

UK Statement at 12th CAREC Ministerial Conference 24 October 2013

First, I would like to thank the Asian Development Bank for inviting bilateral partners to the 12th CAREC Ministerial Conference here in Astana. I would also like to thank the Kazakh Government for being such a warm and hospitable host, as well as their excellent organisation of this event, together with the CAREC Secretariat.

The UK government welcomes the overall direction of CAREC as set out in its 2020 strategy document. With 2014 fast approaching – a momentous year for Afghanistan and the region - it is ever more important for CAREC to turn its vision into action and implement the programmes required to help the region become more interconnected, stable and prosperous.

It has been very heartening to hear – from so many Delegates – how CAREC is helping to accelerate the process of regional economic cooperation. It is also very encouraging to see the multilateral institutions gathered here, working even more closely together, to help take CAREC's agenda forward. It is important that together you set clear and achievable goals that will deliver tangible results for all the people of the region.

In this context, we welcome the new Trade Policy Strategic Action Plan, as well as the Transport and Trade Facilitation Strategy and Action Plan. We also strongly support the Secretariat's plans to better assess CAREC's impact through the ongoing review.

The UK Government will continue to support your efforts and work closely with you to help make CAREC's vision a reality. For example, as one of the leading contributors to the Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund we are already working closely with the Afghan Government to help it to upgrade the country's infrastructure base. This will enable Afghanistan to forge better links – and increase trading opportunities - with its neighbours over time. We are also exploring other options to work with CAREC countries to extend corridors five and six from the Afghan border to Pakistan, to make CASA and CASAREM a reality, and to improve trading links from Pakistan and Afghanistan to Central Asia and beyond.

Historically, trading routes crossed Central and South Asia and interactions between its people were common place. CAREC's vision provides the framework to re-energise these trading patterns and relationships, and to bring lasting stability and prosperity to the region. The UK Government looks forward to our continued cooperation on this vitally important agenda.

Thank you.