

CENTRAL ASIA REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION PROGRAM
SENIOR OFFICIALS' MEETING
18–19 June 2025, Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyz Republic

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

1. The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) was held in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyz Republic from 18 to 19 June 2025. Delegations from 10 CAREC member countries and representatives from 15 development partners participated.¹ Mr. Bakyt Sydykov, Minister of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic chaired the SOM with the assistance of ADB's Mr. Yevgeniy Zhukov, Director General of Central and West Asia Department, and Mr. Muhammad Ehsan Khan, Director General of East Asia Department.
2. The SOM discussed the: (i) draft Implementation Action Plan for the CAREC 2030 Strategy Midterm Review; (ii) initial findings of the Midterm Review of the CAREC 2030 transport, trade and digital strategies; (iii) proposed regional pipeline projects and flagship initiatives; (iv) progress on the CAREC Climate and Sustainability Project Preparatory Fund, CAREC Climate Action Plan, and Climate-Health Nexus initiatives; and (v) the preparations for the 24th CAREC Ministerial Conference (MC) in November 2025, including key deliverables and initiatives in 2025.
3. **Overall Progress of CAREC 2030 Implementation.** The SOM appreciated the achievements from June 2024 to May 2025 under each of the CAREC operational clusters, sectors, and crosscutting themes as presented in the [CAREC Implementation Progress Report](#).²
4. **Implementation Action Plan.** The SOM expressed support to the draft [Implementation Action Plan](#) (IAP) to operationalize the recommendations from the [CAREC 2030 Strategy Midterm Review](#).³ Prepared by the CAREC Secretariat, the draft IAP benefited from the guidance and suggestions at the National Focal Points Strategic [Planning Meeting](#) in Manila in March 2025. The IAP, which outlines concrete actions, projects, activities, and institutional arrangements, will be a living document to monitor its progress and updated to maintain its relevance and responsiveness to CAREC members' evolving priorities.
5. **Azerbaijan** noted the inclusion of digitalization and electrification of railways project as part of the Corridor 2 priority investments, the proposed joint border crossing point (BCP) with Georgia, the CAREC Advance Transit System and Information Common Exchange (CATS/ICE) initiative, and the activities under the COP29 CAREC Partnership for Trade, Climate and Innovation which was signed in Baku in November 2024. Azerbaijan appreciated ADB and AIIB's support including the signing of MOU to jointly conduct prefeasibility study of the proposed Caspian Sea Green Energy Corridor project. The **People's Republic of China** (PRC) underscored the importance of regional connectivity; including deepening cooperation in the new sectors (e.g., agriculture, tourism, and digital and green connectivity); strategic alignment and synergy between CAREC and member countries' international initiatives; emphasis on regional public goods; and opportunities for CAREC to be an engine of innovation. The PRC encouraged high-level CAREC participation at the Tianshan Development Forum to be organized by the CAREC Institute in Q4 2025.

¹ See the SOM [List of Participants](#).

² [Russian version](#) of CAREC Implementation Progress Report (June 2024–May 2025).

³ [Russian version](#) of CAREC 2030 Strategy Midterm Review Implementation Action Plan.

6. **Georgia** acknowledged the IAP as a results-driven practical roadmap, to guide next steps and align with CAREC member's evolving needs and priorities, including in transport connectivity especially in CAREC corridor 2 and the East-West Highway project, and potential support for airport and logistics development, Georgia also recognized CAREC's trade and transit facilitation initiatives including CATS/ICE, pilot for the UN Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records, and the proposed CAREC Trade and Investment Facilitation (CARTIF). **Kazakhstan** supported the shift from coordination to implementation as envisaged in the IAP and highlighted the need to ensure alignment of national and regional priorities, attract sustainable financing especially from the private sector; and prioritize cooperation in transport and logistics, energy integration, digital transformation and regional public goods (environment, regional education and research programs/innovation centers, and healthcare).

7. The **Kyrgyz Republic** noted that the IAP reflects the country's interests including the development of regional transport connectivity within the framework of Almaty-Bishkek Economic Corridor (ABEC) and CAREC Corridor 2; promotion of renewable energy with the Kambarata-1 Hydropower Plant (HPP) project, integrated water management initiatives, digital transformation and trade facilitation, development of sustainable tourism including the cross-border tourism project with Uzbekistan; and mechanisms to attract private sector investment. The Kyrgyz Republic also proposed inclusion of aviation connectivity. **Mongolia** expressed full support for the IAP, including its purpose as a monitoring tool, to help CAREC members work better together in trade, transport, energy, digital development, climate change, public-private partnerships and knowledge sharing with the stronger role of the CAREC Institute.

8. **Pakistan** suggested that streamlining the scope of the CAREC Program should go together with aligning CAREC projects to national development priorities, shifting focus to efficient project delivery by improving project readiness, and strengthening focus on results, feedback mechanisms and shared learning. **Tajikistan** recognized that the recommendations during the NFP Strategic Planning Meeting in March 2025 were included in the IAP. Tajikistan further suggested to reflect "and other CAREC Partners" (in para 1.2), to gradually strengthen the participation of development partners, and add a flagship project in tourism.

