Abstract: In January 2000, the Governments of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic signed the Agreement on Utilization of the Water Facilities of Interstate Use on the Chu and Talas rivers that are shared by both countries. Under the agreement, Kazakhstan has an obligation to reimburse a part of Kyrgyzstan’s expenses for operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation of a number of dams and reservoirs located on the territory of Kyrgyzstan, but supplying water to Kazakhstan. The Agreement was ratified by parliaments of both countries and came into force in February 2002. With the involvement of the OSCE and other entities a project to implement this agreement was initiated. The project consisted of four main components. The first was to develop the statutes and regulations for the Bilateral Commission on the Chu and Talas rivers. The second component called for allocation of costs for operation, management, and rehabilitation of selected water control projects, or the outlining of the financial viability of the Commission. The third component of the project involved public participation. The final component consisted of a public awareness campaign. With support from the major donors, Great Britain and Sweden, and with additional support from Estonia, OSCE was able to realize significant successes in the Chu–Talas project, even though no comparable cooperative project exists in Central Asia. This project has demonstrated that cooperation can function, and that cooperative agreements of the sort pioneered in this project can and do have significant benefits for all participants.

Keywords: Chu and Talas rivers, Bilateral Commission, public participation
1. Basic Information about OSCE Scope of Work

The OSCE is primarily a security organization. As part of its comprehensive approach to security, it is concerned with economic and environmental issues, operating on the premise that economic and environmental solidarity and cooperation can contribute to peace, prosperity and stability. Conversely, economic and environmental problems that are not effectively addressed can contribute to increasing tensions within or among States.

In the Helsinki Final Act (1975), the participating States divided the CSCE’s (now OSCE) areas of activity into three dimensions or baskets.

- Political Dimension.
- Economic and Environmental Dimension.
- Human Rights Dimension.

The second dimension is the Economic and Environmental Dimension, dealing with issues such as economic development, science, technology, and environmental protection in their relation to international security.

The tradition of the OSCE and, indeed, the mandate of the organization speak to the importance of international cooperation and mitigation of potential conflicts. This has been identified and acknowledged as an area wherein the OSCE as a competitive advantage, and the effectiveness of the OSCE’s facilitation of international cooperation is clearly manifested in the Kazakhstan–Kyrgyzstan transborder project entitled, “Creation of a commission between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on the Chu and Talas rivers”, which was conducted collaboratively with the Kazakhstani and Kyrgyz Governments, with the invaluable support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The project was initiated following the UN Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) began calculated guidelines for water management, and it was determined that a more practical and concrete mechanism would be required.