

*Remarks at 11.20am April 17*

It's my pleasure to welcome you all at our Dialogue.

I would like to start by expressing our gratitude to the Azerbaijani chairmanship for hosting this meeting on the sidelines of the 70th session of the UN Economic Commission for Europe.

I am confident that our discussions today will give a new impetus to SPECA's development and promoting economic cooperation, both within the SPECA region and beyond.

Kazakhstan remains a convinced and consistent supporter of our Program. We consider SPECA as a unique platform that brings together national initiatives, regional efforts and the UN expertise in our diverse, yet united region.

Last year, under Kazakhstan's chairmanship, we managed to advance cooperation within the working groups and achieve tangible progress in SPECA's institutionalization. Ongoing discussions at the expert level is reinforced by active contribution by all SPECA participating States and, this year, we need to join our efforts to give a momentum to the SPECA process towards further consolidation.

Kazakhstan fully supports the priorities of the Azerbaijani chairmanship that are becoming more relevant than ever in current geo-economic circumstances.

A consistent growth in trade among SPECA countries is a clear testament to our region's economic potential. For example, trade turnover between Kazakhstan and other participating States in 2022 reached 9.4 billion US dollars, which is 32% higher than in 2021 (USD 7 billion). Exports from Kazakhstan increased by 34% (to USD 7 billion), and imports grew by 25% (USD 2.4 billion).

In order to boost our trade, as well as cooperation in transport, energy, innovation, digital and green transformations, we need to expand and enhance direct policy interaction between the government agencies responsible for the Program and develop mutually beneficial, practical and result-oriented projects. Kazakhstan stands ready to provide necessary support and expertise from all relevant ministries and agencies involved in economic policy.

The Government of Kazakhstan has been implementing comprehensive economic reforms with digital and green transformations at the top of its agenda.

About a month ago, our country has completed an electoral cycle that brought about profound changes in the legal and political system. In his address to the Parliament after the election, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev reaffirmed his commitment to continued reforms and set out new priorities in building an open, self-sufficient and competitive economy.

As we highlighted in the Voluntary National Review on the 2030 Agenda last year, our economic reforms are based on a clear strategic planning that fully integrates the SPECA agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

The National Development Plan of Kazakhstan for 2021-2025 clearly determines goals and priorities in all major areas of the SPECA mandate - energy, trade, environment, transport and technology.

Sectoral programs and strategies are also formulated in accordance with our international commitments and regional priorities. This means that we are ready and well-equipped to further coordinate our efforts within SPECA taking advantage of our national strategies and programs.

Let me stress that Kazakhstan will continue to actively utilize the potential of SPECA to ensure mutually beneficial and effective regional cooperation. We also intend to continue our consistent, annual financial support for SPECA's project activities.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage other SPECA participating States, as well as broader international community, to proactively support the Program.

On behalf of the Government of Kazakhstan, I would like to once again thank you all for joining us today and am looking forward to our discussions.

Thank you for your attention.