



2021 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM

Sustainable Transport and Trade for a Green and Inclusive Economy after the Pandemic

17-18 NOVEMBER 2021 | TASHKENT | UZBEKISTAN

Provisional Programme

(as of 9 November 2021)

Venue: International Hotel Tashkent

Background: The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) was established on 26 March 1998 by the Tashkent Declaration signed by the Presidents of the Central Asian countries 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) as a United Nations special programme to support the countries in their efforts for economic development, cooperation and integration into the economies of Europe and Asia. The current SPECA participating countries are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. UNECE and ESCAP jointly provide overall support to the activities within the framework of the Programme, in close collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinators in the SPECA countries. SPECA provides a subregional collaboration platform for the implementation of those Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that can be achieved better through regional cooperation. In 2021, Uzbekistan is chairing the Programme and hosts the SPECA Days in Tashkent from 16 to 19 November 2021.

The concept of this Forum builds on the recommendations of the 2018 SPECA Evaluation Report that SPECA, as a service-oriented, flexible and strategic platform for policy coordination and cooperation, should foster dialogue, consolidation of positions, solving common problems, elaboration of strategies and work plans for their implementation, as well as sharing expertise. The theme of the 2021 Forum reflects the demand of Uzbekistan and the other SPECA countries to assist in their positioning as connectivity point and hub at the geographic heart of the Eurasian landmass. The Forum will build on the results of the 2019 SPECA Economic Forum “*Connectivity: Sustainable Transport and Trade Facilitation in the SPECA Subregion*”, using the UN norms, standards, and tools. It will take stock of the implementation of the Ashgabat Initiative¹, the Bishkek Declaration² as well as the SPECA Trade

¹ The Ashgabat Initiative was the outcome document from the 2019 SPECA Economic Forum that fostered connectivity, trade and transport facilitation

https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/SPECA/documents/gc/session14/IV_AHGABAT_INITIATIVE_English.pdf and in Russian: https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/SPECA/documents/gc/session14/IV_AHGABAT_INITIATIVE_Russian.pdf

² Bishkek Declaration adopted by the SPECA Governing Council at its fifteen session on 20 November 2020 in Bishkek: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Bishkek%20Declaration_ENG_0.pdf

Facilitation Strategy and Principles of Sustainable Trade, adopted by the SPECA Governing Council at its fourteen session on 21 November 2019 in Ashgabat, as well as the conclusions of the Regional Dialogue on Strengthening Transport Connectivity in the SPECA Region and Beyond in the Era of COVID-19.³

The 2021 SPECA Economic Forum focuses on progress in the development of sustainable transport and trade in the SPECA subregion and their potential contribution to making the economies of the subregion greener, circular, and inclusive: building back better after the pandemic. The choice of topic reflects some of the priority issues for the subregion today: the effects of climate change on key aspects of economic development and cooperation, as well as sustainable development. COVID-19 related restrictions, lockdowns, and border closures caused serious disruptions of supply chains and citizen's mobility, which created additional costs. Therefore, this year the emphasis will be on efficiency and best practices in handling transport operations during the COVID-19 pandemic and building back better in the aftermath. The session on sustainable transport will tackle connectivity as a key issue for lowering transport and transit costs – crucial for competitiveness and economic development of SPECA landlocked developing countries (LLDC). LLDCs pay more than double what coastal countries do to export their goods and high trade costs erode the competitiveness of the LLDCs resulting in an enormous negative impact on their overall sustainable development⁴. Given the environmental benefits of using railway and its high resilience, greater rail transport development is important for increased sustainability and resilience of the SPECA economies. The session on sustainable trade focuses on the implementation of the SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade and the digitalization of multimodal transport data and document exchange in the region. The objective is to promote the implementation of the Forum programme also highlights innovative ways to attract investment into a greener and more resilient economy in the region. A separate session is dedicated to the gender aspect of rebuilding the economies of the region better, and empowering women who work on sustainable development, transport, and trade. Given that Uzbekistan is hosting the SPECA events this year and has strengthened its involvement as the Chair country of SPECA, one session combines various studies and initiatives related to Uzbekistan.

