

**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA
(SPECA)****Seventeenth session of the SPECA Governing Council****18 November 2022, Almaty, Kazakhstan and online****PROGRESS REPORTS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECA THEMATIC
WORKING GROUPS****Introduction**

The SPECA Thematic Working Groups implemented the following activities since the sixteenth session of the SPECA Governing Council held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and online on 19 November 2021.

Water, energy and environment: In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to facilitate economic cooperation in the SPECA subregion as well as integration of the SPECA participating countries into the world economy for their attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and previous decisions of the Working Group on Water, Energy and Environment the Working Group shall: (a) Provide a platform for supporting progress on strategic issues related to water, energy and environment, and towards achieving the respective SDGs with a focus on the SDGs (including, but not limited to SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation and SDG 7 on Affordable and Clean Energy); (b) Aim at improving awareness of SPECA countries on the water-, energy- and environment-related SDGs, provide information and share best practice experiences with regard to the implementation of these SDGs, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs. Promote consideration of energy and water cooperation opportunities and intersectoral and transboundary impacts in the SDG implementation and related action plans; (c) Promote compliance with relevant international legal instruments (to which the countries are Parties), norms, guidelines, standards and recommendations in the fields of competence of the Working Group; (d) Act as a platform for identification, development, support and coordination of technical programmes and projects within the scope of Working Group competence thereby building capacity, promoting best practices and strengthening mutual trust at political level among the SPECA participating countries; (e) Identify, in consultation with its participating countries, their priorities and emerging issues, and consult on regional approaches, taking into consideration subregional aspects; (f) Promote dialogue among its participating countries, including subregional synergies, and an exchange of experiences on policies and programmes; (g) Monitor the implementation of the decisions of the Governing Council; and (h) Promote a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges of the SPECA subregion, where appropriate, between governments and civil society, the private sector, as well as the United Nations and other international organizations.

Name of Activity	Time & Venue	SPECA participating countries	Major results
Organization of regular sessions of the SPECA WG	November 2022, Almaty, Kazakhstan	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	Reporting on the completed and ongoing activities, Programme of Work for 2022-2023.
Food-Water-Energy nexus support to post-COVID-19 recovery in Eastern Europe, Western Balkans, Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa (14 th Tranche of the development account project led by UNECE)	Ongoing	Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan	ESCAP in collaboration with WFP and FAO are preparing a joint study to assess food systems resilience in Asia-Pacific countries in the face of the Ukraine crisis. The study is expected to zoom in the food-water-energy nexus in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. A joint report is expected to be launched by December 2022.
North and Central Asia Subregional Training on GHG Emissions Inventories and Paris Agreement Reporting Requirements	26-29 April 2022, Almaty, Kazakhstan	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	ESCAP and IGCE jointly with the UN Country Team, Kazakhstan organized this second subregional training on GHG emissions inventories and Paris Agreement reporting requirements, which was attended by 36 country experts responsible for national inventories and reporting and developing national MRV systems.
Special Training seminar for experts from Turkmenistan responsible for GHG Emissions Inventories and Paris Agreement Reporting Requirements	21-24 June 2022, online, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan	Turkmenistan	ESCAP and IGCE jointly with the UN Country Team, Turkmenistan organized special training on GHG emissions inventories and Paris Agreement reporting requirements, which was attended by 26 country experts responsible for national inventories and reporting and developing national MRV systems.
Enabling transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management in the Chu and Talas River Basins	Ongoing	Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan	UNECE together with UNDP supported development of the Chu-Talas Strategic Action Programme. The adoption of the Strategic Action Programme by Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan is expected soon. The second phase of the Chu-Talas GEF project is in the process of planning and the project preparatory stage will start as soon as the Strategic Action Programme is approved.

			The 30th meeting of the Chu-Talas Commission was held on 20 April 2022 in Taraz, Kazakhstan
EUWI National Policy Dialogues in Central Asia	Ongoing	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting of the WG on preparation to the Seventh Meeting of the Interministerial Coordination Council to the National Dialogue on Water Policy in Kazakhstan (25 November 2021); - The first NPD in Uzbekistan (27 September 2022) launched the NPD process – the result of many years of lobbying and support; - Negotiations to relaunch of NPD in Turkmenistan (ongoing); - As part of the new EU4Environment Water and Data Programme, launched in January 2022, an agreement on the policy packages and launch of their implementation in Azerbaijan (January-November 2022); - Support to «policy packages» and investment ideas in the water sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan: water quality and accidental water pollution in the Syrdarya basin (in collaboration with the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents and IWAC); 2) Kyrgyzstan: legal support for the new methodology for compensation of damage to water resources and bodies; investment ideas for transboundary Chu-Talas basin; 3) Tajikistan: elaboration of a methodology for the water balance calculations in support of the new Water Code completed.
Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate-resilient transformation of the energy-water-land Nexus in Central Asia and related national policy packages	Ongoing	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	<p>The project “<i>Regional mechanisms for the low-carbon, climate-resilient transformation of the energy-water-land Nexus in Central Asia</i>” (2023-2027) funded by IKI and implemented by UNECE, OECD, SCI-ICWC, EBRD and FAO, aims to improve the management of natural resources in Central Asia in the face of climate change, through analytical work and support to policy development and cooperation.</p> <p>The project will: help countries to mainstream the nexus principles into development planning process; finance pilot</p>

