

Status Report on Regional Business Roundtable (RBR) for Central and South Asia

Preparatory Meeting of the
Central – South Asia Regional Business Roundtable (RBR)

Shayr Ballroom, Hyatt Regency, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic
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STATUS REPORT REGIONAL BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE (RBR) FOR CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA¹

I. Introduction and Context

1. At the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program held in Almaty in April 2004, the country delegations endorsed: *“greater participation of the private sector in the CAREC Program, and recommended that as a first step the Sector Coordinating Committees should endeavor to include the private sector in their deliberations. Longer-term consideration could be given to the establishment of a CAREC Business Forum.”*
2. In response to this request, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) undertook to support the preparation of a Regional Business Roundtable (RBR) in Central and South Asia. A concept paper for the RBR was prepared and distributed for discussion at the CAREC SOM in September 2004². The concept is not confined to CAREC member countries and includes the business communities of Afghanistan, India, Iran, Pakistan and Russia, given their critical role as neighbors and trade partners.
3. The RBR initiative is explicitly designed to stimulate a greater role for the business sector in regional cooperation programs in Central and South Asia, and to utilize regional cooperation efforts to create business opportunities in the participating countries and generally stimulate the investment climate. The preparation of the RBR has covered six existing member economies of CAREC - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, plus three South Asia economies directly to the south - Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. Eight of these economies have been visited during the period November 2004 to March 2005; a mission to India is planned shortly. The possibility of including Russia and Iran in the RBR initiative has been discussed extensively, and they will likely be invited as observers to the RBR.
4. The RBR initiative is based on the premise that it should emphasize the regional cooperation dimensions of the countries being covered, rather than focusing on country-specific dimensions. This has been reflected by giving close attention to CAREC initiatives (in trade, transport, and energy), to the Central and South Asia Transport and Trade Facilitation (CSATTF) program, and other regional initiatives covering all or some of the RBR economies. In particular, it is noted that private sector involvement in CAREC and CSATTF has been very limited to date.
5. This RBR Status Report has been prepared to guide and support a more detailed discussion on the RBR, in particular dealing with operational details, at the CAREC SOM in Manila on 26-27 April 2005.

¹ This Status Report and ongoing preparation work for the RBR for Central and South Asia is being carried out for the ADB by Peter Brimble and David Oldfield of Asia Policy Research Co., Ltd.

² The RBR Concept Paper included an overview of the role of the private sector in regional cooperation programs, lessons learned from other efforts to involve the business sector more deeply in regional cooperation, and indicative guidelines for the establishment of the RBR. Some parts of the RBR Concept Paper, suitably modified, are reproduced below.

II. Notes from the Fact-Finding Missions

6. The main objectives of the fact-finding missions to the RBR economies during November 2004 to March 2005 were as follows:

- (i) Meet with the key private sector individuals in each country and obtain perspectives on the plan to set up the Regional Business Roundtable and views on how the private sector can contribute to the attainment of regional cooperation objectives;
- (ii) Meet with the main business groupings or associations (including both local and foreign business associations) to obtain a first-hand assessment of the status and capacities of these institutions;
- (iii) Meet with key policy makers to obtain their perspectives on regional cooperation initiatives, and on the role of the business community in policy dialogue and other forms of public-private sector cooperation;
- (iv) Meet with the investment promotion agencies to obtain information on the investment climate and opportunities;
- (v) Meet with the key donor agencies involved and/or interest in regional cooperation activities (including networking with the ADB country offices);
- (vi) Assess the current status of subregional cooperation/networking among the business sectors of the RBR economies; and
- (vii) Fill in any major gaps in the information and research carried out to date.

7. In general, the missions found a very positive reaction to the idea of establishing the RBR, both among the public and private sectors. All recognized the importance of the business community becoming more involved in regional cooperation initiatives. In addition, an information base on all key private and public sector players in these economies has been compiled – the beginnings of an RBR member network.

