



**Statement by Mr. Nematullo Khikmatullozoda
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Executive Office of the President, and CAREC National Focal Point
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Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman!

Dear Mr. Masatsugu Asakawa,

Dear Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, let me, on behalf of myself and the delegation of Tajikistan, welcome all participants to **the 23rd Ministerial Conference of the CAREC Program**.

I would like to express my gratitude to our colleagues from the Government of Kazakhstan for chairing the CAREC Program this year, as well as to the ADB team, especially the CAREC Secretariat, for the impeccable organization of the Program-related events.

Also, thank you for the excellent and informative presentations.

Our region, like the whole world, is going through a series of challenging crises, such as major geopolitical upheavals, wars and sanctions.

The consequences of these shocks – a sharp rise in global energy and food prices, soaring inflation and poverty levels, and increasing public debt – are compounded by more frequent natural disasters and global warming.

Climate change poses a serious and growing threat to all humanity and affects the quality of life and sustainable development of all countries in the world.

The CAREC region is no exception to this: in recent years, our countries have experienced serious impacts of climate change – devastating floods, extreme heatwaves, droughts and water shortages.

The glaciers in Central Asia, which are the region's main sources of fresh water, are under increasing threat from the effects of climate change, affecting water, energy and food security across the region.

Urgent regional action is needed, including to support a just energy transition, climate-smart development, disaster risk management and water resources management.

Taking into account the above, we support **the CAREC Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2027** submitted for our consideration.

We note that this Action Plan has been developed in close consultation and coordination with members of the CAREC Climate Change Working Group, and coordinated with the working groups of the various sectoral committees and the focal points across all CAREC clusters.

It also takes into account the CAREC project portfolio and countries' national adaptation priorities, as well as Nationally Determined Contribution targets.

We welcome the establishment of the **CAREC Climate and Sustainability Project Preparatory Facility**.

We also **fully support initiatives of our colleagues from Azerbaijan and the CAREC Program at the upcoming COP29 Conference in Baku** .

Taking this opportunity, I would like to obtain your support for holding **a CAREC session one the sidelines of the International Conference on Glacier Conservation in Tajikistan, which will be held in 2025 in Dushanbe**.

As for the findings of **the CAREC Strategy 2030 Midterm Review** – in general it quite correctly assesses the progress of implementation and offers noteworthy promising options for giving new impetus to regional cooperation under the Program.

We thank Craig Stephenson for his great job.

At the same time, we consider it possible to expand and supplement some of the recommendations of this review.

First: We propose that **all attention of the Program be directed towards implementation of strategies and plans that have already been prepared and approved by all countries**.

To this end, **a focus must be placed on developing high-quality flagship regional projects in each of the CAREC operational clusters**.

In this regard, we support the initiative the CAREC Secretariat has already launched – a pipeline of potential regional projects for funding under the Program.

We request the Secretariat to continue this intervention and provide technical support to countries in preparing high-quality project proposals.

Second: We consider it appropriate to enhance the CAREC Secretariat's coordination with other international financial institutions, especially in terms of designing and implementing regional initiatives and projects, in order to minimize duplication and existing competition for resources.

To this end, we propose two recommendations: 1) **to hold the CAREC Development Partner Forum on regular basis**, during which all regional initiatives and projects in our region should be pre-agreed between development partners and countries; and 2) **the CAREC Secretariat should be strengthened**.

We understand that this requires additional resources, and therefore it is proposed that **funding for the CAREC Secretariat be provided on an annual rotating basis by the Program partners**.

There are currently six of them, so each partner will have a commitment to fund the Secretariat once every six years.

I believe this measure will not be burdensome for the Program partners, and will also strengthen their sense of belonging/involvement in the CAREC Program.

We are confident that this year's activities will strengthen CAREC's profile as a results-oriented program and provide new impetus for further interest and increased support from multilateral institutions.

Taking this opportunity, on behalf of the delegation of Tajikistan, I would like to once again confirm our full support for the CAREC Program.

Thank you for your attention.