CENTRAL ASIA SUB-REGIONAL GREEN FORUM 2024

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CONCEPT NOTE

Background

While Central Asian nations have made notable progress in enhancing their energy sectors, they continue to face critical challenges. These include increasing energy demands, shortages in traditional energy resources, and the necessity for extensive upgrades to outdated energy infrastructure.[1] Environmental issues further compound these difficulties. A significant concern is the region's dependence on singular energy sources like hydroelectric power, which poses substantial energy security risks. This vulnerability is exacerbated by factors such as fluctuating water levels, geopolitical dependencies, reliance on singular natural gas sources, and the aging state of energy infrastructure. The lack of diversified energy sources and issues with pricing mechanisms also contribute to these challenges.[2] Collectively, these issues highlight the pressing need for an all-encompassing approach towards green transition in Central Asia, emphasizing sustainability and energy security.

Central Asian nations have collectively recognized and embraced the imperative of fostering innovation, enhancing productivity, and ensuring job security. Despite diverse needs at regional and national levels, there is a shared commitment to advancing higher efficiency, resilience, and rapid innovation across the region.

At the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), green economy was acknowledged as a tool for achieving sustainable social, economic, and environmental development, as well as poverty eradication. The UN Environment Programme has defined Green Economy as "one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities." In its simplest expression, a Green Economy can be considered as one that is low in carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive.[3]

The transition towards a green economy presents substantial prospects for poverty alleviation, economic growth, social inclusion, and human welfare enhancement. It promises to create equitable employment opportunities while preserving ecosystem health.[4]

Conversely, there is a consensus on the risks associated with delaying the shift away from unsustainable practices. Prolonged inaction poses a threat of environmental degradation with far-reaching adverse effects on human health, welfare, and the region's ecosystems. Key environmental concerns include the loss of biodiversity, unsustainable land use, and the broader impacts of climate change.[5] Therefore, a strategic and timely approach to sustainable development is essential for the future well-being of Central Asia.

Embracing a green transition is not only a commitment to future generations but also delivers immediate benefits. As the tangible impacts of climate change manifest in the present, similarly, the advantages of a green transition are immediate and far-reaching.

1 Central Asia's Great Energy Paradox: https://thediplomat.com/2023/12/central-asias-great-energy-paradox/
2 Reforms and Investment Needed to Power Central Asia's Clean Energy Future: https://thediplomat.com/2023/03/reforms-and-investment-needed-to-power-central-asias-clean-energy-future/
3 https://www.unep.org/pt-br/node/23750
4 Sustainable energy transition in Central Asia: status and challenges: https://energsustainsoc.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13705-021-00324-2
5 Central Asia's Escalating Energy Crisis and its Geopolitical Implications: https://www.caspianpolicy.org/research/energy-and-economy-program-eep/central-asias-escalating-energy-crisis-and-its-geopolitical-implications

There is a broad consensus among stakeholders in Central Asia that a green economy is pivotal for sustainable development, poverty eradication, and effective natural resource management. Such an economy aims to minimize environmental impact, enhance resource efficiency, and reduce waste.

To realize sustained, inclusive, and equitable economic growth, and to create job opportunities, especially for women, youth, and underprivileged groups, it is essential that green transition policies adopt a comprehensive approach. This entails integrating financing, technology, and capacity development with other critical elements of a conducive environment for a green economy. Strengthening cooperation between the public and private sectors is crucial for the widespread and effective implementation of green economy principles and practices in Central Asia.[6]

Moreover, the green transition aligns with the core objectives of the private sector, including revenue growth, cost reduction, and risk mitigation. Evidence increasingly suggests that the business community stands to benefit significantly from aligning with sustainable economic practices. Transitioning to a green economy stimulates innovation, leading to the development of technologies with long-term market relevance, opening up new market opportunities, and improving efficiency in the use of energy, water, and other resources, thus reducing operational costs.

Ultimately, our choices today will shape the future trajectory of Central Asia and the planet at large. Our economic actions will determine our ability to mitigate the worst effects of climate change and preserve vital natural capital.