8. The following summarizes views on the major issues relating to the RBR which were discussed:

- (i) **Substantive Areas of Focus.** There was a general endorsement that the areas of activity covered by CAREC form a satisfactory initial basis for the activities of the RBR namely: (a) Energy; (b) Transport, and (c) Trade Facilitation. Particular interest in trade facilitation was shown by the business community, while the public sector showed more interest in using the RBR to leverage greater private sector involvement in financing infrastructure projects.
- (ii) **Membership.** Should be a broad membership, including both chambers of commerce, industry associations related to the core areas of activity, and key entrepreneurs with a strong interest in regional cooperation. Many respondents confirmed the potential benefits from involving foreign businesses and foreign business associations in the RBR initiative. However, some expressed concerns that the levels of private sector development varied widely across the RBR economies.
- (iii) **Creating “Ownership”.** The importance of ensuring that the RBR structures and activities are developed and owned by the RBR business communities themselves was stressed continually. This must translate into the preparation for and the structure and mechanisms of the Preparatory Meeting for RBR.

- (iv) **Engaging Policymakers.** The RBR process needs to ensure that all efforts are made to engage with top policymakers of each of the RBR economies at every stage of the development and implementation of the RBR.
- (v) **Role of Donors.** The RBR process needs to involve all major donors explicitly. In particular, the ADB has the potential to support the process in a number of ways: (a) information processing and dissemination; (b) facilitating the mobilization of the business communities in each country to play proactive roles in the RBR; and (c) eventually providing capacity building to support the establishment of an RBR secretariat to be “owned” by the private sector if that is the direction chosen.
- (vi) **Potentially Crowded Field.** Many subregional initiatives already involve sub-groups of the RBR countries and deal with private sector issues to varying degrees. It is necessary to identify which of these arrangements are producing tangible results and how the RBR can complement without duplicating their activities. Two initiatives of particular interest are: (a) the “new” UNDP Silk Road Regional Programme with its proposed Silk Road Investment Forum³; and (b) the Central Asian and Russian Business Association⁴ (also called Business Congress). Others to be considered in due course include: (a) the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Business Council; (b) the Central Asia Cooperation Organization Consortiums; (c) UN SPECA Business Advisory Council. However, while concern was expressed about ensuring coordination with related initiatives, many expressed the importance of proceeding with the RBR as soon as possible, with mechanisms built-in to harness synergies with other initiatives where possible. For instance, the RBR might function as a broader forum discussing overall regional business issues, and then if it leads into specific sectors or sub-sectors such as investment, perhaps the RBR could then utilize the Silk Road Investment Forum to focus on the specific issues of investment in the region.
- (vii) **Geographical Coverage.** To a large extent, the core countries of Central Asia as well as Mongolia and the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of the People’s Republic of China were seen by many to be the natural initial members of the RBR. Respondents in the economies of South Asia expressed similar sentiments. Although the challenges of involving the economies of South Asia, Russia and Iran were frequently mentioned, the geographical logic of linking together the nine Central and South Asian economies and Russia and Iran in transport and energy could provide substantial medium to long-term benefits that outweigh the short-term complexities. But an important lesson in regional cooperation is to avoid trying to cover too many issues with too many countries in the early stages of a new regional initiative.

9. **Information Dissemination.** One concern that arose repeatedly, especially in interviews with the business community but also with policy makers, was the lack of information flows about CAREC and its business opportunities, and other regional cooperation initiatives. Business associations and entrepreneurs expressed strong interest in being better informed about initiatives being planned and implemented. This highlights the need for ongoing

³ This initiative is discussed further below.

⁴ This initiative, supported by the World Bank and USAID, aims to bring together business associations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Russia to deal with issues of significant synergy to the proposed activities of the RBR.

information dissemination (especially on CAREC but also other regional cooperation programs) to the “private sector network” that has been built during the fact-finding missions. It also calls for more innovative efforts by ADB and other donors in “packaging” information on regional cooperation programs and initiatives in such a way as to be of maximum value and use to the business community. The RBR could perform a critical role in channeling information about CAREC initiatives and opportunities to its members, particularly via the chambers of commerce and business associations, and then to the broader private sector at the national and local levels.

III. A Summing Up of the Principles and Benefits

10. Before proceeding to consider the details of the RBR and the next steps, a set of basic principles is restated and the expected benefits enumerated. The fact-finding missions have generally confirmed these.