9. **Turkmenistan**, in supporting the IAP suggested a separate column on potential sources of financing for proposed projects and initiatives, with contributions from member countries, development partners, the private sector and other sources.

10. **Uzbekistan** stressed the need to strengthen the linkages of each initiative to specific projects and policies, shift focus from coordination to action, and priority for logistics, infrastructure, and a unified energy market as critical areas for regional cooperation.

11. **Midterm Review of CAREC 2030 Transport Strategy and Pipeline Projects.** The SOM welcomed the initial recommendations of the [draft Midterm Review of CAREC 2030 Transport Strategy](#) (CTS MTR); outcomes of the [22nd Transport Sector Coordinating Committee Meeting](#); proposed programmatic regional facility: Borders Upgrades for Integration, Logistics and Development (BUILD); proposed investment projects along [CAREC Corridor 2](#), and SOM side event on [cross-border Public-Private Partnership \(PPP\)](#). NFPs expressed general support to the recommendations and proposed initiatives from the draft CTS MTR. **PRC** highlighted ADB initiative with PRCF support on promoting green transport and urban mobility in the region, and encouraged ADB to develop more bankable projects with derisking tools and structured products in transport and other relevant infrastructure sectors. **Georgia** highlighted the need to digitalize transport permits and more targeted support for project preparation.

12. The **Kyrgyz Republic** emphasized the need for border service digitalization, compatibility of digital and regulatory systems, multimodal operability (e.g., pilot in Mongolia–PRC–Kyrgyz Republic–Uzbekistan), dry ports, green transport solutions, and the role of the private sector. **Mongolia** expressed interest to join CAREC Corridor 2; development of green and digital corridors and rural connectivity. **Pakistan** reiterated the need for corridor-based planning transforming CAREC corridors from transport to economic corridors, alignment of transport projects with trade and digital initiatives, the expansion of ongoing Regional Improvement of Border Services (RIBS) project, project readiness financing, and railway modernization. In response to **Tajikistan**’s query on the progress of the Shymkent-Tashkent-Khujand Economic Corridor (STKEC) initiative, CAREC Secretariat mentioned ongoing preparation of follow-up TA to support economic corridor development as well as the scoping for the development of the Fotehobod-Oybek BCP between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. **Turkmenistan** requested that the CTS MTR be circulated prior to the NFP meeting in Q3 2025 and suggested to prioritize harmonizing legal and regulatory framework in transport and transit, skills development for transport and logistics specialists, infrastructure projects along the corridors, and ensuring sustainable funding and investments from IFIs and the private sector.

13. **CAREC Climate and Sustainability Project Preparatory Fund (CSPPF) and CAREC Climate Change Action Plan.** The SOM received updates on the [CSPPF](#), where 10 applications for funding were received as of 10 June 2025, covering sectors in energy, transport, health and climate change. The SOM also noted the outcomes of the [4th meeting](#) of the Climate Change Working Group, and the joint proposals of the CAREC Health and Climate Change Working Groups on [Strategy for Healthcare Decarbonization in the CAREC Region \(2026-2030\)](#) and [Regionally Agreed Minimum Requirements for Climate-Resilient Activities in the CAREC Region](#). PRC reaffirmed its support for the CSPPF, prioritizing climate and green development agenda and promoting regional public goods. Several CAREC members submitted proposals for consideration by the Steering Committee.

14. **Midterm Review of CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda (CITA) 2030; CAREC Digital Strategy 2030 and Related Initiatives.** The SOM noted the preliminary findings of the [MTR of the CITA 2030](#), the outcomes of the [7th Regional Trade Group Meeting](#), and the progress report in [trade sector](#) initiatives, including the [CARTIF](#) and the [CATS/ICE](#). The CAREC Secretariat reported that the MTR for the CAREC Digital Strategy 2030 will be considered at the CAREC Special Meeting on 29 June at the margins of the Asia-Pacific Digital Transformation Forum in Manila. CAREC members appreciated the initial findings of CITA 2030 MTR and reiterated support to ongoing initiatives as priorities such as CARTIF (**Azerbaijan, PRC and Georgia**); digital trade, digital connectivity as enabler of trade (**PRC, Pakistan**), and use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) (**PRC**); trade facilitation, customs reforms and cross-border logistics (**Pakistan**), and joint planning to integrate customs, logistics, digital platforms and trade facilitation reforms (**Pakistan**). **Tajikistan** appreciated ongoing ADB support in preparing its National Export Development Program for 2026-2030.

15. **CAREC Flagship Projects—Ongoing and Planned Initiatives.** Three flagship energy projects were presented: (i) Kyrgyz Republic’s Kambarata-1 HPP Project; (ii) Tajikistan’s Rogun HPP; and the (iii) Caspian Sea Green Energy Corridor Project between Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The session also discussed the outcomes of the side event on Critical Minerals. **PRC** requested clarity on the policy for critical minerals, considering ADB’s energy policy as well as the need for consistent and balanced approach towards CAREC members’ critical mineral security issues. **Georgia** requested to be included in the critical minerals TA.

16. **Pakistan** proposed adding two priority areas as CAREC flagship projects: (i) expansion of RIBS project in three BCPs—Kharlachi, Angoor Adda, and Ghulam Khan; and (ii) CAREC

Digital Corridor, which will provide high-capacity fiber-optic connection between Central Asia to global internet hubs in the Middle East via Pakistan. **Kazakhstan** suggested providing multi-tranche financing for projects, considering the limits set by the government on guarantees. **Turkmenistan** requested inclusion of two proposals under the Blueing the Caspian Sea Project which aim to expand the network of meteorological stations in the Caspian Sea and modernize the monitoring services of the three Caspian littoral countries (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan).

17. **Development Partners' Perspectives on MTR IAP, Initiatives and CAREC-Related Projects.** Development partners in general expressed support to the IAP. The **World Bank** stressed the need to prioritize program effectiveness and monitoring to better assess the impact of CAREC operations, add information on financing and role of other stakeholders to ensure implementation of IAP actions. It called for stronger coordination among development partners' regional and national activities (e.g., REMIT project and water resource management) and private sector engagement, and analytical work to create synergies. The World Bank suggested redefining/clarifying CAREC's project classification, i.e., how to reflect multi-phased programmatic projects and co-financing from non-core CAREC DPs. It proposed to reflect regional projects estimated at \$1 billion in the CAREC project portfolio, and include as potential CAREC flagship projects: (i) Regional Electricity Market Interconnectivity and Trade; (ii) One Health for Pandemic Prevention, Food Systems Resilience, and Ecosystem Health in Central Asia, and (iii) construction and modernization of key railway sections of the CAREC Corridor 2 in Kazakhstan with IBRD, AIIB, and other nonsovereign operations. World Bank introduced its recent facility, the Framework for Financial Incentives and the Global and Regional Opportunities Window (GROW).

18. **AIIB** underscored the need to institutionalize engagement with development partners, establish a CAREC project pipeline which includes all development partners, continue cofinancing arrangements, and pilot new resource mobilization methods. **EBRD** supported enhancing infrastructure connectivity and water management. **IsDB** mentioned its support for regional economic corridor development and energy connectivity projects, and ongoing knowledge work with the CAREC Institute. **IMF** emphasized on ensuring fiscal sustainability in large-scale infrastructure projects such as the PRC-Kyrgyz Republic-Uzbekistan railway. The **CAREC Institute** reported its progress in its Revitalization Plan and its strategy for 2026-2030, announced the plans for Tianshan Development Forum in December 2025. **UNDP** highlighted its support to MSMEs in overcoming market fragmentation, regional financing, digital corridors, and tourism. **EFSD** noted that economic and financial stability cluster needs to be supported (with an early warning report for the banking system and debt sustainability review with CAREC Institute underway) and its current priorities in health, education and social protection.

19. **EU** noted its support to CAREC Corridor 2, including a recent EU-EBRD study on the Middle Corridor, the Karambata-1 and Rogun HPPs as well as projects in nuclear energy. It also noted that critical minerals development should have proper consideration of social and environmental standards, and presented its initiatives on digitalization, cybersecurity, trade promotion and facilitation through its partnership with the International Trade Center (ITC). **FCDO (UK)** noted the importance of private sector driven growth for the region, work needed to exclude SOE-driven market distortions, support for WTO accession, and gender mainstreaming. **GIZ** shared its work on human capital, energy efficiency, climate change, green skills development and trade facilitation in Central Asia.

20. **Preparations for the 24th CAREC Ministerial Conference (2025) and Initial Discussions for Commemorating CAREC's 25th Year (2026).** The SOM noted the proposals for the 24th CAREC Ministerial Conference in November 2025, including the CAREC

Technology Forum and CAREC Business Forum. The **Kyrgyz Republic** highlighted three priority areas for the 24th Ministerial Conference: strengthening economic corridors, tourism, trade and logistics; transitioning to green and digital technologies; and enhancing human capital by expanding access to financing and supporting startups; and encouraged support for the business and technology forums. **Georgia** suggested to include chambers of commerce in planning and implementing the business forum.

21. With respect to the 25th year commemorating the CAREC Program in 2026, **Mongolia** shared its initial plans, proposed schedule of Ministerial Conference in July or September, and stressed the importance of preparing for a high-level meeting as soon as possible. Mongolia proposed a commemorative document to be signed at Prime Minister-level. **Azerbaijan** noted that lessons from the SPECA Anniversary may be useful in preparing for the CAREC's 25th year to engage high level participation from ministers and governments. **Kazakhstan** proposed educational lectures and creating a CAREC digital museum. The **Kyrgyz Republic** proposed an anniversary report, creating a digital roadmap, launching innovative initiatives, and organizing a cultural program. **Pakistan** suggested taking stock of progress and charting a future course of action. **Uzbekistan** announced its hosting of the ADB Annual Meeting on 3-7 May 2026 in Samarkand.

22. The SOM expressed its appreciation to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, particularly the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, for chairing the meeting. The SOM also thanked ADB as the CAREC Secretariat and other development partners for continuing support to the CAREC Program.