

**U.S. Department of State
Remarks by Robert Burgess
Director, Office of Regional Affairs
Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs
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As Prepared

President Nakao, Prime Minister Saikhanbileg, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. I would like to thank the Asian Development Bank and Mongolia for organizing this CAREC Ministerial Conference. The United States has been a strong supporter of CAREC since its inception and we work closely with the ADB and its partners to advance its mission.

All of us in attendance today, from CAREC members to its supporters around the world, are united in our desire to build a stable, prosperous and more connected Central Asia. Thriving, diversified economies in Central Asia will generate job growth for member countries, and also stimulate export and investment opportunities for its partners. The United States believes that economic development and security go hand-in-hand. An economically stable Central Asia predicated on strong regional commercial, economic and personal relationships will create alternative paths to address global challenges such as illicit trafficking – in all its forms – as well as terrorism and extremism.

Greater regional connectivity is of particular importance to help sustain the gains achieved in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's location in the Heart of Asia makes it uniquely suited to serve as a regional energy hub and a crossroads of goods from across the region. But this can only happen if it is able to build more enduring links to not only its closest neighbors, but also markets in India, China, Europe, and further afield.

This is the idea behind our New Silk Road initiative, which reflects the U.S. long-term commitment to the region and recognizes its importance and potential. Under the New Silk Road we are pursuing activities in four priority areas where we see our contributions can be most effective: energy; trade and transport; customs and borders; and people-to-people links. We follow a whole-of-government approach, utilizing financial and diplomatic resources from across the U.S. government.

While our work in the region over the years has helped build some of the "hardware" of economic connectivity throughout the region, including supporting financing and construction of roads, bridges and electricity networks, we are increasingly focused on the "software" – including technical assistance for trade liberalization and WTO accession, improving regulatory frameworks to help smooth cross-border flow of goods and services, capacity-building and training for our regional partners, and building people-to-people networks of entrepreneurs, who will be the heart of this economic activity. Building up the infrastructure that connects us, while tearing down the virtual walls that divide us, will generate the economic dynamism that helps fuel growth and job creation.

The United States sees its work on the New Silk Road as complementary to – and not in competition with – endeavors by other partners in the region. There are a number of new economic corridors under construction or under consideration, but this is not a zero-sum game –

each partner in the region has something unique to offer. As long as transparency, robust standards and safeguards are in place Central Asia and the region will benefit greatly from these growing links.

The United States appreciates the efforts of CAREC to help make this vision a reality and we look forward to continued cooperation with all of our international partners to reach our common goals.

Thank you.