



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

**2022 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM “GREENER AND SAFER FUTURE”**

**16-17 November 2022, Almaty and online**

**DRAFT ALMATY DECLARATION<sup>1</sup>**

We, the high-level representatives of the countries participating in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA),

Having met on 16-17 November 2022 in Almaty, Kazakhstan and online, to participate in the 2022 SPECA Economic Forum,

Considering the need for enhanced regional cooperation and more integrated approach towards a more sustainable, resilient, inclusive, greener, safer, equitable and prosperous future of the SPECA participating countries,

Supporting the implementation of internationally agreed goals for sustainable development and environment and relevant international instruments to which they adhere to, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries and the 2015 Paris Agreement,

Emphasizing the need to respond to the urgent economic, social and environmental challenges after the COVID-19 pandemic and consequences of other crises, based on a peaceful co-existence and the rule of law, with no one left behind,

Acknowledging the theme topics of the seventy-ninth session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) “Accelerating climate action in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable development” and the seventieth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) “Digital and Green Transformations for Sustainable Development in the Region of the Economic Commission for Europe” and highlighting expertise

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<sup>1</sup> The Delegation of Turkmenistan reserved its position on the essence of all items of the draft Declaration of the 2022 SPECA Economic Forum due to the need for thorough elaboration and coordination with the relevant structures of Turkmenistan.

of ESCAP and UNECE and their unique position to accelerate a greener and safer future to the benefit of the SPECA participating countries and beyond,

Welcoming the outcomes of the 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), chaired and co-hosted by Kazakhstan,

Welcoming the outcomes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Almaty Energy Forum held on 14–16 November 2022 that has endorsed UNECE, ESCAP, UNDP strategic partnership for countries in Central Asia to help countries build resilient energy systems and accelerate energy transition,

Taking into account the discussions and listening to the views of the participants on the agenda of the 2022 SPECA Economic Forum, having developed recommendations for ensuring economic security and sustainable inclusive development of the SPECA subregion while achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment,

**Adopt the following Declaration:**

We reaffirm the commitment to regional cooperation and stress the importance for the SPECA participating countries to:

1. Support a greener and safer future for the SPECA participating countries and contribute to reaching their common climate, economic and commercial goals through strengthening of regional cooperation in the fields of climate change mitigation and adaptation, control of desertification, rational use of water resources, transitioning to green and sustainable energy, protection of the environment and ecosystems, sustainable and resilient urban development, restoration of rural and urban landscapes, reclamation of uranium tailings, and expansion of resource-saving and green technologies, including the development of renewable energy sources.
2. Accelerate energy transition through regional cooperation, technical capacity support and building resilient energy systems that are sustainable, secure, affordable and reliable. There are achievable pathways for SPECA region to implement resilient low carbon energy systems, and the priorities should include the interplay of all clean and low carbon technologies; sustainable exploitation of critical raw materials and rare earth metals that are required to deliver on the energy transition.
3. Strengthen regional cooperation for innovation and adoption of sustainable and climate-smart technologies, machinery and practices for agriculture and related sectors such as conservation agriculture, water-efficient irrigation and digital solutions, integrated management of natural resources in drought-prone and saline agricultural production landscapes, in order to reduce poverty, safeguard food and energy security.
4. Promote participatory and inclusive approaches to environmental protection, effective access by the public to information concerning the environment, environmental policies and decisions of the relevant environmental authorities, public involvement in decision-making processes on development activities and effective access for all interested parties to judicial and administrative proceedings.

5. Strengthen their capacities to enable accession to multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), including UNECE MEAs to support strengthened SPECA-wide transboundary and regional cooperation toward climate resilient pathways.
6. Accelerate the energy transition to achieve the SDG7 and the Paris Agreement goals towards carbon neutrality through greater regional cooperation and action, including increased uptake of renewable energies, enhanced grid connectivity to enable their secure and efficient integration through the cross-border trade of electricity, reduced methane emissions from the coal, oil and gas and the development of comprehensive strategies encompassing social, economic, technological, and environmental aspects of the just and balanced energy transition.
7. Strengthen the transboundary water cooperation and coordinate stronger efforts towards the implementation of the SDG6 while embracing the water, food and energy nexus approach and work together towards the preparation for the 2023 UN Water Conference.
8. Scale up the compilation and dissemination of timely and quality statistics on sustainable development including the circular economy, sustainable consumption and production and energy supply and use, disaggregated by economic activities to track progress on the transition to cleaner energy.
9. Manage resources sustainably, applying multiple uses (notably in the production of energy, food, restoration of ecosystems) to guarantee socio-economic development and increase preparedness and improve resilience of water and energy systems to climate change.
10. Strengthen the exchange of experiences and best practices between cities in the SPECA region for the formulation and implementation of sustainable, resilient, and inclusive economic and financial responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, other natural and man-made disasters; and support local governments in the development of their recovery and rebuilding plans, SDG voluntary local reviews and innovative financing mechanisms for urban infrastructure projects to accelerate achieving the urban related SDGs at the local level.
11. Strengthen the ICT infrastructure networks and connectivity, digital technologies and applications, digital data systems for sustainable development purposes, including through the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) initiative, and its Action Plan 2022-2026, which provides a useful regional cooperative platform for promoting policy coordination and partnerships between UN agencies, governments, businesses, and social groups at regional and global levels.
12. Noting with appreciation the initiative of the Government of Kazakhstan in establishing the Digital Solutions Centre for Sustainable Development to provide practical digital solutions for SPECA participating countries and noting further the invitation by the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation of ESCAP at its fourth session, to members and associate members to collaborate in the digital transformation process, including under the framework of the Action Plan for Implementing the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative, 2022-2026, request Kazakhstan and

ESCAP to submit jointly a Concept note and relevant proposals to the SPECA participating countries on this issue through the diplomatic channels.

