

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

**Opening Statement by
Mr. Elshan Mammadzadeh
Republic of Azerbaijan**

Honorable participants of the meeting,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

Please, let me first of all thank the Government of Kyrgyzstan and Asian Development Bank for setting up this meeting and for hospitality, as well as for the efforts aimed at achieving progress in the field of regional development between CAREC member states.

Taking into consideration the speech of Mr. Mitsei, it is necessary to underline that the current stage of CAREC program on identifying direction and mid/long-term priorities for regional development is, indeed, one of the crucial steps for successful implementation of this program in general and achievement of concrete expected results.

With regard to this we believe it is important to unite efforts in achieving the goals of regional cooperation and acquiring maximal effect both from the program in general and in a bilateral format within the framework of this program.

It is well known that relatively high level of poverty is an existing problem for Central Asian countries, and those measures undertaken to reduce it, are among priorities of the actions of our governments. Due to this, CAREC can stimulate such tools on combating poverty as restoration and establishment of the relevant infrastructure, mutually beneficial use of the region's energy potential, measures promoting trade, renovation and creation of automobile and railroad networks both within and outside of the region for optimal routes, implementation of major projects in this sector, including automobile and railroad sectors, harmonization of road tariffs along strategic road corridors, unification of customs procedures according to the best international practice. It has been repeatedly mentioned that Central Asian region is a potential bridge between developed markets of Europe and Eastern Asia. Therefore, the participation of Russia and Afghanistan in this program can significantly extend opportunities for all member states.

In order to stimulate regional cooperation it is necessary to pay special attention to some changes in the legislation of member states, especially with regard to harmonization of transport tariffs, unification and improvement of customs procedures according to international practice, creation of a legal mechanism governing multilateral and bilateral trade within and outside of the region of Central Asia.

To reach efficient regional cooperation it is also required to use the maximum potential of state authorities in the member states, and to put more emphasis on fulfillment of pragmatic initiatives oriented at achieving particular results.

In order to obtain experience of international and regional organizations in running various programs and initiatives, as well as to attract additional sources of funding, special attention

should be paid to involvement of such organizations in activities performed under the CAREC program.

We see building of conditions and removal of barriers to mutually beneficial cooperation between member states' private sector representatives as one of the main priorities of regional cooperation under CAREC. In this regard, beside unification and harmonization of customs procedures and relevant legislation, we need to mention such measures as a unified database available for private sector, round tables and regional trade exhibitions and fairs, etc.

Trade between CAREC countries and outside Central Asia is definitely a corner stone for the process of development of regional cooperation between member states. Due to this fact it is necessary to pursue activities aimed at removal of barriers to the growth of world trade, as well as providing the access to world markets for member states.

It is necessary to emphasize a huge energy potential of the region for mutually beneficial regional economic cooperation. As an example we can use the project on transportation of Kazakh oil to the European market through a pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan which is now going through the stage of intergovernmental agreement.

In conclusion I would like to stress again that successful implementation of CAREC program is fully dependent on joint efforts of our countries, and also depends significantly on assistance and cooperation of international organizations and financial institutions.

Thank you for your attention and let me express my confidence that this meeting is going to be fruitful.