



Third session of the SPECA Governing Council

(Moscow, Russian Federation, 20 October 2008)

REPORT

1. Introduction

1. The third session of the SPECA Governing Council was held on 20 October 2008 in Moscow, Russian Federation, in conjunction with the 2008 SPECA Economic Forum, “Investment Partnerships for Stronger Economic Cooperation and Integration in Central Asia”.

2. Participants

2. Representatives of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as well as the Executive Secretaries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), participated in the session. Delegations from India, Germany and the Russian Federation took part in the work of the session as observers, as did representatives of international organizations, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

3. Opening of the session

3. The session was conducted under the chairmanship of Mr. Amonullo Ashur, First Deputy Minister for Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan, Chairman of the third session of the SPECA Governing Council. The Chairman welcomed the participants of the SPECA Governing Council session and expressed his hope for its positive results. He also thanked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation for having offered to host the SPECA Economic Forum and the Governing Council session in Moscow.

4. **Mr. Marek Belka**, Executive Secretary of UNECE, noted in his opening statement that in May 2005 in Astana, the International Conference on Strengthening Sub-regional Economic Cooperation in Central Asia, responding to the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to strengthen SPECA, had decided to undertake a series of comprehensive measures to reform the Programme, including a renewal of its governing structure, an increase in the number of Project Working Groups (PWG), better funding for projects, the organization of annual SPECA Economic Forums and broader cooperation with partner organizations. Noticeable progress had been achieved since then, particularly better programme delivery and an improvement in project funding. Regular coordination had been established between SPECA and UNDP, ADB/the Central

Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Programme, EurAsEC, SCO and other organizations and programmes.

5. SPECA also showed a great degree of flexibility. In the light of increasing demand, the PWG on ICT for Development had been transformed into the PWG on Knowledge-based Development. SPECA was also contributing to addressing the water and energy crisis in Central Asia. It was expected that ways to strengthen contributions in that key area would be developed during the work of the International Conference, “Water Unites - Strengthening Cooperation on Regional Water Management in Central Asia”, which was scheduled to take place in Almaty in November 2008.

6. Mr. Belka emphasized that much remained to be done so that SPECA could fully respond to the expectations of all of its member countries. First, frank discussions were needed, both among the member countries themselves and with UNECE and ESCAP, about emerging challenges and how to face them. The joint visits by the two Executive Secretaries to the capitals of SPECA member countries, proposed by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, would provide an excellent opportunity to discuss future directions of SPECA activities.

7. UNECE hoped that, in the future, SPECA would add to the capacity-building activities focused on decision makers and individual experts already being carried out and also engage in strengthening the activities of the regional institutions of its member countries, such as the International Fund to Save the Aral Sea (IFAS) or the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia. That would further empower the SPECA member countries to deal more effectively with the main challenges of regional economic and environmental cooperation. Such institutional capacity-building could take full advantage of the comparative advantages of both of the Regional Commissions: neutrality under the umbrella of the United Nations, expert assessments carried out by United Nations specialists, a broad network of experts and policymakers and the relevant international legal instruments. The Executive Secretary stressed that it was up to SPECA member countries to define the strategic direction of the Programme and to provide the United Nations with guidance on future activities.

8. **Ms. Noeleen Heyzer**, Executive Secretary of ESCAP, noted in her welcoming statement that the session of the Governing Council was taking place against the backdrop of a gloomy economic environment with pressing challenges in food and energy security, as well as the need for greater financial stability. In a globalizing world, those factors had implications for the achievement of successful development outcomes, particularly the Millennium Development Goals. In such an environment, the need to promote greater regional cooperation was paramount, and there was thus a need to act together to tap the full potential of SPECA to forge regional cooperation in a range of areas, principally energy and water, transport and border crossing, trade, technology, statistics, gender and the economy. By adopting the South-South cooperation modality, SPECA could provide home-grown solutions and policy options to achieve inclusive sustainable development.