11. **Principles.** A number of basic principles have been identified that tend to result in successful efforts to involve the business community in public-private partnerships such as the establishment of mechanisms to involve the business community in regional economic cooperation initiatives. While simple, they are highly relevant for the preparation of the RBR:

- (i) Business people need to see quick and demonstrable results from their participation in any activities outside the purview of their own firms. In the context of the RBR, this could result from enhanced levels of business between member states or through enhancing links between business people and foreign investors.
- (ii) The process of identifying programs and sectors proposed under regional cooperation programs should involve and be validated as much as possible by the key private sector players in each respective area.
- (iii) The activities carried out under CAREC and related regional cooperation programs in the RBR economies to promote trade and investment must complement, and not duplicate, the activities or resources of other regional groupings. In this regard, the programs should take the maximum advantage of existing institutional structures and minimize the extent to which new structures are created.
- (iv) As a critical first step in the RBR public-private partnership process, both public and business sectors must agree on a set of operating procedures and rules. Clear, realistic, and measurable objectives and goals need to be agreed upon. Mechanisms need to be agreed up front as to who will take responsibility for implementing each action and each party must be assigned clear responsibilities for monitoring progress.
- (v) Care must be taken to ensure that the participation of business people is structured in such a way as to make it efficient and productive. This could mean shorter meetings as a result of careful preparation beforehand or multi-faceted programs that offer scope for achieving multiple objectives at the same event.
- (vi) The identification of the “right” private sector partners: real entrepreneurs with an interest in collective action and corporate social responsibility, and also having the vision and leadership ability to mobilize portions of the business sector.
- (vii) The need to involve a wide range of business associations and groupings that can effectively present a coherent position to public sector policy makers, and

- often to strengthen the capacity of businesses and business associations in least developed parts of the region to serve as effective partners.
- (viii) Recognizing that partnerships and linkages are sensitive to economic conditions, politics, culture, ecology, and authority.

12. **Benefits.** The proposed RBR can provide numerous benefits to the growth and development of private sectors and the overall economies in Central and South Asia. In general, benefits arise from greater economies of scale and more closely integrated and competitive business sectors among the members. Specific benefits include new sources of supplies, expanded markets for products and services, increased investment opportunities, new employment, technology transfer, and skills development. These benefits derive from the increased flow of goods, people, and capital, and opportunities for combining these in transnational production. The evidence⁵ suggests that, in order for the CAREC initiatives in particular and the Central and South Asia economies in general to succeed, a mechanism within CAREC and South Asia to involve the private sector actively at various levels must be developed. Also, public sector activities should, where possible, be refocused to explicitly take account of private sector perspectives and inputs.

13. The RBR will also create benefits for both the private and public sectors in the following areas:

- (i) Having a focal point to serve as an intermediary between the public and private sectors in the CAREC Program and other regional cooperation programs;
- (ii) Greater coordination and networking amongst the chambers of commerce and the general business sectors in the Central and South Asian countries;
- (iii) Creating greater awareness of the common challenges and obstacles of doing business in the region and undertaking concerted action, particularly in cross-border facilitation issues, both within the CAR and with neighbors;
- (iv) Achieving "economies of scale" in investment opportunities, training, and leverage of donor inputs and business-related activities;
- (v) Privileged links with major international organizations supporting CAREC and other regional cooperation programs;
- (vi) Creation of another point of access for RBR members to public agencies at the national, regional, and international levels; and
- (vii) Providing a mechanism to consolidate the region's private sector interests and needs, and permit governments to identify regional priorities and ways in which the private sector can be involved in regional cooperation initiatives.

IV. Objectives and Substantive Areas for RBR Activities

14. Building on experiences elsewhere and the initial conditions in the region, the following major objectives for the establishment of the RBR are proposed for consideration:

- (i) **Enhancing Business Inputs into CAREC and other regional cooperation programs.** To enhance business sector involvement in the agenda setting and planning of regional initiatives by providing direct and regular channels for the

⁵ References to research supporting this statement are given in the RBR Concept Paper presented at the September 2004 CAREC SOM.

- private sector to communicate with the participating governments and donor agencies on broad issues related to sub-regional cooperation, as well as specific projects and initiatives. In particular, to represent the business communities of member countries in CAREC Sector Coordinating Committees and other similar regional cooperation coordination activities.
- (ii) **Facilitating Regional Trade and Investment.** To support the development of the hard and soft infrastructure required to foster greater trade and investment activities both within the region and with neighboring countries. The RBR could also serve as a forum to articulate the business sector's perspectives on the needed reforms in the cross-border trade regulatory frameworks and for investment in the required infrastructure networks. This objective could also include regional programs to develop the capacities of the business communities to undertake regional business, through training on importing/exporting, dissemination of information on trade and investment opportunities, and organization of seminars, exhibitions and trade fairs.
 - (iii) **Building Private Sector Networks.** To assist in developing networks of private sector institutions (both domestic and foreign) in the RBR economies in order to encourage trade and investment cooperation in sub-regional projects and initiatives and related activities, and to strengthen linkages between the RBR domestic private sector and external business communities within the region and outside. Building stronger public-private sector partnerships across the RBR economies will play a critical role in this process, both at the national and regional levels.

