



Session 5:

**Review and discuss a Bishkek Ministerial Declaration on CARTIF
for CAREC Ministerial Conference**

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Introduction

We, the Ministers overseeing trade and investment for the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) member countries, convened in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, on the occasion of the 24th CAREC Ministerial Conference:

Acknowledging the long-term strategy of the CAREC Program, *CAREC 2030*, endorsed at the 16th CAREC Ministerial Conference in 2017, which positions CAREC as a catalyst for trade expansion and economic diversification in the region;

Guided by the *CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda (CITA) 2030*, adopted at the 17th Ministerial Conference in 2018, which focuses on expanding market access, promoting diversification, and strengthening trade institutions;

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Building on the progress of CAREC trade cooperation, grounded in mutual trust and collective effort, and responding to the interest expressed by CAREC countries to explore a regional trade agreement as foreseen in CITA 2030;

Recognizing the evolving global and regional landscape, the diverse stages of WTO membership, and the varying economic circumstances across CAREC nations;

Reaffirming our commitment to the multilateral trading system, while recognizing the complementary role of regional initiatives in enhancing connectivity, economic resilience, and inclusive development;

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Committed to promoting inclusive, transparent, and flexible cooperation that boosts trade and investment, while upholding each country's right to regulate for legitimate policy goals;

Acknowledging the technical work undertaken to prepare the zero-draft text of the CAREC Trade and Investment Facilitation Partnership Agreement (CARTIF), and the inclusive consultations held among national authorities;

Appreciating the continued institutional and technical assistance provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in support of this effort under the CAREC Program;

Declaration

Do hereby declare the following:

We endorse the zero-draft text of the CAREC Trade and Investment Facilitation Partnership Agreement (CARTIF) as the basis for launching formal negotiations among interested CAREC countries.

We support the official launch of negotiations on CARTIF, to commence in early 2026, with a view to concluding a modern, development-oriented partnership that:

- Establishes a structured and flexible framework for an effective and progressive trade and investment partnership;

- Facilitates trade in goods and services and reduces non-tariff barriers;

- Promotes regulatory transparency and institutional capacity;

- Enhances investment facilitation and sectoral cooperation, including digital trade;

- Reflects the principles of differential treatment, voluntary participation, and gradual and modular integration.

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We reaffirm the core principles that will guide these negotiations, including open participation, consensus-based decision-making, respect for existing international commitments, and a transparent and inclusive process.

We request the CAREC Secretariat, in coordination with national focal points and with the support of development partners, to provide technical and administrative support for the negotiation process.

We express our gratitude to the Government of Kyrgyz Republic for hosting this Ministerial Conference and for its leadership in advancing regional economic cooperation.

We affirm our commitment to assessing the progress of the CARTIF negotiations at the upcoming CAREC Ministerial Conference and to collaborating in pursuit of a more integrated, resilient, and prosperous CAREC region.

THANK YOU