



Executive Summary
REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING ON
CENTRAL ASIA REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION
27–28 September 2003
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

The Regional Preparatory Meeting was a key step in preparation for the 2nd Ministerial Conference to be held on 11–12 November 2003. In the two-day meeting held in Tashkent, draft proposals prepared by multilateral institutions (MIs) for the three priority areas: transport, trade facilitation, and energy were reviewed. Recommendations based on these reviews will become the common grounds on relevant regional issues for further dialogue and consideration in the 2nd Ministerial Conference. Other issues related to the coming Conference were also discussed in the meeting. Progress and achievements since the 1st Ministerial Conference were also presented.

Mr. R. Azimov, Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan welcomed all the delegations and representatives of MIs to the meeting. He expressed deep appreciation for the active and coordinating role of ADB in fostering regional cooperation, and also welcomed the intensification of efforts of other MIs in the development of this cooperation. In his opening speech, Mr. H.S. Rao, Deputy Director General, East and Central Asia Department, Asian Development Bank, stressed the need for all participating countries to make further efforts to enhance cooperation, accelerate reforms, strengthen institutional capacity, and create a conducive environment for private sector growth.

In the opening session, delegates from member countries articulated their appreciation of the continued role of ADB and other MIs as active regional cooperation facilitators. On the other hand, member countries expressed their commitment to work with MIs and among themselves to contribute to the progress of the economic cooperation in the region. Each delegation from member countries noted priorities on regional cooperation that need to be addressed. Representatives of MIs declared their support for regional cooperation and underscored the increased attention being given by MIs to regional cooperation and the development of regional strategies.

The delegations reaffirmed transport, trade facilitation, and energy as the priority areas for cooperation in Central Asia. Discussions on priority sector proposals were held on the first day of the meeting. Overall, delegates from member countries endorsed the proposed pipeline of projects in these sectors, including their thrusts and strategies. A number of suggestions, including identification of additional projects and issues related to project mechanisms and implementation, were also made to ensure progress in these priority areas.

On the last day of the meeting, the draft outline by the November Senior Official's Meeting (SOM) to the 2nd Ministerial Conference was reviewed. This includes discussions on the progress of the regional cooperation since the 1st Ministerial Conference as reported by ADB, and the recommendations arising from reviews of the draft sector proposals, as well as other issues related to the forthcoming Ministerial Conference. Based on the guidance received from this meeting, the draft outline will subsequently be revised. The revised report will be finalized by the SOM and presented during the 2nd Ministerial Conference for further consideration.