			<p>projects to demonstrate benefits of investments in the “nexus”; facilitate capacity development through policy dialogues.</p> <p>In 2022, the project preparatory/inception phase allowed to refine the project proposal to respond to priorities and needs highlighted by the five Central Asian countries. The implementation phase is expected to start in early 2023.</p>
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II. Sustainable transport, transit and connectivity: In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to support its participating countries in: developing subregional economic cooperation, integrating their economies into the world economy, and attaining the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the WG-STTC shall foster subregional cooperation to promote development of sustainable transport systems and improvement of international and regional connectivity in the SPECA countries. To achieve this through subregional cooperation, the Working Group shall: (i) Provide a platform for strategic discussions on supporting progress towards achieving the directly transport-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3, SDG 9 and SDG 11) and targets, and contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, as a whole, through subregional cooperation, exchange of best practices and experiences, consultations, relevant activities and implementation of projects in SPECA countries; (ii) Raise awareness of SPECA countries on the transport-related SDGs and the role of transport and connectivity in supporting the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda; provide information and share best practice experiences, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (iii) Promote policy dialogue: to support accession and efficient implementation of the United Nations transport-related legal instruments; for coordinated development of road and railway networks, dry ports and intermodal transport; for elimination of physical and non-physical barriers to transport, and for safer and more environmentally friendly transport system; and (iv) Provide analytical work and capacity development activities and tools in the areas of transport infrastructure development, sustainable transport operations, operationalization of international transit corridors, use of new technologies and innovation, regulatory harmonization, intermodal transport, border crossing facilitation, transport of dangerous goods, and other areas, including identification of funding modalities for SPECA activities.

The thematic orientation of the activities of the WG-STTC includes: (i) Sustainable transport development, to enhance subregional and international connectivity in line with the needs of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, harnessing the opportunities arising from global and regional transport trends and technological advances; (ii) Accession and efficient implementation of the United Nations inland transport-related legal instruments, to further develop legal framework for efficient transport, transit and connectivity; (iii) Inland transport infrastructure development; identification of the missing links, removal of bottlenecks, increasing the quality of the infrastructure, transport project financing (including public-private partnership) and promotion of intermodal transport and development of dry ports and terminals; (iv) Development of efficient transport operations; transport facilitation and removal of non-physical barriers to transport (including border crossing facilitation); (v) Development of a monitoring mechanism for sustainable transport connectivity in support of SDGs, collection of transport and border crossing statistics, harmonization of data collection, publishing of subregional transport statistics; (vi) Road safety; activities to reduce road traffic fatalities and casualties in the SPECA region; and (vii) Promotion of subregional cooperation for sustainable transport connectivity which plays an important role in addressing the economic development challenges faced by landlocked SPECA countries.

Name of Activity	Time & Venue	SPECA participating countries	Major results
SPECA Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity, 26th session	25 November 2021	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan	Participating countries shared the experiences and information on latest developments in the improvement of regional connectivity (infrastructure development, removing of bottlenecks), international transit (border crossing facilitation and corridor management) as well as road safety. Furthermore, countries shared information on building back better transport system in post-pandemic times. All of them were presented in the context of transport-related Sustainable Development Goals and assistance to SPECA countries in implementing and monitoring SDGs. All prepared documents including Programme of Work for 2022-2023 were adopted.
Mainstreaming the LLDCs', including SPECA countries, priorities and relevant initiatives into the new regional action programme on sustainable transport development in Asia and the Pacific (2022-2026)	Ongoing	All SPECA countries	The New Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development (2022-2026) adopted by the 4th Ministerial Conference on Transport (Bangkok, 14-17 December 2021) reflected the SPECA' countries' priorities in its 7 thematic areas and foresees a series of specific activities in support of the LLDCs in Asia. In addition, the Ministerial Declaration adopted by the conference noted the efforts of member States to further strengthen the transport connectivity of landlocked countries in the Asia-Pacific region, notably, by promoting multimodal freight transport along existing and emerging interregional corridors and enhancing transport connectivity between Central Asia and other subregions, by, inter alia, exploring the establishment of a regional centre for the development of transport connectivity under the auspices of the United Nations, https://www.unescap.org/events/2021/ministerial-conference-transport-fourth-session
Capacity-building support to Strengthening Capacity for Operationalizing	2019-2022	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	Analysis of the existing conditions of international transport across the countries of the CCWA Economic Corridor, including current transport corridor initiatives, the existing

