



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

**SPECA CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT UNTIL 2030**

In line with the objectives and principles set out in the Tashkent Declaration establishing the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA or the “Programme”) dated 26 March 1998,

*based* on the principles of equality, mutual respect, equal rights and mutual benefit,

*expressing* the aspirations of the SPECA participating States for integration into the global economy and cross-border cooperation,

*being guided* by the UN General Assembly Resolution dated 20 November 2023 celebrating the 25th Anniversary of SPECA,

*commending* the significant results achieved by the SPECA participating States with regard to key priority areas of mutual cooperation,

*expressing* the commitment of the participating States of the Programme to working together with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

*noting* the importance of strengthening coordination of cooperation between UN agencies and programmes and the governments of Central Asian countries in achieving the SDGs, including through the establishment of the UN Regional Centre for Sustainable Development for Central Asia and Afghanistan in Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan,

*reaffirming* the openness of SPECA to new participants who share the goals and principles of the Tashkent Declaration and the determination to promote cooperation in areas of mutual interest to the participating States, ESCAP and UNECE,

*striving* to jointly address the challenges of sustainable economic development, modernization and increasing the competitiveness of national economies globally through the competitive advantages of each SPECA participating State,

*attaching* particular importance to the effective implementation of the initiatives of the Heads of State and Government of the participating States of the Programme as put forward at the first SPECA Summit held on 24 November 2023 in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan,

*recognizing* the significant impact of climate change on sustainable development and the urgent need for collaborative actions within regional platforms, including relevant COP29 regional legacies such as the SPECA Climate and Innovation Dialogue and the SPECA Forum of Climate Smart Cities, which aim to enhance climate resilience, promote sustainable urban development, and align the efforts of SPECA participating States with global climate goals,

the participating States of the Programme, ESCAP and UNECE have agreed to adopt the SPECA Vision with the definition of goals and objectives for the furtherance of economic partnership under the Programme until 2030.

### **I. Goals and objectives**

The participating States of SPECA, ESCAP and UNECE have identified the following as their common goals and objectives for the period until 2030:

- Expanding connections and partnerships among business communities of SPECA participating States;
- Organizing online or hybrid seminars to exchange information and experiences to support the development of the small and medium entrepreneurship sector;
- Providing support for the implementation of investment projects and joint initiatives among small and medium entrepreneurship of SPECA participating States;
- Strengthening SPECA as an effective, open and inclusive regional platform for economic cooperation;
- Strengthening SPECA as an impactful full-fledged regional international association by expanding the programme of activities;
- Efficient functioning and improved performance of the SPECA Governing Council and Thematic Working Groups, including on trade, transport, transit and connectivity, water and energy and environment, innovation and technology, gender and SDGs, and statistics;
- Intensifying trade and economic cooperation and investment cooperation, joint project activities in priority areas of cooperation for the development of the participating States and improvement of the welfare and living standards of their population;
- Enhancing the international standing of SPECA as a unique United Nations programme, including in terms of stronger engagement with other UN entities, including the specialized entities, as well as involved partner countries, international organizations and associations;
- Significantly increasing the volume of mutual trade through simplification and digitalization of trade procedures, with an aspiration in the future;
- Enhancing sustainable and low carbon transport, transit, logistics, connectivity and road safety by promoting development of infrastructure in line with the UN transport infrastructure agreements and border crossing facilitation, implementing joint transport projects, and integrating advanced, intelligent transport systems and technologies;
- Achieving the strategic objectives of the Programme and ensuring implementation of initiatives of the SPECA participating States through the establishment and effective operation of the UN SPECA Multi-Partner Trust Fund (SPECA Fund);
- Institutional development of SPECA through the establishment of the SPECA Secretariat to support the priorities of the Programme;
- Making contributions by the SPECA participating States and attracting financial resources and grant funds on favourable terms to build the SPECA Fund and implement the priority projects of the Programme;

- Organizing SPECA summits under the chairmanship of the participating States of the Programme; and
- Expanding cooperation on joint projects, sharing best practices, and building on each other's strengths in policy development and innovation through the SPECA Climate and Innovation Dialogue, given the growing interlinkages between climate change and innovation is crucial for fostering resilience and ensuring a sustainable future for the SPECA region.

