

**Written Statement by UNIDO**  
**at the 19<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference (MC) of the Central Asia Regional Economic**  
**Cooperation (CAREC) Program,**  
**hosted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB),**  
**Monday, 7 December 2020 (Virtual)**

It is a great privilege and an honour for UNIDO to participate in the 19<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference (MC) of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program hosted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). We wish to express our sincere gratitude to Vice-President Shixin Chen for inviting UNIDO to this event focusing on “People-Centered Regional Cooperation in the Post-COVID Environment”, an important theme to support Central Asia’s COVID-19 recovery trajectory and future development transformation.

From the onset of the crisis, UNIDO has been working with our Member States, the international community, the United Nations system, and a wide range of development and private sector partners, some of whom are present here today, to address the immediate and long-term socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. As a specialized agency of the UN system, UNIDO’s mandate is to promote inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID). In line with this and taking into account that we are not directly mandated to provide humanitarian emergency response, UNIDO put in place a comprehensive [response framework](#) to **prepare and contain, respond and adapt, and recover and transform**. Our approach is based on mutually inclusive pillars, namely partnerships to accelerate the global response, integrated service packages tailored to each Member State’s particular situation and needs, capacity building and knowledge exchange based on lessons learned, best practices and best available technologies. These packages aim at supporting countries with comprehensive socio-economic recovery

approaches, geared towards ISID results at scale. Among UNIDO's first response projects were many interventions focusing on and in collaboration with CAREC Member States.

For instance in **Afghanistan** and **Pakistan**, UNIDO conducted impact surveys of COVID-19 on SMEs in the manufacturing sector. In addition to generating relevant policy recommendations vis-à-vis the Governments, the outcomes of these surveys have informed related socio-economic response frameworks of the respective UN country teams. In **China** UNIDO provided the Government with the "Guidelines for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises: Business recovery in the wake of COVID-19", which were later turned into an international edition accessible to other countries globally. Additionally, UNIDO assisted its national counterparts with the procurement of medical waste decontamination equipment for a newly established hospital, as well as through the provision of safe management of medical waste remote trainings targeting hospital and disposal centre staff. Similarly, in **Kyrgyzstan** UNIDO supported the Government with the assessment of the Healthcare Waste Management System, accompanied by the technology transfer and introduction of best environmental practices, training and awareness raising for the effective and safe treatment of infectious medical waste.

Given the importance of regional and global cooperation in restoring economic stability and supporting economic growth, in **Mongolia**, as part of a regional project, UNIDO focused on strengthening capacities to mitigate COVID-19 impacts through the transfer of photocatalytic coating technology from **Japan** to reduce infection rates in hospitals. Moreover, with the support of the **China** International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), UNIDO assisted countries outside the Central Asia region to tackle COVID-19. For instance, in the **Islamic Republic of Iran**, UNIDO supported the

Government to procure treatment equipment as well as ensuring the safe disposal of its medical waste.

UNIDO has progressed to support its Member States in their efforts to rebuild their economies, and to create jobs and livelihood opportunities in the post-COVID-19 world by working on supporting the expansion of national innovation ecosystems. This has been the approach adopted in **Azerbaijan** through the Azerbaijan's Innovation Agency. UNIDO is supporting the development of an innovation ecosystem and support infrastructure, including a Digital Education and Innovation Centre charged with development and dissemination of e-learning training tools. The project also envisages the promotion of IT literacy in rural areas targeting women entrepreneurs to ensure business resilience and continuity.

Moving forward, UNIDO will continue to engage with a wide range of partners, including business sector entities, such as industry associations, supply chain actors, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), regional organizations, academia and civil society, to analyze the impact of this crisis on industrial sectors, identify country-specific needs and develop agile and innovative solutions. In this regard, the Organization is looking forward to further strengthen its cooperation with the CAREC Program and the CAREC Institute in identifying and supporting transformational and innovative programs for the CAREC countries as they recover from the crisis.