<p>Sustainable Transport Connectivity Along the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic (CCWA) Corridor</p>			<p>operational and physical bottlenecks with due consideration to the impact of the pandemic, green infrastructure development, as well as deployment of existing and proposed transport systems including smart intelligent transport systems (ITS) within CCWA corridor member countries, together with policy recommendations. The study contains action plans for inclusion in a corridor specific strategy through the survey among specialists from the respective CCWA member countries.</p> <p>https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/strengthening-capacity-operationalizing-sustainable-transport-connectivity-along-china</p> <p>Updated database on the agreements on international road and railway transport along the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor: Technical Guide https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/2022-01/Technical%20Guide_0.pdf</p>
<p>Overview and analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the supply chains and transport situation due to COVID-19 pandemic in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan</p>	<p>25 January 2022</p>	<p>Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan</p>	<p>Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: Transport Connectivity, Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and Euro-Asian Linkages 2022</p> <p>https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/kazakhstan-and-kyrgyzstan-transport-connectivity-impact-covid-19-pandemic-and-euro-asian</p>
<p>Capacity-building support for technologies and digital transformation for more resilient and competitive railway operations targeting countries in North and Central Asia</p>	<p>2022-2023</p>	<p>All SPECA countries</p>	<p>In 2022, ESCAP launched a new project to help member States in North and Central Asia to gain understanding and capacity to access the best practices, successful policy tools, and lessons learned on digital transformation and the use of new technologies in rail and multimodal transport in the subregion. Under the project, the secretariat prepared a study report on the inventory of policies in the countries of North-East Asia. The findings of the study report will be discussed at the first expert meeting under the project to be held in November 2022.</p>

Support to the operationalization of the KTI (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Islamic Republic of Iran) railway corridor along east of the Caspian Sea	2021-2022	Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan	MOU between railway administrations of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran signed in November 2021.
Support to the digitalization of railways in North and Central Asia	Ongoing	All SPECA countries	The Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway at its seventh meeting supported the initiative to develop a regional strategy/framework to deepen digitalization among the railways of the region to further enhance competitiveness of rail transport particularly for landlocked developing countries and least developed countries. A capacity-building workshop on rail digitalization in North and Central Asia will be held on 3 November 2022.
Support to the development of the dry ports servicing intermodal transport network in Asia	2020-2022	All SPECA countries	ESCAP developed a training programme covering the various dimensions of dry port development and functions.
Support to national and subregional strategy on sustainable freight	2019-2022	All SPECA countries	ESCAP is implementing a UNDA 12 th capacity-building project on national strategies and regional and subregional cooperation aimed at enhancing the sustainability of freight operations. A draft national strategy on sustainable freight has been prepared for Uzbekistan and a subregional analysis and policy recommendations prepared for the North and Central Asian countries.
Support to the evidence-based freight transport policies for North and Central Asia	2022	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	ESCAP and ITF issued a joint transport outlook report, providing scenarios for future transport demand and CO2 emissions in North and Central Asia up to 2050 to help decision makers chart pathways to sustainable, resilient transport. The scenarios reflect existing policy initiatives and specific constraints in the region. They also examine the potential impact of policies addressing the challenges and opportunities for transport from COVID-19. https://www.itf-oecd.org/itf-north-central-asia-transport-outlook
Supporting transport connectivity	2022	All SPECA countries	In the context of the multiple connectivity chocks to NCA countries,

between North and Central Asia and South and Southeast Asia			<p>the secretariat scaled up its analytical and capacity-building support on strengthening transport links between North and Central Asia and South and Southeast Asia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - additional analytical reports (upcoming report on Central Asia/Southeast Asia connectivity); - policy meetings, including during the 3rd Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration (28-30 September 2022); - support to the transport corridor initiatives, including the new multimodal transport corridor that would connect India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
Support to improving road safety in SPECA countries	Ongoing	All SPECA countries	<p>ESCAP initiated a project on “Contemporary design standards for safety, accessibility, and sustainability” to be implemented in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries.</p> <p>In addition, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan became members of Asia-Pacific Road Safety Observatory (APRSO), supported by ESCAP.</p>
Road Safety Performance Review	2022-2023	Uzbekistan	<p>The RSPR was designed to help the beneficiary country to strengthen the road safety management capacities and effectively address and improve national road safety records. The most critical road safety aspects and priority needs in the beneficiary country will be identified by preparing the RSPR. The RSPR will map gaps in national institutional, legal and regulatory frameworks, assess the level of compliance with UN road safety legal instruments - all in line with the ITC Recommendations and the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety and give recommendations for future actions.</p>
Interconnection of the Uzbek Customs system with the eTIR International System	Ongoing	Uzbekistan	<p>Cooperation and technical assistance to strengthen capacities of national representatives on benefits, methodology and technical specification of eTIR international system and implementation of activities to allow interconnection with</p>

