



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

AD HOC SESSION OF THE SPECA GOVERNING COUNCIL

9 December 2022 (online)

REPORT

I. Introduction

At its 17th session on 18 November 2022, the SPECA Governing Council decided to organize an ad hoc session as a follow-up event to the 2022 session of the SPECA Governing Council. The ad hoc session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) was held on 9 December 2022 in a virtual modality. The ad hoc session was jointly organized by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Chair country of SPECA in 2022, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

II. Participants

Representatives of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan as well as the Deputy Executive Secretaries of ESCAP and UNECE participated in the ad hoc session. The delegation of Afghanistan did not take part in the session. The list of participants of the ad hoc session of the SPECA Governing Council is enclosed (Annex I).

III. Opening of the ad hoc session

The ad hoc session was chaired by H.E. Mr. Abzal Abdikarimov, Vice-Minister of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The Chairperson welcomed all participants to the ad hoc session of the SPECA Governing Council and wished them constructive and fruitful work.

IV. Adoption of the agenda

The Chairperson of the ad hoc session informed participants that there were two items on the session's agenda - adoption of the draft Almaty Declaration and the draft Decisions of the 17th session of the SPECA Governing Council.

The agenda of the ad hoc session of the SPECA Governing Council was approved by participants.

V. Adoption of decisions of the 17th session of the SPECA Governing Council and the Almaty Declaration

The Chairperson reminded participants that consensus had been reached on all draft decisions of the 17th session, except draft decision 6 on a proposal of Azerbaijan to prepare a draft resolution for approval at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2023 and draft decision 7 on the establishment of a council of the Permanent Representatives of SPECA participating countries in Geneva.

The Chairperson noted that the Turkmen side had reserved its position on the contents of all draft Decisions of the 17th session of the SPECA Governing Council, except draft decision 8 regarding the gratitude to Kazakhstan for its active work as the Chair country of SPECA in 2022 and draft decision 9 regarding the election of Azerbaijan as the Chair country of SPECA for 2023.

At the 17th session of the Governing Council, the Delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic had reserved its position on draft decisions 6 and 7. The representative of Kyrgyzstan stated that the Kyrgyz Republic withdrew its previous reservation on draft decisions 6 and 7 and supported the adoption of all draft decisions.

The representative of Turkmenistan noted that Turkmenistan removed its reservations on all draft decisions, except draft decision 4, namely, para 3 on the establishment of the SPECA Secretariat in Almaty as the first location. He suggested amending the text of draft decision 4, para 3, as follows:

“The Council requests the expert group to meet and discuss by 31 March 2023 the draft Terms of Reference on the establishment of the SPECA Secretariat.”

Namely, he suggested removing the following text “... in Almaty as the first location ...”

He also suggested starting with Azerbaijan as the first location of the SPECA Secretariat and identify further location of the Secretariat in alphabetical order of the SPECA countries.

The representative of Azerbaijan noted that the suggestion of Turkmenistan was new to Azerbaijan and more information on rotation of the Secretariat in alphabetical order of SPECA countries was needed.

The Chairperson underlined that the issue of establishment of the SPECA Secretariat was discussed for years and suggested that the Expert Group would discuss this issue.

The representative of Azerbaijan supported the proposal made by the Chairperson and reminded participants that the SPECA countries should nominate experts for the Expert Group by 31 December 2022. The Expert Group will develop the Terms of Reference on the establishment of the SPECA Secretariat as well as discuss the new proposal of Turkmenistan.

The representative of Turkmenistan noted that the above issues were raised in 2019, 2020 and 2021 as well as discussed with the Ambassadors of SPECA countries in Geneva and the UNECE Executive Secretary.

Representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan supported the earlier agreed text of draft decision 4. The representative of UNECE noted the possibility to adopt all decisions and reflect the decision of Turkmenistan on reservation of its position in the report of the ad hoc session of the Governing Council as per established procedures of intergovernmental meetings of UNECE and ESCAP. Participants requested Turkmenistan to send additional information on the proposal in a written form.

Referring to the United Nations Editorial Manual Online (<https://www.un.org/dgacm/en/content/editorial-manual/capitalization>), the representative of ESCAP briefed the participants on matters of capitalization in English and long-standing practice in this regard and referred back to the explanations provided at the last Governing Council session that any changes to the governance and coordination of SPECA, whether through a council or any other mechanism, required due process of consultations culminating in the agreement to revise the Terms of Reference of SPECA by the Governing Council.

The representative of Azerbaijan stressed that in draft decision 7 the word “council”, in his opinion, should be capitalised. The Chairperson emphasised that the word “council” should be capitalised as it was discussed at the 17th session of the Governing Council. Participants of the ad hoc session requested the UN secretariat to make an appropriate amendment to draft decision 4.

The Chairperson proposed to the delegates of the SPECA countries to adopt the draft decisions of the 17th session of the SPECA Governing Council and requested the UN secretariat to reflect a special position of Turkmenistan on draft decision 4 in the report of the ad hoc session.

The draft decisions of the 17th session of the SPECA Governing Council were adopted, with the reservation of Turkmenistan on Decision 4 (Annex II).

When discussing the draft Almaty Declaration, the participants confirmed their approval of the text of the Declaration, except the delegation of Turkmenistan. As for item 12 of the draft Declaration, the representative of Turkmenistan noted that they had not received a Concept Note and relevant proposals on the initiative of the Government of Kazakhstan on establishing the Digital Solutions Centre for Sustainable Development. The representative of Kyrgyzstan confirmed the necessity of obtaining additional information on the proposed Digital Solutions Centre.

The Chairperson informed participants that he would request the Ministry of Digital Development, Innovation and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan to provide more information on the Centre to the SPECA participating countries with the support of the UN secretariat.

The Chairperson of the ad hoc session proposed participants to adopt the draft Almaty Declaration. Participants of the ad hoc session of the SPECA Governing Council adopted the Almaty Declaration (Annex III).

VI. Closing of the ad hoc session

The Chairperson of the session thanked all participants for their intensive and productive work, wished them a happy new year, good health, and success in their work.

The Chairperson closed the ad hoc session of the SPECA Governing Council.

After the ad hoc session, the UN secretariat received a note verbale on the establishment of the SPECA Secretariat from the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan requests the assistance of the UN secretariat in communicating the content of this note verbale to the SPECA participating countries (an English translation of the note verbale is enclosed as Annex IV).

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