

**Speech of
the President of the Republic of Tajikistan
at the Opening Ceremony of
the 6th Ministerial Conference
of Central Asian Economic Regional Cooperation
Economic Cooperation (CAREC),**

Dear Mr. Kuroda,
Dear participants of the Conference,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome all participants of the 6th Ministerial Conference of the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation Program.

I would like to wish you productive work and availing this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to all countries, organizations and individuals rendering support to the CAREC Program.

Countries of our region have a colossal experience of fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation.

It is worth noting that in the recent past a majority of our countries had been within the composition of a single state and had a common economic, information space and implemented joint projects in various spheres rather effectively.

Today the CAREC countries have to re-think the region's development strategy given the realities of the contemporary world.

We clearly understand that for our region, given globalization strengthening, ensuring competitiveness of national economies and formation of common regional markets will be of almost a critical importance.

The whole range of problems, such as inconsistency of national legislations, the presence of trade and other barriers as a result of the globalization process, due to their scope and topicality can be resolved only at the inter-state level.

It is impossible for each of our states to overcome problems of a global nature, which go beyond the national borders, in an isolated manner and without mutually beneficial cooperation.

Therefore we shall not allow for the attempts of unsound competition and political arrogance in the region.

The objective of regional integration shall be, first of all, to participate in global competition from more ponderable positions to achieve an accelerated development of the economy, to ensure its sustainability and betterment of citizens' wellbeing.

The effect of agreed and coordinated cooperation in four key areas of activities specified in the CAREC Comprehensive Action Plan is capable to multiply the opportunities existing in each country of the region.

I am strongly assured, that without strengthening regional cooperation in developing priority areas we selected, for our countries, being single-handed, it would be difficult to gain substantial growth.

Cooperation and cooperation is the key imperative of the globalization epoch.

From this viewpoint the CAREC helps the Program participant countries to realize their potential more fully.

Phased implementation of initiatives in trade, transport and energy contributes to deepening the integration of the region's countries and establish their relations with world markets.

We believe that the CAREC represents a partnership development program and is an example of cooperation among countries and organizations to ensure harmonization of national legislations, achieving real outcomes and to ensure transparency.

If earlier our region could be referred to as unstable, today, we are witnesses of a stable and sustainable peace, political components have been developed forming the basis of a desired investment climate.

The population of our countries is striving for constructive process of vital activities. Tajikistan was and still is a committed supporter of close regional interaction, which, to our mind, shall be based on the following principles:

First: absolute equality of rights and obligations of the process participants.

Second: a striving to establish a single legal space.

Third: providing for free movement of capital, services, goods and labor among the process participants.

Fourth: unifying the goals for rational and fair use of the region's water and energy resources.

Fifth: establishing a single scientific and cultural and humanity space.

The most important – and this has been confirmed during three recent summits held in Dushanbe, where the leaders of a majority of the CAREC participant countries participated – that we are ready to come to agreements and take constructive win-win decisions.

Countries of our region are linked not only by the borders, but by the common historical past, cultural inheritance and have ancient commercial traditions with the roots going back to the times of the Great Silk Way.

We always had been opened for trade and maintained a continuous and free commodity turnover among all parts of the world.

The process of effective integration of the CAREC Program participant counties makes them to face a number of difficulties and at the same time opens up for them new realistic opportunities for economic development.

In this context the improvement of regional trade and elimination of non-trade barriers will provide an opportunity to use the potential of each country more fully.

At the same time, one should take into account that this potential is very high. In this respect the region can become quite self-sustained.

I am sure that the measures on simplification of trade relations imbedded in the draft Trade Facilitation Strategy proposed to the Ministerial Conference for endorsement will help the countries to reduce transactional costs, improve the overall investment climate and open up new business opportunities for them.

As a result this will eliminate problems related to high duties and fees, excessive bureaucracy, non-official payments and will provide for infrastructure development.

Broadening regional trade cooperation, to our mind, would serve to strengthen the basis for promoting the solution of the poverty problem in each country.

Solving the problem of the use of water and energy resources is a key objective for development of Central Asia.

Today an unfair and irrational use of water resources is observed in the region.

It varies by countries from 1,400 to 4,000 cubic meters per person a year.

Given an increasing demand for water throughout the world, including in our region, tackling the issue of an efficient use of water resources is one of the strategic issues in achieving sustainable development.

It strongly urges the need of constructing hydropower facilities, which will enable to ensure accumulation and delivery of water during the vegetation period and dry years at the same time generating electricity during water discharge.

