



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

2015 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM
“Supporting the implementation and monitoring of
the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the SPECA region”

(Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 10-11 November 2015)

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents great opportunities and challenges for SPECA participating countries. National efforts alone, even if assisted by international development partners, might not be sufficient to achieve all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There are several key areas where strengthened subregional cooperation is an important precondition for success. Policymakers and experts alike emphasize the highly specific conditions of the subregion: its landlocked geography with the nearest seaports thousands of miles away; the increasing strain on shared water resources; the dramatic effects of climate change; and the lasting environmental, economic, social and health problems caused by the drying out of the Aral Sea – all of which call for coordinated subregional action if all SDGs are to be achieved by 2030.

SPECA offers a neutral subregional framework for supporting and monitoring regional efforts to achieve the SDGs. The Economic Forum will focus on those areas – water, environment, trade and connectivity – where regional cooperation is a sine qua non for real progress. In addition, innovation, gender and statistics are cross-cutting issues which would profit from a subregional approach. SPECA can facilitate the exchange of best practices, capacity-building, the joint development and implementation of subregional projects and the sharing of experience - for example on the use of new financing mechanisms.

The Economic Forum will offer an opportunity for SPECA participating countries to submit recommendations on the above issues to the Governing Council.

10 November 2015

09.30 – 10.00 Registration of participants

10.00 – 11.15 OPENING OF THE 2015 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM

Representatives of the United Nations will highlight how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is going to transform our world and how the United Nations will support its implementation. Representatives of SPECA participating countries are invited to present their plans, needs and priorities with a view to developing a partnership with the United Nations and other representatives of the development community for joint action at the subregional level.

Opening statements:

H.E. Mr. Sirodjidin ASLOV, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, current Chair country of SPECA

Mr. Christian Friis BACH, Executive Secretary of the UNECE

Representative of ESCAP

Keynote address by UNDP

Statements by the Heads of Delegation of the SPECA participating countries:

Afghanistan

Azerbaijan

Kazakhstan

Kyrgyzstan

Turkmenistan

Uzbekistan

11.15 – 11.30 Coffee break

11.30 – 13.00 SESSION I

Trade

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presents trade as a key means of implementation and underlines the importance of promoting a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system. It also emphasizes the need to significantly increase the exports of developing countries. The session will focus on issues that are of particular importance to the landlocked SPECA subregion and, particularly: procedural and regulatory barriers to trade; strategic possibilities for further developing regional trade; and experience gained during the implementation of the WTO's Aid-for-Trade initiative.

The UNECE will present a background paper and the following have been invited, as speakers, to participate in the discussion: ITC, UNCTAD, WTO and a representative from the private sector.

Discussion among participants.

13.00 – 15.00 Lunch break

15.00 – 16.30 SESSION II

IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY: BRINGING LANDLOCKED CENTRAL ASIA CLOSER TO WORLD MARKETS

Economic growth is a key precondition for the successful implementation of most of the Sustainable Development Goals by SPECA countries, be it ending poverty, improving food security or better education. In this context, geography poses a particular challenge for the SPECA countries which are landlocked and hundreds of miles from the nearest seaports. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underlined that landlocked developing countries deserve special attention. This session will discuss how improved regional cooperation in such closely inter-related areas as transport, trade and electronic data corridors can turn SPECA countries from landlocked into land-linked.

The discussion will be opened by statements from the UNECE and ESCAP.

Innovation

Innovation features prominently in several SDGs, as well as among the means of implementation and in global partnerships. This session will discuss how SPECA countries can harness innovation for achieving the SDGs. The UNECE will present a summary of the results of Innovation Performance Reviews of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and share with participants some thoughts on what could be done in the region to further foster innovation for sustainable development, using existing tools, such as the innovation performance reviews, and by further developing the activities of the SPECA Project Working Group on Knowledge-based Development.

The UNECE secretariat will present a background paper.

Discussion among participants.

16.30 – 16.45 Coffee break

16.45 – 18.00 SESSION III

Water, energy and the environment

At a recent international conference, high-level representatives of Central Asian countries agreed that the success or failure of efforts to achieve SDGs in the subregion will depend on the ability of the countries to improve subregional cooperation on water resources management. In Central Asia, several goals are directly and indirectly related to regional cooperation on water resources management and the environment as the subregion consists of ecosystems closely inter-linked by two main rivers, the Amudarya and Syrdarya. This session will discuss how SPECA can provide more efficient support to subregional cooperation with a view to facilitating the successful achievement of those SDGs related to water, energy and the environment.

The discussion will be opened by statements from UNEP, UNECE and UNDP and by other organizations.

11 November 2015

10.00 – 11.30 SESSION IV

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES, MONITORING METHODOLOGY AND PARTNERS

Statistics

SPECA provides support to governments of participating countries in integrating relevant data into national statistics for monitoring sustainable development in all its dimensions and in particular for the green growth and the preservation of ecosystems. Furthermore, it provides capacity-building on the methodologies required for measuring progress. The session will discuss how this work could best facilitate efforts in the region to monitor progress towards the SDGs and inform the United Nations and the international development community of the subregion's needs for targeted, tailored support.

The discussion will be opened by UNECE.

Gender and economy

Gender is a cross-cutting issue for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. Goal 5 specifically points to the need to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The session will discuss issues in monitoring gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including through policies and programmes to promote women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship development. Other topics will reflect on how to better mainstream gender into the support to achieve the SDGs at the subregional level.

The discussion will be opened by statements from the UNECE, UN Women and UNDP.

INVOLVING REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Central Asian regional organizations, like the Interstate Commission on Sustainable Development (ICSD), the civil society and the academic community should be active partners of the United Nations in supporting the implementation and monitoring of SDGs.

The discussion will be opened by a statement from the UNECE, the Head of the Tajik Branch of the Scientific and Information Centre of ICSD, the Director of the Central Asian Regional Environment Centre and a representative of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan.

11.30 – 11.45 Coffee break

11.45 – 12.30 SESSION V

FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT: OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY THE ADDIS ABABA ACTION AGENDA

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that “the full implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda is critical for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets.” Many SPECA countries are facing serious economic and social challenges

aggravated by rapid demographic growth. Financing for development is especially important if these countries are to successfully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This session will discuss how SPECA countries can take full advantage of the financing opportunities offered by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

The discussion will be opened by statements from UNDESA, UNECE, ESCAP and UNDP.

12.30 – 13.00 CLOSING OF THE 2015 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM

Recommendations to the Governing Council

Summary by the Chairperson of the Economic Forum

Closing statements by representatives of Tajikistan, the UNECE and ESCAP