## **II. Cooperation on trade and investments**

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA, the participating States of the Programme, ESCAP and UNECE have identified the following as priority areas for trade cooperation:

- Fostering progress towards the SDGs through regional cooperation on trade facilitation;
- Promoting awareness of trade-related SDGs among the SPECA participating States and ensuring the exchange of best practices;
- Supporting cooperation among the SPECA participating States on trade policy issues and their involvement in international trade negotiations;
- Aligning positions on the promotion of sustainable trade among the countries of the region and with major trading partners, subject to lifting non-tariff measures and creating a favourable investment climate in the SPECA participating States;
- Supporting the SPECA participating States that are not members to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in accelerating their WTO accession processes;
- Active cooperation in such areas as trade facilitation, sustainable trade development, regulatory harmonization, sanitary, phytosanitary and veterinary quality standards, removal of technical, tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade; further develop and implement the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy and the SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade;
- Trade facilitation and promotion of trade facilitation norms, standards and best practice recommendations, and implementation of the Roadmap for Digitalization of Multimodal Exchange of Data and Documents along the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor using UN Legal Instruments and Standards, approved by the Presidents at the SPECA Summit on 24 November 2023, in Baku. Republic of Azerbaijan;
- Harmonization and alignment of national trade regulation legislation with WTO agreements;
- Implementing international standards and trade facilitation tools, including by digitalizing trade regulation processes and single window facilities;
- Strengthening trade-related research capacity and promoting effective networking among trade-related research institutions of the SPECA participating States;
- Adoption of a Joint Action Plan to promote regional trade, incorporating best practices and experiences in removing existing barriers and harmonizing technical regulation measures;
- Raising the volume of mutual trade turnover of the SPECA participating States and the share of value-added industrial products in its structure to 70 per cent;
- Studying issues of creating regional eCommerce platforms;
- Expanding cross-border trade centers, and wholesale and distribution networks;

- Creation of modern testing laboratories for certification;
- Development of an action plan to expand access of small and medium-sized businesses to financing from commercial banks of the participating States;
- Development of a long-term programme to attract investment in the economies of the participating States, taking into account their investment opportunities;
- Development and implementation of an interactive portal for timely resolution of issues related to support of the activities of economic entities of the participating States;
- Engaging international financial institutions and UN specialized entities to finance cooperation projects in the SPECA participating States;
- Simplification of administrative trade procedures, subject to implementation of the provisions of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement; and
- Establishing a common electronic commodity exchange.

### **III. Cooperation on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity**

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA, the participating States of the Programme, ESCAP and UNECE have identified the following as priority areas for cooperation in the field of sustainable transport, transit and connectivity:

- Diversification of international transport corridors, expansion of transit routes, development of transport and logistics infrastructure and digital infrastructure;
- Creation of large transfer transport hubs;
- Implementation of a combined transport communication system, uniting air and land routes based on the optimal combination and use of the advantages of each of them, with access to the largest international and regional sea, river, road, rail and air hubs;
- Expansion of air routes in the SPECA area;
- Pursuing strategic discussions on the national and subregional transport policies in support of sustainable connectivity in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and active promotion, together with UN specialized entities, of projects to enhance trade and transport connectivity in the SPECA region;
- Linking the China – Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan (CKU) Railway with the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) and the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), with the support of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Global Gateway initiatives, to enhance transport connectivity in the SPECA region, in line with relevant UN infrastructure agreements, and bring a strong multiplier effect to world trade;
- Creating favourable conditions for improving economic stability, safety and risk reduction in freight and passenger transportation, and increasing multimodal transportation, including through the harmonization of legal regimes and unification of fees;
- Increasing the capacity of existing routes and, as appropriate, building new ones in the SPECA region;
- Developing and leveraging the potential – including through suitable corridor management mechanisms- of such transport corridors as CKU, TITR, the Asia-Pacific Countries – China –

Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Turkmenistan – Azerbaijan – Georgia – Turkey – Europe corridor (CASCA+), the Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Turkmenistan – Iran – Turkey – Europe corridor, the Uzbekistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan corridor, the Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Turkmenistan – Islamic Republic of Iran – Saudi Arabia corridor, the Trans-Caspian Corridor, the Kazakhstan – Turkmenistan – Islamic Republic of Iran corridor, the China – Tajikistan – Uzbekistan – Turkmenistan – Iran – Turkey – Europe corridor;

