



**CENTRAL ASIA REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION PROGRAM
TOURISM FOCAL POINTS GROUP MEETING -
12-13 June 2023, Pulman Hotel
Tbilisi, Georgia**

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

I. Introduction

1. In line with the CAREC Tourism Strategy 2030 endorsed at the 2021 CAREC Ministerial Conference (MC) serial consultations and working group meetings of the Tourism Focal Points Group (TFPG) held to present and approve the regional tourism investment framework 2021–2025, the concept of the CAREC Tourism Virtual Portal and the report on Tourism Infrastructure, services, and prioritization.
2. The Progress report of the TA 9776-REG which covered the new activities and additional financing, including indicator database, visa facilitation study, phase 2 of ABEC safety and health protocols, and accommodation classification system were presented. ADB also presented priority investment projects, the soft launching of the web portal VisitSilkRoad, capacity building program, and climate change impact on the tourism industry for sustainable development.
3. The aims of the TFPG were to present (i) the current status, achievements and development challenges of the tourism industry in the region in the post-COVID era and due to geopolitical tensions and increasing risks of climate change; (ii) to get an endorsement from the Senior Officials Meeting on further steps.
4. Following the opening plenary session, TFPG featured four intensive discussions on the progress report, investment priorities, web portal, and capacity-building needs in the region. The countries also agreed with the presentation on climate change impact and the needs for sustainable sector development. ADB also presented new requirements for the project to be aligned with the Paris Agreement. The agenda of the TFPG is in Attachment 1.
5. TFPG was represented by high-level Tourism focal from 9 CAREC countries (except AFG) in person except for PRC who joined the sessions online. The countries participated:
 - Tourism government agencies from Azerbaijan, PRC, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
 - Bilateral partner the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.
 - ADB and TA consultants. A full list of participants is in Attachment 2.

II. Highlights of the Working Group Meeting

6. **Opening Session:** The Opening Sessions of the TFPG were given by Ms. Xiaohong Yang, Deputy Director General, Central and West Asia Department (CWRD). Ms. Yang highlighted Georgia's introduction of reforms, economic achievements and tourism development in the region and thanked for hosting this event as a Chair country in the CAREC program. She invited other countries to share their experience and learn from other regional programs better and more sustainable ways of development in the new normal.

7. On behalf of the Georgian Government Ms. Maia Omiadze, Head of the Georgia National Tourism Administration welcomed participants of the TFPG in Georgia. She emphasized the importance of tourism in economic growth, job creation, and culture enrichment and the need to develop the sector in accordance with changing global and regional environment. Ms. Omiadze also expressed her confidence that regional collaboration will be important for the future development of the sector, exchange of knowledge, improved connectivity, and sustainable tourism development in the region.



8. The welcome remarks were followed by presentation of the Progress Report which covered the new activities and additional financing, including the indicator database, visa facilitation study, phase 2 of ABEC safety and health protocols, and accommodation classification system presented.

9. During the second session, the structure of the proposed priority project (A,B,C,D) were discussed. The preparation of two priority projects - (A) on improving infrastructure and services and environmentally sustainable concepts, and (B) upgrading and rehabilitating historical and culturally relevant tourist attractions in integration with urban planning and development were selected by a majority of the countries. Project profiles for (C) on development of a common registry and data collection; (D) on branding, strategy, planning, budgeting for the implementing a common brand VisitSilkRoad have had limited interest.

10. Project C most likely needs a reformulation to include a tourism business registry associated with the assets' databases, content, and management. PAK and KGZ have shown interest in this. An additional feature of tourism training certification, accreditation, recognition, and possible licensing issues could be included, as it is highly linked with the private sector business registry and the institutional component of training, thus complementing the GIZ Blending courses. Furthermore, the component of the quality label associated with training could be transferred from Project D to Project C. The geographical scope of this revised project C scope could be PAK and KGZ.

11. Project D is comprehensive and covers the entire CAREC countries. It could include the assessment of multi-country thematic routes and their potential for development, as mentioned by various countries. The scope should be the entire CAREC region and its common brand VisitSilkRoad.

12. During the third session, a soft launch was made of the web portal VisitSilkRoad. To finalize the portal ADB requested the countries to provide the best available quality and refined information on tourist attractions with high-quality pictures, check if applicable the information on 10 best destinations in their countries. The team also presented financial sustainability of the portal after the TA resources will be closed in December 2024 and proposed some ways to sustain it in the future including educational components and financial contributions from the countries.

13. The TFPG supported the CAREC VisitSilkRoad Tourism portal soft launch and agreed to provide additional information and comments to ensure the finalization of the portal for a proposed launch during the upcoming CAREC Ministerial Meeting in November 2023.

14. The fourth session the proposed capacity-building component presented by GIZ was discussed. The TFPG supported the development of a capacity building program in cooperation with GIZ and customization for the CAREC region of the *atingi* online platform. ADB will work with GIZ to finalize the MOU and start customized program development which is to be finalized by the end of 2024.

