



Public organisation  
"Eco consultancy"



Pamir Eco-Cultural  
Tourism Association

**August 2th - 10th, 2017**  
**GBAO, Tajikistan**

### **ANNOUNCEMENT**

On behalf of the Public Organization "Environmental Consultancy" jointly with the Pamir Eco-Cultural Tourism Association (PECTA) in Tajikistan, Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO).

### **INTERNATIONAL MOBILE LEARNING CIRCLE**

On biocultural diversity focused on the centennial of Vavilov's expedition to explore the links between genetic diversity of crops and human cultures in the Pamir Highlands

## **The Pamir Mountains**

"The Tajik Pamir is situated in the eastern part of Tajikistan (Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast – GBAO) and covers nearly half of the total surface area of Tajikistan. Human settlements are located at altitudes varying from 1200 to 4000 meter above sea level."

The Mountains of Pamir connected by the ancient Silk Road, the remote border region between Afghanistan (Badakhshan) and Tajikistan (GBAO) was once a place of prosperous exchange.

From Alexander the Great, who marched through them, to George Nathaniel Curzon, who found the source of the Oxus in their folds, many have held in awe this distant and isolated range of peaks. It is an extraordinary world – an ancient and dignified human culture living in a diverse environmental ecosystem.

After centuries of relative abandon, the paths that formed the Pamiri part of the Silk Road before its disintegration are now busier than ever. Once again they are allowing international trade to access these mountains and trade is quickly becoming the most important driver of change.

Camels are still used in the remote areas of the Wakhan and the high Pamirs in the East, but asphalt roads now reach most places, particularly on the Tajik side of the border.

The history of the Pamirs starts much earlier than this. It begins even before the Silk Road and Marco Polo came through these mountains, or Chinese pilgrims in search of Buddhist scriptures from India. It begins when the Pamirs were not yet a destination, or a route to be traversed but simply a mountain refuge in which people could live in relative peace.



The Silk Road today is a rich tapestry of tourism destinations and products based on the unique and outstandingly rich heritage, nature, and traditions of dozens of distinct histories, peoples and cultures all along the timeless route now extending a warm welcome to visitors, one of the earliest scientists to realize that wild genetic diversity could be lost, through genetic erosion, reducing the possibilities for future crop improvement.

## Vavilov Expedition to the Pamir Mountains:

*Nikolay Ivanovich Vavilov's theories direct present-day global activities in plant science, breeding, and conservation. His expeditions around the world located centers of diversity of crop evolution. Vavilov was one of the earliest scientists to realize that wild genetic diversity could be lost, through genetic erosion, reducing the possibilities for future crop improvement.*

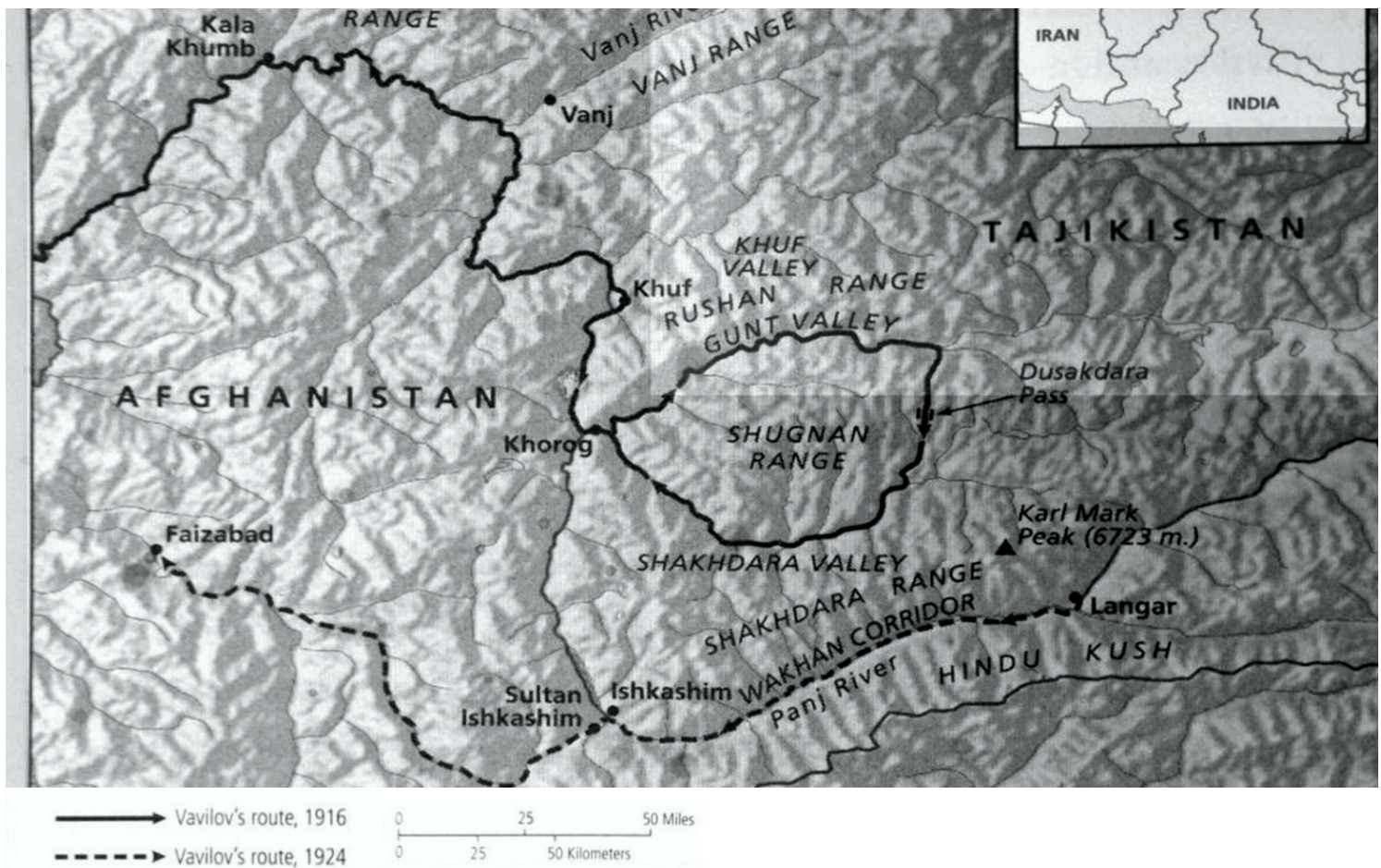
*The objective of this "Mobile Learning Circle" is to get introduced, observe and investigate the potential genetic and biological diversity of the Pamir Highlands of Tajikistan, which was one of the areas of interest also for Vavilov's expeditions in 1916 and 1924.*