- Integrating and aligning the national logistics centers of the SPECA participating States with the international maritime and dry ports, as well as intermodal terminal, requirements and best practices;
- Equipping intermodal, multimodal transport and logistics centers of the SPECA participating States with special equipment for weight and dimensional control of trucks and workshops, as well as for container maintenance and repair services;
- Introducing real-time cargo location systems in the SPECA region;
- Organizing the production of cargo vehicles, including vessels, with technical and expert support from UNECE;
- Increasing the volume of cargo transportation through the development of backbone transport hubs, wholesale and distribution centers and logistics centers;
- Developing supporting infrastructure and roadside services that meet modern standards of quality and convenience;
- Implementing joint infrastructure projects to build seaports and dry ports and intermodal terminals;
- Implementing and developing digital technologies for domestic and transit international cargo transportation;
- Development and implementation of E-Permit information system, an electronic exchange of permit forms for international freight transport in the SPECA region;
- Simplification and digitalization of customs administration of transit transport of goods in international traffic;
- Arranging for online information exchange between customs services;
- Developing a unified customs transit system, including by adding the stakeholder States thereto;
- Introducing electronic shipping documents to facilitate the movement of goods and vehicles within the SPECA region;
- Improving legal and regulatory support for cooperation on transport;
- Improving the efficiency of the coordinated tariff policy in international freight traffic;
- Reducing adverse environmental impact of the transport system, including through the use of environmentally friendly fuels and other active efforts to transition to environmentally sustainable transport, in line with the global and regional goals and initiatives;
- Taking stronger efforts to develop and implement national road safety strategies and action plans, strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation to achieve global and regional goals and targets;

- Developing human resources, education, science and innovation in the transport sector; and
- Establishing modern systems to manage transport processes, including arrangements for increasing the capacity of transport infrastructure, tracking the movement of goods and vehicles, and speeding up the processing and delivery of goods and passenger transportation.

#### **IV. Cooperation for sustainable use of water and energy resources**

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA, the participating States of the Programme, ESCAP and UNECE have identified the following as priority areas for cooperation in the field of sustainable use of water and energy resources (WER):

- Achieving sustainable interoperability of the energy systems of the SPECA participating States with the energy systems of neighbouring States;
- Implementing measures to introduce water and energy saving technologies;
- Achieving sustainable operation of the energy systems of SPECA participating States with the energy systems of neighbouring States, increasing renewable energy capacity in the region and improving regional energy connectivity, integrating and coordinating energy infrastructure, resources and markets in the region to enhance energy security and sustainability of energy systems;
- Planning and coordination of measures to prevent and eliminate the consequences of natural disasters and man-made impacts;
- Developing infrastructure to ensure the sustainability of interstate supplies of energy resources and the development of external markets;
- Expanding relations of the SPECA participating States with international organizations, donor countries and partners in the field of effective use of WER;
- Taking joint action to protect ecosystems;
- Achieving carbon neutrality and a phased transition to renewable and alternative energy sources;
- Promoting the stability of joint energy, water and irrigation systems;
- Improving the common electricity market, including the renewable energy sources market of concerned SPECA participating States;
- Ensuring energy security through responsive cooperation in times of crisis situations in the fuel and energy complex;
- Developing hydrocarbon deposits in the SPECA participating States and building appropriate infrastructure for their processing and transportation;
- Enabling the use of environmentally friendly motor fuels, non-conventional and renewable energy sources;
- Establishing and introducing in the region a mutually beneficial economic mechanism for water and energy cooperation at both interstate and private levels, including the use of PPP mechanism;
- Improving legislation in the field of water management and energy;
- Developing infrastructure for collection and storage of runoff and flood waters;

- Revitalizing cooperation for the implementation of the regional programme «Green Agenda» for Central Asia;
- Sharing experience in design, construction and operation of waterworks, and modernization of irrigation systems; and
- Fostering the sustainable use of water and energy by supporting cities in developing and implementing innovative green and climate-smart city policies, as envisaged in the SPECA Forum of Climate Smart Cities.

