



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

**2013 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM
“Inclusive and Sustainable Development through Regional Cooperation”**

(Almaty, Kazakhstan, 19-21 November 2013)

JOINT STATEMENT

The 2013 SPECA Economic Forum titled “Inclusive and Sustainable Development through Regional Cooperation” took place between 19 and 21 November 2013 in Almaty.

The Expert Segment of the Forum discussed the promotion and financing of green technologies. Its participants emphasized that environmental challenges require innovative policy responses that reconcile the need for sustained improvements in living standards with the need to reduce the use of resources and to address climate change. Innovation can contribute to finding cost-efficient and eco-innovative solutions to address these challenges, while creating new business opportunities for the private sector.

Governments can implement various strategies for promoting more resource efficient and less environmentally damaging green technologies. These roles include not only direct support to R&D and facilitating the exchange of knowledge but also increasing the demand for eco-innovative solutions through procurement policies and environmental regulations. The promotion of eco-innovation requires a balanced strategy resulting from the coordination of different policies and the use of a range of instruments targeting the generation, absorption and diffusion of green technologies.

Collaboration between various public and private stakeholders facilitates the introduction and dissemination of green technologies. Knowledge is only useful if widely applied, and this can be supported through focused educational programmes. Sharing risks and information makes possible projects that could not be undertaken in the absence of cooperation. The use of public-private partnership mechanisms to mobilise the necessary resources and introduce innovative approaches facilitates finding efficient solutions to the challenges posed by the need to revamp infrastructure while alleviating financing constraints in the public sector.

Regional cooperation, including through the use of ICT, can make an important contribution to supporting the efforts of policymakers to promote the introduction and financing of green technologies. There are multiple areas in which this cooperation can be beneficial, including the pooling of resources or the formation of cross-border networks and technology platforms through which knowledge circulates. Regular exchanges of national experiences and good practices in the implementation of Government policies and PPP mechanisms as well as the use of innovative technologies would be useful as countries seek to address the impacts of climate change.

The High-level Segment of the Forum discussed regional aspects of Rio+20 and the post-2015 development agenda. Discussing the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development allowed participants to highlight their close interconnection. Participants fully supported the demand by the Rio+20 outcome document “The future we want” to have sustainable development at the core of the post-2015 development agenda.

Participants pointed out that due to the close connection among the ecosystems of the Aral Sea Basin there are a number of environmental challenges, in particular climate change, that can only be addressed through regional efforts. Furthermore, they identified several issues – including water resources management, energy efficiency and renewable energy, transport and trade – where regional cooperation can significantly contribute to the successful implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes.

The role of the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in the implementation of Rio+20 was highlighted by several participants. It was proposed to further strengthen ICSD so it could more effectively coordinate regional action in order to achieve sustainability in the Aral Sea Basin. Updating the Regional Environmental Action Plan by ICSD in light of Rio+20 was also recommended.

When discussing regional aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, participants pointed out that development is the result of a complex interaction between multiple economic, social, cultural, ecological, political and legal factors, many of which have important cross-border and regional elements. Therefore, they supported recognition of the importance of strengthened regional cooperation for the successful implementation of the post-2015 development agenda.

Participants pointed out that the question of resources for accomplishing the region’s post-2015 goals is another area where regional cooperation could make an important contribution. Improving regional trade relations, transport, border crossing, and intra-regional investment could provide additional means for development. Regional economic cooperation should also be seen as a contribution to the peace and security of Central Asia – an important precondition for stable and sustainable development in the region.

Participants recognized the role that the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia can play in the implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes and the post-2015 development agenda through strengthening regional cooperation.
