



Joint Ministerial Statement

8th Ministerial Conference on Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
16 October 2009

Representing the Governments of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, Ministers adopted the following statement at the conclusion of the 8th Ministerial Conference on Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 16 October 2009.

1. The CAREC Program is making significant progress in implementing its project-focused strategies in the priority sectors of transport, trade, and energy. Building on the active investment plans of each CAREC country, our multilateral partners¹ have programmed almost \$4 billion in loans and grants in these sectors in 2009. This is double the volume of investment in 2008. It is a strong illustration of the value of our Program's practical approach to cooperation and the close coordination among our countries and partners.
2. CAREC is at work across the region building transport and energy infrastructure, simplifying border and trade arrangements, undertaking research on regional issues, and building networks in support of cooperation. This work is opening new economic opportunities for millions of our citizens. It represents tangible progress toward our vision of "Good Neighbors, Good Partners, Good Prospects."
3. Today we endorsed two documents.
 - The **CAREC Energy Action Plan Framework** will support achievement of the Energy Sector Strategy goals of energy security and increased energy trade to support economic growth. The Action Plan will deliver investments, knowledge and capacity building, and policy advice in three strategic areas: Energy demand-supply balance and infrastructure constraints; regional dispatch and regulatory development; and analysis of energy-water linkages. The Action Plan outlines diagnostic work in each area that will help establish a shared understanding of opportunities for cooperation and action.

¹ Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme, and World Bank.

- The **CAREC Program Results Framework** will highlight the value and tangible impact of regional cooperation. It will track progress of CAREC operations, indicate areas for improvement, and highlight trends in results. Results Framework data will serve as the basis of a broader CAREC development effectiveness review. This review will articulate program achievements through a credible and transparent process and inform the Program's decision-making processes.

4. These documents complete our strategic direction. With strategies and action plans in place for each of the priority sectors and a framework for monitoring results, we pledge our commitment to work together and with our multilateral partners to achieve our CAREC goal of development through cooperation.

5. As our large investments in transport infrastructure rehabilitate the six CAREC corridors and create connections among our countries and to key external markets, we must deepen our efforts to ensure goods and people can smoothly travel these routes. We welcome the initial findings of the Corridors Performance Measurement and Monitoring program. The data reveal the main causes of delays and costs along the corridors. They highlight the urgent need for infrastructure improvements at border crossings and greater progress on customs modernization and harmonization. They also signal the potential of the single window schemes many of our countries are now developing.

6. We request the CAREC Secretariat and committees to continue the corridor monitoring program, to begin assessments of physical infrastructure needs at priority border crossings along each corridor, and to support the implementation and networking of single window schemes in the region. Our work should target the development of "seamless corridors" to support the competitiveness of our economies in regional and global markets.

7. We welcome the start of efforts to include the private sector in our regional cooperation efforts. We request our multilateral partners to increase support for business climate improvements in the CAREC region. In this regard, we recognize the value of continuing knowledge-sharing workshops on public-private partnerships; holding a CAREC Business Development Forum in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China, in 2010; and networking among CAREC chambers of commerce. This expanded public-private interaction will be instrumental to fostering consensus on regional initiatives for increasing private sector participation in CAREC activities.

8. In 2009, our Program moved confidently into implementation of our agreed strategic directions. Despite the global economic crisis, our partnership continued delivering tangible results to the people of the CAREC region and investments that strengthen our growth prospects. As we move forward, we will continue our practical, project-based cooperation, to strengthen our connections with each other and with global markets, and to ensure that trust and goodwill guide our joint efforts.