



**Joint Ministerial Statement
17th Ministerial Conference on
Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
15 November 2018**

CAREC 2030: Expanding Trade and Promoting Diversification

Representing the Governments of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the People's Republic of China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Ministers adopted the following statement at the conclusion of the 17th Ministerial Meeting on Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) in Ashgabat on 15 November 2018

I. Trade Integration and Expansion for Greater Diversification

- Noted the positive and dynamic regional outlook marked by revival of growth, pick-up in trade and greater opportunities for cooperation.
- Cognizant of the strong nexus between trade and sustainable development and how trade interacts with SDGs.
- Deliberated opportunities, challenges and policy options in promoting export expansion and diversification in CAREC.
- Endorsed the CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030 and its Rolling Strategic Action Plan 2018-2020.
- Resolved to advance the refined CAREC trade agenda to create a more fair, sound, and transparent trading environment.

II. Progress on Implementation of the CAREC 2030

Cluster 1: Economic and financial stability.

- Welcomed the first CAREC High-Level Forum on “Macroeconomic Policies for Economic and Financial Stability” in Astana.
- Highlighted the significance of continued policy dialogues on regional and global issues to promote economic and financial stability in the region.
- Welcomed the conduct of regular high-level macroeconomic policy dialogues to keep policy makers informed of regional and global macroeconomic development trend and policy options.

Cluster 2: Trade, tourism, and economic corridors

- **In trade**
 - Welcomed establishment of CAREC Regional Trade Group for deliberating intertwined trade issues in a synergistic manner.
 - Commended on the continued endeavors in customs cooperation and welcomed the regional workshops on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues leading to the formulation of a regional SPS working group.

- Welcomed the inter-subregional forum on implementation of WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement to strengthen knowledge sharing and cross learning with other regions/subregions.
- **In tourism**
 - Welcomed the precursory work of tourism promotion and cooperation in CAREC through a scoping study.
 - Urged continued work in this area in identifying projects and programs.
- **In economic corridors**
 - Noted the progress in implementing the Almaty-Bishkek Economic Corridor.
 - Welcomed an ADB technical assistance in assessing the potentials of a new cross-border economic corridor development (ECD) among Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.
 - Encouraged all partners to continue exploring other sections and various modalities and approaches for ECD in CAREC.

Cluster 3: Infrastructure and economic connectivity

- **In transport**
 - Satisfied with the implementation progress of the related transport strategies and knowledge work in promoting faster, greener, safer and sustainable connectivity.
 - Welcomed the results of the aviation study in facilitating CAREC business and tourism development and called for continued efforts in furthering this important area.
 - Noted the endeavors in preparing a renewed CAREC Transport Strategy leading to 2030 and hoped for its launching in 2019.
- **In energy**
 - Appreciated progress on key cross-border energy connectivity projects and efforts towards establishing a common energy market.
 - Welcomed the successful convening of the 3rd CAREC Energy Investment Forum.
 - Endorsed the CAREC High Technology Roadmap.
 - Applauded the conduct of the mid-term review of the Energy Sector Coordinating Committee Strategy and Work Plan 2016–2020 leading to the formulation of a renewed CAREC Energy Strategy up to 2030.

Cluster 4: Agriculture and water

- Appreciated the efforts in implementing the CAREC Common Agenda for Modernization of SPS Measures for Trade.
- Welcomed the regional initiative to set up a CAREC Food Safety Network for sharing food safety related information and best practices.
- Endorsed the establishment of a regional SPS working group under the Regional Trade Group.

Cluster 5: Human development

- Welcomed the initiation of a scoping study on cooperation in higher education and skills development, and the study in assessing the potential to promote people-to-people contacts and cross-border community development.
- Expect development partners to step up efforts in operationalizing this sector including enhanced engagement with the private sector and civil society.

III. CAREC Institute

- Commended the CAREC Institute (CI) on progress achieved since obtaining its legal status in September 2017.
- Looked forward to approval of “CI Strategy 2022” and 2019–2020 Rolling Operational Program by CI Governing Council in December 2018.
- Expect CI to help CAREC countries build capacity through evidence-based research and cutting-edge capacity building and training.

IV. Enhancing Institutional Mechanism

- Commended the important role of development partners in implementing the CAREC 2030 strategy and hoped for their scaled up financial and technical support for CAREC projects and activities.
- Called for increased participation of private sector in the CAREC Program.
- Expressed willingness to consult leaders for a possible first-ever CAREC Leaders’ Summit to mark the 20 years anniversary of CAREC in 2020.
- Expressed appreciation to the CAREC Secretariat, the sector coordinating committees and the CI for their continued and dedicated support to the CAREC Program

V. Conclusions and Acknowledgement

- Thanked Government of Turkmenistan for chairing and hosting 17th Ministerial Conference, and ADB as the CAREC Secretariat, for the excellent arrangements.
- Looked forward to gathering together in 2019 in Uzbekistan.