13. Increase efforts to facilitate reskilling, upskilling, and changing skill requirements to leverage digitalization opportunities, and to developing skillsets to manage the perceived risks and challenges and better understand the complexity and the new vulnerabilities brought by the retention of the legacy systems in combination with proliferation of digitalization.
14. Strengthen the cooperation of the SPECA participating countries in the World Trade Organization, strengthening the linkage between trade and sustainable development, including through sustainable transport, trade, and transit, and prioritizing support and cooperation with countries in the WTO accession.
15. Enhance the circularity component of trade strategies, with attention to the elimination of procedural and regulatory barriers to trade that negatively affect the environment; enhancing traceability to reduce wasteful practices in international trade; minimizing food loss and waste along value chains to enhance food security; improving water use for agriculture and facilitating trade in agricultural commodities; and building private sector capacities, particularly MSMEs, to enhance productivity of high-value agricultural products and organic products.
16. Consider including provisions in trade agreements to make trade greener and more resilient during the crises, such as those featured in the United Nations Model Chapter on Trade in Crisis Situations in Regional Trade Agreements and accelerate accession to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific of SPECA participating countries yet party to it, considering the use of the UN/CEFACT semantic standards and reference data models as a universal reference to avoid fragmentation of efforts for digitalization of information flows along cross-border supply chains, to lower trade costs of trade among the SPECA countries and other economies in Europe, reduce transport time and increase transparency.
17. Encourage SPECA participating countries that have not yet done so to consider becoming contracting parties to the United Nations legal instruments on inland transport and, beyond accession, applying, implementing and promoting their provisions.
18. Note the active implementation of the Digital Silk Road project, which aims to create a new telecommunication backbone route between Europe and Asia.
19. Strengthen cooperation among SPECA countries on the common principles on sustainable freight transport providing greater coherence, political commitment, synergies, and further momentum to sustainability considerations in freight transport policies recognizing the crucial role of sustainable freight transport for economic transformation and, in this regard, reaffirm the vital role of the regional approach on sustainable multimodal freight transport, as recognized by ESCAP Resolution 78/3 on Implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the UNECE Inland

Transport Committee Resolution on Ushering in a decade of delivery for sustainable inland transport and sustainable development adopted in February 2022.

20. Noting that digitalization of transport is one of the thematic areas of the Regional Action Programme on Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and Pacific (2022-2026) and one of the priorities in the Inland Transport Committee Strategy until 2030, call on SPECA participating countries to continue promoting the application of new technologies and digital transformation in transport, logistics and mobility.
21. Enhance regional connectivity including through strengthening regional cooperation in transport, logistics, energy, and information and communications technology, among other areas, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
22. Promote, where appropriate, cooperation in space technology, research and development for peaceful purposes. And also consider the possibility of cooperation in the field of satellite navigation, Earth observation, space technology, research, development and other areas in accordance with the interests of the SPECA participating countries.
23. Provide a secure and consistent policy environment that enables the ongoing green transformation of the private sector, acknowledges the efforts being made by private enterprises to decarbonize and contribute to social and economic development, and support initiatives of business networks such as the Asia-Pacific Green Deal for Business adopted by the ESCAP Sustainable Business network and the call to innovate for a more sustainable future by the UNECE Transformative Innovation Network.
24. Invite SPECA participating countries to follow the example of Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan and proceed with the interconnection of their national customs systems with the eTIR international system which will lead to paperless and contactless border crossing operations following the TIR Convention.
25. Encourage the SPECA participating countries to ratify the additional protocol to the CMR Convention on the electronic consignment note (eCMR) and actively participate at the sessions of the official group of experts on the operationalization of eCMR ensuring that a sustainable solution will be agreed at the level of UN that covers the requirements and interests of all stakeholders and geographical regions.
26. Invite the SPECA countries to support capacity building on innovation for the private sector and especially for start-ups, including through business incubation and acceleration programmes and tools to support innovative enterprises with high growth potential. Strengthen regional cooperation on foreign direct investment for the Sustainable Development Goals and enhance knowledge and experience sharing on foreign direct investment promotion and facilitation, particularly related to foreign direct investment in the digital economy.

27. Promote the implementation of the best practice of public-private partnerships for the rational use of resources and green finance, the transition to a green and sustainable economy and the implementation of integration projects in our countries.
28. Promote increase of the representation of women in all levels of environmental decision-making and ensure their participation in the consultation and planning processes on climate change adaptation, mitigation and harnessing climate finance, sustainable transport and mobility as well as environmental sustainability.
29. Strengthen the gender dimensions of climate actions, standards, policies and investments, particularly for women and girls living in rural areas, as well as leverage the knowledge, capacities and skills of women and girls, who are powerful agents of change and must be part of the solution towards a sustainable future.
30. We express our sincere gratitude to the people and the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for their warm hospitality, generous support and for the excellent arrangements made for the organization of the 2022 SPECA Economic Forum.
31. We express our appreciation to ESCAP, UNECE and their Executive Secretaries, agencies, funds, and programmes of the United Nations system in the region, DCOs and RCOs, as well as international financial institutions, foundations, bilateral donors, and other partners of SPECA in supporting sustainable economic development of the subregion for the greener and safer future.