



**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA
(SPECA)**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE
OF THE SPECA WORKING GROUP ON INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

A. PREAMBLE

1. The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) was established by the Tashkent Declaration on 26 March 1998, signed by the Presidents of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Executive Secretaries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan joined the Programme later.

2. The SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development (WG on ITSD) is a subsidiary body of the Governing Council of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia. The WG on ITSD draws on previous forms of regional cooperation in related areas, in particular, on the work of the SPECA Project Working Group on Information and Communication Technologies for Development (PWG on ICT) and the SPECA Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (WG on KBD).

3. The SPECA participating countries are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific provide overall support to the Programme.

4. The Working Group on ICT for Development was created by the decision 5 of the Special Meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee in 2005. In 2007, the Governing Council at its 2nd session took a decision to broaden the mandate of the Working Group and transform it into the Working Group on Knowledge-based Development.

5. At the 10th session of the SPECA Governing Council (Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 11 November 2015) representatives of the SPECA participating countries adopted a Declaration reiterating their commitment to the Programme as a platform for promoting cooperation in the SPECA subregion and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. The SPECA Governing Council requested the SPECA WG on KBD develop a draft SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development,¹ while the Expert Group Meeting on SPECA (Almaty, Kazakhstan, 11-12 June 2018) recommended that the SPECA WG on KBD formulate where

¹ Decision 2 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2017/2) of the 12th session of the SPECA GC in Dushanbe underscored the importance of elaborating an innovation strategy for the SPECA region to achieve the SDGs, while Decision 3 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2018/3) of the 13th session in Almaty requested the SPECA countries, UNECE and ESCAP to finalize the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development for adoption by the Governing Council.

regional coordination is needed in relationship to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the thematic work areas of the Working Group.

7. These recommendations were discussed during informal consultations at the time of the 10th session of the SPECA WG on KBD (Baku, Azerbaijan, 5 July 2018). These consultations highlighted a need to align the TORs with the SDGs, and determine a new name for the working group to more accurately reflect its priority areas of work.

B. OBJECTIVES

8. In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to support its participating countries in developing subregional economic cooperation, and integrating their economies into the world economy for their attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the WG on ITSD shall:

(i) Provide a platform for supporting progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on the SDGs directly related to innovation and technology development (including, but not limited to SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure; SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth; SDG 13 on combatting climate change and its impacts; and SDG 17 on partnerships).

(ii) Aim at improving awareness of SPECA countries on the innovation and technology development related SDGs, provide information and share best practice experiences with regard to the implementation of these SDGs, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs;

(iii) Become a mechanism for identification, implementation and coordination of technical programmes and projects within the scope of Working Group competence thereby building capacity, promoting best practices and strengthening mutual trust at political level among the SPECA participating countries; and

(iv) Promote cooperation between SPECA countries on strategic approaches to harness innovation as a driver of future sustainable development in the subregion.

9. The thematic orientation of the activities of the WG on ITSD will include, but not be limited to, areas such as:

(i) ICT for development;

(ii) Promotion of innovation and innovative technology applications;

(iii) Promotion of transfer and commercialization of innovative technologies; and

(iv) Development of effective infrastructure for innovation support and financing, including through PPPs.

C. PARTICIPANTS

10. The WG on ITSD shall comprise National Representatives, nominated by the Governments of the SPECA participating countries. The National Representatives shall be senior officials involved in the formulation and implementation or be aware of national policies and programmes, which affect national policies related to innovation and technology development in their respective countries and able to effectively follow up the recommendations and decisions of the WG on ITSD.

11. Each participating country shall also nominate, on a permanent or on an ad hoc basis as appropriate, experts on various aspects of innovation and technology for sustainable development as required.

12. Governments of the SPECA countries shall nominate focal points for the Working Group to

ensure successful delivery of programmes of work, according to the adopted Terms of Reference.

13. Relevant subregional organizations implementing programmes related to innovation and technology are invited to nominate their representatives to participate in the work of the Working Group as observers.

14. Neighbouring countries of the SPECA region are invited to nominate their representatives to participate as observers in the work of the WG on ITSD, especially when issues concerning cooperation with neighbouring regions are discussed.

15. Other United Nations bodies as well as bilateral and multilateral agencies and organizations operating on innovation and technology development issues in SPECA countries are invited to participate in the work of the Working Group as observers and to nominate liaison officers on matters related to its work.

D. MODALITIES OF OPERATION

16. The WG on ITSD is chaired by at least one SPECA country.

17. The WG on ITSD develops, agrees upon and approves its Terms of Reference and submits to the Governing Council session for adoption.

18. The two Regional Commissions shall provide substantive support to the WG on ITSD by:

- (i) Providing expertise as well as assistance to activities implemented by the Working Group; and
- (ii) Providing secretariat support to the preparation and organization of sessions and meetings of the Working Group, including preparation of documents and studies as well as maintenance of records.

19. The WG on ITSD shall hold its annual sessions at a date and venue agreed by the participating countries any time before or concurrent to the annual sessions of the SPECA Governing Council.

20. The WG on ITSD shall draw important policy issues to the attention of the SPECA Governing Council.

21. The working languages of SPECA are Russian and English.

E. FUNDING

22. The operational costs of the WG on ITSD as well as the costs of participation of National Representatives and experts in its sessions shall as a rule be borne by the Governments of the SPECA participating countries.

23. In addition, the UNECE and ESCAP shall support, within their available resources, the functioning of the WG on ITSD.

24. The WG on ITSD shall also seek funds and technical assistance for its operations from multilateral and bilateral donors for the implementation of specific capacity-building projects falling under the scope of the approved work programmes.

F. PROGRAMME OF WORK AND ACTIVITIES

25. The WG on ITSD shall develop, agree upon and implement its annual work programme.
26. The WG on ITSD shall prepare its annual reports on progress made in the implementation of its activities to the Governing Council sessions.
27. The WG on ITSD shall draw up its biennial work programmes which are integrated into SPECA Work Plans.
28. The WG on ITSD shall formulate and agree upon specific projects and programmes and seek extrabudgetary resources for their implementation.

G. OTHER MATTERS

29. The current Terms of Reference shall be reviewed in 5 years or sooner if the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development so decides.
 30. These Terms of Reference were reviewed and adopted by the SPECA Governing Council on 21 November 2019.
-