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REPORT

Fourteenth session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 19 November 2019

RECOMMENDATIONS of the fourteenth session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade

The fourteenth session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade discussed the following topics: report on the activities in 2018-2019; report on the Round Table on Trade Policy and the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement on 18 November 2019; strengthening the partnership of SPECA trade negotiators; implementation of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy; developing projects to implement sustainable and inclusive trade in the subregion; non-tariff barriers to trade; and building partnerships for trade and sustainable development in the SPECA subregion.

The participants recommend to the Governments of SPECA participating countries to:

1. take note of the progress report on the activities of the WG on Trade in 2018-2019;
2. strengthen the collaboration of the SPECA trade negotiators and policy-makers, notably on the implementation of the WTO TFA, accession to the WTO of those SPECA countries that are not yet members;
3. further use the SPECA framework as a collaborative platform of the SPECA countries to support sustainable and inclusive growth and the development of sustainable trade in the subregion, with a focus on providing input to:
 - i. policy decisions in SPECA countries to achieve the SDGs related to trade;
 - ii. work programmes, cooperation plans, best-practice exchanges, and the use of standards and tools for sustainable trade to achieve the SDGs; and
 - iii. development of subregional projects on sustainable trade that would attract funding;
4. submit for approval at the 14th session of the SPECA Governing Council on 21 November 2019, in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, the following deliverables of the WG on Trade: the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy, the Principles for sustainable trade and the Concept Note on a Study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the SPECA Subregion;
5. upon approval of the Trade Facilitation Strategy by the Governing Council, further develop in 2020 the Roadmap of Activities to Implement the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy as a separate document with timelines and responsibilities distributed, and start implementing it;

6. identify areas for development, draft and propose to development partners projects on sustainable trade in the subregion;
7. upon approval of the Concept Note on a Study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the SPECA Subregion by the Governing Council, in collaboration with UNECE, start raising funds, preparing a methodology and conducting the Study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the SPECA Subregion;
8. strengthen subregional cooperation to support parallel progress in regional trade development and sustainable development;
9. collaborate with the SPECA WG on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity on strengthening the transit regime in the SPECA subregion, including the TIR Convention;
10. promote the distribution and use of the third edition of the *English-Russian-Chinese Glossary of trade facilitation terms*, developed by UNECE, translated by the China National Institute for Standardization, also assisted by the Eurasian Economic Commission;
11. reinforce collaborative efforts with relevant international organizations and development partners working towards the achievement of trade facilitation and sustainable trade in the subregion, included but not limited to UNCTAD, IRU, OSCE, the World Bank, GIZ, USAID, ADB, and others; further collaborate with donor Governments, attract support from SPECA countries in line with the 2018 SPECA Evaluation Report;
12. support the development and adoption of the *Ashgabat Initiative on reducing barriers to trade and transport in the SPECA subregion, using UN legal instruments, standards and best-practice recommendations*, as the concluding document from the 2019 SPECA Forum on *Connectivity: Sustainable Transport and Trade Facilitation in the SPECA Subregion*, 20-21 November 2019 in Ashgabat.

REPORT of the 14th session

Opening and organizational matters

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) together with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) organized the fourteenth session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade on 19 November 2019, in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, back-to-back with the 2019 SPECA Economic Forum *Connectivity: Sustainable Trade and Transport Facilitation in the SPECA Region* (20-21 November 2019) and the 14th session of the SPECA Governing Council (21 November 2019).

A. Participants

Representatives of all SPECA participating countries took part in the session: Afghanistan; Azerbaijan; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; delegates of the Russian Federation and Germany participated, as well as the European Union. The following United Nations agencies and programmes participated in the session: UNECE; ESCAP; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the World Trade Organization (WTO); the following regional and international organisations sent their representatives: the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO); the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Representatives of foundations, business and academia also participated. Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were represented at the ministerial level, Kazakhstan was represented by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in Turkmenistan (the nominated Vice Minister sent her excuses), while Azerbaijan's delegation was composed of technical specialists in international trade policy and transport.

