

**Opening address by
Mr. Altankhuyag Norov**

**First Deputy Prime Minister
Mongolia**

at 8th Ministerial Conference on Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation

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Your Excellency President Kuroda, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

First of all, on behalf of the Government of Mongolia I am pleased to extend a very warm welcome to all our distinguished guests and delegates here today at the 8th Ministerial Conference on Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation in Ulaanbaatar.

It is an honor for Mongolia to host this Ministerial Conference, and a great pleasure to have you in our country.

Let me also extend a sincere gratitude to the CAREC Secretariat and the ADB Resident Mission in Mongolia for their valuable support in organizing this Ministerial conference.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Last 20 years since transition to market oriented economy Mongolia has given great importance to regional cooperation and active involvement into regional cooperation programs has been set as one of priority objectives of our foreign relations policy.

It is essential for us to develop economic cooperation with neighboring and regional countries as we aim to create prosperous economy using the mineral resource in sustainable and eco-friendly way, developing the traditional agriculture sector, the tourism, and the modern technology.

In addition to the CAREC program we extend the regional cooperation with the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia-Europe Meeting, and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council as a participating country and with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as an observer country. We will aim towards joining the APEC, becoming member state of the ASEAN, and making contribution to the East Asia Cooperation in the future.

Mongolia has land, mineral resources' and animal husbandry products' potential to contribute to overall objectives of sustainable regional development. However, it is crucial to utilize these resources efficiently and effectively to further enhance regional economic cooperation.

I have no hesitation that not only Mongolia but the whole region will have opportunity to get benefits of the Investment agreement on Oyu Tolgoi copper and gold deposits signed last week.

Distinguished friends and guests,

More than a decade has passed since the CAREC Program first defined its headline objectives and it has made significant contribution to providing new opportunities for regional cooperation development and improving lives of people in the region.

The projects under the CAREC Program have been implemented very successfully. The regional corridors that connect Russia and PRC and modernized customs systems projects are now at stage of full implementation in Mongolia. These vertical international routes and customs integrated information system will have great impact on traffic increase, and further development of foreign trade and investment in the region. I believe that the CAREC pipeline projects on regional logistics and gobi urban infrastructure development will significantly contribute to trade facilitation in the region.

Today we are planning to discuss the Report from the Senior Officials Meeting to the Ministerial Conference and endorse two important initiatives as Energy Action Plan Framework and CAREC Program Results Framework. Monitoring of the results of the action plans is important and the CAREC Program Results Framework will provide us opportunity to articulate the program achievements as well as weaknesses that need to be addressed.

Distinguished friends and guests,

Time period we are living in has its uniqueness. While the globalization and the technological innovations in the modern world have opened us great opportunities to achieve high economic

growth, more concerns have been risen on many non-conventional issues as environmental degradation, spread of communicable deceases, and terrorism which require more mutual understanding and collaboration than ever before.

You may agree with me that the Central Asian countries are facing common challenges to prevent from possible environmental disasters, utilize mineral resources jointly, and substitute each others economy. To these challenges we should develop and accept more knowledge-based, crisis immune economic models along with clean development mechanisms.

I would like to highlight here that we should seriously consider environmental issues while expanding our regional collaboration. Global warming and climate change have negatively affected the Mongolian ecological system, and the scientists have extensively warned about desertification and sand storms issues recently.

Along with core sectors as trade, transport, energy defined in the CAREC Comprehensive action plan other sectors as environment, agriculture and tourism should be also taken into consideration. The CAREC Program's active involvement with these subsidiary sectors could succeed in resolving the outstanding issues at regional level.

Nowadays we are living in more civilized and interrelated world, however, the concerns of regional cooperation remain the same as how to develop together and how to resolve issues together. I believe that today's Ministerial Conference definitely will make its own contribution to answering these questions.

I wish each and every one of you a pleasant stay in Mongolia, and all of us a rewarding and fruitful meeting.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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