



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

SPECA WORK PLAN FOR 2024-2025

**(Ongoing, planned and possible UNECE and ESCAP activities in support of
the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA))**

The activities to be carried out by the SPECA Thematic Working Groups are demand-driven, focused on a limited number of priority topics and matched with available resources.

WATER, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to facilitate economic cooperation in the SPECA subregion as well as integration of the SPECA participating States into the world economy for their attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and previous decisions of the Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment, the Working Group shall: (a) Provide a platform for supporting progress on strategic issues related to water, energy and environment, and towards achieving the respective SDGs (including, but not limited to SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation and SDG 7 on Affordable and Clean Energy); (b) Aim at improving awareness of SPECA countries on the water-, energy- and environment-related SDGs, provide information and share best practice experiences with regard to the implementation of these SDGs, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs, promote consideration of energy and water cooperation opportunities and intersectoral and transboundary impacts in the SDG implementation and related action plans; (c) Promote compliance with relevant international legal instruments (to which the countries are Parties), norms, guidelines, standards and recommendations in the fields of competence of the Working Group; (d) Act as a platform for identification, development, support and coordination of technical programmes and projects within the scope of Working Group competence thereby building capacity, promoting best practices and strengthening mutual trust at political level among the SPECA participating States; (e) Identify, in consultation with its participating States, their priorities and emerging issues, and consult on regional approaches, taking into consideration subregional aspects; (f) Promote dialogue among its participating States, including subregional synergies, and an exchange of experiences on policies and programmes; (g) Monitor the implementation of the decisions of the Governing Council; and (h) Promote a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges of the SPECA subregion, where appropriate, between Governments and civil society, the private sector, as well as the United Nations and other international organizations.

WATER, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe	Budget
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
XB project funded by IKI Germany “Improving the energy efficiency of the global building supply chain industry and its products to deliver high performance buildings” for seven beneficiary countries of which three are SPECA participating States: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	Expected to start in the second half of 2024. Duration 5-6 years	Total budget for the full project (seven countries) is EUR 19.8 million
UNDA project “Strengthening energy policies of Countries with Special Needs to build back better from COVID-19” for eight beneficiary countries of which two are SPECA participating States: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan	January 2022- June 2025	Total budget for the full project (eight countries) is USD 700 thousand
XB project “Energy Connectivity in Central Asia” for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The target groups are policymakers, regulators, industry actors, electricity and gas grid operators, non-governmental organisations, academia and other experts dealing with the development and deployment of energy connectivity projects.	September 2023- December 2024	Total budget is USD 248,600
UNDA project “Supporting increased energy security and resilience through energy transition” for five beneficiary countries of which two are SPECA participating States: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan	2023-2026	Total budget for the full project (five countries) is USD 750,000
XB project “Energy connectivity for sustainable development – Enabling renewable energy resource sharing across borders”	2024-2025	USD 250,000
XB project “Support the sustainable energy development in South-East Asia and North and Central Asia through enhanced subregional cooperation and knowledge sharing”	2024-2025	USD 300,000

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to support its participating States 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-STTC fosters subregional cooperation to promote development of sustainable transport systems and improvement of

international and regional connectivity in the SPECA States. To achieve this through subregional cooperation, the Working Group: (i) Provides a platform for strategic discussions on supporting progress towards achieving the directly transport-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3, SDG 9 and SDG 11) and targets, and contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, as a whole, through subregional cooperation, exchange of best practices and experiences, consultations, relevant activities and implementation of projects in the SPECA States; (ii) Raises awareness of SPECA States on the transport-related SDGs and the role of transport and connectivity in supporting the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda; provides information and share best practice experiences, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (iii) Promotes policy dialogue: to support accession and efficient implementation of the United Nations transport-related legal instruments; for coordinated development of road and railway networks, dry ports and intermodal transport; for elimination of physical and non-physical barriers to transport, and for safer and more environmentally friendly transport system; and (iv) Provides analytical work and capacity development activities and tools in the areas of transport infrastructure development, sustainable transport operations, operationalization of international transit corridors, use of new technologies and innovation, regulatory harmonization, intermodal transport, border crossing facilitation, transport of dangerous goods, and other areas, including identification of funding modalities for the SPECA activities.

The thematic orientation of the activities of the WG-STTC includes: (i) Sustainable transport development, to enhance subregional and international connectivity in line with the needs of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, harnessing the opportunities arising from global and regional transport trends and technological advances; (ii) Accession and efficient implementation of the United Nations inland transport-related legal instruments, to further develop legal framework for efficient transport, transit and connectivity; (iii) Inland transport infrastructure development; identification of the missing links, removal of bottlenecks, increasing the quality of the infrastructure, transport project financing (including public-private partnership) and promotion of intermodal transport and development of dry ports and terminals; (iv) Development of efficient transport operations; transport facilitation and removal of non-physical barriers to transport (including border crossing facilitation); (v) Development of a monitoring mechanism for sustainable transport connectivity in support of SDGs, collection of transport and border crossing statistics, harmonization of data collection, publishing of subregional transport statistics; (vi) Road safety; activities to reduce road traffic fatalities and casualties in the SPECA region; and (vii) Promotion of subregional cooperation for sustainable transport connectivity which plays an important role in addressing the economic development challenges faced by landlocked SPECA States.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY		
Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe	Budget
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
Road Safety Performance Review Kazakhstan	2024-2025	USD 90,000
UNDA Project Sustainable Mobility and Smart Connectivity in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Western Balkans (LearnITC project)	2023-2024	USD 100,000
Interconnection of national customs system of Kazakhstan with eTIR International	2023-2024	USD 20,000
Interconnection of national customs system of	2024	USD 20,000

Kyrgyzstan with eTIR International		
Interconnection of national customs system of Tajikistan with eTIR International	2023-2024	USD 20,000
Building resilient, climate adaptive and economically viable transport infrastructure networks	2023-2024	USD 226,000

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to support its participating States 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 States. 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 States on the trade-related SDGs; help 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 States 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.

