

**Statement by Mr. Kabir Jurazoda
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Distinguished Mr. Yingming Yang, esteemed colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

In recent years, the CAREC region has seen remarkable economic growth - growth driven by increased investment, expanded trade, and the development of critical infrastructure. However, as we reflect on our achievements, we must also acknowledge that we are now entering a new phase - one marked by a moderate slowdown following a period of exceptional performance.

This shift presents both challenges and opportunities. While a slowdown may raise concerns about employment, consumer confidence, and future investment, it also offers us an opportunity to reassess our strategies, to focus on sustainability, and to build long-term resilience in our economies.

As we navigate this transition, it is clear that collaboration is key. Policymakers, businesses, and all stakeholders must come together to address these challenges and seize the opportunities that lie before us.

Looking ahead, we must ask ourselves: What should we prioritize to ensure sustainable growth and resilience in our region?

First and foremost, we must prioritize climate change adaptation and mitigation. Our environment faces unprecedented challenges, and it is imperative that we take proactive measures to protect both our ecosystems and our communities.

Additionally, we need to focus on diversifying our economies and decarbonizing our energy sources. Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and embracing sustainable economic activities is no longer a choice; it is a necessity.

A crucial part of this transition is green electrification. We must invest in clean energy generation, develop smart grids, and foster regional electricity trade. By sharing resources and optimizing our energy systems, we can build a more sustainable and efficient future.

Sustainable mining practices are another area of focus. As the demand for critical minerals rises, we must ensure that our mining activities are responsible, environmentally sound, and beneficial to local communities.

Equally important is the role of digitalization. Advancements in artificial intelligence, broadband connectivity, and data infrastructure offer us the chance to unlock new economic opportunities and drive efficiency across all sectors.

Improving transport connectivity is also essential. By enhancing our transport corridors and infrastructure, we can facilitate trade, stimulate growth, and strengthen regional ties. This is not just about financial gains—it's about creating pathways for long-term prosperity and deeper collaboration.

Our region is blessed with abundant renewable energy resources, including small hydro, wind, solar photovoltaic systems, and biomass. These resources hold immense potential for diversifying our energy portfolios and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels.

In particular, we must recognize the geothermal energy potential in Central Asia. For example, Uzbekistan has the potential to generate an impressive 67,000 Mtoe of geothermal energy. This is a key resource that can support our efforts to transition to clean, sustainable energy. By investing in these renewable sources, we can meet rising energy demands while contributing to global efforts to combat climate change.

Transportation services play a vital role in several CAREC economies. The revenue generated from these services is not only significant, but also critical to the economic wellbeing of our countries. However, the true value of our transport corridors goes beyond financial measures. These corridors enhance connectivity, foster collaboration, and open new avenues for growth and development across the region. Strengthening these transport links will create a more integrated and prosperous future for all CAREC countries.

Finally, the CAREC Digital Strategy 2030 presents both a challenge and a remarkable opportunity for cooperation among our member countries. Digital transformation is not just a passing trend—it has the potential to revolutionize sectors such as healthcare, education, agriculture, finance, trade, and tourism.

To fully leverage this transformation, we must work together. The challenge is in developing solutions that are tailored to the unique needs of our diverse economies. This requires sharing best practices, exchanging innovative ideas, and pooling our resources and expertise. By doing so, we can create integrated digital solutions that enhance service delivery, boost productivity, and improve the quality of life for all our citizens.

Thank you for your attention.

Together, let us embrace these opportunities, confront the challenges ahead, and build a brighter, more sustainable future for the CAREC region.