9. She recalled that the Tenth anniversary of SPECA provided an opportunity to review the progress that had been achieved and to consider the ways in which SPECA could become more useful to its member countries. To develop the initiative of the Secretary-General contained in a letter to the Heads of SPECA member countries, the Executive Secretaries of UNECE and ESCAP intended to undertake missions to the capitals of member countries to discuss how they could work together to meet the transnational challenges facing the region.

10. ESCAP could facilitate technical and regional cooperation and assist in strengthening the links between Central Asia, the Caucasus and other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. For instance, the ESCAP-led initiatives of the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway were important achievements that connected Central Asia with the other countries of Asia and Europe. The year before, ESCAP had hosted a meeting to bring together experts from SPECA and ASEAN member countries to exchange experiences in trade facilitation. A session of the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries, which included SPECA members, would be held during the Commission session in April 2009.

11. Ms. Heyzer emphasized the need to support genuine partnerships among a range of bilateral and multilateral agencies and expressed satisfaction that representatives of United Nations agencies and other international organizations were present at the Governing Council session.

12. **The Head of the delegation of Afghanistan** emphasized that SPECA member countries would only be able to take advantage of globalization by strengthening regional cooperation. Afghanistan attached great hope to the strengthening of its participation in regional cooperation in Central Asia. The representative of Afghanistan stressed that his country highly valued the spirit of cooperation and unity within the SPECA framework.

13. The SPECA region had vast potential in natural and human resources. Afghanistan could play a strategic role in the transit of energy resources from Central Asia to South Asia. The Government of Afghanistan actively supported the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project and SPECA could play a constructive role in its development. A no less important role was played by the development of roads and railways connecting Central Asia with seaports in South Asia. Afghanistan was also interested in increasing its electricity imports from Central Asia.

14. The efficient and wise use of water resources was an issue of paramount importance for all Central Asian countries, including Afghanistan. Afghanistan was in great need of technical assistance to strengthen its potential in that area. As the world financial crisis could negatively affect funding for development aid, Afghanistan called for the continuation of adequate funding for SPECA projects.

15. **The Head of the delegation of Azerbaijan** stressed that his country attached great importance to the development of cooperation with Central Asian countries. He recalled that the first SPECA Economic Forum had taken place in Baku. Since then, discussions at SPECA Economic Forums had moved to a completely new level. The SPECA Work Plan defined the areas of work in six SPECA Project Working Groups. In November, Azerbaijan would host the first session of the PWG on Knowledge-based Development in Baku. Azerbaijan would also play a leading role in the PWG on Gender and Economy.

16. Azerbaijan supported the further strengthening of SPECA since the framework of the Programme promoted the development of a positive atmosphere of cooperation. At the same time, there was a need to strengthen the practical implementation of the Programme and cooperation with partner organizations. Azerbaijan's offer to host a regional centre for the development of e-management was still open.

17. Azerbaijan was actively developing a modern financial sector and was therefore experiencing the full impact of the world economic crisis. SPECA member countries should coordinate their economic policies more closely in order to be less affected by world financial

turmoil. In addition, more joint projects were needed in key areas which would encourage greater investment.

18. **The Head of the delegation of Kazakhstan** joined previous speakers in expressing an overall positive assessment of SPECA activities. Over the 10 years which had passed since the adoption of the Tashkent Declaration on the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, the Programme had proven that it was an excellent platform for open and thorough discussions of the problems of subregional cooperation of States in the region.

19. All of the Programme's areas of activity - trade, transport, rational use of water and energy resources, knowledge-based economic development and gender equality - were extremely relevant and of interest to the countries in the region. Measures to reform and strengthen the Programme and its governing structure had proven themselves to be worthwhile. The outcomes of the two previous sessions of the SPECA Governing Council had turned out to be effective and the Coordinating Committee, which was responsible for the operational management of the Programme's activities, was working well.

20. SPECA Economic Forums were being held regularly, which helped to attract the attention of foreign investors and partners to the needs of SPECA countries.

21. The implementation of the 2008-2009 Work Plan, including all areas of activity of UNECE and ESCAP in support of the Programme, furthered the assurance of reliable project funding and was therefore an important factor for success. Kazakhstan was prepared to participate actively in the work of SPECA and to promote the implementation of the Programme.

