

Written Statement by UNIDO
at the 20th Ministerial Conference (MC) of the Central Asia Regional Economic
Cooperation (CAREC) Program,
hosted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB),
17 November 2021 (Virtual)

It is a great privilege and an honour for UNIDO to participate in the 20th Ministerial Conference (MC) of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program hosted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). We wish to express our sincere gratitude to Vice-President Shixin Chen for inviting UNIDO to this important event focusing on “Connectivity, Cooperation and Resilience in a Digital Era”, an important theme to address the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and for the future growth and transformation of the Central Asia region. We also commend and welcome two documents, namely the CAREC Health Strategy 2030 and CAREC Digital Strategy 2030, which underline the importance of a common vision and the joint efforts needed to address critical health and digital issues faced by the region.

In 2021, UNIDO continued working with its Partners including our Member States, the international community, the United Nations Development System, and the private sector to address the immediate and long-term socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. As a specialized agency of the UN system, UNIDO’s mandate is to promote inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID) and as such, UNIDO leveraged on the new opportunities emanating from the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) to contribute to the recovery endeavours. UNIDO increased its support to its Member States to facilitate their 4IR transition and supported the promotion of technology transfer of 4IR frontier technologies, facilitating the development of innovation policies and standards and facilitating strong partnerships to implement industrial best practice in 4IR projects.

With our expertise in innovation and 4IR, we are pleased that we have been able to offer this expertise as part of the Organization's programmatic activities in the CAREC region.

The advancement of women's economic empowerment from the digital perspective is also an important aspect for UNIDO. In 2021, UNIDO launched an [online training course](#), available in Russian and English, on digital business innovations for women entrepreneurs and managers. It is important for UNIDO to extend this theme into our projects.

In **Tajikistan** for example, we implemented a project to introduce digital technologies in the textile sector with a focus on supply chains, product development and design, and branding. The project applied digital developments (such as introduction of design software and efficient weaving machines) in carpet weaving, embroidery and jewellery industries. This contributed to income and employment-generating activities for women in rural areas, vulnerable communities and in refugee camps. With the digitalization element, this project was able to leverage online and remote consultations to provide technical assistance services, despite the COVID-19 outbreak.

In another example, UNIDO, with the financial support of Slovenia, continues to work on a project in **Azerbaijan** focusing on the development of a Digital Education and Innovation Centre. This Centre aims to improve the innovation ecosystem and create awareness of 4IR, through the acquisition and sharing of knowledge and experience and to facilitate the competitiveness of innovative enterprises.

UNIDO also focuses on the CAREC region in its global innovative multi-stakeholder programs such as the Global Quality and Standards Programme (GQSP), which has national projects in **Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan**. Our Global Cleantech

Innovation Programme (GCIP) is active in **Kazakhstan** and the EU4Environment programme is being implemented in **Azerbaijan**.

We are also strong supporters of the Belt and Road Initiative led by **China**. We participate in large-scale international events, such as the China International Import Expo (CIIE), China International Fair for Investment & Trade (CIFIT), and the China International Small and Medium Enterprises Fair (CISMEF) with the goal to facilitate trade, investment and knowledge transfer between China and Central Asia countries, building *connectivity, cooperation, and resilience*.

UNIDO and the Government of the **Kyrgyz Republic** are in the process of finalization of the [Programme for Country Partnership for the Kyrgyz Republic \(PCP Kyrgyzstan\)](#). The PCP adopts an innovative approach to mobilize partners, resources, and expertise to accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrialization. The PCP rests on a multi-stakeholder partnership between development partners, UN entities, financial institutions and the business sector, under the overall leadership and ownership of the national government. Through the PCP, UNIDO provides policy advice to the government, delivers multidisciplinary technical assistance focused on selected priority areas, and facilitates overall PCP coordination and the convening of partners.

Moving forward, UNIDO will continue to engage with a wide range of partners in the CAREC region in support of our collective goal to achieve the 2030 Agenda through inclusive and sustainable industrial development. We look forward to strengthening and expanding our cooperation with the CAREC Program, the CAREC Institute, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to identify and support transformational and innovative programs for the CAREC countries to help with the recovery from the crisis and to realize the opportunities and benefits associated with the Digital Era.