



Session 8: Presentation of the CATS-ICE Roadmap and Long-Term Sustainability

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Political and Strategic Endorsement



Secure ministerial-level endorsements

Obtain high-level political commitment from all CAREC member states



Integrate CATS/ICE into national trade facilitation strategies

Align national priorities and plans with the regional CATS/ICE initiative



Reaffirm CATS/ICE role under CITA 2030

Ensure CATS/ICE is a long-term regional priority under the CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda

Political endorsement is critical to the success of the implementation, ensures alignment across member states, signals to stakeholders that CATS/ICE is a regional priority. The foundation for coordinated action and long-term sustainability.

Legal and Institutional Foundations



Finalization and ratification of Multi-Country Agreement

Establish the legal framework for CATS/ICE operations through a multilateral agreement among participating countries



Alignment of national legislation

Ensure national laws and regulations are aligned with the CATS/ICE legal framework, addressing provisions related to customs transit, data exchange, mutual recognition, and guarantee mechanisms



Establishment of National CATS Project Management Teams

Set up dedicated National CATS Project Management Teams and coordination committees to manage CATS/ICE implementation, coordinate between customs and other agencies, and liaise with regional structures

Establishing the necessary legal and institutional foundations is critical to enable efficient coordination and implementation of the CATS/ICE across the CAREC region. This also contributes significantly to long-term sustainability and seamless cross-border operations.

Regional Management Structure



Establish a regional CATS/ICE management institution

This institution will manage regional legal/regulatory environment, central IT development cycles, maintain common reference data, operate the ICE platform, and provide central helpdesk support.



Oversee system governance and compliance

The institution will plan and coordinate the transition to the decentralized ownership model, conduct conformance testing, and approve national system deployments.



Ensure uniform compliance with agreed standards

The institution will act as a neutral platform for dispute resolution and technical coordination to maintain system integrity and interoperability.

The establishment of a central CATS/ICE management institution is essential to maintain system integrity, ensure interoperability, and facilitate the transition to a decentralized ownership model, contributing significantly to the long-term sustainability.

Accession Process for All Countries (2)



Standardized onboarding pathway

Countries follow a defined process for joining CATS/ICE, including readiness assessments, legal adjustments, technical integration, and conformance testing



Ensure consistency

The accession process guarantees uniform system performance and operational procedures across all participating countries



Accommodate different capacities

The process is designed to be flexible, allowing countries with varying levels of readiness to join at their own pace

The standardized accession process governed by an Accession Handbook / Guideline ensures that each country reaches the same baseline operational readiness before joining the CATS/ICE live operations, reducing the risk of technical or procedural bottlenecks and maintaining consistency across the regional system.

Accession Process for All Countries (2)

- **Standardized Accession Guideline**

CATS/ICE Accession Handbook/Guideline would outline a standardized onboarding pathway for countries to join the system.

- **Readiness Assessments**

Readiness assessments would be conducted for each country to identify legal, institutional, and technical gaps that need to be addressed prior to accession

- **Legal Adjustments**

Assist countries in aligning their national legislation with the CATS/ICE legal framework, including provisions related to customs transit, data exchange, mutual recognition, and guarantee mechanisms

- **Technical Integration**

Guide countries through the process of technically integrating their national CATS system with the ICE platform, ensuring secure and compliant data exchange

- **Capacity Building**

Provide targeted training and capacity building programmes to ensure customs officials, IT staff, and private sector operators are equipped to utilize the CATS/ICE system effectively

- **Conformance Testing**

Implement a strict conformance testing procedure to verify that each country's national CATS system comply with the common CATS/ICE system specifications before going live

Technical Development and Consistency

CATS/ICE Technical Framework

Developing a robust technical framework for CATS/ICE, including Common System Specifications and secure integration capabilities to ensure interoperability in the scenario with diverse national IT environments.

Centralized vs. Decentralized Approach

Establishing a clear distinction between Common System Specifications and Application Specifications, to prepare for the transition to a decentralized ownership model where countries can develop their own CATS applications while maintaining interoperability.

Centrally vs. Nationally Developed CATS Application

Introducing a centrally developed CATS application to accelerate early participation and live operational trials, before countries transition to nationally developed systems at their own pace depending on capacity and readiness.

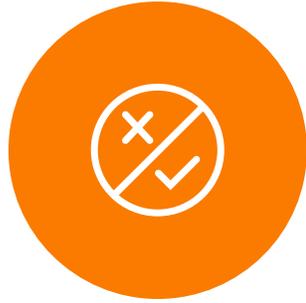
Secure Central ICE Platform

Continuing to centrally develop ICE platform to facilitate secure, cross-border data exchange, ensuring data integrity and security in transit operations.

Continuous Technical Enhancements

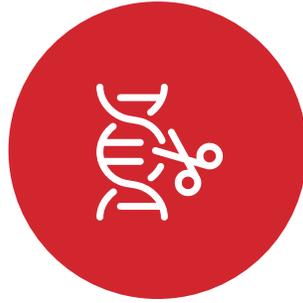
Regularly updating the technical framework, specifications, and integration requirements to adapt to evolving trade patterns, technology, and security needs, ensuring the long-term relevance and effectiveness of CATS/ICE.

Conformance and Parallel Testing



Conformance Testing

Ensures national systems comply with Common System Specifications before joining live operations



Parallel Testing

Verifies processes and data flows function correctly in real-world scenarios without disrupting existing operations



Quality Assurance Gates

Prevents technical or procedural failures from affecting the entire regional network

Conformance and parallel testing act as critical quality assurance measures, ensuring the technical and operational integrity of CATS/ICE before full-scale implementation across the CAREC region or when a new country joins the system.

Live Operational Trials and Launch

Q3 2026
Launch initial live operational trials on selected pilot corridors

Q3 2026
Use actual cargo movements under CATS/ICE rules, supported by chain-guarantee mechanism and mutual recognition of customs controls

Q4 2026
Collect data based on real-time monitoring and feedback for refining operational procedures and system features

Q4 2026
Transition from controlled live operational trials to full-scale launch of CATS/ICE operations

Capacity Building and Communication



Targeted training programs

Develop e-learning modules, in-person workshops, and 'train-the-trainer' approaches to build sustained expertise among customs officials, IT staff, and private sector operators



Robust communication strategy

Establish a comprehensive strategy to communicate system plans, upcoming changes, and engage with the private sector through regular events and outreach to ensure uptake of the system



Practical simulation exercises

Incorporate hands-on training to ensure personnel are prepared to effectively utilize CATS/ICE features and procedures

