. Today, regional collaboration is more important than ever, and countries of Central Asia need a stronger, financially sustainable IFAS with a broader mandate to effectively support this evolving agenda.

*Tatiana Proskuryakova,  
Regional Director for the Central Asia region, World Bank*



Regional cooperation on integrated water resources management is key to reach the SDGs worldwide and thus improve the livelihood of millions of people. For Central Asia, IFAS is the key existing platform for water cooperation and management that has the capacity to navigate the challenging water issues in the Aral Sea Basin diplomatically and successfully. IFAS with its Executive Committee and sub-organisations merits all support it can get.

*Caroline Milow,  
GIZ Programme Manager, Green Central Asia project*

IFAS has catalyzed a new era of cooperation on water resources management and environment in Central Asia. As a regional platform, IFAS is leading the way on integrating the linkages across the nexus of water, energy, food and biodiversity through policy dialogue and innovation and promotion of development, research, capacity building and investment. Congratulations to IFAS on its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

*International Water Management Institute*

IFAS played a crucial role in supporting regional cooperation on water since the countries of the region became independent in 1991. Inherited problems and the emergence of new challenges make legal and institutional strengthening of the Fund an urgent necessity. The devastating consequences of the drying out of the Aral Sea are aggravated by the increasingly dramatic effects of climate change, loss of biodiversity and rapid melting of glaciers. Ongoing infrastructure development, like the building of the Kosh Tepa irrigation network in Afghanistan contributes to uncertainties and the need to work together on solutions. Political will to strengthen regional cooperation exists: a significantly strengthened IFAS should play a key role in translating political will into effective action.

*Marton Krasznai,  
Scientific Director, Center for Central Asia Research, Corvinus University Budapest*

Since its inception, IFAS has garnered remarkable achievements in promoting and addressing water cooperation in Central Asia. Through its commitment to fostering dialogue, coordination, and collaborative projects, the Fund has effectively facilitated sustainable development and equitable access to shared water resources, while harmonizing policies and regulations to promote regional environmental sustainability. The fruitful collaboration between IFAS and UNECE has considerably enhanced regional water cooperation across Central Asia and we look forward to its continuation. Looking ahead, we envision IFAS fortifying its pivotal role as the regional vehicle for enhancing cooperation in order to secure a better future for Central Asian countries ensuring sustainable use of water resources while preserving the environment for generations to come.

*Batyr Khadzhiyev,  
Economic Affairs Officer, UN Economic Commission for Europe*