The Working Group supports cross-border and regional cooperation for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in the SPECA region, with a focus on sustainable trade, (notably SDG targets 17.10 and 17.11). The session focused on finalizing the documents and deliverables of the SPECA Working Group on Trade expected to be approved by the upcoming 14th session of the SPECA Governing Council on 21 November 2019, notably the updated Terms of Reference of the Group; Progress Report and Work Plan for 2020-2021; the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy; the Principles of Sustainable Trade in the SPECA subregion; and the Concept Note on Regional Study of Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade. Another objective was to analyze further the opportunities and challenges from participation in the multilateral trading system and to make a brief overview of the status of implementation of the WTO TFA.

Participants of the session as well as representatives of the SPECA participating countries contributed to the aforementioned documents, as well as provided their insights on those areas of trade development that the SPECA Working Group on Trade will work on in the coming 3-4 years and supported the idea of adopting the Ashgabat Initiative as the concluding document of the 2019 SPECA Economic Forum.

B. Opening

H.E. Mr. Zavqi Zavqizoda, First Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan and Chairperson of the SPECA Working Group on Trade, opened and **chaired the session**. He drew the attention of the participants to the three deliverables of the WG on Trade that were expected to be finalized and submitted for adoption to the upcoming 14th session of the SPECA Governing Council and invited everyone to contribute to their finalization. He also outlined that cooperation of trade negotiators can bring substantial benefits to the further promotion of economic growth of the SPECA countries and thus contribute to the achievement of the SDG target 17.11.

H.E. Mr. Karar Mammedov, Deputy Minister of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations of Turkmenistan, welcomed the participants at the session on **behalf of the Government of Turkmenistan** and outlined the important role of SPECA in providing a common ground for cooperation of the countries of Central Asia, Afghanistan and Azerbaijan. Substantial results were achieved in the areas of transport, water resources management and trade facilitation. In 2017 and 2018, the main goods exported from Turkmenistan to other SPECA countries were agricultural products, fuel, chemical products, as well as textiles, while the main imports from the SPECA countries were: foodstuff, industrial and agricultural machinery, metals, construction materials, electronics and vehicles.

Mr. Sayed Yahya Akhlaqi, Deputy Secretary General of the ECO, welcomed the participants and made a brief introduction to the recent ECO agreements. The ECO Trade Agreement, which aims at strengthening the cooperation among the ECO Member States in trade facilitation, had been signed by Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement was signed by all SPECA countries except for Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Full implementation of those two agreements would further promote trade development in the region.

Representatives of the SPECA participating countries then presented their priorities and suggestions on trade facilitation, sustainable trade development, non-tariff barriers to trade and the overall activities of the SPECA Working Group on Trade.

C. Country statements

- a. **Azerbaijan** reported on the progress in its process of accession to the WTO, in both multilateral and bilateral negotiations. The latest bilateral meetings were conducted in 2019 with the USA, Canada, Australia, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong Market access of foreign goods and the domestic support to agriculture were discussed. The Action Plan of accession of Azerbaijan to the WTO (signed in 2006 by the President) concentrated on the introduction of 39 new legislative acts. 10 acts had already been adopted and the next 10 were under development. On the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), Azerbaijan had conducted an assessment of its readiness to implement the Agreement, with the help of UNECE. The assessment had found that 28 out of 39 TFA measures had already been implemented in Azerbaijan, while from the remaining 11 measures, 10 had been partially implemented.
- b. **Kazakhstan** reported on its progress of implementation of the WTO TFA and on the process of public-private consultations undertaken within the recently established National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) with an objective to identify concrete priority activities for trade facilitation implementation. The NTFC is chaired by the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan and is composed of representatives from all governmental agencies and business associations. Following recommendations of the UNECE, a Working sub-party chaired by Deputy Minister of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan has been established under the NTFC to provide a more agile and reactive consultation mechanism. In July 2019 Kazakhstan officially notified the definitive dates for implementation of its “B” and “C” measures.
- c. **Kyrgyzstan** reported on the adoption of the Action plan for the implementation of the TFA until 2023. The Ministry of Economy had established six specialized working groups on the implementation of various provisions of the TFA. Kyrgyzstan also officially nominated its transit coordinator and launched the implementation of the international cargo vehicle weight certificate. Kyrgyzstan is developing legislation for e-commerce.
- d. **Tajikistan** confirmed its continuous commitment to all trade-related initiatives in the SPECA region and outlined the high importance attached to the regional cooperation with other SPECA