15. **Two Dimensions of the RBR Activity.** There exist two broad and interrelated dimensions of the proposed RBR initiative: (i) to stimulate greater involvement of the local business sectors in regional cooperation initiatives involving the RBR economies (a somewhat shorter-term dimension); and (ii) to attract investors from countries outside the region to invest in the counties being covered (a more medium to long-term dimension). The consultations with private sector and government officials reveal that the first RBR Preparatory Meeting should focus primarily on dimension (i), which might also include activities to prepare information and materials that could eventually support a larger and more ambitious activity aiming at dimension (ii), namely to attract business entrepreneurs from other major investing countries into the RBR economies.⁶

16. The types of activities and issues that could be considered by the RBR are as wide and far ranging as the business sectors of the member economies. However, as mentioned earlier, there is a general consensus that the RBR should initially focus on the following three areas: (i) Energy; (ii) Transport; and (iii) Trade facilitation.

17. In each area, there will be a range of types of activities that the RBR could undertake:

⁶ In this regard, the potential for close cooperation with the UNDP Silk Road Regional Programme (SRRP) is great. In particular, the SRRP is planning to "encourage Public Private Partnerships (PPP) in selected fields of, for example: infrastructure, tourism and hotel development, through the organization of a Silk Road Investment Forum which will become an annual or biannual event to attract international and Chinese investment. The Investment Forum will be held on a rotating basis in different Silk Road cities as decided by the Steering Committee. Workshops on regional trade development will be held in cooperation with the SCO Business Council alongside the Silk Road Investment Forum."

- (i) Provide ideas and information to support the preparation and implementation of regional cooperation projects (e.g., providing inputs to programs to improve cross-border transportation processes);
- (ii) Become involved directly in the regional cooperation program (e.g., providing finance, products or services to power distribution projects);
- (iii) Use the existence of regional cooperation programs to leverage investment activities (e.g., attracting foreign construction firms as joint venture partners in building a regional road); and
- (iv) Directly support the public sector in implementing a regional policy reform program (e.g., a freight-forwarders' association supporting efforts by the public sector to improve cross-border transportation procedures).

18. Additional areas of activity can be considered by the RBR as it develops over time. Some ideas that were mentioned during the fact-finding missions include:

- (i) Financial sector development – banking, finance, securities, and related matters;
- (ii) SME development - the importance attributed to SME development by all RBR economies and the challenges they face offer a potentially fruitful issue-area for regional economic cooperation. In particular, supply chain development among SMEs in Central and South Asia and their integration into broader value chains in the region are critical to their sustainability, creating jobs, and alleviating poverty;
- (iii) Private sector development through strengthening business associations; and
- (iv) Strengthening the RBR business communities' understanding of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements.

V. Potential Structures and Mechanisms

19. Closely related to the discussion of the areas for RBR activities is the issue of "permanency" of the RBR; whether it should be a one-time event, an annual event with no permanent institutional structure, or a permanent institution with a full-time secretariat with agreed functions. In general, however, establishing the RBR is not intended to be an institution-building exercise per se, but rather creating an efficient, effective, and sustainable mechanism by which the business leaders of Central and South Asia can interface between themselves and with policy makers and donors and implement an action-based partnership. It is envisaged that the RBR will essentially function as an informal and deliberative forum that meets face-to-face only on selected occasions to minimize the time inputs of the business leaders.

20. In order to facilitate the discussions of how the RBR ought to be set up and operate, several variables or options will need to be discussed at the RBR Preparatory Meeting. This list is not necessarily inclusive and certainly does not restrict RBR members from proposing other options or ideas.