At this locality Vavilov's notes can be compared with the agricultural activities of the modern day. The area is representing significant climatic, environmental, and human-caused changes have affected the local agriculture during the intervening years.

Vavilov recognized that the Pamir Highlands of Western Tajikistan were a significant center for crop evolution. When Vavilov traveled there, glacier-capped ranges of the Onion Mountains, known as "The Roof of the World," provided water in gray rivulets that were channeled into canals and ponds. In Vavilov's time, nine wild species of onions grew with many heirloom cultivars grown in fields, gardens, and orchards (Nabhan, 2009).

Vavilov took meticulous notes on the elevation gradients of the crops in the Pamiri Highlands. He realized that while the wheat produced in his homeland was vulnerable to cold dry weather, the hardy, short season grains developed in Tajikistan would be valuable. He suggested they could broaden diversity and provide more hardiness for the difficult Russian climate.

In the Pamir Highlands, the traditional practice of growing fields of diverse genotypes has provided resilience to the changing temperature and climate.



*1 Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov (November 13, 1887 – January 26, 1943) was a prominent Russian and Soviet botanist and geneticist best known for having identified the centres of origin of cultivated plants. He devoted his life to the study and improvement of wheat, corn, and other cereal crops that sustain the global population.*

## The main topic and the programme of the Mobile Learning Circle (MLC):

The main programme will cover the route of Vavilov's expedition to the Pamir Mountains on 1916 and 1924 including:

- **Research work on Vavilov life and his expeditions around the world;**
- **Bio-cultural diversity and traditional knowledge of the local people in agriculture;**
- **Introduction to the world genetic resource and origin of domestic crops.**

The programme will continue nine days starting from Dushanbe through Pamir highway to Khorog – administrative center of GBAO, with overnight in Darwaz. This will continue to Ishkashim with travel through Wakhan corridor to Murghab. Through this round trip the route will be merged in Khorog and back to Dushanbe.

During the course of the MLC you will have a chance to travel through the Pamir Mountains, Wakhan and Murghab with their many unique natural, cultural, historical, archaeological and ethnographic sites, are distinguished by greatness of their wildlife and beautiful scenery (memorable valleys and gorges, mountains and high-mountain lakes), healthy environment (pure air and water), rich history and cultural heritage (including sacred sites, local original traditions) and, above all, unique hospitality of the population living here.

The programme will also covers partly trip over the Tajik National Park "Pamir Mountains" the World Natural Heritage site inscribed by UNESCO on June 27, 2013.



## Application procedure:

If you are interested in attending the conference, please send your application form to the organizers e-mail at [yodgorqonunov@yahoo.com](mailto:yodgorqonunov@yahoo.com) and [ecosovet@yahoo.com](mailto:ecosovet@yahoo.com) latest by 30th of June 2017.

### Application package consisting of:

- Short CV with list of publications, preferable related to the call topic;
- An abstract from your own research on Vavilov biography, life and expedition around the world, especially to Central Asia and other mountains areas in the above mentioned topics;
- Poster (draft version of the poster you would be exhibiting during the MLC) for a presentation.

### Cost coverage:

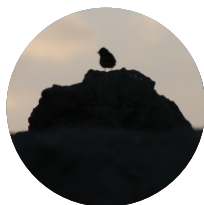
- International return ticket from and to airport in Dushanbe (lowest possible economy class airfare)
- Transport to and from the conference venue;
- Accommodation and meals during the stay in Tajikistan;

**Please note:** All other costs, such as health insurance, transport costs from participants' home town to their home airport or travel costs for visa application in the home country have to be borne by the participants.

### Procedures for Free Registration and Participation Fee:

Interested people can also participate in the Mobile Learning Circle by paying the full cost of participation. The full packages for participation in the Mobile Learning Circle includes all cost associated with in country expenses: accommodation, travel expenses, food, police registration will be provided at a fee of 1500\$ (One thousand and five hundred USD) per participant. The standard registration deadline is June, 30, 2017.

Other cost such as air ticket to and from Dushanbe International Airport, health insurances and visa cost are not included in the participation fee. However the organizing team can support with arranging visa or other logistic arrangements.



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### Travel date:

**2th of August 2017:** Arrival at Dushanbe International Airport

**10th of August 2017:** Departure from the Dushanbe International Airport

For further questions, please contact:

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