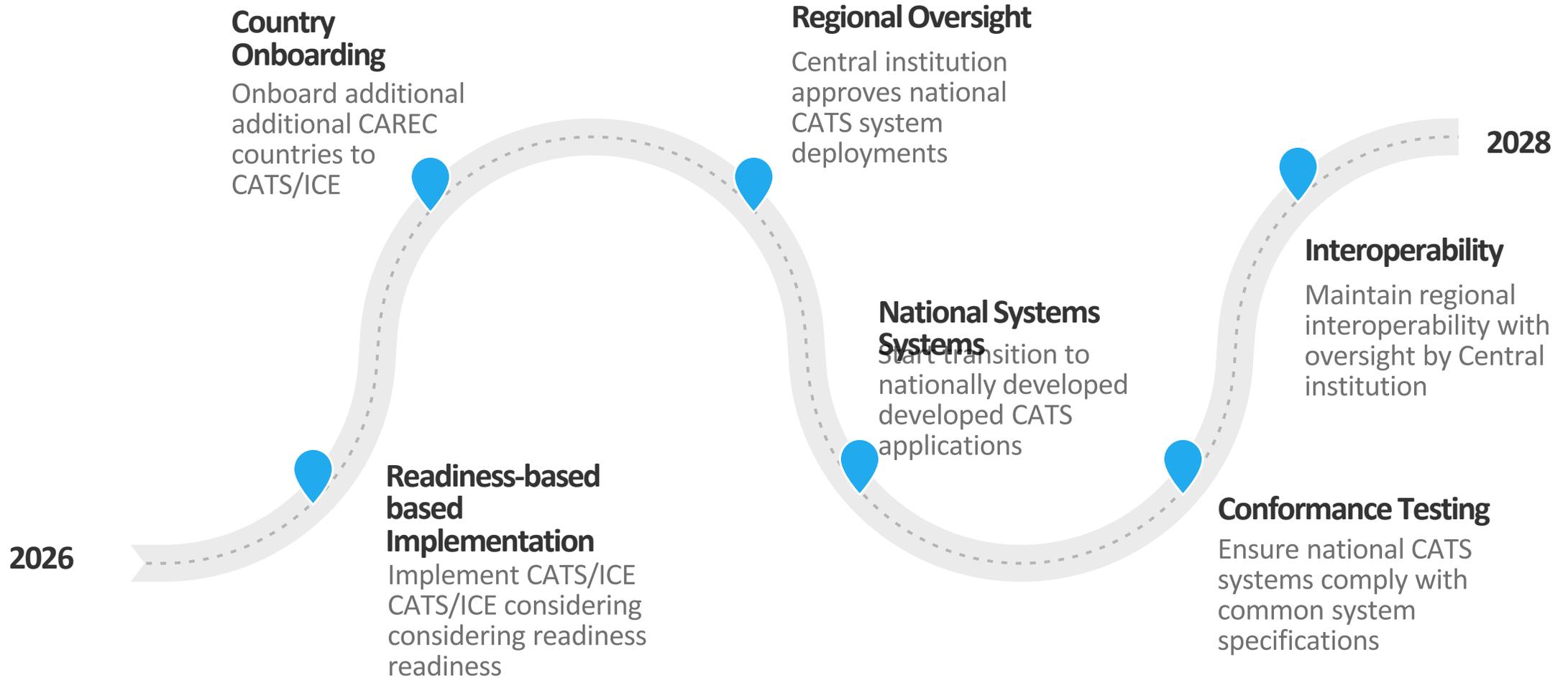


Continuous capacity building and communication

Maintain ongoing training and communication efforts as long as the CATS/ICE system remains in operation

Effective capacity building and communication are crucial to ensuring the successful utilization of CATS/ICE by all stakeholders. Comprehensive training programs, practical exercises, and a robust communication strategy will empower customs officials, IT staff, and private sector operators to fully leverage the system's features and contribute to its long-term sustainability.

Gradual Expansion and National Transition



Complete Regional Rollout and Integration

Complete Regional Rollout & Potential Inter-regional Integration (Q1–Q4 2029)

- **All willing CAREC states operational** on CATS/ICE

At this stage, all willing CAREC countries will be operational on CATS/ICE, with interconnected national systems communicating through the ICE platform.

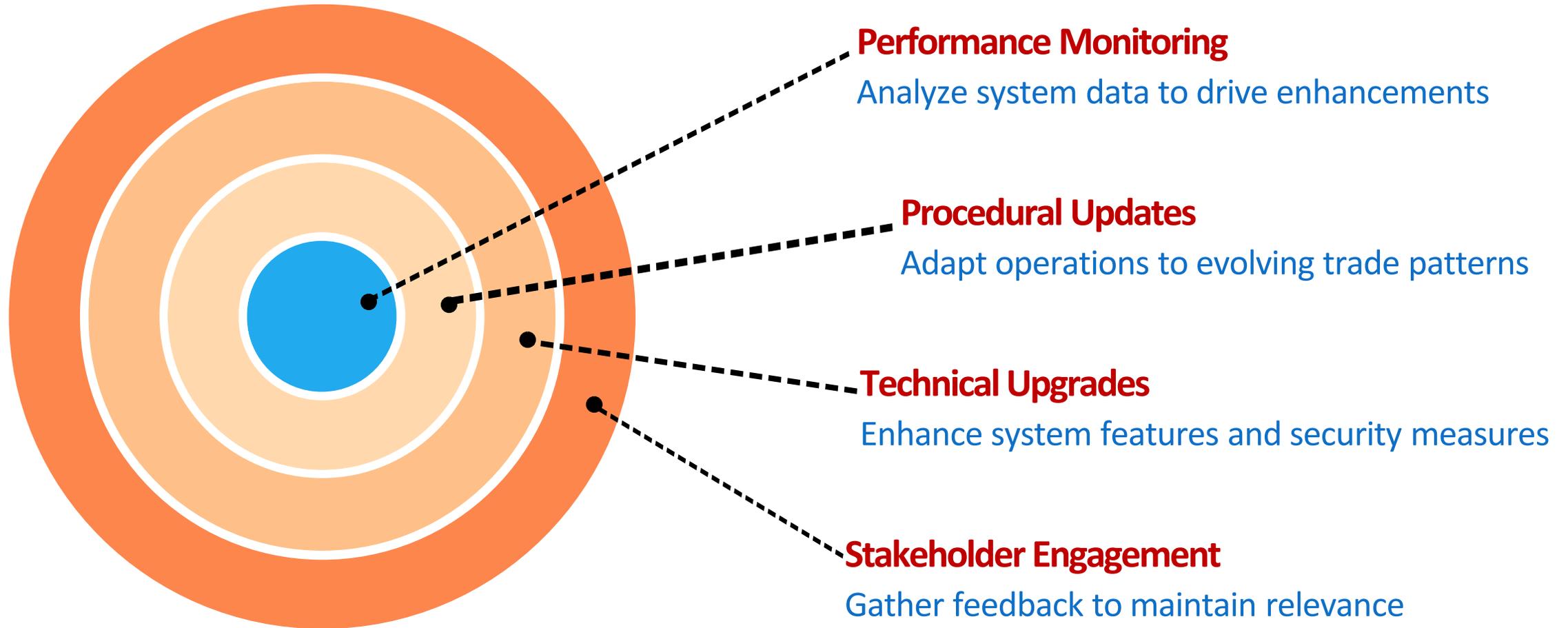
- **Enable interoperability** with EU NCTS and ASEAN ACTS