## **V. Cooperation for effective food security**

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA, the participating States of the Programme, ESCA and UNECE have identified the following as priority areas for cooperation in the field of effective food security governance:

- Establishing a dedicated High-Level Working Group on Effective Food Security;
- Developing trade and economic relations between FEA participants, producers and consumers of agro-industrial products;
- Supporting initiatives to achieve the SDGs relating to food security;
- Facilitating exchange of best practices and raising awareness of agro-industry-related SDGs in the SPECA participating States;
- Supporting increased cooperation among the SPECA participating States on food security;
- Facilitating trade and promoting implementation of international norms and standards relating to best practices in food security;
- Promoting public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the area of food security;
- Promoting cooperative links between the leading agro-industrial enterprises and creating value chains;
- Stimulating scientific and technological exchanges and introducing advanced resource-saving solutions in agriculture;
- Adopting joint instruments on food security in the SPECA region with a focus on the SDGs achievement;
- Supporting institutional arrangements for cross-border, inter-agency and public-private partnerships for development of agro-industrial complex;
- Promoting integration of the SPECA participating States into global food and agricultural supply chains;
- Strengthening research capacity in the field of food security;
- Establishing effective linkages between research institutions in the agro-industrial sector of the SPECA participating States;
- Introducing innovative technologies and implementing high-tech projects for agricultural production and food processing;
- Organizing joint forums, exhibitions, training courses and seminars, as well as research activities to share best practices and technologies in the agro-industrial sector;

- Taking measures to expand mutual trade and improve quality of agricultural commodities and foodstuffs;
- Strengthening food safety controls;
- Organizing production of goods recommended for healthy nutrition;
- Improving veterinary, sanitary and phytosanitary standards;
- Raising awareness of standards, norms and regulations related to the safety of food and products subject to phytosanitary and veterinary supervision;
- Developing high-yielding and resilient crop varieties;
- Establishing information and consulting centers for farmers and small producers, improving the quality of agro-consulting services they receive in order to train them to work on the basis of resource-saving technologies;
- Empowering agricultural producers to use green technologies;
- Ensuring free trade in goods and simplifying the rules governing the movement of foodstuffs;
- Taking measures to foster a healthy eating culture among the population of the SPECA participating States, providing safe and vitamin-rich food products at affordable and stable prices; and
- Organizing fairs involving agricultural producers from the SPECA participating States and partners.

## **VI. Cooperation in Innovation, Technology, Education and Science for Sustainable Development**

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA, the participating States of the Programme, ESCAP and UNECE have identified the following as priority areas for cooperation in the field of innovation and technology:

- Promoting innovation and application of innovative technologies;
- Developing infrastructure to support and finance innovation activities, including through PPPs;
- Pooling the knowledge and efforts of engineering companies from the SPECA participating States to develop innovative machinery and equipment for the energy, logistics and transport, agriculture and water sectors;
- Harmonizing the legislation of the SPECA participating States in the field of ICT based on universally recognized principles and norms of international law;
- Supporting scientific and technical cooperation and information exchange in the field of information;
- Developing digital health care and telemedicine;
- Developing a network of Economic Universities and Open Digital University in the SPECA region;
- Collaboration on establishment of the SPECA Regional Research Center on Sustainable Development and Green Economy at the Azerbaijan State University of Economics through



leading coordination role of the Sustainable Development and Green Economy Center named after Nizami Ganjavi;

- Expanding opportunities for electronic interaction through digitalization of procedures, including in state control and supervision;
- Designing and implementing interstate digital development projects;
- Implementing measures to introduce digital technologies in the customs sector and transport and logistics sector;
- Implementing and integrating electronic trading platform systems within the SPECA region to improve the efficiency of eCommerce;
- Sharing best practices in digitalization of public administration and public services to shift to paperless trade and reduce the non-observed economy in the SPECA region;
- Developing human resources and delivering digitalization training;
- Building and improving legal and regulatory framework to support and develop the ICT and innovation sector;
- Fostering innovative entrepreneurship and promoting commercialization of innovations;
- Cooperation among IT parks in the SPECA participating States to generate joint ICT projects and launch promising start-up projects;
- Organizing trainings, workshops and meetups to stimulate interest in ICT and promote computer literacy;
- Implementing joint projects aimed at creating technology parks and training qualified IT specialists;
- Assisting IT-companies in the SPECA participating States in accessing the global market;
- Supporting organizations in the SPECA participating States that provide IT services and export IT products;
- Promoting and implementing the Digital Inclusion project to train youth, women and persons with disabilities in IT service delivery skills;
- Establishing the SPECA Center for Digital Solutions and Artificial Intelligence Development;
- Organizing joint research work to promote mutual scientific cooperation and increase technological awareness and knowledge through joint scientific articles;
- Organizing business acceleration programmes to develop and support start-ups, collective projects and student initiatives in the field of innovation and technology;
- Taking measures to improve women's health, ensure their employment, develop women's entrepreneurship, and strengthen social protection;
- Ensuring, in accordance with applicable international treaties, mutual recognition and equivalence of documents on higher education and academic degrees;
- Strengthening scientific cooperation between higher education institutions of the SPECA participating States;