countries. Tajikistan had successfully implemented its post-WTO accession Programme of adjustment of Tajikistan's economy. In August 2019, Tajikistan officially submitted to the WTO secretariat its notification on the definitive categorisation of TFA measures "B" and "C". On the bilateral level, Tajikistan updated its Free Trade Agreement with Uzbekistan and signed a protocol on bilateral trade with Kazakhstan. In compliance with its TFA obligations, Tajikistan established its national trade portal in April 2019. The share of exports to Kazakhstan reached 19.9% of total exports of Tajikistan for the first 10 months of 2019. Tajikistan already assists Uzbekistan in the latter's accession to the WTO and is ready to extend its support to other SPECA countries as well.

- e. **Turkmenistan** reaffirmed its support to the regional initiatives of the SPECA countries and underlined the importance of trade in achieving the SDGs. The first Caspian Economic Forum, held in August 2019 in Avaza, Turkmenistan, promoted the establishment of stronger regional partnerships for trade cooperation and facilitation. The UNECE Executive Secretary participated at that Forum and provided substantial input to the success of the event. She met many high officials of the SPECA countries. The President of Turkmenistan discussed with the UNECE Executive Secretary the idea to establish a SPECA Trust Fund in the region and promised comprehensive support to the activities within the framework of SPECA. Following on that proposal, the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan in Geneva organized the SPECA Ambassadorial Conference on 9 September 2019 where all Ambassadors of the SPECA countries, the UNECE Executive Secretary and Directors of UNECE Divisions were present. The countries expressed their interest in establishing a SPECA Trust Fund and forwarded the available information to their capitals for study and consideration. Based on the outcomes of that high-level meeting, the UNECE secretariat prepared a Concept Note on the Establishment of the SPECA Trust Fund (in English and Russian), which was sent to the SPECA countries.
- f. **Uzbekistan** recalled the success of the Round Table on Trade Policy and WTO held on 18 November 2019 and reported on the measures undertaken by Uzbekistan in trade liberalization, further development of intraregional trade and trade facilitation. In the previous two years, Uzbekistan had adopted more than 45 legislative acts on streamlining and digitization of its Customs procedures, development of risk management systems and integration of advanced ICT solutions in the Customs administrations. Uzbekistan introduced an advance submission of Customs declarations and, based on its simple and comprehensive form, it can be used directly by the declarants without the use of Customs brokers. The cargo declaration can now be completed with the help of Customs officers working at the front-office of the respective Customs facilities. As a result of these reforms, the international trade of Uzbekistan for the first 10 months of 2019 increased by 25%; export increased by 35% and reached 15 billion USD. In 2019 the volume of intraregional trade increased by 66% compared to 2016. As part of its WTO accession process, Uzbekistan is already conducting an assessment of its readiness to implement the TFA with the support of the GIZ and is exploring the opportunity to conduct another assessment by the UNECE.

The Chairperson of the session summarized the country statements, outlining that the process of trade and transit facilitation is on different levels in the SPECA countries and that close cooperation and exchange experiences between them is the only way to reach long-term sustainable development objectives.

Session I – Regional Trade Cooperation and Trade Facilitation

A. Progress Report of the SPECA WG on Trade

H.E. Mr. Zavqi Zavqizoda, in his capacity as **Chairperson** of the SPECA WG on Trade, presented the Progress Report of the WG on Trade. He invited the participants to provide inputs to the finalization of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy developed through intergovernmental consultations within the SPECA WG on Trade.