The system will also be prepared for potential interoperability with external regional systems, such as the EU's NCTS and ASEAN's ACTS, to facilitate inter-regional trade.

- Achieve **seamless regional** and potentially **inter-regional transit environment**

Full regional rollout maximizes the benefits of CATS/ICE, creating a seamless transit environment across CAREC and potentially linking it with other major trade corridors.

Continuous Improvement and Sustainability



Roadmap to Full CATS/ICE Live Operations (1)

1. Political and Strategic Endorsement (Q1–Q4 2025)

- Secure *ministerial-level commitment* across CAREC states
- Integrate CATS/ICE into *national trade facilitation strategies*
- *Expand commitment beyond early adopters* Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan

2. Legal and Institutional Foundations (Q1 2025–Q2 2026)

- Finalize and ratify the *Multi-Country Agreement*
- *Align national laws*, where applicable, with regional transit, data exchange, and guarantees
- Establish *national project teams* and *coordination committees*

3. Regional Management Structure (Q3 2026–Q2 2027)

- Create a *regional CATS/ICE management institution*
- Manage IT development, ICE platform, *common reference data, common system specifications*
- Oversee *governance, conformance testing, and dispute resolution*

4. Accession Process for All Countries (Q4 2025–Q2 2027)

- Develop and apply a standardized *accession handbook / guidelines*
- Ensure *consistent readiness* (legal, technical, and capacity)
- Allow *flexible timing* for countries to join live operations

5. Technical Development and Consistency (Q3 2023–Q2 2027)

- Evolve the *Prototype* into *Version 3* for live operational trial
- Separate *common system specifications* from application specs
- Ensure *secure integration* with ICE for all national CATS systems

6. Conformance and Parallel Testing (Q1 2024–Open)

- Mandatory *conformance testing* for compliance with common system specifications, ensuring interoperability
- *Parallel testing* with real data before live rollout
- Act as a *quality assurance gate*

Roadmap to Full CATS/ICE Live Operations (2)

7. Live Operational Trials (Q3–Q4 2026)

- Launch live operational trials on *selected corridors*
- Use *real cargo movements* with guarantees and mutual control recognition
- *Dependency* on prior *legal ratification of the multi-country agreement*

8. Capacity Building and Communication (Q4 2025–Open)

- Train customs, IT staff, operators, and insurers with *tailored training programmes*
- Roll out *e-learning, workshops, and “train-the-trainer”* models
- Establish robust communication and *private sector outreach*

9. Gradual Expansion and National Transition (Q1 2026–Q4 2028)

- Expand operations to *new corridors* and *member states*
- Encourage *nationally developed CATS applications* (with mandatory conformance testing)
- Maintain *regional oversight* via conformance testing

10. Complete Regional Rollout & Potential Inter-regional Integration (Q1–Q4 2029)

- *All CAREC states operational* on CATS/ICE
- *Enable interoperability* with EU NCTS and ASEAN ACTS
- Achieve *seamless regional* and potentially *inter-regional transit environment*

11. Continuous Improvement & Sustainability (Q1 2027–Open)

- Ongoing *monitoring* and *system upgrades*
- *Update regularly* legal frameworks, specifications, and operational guidelines
- *Maintain adaptability* to evolving trade, technology, and security needs

Roadmap to Full CATS/ICE Live Operations