			eTIR International.
Strengthening capacities of Turkmenistan national representatives on accession and efficient implementation of selected UN transport legal instruments	23 June 2022	Turkmenistan	Representatives of the Government of Turkmenistan strengthened capacities on tools for digitalization of transport services (eTIR and eCMR).
Accelerating post-COVID recovery of Kazakhstan through switching to natural gas in road transport	2021-2022	Kazakhstan	Project resulted with: (i) Capacity building workshop on decarbonization of the transport sector in Kazakhstan (24-25 November 2021); (ii) Development of a study and assessment of country economic and environmental effects from switching the transport sector to the use of natural gas as a motor fuel; and (iii) Development of a report and recommendations on steps for harmonization of national regulations in accordance with the Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, UN Regulations under the 1958 Agreement, and UN Rules under the 1997 UN Agreement to ensure uniform and safe technical conditions of gas equipment, facilitate refueling and cross border movements of motor vehicles.
Sustainable Inland Transport Connectivity Indicators (SITCIN) Project (UNDA-financed)	21 December 2021	Kazakhstan	National representatives strengthened capacity on SITCIN indicators and selected UN transport related legal instruments identified in national connectivity reports.
SPECA Workshop on digitalization of transport services (eTIR and eCMR)	24 November 2021	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan	During the workshop beneficiary countries strengthen knowledge on digitalization of transport services, procedures and documents (eTIR and eCMR) highlighting the advantages that new electronic systems can bring on trade and border crossings facilitation in the region. Number of best practice cases in different countries were presented.

III. Trade: In line with the overall objectives of SPECA to support its participating countries in developing subregional economic cooperation, integrating their economies into the world economy, and attaining the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the WG on Trade shall foster

subregional cooperation to promote national and regional development of sustainable trade in the SPECA participating countries. To achieve this through subregional cooperation, the Working Group shall: (i) Provide a platform for supporting progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through subregional cooperation in trade and trade facilitation with a focus on SDGs directly related to trade development, notably SDG 17 on partnerships, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (ii) Assist in improving the awareness of SPECA countries on the trade-related SDGs; provide information and share best practice experiences, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (iii) Promote policy dialogue to support: trade policy cooperation among the SPECA countries and their trade negotiators; trade facilitation; aligning positions on sustainable trade, dealing with non-tariff measures, and investment policies; and (iv) Provide analysis and capacity-building in the areas of trade facilitation, sustainable trade development, regulatory harmonization, agricultural quality standards, elimination of non-tariff barriers to trade, investment, and other areas, including identification of funding modalities for SPECA activities.

The thematic orientation of the activities of the Working Group on Trade includes: (i) sustainable trade development among the countries in the region and with the main trading partners; (ii) trade facilitation and promotion of trade facilitation norms, standards and best practice recommendations; (iii) public-private cooperation for trade facilitation; (iv) regulatory harmonization, market surveillance and risk management; (v) agricultural commercial quality standards; (vi) investment and trade development; and (vii) other areas of competence of UNECE and ESCAP related to the development of trade, regional markets and harmonization of standards in these areas. The deliverables of the WG on Trade focus on four areas: (i) trade policy cooperation, including on the WTO negotiations; (ii) implementation of the SPECA Trade Facilitation Strategy; (iii) implementation of the SPECA Principles for Sustainable Trade; (iv) non-tariff measures and barriers to trade; and (v) digitalization of multimodal transport information exchange, with which the WG started dealing in 2021.

Name of Activity	Time & Venue	SPECA participating countries	Major results
17th session of the SPECA Working Group on Trade	31 August 2022, Singapore	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	The event reviewed national and regional plans and strategies of the SPECA countries for sustainable trade development and facilitation and strengthen cooperation among trade diplomats of the SPECA countries.
Working paper on the harmonization of border-crossing procedures in the SPECA region (updated working document of the SPECA WG on Trade)	August 2022	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	This is a working paper of the SPECA WG on Trade for the next years until it is ready to be presented for adoption by the SPECA Governing Council as a strategic document of SPECA. The study was published on the SPECA WG on Trade web page.
Seminar on the promotion of UN/CEFACT standards for digitalization of trade and multimodal data exchange	31 October 2022, Baku, Azerbaijan	All SPECA countries	Seminar on the promotion of UN/CEFACT standards (for the digitalization of data exchange standards for multimodal transport and trade).