22. **The Head of the delegation of Kyrgyzstan** welcomed the results of the SPECA Economic Forum, which demonstrated the overall strengthening of cooperation under the Programme, supported by UNECE and ESCAP. SPECA member countries needed to develop a strategic partnership in such key areas as water resources, transport and trade. The goal of such a partnership should be the dynamic development of all Central Asian States. Multilateral cooperation mechanisms, such as SPECA, EurAsEC and SCO, played an important role in the development of such partnerships. As for SPECA, it could support programmes carried out by those regional organizations, in particular in such key area as water and energy resources and transport.

23. The attention of SPECA was focused on key issues of cooperation in the region, such as transport. Kyrgyzstan had signed all of the UNECE transport conventions and hoped to reduce the costs associated with import and export charges and access to world markets. The further development of projects along the Great Silk Road required improvements in transit across borders. Cooperation between SPECA and ADB/CAREC needed to be strengthened in order to ensure the complementarity of efforts of both programmes. The *Guidebook on Promoting Good Governance in Public-Private Partnerships* developed by UNECE could be of appreciable help to SPECA member countries in broadening their cooperation with international financial institutes, particularly in areas such as the development of hydropower. In addition, it was extremely important that issues of water resources stopped being an area of conflict and became an area of regional cooperation. The Government of Kyrgyzstan is ready to further strengthen its support of SPECA activities.

24. **The Chairman, speaking on behalf of Tajikistan**, expressed his gratitude and appreciation to UNECE and ESCAP for their participation and their assistance to countries in the

Central Asian region through SPECA. Tajikistan, as a supporter of regional economic cooperation, had been actively participating in SPECA activities since its creation. SPECA aimed to strengthen cooperation among the countries of Central Asia to increase the rate of economic development and to mobilize additional internal and external resources to solve issues that were a priority for all member countries.

25. Although problems of economic growth and social development and the financial and food crises were national issues, they had a strong regional context because the SPECA member countries were directly connected with one another. Issues of managing water and energy resources, labour migration, intraregional trade and the use of a common transport and transit infrastructure affected economic, social and investment development. Prospects for prosperity depended significantly on strengthened cooperation among Central Asian countries.

26. The extreme importance of cooperation was recognized by SPECA countries. Calls for the integration of the countries had been heard repeatedly at multilateral and bilateral meetings of their leaders. Documents regulating various issues of regional cooperation had been adopted. Nevertheless, the gap between adopted documents and their implementation remained great. SPECA had enormous potential and, in that regard, member countries needed to focus their attention on improving the normative and legal basis for the development of regional cooperation, in particular for transport and transit potential. The goal of such cooperation could be the solution of regional transit problems and the solution of the transport impasse, the development of cooperation for the efficient use of water and energy resources and hydrocarbon stores, the development of regional trade and the adoption of measures to simplify trade procedures.

27. Tajikistan chaired the Project Working Group on Trade, which had completed discussions on its terms of reference and confirmed its work plan and its action plans for the simplification of trade procedures, trade policy, accession to WTO and the development and promotion of export potential. Tajikistan supported reforms to simplify trade procedures, since that issue was particularly urgent. The transport, transit and trade policies of Tajikistan, as a landlocked country, largely depend on the policies of neighbouring States on those issues, as well as on the presence of a harmonized system of trade in the region as a whole.

28. So far, normative and legal acts to streamline procedures connected with export and import operations had been adopted, the single window concept for export and import operations had been developed and a TIFA (Framework agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Governments of the countries of Central Asia concerning the development of trade and investment relations) conference had been held, where the major issues had been developing trade and attracting investments. A conference on the development of cross-border trade was being planned. Decrees of the Government of Tajikistan had been adopted on the creation of two free economic zones: in the north of the country and in the south, on the border with Afghanistan.

29. The Chairman emphasized that the successful solution of many problematic issues, as well as the efficient implementation of the programmatic activities of SPECA, depend on the common will to undertake joint efforts to achieve mutually beneficial and mutually acceptable results.