B. Regional Trade Facilitation Strategies

Ms. Sheri Rosenow, Counsellor of the Market Access Section of the WTO, presented, in a comparative perspective, the experience of other regions in the development of regional trade facilitation strategies. The TFA has provisions that encourage WTO members to adopt regional approaches to assist in the implementation of their obligations. Such a provision was first proposed by the Caribbean countries wishing to reduce costs and support each other with capacity building and then it was endorsed by all other members of the WTO who extended that provision to the whole Agreement. The main objectives of adopting a regional trade facilitation strategy are: (i) coordination of reforms; (ii) maximization of market access opportunities; (iii) improvement of the business environment; (iv) mobilization of donor support; (v) development of economic resilience. On the level of regional cooperation, the closest to the SPECA example is CARICOM. They have developed and adopted the CARICOM Regional Trade Facilitation Strategy, which was presented at the WTO recently. They had also launched work on developing a Roadmap for implementation. The Strategy identified 18 Category “C” priority TFA provisions that require regional cooperation. The Governments of the Caribbean countries then conducted consultations with representatives of the regional business community and narrowed the list to just 8 top priority provisions: TFA articles 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 6.1, 7.6, 7.4, 7.5 and 5.3. Some of the TFA provisions will be implemented on the regional level (trade information website, enquiry point, risk management system, advance ruling, laboratories, regional representation in international standards setting bodies) while some will only be implemented on national level but with regional support (model laws, regulations and agreements, standard operating procedures and guidelines, regional coordinating committees). The CARICOM Secretariat, which has existed for long time, will provide its comprehensive support to implement the Strategy through: (i) overseeing regional coordination and implementation within region; (ii) monitoring and progress evaluations; (iii) ensuring coherence and consistency between trade facilitation priorities; (iv) promoting public-private region-wide dialogue; (v) serving as the platform for exchanging experience and best practices; (vi) mobilization of donor support for regional projects.

C. SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy

The Chairperson of the session delivered a brief introduction of the methodology and objectives of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy, which had been developed through intergovernmental consultations within the SPECA WG on Trade for the last two years.

Mr. Mario Apostolov, UNECE Deputy Coordinator of SPECA, Secretary to the SPECA WG on Trade and Regional Adviser of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the UNECE, continued the presentation of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy recalling the latest activities of the SPECA WG on Trade on building capacity for trade facilitation in the region (including a seminar on 4 items of the WTO and National Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanisms in Nur-Sultan in May 2019, a high-level seminar of the SPECA WG on Trade at the WTO on 4 July 2019, and other activities). The Strategy defines: (i) a vision for trade facilitation in the region led by the SDGs; (ii) the current and desired situations of implementing the TFA; (iii) goals and indicators of achievement; (iv) activities and monitoring mechanism; (v) resources necessary to successfully implement trade facilitation measures. If the SPECA Governing Council adopts the proposed Strategy, then the WG on Trade will further work on the Roadmap for implementation of the Strategy and conduct studies on streamlining formalities with the support of the development partners.

D. CIS activities on trade facilitation

Mr. Sergei Ivanov, Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee of the CIS, noted that all SPECA countries except for Afghanistan are CIS member States. Based on the Agreement on the CIS Free Trade Area, the total volume of trade between CIS countries increased by 11% in 2018 and continues to grow. A special place in this positive trend belongs to Uzbekistan as its trade with other CIS countries increased by more than 30% in 2018. The liberalization of foreign trade helped Uzbekistan to become the fastest growing economy in the CIS. It is a common misconception to consider that trade facilitation is only about Customs. The CIS approach to trade facilitation is aligned with the Buy-Ship-Pay model of UNECE; it considers trade facilitation in a much broader sense and extends the concept to cover not only goods but services as well. In this perspective, the CIS develops an Agreement on Free Trade in Services. When finalized, it will contribute to further development in the CIS in this area. The CIS work on trade facilitation is carried out by several Working Groups, each dedicated to focus themes (Customs facilitation, standardization, digitization and others) and the deliverables of this work can also be used within the activities of the SPECA Thematic Working Groups.