III. Next Steps

15. Based on the contents of the Progress Report and discussions at the TFPG meeting, ADB will prepare (i) the outline of the priority projects, (ii) by July will prepare an information request to all tourism authorities and ADB country offices in order to have an official launch of the tourism portal during the CAREC MC; (iii) finalize and sign MOU with GIZ on capacity building component; (iii) continue to cooperate with other RETAs on Common Health protocols and Standards, the accommodation classification system under the ABEC, Sustainable Tourism Project, Tourism Satellite Account.

Attachments:

1. Agenda of the TFPG;
2. List of Participants.

**CAREC Tourism: Working Group Meeting, Silk Road Tourism Web Portal Soft Launch
and Capacity Building Workshop
12–13 June 2023, Tbilisi, Georgia
Pullman Tbilisi Axis Towers
37 M, Chavchavadze Avenue, 0179, tel.+995 32 200 33 22**

DAY 1 – Monday (June 12)

08:30–09:00	Registration (Pullman Hotel, Venue – Meeting Room 1)
09:00– 10:20	Session 1: Sustainable Tourism Development in the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Region – Progress Report
09:00–09:10	Welcome Remarks (10 mins) Ms. Xiaohong Yang , Deputy Director General, Central and West Asia Department (CWRD), ADB Ms. Maia Omiadze , Head, Georgia National Tourism Agency (GNTA), Government of Georgia
09:10–09:25	Presentation on Regional Technical Assistance Progress Report (15 mins) Mr. Seung Min Lee , Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division (CWRC), CWRD, ADB <i>This session will present the implementation progress on TA9776-REG - Sustainable Tourism Development in the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Region, including the new activities (additional financing): indicator database, visa facilitation study, phase 2 of ABEC safety/health protocols and accommodation classification.</i>
09:25–09:50	Open Discussion (20 mins) Moderator: Ms. Ramola Naik Singru , Principal Urban Development Specialist, Urban Development and Water Division (CWUW), CWRD, ADB <i>Participants from CAREC countries will be requested to provide their views and inputs on the new activities (additional financing).</i>
09:50–10:20	Group Photo and Coffee Break (25 mins)
10:20– 12:00	Session 2: CAREC Tourism Priority Projects

10:20–10:25	<p>Introductory Remarks (5 mins) Ms. Ramola Naik Singru, Principal Urban Development Specialist, CWUW, CWRD, ADB</p>
10:25–10:45	<p>Presentation on CAREC Tourism Priority Projects (20mins) Mr. Carlos Faria, Team Leader and Tourism Economist; and Mr. Pedro Ferreira, Web Developer, JCF Strategy Consulting, Lda</p> <p><i>This session will present the CAREC tourism priority projects reflected in the infrastructure services report based on the stakeholder consultations.</i></p>
10:45–12:00	<p>Open Discussion (85 mins) Moderator: Ms. Ramola Naik Singru, Principal Urban Development Specialist, CWRD, ADB</p> <p><i>Participants from CAREC countries will be requested to provide their views and inputs on CAREC tourism priority projects and future steps to be taken.</i></p>
12:00–13:30	<p>Lunch Break (90 mins)</p>
13:30–15:00	<p>Session 3: Silk Road Tourism Web Portal Soft Launch</p>
13:30–13:35	<p>Introductory Remarks (5 mins) Mr. Seung Min Lee, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRC, CWRD, ADB</p>
13:35–14:00	<p>Presentation on Silk Road Tourism Web Portal (25mins) Mr. Carlos Faria, Team Leader and Tourism Economist; and Mr. Pedro Ferreira, Web Developer, JCF Strategy Consulting, Lda</p> <p><i>This session will present the CAREC tourism web portal including key features and highlights, covering country information and tourist sites.</i></p>
14:00–14:40	<p>Open Discussion (40 mins) Moderator: Mr. Seung Min Lee, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRC, CWRD, ADB</p> <p><i>Participants from CAREC countries will be requested to provide their views and inputs on the Silk Road tourism web portal, identify ways to complete missing information and provide suggestions on the management and sustainability of the web portal. Questions and suggestions on the portal are highly encouraged.</i></p>
14:40–15:00	<p>Coffee Break</p>
15:00–17:30	<p>Session 4: Capacity Building Program</p>