Objective of the Central Asia Sub-Regional Green Forum 2024

The Central Asia Sub-Regional Green Forum 2024 emerges as a proactive initiative, aligning with the aspirations of the region's countries and institutional partners to contextualize green economy solutions within Central Asia's unique milieu. This forum aims to amplify the impact of transitioning to a green economy by elevating and replicating regionally resonant, successful practices.

Envisioned to enhance regional consciousness, the Central Asia Sub-Regional Green Forum 2024 will highlight and expand the influence of proven green economy strategies, developed and implemented by Central Asian nations and others with similar economic frameworks. These strategies address sustainable development challenges, echoing the needs and ambitions of the region.

Organized by the Green Consortium – comprising European and Central Asian enterprises in collaboration with National Ministries and various international organizations active in the region – the forum is graciously hosted by the Government of Kyrgyzstan.

The forum will convene high-level government delegates, representatives from international bodies, including the United Nations, European Commission, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and foundations active in Central Asia, alongside prominent private sector entities and civil society figures from within and beyond the region.

It aims to bring together national ministry representatives, including those from Economy, Energy, Environmental Resources and Ecology, Water Resources, and Agriculture. These delegates, along with world-class green economy experts from the aforementioned institutions, will deliberate on advancing Central Asia's green transition and the realization of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. The forum will concentrate on three core areas: enhancing regulatory and policy frameworks for a green economy, fostering innovative green investment via public-private partnerships, and bolstering national capacity for comprehensive green initiatives.

The Central Asia Sub-Regional Green Forum 2024's primary goal is to foster an environment conducive to knowledge exchange, assisting participants in deepening their understanding of the evolving trends and opportunities in promoting the Green Economy agenda in Central Asia.

6 Five Things to Know About the Future of Energy in Central Asia: https://www.adb.org/news/features/five-things-know-about-future-energy-central-asia

Additionally, the forum aims to serve as a pivotal networking platform for key green economy advocates and stakeholders in the region. It seeks to facilitate the alignment of solution providers' capabilities with the requirements of those seeking solutions, potentially catalyzing the practical exchange of green economy solutions and experiences within Central Asia.

More specifically, the Central Asia Sub-Regional Green Forum 2024 will:

- The forum offers a pivotal opportunity for high-level participants to showcase effective green economy solutions and innovative green technologies, highlighting their potential for replication across the region.

- It will function as a dynamic platform for fostering networking and generating ideas for specific regional public-private partnerships, which could catalyze the expansion of green investment projects in participating countries.

- As an intellectual nexus, the forum will facilitate the production and validation of policy recommendations, supporting enhancements in national and regional green economy strategies.

- Additionally, the event will contribute to building new partnerships leading to practical agreements. Such agreements will focus on concrete actions and projects, aligned with national priorities, further advancing the Green Economy agendas of participating countries.

Value Proposition

The participants at the Central Asia Sub-Regional Green Forum 2024 will include four groups of champions and stakeholders: high-level policymakers, solution providers, solution seekers and those seeking to scale up solutions. For each of these groups, the Forum will offer the following value-added propositions:

1. *For Policymakers:* The Central Asia Sub-Regional Green Forum 2024 stands as a pivotal platform for integrating green economy concepts within the regional and global context. It will enable policymakers to define new strategic directions, set priorities, and spearhead impactful green economy partnerships across Central Asia and beyond.

2. *For Solution Providers:* This Forum presents a unique opportunity to exhibit effective, sustainable, and scalable green economy solutions aligned with the outlined themes. It aims to kindle the interest of potential collaborators (solution seekers) in identifying and adapting these initiatives for broader application, both regionally and globally, drawing upon the successes and learnings of the solution providers.

3. *For Solution Seekers:* The Green Forum offers a learning avenue to understand diverse green economy solutions applicable to similar challenges. It provides a collaborative space for solution seekers to connect with providers, exploring methods to replicate successful models and best practices showcased during the event.

4. *For those seeking to Scale Up Solutions:* The Forum will highlight the intrinsic value of presented green economy solutions, aiding participants in making informed, strategic decisions to support expansion efforts. This includes fostering traditional and innovative cross-border cooperation and exploring diverse funding mechanisms for scaling up these solutions.

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