

UK statement

The UK warmly welcomes this 14th CAREC Ministerial conference, here in Ulaanbaatar and congratulates the Mongolian Government and the Asian Development Bank for its excellent organisation of the event. It is a reflection of the importance of regional economic cooperation that representatives from so many countries and international organisations have gathered here for the very useful discussions that have been held over the past few days.

We will all agree that encouraging greater economic cooperation is central to ensuring the long-term prosperity and stability of the region and its people, including women and girls. With two of the world's fast-developing countries (India and China) in such close proximity, greater connectivity, supported by harmonised economic policies, could be a game-changer for Central and South Asia. In particular, it could provide a significant stimulus to the economies of the region by opening up markets, facilitating the safe movement of people to rewarding jobs, and encouraging more effective management of shared resources.

This CAREC conference is an important opportunity to re-affirm our support for this agenda, and to reflect on progress made as well as the challenges remaining.

And good progress has indeed been made. The UK particularly welcomes progress on key energy connectivity programmes such as the Central Asia South Asia (CASA) 1000 energy trade project and the TUTAP electricity grid strengthening project (Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan). We are delighted to be able to support both of these projects and strongly welcome steps taken by the World Bank Group and Asian Development Bank Group to explore how CASA 1000 and TUTAP can be aligned. These two projects are just the start of what we trust will be an effective regional energy market in Central and South Asia. We look forward to seeing progress on other key regional energy initiatives such as TAPI.

However, more remains to be done to unlock the significant potential that the region's natural resources, growing human capital, and geographic location offer. In particular, more efforts need to be made to improve the transit trade environment and develop effective trade corridors which will allow people across the region to trade with each other and get their goods to markets.

CAREC has been an important forum for mobilising the political and economic means to deliver on key regional initiatives. It is crucial that momentum is not lost and that we build on this success going forward. In particular, it will be important for interventions to be aligned and reinforcing of other regional fora and strategies.

The UK remains a strong supporter of this agenda and looks forward to continuing to work with the governments of the region as well as international financial institutions to ensure that meaningful progress is made.