Review of the results of implementing Authorized Operator schemes. Planned seminar to examine the ways to harmonize the criteria for recognition of companies as AEOs, harmonizing the AEO schemes, mutual recognition of AEOs among the countries and exchange of information on the status of firms as AEOs	Ongoing (Seminar later in 2022)	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	This activity is implemented with varying success. Possibilities for harmonizing the conditions for AEO status are currently being explored, with a view to facilitating the development of schemes for the mutual recognition of AEO between countries, and/or the exchange of information on the status of specific companies as AEOs.
Assist the development of transit in the region: eTIR implementation pilots and meeting of the nominated transit coordinators in the region	Ongoing: (Meeting of the transit coordinators – later in 2022)	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	Support for the coordination of the work of national transit coordinators (as per the Roadmap to implement the SPECA trade facilitation strategy).
Time Release Studies	Ongoing	Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	With support of other organizations.
Readiness assessments for cross-border paperless trade in Turkmenistan	The study was carried from 1 March to 30 September 2022	Turkmenistan	Turkmenistan is a Party of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. The outcome of the study provided the country with reference on effective implementation of the Framework Agreement. As part of the study, a national validation workshop was held in Ashgabat on 6 September 2022.
Draft national trade facilitation strategy of Uzbekistan	2022	Uzbekistan	The assessment of the readiness of Uzbekistan to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement accomplished in 2021 with assistance from UNECE recommended drafting a national trade facilitation roadmap. First draft of the national trade facilitation strategy of Uzbekistan finalized in March 2022. Preparation of the second draft

			under way – to be finished by the end of 2022.
Readiness assessments for cross-border paperless trade in Tajikistan	The study was carried out from 1 August to 30 September 2022	Tajikistan	Tajikistan is working on the domestic process to become a Party of the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. The outcome of the study will support the country to accede to the Framework Agreement and prepare the country for the implementation of the Agreement once the country becomes a Party. As part of the study, a national validation workshop was held in Dushanbe in September 2022.
Business process analysis of trade procedures in Kazakhstan	The study was carried out from 1 July to 30 September 2022	Kazakhstan	The study highlights the importance of converting paper-based trade documents to paperless trading. This provides the country with useful reference to accede to the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific.
SPECA side event during the 12 WTO Ministerial Conference	14 June 2022, Geneva	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	This side event was planned in 2019 but was postponed due to the pandemic and the postponement of the MC12. The countries wanted to use the occasion of a SPECA country (Kazakhstan) hosting a WTO MC for the first time in the region and in a transition economy. Even if the event was held in Geneva, Kazakhstan was the formal host. Representatives from the capitals of the SPECA countries discussed all the topics of the ToR and programme of work of the WG on Trade: above all regional cooperation in the WTO process, as well as the implementation of the SPECA TF Strategy, the SPECA Principles of Sustainable Trade, NTBs, and the new topic: standardized digitalization of information flows along the SPECA multimodal trade corridors.
Capacity-building events in support of the establishment, functioning and regional cooperation of the National Trade Facilitation Committees of the SPECA countries	20-22 June 2022, Almaty; 23 March 2022; 16 November 2021, Tashkent	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	With assistance from UNECE and GIZ, several capacity-building events took place in support of the establishment, functioning and regional cooperation of the National Trade Facilitation Committees of the SPECA countries. GIZ has supported the establishment of a regional network of NTFCs in collaboration with UNECE, UNCTAD and several other agencies.

Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia 2021	May 2022	Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	<p>The report presents results of the 2021 United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for six participating countries in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, reviewing the progress of trade facilitation reforms and provides a detailed analysis based on 58 trade facilitation measures covering both binding and non-binding WTO TFA measures, as well as measures beyond the scope of WTO TFA.</p> <p>The study was published in May 2022, https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/untf-survey-2021-SPECA?ref=untfsurvey.org</p>
Guide on how to establish and operate a Trade Facilitation Enquiry Point for SPECA countries	March 2021 – March 2022	All SPECA countries	<p>The Guide on how to establish and operate a TF Enquiry Points was developed in collaboration with a consultant and a group of experts from the SPECA region. Published in March 2022 at Guide on TF Enquiry Points. This activity was part of the implementation of the SPECA TF Strategy.</p>
Establish a Trade Facilitation Enquiry Point in Uzbekistan	January 2022, Tashkent, Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan	<p>This was the first case of using the SPECA Guide on how to establish and operate a TF Enquiry Points (Guide on TF Enquiry Points) to develop a national enquiry point in a SPECA country.</p>
Technical Specification for a Uniform Customs Information Page in the SPECA Countries	January 2022	All SPECA countries	<p>This model template describes the installation and set-up procedures necessary to deploy a specified information page at the websites of the Customs authorities of the Central Asian countries. Such page would contain all relevant information on border checkpoints in a universal and easy-to-use form (both documents are in Russian). They can be found at the Model template for Customs regional information page</p>
Round table under the auspices of the SPECA WG on Trade on subregional collaboration in the WTO process	8 December 2021, Geneva	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	<p>Informal discussion organized by UNECE/ECTD for the SPECA countries, on WTO related issues, moderated by H.E Mr. Abdurahmonzoda, Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan and Chair of the SPECA Working Group on Trade. Participants shared plans and issues as they arise in the WTO access process, covered a wide</p>