15:00–15:05	Introductory Remarks (5 mins) Ms. Ramola Naik Singru , Principal Urban Development Specialist, CWUW, CWRD, ADB
15:05–15:25	Presentation on <i>Capacity Building Program</i> (20 mins) Mr. Wouter Schalken , Senior Sustainable Tourism Specialist, Urban Sector Group, (SDSC), Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department (SDCC), ADB Dr. Andreas Hofmann , Sector Project Cooperation with the Private Sector, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH <i>This session will present the proposed Capacity Building Program for Public and Private Sectors.</i>
15:25–15:45	Open Discussion (20 mins) Moderator: Mr. Wouter Schalken , Senior Sustainable Tourism Specialist, SDSC, SDCC, ADB <i>Participants from CAREC countries will be requested to provide their views and agreements on the scope of the CAREC Capacity Building Program.</i>
15:45–16:35	Session 5: Climate Change Impact on CAREC Tourism Sector
15:45 –16:35	Open Discussion (50 mins) Moderator: Mr. Wouter Schalken , Senior Sustainable Tourism Specialist, SDSC, SDCC, ADB Mr. Kenzhekhan Abuov , Senior Project Officer, CWRC, CWRD, ADB <i>Participants from CAREC countries will be requested to provide their views and inputs on Climate Change Impact on CAREC Tourism Sector and recommend steps to be undertaken.</i>
16:35–16:45	Closing Session
	Closing Remarks: Ms. Tamar Koriauli , First Deputy Head, GNTA, Government of Georgia Ms. Lyaziza Sabyrova , Director, CWRC, CWRD, ADB
17:30–19:30	Cocktail Reception at Pullman Tbilisi Axis Towers (hosted by the Asian Development Bank)

DAY 2 – Tuesday (June 13)

09:00–12:00	CAREC Senior Officials' Meeting
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09:00–12:00	CAREC Tourism Sector Working Group Focals will be requested to attend the <i>Senior Officials' Meeting</i> morning session for the (i) CAREC Tourism Progress Reporting and (ii) Silk Road Tourism Web Portal Soft Launch
12:00–13:00	Lunch Break
13:00–17:00	<i>Knowledge Sharing by Georgia</i>
13:00–14:00	Departure from Hotel/Travel to Site
14:00–17:00	<p>Site Visit(s) Moderator: Ms. Tamar Koriauli, First Deputy Head, GNTA, and CAREC Tourism Sector Working Group Focal for Georgia Mr. Charles Simbillio, Operations Analyst, CWUW, CWRD, ADB</p> <p><i>Participants from CAREC countries will visit historic sites at Tbilisi Old Town:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Metekhi Church</i> 2. <i>Other Historic Sites</i>
17:00–19:00	<i>Dinner at Marani Restaurant, Grishashvili 11, Tbilisi (hosted by the Georgia National Tourism Agency)</i>
19:00–20:00	Return to Hotel

**CAREC Tourism: Working Group Meeting, Portal Launch and
Capacity Building Workshop
12–13 June 2023**

List of Participants

CAREC Tourism Sector Working Group Focal

Azerbaijan

1. Ms. Gunay Bayramova, Head of Tourism Industry and Projects Division Tourism Policy and Strategy Department, State Tourism Agency of Azerbaijan

PRC

2. Mr. Chen Gao, Deputy Director, Department of International Exchanges and Cooperation, Ministry of Culture and Tourism (*virtual*)

Georgia

3. Ms. Maia Omiadze, Head, Georgia National Tourism Agency (GNTA), Government of Georgia
4. Ms. Tamar Koriauli, First Deputy Head, GNTA and CAREC Tourism Sector Working Group Focal for Georgia
5. Mr. Beka Toria, Program Manager, Municipal Development Fund of Georgia (*site visit*)

Kazakhstan

6. Mr. Dastan Ryspekov, Chairman of the Committee, Committee of Tourism Industry of the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Kyrgyz Republic

7. Ms. Kyial Kenzhematova, Deputy Director of Tourism Department, Ministry of Culture, Information, Sport and Youth Policy, Kyrgyz Republic

Pakistan

8. Mr. Aftab Ur Rahman Rana, Managing Director, Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation

Mongolia

9. Mr. Munkh-Od Tugserel, Director General, Tourism Policy Regulation Department, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Mongolia

Tajikistan

10. Mr. Khurshed Kosimov, Leading Specialist of the Department of Economics and Planning Committee, Tourism Development of Tajikistan

Turkmenistan

11. Ms. Gulshat Bakyyeva, Deputy Head of Tourism Department, Ministry of Culture, Turkmenistan

Uzbekistan

12. Mr. Farrukh Ermatov, Deputy Head of International Cooperation and Work with Ratings, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Uzbekistan

Asian Development Bank

13. Ms. Xiaohong Yang, Deputy Director General, Central and West Asia Department (CWRD)
14. Ms. Lyaziza Sabyrova, Director, Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division, CWRD
15. Mr. Seung Min Lee, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRD
16. Ms. Ramola Naik Singru, Principal Urban Development Specialist, CWRD
17. Mr. Wouter Schalken, Senior Sustainable Tourism Specialist, Urban Sector Group, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Department
18. Mr. Kenzhekhan Abuov, Senior Project Officer, CWRD
19. Mr. Charles Felix Simbillo, Operations Analyst, CWRD

Consultant

20. Mr. Carlos Faria, Team Leader and Tourism Economist, JCF Strategy Consulting, Lda
21. Mr. Pedro Ferreira, Web Developer, JCF Strategy Consulting, Lda (*virtual*)
22. Ms. Consuelo Javier, Workshop Coordinator, TA977-REG: Sustainable Tourism Development in the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Region
23. Dr. Andreas Hofmann, Sector Project Cooperation with the Private Sector, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH