



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

**Tenth session of the SPECA Governing Council**

**(Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 11 November 2015)**

**DECLARATION**

1. We, high-level representatives of countries participating in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, Afghanistan and Azerbaijan (SPECA) reiterate our commitment to the Programme as a platform for promoting subregional cooperation in the SPECA region, its further integration in the world economy and achieving sustainable development.
2. The 2015 session of the SPECA Governing Council marks the 10th Anniversary of the International Conference on Strengthening Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation in Central Asia and the Future Role of SPECA (Astana, Kazakhstan, 25-27 May 2005).
3. Since then, a number of important achievements were made including: the broadening of the Programme's thematic scope; an increase in the number of countries participating; as well as stronger interest in and support to the Programme from development partners such as international organizations and bilateral donors. Nevertheless, much more remains to be done in order to realize the full potential of SPECA.
4. We welcome the recent adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda by the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 and the commitment to its implementation, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by governments and other stakeholders working closely together.
5. We reconfirm that SPECA, as envisaged at the 2014 session of its Governing Council in Ashgabat, has a strong potential for supporting and facilitating the achievement of the SDGs. The SPECA framework, including its Governing Council, Economic Forums, and Working Groups as well as projects implemented under its aegis, can provide an important platform for supporting progress towards many of the SDGs through the exchange of best practice, capacity-building, joint development and implementation of regional projects and the sharing of experience on the use of new financial mechanisms and partnerships.
6. We emphasize the importance of subregional cooperation for the achievement of the SDGs and targets, in particular for those related to the development of resilient infrastructure, trade, industry, sustainable management of natural resources and climate change.
7. In the light of the above, we decide on the following:
  - a) Starting from 2016, the SPECA Project Working Groups will be converted into Thematic Working Groups (TWG) on:

- Water, Energy and Environment
- Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity
- Trade and Trade Facilitation
- Knowledge-based Development (or Innovation and PPPs)
- Gender and Economy and
- Statistics

b) The Thematic Working Groups will:

- Follow closely the efforts of participating countries to implement the 2030 development agenda and offer advice and assistance within their respective mandates. For example, the Working Group on Statistics could play a vital role in strengthening national statistical capacities for collecting data relevant to measuring progress towards SDG implementation in the SPECA region;
- Pay particular attention to strengthening regional cooperation when it would enhance the ability of participating countries to achieve the SDGs;
- Provide fora, as experience is gained in the achievement of relevant SDGs, for the exchange of experiences, lessons learned and good practice, as well as for mobilizing additional support for national and subregional implementation;
- Undertake enhanced policy discussions on strategic issues, from a regional perspective; and
- Continue overseeing the implementation of projects included in the SPECA Work Plans. Projects within the respective mandates of TWGs will be included in the Work Plans upon the request of participating countries and when resources for implementation are assured.

c) At their next sessions, the TWGs, while continuing to oversee and jointly elaborate projects for inclusion in SPECA Work Plans, will begin discussing individual and joint initiatives as well as the plans of SPECA participating countries for achieving those SDGs and targets which fall within their respective areas of expertise and mandates.

d) Matters related to overall progress in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, as well as cross-sectoral linkages among relevant SDGs will be also discussed, as appropriate, at the future sessions of the SPECA Governing Council and Economic Forums. This will take into account expected decisions by relevant UN intergovernmental bodies on how regional and global follow-up and review will be organized, including by the United Nations Regional Commissions.

8. We recognize that achievement of gender equality as a specific focus of the SDGs through Goal 5, is also a cross-cutting issue to be factored into the implementation of the other SDGs, and thus commit to the consideration of gender aspects of subregional cooperation within SPECA for achievement of the SDGs.

9. We highly appreciate the expressed commitment of our development partners and, in particular, the UNDP and UN Country Teams in the SPECA region, to actively support the national and subregional efforts of SPECA countries to achieve the SDGs. We invite our partners to continue to actively cooperate with UNECE and ESCAP in bringing the relevant lessons learned and experiences gained to the SPECA Thematic Working Groups and other meetings so that they can be shared and discussed among SPECA countries with a view to expediting progress towards the achievement of SDGs in the region and contributing to SDG follow-up and review.

10. We underscore the importance of partnerships for SDGs implementation. In this regard the UN Country Teams, as well as the Regional UN Development Group Team, which provides an important link between country and regional actions towards SDGs, should play an important role in strengthening subregional cooperation in the SPECA region and provide an important contribution to strengthening inter-governmental cooperation within the SPECA framework.

11. We encourage UNECE, ESCAP and their partners to continue providing assistance within the SPECA framework and through direct cooperation with regional organizations that are expected to play an active role in the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

12. We recognize the role of civil society and, in particular, the Central Asia Regional Environmental Centre, the academic community and the private sector, in supporting and complementing the efforts of Governments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

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