



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

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**PREAMBLE**

1. The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) was established by the Tashkent Declaration on 26 March 1998. The SPECA participating States are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

**OBJECTIVES**

2. The objectives of the Programme are to facilitate economic cooperation in the SPECA region, integration of the SPECA participating States into the world economy and to provide a platform for cross-border cooperation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. SPECA (a) provides a neutral United Nations platform for discussions on strategic issues of regional economic cooperation among the SPECA participating States as well as their integration into the world economy for the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (b) develops, supports and coordinates relevant capacity-building activities in the SPECA participating States; (c) promotes compliance with relevant international legal instruments, norms, guidelines, standards and recommendations; and (d) stimulates the exchange of best national practices among the SPECA participating States.

**GOVERNING STRUCTURE**

**SPECA Governing Council**

4. The supreme governing and decision-making body of SPECA is the Governing Council, composed of National Coordinators at the minister or deputy minister level, as well as the Executive Secretaries of the UNECE and ESCAP.

5. The Governing Council is chaired by one of the SPECA participating States. The Chair country is elected by the Governing Council session on a rotational basis, normally for a period of one year. Decisions are taken by consensus.

6. The SPECA Governing Council meets annually at a date and venue agreed by the participating States. A Chairperson of the annual session of the SPECA Governing Council is a National Coordinator or a high-level representative of the Chair country.

7. The UNECE and ESCAP secretariats each nominate a SPECA Coordinator and a Deputy Coordinator at UNECE and ESCAP, respectively, to ensure the smooth running of the Programme.

8. Each SPECA participating State nominates a SPECA Focal Point to assist the SPECA National Coordinator as well as the SPECA Coordinators and Deputy SPECA Coordinators at UNECE and ESCAP in the proper management of the Programme.
9. The official working languages of SPECA are Russian and English.
10. The Governing Council provides guidance to the work carried out within the SPECA framework by:
- (a) Determining strategic issues for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals that are regional in nature or require regional economic cooperation and integration,
  - (b) Considering the conclusions and recommendations of the SPECA Economic Forums for adoption as decisions,
  - (c) Identifying priorities for its future work, discussing and adopting biennial SPECA work plans based on the biennial work programmes of the SPECA Thematic Working Groups,
  - (d) Reviewing progress in the implementation of activities of the SPECA Thematic Working Groups, and
  - (e) Establishing and disbanding Thematic Working Groups and approving their Terms of Reference.
11. Representatives of the member States of UNECE and ESCAP, United Nations Funds, programmes and specialized agencies, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions and donor agencies may be invited to attend the SPECA Governing Council sessions as observers.
12. Representatives of the private sector and academic community may be invited to participate in the discussion of specific agenda items.

### **SPECA Economic Forums**

13. The SPECA Economic Forums are organized annually in conjunction with the sessions of the Governing Council.
14. The SPECA Economic Forums focus on selected strategic issues of economic development and cooperation in the SPECA region, which contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. The Forums provide a platform for high-level policy dialogue among all relevant stakeholders and make concrete recommendations to the Governing Council. The theme topic of each Economic Forum should be identified in advance by the Chair country of SPECA.
15. Representatives of the UNECE and ESCAP member States, representatives of United Nations Funds, programmes and specialized agencies, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions, and donors as well as representatives of the private sector and academic community may be invited to participate in the SPECA Economic Forums.

### **SPECA Trust Fund**

16. The SPECA Trust Fund is established under United Nations management with a view to mobilize and harness financial support from potential partners for implementing regional assistance projects in SPECA participating States.

17. The SPECA Trust Fund will operate as a UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), in line with the Terms of Reference of the SPECA MPTF and the applicable UN rules, policies and procedures, as well as guidance and decisions of SPECA decision-making bodies. The SPECA MPTF is a UN-managed pooled fund mechanism established to operationalize stronger cooperation and integration in the SPECA region through programmatic interventions. The scope theory of change and governance mechanisms of the SPECA MPTF are specified in its Terms of Reference.

