



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

2016 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM
“Enhanced Implementation of SDGs through Cooperation”

(Ganja, Azerbaijan, 22-23 November 2016)

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

With deep and complex reforms necessary to build resilient economies yet to be achieved in SPECA participating countries, Agenda 2030 provides a valuable opportunity to revisit development trajectories and effectively implement the Agenda’s sustainable development goals (SDGs). While most SPECA participating countries are developing strategies that mainstream sustainable development into national plans, in addition to establishing institutional coordination and monitoring frameworks, much work remains to be done.

SPECA can serve as a mechanism that promotes policy consistence and coherence across its participating countries. Furthermore, through a subregional consolidation of national assessments, SPECA can serve as a bridge which feeds them into the regional and global follow-up and review mechanism for Agenda 2030.

Consequently, the objective of the 2016 Economic Forum is for SPECA participating countries to take stock of how the subregion is positioning itself in the implementation of SDGs, to assess national SDG strategies and institutional frameworks, and to examine practical approaches and modalities. By developing a baseline in 2016 upon which the subregion stands in terms of SDGs, SPECA participating countries will be in a position to review, measure, and adapt implementation on a cooperative basis, annually, through the year 2030. Furthermore, it would also be desirable to identify and agree on the necessary conditions required for SPECA to function as a unique platform for subregional cooperation.

The recommendations emerging from the 2016 SPECA Economic Forum will be submitted for adoption to the 11th session of the SPECA Governing Council as a “Draft Ganja Declaration on Enhanced Implementation of SDGs through Cooperation”.

22 November 2016

08.30 – 09.00 Visit to the monument of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev

09.00 – 09.30 Registration of participants

09.30 – 10.00 OPENING OF THE 2016 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM

Opening statements:

H.E. Mr. Shahin Abdulla MUSTAFAYEV, Minister of Economy of Azerbaijan

Dr. Shamshad AKHTAR, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) delivered by **Mr. Kaveh ZAHEDI**, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Mr. Christian Friis BACH, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

10.00 – 10.15 Group Photo

10.15 – 10.30 Coffee break

10.30 – 12.00 SESSION I: REVIVING AND REBALANCING ECONOMIC GROWTH: REVIEW OF CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVES AND PRIORITY POLICY REFORMS

Reviving and rebalancing growth and trade, with supportive infrastructure connectivity, economic diversification and structural transformation will be critical for implementation of SDGs. Under this agenda item, based on the findings of ESCAP papers, the impacts of deep plunges in commodity prices will be reviewed and lessons drawn by SPECA countries, as will the recent surge in cross-border connectivity initiatives. Policy responses and reforms will be proposed which aim not only at cross-border infrastructure connectivity, but also at market integration, in order to enhance the capacity of SDG implementation through wider connectivity initiatives and the participation of a diversified business sector. Special attention will be paid to the economic integration of Afghanistan through trade, investments, and entrepreneurship development.

Moderator: Representative of the Government of Azerbaijan

Presenter: **Mr. Kaveh ZAHEDI**, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Discussants:

Mr. Christian Friis BACH, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, UNECE (TBC)

Mr. Petko DRAGANOV, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Head of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)

Mr. Bakhodur ESHONOV, Independent Consultant, Uzbekistan

Mr. Khojamakhmad UMAROV, Head, Macroeconomic Department, Center of Economic Studies, Tajikistan

12.00 – 13.00 SESSION II: REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The transformational potential of SDGs needs to be situated within the contextual realities of the seven SPECA participating countries. Furthermore, it is important to base reform

decisions on accurate information and analytical evidence. Towards this end, each participating country will briefly present a country paper that comprehensively outlines the status of SDG mainstreaming in the national policy-planning process, institutional setups, and reforms currently underway. The papers will serve as instruments for factual evidence and information gathering which will help strengthen SPECA as a mechanism for sharing practical approaches and beneficial modalities for action. The papers will also guide the ESCAP and UNECE secretariats in their support to SPECA countries for SDG implementation. Agencies of the UN system and other stakeholders will be invited to briefly present areas in which their programmes can contribute to the SPECA Work Plan for 2016-2017.

