

**2012 SPECA Economic Forum “Strengthening Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Central Asia by Sharing the Asian Experience”  
(Bangkok, Thailand, 27-28 November 2012)**

**Conclusions by the Chairperson of the 2012 SPECA Economic Forum**

- The 2012 SPECA Economic Forum was held on 27 and 28 November 2012 in Bangkok under the title “Strengthening Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Central Asia by Sharing the Asian Experience”. The meeting built on the work accomplished by two previous SPECA Economic Forums: the 2007 Economic Forum in Berlin which reviewed the European experience of regional economic cooperation and integration and the 2008 Economic Forum in Moscow, which discussed the experience of Eurasian economic cooperation and integration.
- In his opening statement, the representative of Turkmenistan, the present Chair country of SPECA, expressed full support of his Government to all activities in this important regional framework, in particular to efforts to ensure the safe delivery of energy resources to world markets.
- The Executive Secretary of UNECE underlined the importance of careful study of Asian best practices in the field of regional economic cooperation and integration as well as increased attention to regional aspects of the post-2015 development agenda and implementation of the Rio+20 priorities.
- The Executive Secretary of ESCAP pointed to the growing strategic importance of the Central Asian region. She called for a greater role of SPECA in promoting economic cooperation and integration processes in the Asia-Pacific region, which are far from being complete.
- The representatives of SPECA participating countries outlined those areas of regional economic cooperation which are considered to be a priority for their Governments. While describing the impressive economic progress by their countries they pointed to the role of regional economic cooperation in accelerating this progress and making it sustainable.
- The Economic Forum heard keynote statements on Asian regional cooperation and integration processes, in particular the experiences of SAARC and APEC and also on evolving integration in the framework of the Euro-Asian Economic Commission and on activities of the Eurasian Development Bank. The presentations on Eurasian economic integration not only emphasized the successes of this process but also its open nature.
- Participants highlighted the relevance of the Asian experience for Central Asia and emphasized the need to develop closer cooperation among regional organizations and arrangements, which could play a key role in improving intraregional connectivity in the broader Asia-Pacific region.
- A particularly important aspect of regional cooperation and integration – its role in strengthening the stability and security of the region - was highlighted during the third session of the Economic Forum. The particular role of strengthened economic

cooperation between Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbours for the success of the “transition decade” in Afghanistan was emphasized by the speakers.

- Representatives of international financial institutions presented their views on regional economic cooperation and integration in Central Asia. The representative of ADB introduced the CAREC strategy till 2020 and described the main directions of CAREC activities in the field of trade, transport and energy as well as activities of the CAREC Institute. The representative of the International Monetary Fund presented a detailed analysis of economic processes in Central Asia, comparing them with similar processes in other regions of the world. He highlighted the contradiction between the impressive economic growth of the countries of the region and the modest gains in intraregional trade and investment. The presentation by the representative of the UNDP focused on two global initiatives, the work on the post-2015 development agenda and the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General on sustainable energy for all. She called on SPECA to catalyze efforts to better integrate the needs and priorities of the Central Asian region into the post-2015 development agenda and the implementation of other initiatives.
  - The Economic Forum heard in depth analyses by two distinguished researchers on regional cooperation and integration processes in Central Asia, highlighting the potential benefits of strengthened regional cooperation for the sustainability of economic growth of these countries and the much-needed diversification of their economies.
  - The concluding session of the Economic Forum focused on the role of regional economic cooperation in the successful achievement of UN development goals and in the implementation of priorities set by UN summits. Participants heard convincing arguments in favour of better integration of the special needs and priorities of SPECA countries in the post-2015 development agenda. Regional cooperation would help SPECA countries to implement the Rio+20 priorities too. A more intensive discussion of regional aspects of these issues within the SPECA framework was supported by participants.
  - The 2012 SPECA Economic Forum continued the tradition of previous such meetings of discussing strategic issues of regional economic cooperation in Central Asia. I would like to thank ESCAP and UNECE for the preparation of this important event, thank our speakers for their excellent presentation and thank the representatives of SPECA countries for their active participation in these discussions. I trust that they return to their capitals with a wealth of ideas that will further enrich and facilitate the joint thinking of SPECA countries on key issues of regional economic cooperation and integration in Central Asia.
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