



**Activities of the Kazakhstan-
Uzbekistan Working Group on
Environmental Protection and
Water Quality in the Syr
Darya River Basin**

CREATION OF THE KAZAKHSTAN-UZBEKISTAN WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND WATER QUALITY IN THE SYR DARYA RIVER BASIN

On 2 June 1997, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan signed an agreement on cooperation on environmental protection and sustainable environmental management.

In March 2017, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan signed the Strategy for Economic Cooperation for 2017–2019, which included the following activities: "To create a joint Commission for cooperation on environmental protection" and "To ensure joint water sampling, analysis, and exchange of water quality data and regulations".

In September 2018, a Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Joint Working Group (Commission) on Environmental Protection and Water Quality in the Syr Darya River Basin (the Working Group) was established.

The composition of the joint Working Group, its regulations and Work Plan for 2018–2020 were approved;

So far, the Working Group has held five meetings.

In the framework of the 1st meeting of the Working Group:

- The Parties visited laboratories in Kazakhstan performing water quality monitoring and control. They studied regulatory and technical documentation of the Parties.

For the first half of **2019**, it was planned to hold **mutual** visits to laboratories and exchange observation programmes, coordinate the list of pollutants of mutual interest to both Parties, consider and unify measurement procedures to ensure comparability of measurement results.

In March 2019, the activities of the working group of Kazhydromet and environmental protection authorities of Shymkent city were reviewed;

In May 2019, the activities of laboratories of Uzhydromet, the Ministry of Health and the State Committee for Ecology and Environment Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan were reviewed.

In the framework of its 2nd meeting held in Nur-Sultan city (7–8 November 2019), the joint Working Group approved:

The list of indicators to be measured (28 items);

Sites for joint water sampling (2 sites);

Conducting sample analysis and sharing results;

In the framework of its 3rd meeting (24 December 2020), the Working Group considered the following issues:

The Parties agreed to exchange encrypted samples (reference samples) every 5 years, to review and determine the timing of sampling, taking into account the time of water travel in the Syr Darya River.

Sampling taking into account the time of water travel in the Syr Darya River;

The Work Plan for 2020–2022;

The date and time of sampling (time in Uzbekistan) at Chinaz town;

The date and time of sampling (time in Astana) at the gauge at the bridge over the Syr Darya River.

In the framework of the 4th meeting of the Working Group held on 13 December 2021 in Almaty, the Parties approved a schedule for water sampling taking into account the time of water travel and agreed to continue coordinated water sampling and exchange of data on water quality in the Syr Darya River. The Parties agreed to promptly notify each other of occurrence of emergency situations and to perform joint analysis of water samples engaging specialised laboratories and approved the Work Plan of the Working Group for 2022.

The Work Plan covers sharing experience of the Parties in joint analysis of water samples performed by specialised laboratories and in building the capacity of the state control of the Parties based on the case of pollution sources in the Syr Darya River basin.

In accordance with the Work Plan of the Working Group, coordinated sampling and water quality monitoring in the Syr Darya River is performed at 4 agreed sites (2 sites in the Republic of Kazakhstan and 2 – in the Republic of Uzbekistan), taking into account the time of water travel, 4 times a year (March, July, September, December) with each Party doing it on its territory. The results of analysis of water samples are exchanged using agreed e-mails of the Parties.

The 5th meeting of the Working Group was held on 14–15 December 2022 (Tashkent city). Representatives from the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Tajikistan were invited to participate in the event as observers.

An interim report on the implementation of the project "Development of Joint Measures to Prevent and Respond to Pollution of the Syr Darya River in Emergency Situations" (Phase I) was presented.

Kazakhstan proposed to consider the creation of a joint 4-party working group to deal with water quality in the Syr Darya River basin building on the Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Joint Water Resources Management and Conservation of Interstate Sources dated 18 February 1992.

The meeting considered the draft Programme of Measures for the conservation and restoration of the ecosystem of the transboundary Syr Darya River for 2023–2025, which included activities to identify and eliminate sources of pollution of the river.

In general, since the establishment of the Working Group, the Parties have made progress in the implementation of measures aimed at improving the ecosystem of the Syr Darya River basin.

However, to ensure the effectiveness of their efforts, some issues should be addressed, such as mismatches in national regulations and standards and differences in physical facilities of environmental monitoring services – water quality monitoring is carried out by various agencies using different sampling sites and monitoring frequencies.

That makes it difficult to analyse monitoring data and make appropriate decisions regarding the target water quality in the Syr Darya River basin.

Therefore, a comprehensive environmental survey of the Syr Darya River basin should be performed with the involvement of international organisations.

The Work Plan of the Working Group for the current year includes the development of project proposals for the joint implementation of projects to improve the status of the Syr Darya River. Taking this opportunity, we would like to note that the Parties stand ready to consider proposals for the implementation of that activity.

Joint analysis of water samples performed by specialised laboratories of the State Committee for Ecology and Environment Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan

- In accordance with the Work Plan of the Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Joint Working Group on Environmental Protection and Water Quality in the Syr Darya River Basin for 2022, the Parties held working meetings on joint analysis of water samples performed by specialised laboratories of the Parties. There were also working meetings held on issues related to building the capacity of the state control of the Parties based on the case of pollution sources in the Syr Darya River basin.
- On 19 July 2022, a joint sampling of collector-drainage waters was carried out at three sites (upstream and downstream the discharge point and the Syr Darya River). The technical conditions of laboratories and inspection activities of the State Committee for Ecology and Environment Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan were reviewed.
- On 20 July 2022, collected water samples were analysed for 28 indicators according to the programme. There was exchange of experience on observation programmes, sampling methods, day-1 analysis, and the system of delivery of collected samples.



The work of the wastewater treatment facilities of a textile enterprise in Chirchik city, ChirchikTex JSC, and the situational centre for monitoring waste management was studied. Regulatory legal documents on state regulation and state control were reviewed.



Joint analysis of water samples performed by specialised laboratories of Kazakhstan

- On 11–14 October 2022, a delegation of Uzbekistan took part in joint sampling of water of the Syr Darya River at the border with the Republic of Kazakhstan.
- According to the protocol of sampling dated 11 October 2022, a joint analysis of samples was performed with the participation of representatives of Kazhydromet RSE. The state of inspection activities of the Departments of Ecology in Shymkent city and Turkestan region was reviewed.

The Parties visited and studied the work of the wastewater treatment facilities in Shymkent city and PetroKazakhstanOil Products LLP. They also visited Shardarinskaya HPP to review its operations.

The Parties agreed on further joint work in terms of monitoring the water quality in the Syr Darya River, as well as studying the level of pollution of the Syr Darya River with the surface waters of the Keles River, making an inventory of discharges and identifying additional sampling sites.



An underwater scene with clear blue water and a sandy bottom. The water surface is visible at the top, showing gentle ripples. The lighting is soft and even, creating a serene atmosphere.

Thanks for your attention!