



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

SPECA/EF/2018/1
17 September 2018

2018 SPECA Economic Forum
Almaty, Kazakhstan, 20 and 21 September 2018

Twenty years of SPECA: A new stage in regional cooperation
for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) was established through the Tashkent Declaration of 26 March 1998 to promote regional economic cooperation in Central Asia and integration of these countries into economies of Europe and Asia.

Recalling the commitment of all stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1) and the overarching goal of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 (A/RES/69/137) to overcome their structural challenges to attain internationally agreed development goals, the Ganja Declaration emanating from the eleventh session of the SPECA Governing Council expressed support for SPECA as a platform for reinforcing progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals on infrastructure, innovation, and diversification, which are crucial drivers of economic growth and sustainable development.

This Economic Forum, convened under the theme “Twenty years of SPECA: A new stage in regional cooperation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” considers how developments in transport, trade, environment, water and energy, statistics, knowledge-based development and gender and economy, contributed towards regional economic cooperation and sustainable development of the SPECA participating countries, in part, by addressing the specific priorities of landlocked developing countries, as contained in the Vienna Programme of Action.¹ Given their dependence on selected economic sectors for growth, trade and employment, continued structural economic transformation may need to complement measures to strengthen trade, transport, communication and energy networks, if benefit from regional integration and cooperation are to be realized. Its means of implementation may furthermore call for each country to mobilize its resources as well as seek support of its development partners, including the private sector. Discussions will also take

¹ The priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 are:

- Priority 1: Fundamental transit policy issues
- Priority 2: Infrastructure development and maintenance
 - (a) Transport infrastructure
 - (b) Energy and information and communications technology infrastructure
- Priority 3: International trade and trade facilitation
 - (a) International trade
 - (b) Trade facilitation
- Priority 4: Regional integration and cooperation
- Priority 5: Structural economic transformation
- Priority 6: Means of implementation

into consideration other initiatives that are being implemented in the subregion with the ultimate objective of eradicating poverty in all its forms and leaving no-one behind as stated in the Agenda 2030.

Through the adoption of the Resolution “Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries” (A/RES/72/232), the General Assembly decided to convene a comprehensive high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 in 2019 to review progress made in its implementation. Given the launch of the first Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries in Central Asia, in August 2003 in Almaty, the 2018 SPECA Economic Forum could provide a timely opportunity to review the achievements and challenges of the landlocked SPECA countries.

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

20 September 2018 (Day 1)

Registration of participants
08.30-08.50

Group photo (Heads of Delegations)
08.50-09.00

1. Opening of the forum
09.00-09.30

Documentation:

Annotated Provisional Programme (SPECA/EF/2018/1)

Minister of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

2. Progress in transport, trade, energy and information and communication technology through regional cooperation
09.30-10.30

Documentation:

Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 (A/RES/69/137) (SPECA/EF/2018/INF/1)

Socio-economic development of the seven SPECA participating countries is constrained by lack of territorial access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from world markets and high transit costs. Improved connectivity in transport, trade, energy and information and communication technology through development of roads and railways networks, rural energy infrastructure, open and affordable access to the Internet as well as enhanced intraregional trade could highlight the progress made towards attainment of Priorities 1 (fundamental transit policy issues), 2 (infrastructure development and maintenance) and 3 (international trade and trade facilitation) of the Vienna Programme of Action.

Panel discussion: Key results of SPECA, 1998-2018
09.30-10.00

Chairpersons of the SPECA Thematic Working Groups on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity; Trade; Water, Energy and Environment; and Knowledge-based Development

Plenary discussion: SPECA members followed by observers
10.00-10.30

Group photo (All participants) 10.30-10.40

Coffee Break 10.40-11.00

3. Regional integration and cooperation
11.00-12.45

In addition to improved connectivity in transport, energy and information and communications technology, infrastructure, trade and regulatory policies of neighboring countries have significant repercussions for landlocked countries. For these countries, the cost of reaching international markets depends not only on their geography, policies, infrastructure and administrative procedures but also on those of their transit developing countries. Given that SPECA countries themselves are transit developing countries, regional integration and cooperation (Priority 4), as well as harmonized regional policies could lead to improved transit transport connectivity and intraregional trade.

Country statements: Progress and challenges for improved connectivity and harmonized regulatory policies
11.00-11.45

Representatives of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

Plenary discussion: International organizations
11.45-12.15

Plenary discussion: SPECA members
12.15-12.45

Lunch 12.45-14.00

4. Structural economic transformation
14.00-15.45

Structural economic transformation (Priority 5) is essential if participating countries of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) are to benefit from regional integration resulting from improved trade, transport communication and energy networks. Such transformation would require greater value addition in manufacturing and agriculture, economic and export diversification, service sector

development and foreign direct investment in high-value added sectors. Such transformation could allow SPECA countries, especially those previously with economies in transition from centrally planned to a market oriented one, to overcome their geographical disadvantages as well as external shocks, promote employment and attain sustainable development.

Documentation:

Regional cooperation for structural economic transformation towards sustainable development in the SPECA region (SPECA/EF/2018/2)

Presentation by Mr. Vladimir Popov, Research Director in Economics and Political Sciences, Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute, Berlin

14.00-14.30

Panel discussion: Structural economic transformation

14.30-15.15

Representatives of selected (1) SPECA countries, (2) developing countries that have undergone structural economic transformation, (3) international financial institutions, (3) academia/research institutions/civil society/private sector and (5) Chairpersons, Thematic Working Groups on Gender and Economy and on Statistics

Plenary discussion: SPECA members followed by observers

15.15-15.45

Coffee break 15.45-16.00

**5. Means of implementation: Partnerships for enhancing cooperation within SPECA
16.00-17.30**

Mobilization of domestic resources for the development of infrastructure and transit facilities needs to be complemented with the support of development partners, including through South-South cooperation. In addition to the transit developing countries, these partners could include international and regional development partners as well as the private sector.

Panel discussion: Means of implementation

16.00-16.30

Representatives of selected (1) SPECA countries, (2) transit developing countries, (3) subregional organizations; (4) development partners and (5) private sector

Plenary discussion: SPECA members followed by observers

16.30-17.30

Reception (Restaurant at the “Worldhotel Saltanat Almaty”)

18.00-20.00

21 September 2018 (Day 2)

**6. Conclusions and recommendations of the Economic Forum
09.00-10.00**

The conclusions and recommendations of the Economic Forum will be submitted by the Chairperson of the 2018 SPECA Economic Forum for consideration and adoption as decisions of the thirteenth session of the Governing Council of SPECA.

**7. Closing of the forum
10.00-10.30**

Minister of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Coffee break 10.30-11.00