In line with the recommendations of the 2018 SPECA Evaluation Report, endorsed by all SPECA countries, this Forum is conceived as a policy and operational meeting, with a less formal format, leading to more meaningful exchanges. It aims at enhancing discussions through panel sessions, oriented towards building partnerships for the achievement of concrete tasks, adopting regional initiatives and strategies, outlining actions to achieve them, formulating ideas for enhancing international transport regime, lowering trade barriers and other actions to foster cross-border supply chains. The participants will help prepare recommendations on how to make the SPECA subregion a well-connected, and sustainable transport system and trade facilitation hub, devising follow-up mechanisms on how to ensure the realization of these policy recommendations that will help achieve relevant SDGs.

Discussions will focus on improving connectivity in the region, using sustainable transport and trade facilitation legal instruments, norms, standards, and tools to foster sustainable growth in the subregion.

³ <https://unece.org/transport/events/strengthening-transport-connectivity-speca-region-and-beyond-era-covid-19>

⁴ Ministerial Meeting of LLDCs on Trade and Transport Achieving the SDGs in Landlocked Developing Countries through Connectivity and Trade Facilitation, Astana, Kazakhstan, 16-17 May 2018

17 NOVEMBER 2021

REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Co-chairpersons of the 2021 SPECA Economic Forum:

H.E. Mr. Badriddin Abidov, Deputy Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE

10:00 – 11:45

OPENING OF THE FORUM

Welcome statements:

H.E. Mr. Sardor Umurzakov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Ms. Olga Algayerova, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNECE Executive Secretary

Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, UN Under-Secretary-General and ESCAP Executive Secretary

Statements by Heads of delegation of the SPECA countries:

Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

Statements by other high-level representatives and heads of delegation

(UNRCCA, EU, EAEU, SCO, ECO, the Russian Federation, other countries, and organizations)

Note on the structure and objectives of the 2021 SPECA Economic Forum

Mr. Mario Apostolov, Forum Coordinator, UNECE

11:45 – 12:45

LUNCH BREAK

12:45 – 14:45

SESSION I: HOW TO RESTORE CONNECTIVITY AND BUILD BACK MORE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN THE SPECA SUBREGION

Moderator: Ms. Vladanka Andreeva, UN Resident Coordinator in Azerbaijan

Mr. Yuwei Li, Director, Sustainable Transport Division, UNECE

Mr. Weimin Ren, Director, Transport Division, ESCAP

Panel 1 composed of 4-5 representatives of SPECA countries and international organizations on best practices for more efficient transport operations during COVID-19 and building back better transport system (3 questions x 5 min in a moderated discussion)

H.E. Mr. Jasurbek Choriyev, Deputy Minister of Transport of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Partners: Ministries of Transport in the SPECA countries; OHRLLS, TER

Objective: Strengthen capacities and share best practices on how to restore/enhance connectivity and ensure sustainable and efficient functioning of international transport corridors during the COVID-19 crisis which caused serious disruptions of supply chains and citizen's mobility.

Panel 2 composed of 4-5 representatives of international organizations and IFIs (e.g. World Bank, ADB, EIB, EBRD, IsDB, UIC, OSJD, ECO, TER, CCTT) on building back better transport system, with special focus on railways (two statements in moderated discussion, 7 x 6 min)

Statements by the other international organizations and IFI's (8 min)

Partners: international financial institution, regional and sectorial organizations

Objectives: Reinforce the commitment of the SPECA countries to efficient implement UN legal instruments and build sustainable transport system, with specific focus on railways.

Discussion (10 min)

ESCAP: Presentation on the outcomes of the sessions of Working Groups on Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway networks and Dry ports held in 2021, as well as the preparation of the Next Regional Action Programme on Sustainable Transport Development and the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Transport in the Asia-Pacific region.

14:45 – 15:00

COFFEE BREAK

15:00 – 17:00

SESSION II: SUSTAINABLE TRADE IN THE SPECA SUBREGION

Moderator: Ms. Michaela Friberg-Storey, UN Resident Coordinator in Kazakhstan

Uzbekistan's priorities for sustainable trade and regional cooperation

H.E. Mr. Badriddin Abidov, Deputy Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Improving connectivity and sustainability for Transport, Transit and Trade in Central Asia

Mr. Johannes Linn, Non-resident Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution

Facilitating trade in Tajikistan and the SPECA region and its impact on sustainable development

H.E. Mr. Abdurahmon Abdurahmonzoda, Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan, Chairman of the SPECA Working Group on Trade

Contribution of trade to sustainable development in Central Asia

Mr. William Tompson, Head, Eurasia Division, OECD

The potential of trade facilitation and data digitalization for Central Asia
Mr. Mario Apostolov, Regional Adviser, UNECE