			range of issues (including “new issues”) as discussed in the preparations for the WTO MC 12, implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the possibilities for cooperation among the SPECA countries on WTO and trade-related processes.
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IV. Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development: The main objectives of the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development are: (i) to provide a platform for supporting progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on the SDGs directly related to innovation and technology development (including, but not limited to SDG 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure; SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth; SDG 13 on combatting climate change and its impacts; and SDG 17 on partnerships); (ii) to aim at improving awareness of SPECA countries on the innovation and technology development related SDGs, provide information and share best practice experiences with regard to the implementation of these SDGs, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs; (iii) to become a mechanism for identification, implementation and coordination of technical programmes and projects within the scope of Working Group competence thereby building capacity, promoting best practices and strengthening mutual trust at political level among the SPECA participating countries; and (iv) to promote cooperation between SPECA countries on strategic approaches to harness innovation as a driver of future sustainable development in the subregion.

Thematic orientation of the activities of the WG on ITSD includes: (i) ICT for development; (ii) Promotion of innovation and innovative technology applications; (iii) Promotion of transfer and commercialization of innovative technologies; and (iv) Development of effective infrastructure for innovation support and financing, including through PPPs.

Name of Activity	Time & venue	SPECA participating countries	Major results
Third session of the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development (WG on ITSD)	20 July 2022, Almaty, Kazakhstan	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	Report and 19 Decisions could be found here: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/D12a-Report-E_0.pdf https://www.unescap.org/events/2022/third-session-speca-working-group-innovation-and-technology-sustainable-development
Expert Group Meeting on Innovation and Technology for SD	19-20 July 2022, Almaty, Kazakhstan	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	EGM was organised by ESCAP, together with UNECE, chaired by the MDDIAI of Kazakhstan with the support of Zerde Holding JSC to support the preparations to the SPECA WG on ITSD, 20 July 2022. https://www.unescap.org/events/2022/expert-group-meeting-innovation-and-technology-sustainable-development Video Interviews with SPECA WG on ITSD members on DSC SD: https://youtu.be/kSsCRIYmEY4 (RUS) and https://youtu.be/4FPDWucGKys (ENG)

Working paper on establishing “a Digital Solutions Centre for Sustainable Development” (DSCSD): options for operational modalities	8 September 2022	Kazakhstan	This document considers the feasibility as well as options for operational modalities for establishing the DSCSD in Almaty, Kazakhstan, with the aim of supporting and guiding the relevant ministries and authorities in Kazakhstan. The paper identifies three operational modalities of the Centre for the consideration of the Government of Kazakhstan. https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/working-paper-establishing-digital-solutions-centre-sustainable-development-options
Asia-Pacific Digital Transformation Report 2022: Shaping Our Digital Future	30 August 2022	All SPECA countries	The Report suggests three pathways that are aligned with the ESCAP Action Plan 2022-2026 of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS), aimed at expanding digital connectivity and accelerating digital transformation for more inclusive and sustainable societies. https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/asia-pacific-digital-transformation-report-2022-shaping-our-digital-future
A Climate Resilient Energy Sector in the Kyrgyz Republic, Action Plan and Policy Recommendations Framework	7 March 2022	Kyrgyzstan	The present report identified several generic structural and non-structural climate resilience measures relevant for the energy sector in Kyrgyzstan. It outlined a 5-step approach, which will assist the country in understanding sectoral climate vulnerabilities in detail, identifying priority assets at high risk, increasing climate resilience of these assets, and identifying key barriers to a successful climate change adaptation of the energy sector. Undertaking these steps will allow Kyrgyzstan to identify key local challenges to address through implementing pilot projects, to prepare a national energy climate resilience framework and to unlock existing climate finance and green recovery funding opportunities. https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/climate-resilient-energy-sector-kyrgyz-republic-action-plan-and-policy-recommendations
A Climate Resilient Transport Sector in the Republic of Kazakhstan, Action Plan and Policy Recommendations Framework	7 March 2022	Kazakhstan	This report identified a number of generic structural and non-structural climate resilience measures relevant for the transport sector in Kazakhstan. It outlined a 5-step approach, which will assist the country in understanding sectoral climate vulnerabilities in detail, identifying priority assets at high risk, increasing climate resilience of these assets and identifying key barriers to a successful climate change adaptation of the