Moderator: Mr. Kaveh ZAHEDI, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP

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

Afghanistan

Azerbaijan

Kazakhstan

Kyrgyzstan

Tajikistan

Turkmenistan

13.00 – 14.30 Lunch hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan

14.30 – 15.00 SESSION II: REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AT NATIONAL LEVEL (Continued)

15.00 – 16.00 SESSION III: STATISTICAL ASSESSMENT AND STATISTICAL CAPACITY-BUILDING NEEDS

Data paucities are large in SPECA participating countries. Therefore, there is an urgent need to map SDG data and indicator readiness against the emerging SDG indicator architecture. Based on ESCAP findings, the discussions under this agenda item will consider how SPECA can serve as a mechanism that identifies gaps in statistics, as well as capacity-building needs for enhanced collection, timeliness, and accessibility of data. Proposals will be also made on how SPECA can promote the sharing of statistics across the subregion, so that a more complete picture of the subregional implementation progress emerges.

Moderator: Representative of the Government of Azerbaijan

Presenter: Ms. Tiziana BONAPACE, Head, ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia

Discussants:

UNECE representative

Open discussion

16.00 – 16.15 Coffee break

16.15 – 17.30 SESSION IV: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESOURCE-USE EFFICIENCIES

SPECA participating countries are severely affected by the legacy of overexploitation of natural capital. Energy and water intensity remains very high, the rate of greenhouse gas emissions has increased rapidly over the past decade, and soil degradation is widespread. Thus, the food security, water and energy nexus is particularly strong and therefore challenges the sustainability of development. Under this item, discussion will focus on addressing these interlinkages through the indivisibility of SDGs. Furthermore, the cost-effectiveness of enhancing regional climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures through actions taken on a regional cooperative basis will be considered.

Moderator: Representative of the Government of Azerbaijan

Presenter: **Mr. Nikolay POMOSHCHNIKOV**, Senior Officer, ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia

Discussants:

Mr. Batyr HAJIYEV, Economic Affairs Officer, UNECE

Ms. Saltanat ZHAKENOVA, Environmental Management Program, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC)

Open discussion

19.30 – 22.00 Banquet/Dinner hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan

23 November 2016

10.00 – 11.15 SESSION V: REBALANCING DEVELOPMENT FOR EQUALITY, INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Balancing the three pillars of sustainability – economic, environmental, and social – forms the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda item will focus on the social pillar of sustainable development. An ESCAP background paper will explore trends for the SPECA participating countries on equality and inclusion, followed by the identification of policy priorities for enhanced equity and social justice. The discussion will include how SPECA can serve as a mechanism to review and assess common and diverse socio-economic challenges and trends with cross-sectoral implications, such as universal social protection systems, institution-building and gender equality, as well as those with cross-border implications such as migration.

Moderator: Representative of the Government of Azerbaijan

Presenter: **Ms. Tiziana BONAPACE**, Head, ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia

Discussants:

Mr. Mr. Rafkat HASANOV, Expert, DAI Programme, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Open discussion

11.15 – 11.30 Coffee break

11.30 – 12.30 SESSION VI: EVALUATION OF SPECA

The above-indicated issues will form the core of substantive discussions of the SPECA Economic Forum. Based on their outcome, the Economic Forum will be invited to consider participating in an in-depth evaluation of SPECA in 2017. The monitoring and evaluation of programme effectiveness has received increased attention in the UN system, and a forward-looking systematic evaluation of SPECA could help strengthen its role in SDG implementation. Discussions under this item will focus on the nature, scope, and purpose of the evaluation, and it is expected that the recommendations of the Economic Forum will be submitted to the 11th session of the Governing Council for adoption.

Moderator: Representative of the Government of Azerbaijan

Presenter: **Mr. Kaveh ZAHEDI**, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Discussants:

Mr. Matthew KAHANE, UNECE expert

Open discussion

12.30 – 13.00 CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT GANJA DECLARATION

Presentation by the Chairperson of the 2016 SPECA Economic Forum and finalization of the text.

CLOSING OF THE 2016 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM

Closing statements:

H.E. Mr. Shahin Abdulla MUSTAFAYEV, Minister of Economy of Azerbaijan

Dr. Shamshad AKHTAR, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP delivered by **Mr. Kaveh ZAHEDI**, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP

Mr. Christian Friis BACH, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of UNECE

13.00 – 14.30 Lunch hosted by the Government of Azerbaijan