Sustainable Trade and the Circular Economy in the SPECA region: The opportunities ahead

Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk, Director, ECT Division, UNECE

Accelerating climate-smart trade and investment for Sustainable Development (ESCAP, UNCTAD, UNEP. Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2021)

Mr. Yann Duval, Chief of Section on Trade Policy and Facilitation, ESCAP

Ready4Trade Central Asia project and its focus on sustainable trade development

Ms. Elena Boutrimova, Chief Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, ITC

CAREC and ADB activities supporting trade and sustainable development

Ms. Xiaoqin Fan, ADB (TBC)

GIZ Trade Facilitation project in Central Asia and cooperation with UNECE

Ms. Asel Uzagalieva, Component Manager, "Trade Facilitation in Central Asia" Programme

Discussion

Partners invited to participate in the session and discussion: WTO, SCO, GIZ, TRACECA, ECO, ITC, EU, EAEU; CAREC/ADB, OECD

Objective: Reinforce the commitment of the SPECA countries to achieve functional cooperation in regional trade and implement the UNECE standards for multimodal transport data and document exchange, as an innovative tool to achieve cooperation. Obtain commitment of the countries to support the SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade. Obtain commitment from development partners to support these initiatives.

18 NOVEMBER 2021

10:00 – 12:00

SESSION III: APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES OF CIRCULAR ECONOMY TO SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRADE AND TOURISM IN THE SPECA COUNTRIES

Moderator: Ms. Sezin Sinanoglu, UN Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan

Sustainable, clean and healthy transport: implementing the Vienna Declaration of the fifth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment

Mr. Vadim Donchenko, Deputy Director General, Scientific and Research Institute of Motor Transport (NIIAT), Russian Federation

Bangkok Declaration on the "City and Transport: Safety, Efficiency, and Sustainability"

Mr. Ishtiaque Ahmed, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP

Trade, water management, food security and circular economy in the SPECA region
Mr. Bo Libert, UNECE Consultant

Applying Principles of Circular Economy to Sustainable Tourism in the SPECA Countries

Mr. Shukhrat Isakulov, Adviser to Director, "Silk Road Office (UNWTO)", Ministry of Tourism and Sport, Uzbekistan

Key messages and takeaways to facilitate the discussion

Ms. Sarangoo Radnaaragchaa, Regional Adviser, UNECE Environment Division

Discussion

Mr. Rashid Karzhaspaev, Chief Expert, Department of Ecological Policy and sustainable development, Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Partners: Ministries of Environment, Transport, Trade, Tourism in the SPECA countries; UNEP, UNRCCA, OSCE, UNDP, OECD

Objective: build political will among the SPECA countries for transition to a circular economy using UN instruments on transport, environment and trade

12:00 – 13:00

LUNCH BREAK

13:00 – 14:45

SESSION IV: INNOVATIVE MECHANISMS AND INSTRUMENTS FOR FINANCING INVESTMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Moderator: Mr. William Tompson, Head, Eurasia Division, OECD

Panel 1. Attracting, evaluating and monitoring sustainable investments in the SPECA countries

Importance of investment and innovative financing priorities for the region

H.E. Mr. Badriddin Abidov, Deputy Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan

FDI Trends and Prospects in the SPECA Region and the Tools UNCTAD can Provide to Boost Sustainable FDI

Mr. Joerg Weber, Head of Investment Policies Branch, UNCTAD

Leveraging FDI for Sustainable Development, Definition of sustainable FDI, key FDI trends in SPECA, ESCAP Handbook on Policies, Promotion and Facilitation of Sustainable FDI (forthcoming), and training for countries on how to develop tailored indicators to evaluate the contribution of an FDI project to their priority SD sectors

Ms. Heather Taylor-Strauss, Economist, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, ESCAP, and **Mr. Douglas van der Berghe**, ESCAP consultant (15 min)

Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk, Director, ECT Division, UNECE

Panel 2. Building an investment pipeline: supporting innovative business ventures and a culture of experimentation for sustainable development

Subregional cooperation to support innovative entrepreneurship under the Action Plan of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development

Mr. Christopher Athey, Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, UNECE (7 minutes)

Supporting innovative entrepreneurship through business incubators and policies to support innovative high-growth enterprises in the SPECA countries

Ms. Lyudmyla Tautiyeva, consultant, UNECE (7 minutes)