4. Review of the implementation of the decisions of the SPECA Governing Council taken at its second session (13 November 2007, Berlin, Germany), including the implementation report of the 2008-2009 SPECA Work Plan.

30. **The Chairman** announced that a brief review of the work conducted by the SPECA Project Working Groups and a review of the ongoing cooperation between UNECE and ESCAP and their partner organizations, including the European Union, EurAsEC and CAREC, would be presented under the agenda item.

31. **Mr. Marek Belka**, Executive Secretary of UNECE, on behalf of the two Regional Commissions, presented a brief review of the work conducted by the SPECA Project Working Groups, which had been prepared by UNECE and ESCAP and distributed to the session participants. In that regard, he noted the following new points:

- a) In accordance with the decisions of the second session of the Governing Council, the PWG on ICT for Development had been transformed into the PWG on Knowledge-based Development. The first session would be held in Baku on 12 November 2008. In addition to ICT issues, the PWG would address issues of innovative development, competitiveness, intellectual property rights and public-private partnerships.
- b) SPECA projects had begun to receive additional funding from the World Bank, ADB, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Government of the Russian Federation. As the present financial crisis could limit funding from some donors, SPECA member countries with adequate resources could consider the possibility of joint financing of projects of particular interest to them.
- c) In view of the compound water and energy crisis developing in the region, work to mobilize additional funding to support the work of the PWG on Water and Energy Resources had increased noticeably. In particular, UNECE was actively working in that area with the European Commission and Italy, the country responsible for water and environmental issues in the implementation of the European Union Central Asian Strategy. In that regard, UNECE in cooperation with the Government of Germany, UNDP and the Executive Committee of IFAS was organizing the International Conference “Water Unites - Strengthening Cooperation on Regional Water Management in Central Asia” which will be held on 17 and 18 November 2008 in Almaty.

32. **The Chairman** noted that the participants in their interventions at the opening session of the Governing Council had already provided their detailed assessments of the activities of SPECA and its Project Working Groups and had touched upon issues of strengthening the cooperation of SPECA with international and regional organizations and he invited any further comments.

33. **The delegation of Kazakhstan** showed a video to the participants of the Governing Council session on plans for the development of Europe-Asia transport corridors through Kazakhstan.

34. **Mr. Ben Slay, the representative of UNDP**, shared with the session participants the preliminary results of the joint inter-agency research on current development challenges in the Central Asian region, with a particular focus on the link between water and energy problems.

Representatives of international organizations, on the basis of a preliminary assessment made by the World Bank, had agreed in July 2008 in Almaty to conduct a joint analysis of the risks associated with the compound crisis growing in the region as a result of the drought and the extremely cold 2007-2008 winter and the resulting problems of water supply and energy and food security. The countries suffering the most were Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which needed humanitarian aid. The present crisis was linked with general water management problems in the region, particularly in the Syr Darya basin. The results of the research would be presented at the International Conference “Water Unites - Strengthening Cooperation on Regional Water Management in Central Asia”, which will be held on 17 and 18 November 2008 in Almaty.

35. **The Chairman** proposed the adoption of the following decisions under the agenda item:

- a) The Governing Council notes with satisfaction the outcomes of the third meeting of the SPECA Economic Forum “Investment partnerships for stronger economic cooperation and integration in Central Asia” which was held in Moscow on 20 October 2008.
- b) The Governing Council takes note of the report on the implementation of the 2008-2009 SPECA Work Plan. It notes with satisfaction the increasing number of activities implemented within the framework of the six Project Working Groups and the steady growth of budgetary and extrabudgetary funding available for project implementation.
- c) The Governing Council welcomes the inaugural session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (former the PWG on ICT for Development) which is scheduled to be held on 12 November 2008 in Baku, Azerbaijan.
- d) The Governing Council welcomes the achievement of significant progress in establishing the regular and substantial coordination of activities and in strengthening cooperation between SPECA and other programmes and organizations supporting regional economic cooperation in Central Asia, in particular the annual inter-agency coordination meetings with the participation of UNDP and ADB (CAREC group), EurAsEC, ECO and SCO. The Governing Council urges UNECE and ESCAP to continue their close cooperation with partner organizations, including the elaboration and implementation of joint projects in support of regional cooperation, whenever feasible.

