

**Fourth Ministerial Conference on
Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
5-6 November 2005, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic**

**Opening Statement by
Minister of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade of the Republic of
Uzbekistan Mr. R. Azimov**

Dear Mr. Kulov!
Dear Mr. Haruhiko Kuroda!
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of Uzbekistan's delegation allow me to thank Kyrgyz Government for a warm welcome in Bishkek and excellent organization of this Ministerial Conference under the aegis of ADB.

As you know, realizing significant benefits from development of regional cooperation in Central Asia, in 2002 President Tadao Chino initiated the establishment of a special forum, which, gathering annually, will be called to develop proposals to deepen and expand regional cooperation.

We welcome that at recent 38th Annual Meeting ADB President Haruhiko Kuroda having determined ADB's midterm strategy and priorities, noted that these priorities will be achieved in the context of unique ADB's role in deepening regional economic cooperation and integration.

Today we feel that ADB's management clearly demonstrates strong commitment to this mandate.

Experience and logic of development in countries of the region confirms objective pattern of deepened regional economic ties. Today we deeper understand the need in cooperation, firstly from the perspective of region's strengthened stability, security and socio-economic development.

Today "Regional Cooperation" category becomes an effective mechanism to address many acute problems of our countries.

At the same time real results are possible only if each stakeholder would understand all objective benefits from regional economic integration, and acknowledge the importance and need to achieve consensus when making decisions based on consideration to mutual interests.

Based on the consensus, which takes into account national interests of all countries in the region, we have identified three areas such as transport, trade and energy as the most priority sectors with huge unexposed potential.

We are pleased to state that after three years, for the purposes to demonstrate benefits from development of regional cooperation in these areas by means of national and regional Round Tables, this process again started to involve a broader audience, including not only government, by business and academics.

In the result of discussions and consultations, today we have a list of project proposals, considered as the first draft of the CAREC financial and technical assistance program.

We are determined that there are good examples of concrete regional cooperation projects, and the discussion revealed new construction proposals to be implemented in the nearest future.

For consistent development and beginning the implementation of each individually selected project, we think it is critically important to determine participation in funding, and when necessary in co-financing by IFIs.

In this regard we fully support the thesis, that in the issues of expanding and deepening economic cooperation in the region international financial and economic organizations should not as much compete among each other, but be partners.

Moreover, when they provide financial or technical assistance to countries in the region we believe that main coordination role in the implementation of all projects of regional significance should be played by the CAREC Program.

It is also necessary to a maximum extent possible reduce duplication and overlap among regional cooperation initiatives. CAREC Program should coordinate with other regional organizations and programs, especially the ones like SCO and EEC, more efficiently.

We also think that in the development and implementation of regional projects, donor community should provide financial assistance to the involved countries on equitable basis in order to avoid any idle gossip by recipient countries that receive financial assistance from donor organizations on more beneficial or on the contrary less attractive conditions compared to other recipient country under the same project.

It is not a secret that negotiations to agree and implement regional projects require a lot of time and efforts. In this regard we consider it expedient that IFIs, besides projects of national significance, would include all regional projects in the development of Country Strategies for each individual country in the region.

There is a need to derive amounts of financial and technical assistance under CAREC Program from indicative figures that IFIs intend to provide to each individual country on annual basis.

Through this IFIs could encourage governments of countries in the region to expedite the implementation of priority and strategically important projects of regional significance not from annually approved figures, but from forming the additional budget.

We also call for the Governments of countries in the region, if they are interested in expanding regional cooperation to new sectors as tourism, telecommunications, HIV/AIDS and others, to base themselves on the fact that work has already been done in these sectors, previously supported by a number of international structures.

From our perspective, at least at this stage, it would be expedient to concentrate efforts on practical implementation of activities in the agreed sectors.

In particular a number of projects, noted by us multiple times in the past, are of strategic interest for Uzbekistan. These are:

- implementation of Trans-Afghan corridor;

- modernization and development of railroads and roads in southern and northern directions;
- reconstruction of oil and gas pipelines.

Strongly intending to stir up participation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in regional investment cooperation, today we have submitted a list of regional projects for review by ADB President H. Kuroda.

Striving to ensure the implementation of any project under CAREC Program, different countries of our region might have different options and ways to address similar tasks.

In this regard we support the thesis that in the implementation of each specific project it is necessary to rely on economic efficiency with thorough development of alternative options to achieve the goal and address the tasks posed.

Thank you for your attention.