Mr. Alim Khamitov, Director, Business Incubator MOST, Kazakhstan

Mr. Almaz Toktogulov, Deputy Executive Director, State Fund of Intellectual Property of Kyrgyzstan

Mr. Vladimir Tsoy, Director, C.A.T. Science Accelerator, Uzbekistan

Ms. Venera Isakul kyzy, Business Incubator under the Kyrgyz Economic University

Innovative and Sustainable Financing Instruments for Sustainable Development

Mr. Alberto Isgut, Macroeconomic and Financing for Development Division, ESCAP (10 min)

Opportunities for a Multilateral Framework Investment Facilitation for Development for the SPECA Countries

Mr. Axel Berger, German Development Institute [TBC]

Statements by development partners on their activities fostering investment for sustainable development in the SPECA region: OECD, GIZ, ADB, etc.

Panel 3. Establishment of SPECA Fund

Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin, UNECE Deputy Executive Secretary

Representative of the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office

Discussion

14:45 – 15:00

COFFEE BREAK

15:00 – 16:00

SESSION V: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: POLICY CHALLENGES DURING AND AFTER COVID-19 FOR THE SPECA REGION

Moderator: Ms. Monika Linn, Principal Adviser and Chief, Sustainable Development and Gender Unit, UNECE

Speakers:

H.E. Ms. Tanzila Narbaeva, Chairperson of the Senate of Oliy Majlis, Uzbekistan

[TBC]

Ms. Olga Algayerova, Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary, UNECE

Ms. Sadagat Gahramanova, Deputy Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs, Azerbaijan, and Chair of the SPECA Thematic Working Group on Gender and SDGs

Ms. Blerta Cela, Deputy Regional Director, Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, UN Women

Mr. Strinivas Tata, Director, Social Development Division, ESCAP

Ms. Kankana Dubey, UNECE expert

Ms. Bharati Sadasivam, Team Leader, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub

Ms. Dono Abdurazakova, Senior Gender and Social Protection Adviser, FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

Ms. Alina Fetisova, Trade Facilitation Programme Officer, International Trade Centre

Partners: Representatives of SPECA countries will have the opportunity to share experience in undertaking specific measures and discuss visions and plans for recovery policies with a gender lens. Particular attention will be given to policy initiatives and measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women's employability, the adoption of support schemes and mechanisms for women entrepreneurs, including in urban and rural areas. Partners from the UN system in the UNECE region will share experience and plans on supporting the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women to build inclusive economies and resilient societies in the region.

Objective: The session will feature a policy dialogue on the post-pandemic recovery plans to accelerate the advancement of women's participation in the economy in all sectors and at all levels of decision-making. It will address strategies and programmes for strengthening women's economic empowerment to support the achievements of the SDGs and enhance regional cooperation among SPECA countries.

16:00 – 17:00

SESSION VI: FOCUS ON UZBEKISTAN: PRESENTATION OF STUDIES AND PROJECTS WITH A FOCUS ON UZBEKISTAN AND ITS ROLE IN REGIONAL COOPERATION

Moderator: Ms. Matilda Dimovska, UNDP Resident Representative in Uzbekistan

Speakers: Short presentations on the findings and policy recommendations of recent or current studies and projects undertaken by UNECE and ESCAP with a focus on Uzbekistan:

Assessment of the readiness of Uzbekistan to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, prepared with UNECE

Ms. Anastasia Belova, Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan

UNECE study on procedural and regulatory barriers to trade in Uzbekistan

Mr. Tangiz Assanov, Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan

UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Uzbekistan

Mr. Jakob Fexer, Economics Affairs Officer, UNECE

UNECE Environmental Performance Review of Uzbekistan

Mr. Jusipbek Kazbekov, Deputy Chairman of the State Committee for Ecology and Environment Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Digitalization of Multimodal Transport data exchange using UN standards

Mr. Sherzod Ata-Mirzaev, Ministry of transport of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Objectives: Build political will for the implementation of the policy recommendations of these studies and projects; build synergies with other organizations (ITC); obtain endorsement (notably for the regional cooperation aspect) from the SPECA Governing Council.

17:00 – 17:30

CLOSING SESSION: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2021 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM

Moderators: H.E. **Mr. Badriddin Abidov**, Deputy Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and **Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin**, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE

[Closing statements by representatives of Uzbekistan, UNECE and ESCAP](#)

Further Information:

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