36. The proposed draft decisions were adopted (see Annex—Decisions 1, 2, 3 and 4).

5. Follow-up to the letter of the United Nations Secretary-General on joint visits of the Executive Secretaries of UNECE and ESCAP to the SPECA capitals to discuss ways to further strengthen the Programme. The proposals of Kazakhstan on strengthening SPECA (letter of the President of Kazakhstan to the UN Secretary-General)

37. **Mr. Marek Belka**, Executive Secretary of UNECE, recalled that the United Nations Secretary-General in his letter of 5 March 2008, in which he had congratulated the Presidents of SPECA member countries on the Tenth anniversary of the Tashkent Declaration, had proposed that the Executive Secretaries of UNECE and ESCAP undertake joint visits to SPECA countries and discuss with their leaders how the Programme could be further strengthened so that it could

more effectively promote regional economic cooperation. Although those joint visits had not yet begun, in June 2008, Mr. Belka had had the honour to meet in Dushanbe with President E. Rahmon and discuss some key issues connected with the regional management of water resources. Mr. Belka had expressed his certainty that his successor to the post of UNECE Executive Secretary would continue to pay special attention to SPECA, which was a key area for the work of the Commission in Central Asia.

38. The Executive Secretary of UNECE recalled that the letter of President N. Nazarbayev to the United Nations Secretary-General had been distributed to session participants and underlined that the Regional Commissions highly valued the strong support that SPECA received from the President of Kazakhstan. Mr. Belka hoped to receive in the near future the opinions of other SPECA member countries regarding the proposals contained in the letter.

39. **Ms. Noeleen Heyzer**, Executive Secretary of ESCAP, noted that the strengthening of regional cooperation would help member States to turn economic growth into stability, security and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. SPECA activities targeted regional cooperation and South-South cooperation. She also noted that, during the upcoming joint visits to Central Asia, the Executive Secretaries intended to discuss the further strengthening of the Programme and how the United Nations could more effectively contribute to the prosperity and stability of the region through the unique Programme. She underlined that, in his letter to the United Nations Secretary-General, the President of Kazakhstan had proposed preparing a list of concrete projects under SPECA and inviting the Russian Federation, China and the European Union to work with the Programme.

40. She also recalled that, during the informal meeting of heads of delegations of SPECA member countries that had taken place the preceding year in Almaty during the sixty-third session of the Commission, Kazakhstan had made several proposals to increase the effectiveness of SPECA, including the following:

- a) To mobilize resources for medium-term and long-term projects;
- b) To define a broader list of projects and establish close cooperation with EC and ASEAN; and
- c) To invite neighbouring countries, such as the Russian Federation and China, to be observers to SPECA.

41. She said that those proposals had been transmitted to all SPECA member countries and that the Regional Commissions were awaiting both feedback on the proposals and other ideas based on the priorities of the countries.

42. **The Chairman** proposed the adoption of the following decisions under the agenda item:

- a) The Governing Council invites the Executive Secretaries of UNECE and ESCAP to undertake joint visits to SPECA capitals to discuss additional ways to strengthen the Programme, an idea initiated by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his letter of 5 March 2008 to the Presidents of SPECA member countries.
- b) The Governing Council expresses its appreciation for the proposals on strengthening SPECA contained in the letter of the President of Kazakhstan and requests the secretariats of both Regional Commissions to elaborate concrete proposals for their

implementation for discussion at the next session of the SPECA Governing Council or Coordinating Committee.

43. **The representative of Azerbaijan** suggested revising the wording of the second point of the proposed draft decision to make it more specific.