E. GIZ perspectives on Trade Facilitation in Central Asia

Ms. Christina Schmahl, Regional Trade Policy Advisor of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) Regional Office in Bishkek, delivered a brief overview of the second stage of the project “Trade Facilitation in Central Asia”, which was expected to be commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development in December 2019. The objective of this new project is to improve the implementation of trade facilitation measures in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The following main outputs are going to be pursued: (i) improvement of risk management systems for border clearance by strengthening cooperation between control agencies; (ii) introduction of simplified transit procedures through TIR Electronic Pre-Declaration with a view to establish eTIR corridors; (iii) activation of the involvement of the private sector in policy making for trade facilitation through the NTFCs; (iv) piloting of innovative measures of trade facilitation on several border crossing points. Those outputs are already aligned with the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy achievement indicators and once the Strategy is adopted, GIZ is ready to render support to the SPECA countries in its implementation.

F. OSCE work on connectivity, trade and transport facilitation in the region

Ms. Ivana Markovic, Economic and Environmental Officer of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat, presented the activities of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat. Each year the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat prepares a list of proposed projects for the next year in the economic and environmental areas, and it submits that list to the Government of Turkmenistan for endorsement. The OSCE Regional Ministerial Conference “Good Governance and Economic Connectivity – Best practices within the OSCE Region” held on 30-31 May 2018 in Ashgabat produced in its concluding document a set of 28 recommendations in the areas of trade and transport facilitation and digitization of Customs and transport procedures. Those recommendations coincide with the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy and the draft of the 2019 SPECA Economic Forum concluding document. Once the latter are adopted by the SPECA Governing Council, they would permit synergies in achieving the objectives set forth in all those documents.

G. The private sector view on trade and transport facilitation in the SPECA region

Ms. Larisa Kislyakova, Chairperson of the Association of Transport and Logistics Partnership in Central Asia, introduced the activities of the association created within the Central Asian Trade Forum annual events, which are supported by USAID and GIZ. The Association developed several studies on the physical and non-physical barriers to road transport as the most used mode of transport in Central Asia and on the state of implementation of the UN transport-related legal instruments. The principal recommendation formulated on the basis of

those studies was to strengthen public-private dialogue within the newly created NTFCs. With the support of the GIZ, the Association organized the first regional meeting of the NTFCs where the following issues were given top priority: (i) information availability; (ii) transit; (iii) facilitation of border crossing procedures; (v) implementation of the international weight certificate; and (vi) temperature related regulations.

H. Launch of the new UNECE Publication “Trade Facilitation Terms: an English-Russian-Chinese Glossary (revised third edition)”

Mr. Mario Apostolov, UNECE Deputy Coordinator of SPECA and Regional Adviser of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the UNECE, made a brief overview of the third edition of the Glossary and outlined the success of the previous editions. The initial request to develop such a Glossary was made in 2006 and this led to the first edition of the Glossary that contained 837 terms in English and Russian. Following the accession of the Russian Federation to the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) the Glossary was complemented and thus a second edition was published in 2012, containing 891 terms. With the entry into force of the TFA, with Russia and China becoming WTO members, with the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union, and with the introduction of INCOTERMS 2020, it became necessary to review and update the Glossary to reflect the new trends in trade facilitation and for the first time to include Chinese translation. This work was finalized in October 2019 and resulted in the publication of the revised third edition of the Glossary on 15 November 2019. This edition is also published in electronic form¹ at the UNECE website with many advanced interactivity features integrated into it.

Mr. Grant Akopyan, Consultant of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the UNECE, continued with a demonstration of the special features of the electronic version of the Glossary.

The Chairperson of the session made a summary of the first session, dedicated to the strengthening collaboration between the SPECA participating countries within the framework of the SPECA WG on Trade, and welcomed the publication of the third edition of the Glossary. He also invited the representatives of the SPECA participating countries to consider publishing the Glossary adding their national languages which would support the capacity of national trade policymakers to understand the trade facilitation terms.

