

**Dear Mr. Olzhas Abaevich,
Dear Mr. Asakawa,
Distinguished participants of the conference,**

Welcome to the beautiful city of Astana.

It is a great honor for me to open the 23rd (twenty third) Ministerial Conference of the CAREC Program and to welcome all participants to Astana. I am confident that today's session, reflecting on **Kazakhstan's chairmanship** this year, will give a new impetus to regional economic cooperation.

As the Governor of the Asian Development Bank representing Kazakhstan, I would like to express my satisfaction with the **30-year partnership between Kazakhstan and ADB**, and I extend my gratitude to Mr. Asakawa and the Asian Development Bank for their support of Kazakhstan on the way of economic reforms and implementation of important socio-economic projects.

The CAREC Program is significant initiative of the ADB, implemented in the region for over 20 years in partnership **with other international financial organizations.**

Today's **Ministerial Conference**, gathering such high-level representatives from the participating countries, underscores our commitment to further cooperation.

It is encouraging to note that the **Long-term strategy of the CAREC Program until 2030** has expanded its focus beyond three traditional sectors to **five clusters**, including critical areas for the

region such as **water resources, agriculture, and human development.**

Since the launch of the program in 2001, over **276** (*two hundred seventy-six*) **investment projects**, which have not only strengthened our economies, but also improved the well-being of our citizens.

In Kazakhstan alone, **more than 20 projects** have been successfully completed in recent years aimed at **enhancing transportation accessibility and logistics connections between countries.** We have constructed and modernized **thousands of kilometers of roads and railways**, bolstering transport corridors that link Europe and Asia through our region.

Today, Central Asia is becoming an important transit region and Kazakhstan is actively developing its transport and logistics potential through initiatives like the “**New Silk Road**” and **the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route.**

The implementation of the **Trans-Caspian International Transport Route**, which passes through Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, has significantly increased transit volumes between Eastern and Western Europe. **In 2023**, the volume of cargo transported via this route **grew by 65%** compared to 2022 (*2.76 million tons*).

To further implement such large-scale infrastructure and related projects that ensure transportation connectivity among the countries of the region, Kazakhstan is committed to attracting **technical assistance through the CAREC program.**

Kazakhstan aims to become a leader **in green energy** in Central Asia. We have already made ambitious commitments to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 and **transition to low-carbon technologies and developing renewable energy sources.**

In the next decade, we plan to construct power stations with a capacity of **26,000 MW**, with approximately **10,000 MW to be generated from renewable sources**, including **new wind and solar power plants.**

In coordination with neighboring countries, we are also actively working on modernizing water supply systems and implementing green technologies in the energy sector.

In this regard, I hope that the CAREC platform and the established **CAREC Climate and Sustainability Project Preparatory Fund** will facilitate attracting investments for the implementation of environmental and climate programs and projects in our countries.

However, our priorities within the CAREC program are not limited only to infrastructure. Developing **human capital** and improving the quality of life are also key priorities.

Kazakhstan seeks to invest actively in education and healthcare, which **are the foundation for long-term economic growth.** Last year alone, our education **budget increased by 29%.**

Joint programs for **exchanging experiences and knowledge** among our countries, supported by international organizations, ensure a sustainable future for us.

To improve the quality of education, knowledge transfer, and our country's competitiveness, the Government of Kazakhstan has taken measures to enhance higher education, including opening branches of leading **foreign universities**.

Kazakhstan is also actively investing in healthcare, which is **fundamental for long-term economic growth**.

Over the past five years, approximately **400 healthcare facilities** have been built in Kazakhstan. In June of this year, the government adopted the **Concept for Healthcare Infrastructure Development until 2030**.

This concept will apply global best practices for **attracting private investment** in the healthcare sector.

I would like to especially acknowledge our **international partners who** play a vital role in supporting the regional initiatives of the CAREC program. The **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development**, the **World Bank**, and the **United Nations Development Programme** have made significant contributions, implementing over **180** (*one hundred eighty*) **projects** in areas such as infrastructure modernization, improving the business environment, water supply, ecology, and socio-economic development.

Kazakhstan is ready to continue active collaboration with our neighbors and international partners to achieve our common goals. **Thank you all for your attention**, and I wish all of us a **successful and fruitful** session today!