- (i) **Members of the RBR.** Proposed to be three carefully selected business leaders from each RBR member economy representing a broad sample of: (a) Chambers of Commerce and business associations; (b) involvement in core CAREC sectors and activities; and (c) foreign business associations and companies. The selected business leaders should have an identifiable interest in regional cooperation activities, and also in at least one of the three broad areas of initial

- concern. It is propose to develop the criteria for the selection of the initial set of RBR members shortly following the April 2005 CAREC SOM.
- (ii) **Observers.** It is also suggested that additional representatives from the business communities of the RBR economies as well as Russia, Iran and others could attend meetings as suitable.
 - (iii) **Policymakers and Donors.** The “participation” in the RBR of relevant key senior policymakers from the RBR member economies and representatives of key donor agencies will likely be critical and needs to be considered from the beginning, perhaps with “observer” status or something similar.
 - (iv) **Chairperson(s).** Proposed that a business leader selected from among the RBR members chair the RBR. For the Preparation Meeting of the RBR, it is suggested that the senior representative from the ADB and a senior business leader from the host country be co-chairs of the meeting.
 - (v) **Meetings of the whole RBR.** Proposed to meet at least once a year for at least two to three years, possibly to coincide with the holding of the CAREC Ministerial Conference. Additional meetings for all or a small group of RBR members will need to be scheduled as required, but these should be infrequent with more reliance placed on electronic communications wherever possible. Also, it is clear that the continuation of the annual meeting beyond the first 2-3 years will depend on the outputs of the initial meetings and clear evidence that the private sector is both benefiting and demonstrating ownership.
 - (vi) **Range and depth of issues.** Need to consider how the RBR will cover the three priority areas that have been identified, namely energy, transport, and trade facilitation. Even within these areas, it is proposed to concentrate on a few critical issue-areas in the early stages of the RBR and strive to achieve tangible results in a defined timeframe.
 - (vii) **Possible formation of sectoral or functional sub-committees or working groups** to focus on specific areas of core focus of the RBR. Proposed to discuss this in a preliminary manner at the RBR Preparatory Meeting, with actual formation of groups only after decisions on substantive areas and activities are completed. The members of these sub-committees or working groups would interact, as required and suitable candidates from the business community would chair the groups. However, if sub-committees or working groups are a desired mechanism for the RBR, the number of these bodies should be small and focused on delivering tangible outputs.
 - (viii) **A secretariat for the RBR** as a whole and for the specific sub-committees and working groups. It is likely that the RBR and any sub-bodies that are eventually formed would benefit from some form of secretariat support, particularly for following up on actions or commitments undertaken by the RBR members and policy makers and donors. If a secretariat is deemed useful, it is proposed that ADB explore the possibility of providing these facilitation services, possibly through introducing regional business cooperation consultants in the regional cooperation units in the two respective departments. However, it is recommended to allow the RBR to function for 2-3 years before making the decision to set up a full-time secretariat.
 - (ix) **Communications between the RBR members and Donors/Policymakers.** Given the weaknesses in information dissemination, it is proposed to consider establishing a RBR web-based communication network, likely within or linked to ADB’s CAREC and SASEC web pages, with relevant information being made

available in a business-friendly format to all RBR members through the Internet. Video conferencing and conference calls to be considered when appropriate to maximize the convenience for all members.

- (x) **Linkages, coordination and outreach.** It is likely that, in order to maximize the effectiveness of implementing projects and activities, the RBR will need to consider developing linkages with all other appropriate regional business groupings and national chambers of commerce. At the appropriate time (i.e., when the RBR has clearly identified the possible roles for these regional groupings and national chambers in helping to implement various RBR initiatives), the RBR could engage the leaders of organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the UNDP Silk Road Regional Programme, the nascent Central Asian and Russian Business Association, other regional business councils, and national chambers of commerce. This approach could also apply to linkages with over 300 Asian companies that have joined the United Nations in carrying out the Global Compact.

VI. Towards a Basic Road Map for the RBR

21. Following the preparation of this Status Report and the deliberations, comments, and suggestions of the CAREC SOM in April 2005, the following major steps are recommended:

22. **Organizing the RBR Preparatory Meeting.** Building on the consultations with governments and private sector, an RBR Preparatory Meeting will be held. The RBR Preparatory Meeting will be carefully structured to stimulate discussions and to produce tangible results and next steps and activities of the RBR. In particular, the following activities will be undertaken:

- (i) Confirming and contacting participants for the RBR Preparatory Meeting, and using this activity to brief potential participants on what will be expected of them;
- (ii) Developing an annotated agenda to support the discussion in the meeting, which is propose to last for two days (see Attachment 1);
- (iii) Consulting with the governments, business community and other partner institutions in organizing the RBR Preparatory Meeting;
- (iv) Preparing a "Background Paper" to guide discussion at the RBR. This will simply bring together a range of useful background materials to support the discussions at the RBR Preparatory Meeting. ADB and other donors will also prepare information packs on relevant regional cooperation programs;
- (v) Preparing a draft "Strategic Action Plan" to indicate possible future developments of the RBR and guide and support the deliberations during the RBR Preparatory Meeting. It will be designed to stimulate discussions and feedback from the top business leaders in the Central and South Asia region who have agreed to be a part of the RBR preparation process. Also, it is intended to provide a basic structure that can incorporate all the deliberations in the RBR Preparatory Meeting and contribute to the preparation of the blueprint for the eventual formation and implementation of the RBR. The draft action plan will not be intended to lay out fixed objectives, structures, and mechanisms for the RBR in a way that would preempt free and open discussions at the RBR Preparatory Meeting. However, it is hoped that the discussions during the RBR Preparatory

- Meeting will yield a concrete document that lays out in practical terms a blueprint for the formation and implementation of the RBR; and
- (vi) Facilitating all aspects of organizing the RBR Preparatory Meeting.

23. It deserves to be emphasized that all the materials being prepared are intended to assist the business communities in the RBR economies in preparing well for the meeting, and coming with specific ideas and comments to ensure the success of the RBR Preparatory Meeting. Specifically, it is suggested that the participants from each RBR economy interact before traveling to the Meeting and discuss in detail the issues of concern. This could be achieved with facilitation from the ADB country offices through holding small "working groups" of interested businesspersons to discuss the topics to be considered at the RBR Preparatory Meeting. This would permit the involvement of larger numbers of businesspersons than simply those that will attend the Meeting. For other participants, the interactions could be through ongoing communications via email.

24. **Timing.** It is suggested that the RBR Preparatory Meeting be held just before a CAREC SOM meeting to permit: (i) the involvement of certain key public sector players in the RBR Preparatory Meeting; and (ii) the presentation of the major findings from the RBR Preparatory Meeting to the SOM meeting.

25. **Following Up the Preparatory Meeting.** The following activities are as immediate follow-up to the Preparatory Meeting on the RBR:

- (i) Revising the draft "Strategic Action Plan" in light of the discussions in the RBR Preparatory Meeting, placing emphasis on the concrete roadmap elements of the Plan and taking careful consideration of the deliberations with the business participants. It is proposed to develop and finalize this Plan to be adopted by the CAREC Ministers Conference in late 2005. The Plan is expected to include statements on:
- a. The Vision, Objectives, and Terms of Reference
 - b. The Substantive Activities
 - c. The Structure and Mechanisms
 - d. The Required Commitments and Organizational Changes (including strengthening the ability of ADB and other major donors to handle regional business issues, and building capacities in key business associations and chambers of commerce)
- (ii) Developing background papers on selected topics that would be critical to the future development of the RBR, such as: (a) detailed descriptions and work programs for specific action plan items; (b) guidelines and options on the structuring of a secretariat; and (c) guidelines on the preparation of a comprehensive business plan for the RBR.

VII. Key Discussion Issues for the CAREC SOM

26. The points raised below constitute the main RBR-related issues for consideration, discussion and endorsement at the CAREC SOM on 26-27 April 2005:

- (i) Confirm that the CAREC policy makers endorse the RBR concept as presented, and provide any additional thoughts and insights.

- (ii) Confirm that CAREC policy makers are prepared to engage with the RBR business communities on regional cooperation matters. In particular:
 - a. to allow an RBR representative to brief the CAREC SOM following the RBR Preparatory Meeting; and
 - b. to recommend that an RBR representative be invited to address the CAREC Ministerial Conference in late 2005.
- (iii) Provide perspectives on the participants and membership of the RBR:
 - a. Countries (core members and observers)
 - b. Businesspersons (criteria for selection)
 - c. Policymakers
 - d. Donors
 - e. Types of members (full members, observers, etc.)
- (iv) Discuss and endorse the priority areas of focus and types of expected activities.
- (v) Provide comments and advice on the plans for the RBR Preparatory Meeting, and endorse the general time frame for the preparation process.
- (vi) Consider the issues proposed for discussion at the RBR Preparatory Meeting, and provide suggestions on additional items.
- (vii) Endorse the indicative agenda for the RBR Preparatory Meeting.

