



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

2011 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM

**“20 Years of Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Central Asia:
Successes, Challenges and Prospects”**

(Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 10-11 November 2011)

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

BACKGROUND

The SPECA Governing Council at its fifth session held in Geneva on 19 October 2010 concluded that the next SPECA Economic Forum should deal with the state of economic cooperation and integration in Central Asia (Decision 11 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2010/11)). Accordingly, the 2011 SPECA Economic Forum is organized under the title “20 Years of Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Central Asia: Successes, Challenges and Prospects”.¹

In 2011, Central Asian countries are celebrating the 20th anniversary of their independence. This occasion offers an opportunity for these countries to take stock of the economic and social progress achieved by them during these two decades. The 2011 SPECA Economic Forum will complement this by taking a broader look: it will discuss the successes and challenges of regional economic cooperation and integration in Central Asia since 1991. It is also expected to make recommendations on the way forward.

FORMAT

The Government of Turkmenistan as the Chair of SPECA in 2011 proposes a setting and format for the 2011 SPECA Economic Forum along the model of similar and larger international events.² The objective is to facilitate a vivid, interactive discussion. The Chair also proposes to invite a high-level person of international reputation as keynote speaker.

The keynote speakers and invited experts on regional cooperation and integration will be asked to highlight on the basis of concrete examples the main objectives of and benefits offered by regional cooperation and integration organizations.

¹ The sixth session of the SPECA Governing Council will take place immediately after the Economic Forum in the afternoon of 11 November 2011.

² The venue of the Economic Forum could be a conference facility offering a “theatre-type” setting with panelists sitting on the podium.

The representatives of SPECA member countries, partner organizations and multilateral and bilateral donors will be invited to engage in an open discussion on how much progress has been achieved in regional economic cooperation and integration in Central Asia and what steps could be undertaken to further strengthen such cooperation and integration in the future.

The 2011 SPECA Economic Forum in its conclusions could highlight possibilities for pragmatic steps that could strengthen further the institutional and legal basis for regional economic cooperation and integration in areas where member countries are ready for it.

10 November 2011

10.00-11.15 Opening session

Opening statements by the representative of the host country, the Executive Secretary of UNECE and the Executive Secretary of ESCAP.

Opening statements by the representatives of SPECA member countries.

11.15-11.30 Coffee break

11.30-13.00 First session: “Setting the stage: the role of regional cooperation and integration in the age of globalization”

A keynote speaker and the panelists will explore the role of regional economic cooperation and integration in the age of globalization. The discussants will be invited to highlight the objectives and benefits of regional economic cooperation and integration organizations in other geographical areas, setting the scene for the subsequent discussion of cooperation and integration processes of the last two decades in Central Asia.

Keynote statement by a high-level guest speaker on the economic and social benefits of regional cooperation and integration.

Panel of discussants³: the Executive Secretaries of UNECE and ESCAP, the Director of RBEC UNDP (*tbc*), high-level representatives of the European Union (*tbc*), ASEAN (*tbc*) and BSEC (*tbc*).

13.00-15.00 Lunch break

15.00-16.15 Second session: “How economic cooperation and integration can contribute to regional stability and security”

This session will highlight the benefits of regional economic cooperation and integration in broader areas of common interests, like increasing the overall stability and security of the region. The discussants will be invited to highlight the role of regional economic cooperation in addressing broader shared challenges, for instance environmental security. The example of Afghanistan will be used to demonstrate the role of regional economic cooperation in post-conflict stabilization efforts.

³ Panelists will be invited to make brief interventions related to the keynote address which will be followed by an interactive discussion by the panelists and the audience.

Keynote statement: "The contribution of regional organizations to peace and stability", Professor Ademola ABASS, Head of Peace and Security Program, United Nations University for Comparative Regional Integration Studies (UNU-CRIS).

Keynote statement on the role of regional cooperation for the reconstruction and stabilization of Afghanistan.

Panel of discussants: Representatives of UNAMA (*tbc*), RECCA Secretariat (*tbc*), UNRCCA (*tbc*) and OSCE (*tbc*).

16.15-16.30 Coffee break

16.30-18.00 Third session: "How to take advantage of the benefits offered by regional economic cooperation and integration in Central Asia?"

In light of the findings and recommendations of the Central Asia Human Development report by UNDP and forecasts for the development of the world economy, discussants will be invited to deliberate on how strengthened regional economic cooperation and integration could contribute to the rapid and stable economic growth of SPECA member countries in the future. Representatives of the private sector will be invited to present "success stories" to demonstrate the advantages of cross-border and regional economic cooperation in Central Asia.

Keynote statement on the basis of the Central Asia Human Development Report by UNDP.

Keynote statement on the basis of the OECD / WB forecast for the development of the world economy.

Panel of discussants: Representatives of EBRD (*tbc*), World Bank (*tbc*), EurAsEC (*tbc*), EDB (*tbc*) as well as businesses that engage in successful cross-border and regional activities.

11 November 2011

10.00-11.15 Fourth session: "Enhancing intra-regional trade, transport, transit and investment"

This session will review opportunities for improved cooperation and integration in such key areas as trade, transport, transit and investment. Discussants will be invited to highlight the role of efficient trade and transport links and a favourable investment climate as key factors in economic integration initiatives. The session will also discuss their importance for the competitiveness of modern economies.

Keynote statement: Transport as a key contributor to competitiveness and a catalyst for integration among the land-locked countries of Central Asia.

Panel of discussants: Representatives of the UNECE and ESCAP, the CAREC Institute (*tbc*), ADB (*tbc*) and IsDB (*tbc*).

11.15-11.30 Coffee break

11.30-12.30 Fifth session: “The way forward: working together to strengthen political, legal and institutional support to regional economic cooperation”

This session will explore, how political level consultations, support to institution building and legal harmonization can accelerate the strengthening of regional economic cooperation in the SPECA region. Keynote statement by the Executive Secretary of the UNECE on the potential of SPECA to support regional economic cooperation and integration through human and institutional capacity-building and legal harmonization.

Panel of discussants: Representatives of SPECA member countries.

12.30-13.00 Closing session

Adoption of Conclusions.

Closing statements by the representative of the host country and the Executive Secretaries of ESCAP and UNECE.
