



## The Regional Scientific Technical Council: Enhancing Regional Cooperation on Disaster Risk Management

In Central Asia, a large region that includes Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, several types of natural hazards pose significant threats to people and economies. These include floods, droughts, earthquakes, and landslides.

Earthquakes and floods, in particular, are major concerns in the region. Every year, earthquakes affect about 1.9 million people and result in economic losses exceeding \$3.5 billion and floods impact around 950,000 people annually, causing economic losses of approximately \$4.7 billion.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the risk of extreme weather events is expected to increase due to climate change.

Given these circumstances, disaster resilience is a high priority for Central Asian governments, and they are actively developing national strategies to reduce the risks associated with disasters. Significantly, these countries

also recognize the need for regional cooperation in managing such disasters, as natural hazards are not contained within national borders.

To address these challenges, the European Union, the World Bank, and GFDRR have initiated the “Strengthening Financial Resilience and Accelerating Risk Reduction in Central Asia” Program in 2019. One of this program’s main objectives is to bring together regional scientists and government officials to share knowledge and experiences related to emergency situations and disaster risk reduction.

### Platform to enhance regional cooperation

In December 2019, these efforts were institutionalized by the creation of the **Regional Scientific and Technical Council for Emergency Situations**, following a decision by a Regional Forum of the Heads of Emergency Authorities of Central Asian countries.

<sup>1</sup> GFDRR 2017. <https://www.gfdr.org/en/publication/europe-and-central-asia-country-risk-profiles-floods-and-earthquakes>



The Council functions as a public expert consultative body, established to facilitate cooperation between these same emergency authorities, who each send three representatives, as well as experts from international, non-governmental and scientific organizations.

Meeting at least once a year, the Council works on a range of disaster-risk issues including natural hazards, hydrometeorology, and climate change in Central Asia. Its activities are supported by the Secretariat of the [Center for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (CESDRR), based in Almaty.

## Objectives

The Regional Council has several main goals, which include enhancing regional collaboration and cooperation among state authorities, international organizations, scientific institutions, educational organizations, and other stakeholders involved in disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness. Collaboration is particularly important for addressing large-scale and transboundary emergencies.

The Council also assists in coordinating the scientific and technical activities of various entities, governmental and non-governmental, at the regional level. This coordination ensures a cohesive approach to disaster risk reduction and emergency prevention.

Furthermore, the Council actively participates in the planning and implementation of regional programs and projects focused on scientific, technical, and educational initiatives related to disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness. It contributes by developing scientific and technical proposals and recommendations that incorporate technological and procedural advancements.

Additionally, the Council carries out public scientific and technical assessments of regional programs, projects, and methodological materials related to large-scale and transboundary emergencies. It plays a role in shaping regional scientific and technical programs and projects, providing recommendations on their funding, and facilitating mutual scientific and technical work among stakeholders to protect populations and territories from such emergencies.

Lastly, the Council contributes to the collection, compilation, and dissemination of scientific, technical, and methodological information in the field of disaster risk reduction, prevention, and emergency elimination at the regional level. This ensures that stakeholders have access to up-to-date and relevant information to support their efforts in addressing emergencies effectively.

## Recent Activity

The Council has been involved in numerous meetings that address regional disaster risk assessment and capacity building in Central Asia, reflecting its deep involvement in the SFRAAR Program. For example, members of the Council regularly attended the Program's steering committee meetings to discuss the preliminary reports and offer their comments and feedback.

Between December 2019 and September 2022, a series of online meetings were held that covered the Program's efforts on various topics such as river and rain flood hazard and risk assessment, landslide scenarios, data set development for exposure and vulnerability assessment, and the exploration of multiple hazard modeling. These meetings aimed to strengthen resilience, support disaster risk management, and facilitate discussions on emergency preparedness and response in the region.

More recently, in Dushanbe on 4 October 2022, there was an extended meeting of the Regional Scientific and Technical Council. In addition to the council members, it also involved Central Asian national focal points of the Sendai Framework Program and representatives of international organizations. The meeting presented the results of the regional risk assessment for Central Asia, along with country reports emphasizing the strengthening of social protection systems' resilience.

Now in its fourth year of collaboration, the Regional Scientific and Technical Council has proven itself to be a dedicated and effective source of expertise. The close cooperation between the World Bank and the Council has been essential to the success of the SFRAAR Program, and as the Program concludes in 2024, the Council will remain a firm foundation for collaboration and will contribute to increasing the region's long-term disaster resilience.



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