



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

**TERMS OF REFERENCE
OF THE SPECA WORKING GROUP ON TRADE**

A. PREAMBLE

1. The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia 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. The current 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.

2. The SPECA Working Group on Trade (WG on Trade) is a subsidiary body of the Governing Council of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia.

3. The Working Group on Trade was created by decision 5 of the Special meeting of the SPECA Regional Advisory Committee on 27 May 2005, and held its first meeting on 14 December 2006 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. 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.

4. The SPECA Evaluation carried out in 2017-2018 recommended that SPECA, including the Working Group on Trade, should become more country-owned and country-driven and should organize activities related to dialogue, consolidation of positions, solving of common problems, elaboration of strategies, expertise and become a service-oriented, flexible and strategic platform for cooperation and policy coordination. The overall goal is to build cooperation among the SPECA countries for the implementation of SDGs related to trade that can be best achieved through subregional cooperation. This includes lowering barriers among the countries and with their major trading partners, in order to strengthen the regional market and integration with the European and Asian economies, develop cross-border supply chains, attract investment, technologies and innovation to modernize the countries' economies.

B. OBJECTIVES

5. In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to support its participating countries in: developing subregional economic cooperation, integrating their economies into the world economy, and attaining the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the WG on Trade shall foster subregional cooperation to promote national and regional development of sustainable trade in the SPECA participating countries. To achieve this through subregional cooperation, the Working

Group shall:

- (i) Provide a platform for supporting progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through subregional cooperation in trade and trade facilitation with a focus on SDGs directly related to trade development, notably SDG 17 on partnerships, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs;
- (ii) Assist in improving the awareness of SPECA countries on the trade-related SDGs; provide information and share best practice experiences, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs;
- (iii) Promote policy dialogue to support: trade policy cooperation among the SPECA countries and their trade negotiators; trade facilitation; aligning positions on sustainable trade, dealing with non-tariff measures, and investment policies; and
- (iv) Provide analysis and capacity-building in the areas of trade facilitation, sustainable trade development, regulatory harmonization, agricultural quality standards, elimination of non-tariff barriers to trade, investment, and other areas, including identification of funding modalities for SPECA activities;

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

- (i) sustainable trade development among the countries in the region and with the main trading partners;
- (ii) trade facilitation and promotion of trade facilitation norms, standards and best practice recommendations;
- (iii) public-private cooperation for trade facilitation;
- (iv) regulatory harmonization, market surveillance and risk management;
- (v) agricultural commercial quality standards;
- (vi) investment and trade development; and
- (vii) other areas of competence of UNECE and ESCAP related to the development of trade, regional markets and harmonization of standards in these areas.

7. The activities of the WG on Trade should reflect, but not be limited to:

- (i) Mutual assistance in countries' WTO accession and implementation of WTO commitments, in compliance with SDG 17.10 and the SPECA Ashgabat Statement of 13 May 2016;
- (ii) Finalization and implementation of a regional SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy;
- (iii) Adoption and implementation of principles for aligning regional trade and growth patterns to the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (iv) Support for the SPECA Aid-for Trade Initiative, as outlined in the Baku Ministerial Declaration of 1 December 2010;
- (v) Consolidation of regional and bilateral trade agreements in the SPECA subregion, with a focus on Sustainable Development;
- (vi) Support for institutional arrangements for cross-border, interagency and public-private cooperation for trade development, such as the National Trade Facilitation Committees;
- (vii) Assistance for the development of an innovation-driven trade diversification agenda focused on Sustainable Development, including the use of ICT and electronic business standards and moving away from primarily resource-based export structures;
- (viii) Providing a capacity-building platform for growing intra-regional trade to support a consolidated regional market and integration into regional and global supply chains, while focusing on capacity development of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises

- (MSMEs) and encouragement of FDI;
- (ix) Streamlining formalities and documentary procedures; implementation of international trade facilitation standards and tools, including the Single Window;
 - (x) Strengthening trade research capabilities and forging effective linkages among SPECA trade research institutions; and
 - (xi) Building synergies among various activities in the above-mentioned areas, carried out by UNECE and ESCAP and other international agencies and development partners.

8. Promote cooperation between SPECA countries on strategic approaches to harness trade as a driver of sustainable development in the subregion.

C. PARTICIPANTS

9. The Working Group on Trade shall comprise National Representatives, nominated by the Governments of SPECA participating countries and the UNECE and ESCAP Secretaries to the SPECA Working Group on Trade. The National Representatives shall be senior officials involved in the formulation and implementation of national policies and programmes, which affect national policies related to trade, trade facilitation, regulatory cooperation, and agricultural quality standards in their respective countries and able to effectively follow up the recommendations and decisions of the WG on Trade.

10. Each participating country shall also nominate, on a permanent or *ad hoc* basis, as appropriate, experts on various aspects of trade as required.

11. Governments of SPECA countries shall nominate Focal Points for the Working Group to ensure successful delivery of the programme of work, according to the adopted Terms of Reference.

12. Relevant subregional organizations implementing programmes related to sustainable trade development are invited to nominate their representatives to participate in the work of the Working Group as observers.

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

14. Other United Nations bodies as well as bilateral and multilateral agencies and organizations dealing with trade development and facilitation in the SPECA countries are invited to participate in the Working Group as observers and to nominate liaison officers on matters related to its work.

D. MODALITIES OF OPERATION

15. The WG on Trade is chaired by Tajikistan and Turkmenistan as co-chairing countries.

16. The WG on Trade develops, agrees upon, approves and/or reviews, if necessary, its Terms of Reference and submits them to a SPECA Governing Council session for adoption.

17. The two Regional Commissions shall provide substantive support to the WG on Trade by:

- (i) Providing expertise and 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.

18. The WG on Trade 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.

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

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

E. FUNDING

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

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

23. The WG on Trade shall also seek funds and technical assistance for its operations from multilateral and bilateral development partners for the implementation of specific capacity-building projects falling under the scope of the approved work programme.

F. PROGRAMME OF WORK AND ACTIVITIES

24. The WG on Trade shall develop, agree upon and implement its annual work programme.

25. The WG on Trade shall prepare its annual reports on progress made in the implementation of its activities to the Governing Council sessions.

26. The WG on Trade shall draw up and agree upon its biennial work programmes which are integrated into SPECA Work Plans.

27. The WG on Trade shall formulate and agree upon specific projects and programmes and seek extrabudgetary resources for their implementation.

G. OTHER MATTERS

28. The current Terms of Reference shall be reviewed in 5 years or sooner if the SPECA Working Group on Trade so decides.

29. These Terms of Reference were reviewed and adopted by the SPECA Governing Council on 21 November 2019.
