



Joint Ministerial Statement

Tenth Ministerial Conference on Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation

**Baku, Azerbaijan
23 November 2011**

“CAREC 2020: Focus, Action, Results (FAR) – Beyond Borders”

Representing the Governments of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Ministers adopted the following statement at the conclusion of the 10th Ministerial Meeting on Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 23 November 2011.

Commemorating a Decade of Achievements

1. We take pride in celebrating ten years of fruitful collaboration in CAREC. Significant strides have been made in physical connectivity through infrastructure investments, facilitation of cross-border and transit movements, trade policy, and knowledge building and sharing. The strong resolve and commitment of our governments have made this possible. Mutual trust has allowed for flexibility and pragmatism to guide CAREC's operations under an effective institutional framework.
2. In taking stock of what we accomplished, we are pleased to note that CAREC-related projects worth almost \$17 billion have been completed or are under way. We acknowledge with appreciation, the contribution made by our multilateral institution partners in realizing a substantial part of these investments. Beyond the quantum of financial resources that they provided, they helped ensure the quality of investments by providing strategic and technical advice that guided discussion and consensus building, and eventually led to informed choices.
3. We are resolved to sustain what we have so far achieved. Lessons from the past had taught us to be more focused, to sharpen our priorities, to develop stronger ownership, to mainstream regional cooperation into our development plans, and to strengthen our capacities. At the same time, we recognize that there are outstanding issues, challenges, and risks in CAREC that we intend to address in the coming years. We have recognized the need for engaging the private sector more actively, seeking new modalities for mobilizing resources, and coordinating more effectively with development partners.

Moving Forward to CAREC 2020

4. We unanimously endorsed our overarching strategy for the second decade of the CAREC Program. CAREC 2020 is anchored on the two, mutually-reinforcing objectives of expanded trade and improved competitiveness. Investments in physical infrastructure will enlarge markets and contribute to increased trade. Investments in soft infrastructure such as transport facilitation and trade facilitation will increase returns on infrastructure investments and contribute to industrial diversification, expansion, and competitiveness.

5. We endorsed the medium-term priority projects to support the goals of CAREC 2020. These projects are targeted to deliver concrete results throughout the decade. Among others, we envisage the completion of ongoing physical infrastructure projects, accession and implementation of the measures to facilitate cross-border transport and trade, implementation of the trade policy action plan, and initiatives to transform pilot transport corridors into full-fledged economic corridors. We have committed to mainstream the medium-term priority projects into our respective development plans. We instruct our senior officials and sector coordinating committees to develop feasible business plans to implement these projects. We will look opportunistically to work on second-tier activities.

6. We look forward to reviewing the five-year action plan for the CAREC Institute at our next meeting. The Institute will provide the analytical underpinning for strategic-, sector-, and projects-related work under the CAREC Program, and associated capacity building for all CAREC bodies. We approved the Institute's interim action plan for 2012, which consists of short-term priority knowledge products and training activities to support CAREC 2020.

Conclusions and Acknowledgements

7. The tenth anniversary of the CAREC Program has presented a natural opportunity to reflect on how the region is unfolding, and how our respective countries can benefit from the synergies of our individual and collective efforts. Building on the gains of the past, and inspired by our shared vision, we have charted our course for the next ten years. We are confident that as good neighbors and good partners, we can help secure the future of CAREC in realizing the good prospects that the region has to offer. CAREC can contribute to international efforts to improve economic linkages within the region.

8. We thank the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for chairing and hosting our Tenth Ministerial Conference, and our Secretariat, the Asian Development Bank, for the excellent arrangements made. We are grateful to our multilateral partners for their untiring and invaluable support to our countries and to the CAREC Program. We look forward to our 11th meeting to be held in 2012 in the People's Republic of China.
