



# 2021 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM

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

17-18 NOVEMBER 2021 | TASHKENT | UZBEKISTAN

### Programme

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 Initiative<sup>1</sup>, the Bishkek Declaration<sup>2</sup> as well as the SPECA Trade 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

<sup>1</sup> 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](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](https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/SPECA/documents/gc/session14/IV_AHGABAT_INITIATIVE_Russian.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> 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](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Bishkek%20Declaration_ENG_0.pdf)

## Dialogue on Strengthening Transport Connectivity in the SPECA Region and Beyond in the Era of COVID-19.<sup>3</sup>

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 development<sup>4</sup>. 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.

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

<sup>4</sup> 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

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## 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:

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan

### Statements by other high-level representatives and heads of delegation

UNRCCA (Mr. Philipp Saprykin), BSEC (H.E. Mr. Traian Chebeleu), Russian Federation (Mr. Taras Pronin), ITC (Ms. Elena Boutrimova).

### 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

*Introduction on goals of the session and importance of transport connectivity and regional cooperation*

*Key-note speeches on UNECE and ESCAP activities on sustainable transport and connectivity in SPECA region*

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

**Ms. Azhar Jaimurzina Ducrest**, Chief of Section, Transport Division, ESCAP

**Panel 1** composed of representatives of SPECA countries on best practices for more efficient transport operations during COVID-19 pandemics and building back better transport system. Special emphasize on transport infrastructure development for better connectivity and border crossing facilitation/shortening of waiting times/digitalization of procedures

**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.

**Mr. Mamanbiy Omarov**, Head of Department of International Relations, Logistics and Export Development, Ministry of Transport, Uzbekistan

**Mr. Azar Aliyev**, Deputy Head of the Transport Policy Department, Ministry of Digital Development and Transport, Azerbaijan

**Panel 2** composed of representatives of international organizations and IFIs on building back better transport system, with special focus on railways.

**Objectives:** Reinforce the commitment of the SPECA countries to develop sustainable transport system, efficient and well-connected, with specific focus on railways. Discuss benefits and challenges in development of railway projects, role of railway sector in international transport and collaboration between transport modes. Point out how efficient implementation of UN legal instruments and digitalization could build more sustainable transport system.

**Mr. Hideaki Iwasaki**, Transport and Communications Division, Central and West Asia Department, ADB

**Mr. Mansur Bustoni**, Senior Transport Specialist, The World Bank

**Mr. Sayed Yahya Akhlaqi**, Deputy Secretary General, ECO

**Mr. Vadim Zakharenko**, General Delegate to the Permanent Delegation to Eurasia, IRU

**Ms. Malgorzata Kopczynska**, Project Manager, Trans-European Railways (TER)

**Mr. Gennady Bessonov**, Secretary General, International Coordinating Council on Trans-EurAsian Transportation CCTT (video statement)

#### Discussions

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. Zulfia Karimova**, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, ADB

*GIZ Trade Facilitation project in Central Asia and cooperation with UNECE*

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

*OSCE activities in support of green trade in ports*

**Mr. Daniel Kroos**, OSCE

## Discussion

**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.

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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 (NIAT), 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

*Developing sustainable transport in Kazakhstan through a green economy lens*

**Mr. Rashid Karzhaspayev**, Chief Expert of the Department of Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan

*Key messages and takeaways to facilitate the discussion*

**Ms. Sarangoo Radnaaragcha**, Regional Adviser, UNECE Environment Division

### Discussion

**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*

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

*Attracting, evaluating and monitoring sustainable investments in the SPECA countries*

**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

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

**Ms. Lyudmyla Tautiyeva**, consultant, UNECE

**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

**Mr. Altynbek Aitymbetov**, Director, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan

**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

*Investment facilitation for Development*

**Mr. Mohammad Saeed**, Chief, Trade Facilitation and Policy for Business Section, International Trade Centre

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

**Mr. Axel Berger**, German Development Institute

**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

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

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

**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

*Women at the core of the economic recovery and development*

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

**Ms. Kankana Dubey**, UNECE expert

**Ms. Barbora Galvankova**, Programme specialist, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, UNDP Regional Hub for Europe and CIS

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

*Ready4Trade Central Asia: Facilitating trade for women*

**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. Tengiz Asanov**, 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

*Establishment of Trade Facilitation Enquiry Point (para. 3 art.1 TFA) in Uzbekistan*

**Mr. Sarvarkhuzha Ganikhodzhaev**, Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade 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**

### ***Closing statement and results of the Forum***

**Mr. Dmitry Mariyasin**, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNECE

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

**Further Information:**

[www.unece.org](http://www.unece.org)

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