- Creating conditions for the formation of a common educational and research space of the SPECA region;
- Strengthening cooperation between academies of sciences, leading research centers, higher education institutions and the largest technology parks of the SPECA participating States;
- Expanding the practice of creating joint educational and research structures; and
- Developing coordinated measures to protect young people from radicalism, extremism, terrorism, human trafficking, drug addiction, and a frivolous attitude to life.

## **VII. Cooperation on gender equality and SDGs**

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA, the participating States of the Programme, ESCAP and UNECE have identified the following as priority areas for cooperation in the field of gender equality and SDGs:

- Promoting women's representation in public and private companies;
- Averting stereotypes in education and research to increase women's representation in research and development (R&D);
- Creating support systems to promote women's entrepreneurship;
- Increasing the share of women in decision-making positions to 30 per cent by pursuing gender equality policies and increasing women's socio-political activism;
- Fostering in society a culture of zero tolerance of harassment and violence against women and safeguarding women's rights and legitimate interests;
- Formulating proposals to address emerging issues related to gender equality, poverty reduction and economic growth in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs;
- Promoting key gender equality issues, including ensuring full economic and political empowerment of women;
- Establishing the SPECA Businesswomen's Council in order to continuously and systematically encourage active initiatives and concrete plans of businesswomen under the Programme;
- Establishing an international SPECA Recognition Award for women who have made a major contribution to the prosperity and economic development of countries and cooperation under the Programme;
- Broadening training and retraining opportunities for qualified specialists and for attestation of academic and educational research personnel; and
- Strengthening cooperation with the "UN Women" organization.

## **VIII. Cooperation on statistics**

In line with the overall objectives of SPECA, the participating States of the Programme, ESCAP and UNECE have identified the following as priority areas for cooperation in the field of statistics:

- Conducting international comparisons of countries in the region;
- Promoting cooperation in collecting, processing and disseminating statistical information in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics adopted by UNECE in 1992 and the UN Statistical Commission in 1994;
- Supporting development of national statistical systems in the region to enhance their capacity to produce, process, and disseminate relevant statistics in line with internationally agreed methodology and quality standards that meet the users' needs;
- Facilitating exchange of experience and best practices on all stage of statistical production, including dissemination and communication of statistical information in socio-demographic, economic and environmental and climate change areas;
- Assessing national statistical systems and facilitating sectoral reviews to support the development of national statistical strategies and development plans;
- Developing advanced statistical methods and techniques, including innovative open data solutions, for professional development of statisticians, conducting research and applying the same in practice;
- Stimulating close cooperation in development wide implementation of modern ICT in the processes of collection, processing, transmission and dissemination of statistical data, deepening automation of work processes related to statistical data, formation of a unified statistical data bank;
- Supporting the changing roles of National Statistical Organizations with respect to data stewardship in the National Statistical System, accessing and using non-traditional data sources, increased independence and the accompanying change in statistical legislation and the communication of these changes;
- Developing and exchanging of experiences in modernizing human resource management, development and training in statistics and communication with stakeholders; and
- Ensuring comparability and expansion of published aggregate statistical data regarding socio-economic and environmental situation of the SPECA participating States, including on the status of gender equality and exchange of information on environmental, economic and social issues.

The participating States of the Programme, ESCAP and UNECE share confidence that consistent and quality implementation of this Concept will strengthen SPECA as a consolidated, effective, multidisciplinary programme that promotes regional stability, economic cooperation and the well-being of the citizens of the SPECA participating States.

By 2030, SPECA will have solidified its positions in the global and regional architecture, progressively moving towards effective integration of the Programme participating States into the world economy and enhanced cross-border cooperation to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

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