18. The Fund will be governed by the SPECA UN Trust Fund Steering Committee (Azerbaijan). The co-chair(s) of the Steering Committee of the SPECA Trust Fund will present an update on the SPECA Trust Fund's work to the decision-making bodies of SPECA upon request, including annual reports to the SPECA Governing Council.

### **SPECA Thematic Working Groups**

19. The SPECA Governing Council has the following subsidiary bodies:

- a. Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment,
- b. Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity,
- c. Working Group on Trade,
- d. Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development,
- e. Working Group on Statistics, and
- f. Working Group on Gender and SDGs.

20. In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to support its participating States in developing subregional economic cooperation, and integrating their economies into the world economy for realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SPECA Thematic Working Groups shall:

- (i) Provide a platform for supporting progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on the SDGs directly related to their thematic areas of work;
- (ii) Aim at providing information and share best practice experiences regarding the implementation of SDGs related to their thematic areas of work, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; and
- (iii) Become a mechanism for identification, implementation and coordination of technical programmes and projects within the scope of their competence thereby building capacity, promoting best practices and strengthening mutual trust at political level among the SPECA participating States.

21. Each Working Group is chaired by at least one SPECA participating State.

22. Each Working Group shall comprise National Representatives nominated by the Governments of the SPECA participating States as well as the UNECE and ESCAP Secretaries to the Working Group.

23. The National Representatives shall be senior officials involved in the formulation and implementation or be aware of national policies and programmes, which affect national policies related to the main areas of work of the relevant Working Group and able to effectively follow up the recommendations and decisions of the Working Group sessions.

24. The two United Nations Regional Commissions shall nominate the UNECE and ESCAP Secretaries to each Working Group to provide support to the activities of the Group.
25. Each SPECA participating State shall also nominate, on a permanent or *ad hoc* basis, experts on various aspects of the thematic areas of work when required.
26. Governments of the SPECA participating States nominate Focal points for each Working Group to ensure successful delivery of programmes of work, according to adopted Terms of Reference.
27. Each Working Group shall hold its annual session at a date and venue agreed by all SPECA participating States any time before or concurrent to the annual sessions of the SPECA Governing Council.
28. Each Working Group develops, agrees upon and approves its Terms of Reference and submits them to the Governing Council session for adoption.
29. Each Working Group shall develop, agree upon, approve and implement its biennial work programmes and prepare its annual reports to the Governing Council sessions on progress made in their implementation.
30. The two UNECE and ESCAP Secretaries to each Working Group shall provide substantive support to the Group by:
  - (i) Providing expertise as well as assistance to activities implemented by the Working Group; and
  - (ii) Providing secretariat support to the preparation and organization of sessions and meetings of the Working Group, including preparation of documents and studies as well as maintenance of records.
31. Each Working Group shall draw important policy issues to the attention of the SPECA Governing Council sessions.
32. Neighbouring countries of the SPECA region are invited to nominate their representatives to participate in the work of each Working Group, especially when issues concerning cooperation with neighbouring regions are discussed.
33. Other United Nations bodies, programmes and specialized agencies, international and regional organizations, international financial institutions and donors as well as representatives of the private sector and academic community may be invited to participate in the work of each Working Group as observers and to nominate liaison officers on matters related to each Working Group activities.

## **RESOURCES AND FUNDING**

34. The Tashkent Declaration calls upon other States and United Nations agencies, donor countries, international financial institutions as well as the private sector to provide financial and other types of assistance to SPECA.
35. The costs of participation of the SPECA National Coordinators or their representatives as well as experts in the sessions of the Governing Council and Economic Forums as well as National Representatives and experts in the sessions or meetings of the SPECA Thematic Working Groups shall,

as a rule, be borne by the Governments of the SPECA participating States. In addition, the UNECE and ESCAP shall provide financial support, within their available resources.

36. The SPECA participating States are invited to provide financial and other types of support to the implementation of the Programme.

37. The Thematic Working Groups shall, to the extent possible, seek extrabudgetary resources and technical assistance from multilateral and bilateral donors for the implementation of specific capacity-building projects falling under the scope of the approved work programmes.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

38. These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed after 5 years or sooner if the SPECA Governing Council so decides.

39. These Terms of Reference were reviewed and adopted on 23 November 2023.

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