Meanwhile one should take into account that the use of water for power-generating purposes does not result in withdrawal of water resources from nature and does not deteriorate their quality.

The maximum use of rich hydropower opportunities of the region, undoubtedly, can become a powerful factor for development of light, processing, food and other industries in the region, a guarantee of ensuring energy security and sustainable economic development of all Central Asian countries.

It is evident that today for a stand-alone country even possessing a significant resource, water and energy basis it would be very difficult to ensure its security staying apart from international integration processes.

Therefore we have to establish a balance of interests of the participating countries to enable a rational use of existing opportunities for growth on a mutually beneficial basis.

There are enough examples in the world of effective and civilized solutions to these problems, both on a bilateral and multilateral basis.

Their experience demonstrates the need to take into account objective interests of each country, their mutual recognition, and, hence, the expression of their shared political will for implementation of mutually beneficial projects.

At present the problems of access to clean drinking and safe sources of water supply are the most topical issues not only in our region, but throughout the world.

As we stated earlier, according to the UNICEF and the World Health Organization, more than forty percent of the planet's population live in unsatisfactory sanitary conditions due to insufficient supply of drinking water and more than a billion of people have no access to it.

Children are those suffering the most from the lack of clean drinking water and each day more than four thousand children die in a global scale because of the diseases caused by the lack of water.

Initially we have been supportive of the idea that the solution of water-related problems shall become a catalyst for cooperation among peoples and nations.

The initiatives voiced by Tajikistan have been also supported by the international community and the 58th Session of the UN General Assembly adopted a decision on announcing the international decade of actions "Water for Life".

Therefore, once again I would like to reiterate the proposal made earlier about our

readiness to use colossal reserves of fresh water of the Sarez Lake with the volume of 17 cubic kilometers in the interests of the region's countries.

Potentially the Sarez Lake resources can provide for eternal supply of clean water to 30-40 million of people of Central Asia.

In this connection, firstly, I address you – representatives of esteemed international financial organizations – to consider a possibility of allocating funds to prepare a feasibility study for this project.

Secondly, we propose to the countries of the region and international financial organizations to study a possibility of establishing a regional consortium for joint use of the Sarez Lake resources, and for this purpose to conduct an international scientific and practical conference in Dushanbe in the coming year.

Dear Conference participants,

Nowadays it is difficult to speak about development of the region without solving problems in the area of transport and communications.

CAREC states have a different level of development of transit transport highways. Apart from the fact that many countries of the region are located at a distance from large markets, marine routes and railway hubs, various barriers make this problem even more complicated, especially for Tajikistan.

Another impact is that of transport and communication infrastructure, which is lagging behind the level of its development in other regions of the world.

Establishment of reliable and safe transport corridors providing for minimum transportation costs, and their further transformation into economic corridors will give an opportunity to increase economic development growth rates and ensure poverty reduction in the region.

I am sure, that the endorsement of the Strategy in the area of development of transport corridors by the CAREC participant countries will have a great impact on mutual trade growth and will be beneficial for all countries.

The mentioned priority areas of regional cooperation development will enhance the interaction among the countries and international institutions under the CAREC on the second-tier priorities of the Program – human capacity development, agriculture, tourism and others.

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

The overarching goal of all CAREC participating countries is the improvement of living standards of their citizens.

I would dare to express some wishes for the sake of achieving this goal:

Firstly, we expect practical actions and mechanisms from the CAREC to resolve water and energy problems, cross-border issues, to develop communications, as well as to achieve common objectives of ensuring security.

All strategies and plans shall be implemented in a timely manner.

The indicator of the progress can be the forthcoming signing of the Financing Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Asian Development Bank for the project aimed at improving a regional road corridor linking Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China,

Afghanistan and other countries.

Secondly, to solve the above stated problems, it will be necessary to strengthen the capacity of the CAREC countries in the area of regional cooperation, first of all by training highly qualified specialists capable to effectively tackle large-scale tasks in the developing world.

Therefore I appeal to you to pay an adequate attention to issues of human resources development.

Thirdly, in order to implement our long-term vision to a full extent, we have to be guided by a win-win strategy based on common interests.

In this case we would be able to establish a potent basis for ensuring wide-scale integration not only in the economy, but also in other spheres of vital activities of the peoples of the CAREC participant countries.

Availing the opportunity, I would like to reconfirm our full support and commitment to the CAREC Program.

We will continue our interaction with all the countries participating in the Program implementation and development partners in the name of deepening regional cooperation and prosperity of our countries.

In the conclusion I would like to wish you all fruitful work and a pleasant stay in Dushanbe.

Thank you for your attention.