

**Notes for the Preparatory Meeting of the  
Regional Business Roundtable (RBR)  
for Central and South Asia**

**Harnessing the Dynamism of  
Business for Regional Cooperation**

**Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic; November 3-4, 2005**

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**Opening Session**



## **The Context for the RBR**

- The CAREC SOM in Almaty in April 2004 called for: “..greater participation of the private sector in the CAREC Program...”
- The CAREC SOM in Manila in April 2005 fully endorsed the RBR initiative
- The RBR initiative is explicitly designed to stimulate a greater role for the business sector in regional cooperation programs in Central and South Asia
- It forms a critical part of ADB’s efforts to support the business sector in RBR countries



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## **Messages from the Fact-Finding Missions**

- Strong interest from all public and private sector players
- The beginning of an RBR network database highly valued
- Information dissemination on CAREC and other regional cooperation initiatives weak; need for “packaging” of information to suit business needs



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## **Key Findings from the Fact-Finding Missions**

1. Agreement with the proposed areas of focus
2. Need for a “broad” business sector membership
3. RBR must be “owned” by the business communities
4. Importance of engaging top level policymakers and all key donors
5. Need to ensure coordination with related initiatives
6. General agreement with proposed geographical coverage, but need to take care not to over-extend activities



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## **The Basic Proposed Characteristics of the RBR**

- The RBR is planned to include CAREC member economies (including new members Afghanistan and Russia) and also the business communities of India, Iran, and Pakistan
- The RBR will focus on regional cooperation issues, with an initial focus on: (a) Energy; (b) Transport, and (c) Trade Facilitation...
- ...linking into the Central and South Asia Transport and Trade Facilitation Program, the Silk Road Regional Programme, and others
- The RBR will be driven by the business communities



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## The RBR Preparatory Meeting: Critical Success Factors

- Ensuring that the meeting allows for the views and perspectives of the **business community** to be fully reflected
- Identification of activities that will be of **value to the business community**
- Agreement on key next steps – proposed to be embodied in an **RBR Strategic Action Plan**, with possible activities in each of the three key areas of focus



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## Indicative Structure of an RBR Strategic Action Plan

- Geographic coverage
- Vision and objectives
- Principles and benefits
- Substantive activities
- Structure and mechanisms
  - Members, management, secretariat, meetings
  - Communications, linkages and outreach
  - Governance
- Practical next steps



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## Key Likely Issues

- Consensus among RBR participants on what level of involvement they desire in regional cooperation and planning.
- Identifying a clear overall objective for RBR and the specific roles or functions it will perform.
- Getting government recognition that business sector involvement is vital to successful regional cooperation.
  - Governments should recognize formal role of RBR in regional forums.
- Mobilizing the broader business community through the RBR.



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## Follow Up to the RBR Preparatory Meeting

- Presentation of key elements of the RBR Strategic Action Plan to the CAREC Ministerial Conference, November 5-6, 2005

Commencement of RBR Substantive Activities



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## **Modalities of the RBR Preparatory Meeting**

- Participants ask to speak by placing the name plate vertically
- If possible, interjections should be kept to less than 5 minutes
- Co-Chairs will ensure that the dialogue proceeds smoothly and consistently
- Selected participants may be requested to support the preparation of Action Plans and Next Steps as required
- RBR Meeting Coordinators will keep comprehensive notes on the meeting



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## **Meeting Agenda**

- Day 1: The RBR
  - Opening Session with Overview of Regional Cooperation
  - Session 1 – The Vision, Objectives, Proposed TOR
  - Session 2 – The Substantive Activities
  - Session 3 – The Structure and Mechanisms
  - Session 4 – Required Commitments and Changes
- Day 2: Status of Regional Cooperation
  - Session 5 – The Status of Regional Cooperation in the Three Areas: Energy, Transport, Trade Facilitation and Related Areas



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# Meeting Agenda

- Session 6 – Break-Out Group Meetings on Substantive Areas
- Session 7 – Presentations back to Plenary
- Special Presentation: Business Opportunities and Challenges of Economic Integration within Eurasia
- Day 2: RBR Next Steps
  - Session 8 – Discussion and Agreement on Strategic Action Plan
  - Session 9 – Closing Statements by Country Delegations



## Session 1

### The Vision, Objectives, Proposed Terms of Reference



## **Indicative Visions What Should RBR Aim At**

- Example 1 - Limited: “to stimulate a greater role for the business sector in regional cooperation programs in Central and South Asia”
- Example 2 – Broader: “to stimulate a greater role for the business sector in development of the CAREC and adjacent regions”
- Example 3 – Starting smaller and growing along with success – a combination of 1 and 2



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## **The Proposed Objectives**

1. Enhancing business inputs into CAREC and other regional cooperation programs
2. Facilitating regional trade and investment
3. Building private sector networks

Two Dimensions of the RBR – which itself is expected to embody a two-way channel of information:

1. Involving the locally-based businesses
2. Bringing in international businesses



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## **Session 2**

### **The Substantive Activities**

The logo for the Asian Development Bank (ADB), consisting of the letters 'ADB' in white on a black rectangular background.

### **Indicative Substantive Activities**

- Possible functional activities:
  - Business sector inputs to regional cooperation programming.
  - Represent broader Central and South Asia business community in regional forums.
  - Advocacy for business sector interests/needs in public policies and economic planning.
  - Promoting linkages and networks across Central and South Asia business sectors.
  - Enhancing availability of information on regional business opportunities.

The logo for the Asian Development Bank (ADB), consisting of the letters 'ADB' in white on a black rectangular background.

## **Indicative Substantive Activities (continued)**

- Possible sectoral activities for energy, transport, and trade:
  - Advise governments and MIs on practicality and desirability of proposed regional initiatives.
  - Assist in technical planning for regional sectoral initiatives.

## **Session 3**

### **The Structure and Mechanisms**

## **Structures and Mechanisms: Issues for the RBR Preparatory Meeting**

- Membership – including observers
- Donors and policymakers
- Meetings of the RBR
- Sub-groups or working groups
- Secretariat functions
- Communications between all key players
- Linkage and outreach



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## **Possible Structures**

- An annual meeting of business people.
  - No formal structure or membership.
  - Discuss developments and opportunities in regional programs.
- Small representative group of RBR.
  - Participate in regional forums, representing business sector.
  - Hold broader RBR meetings periodically to disseminate information. Possibly a communications network.
- Formal membership body with secretariat or technical support facility.
  - To establish a formal, recognized business sector mechanism for inputs to regional cooperation programming.
  - Complements governments and MIs; becomes the “third leg.”



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## Possible Mechanisms

- Serve as interface between public sector and MIs on one hand, and broader business sector on the other for inputs to regional economic programming.
- Establish working groups/technical groups on energy, transport, and trade.
- Secretariat/technical support facility to compile information from the activities/initiatives of regional forums and disseminate information and updates to RBM members.



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## Possible Mechanisms (continued)

- Web-based communication network for RBR, mainly for sharing information.
  - Relevant information being made available to all RBR members through the Internet.
- RBR participants serve as country focal points for business sector.
  - Awareness raising of regional opportunities for local businesses.
  - Linkages and outreach with other appropriate regional business groupings and national/local business associations.



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## **Session 4**

### **The Required Commitments and Organizational Changes**



## **Possible Commitments and Organizational Changes**

- Consider the issues for three groups of stakeholders with regard to these matters that might be critical for the success of the RBR:
  - Business community
  - Public sector
  - Development partners (MIs)
- Changes in attitudes
- Changes in organizational structures
- Resource requirements