The Chairperson of the session invited the participants to consider the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy. The text of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy was accepted unanimously.

Session II – Regional Trade for Achieving Sustainable Development, Non-Tariff Measures and Barriers

The Chairperson of the session made an introduction to the objectives of session II: (i) make an overview on the state of alignment of non-tariff measures with the SDGs in the SPECA region; (ii) present the Concept Note for a regional study on non-tariff barriers to trade; and (iii) discuss the Principles of Sustainable Trade. The expected results of the session II were accepting the final drafts of the two abovementioned deliverables of the SPECA WG on Trade with a view to submit them to the 14th session of the SPECA Governing Council for adoption.

A. Non-tariff Measures (NTMs) and Sustainable Development in the SPECA Region

Mr. Yann Duval, Chief of the Trade Policy and Facilitation Section of the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division of the ESCAP, made an overview of the latest joint ESCAP-UNCTAD publication “Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2019: Navigating Non-Tariff Measures towards Sustainable Development”. For the last twenty years it has become a common trend in the Asia-Pacific to lower applied tariffs while introducing new regulations (48% TBT, 30%

¹ <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=53007>

SPS, 13% export-related measures and others). The traditional approach to NTM is that they are by default negative concepts and should be eliminated. The main objective of the aforementioned report was to demonstrate that selected NTMs, even those that seem to limit trade, may need to be accepted and maintained. In this perspective, 42% of the NTMs are directly and positively affected by the SDG targets, the highest share of which address SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) through regulations on medicine, food and vehicle safety, alcohol and tobacco products. At the same time, the study revealed that there was a scope for more regulations in the following spheres: (i) water efficiency for SDG target 6:4; (ii) energy efficiency for SDG target 7:3; (iii) illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing for SDG targets 14:4 and 14:6; and (iv) illegal timber trade for SDG target 15:2. As the NTMs affect trade, their influence can be calculated, and the result is that the average trade costs of NTMs in the Asia-Pacific region are 15.3% higher than in US and EU. The report formulates recommendations on what can be done to maximize the contribution of NTMs to achieve SDGs: (i) use international harmonized standards when introducing NTMs; (ii) improve the implementation of trade facilitation measures; (iii) follow the TRIM approach when introducing NTMs on domestic level (Transparency, Regulatory reviews and sustainability impact assessments, Inclusive trade facilitation and More quality infrastructure); and (iv) combine efforts on the regional level to reduce protectionism and compliance costs.

B. Principles of Sustainable Trade and the Concept Note on Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade in the SPECA Region

Mr. Mario Apostolov, UNECE Deputy Coordinator of SPECA and Regional Adviser of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division of the UNECE, recalled the background on the development of the of the two deliverables of the WG on Trade and provided a brief presentation of their objectives. For the Principles of Sustainable Trade, the main activities are to: (i) analyze the situation & risks of inaction in the SPECA region; (ii) formulate strategic responses to improve the impact on trade of various spheres; (iii) formulate concrete actions to raise the understanding of relevant SDGs; (iv) put forward innovative approaches to foster change in attitudes and practices. The Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to trade in the SPECA Region has an objective to identify the regulatory and procedural barriers to trade and propose a set of recommendations to improve efficiency of their implementation.

The Chairperson of the session made a summary of session II and invited the representatives of the SPECA countries to provide comments (if any) to the two deliverables of the WG on Trade that were presented during the session II. The texts of both deliverables were accepted unanimously.

Session III: Updated Terms of Reference (ToR) of the SPECA Working Group on Trade

The Chairperson of the session made an overview of the changes in the updated Terms of Reference of the SPECA Working Group on Trade and invited the representatives of the SPECA countries to approve the final version of its text to be submitted to the Governing Council for adoption. The text of the updated ToR of the SPECA Working Group on Trade was unanimously approved.

The **Chairperson of the session** led the discussion on the English and Russian texts of the Recommendations of the 14th session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade and invited the participants to provide their comments to the proposed texts. Both texts of the Recommendations were approved unanimously.