

Central Asia: June' 07

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Journalists from across region gather for Bishkek round table on reporting international relations and economics.

In June, IWPR Central Asia offered a unique opportunity for journalists, analysts and project staff from different countries in Central Asia to congregate in Bishkek for a training session and discussion.

On June 14 and 15, 12 journalists from Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, along with IWPR editors from the five countries in the region, took part in a regional training session in Bishkek run by IWPR Senior Editor, John MacLeod, and News Briefing Central Asia, NBCA, executive editor Kumar Bekbolotov.

The training was aimed at experienced NBCA contributors and helped participants refine their reporting and editing skills. In addition to learning and practicing important principles of journalism, participants were briefed in the latest methods of information security.

The training session was followed by a regional round table held on June 16 in Bishkek - attended by reporters, editors and academics - which discussed how to report on international relations and economic issues, and was followed by series of practical sessions for IWPR contributors.

Journalists and editors watched as seven experts - divided in two panels based on their economic or political expertise - discussed what they considered the role of analytical journalism in their countries.

After initial remarks by John and Kumar, who moderated the discussion, experts presented an overview of how the region is portrayed in analytical news coverage, both locally and internationally.

According to Eduard Poletaev, editor-in-chief of *Mir Evrazii* magazine in Kazakstan, a stereotypical picture of Central Asia has been presented for several reasons, including the lack of international reporters and experts in the region.

Poletaev said projects like NBCA give a platform for communication that is in high demand.

Tajik political scientist Parviz Mullodzhanov said the development of political unions like Shanghai Cooperation Organization, SCO, and Collective Security Treaty Organization, CSTO, depends largely on the media coverage, which can highlight both mistakes and opportunities for development.

Kyrgyz expert Orozbek Moldaliev said that NBCA has become one of the few outlets where expert opinion can be heard by wider audiences, allowing analysis to make a difference.

During the round table, there was an interesting debate on the future of Central Asian political and economic unification projects.

Some speakers said that even though there is some political will to form a union, progress is being hampered by external actors opposed to such a geopolitical formation.

Petr Svoik, an economic expert from Kazakhstan, explained why a union would be hard to achieve. He said that true integration is only possible between countries with transparent and open parliamentary systems, but in Central Asia most of the countries have presidential or super-presidential forms of governance.

Svoik then gave advice to journalists writing about energy. He suggested that they should learn the basic process involved in oil and gas extraction, to allow them to relate any changes in energy markets to a bigger geopolitical picture.

Tajik representative Khodzhimakhmad Umarov spoke about how analysis of regional electrical power capacities, projects and prospects of cooperation could help to foster development in this sphere.

In particular, he spoke about the necessity of holding a public debate on the current situation regarding the Rogun hydroelectric power station, the construction of which has been producing tensions between the Tajik government and the Russian company Rusal which is responsible for construction works.

Kyrgyz economist Sapar Orozbekov spoke about a regional electricity union and the construction of two hydroelectric power stations Kambarata-1, 2 in Kyrgyzstan - subjects regularly covered by NBCA.

Notably, Orozbekov said that according World Bank estimates, the initial price of 1 kilowatt-hour produced at the completed Kambarata-2 station will be eight US cents, which is four times higher than other hydroelectric power stations in the region.

Kamarata-1 and 2 are seen as the only Kyrgyzstan's salvation in terms of energy expert prospects, and Orozbekov's suggestion provoked serious debate on the latter.

Towards the end of the round table, guest speakers and participating journalists exchanged suggestions on how to improve the quality of interaction between journalists and experts.

Location: [Central Asia](#)
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[Turkmenistan](#)
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