

Concept Paper

**PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CAREC  
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FORUM (CAREC-BDF)**

**I. Background**

At the Fourth Ministerial Conference on CAREC, ministers see the private sector as an engine of economic growth for the region and emphasized the importance of ensuring that regional cooperation reflects the needs and interests of the private sector. At the Fifth Ministerial Conference, ministers declared that trade, investment and business sector will provide an integrated framework for improving the climate for investment in Central Asia, and linking enterprises business to regional and global market. Ministers further agreed that there is a need to better integrate the interests of the business community in the CAREC Program.

It is against this background that the CAREC Business Development Forum (BDF) was successfully convened in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, PRC In October 2006. More than two hundred representatives from seventeen countries, both inside and outside the region, six MIs and business community participated. A series of concrete outcomes were achieved as a result of the event.

Despite of its success at the first BDF, CAREC members have realized the important role that the business sector could play in regional cooperation, thus felt an immediate need to regularize the event and set up a mechanism in CAREC to encourage more and more business involvement in the regional cooperation and to explore opportunities for partnership between private and public sectors.

**II. Objectives**

BDF aims to:

- enhance business involvement in regional projects and cooperation programs and identify possible joint initiatives in the priority sectors of development;
- facilitate regional trade and investment and enhance business environments;
- stimulate public-private partnerships towards meeting Central Asia's infrastructure needs;
- build private sector networks and provide business a voice in the development of the region.

**III. Expected Outputs**

The CAREC-BDF will bring together business leaders and policy makers towards formulating specific proposals to reduce impediments to regional cooperation and development.

The BDF is expected to come out with a set of recommendations for submission to and consideration by the Ministers of CAREC through SOM. As an action-oriented forum, it will place emphasis on the identification of ways by which business sector participation in the activities of the working groups of CAREC may be enhanced. Specific opportunities, and challenges will be also be identified by the forum towards addressing obstacles to investments and public-private sector partnership.

#### **IV. Participants**

Participants will include senior business leaders, policymakers and experts involved in Central Asia who can contribute in the process of exploring and building partnerships towards an enhanced business environment and broader business participation in regional cooperation and development in Central Asia.

#### **V. Format**

The CAREC-BDF will involve one day of formal meetings and an additional half day for networking and discussions on specific projects. Discussion Groups will focus on the identification of practical opportunities and partnerships in those priority sectors as agreed upon by CAREC members.

#### **VI. Frequency and Venue of Meetings**

BDF would meet annually. BDF's presidency shall be rotated among the CAREC countries or as agreed to by the CAREC countries. The BDF's presidency and the host country could be two different CAREC members. Its first meeting will be held in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, PRC at a date of September, 2009 alone with the Urumqi Fair.

Costs associated with the holding of BDF meetings would be financed by the host country to the most possible extent. Contributions from CAREC members, other countries and MIs will be encouraged.