



SAMARKAND
59th ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
3-6 MAY 2026



CAREC and the Global Silk Road: Connecting Regions through Tourism

5 May 2026 (Tuesday), 09:00–10:30 AM

Venue: Ballroom, Congress Center, Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Introduction

Tourism is emerging as one of the most dynamic drivers of cross-border connectivity and shared prosperity across the CAREC region. As the modern Silk Road regains global attention, CAREC countries are uniquely positioned to leverage their rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and deep historical linkages to attract a growing number of international travelers. With demand rising for deeper cultural engagement and multi-country journeys, the region has an opportunity to reposition itself as a tourism corridor connecting Central Asia, the Caucasus, East Asia, and South Asia to Europe and beyond.

Building on improvements in air and land transport connectivity, streamlined visa regimes, and the rapid rise of digital travel platforms, the CAREC region is well placed to create seamless, multi-destination itineraries that connect its cultural hubs, UNESCO sites, natural wonders, and emerging urban attractions. Realizing this potential, however, requires coordinated policies, harmonized standards, and public–private sector collaboration.

Objectives

- Position CAREC region as a global tourism corridor
- Leverage Silk Road heritage and modern connectivity to create a regional brand
- Align with ADB priorities on regional cooperation and public goods, digital transformation, and private sector development to promote regional tourism

The high-level session will explore how the region can further integrate into global tourism networks, while leveraging digital innovations and good practices in sustainable tourism. It will draw on ongoing initiatives, including the [VisitSilkRoad.org](https://www.visitSilkRoad.org) portal, regional tourism investment pipeline and cross-border facilitation studies, to identify and discuss concrete opportunities that can be scaled across several CAREC members.

Key questions include:

- *What are the opportunities and constraints for the CAREC region to expand cross-border tourism?*
- *How can governments and development partners enable private sector-led tourism development?*
- *What are the emerging global models and digital solutions to promote sustainable and inclusive tourism?*

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Final Agenda

08:45–09:00	Presentation of CAREC Tourism videos
09:00–09:08	Opening Session Welcome Remarks Mr. Abdulaziz Akkulov , Chairman, Uzbekistan Tourism Committee Opening Remarks Mr. Yingming Yang , Vice-President (South, and Central and West Asia) Asian Development Bank (ADB)
09:08–09:16	ADB Presentation: Unlocking Cross-Border Tourism in the CAREC Region: Challenges, Opportunities, and the Path Forward Mr. Asad Aleem , Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration, Central and West Asia Department, ADB
09:16–10:05	High-Level Panel Session <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Shijun Liu, Executive Director, UN Tourism• Mr. Abdulaziz Akkulov, Chairman, Uzbekistan Tourism Committee• Ms. Khulan Bat-Erdene, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Finance, Mongolia• Ms. Feruza Nazarova, Director and Founder, Advantour• Mr. Timur Perkov, Business Development Executive, Qanot Sharq Airlines Moderator: Ms. Sunniya Durrani-Jamal , Country Director, Azerbaijan Resident Mission, ADB
10:05–10:18	Open Discussions (Q&A from the audience via Pigeonhole Live)
10:18–10:20	Group photo (ADB management and speakers)
10:20–10:22	Signing of Letter of Intent between ADB and UN Tourism <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Yingming Yang, Vice-President (South, and Central and West Asia) Asian Development Bank (ADB)• Mr. Shijun Liu, Executive Director, UN Tourism
10:22–10:25	Closing Remarks Mr. Muhammad Ehsan Khan , Director General, East Asia Department, ADB