

TASHKENT Declaration on establishment of the Interim Regional CADI Secretariat

Participants from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan met at the Regional Awareness Raising Workshop in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, held from 22-23 October 2019. The workshop was organized within the project on “Central Asian Desert Initiative (CADI): Conservation and sustainable use of cold winter deserts”.

The project is focusing on temperate (cold winter) deserts. Nearly 95% of these ecosystems are in Central Asia. They provide habitat for a wide range of plant and animal species. Temperate deserts are threatened through a mix of human impacts. Corresponding conservation efforts are therefore needed.

The objectives of the workshop were 1) to introduce past and existing project work, and 2) to discuss and agree on the establishment modality, organizational structure, composition of the national representatives and the plan of work of the to be established Interim Regional CADI Secretariat.

Participants to the workshop expressed their strong commitment towards establishing the Interim Regional CADI Secretariat. Participants to the workshop also suggested to establish national CADI secretariats in each country of the region. The overall objective of these bodies will be promotion of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the temperate deserts of Central Asia.

The work of the Interim Regional CADI Secretariat will focus on the thematic (focal) areas related to the three Rio Conventions and corresponding multilateral environmental agreements. In particular, the Interim Regional CADI Secretariat will concentrate on the following agenda:

1. Regional approaches to CADI's focal areas including policy reviews, formulation and examination of technical approaches, and collaboration with other regional programs and organizations
2. Information exchange strategies to facilitate dialogue between scientific institutions and national policymakers (in addition to international organizations) on transboundary migration of the wild fauna species;
3. Support to national initiatives and activities for biodiversity protection and against desertification;
4. Advice for regional and national strategies to counteract the impact of climate change;
5. Strategies for establishment of infrastructure and new employment opportunities for local communities to make the villages in the deserts attractive for living.

The seat of the Interim Regional Secretariat will be hosted for the first three years through in-kind contribution by the State Committee on Forestry of Uzbekistan in Tashkent. The Interim Regional Secretariat will be initially considered an Initiative which could be later on turned over into a legal entity, if found appropriate. The national CADI Secretariats will be in-kind hosted by the partner countries and their respective organizational structures.

The workshop participants agreed that FAO will select and employ Interim Regional CADI coordinator and his/her assistant. Funds for these positions will be provided by the CADI project for the initial period of two years (i.e. possible extended project duration). Interim Regional CADI coordinator and his/her assistant will work under the auspices and direct supervision of FAO office for the initial period of two years. Future funding, auspices and supervision will be identified during this period. The position of Interim Regional CADI coordinator and his/her assistant can change on a three years rotational basis, if found appropriate.

The decision making body of the Interim Regional CADI Secretariat will be the CADI Steering Committee (SC). SC meetings will be conveyed annually on a rotational basis in each member country. The CADI SC will be composed of representatives nominated by the national CADI Secretariats. The following members are recommended for each country: National focal points to the three Rio Conventions, national CADI project coordinators/implementing partners and the representatives of the relevant national ministries, if appropriate.

The basis for developing the agenda of the Interim Regional CADI Secretariat will be a 3 years plan of work (PoW). This PoW will be mandated to address mainly the following gaps and issues:

- Lack of international political instruments focusing on temperate deserts (as per definition of this globally distributed biome used by UNESCO).
- Fences along international borders which restrict migration of wild animals.
- Limited distribution of Saxaul (*Haloxylon* spp.) dominated desert forests. These areas are capable of efficient and affective carbon fixation, and provision of other ecosystem services.
- Insufficiently functioning system of protected areas (of all categories). This system should consider corridors and connection to the surrounding landscape through zoning. The zones should temporarily and spatially differentiate among areas with strict protective, buffer and sustainable natural resources use function.
- Threat of pests and diseases which could be potentially transmitted through uncontrolled border crossing by migrating animals.
- Weak basis for sharing of data, knowledge, best practice examples and technologies, and for promoting scientific cooperation and coordination including natural resource monitoring.

Hence, the following project type activities (subject to approval of the SC) should be integrated in the first PoW (2020-2022) of the Interim Regional CADI Secretariat. This suggestion is based on the consensus among the country representatives who participated in the Regional Awareness Raising Workshop:

- Initiating policy dialogue on impact of fences along the borders on migration of wild animals
- Developing of scientific cooperation across borders including awareness raising on the pleas of temperate deserts among policy makers and wider public
- Conducting planting of Saxaul trees
- Establishing transboundary protected areas

Numerous other project type activities were identified by the participants, mainly in relation to specific national needs. The Interim CADI Regional Secretariat should include lobbying and facilitation of implementation of those other activities in its first PoW.

Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 23 October 2019