			<p>transport sector. Undertaking these steps will allow Kazakhstan to identify key local challenges to address through implementing pilot projects, to prepare a national transport climate resilience framework and to unlock existing climate finance and green recovery funding opportunities.</p> <p>https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/A%20Climate%20Resilient%20Transport%20Sector%20in%20Kazakhstan.pdf</p>
Kazakhstan, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Profile (Working paper)	7 March 2022	Kazakhstan	<p>Report analyses the ICT, energy, and transport sectors, as appeared to be most sensitive to changes in temperature and precipitation as well as to related extreme weather events in Kazakhstan. These sectors are critical to the country's economy and need to include climate change adaptation measures to minimise potential future socio-economic vulnerabilities. A lag in the development of data transmission network makes access to reliable internet services in several rural areas of the country a challenge.</p> <p>https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/kazakhstan-climate-change-and-disaster-risk-profile</p>
Kyrgyz Republic, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Profile	7 March 2022	Kyrgyzstan	<p>Report illustrates that the ICT, energy, and transport sectors appear as more sensitive to changes in temperature and precipitation. The energy sector appears to be the most vulnerable among the three sectors considering its heavy dependence on hydropower and is ageing energy infrastructure. Landslides damage terrestrial cables, mobile towers, destroy underground ducts causing network failure and disrupting ICT broadband services. A weak adaptation to future climate change patterns in this sector is likely to generate significant socioeconomic vulnerabilities.</p> <p>https://www.unescap.org/kp/2022/kyrgyz-republic-climate-change-and-disaster-risk-profile</p>
Regional Dialogue on Linking Past and Future Regional Cooperation and Partnerships	26 January 2022	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan	<p>The final meeting of RECI DA 11th tranche project took a stock of the outcomes of the four-year project cycle and defined the future areas of cross-sectoral cooperation under Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Initiative. The outcomes of the project include analytical knowledge products, capacity buildings workshops on the topics of</p>

			the seamless connectivity and resilience of integrated infrastructure corridors, e-resilience, and the digital transformation, including online tools. These knowledge products focused on: (1) co-deployment of ICT Infrastructures with energy and transport infrastructures, (2) resilient infrastructure, (3) financing infrastructure, (4) linkage of rural transport systems to regional and international transport networks, (5) methodological notes and assessment of the e-resilience, and (6) Central Asian digital cooperation strategies and approaches. Meeting is accessed at: https://www.unescap.org/events/2022/regional-dialogue-linking-past-and-future-regional-cooperation-and-partnerships
E-Resilience Monitoring Toolkit: Methodological Notes and Pilot Country Profiles	29 December 2021	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan	The baseline methodology and a point for further discussions among interested SPECA countries and stakeholders is offered. In particular, the paper describes process of initial e-resilience data collection, techniques used to transform the data into a single dataset, operations with data, such as missing values treatment and normalization, and visualization of the data. An online visually appealing dashboard put together several pilot countries profiles with specific policy recommendations. Report could be accessed at: https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/e-resilience-monitoring-toolkit-methodological-notes-and-pilot-countries-profiles
UNECE Online Training: Supporting innovative high-growth enterprises in the SPECA subregion	15-17 February 2022	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan	The online training built the capacity of the SPECA stakeholders to design effective policies and institutions to enable and foster the potential of innovative, high-growth entrepreneurship for sustainable development and resilient COVID-19 recovery. https://unece.org/info/SPECA/events/365117
UNECE Webinar: New Approaches to Innovation Policy in the Transition Economies of the SPECA subregion	19 May 2022	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan	SPECA stakeholders provided critical feedback on the initial findings of ongoing work on “New innovation policy for transition economies of the SPECA subregion”. In addition, SPECA stakeholders decided to support a proposal to establish a SPECA business incubator and accelerator network at the next session of the Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development,