44. The draft decisions were adopted with the amendment of Azerbaijan (see Annex - Decisions 5 and 6).

6. Information on the SPECA office proposed in the report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly on strengthening the United Nations development pillar

45. **Ms. Noeleen Heyzer**, Executive Secretary of ESCAP, recalled that the United Nations Secretary-General, aiming to create stronger cooperation and increased effectiveness of programme delivery, had proposed to the General Assembly that a joint ESCAP-UNECE SPECA office be created in Central Asia. In that regard, she hoped that the important United Nations development pillar would receive staunch support from SPECA member countries at the UN General Assembly. She noted that one of the main functions of the office would be to promote and support specific regional priorities and programmes.

46. **Mr. Marek Belka**, Executive Secretary of UNECE, noted that the United Nations Secretary-General, in proposing the creation of a joint ESCAP-UNECE office in Central Asia, had underlined that it was being done “with a view to strengthening the Organization’s programme delivery in countries of the region within the framework of SPECA”. According to the report of the Secretary-General, the joint SPECA office would be created “to ensure regular liaison with the Governments of member countries to improve needs assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of projects, to strengthen the support to SPECA governing bodies and Project Working Groups”.

47. The Executive Secretary of UNECE also noted that, if the General Assembly were to approve the proposal of the Secretary-General, both Regional Commissions would jointly circulate to the Governments of SPECA member countries invitations for proposals to host the office, including detailed requirements and precise criteria for the evaluation of the proposals. At the same time, the Executive Secretary underlined that, since UNECE and ESCAP jointly support SPECA, it should be a truly joint office, which would be jointly staffed and managed by both of the Regional Commissions and accountable to them.

48. The members of the Governing Council supported the initiative of creating a joint office of the Regional Commissions for SPECA. **The representatives of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan** confirmed their interest in hosting the joint office of Regional Commissions for SPECA in their countries.

49. **The Chairman** proposed the adoption of the following decisions under the agenda item:

- a) The Governing Council takes note with appreciation of the information provided by the secretariats of UNECE and ESCAP on the creation of a joint UNECE-ESCAP SPECA office as proposed in the report of the United Nations Secretary-General “Improving the effective and efficient delivery of the mandates of development-

related activities and revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009”.

- b) The Governing Council welcomes the interest expressed by several SPECA member countries in hosting the office in their countries. It requests the secretariats of both Regional Commissions, if the General Assembly should approve the relevant proposal of the United Nations Secretary General, to circulate jointly to the Governments of SPECA member countries invitations for proposals to host the office, including detailed requirements and specific criteria for the evaluation of the proposals.

50. The proposed draft decisions were adopted (see Annex - Decisions 7 and 8).

7. Election of the Chair (country) of the SPECA Governing Council

51. The Chairman recalled that, at its previous session in Berlin in November 2007, the Governing Council had invited the Governments of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to consider the issue of their possible chairmanship of SPECA. As responses from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to that invitation had not yet been received, the Governing Council had been pleased to accept the offer of Tajikistan to continue its chairmanship of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (see Annex - Decision 9).

8. Other business

52. **The representative of the secretariat** proposed that the decision on the venue and time of the next session of the Governing Council and the 2009 SPECA Economic Forum should be agreed upon through diplomatic channels. The Governing Council agreed to the proposal (see Annex - Decision 10).

53. **The Chairman** expressed his appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation for its excellent organization of the Governing Council session and the SPECA Economic Forum in Moscow and the hospitality shown to the participants in those events.

54. The Chairman thanked the secretariats of UNECE and ESCAP and their Executive Secretaries for having organized the session and for their active work to strengthen SPECA and their support in implementing the Programme.

55. The Chairman expressed particular gratitude to Mr. Marek Belka, who was assuming his new important responsibilities as Director of the European Department of the International Monetary Fund at the beginning of November 2008 and who, as Executive Secretary of UNECE, had made a huge personal contribution to the strengthening of SPECA and the development of fruitful cooperation between UNECE -and the United Nations as a whole - and SPECA member countries.

56. **The Governing Council** supported the proposal of the Chairman to reflect the aforementioned statements in the report and decisions of the Governing Council at its third session (see Annex - Decisions 11-13).

