



NATIONS UNIES

COMMISSION ÉCONOMIQUE
POUR L'EUROPE

ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫЕ НАЦИИ

ЕВРОПЕЙСКАЯ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКАЯ
КОМИССИЯ

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR EUROPE

Closing Remarks

by

Mr. Sven ALKALAJ

United Nations Under-Secretary-General

**Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic
Commission for Europe**

at

**the 2012 SPECA Economic Forum: “Strengthening Regional
Economic Cooperation and Integration in Central Asia by
Sharing the Asian Experience”**

Bangkok, 28 November 2012

Dear Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank our Chairperson, Ambassador Aydogdyev and all the speakers of the 2012 SPECA Economic Forum for a truly fascinating exchange of experiences and ideas on regional economic cooperation and integration. During this one and a half day a very broad discussion took place that gave all of us a good idea about the complexity of regional cooperation and its intricate links with the economic development, security, social stability and human development of the countries involved.

The discussion started with the presentation of the Asian experience of economic cooperation and integration – in particular of SAARC and APEC – and then expanded to cover Euro-Asian integration processes in the framework of the Eurasian Economic Commission. Participants later examined some key areas and objectives of regional economic cooperation and integration, in particular the strengthening of the stability and security of the countries of Central Asia. No surprise that this discussion focused on the stabilization and sustainable development of Afghanistan in view of the beginning of the “transformation decade”, the success of which depends, among others, on progress with strengthening regional economic cooperation between Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbors.

The presentation by the representative of the Asian Development Bank on the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program outlined the impressive long-term strategy of the most important coordination framework for development assistance by multilateral financial institutions, with a portfolio of nearly 20 billion dollars of investment. The readiness of CAREC to work with other regional arrangements was certainly welcomed by the representatives of the Governments of SPECA participating countries who have consistently called for closer coordination and cooperation between SPECA and its much bigger partner, CAREC. The presentation by the IMF revealed the striking gap between the impressive economic progress by Central Asian countries in recent years and the modest growth of regional economic cooperation within the Central Asian region.

Perhaps one of the more important conclusions of the Forum was the articulation of the need to pay more attention to regional aspects of the post 2015 development agenda. The importance of regional cooperation was emphasized for the successful implementation of the Rio+20 priorities too.

A fully support the approach to the elaboration of the post 2015 development agenda proposed by my distinguished colleague, the Assistant Administrator of the UNDP, Ms. Sultanoglu, combining national level work by the UNDP with the discussion of regional aspects in the SPECA framework. Such an approach would increase the chances that the global post 2015 development agenda reflects the particular challenges faced by the SPECA region and recognizes the importance of regional cooperation in meeting these challenges. This would facilitate the mobilization of public and private resources to help SPECA countries achieve the new goals.

I would like to thank again our partner Commission, ESCAP for the excellent organization

of this Economic Forum, building on their long-cooperation with Asian regional organizations and institutions in the interest of SPECA participating countries. I hope this discussion will provide ample food for thought and new impetus to efforts to strengthen regional economic cooperation and integration in Central Asia.