			https://unece.org/speca/events/webinar-new-approaches-innovation-policy-transition-economies-speca-sub-region
UNECE publication: New Innovation Policy for transition economies in the SPECA subregion	2022-2023	SPECA countries	The publication proposes a novel framework for thinking about governance in SPECA countries – new innovation policy. Based on ideas such as new industrial policy, growth diagnostics, product space, and the growth identification and facilitation framework, it outlines the principles and means for targeting public support towards defraying the risk of innovation and playing a catalytic role. Work on the publication was started in early 2022 and has progressed well. It will be officially launched in 2023.
UNECE Webinar: Fostering innovative entrepreneurship through educational curricula in the SPECA subregion	19 September 2022	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan	Building on strong interest from the SPECA countries on innovative entrepreneurship and to support implementation of the SPECA Innovation Strategy for Sustainable Development and its Action Plan , the SPECA Working Group on Innovation and Technology for Sustainable Development on 20 July 2022 welcomed a proposal to set up a SPECA Network of Business Incubators and Accelerators for Sustainable Development . This webinar was the first of the activities of the Network, focusing on the promotion of entrepreneurial culture in the education system as a crucial element of innovative development in the SPECA subregion.
UNECE Online Training: Effective management and development of a business incubators and accelerators	27-29 September 2022	SPECA countries	The training was held within the framework of the SPECA Network of Business Incubators and Accelerators for Sustainable Development. During the training, the following questions were addressed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) how to improve the quality of the selection of projects for acceleration; 2) how to interact with business angel networks and venture funds; and 3) how carry out the overall successful development of the business incubation and acceleration programme.
UNECE Policy Handbook: Supporting	2022-2023	SPECA countries	This handbook is being developed within the framework of the UNECE project “Enhancing the capacity of the SPECA countries to

Innovative High-Growth Enterprises in the SPECA subregion			design, implement and monitor effective policies to support innovative high-growth enterprises to drive post-COVID-19 recovery and progress towards the circular economy”. It helps officials from SPECA countries to develop a better understanding of the innovation as well as of the policies and tools that enable and promote innovative, high-growth entrepreneurship to accelerate their COVID-19 recovery and progress towards sustainable development. Work on the publication was started in early 2022 and has progressed well. It will be officially launched in early 2023.
UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development: Review of Uzbekistan	March 2022	Uzbekistan	The national Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Uzbekistan has been published and presented to the Government. It contains 14 specific recommendations for innovation policy reforms tailored to the specific circumstances and priorities of Uzbekistan. The Review was carried out in close cooperation between the Ministry of Innovative Development of Uzbekistan and the UNECE secretariat. The findings and recommendations were vetted by the UNECE Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships. Consultations are underway on a capacity-building programme to support the implementation of Review recommendations. https://unece.org/info/Economic-Cooperation-and-Integration/pub/366072
UNECE Innovation for Sustainable Development Review of Turkmenistan	September 2022, Geneva	Turkmenistan	Consultations were held between the Government of Turkmenistan and the UNECE secretariat on implementing the national Innovation for Sustainable Development Review which the Government has requested. It was agreed that the Review could be initiated in the second half of 2023 subject to extra-budgetary funding being raised. It was also agreed that the Review should complement a Study on Regulatory and Procedural Barriers to Trade which Turkmenistan has also requested of UNECE, and that both would support the process of Turkmenistan’s accession to the World Trade Organization.
Participation of experts from SPECA countries in UNECE policy-oriented meetings	May 2022, November 2022, Geneva	SPECA countries	Policymakers from SPECA countries participated in two international policy dialogues on innovation policy for sustainable development, held at the annual sessions of the UNECE Committee on Innovation,

			<p>Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships, and of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies. Policymakers from SPECA countries exchanged experiences with their peers from other UNECE countries on innovation-enhancing procurement and on transformative innovation. SPECA policymakers also reported on progress with innovation policy reform in their countries and discussed additional needs and opportunities for technical cooperation.</p> <p>https://unece.org/info/Economic-Cooperation-and-Integration/events/365616</p> <p>https://unece.org/info/Economic-Cooperation-and-Integration/events/369706</p>
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V. Gender and SDGs: In line with the overall objective of the Programme to facilitate economic cooperation in the countries of the SPECA region as well as integration of the SPECA participating countries into the world economy for their attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Working Group on Gender and SDGs shall continue to work in the area of gender mainstreaming and transformative policies as follows: (a) Non-discriminatory labour market policies in the course of hiring and work environment free of discrimination and exploitation; (b) Policies to promote the participation of women in public and private companies; (c) Policies to prevent stereotypes in education and research to advance the participation of women in R&D sectors; and (d) Policies for building support systems for women entrepreneurship development.

Name of Activity	Time & venue	SPECA participating countries	Major results
Annual session of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs	9 November 2022, online	Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan	The annual session of the SPECA Working Group on Gender and SDGs was convened within the context of COP 27 with the theme on “women in the green economy”. Participants shared experiences in implementing various measures and initiatives and how these measures have affected gender equality in their countries. Strategies and actions were further discussed to identify the way forward towards advancing gender equality in the context of climate change, including women’s full economic and political empowerment in support of the 2030 Agenda.

VI. Investments and Financial Technical Cooperation

Name of Activity	Time & venue	SPECA participating countries	Major results
Preparations for the first session of the SPECA Working Group on Investments and Financial Technical Cooperation (WG on IFTC)	Ongoing	Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan, the Chair country of the SPECA Working Group on Investments and Financial Technical Cooperation, conducts preparatory work for the 1st session of the WG on IFTC.