57. **The Chairman** announced that, in accordance with established practice, in the following 10 days, the secretariat would prepare the draft report of the session, including the texts of the

decisions of the Governing Council, which would be sent to session participants after approval by the Chairman.

58. The delegations of SPECA member countries and the Executive Secretaries of UNECE and ESCAP made brief closing statements, after which the Chairman declared the third session of the Governing Council closed.

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ANNEX

**DECISIONS
OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE SPECA GOVERNING COUNCIL****Decision 1 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/1)**

The Governing Council notes with satisfaction the outcomes of the third meeting of the SPECA Economic Forum “Investment partnerships for stronger economic cooperation and integration in Central Asia” which was held on 20 October 2008 in Moscow, Russian Federation.

Decision 2 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/2)

The Governing Council takes note of the report on the implementation of the SPECA Work Plan for 2008-2009. It notes with satisfaction the increasing number of activities implemented within the framework of the six Project Working Groups and the steady growth of budgetary and extrabudgetary funding available for project implementation.

Decision 3 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/3)

The Council welcomes the inaugural session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development (former the PWG on ICT for Development) which is scheduled to take place on 12 November 2008 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Decision 4 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/4)

The Governing Council welcomes the achievement of significant progress in establishing the regular and substantial coordination of activities and in strengthening cooperation between SPECA and other programmes and organizations supporting regional economic cooperation in Central Asia, in particular the annual inter-agency coordination meetings with the participation of UNDP and ADB (CAREC group), EurAsEC, ECO and SCO. The Governing Council urges UNECE and ESCAP to continue their close cooperation with partner organizations, including the elaboration and implementation of joint projects in support of regional cooperation, whenever feasible.

Decision 5 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/5)

The Governing Council invites the Executive Secretaries of UNECE and ESCAP to undertake joint visits to SPECA capitals to discuss additional ways to strengthen the Programme, an idea initiated by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his letter of 5 March 2008 to the Presidents of SPECA member countries.

Decision 6 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/6)

The Governing Council expresses its appreciation for the proposals on strengthening SPECA contained in the letter of the President of Kazakhstan and requests the secretariats of both Regional Commissions to elaborate concrete proposals for their implementation and to submit them for consideration by SPECA member countries for possible inclusion on the agenda of the next session of the SPECA Governing Council or Coordinating Committee.

Decision 7 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/7)

The Governing Council takes note with appreciation of the information provided by the secretariats of UNECE and ESCAP on the creation of a joint ECE-ESCAP SPECA office in Central Asia as proposed in the report of the United Nations Secretary-General “Improving the effective and efficient delivery of the mandates of development-related activities and revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009”.

Decision 8 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/8)

The Governing Council welcomes the interest expressed by several SPECA member countries in hosting the office in their countries. It requests the secretariats of both Regional Commissions, if the General Assembly should approve the relevant proposal of the United Nations Secretary-General, to circulate jointly to the Governments of SPECA member countries invitations for proposals to host the office, including detailed requirements and specific criteria for the evaluation of the proposals.

Decision 9 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/9)

The Governing Council welcomes and is pleased to accept the offer of Tajikistan to continue its chairmanship of SPECA.

Decision 10 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/10)

The Governing Council decides that the venue and time of the next session of the Governing Council and the 2009 SPECA Economic Forum will be agreed upon through diplomatic channels.

Decision 11 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/11)

The Governing Council expresses its appreciation to the Government of the Russian Federation for its hospitality and for the excellent arrangements made for the meetings of the Governing Council and the SPECA Economic Forum.

Decision 12 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/12)

The Governing Council expresses its appreciation to the secretariats of UNECE and ESCAP and their Executive Secretaries for their organization of the session and for their active work to strengthen SPECA and their support in implementing the Programme.

Decision 13 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2008/13)

The Governing Council expresses special gratitude to Mr. Marek Belka, who will assume his new important responsibilities as Director of the European Department of the International Monetary Fund at the beginning of November 2008 and who, as Executive Secretary of UNECE, made a huge personal contribution to the strengthening of SPECA and the development of fruitful cooperation between UNECE—and the United Nations as a whole—and SPECA member countries.

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