The thematic orientation of the activities of the Working Group on Trade includes: (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. The deliverables of the WG on Trade focus on four areas: (i) trade policy cooperation, including on the WTO negotiations; (ii) implementation of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy; (iii) implementation of the SPECA Principles for Sustainable Trade; (iv) non-tariff measures and barriers to trade; as well as (v) digitalization of multimodal transport information exchange, with which the WG started dealing in 2021.

TRADE DEVELOPMENT		
Name of Project/Activity	Timeframe	Budget
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities will be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners could expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities		
UNDA project 2225: Enhanced capacities of selected countries in the ECE region for pandemic-resilient, sustainable cross-border trade and transport	March 2022 – June 2025	USD 430,000
UNECE E379 project: Building Cross-border Cooperation for Sustainable Trade in the SPECA subregion	September 2021 – December 2024	USD 250,000
UNECE E293 project: Strengthening the capacity of Central Asian countries to implement trade facilitation measures and better integrate into the international rules-based trading system	January 2018 - 31 December 2023	USD 352,000
Project “Enhancing Regional and Global Value Chain Participation of Central Asian Countries to Support Sustainable Development in the Digital Era”. Pilot countries Kazakhstan (confirmed) and Mongolia (tentative). Beneficiary countries: pilot + all North and Central Asian (NCA) countries. Planned outputs: Digital trade regulatory database/analysis, value chain database and/or analysis. Capacity-building workshops. 2024 activities: Data collection and analysis in pilot countries.	2023 - 2025	Appr. USD 200,000
11th Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum in Uzbekistan	2024, date tbc	Regular budget and/or extrabudgetary funds
UNECE E360 project: Enhancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda through strategic cooperation among the SPECA countries	1 June 2020 – 30 June 2024	USD 80,000
UNECE E333 project: Strengthening the capacity of SPECA to support countries in achieving the SDGs through regional cooperation	1 June 2019 – 31 December 2027	USD 40,000

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The main objectives of the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development are: (i) to provide a platform for supporting progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on the SDGs directly related to innovation and technology development (including, but not limited to SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure; SDG 8

on decent work and economic growth; SDG 13 on combatting climate change and its impacts; and SDG 17 on partnerships); (ii) to aim at improving awareness of SPECA States on the innovation and technology development related SDGs, provide information and share best practice experiences with regard to the implementation of these SDGs, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (iii) to become a mechanism for identification, implementation and coordination of technical programmes and projects within the scope of Working Group competence thereby building capacity, promoting best practices and strengthening mutual trust at political level among the SPECA participating States; and (iv) to promote cooperation between SPECA States on strategic approaches to harness innovation as a driver of future sustainable development in the subregion.

Thematic orientation of the activities of the WG on ITSD includes: (i) ICT for development; (ii) Promotion of innovation and innovative technology applications; (iii) Promotion of transfer and commercialization of innovative technologies; and (iv) Development of effective infrastructure for innovation support and financing, including through PPPs.

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT		
Name of Project/Activity	Lead Executive Agency	Timeframe
Ongoing and planned projects/activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.		
Capacity-building on policy options and practical instruments to promote knowledge-based development	UNECE	October 2023 - December 2025
Implementation of the UNECE project on Innovation for Sustainable Development Reviews of selected countries	UNECE	October 2023 - December 2025
Support to SPECA States to foster innovation to deliver the SDGs	UNECE	October 2023 - December 2025
Promote regional connectivity and transformation of SPECA region in the framework of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Action Plan 2022-2026	ESCAP	October 2023 - December 2025
Capacity development on the utilization of digital technology and geospatial information	ESCAP	October 2023 - December 2025
Capacity development on the utilization of ICT and GIS for disaster risk reduction	ESCAP	October 20 - December 2025
Strengthen institutional capacity on integrating geospatial and statistical data, with a focus on drought monitoring and land accounts in Central Asia	ESCAP	October 2023 - December 2025
Capacity development to reduce and mitigate disaster risks in endorheic (inland) water basins in Central Asia	ESCAP	October 2023 - December 2025

GENDER AND SDGs

In line with the overall objective of the Programme to facilitate economic cooperation in the countries of the SPECA region as well as integration of the SPECA participating States into the world economy for their attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Working Group on Gender and SDGs shall continue to work in the area of gender mainstreaming and transformative policies as follows: (a) Non-discriminatory labour market policies in the course of hiring and work environment free of discrimination and exploitation; (b) Policies to promote the participation of women in public and private companies; (c) Policies to prevent stereotypes in education and research to advance the participation of women in R&D sectors; and (d) Policies for building support systems for women entrepreneurship development.

GENDER AND SDGs	
Name of Activity	Timeframe
Ongoing and planned activities with funding secured or expected. These activities would be implemented in mutually reinforcing way. Additional support from interested partners would expand the scope and the number of beneficiaries of these projects/activities.	
Take forward opportunities identified within annual meeting discussions, for further subregional cooperation on the implementation of the SDG 5 on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls	November 2023 – November 2024
Support SPECA region participation in the Beijing +30 regional review framework and processes	November 2023 – November 2024