

**Statement at the SPECA Economic Forum
Session 4, 18 November 2021**

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

Dear Forum members!

Firstly, I would like to greet the Uzbek side and ESCAP for organizing an important high-level forum on post-pandemic green and inclusive economy.

We highly appreciate the cooperation with the secretariat of ESCAP, and all efforts put under the current Memorandum of Agreement between the Ministry of Digital Development and Aerospace Industries and ESCAP.

We also want to thank ESCAP for the research contribution to the establishment of the Digital Solutions Center in Central Asia, for organizing a regional cross-country consultation among experts of SPECA Member States in 2021, and for providing online tools for the joint ICT, transport, and energy infrastructure deployment, simulator and e-resilience monitoring dashboard during pandemic recovery.

Kazakhstan is constantly working on the issue of increasing the investment attractiveness of its ICT sector. In this regard, the country's leaders have set the task of attracting global technology companies to the ICT industry.

An effective innovation infrastructure plays an important role in increasing investment attractiveness. In 2018, Kazakhstan established Astana Hub to support domestic start-ups. Astana hub has simplified visa and labour regimes and preferential tax treatment.

Kazakhstan has created the foundations for a fully-fledged digital government to function, with a citizen-centred focus and emphasis on collected and properly processed data.

We firmly believe that the digital economy, especially post-pandemic, should not create a social divide. The economy must engage and connect the two actual themes - climate change and a digital transformation - through inclusive and enabling green economy transformation policies.

Our country pursues a policy based on the concept of a "hearing state" and focused on creating value for each member of our society.

To achieve this aim, we make the most of the opportunities provided by information technology.

The current digital transformation plays crucial role in transforming the public services sector and in creating opportunities for new business development.

Thus, strengthening the institutional capacity of SPECA through the work of the proposed Digital Solutions Center for Sustainable Development under the auspices of UNESCAP can play a key role in preparing the basis for the digital transformation both in the region and in the country.

We are promoting the idea of a regional centre and believe that this will create a common platform for the SPECA initiative.

In this regard, we ask ESCAP to work out and propose an appropriate Roadmap for the creation of the Center at the Digital Forum in Almaty, in February 2022 if possible, where we would also like to invite all SPECA member countries.

There are companies in Kazakhstan that focus on the development of innovation clusters and IT companies, such as Astana Hub, Qazinnovations, Zerde Holding, and many others.

All of them are ready to share their experience, solutions, including work through platforms for exchange of successful cases with our colleagues in the region.

Moreover, we are ready to involve our related organizations and share our capabilities within the framework of the proposed Centre.

Thank you all for your attention, I wish successful work to all participants of the forum.