Statement by Mr. Assan Darbayev
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25th Ministerial Conference
Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program
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Dear colleagues,
Your Excellency, Mr. Yingming Yang,
(Vice-President of the Asian Development Bank for South, Central and West Asia)

First and foremost, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Mongolia and the Asian Development Bank for organizing the 25th CAREC Ministerial Conference. It is a great honor for me to participate in today's session.

Over the past 25 years, the CAREC Program has evolved into an important platform for bringing together the efforts of participating countries in addressing shared development challenges.

Kazakhstan regards the CAREC Program as one of the key platforms for regional economic cooperation. Since its inception, the Program has contributed to strengthening transport and economic connectivity with countries across the region, as well as with the broader markets of Europe and Asia.

We consider the development of transport corridors to be among the most significant outcomes of our cooperation.

For Kazakhstan, given its strategic geographic location, effective regional connectivity is one of the key factors underpinning sustainable economic growth.

Within the framework of the CAREC Program, a number of projects aimed at modernizing road infrastructure, developing cross-border infrastructure, and enhancing the efficiency of transport routes have been implemented.

The implementation of these projects has significantly improved transport connectivity between Kazakhstan's regions and international markets, creating more favorable conditions for the movement of goods and people.

For Kazakhstan, the key priority areas remain transport and logistics connectivity, digital transformation, energy security, and trade.

However, the legacy of CAREC is not limited to the kilometers of roads constructed or the volume of financing mobilized.

Equally important is the development of a culture of regional cooperation based on joint planning, the exchange of experience, and the pursuit of practical solutions.

CAREC Trade and Investment Facilitation Partnership Agreement (CARTIF) Negotiations

Excellencies,

Kazakhstan welcomes the progress made in the CARTIF negotiations and considers the Agreement an important step towards deeper regional trade and investment cooperation.

As the negotiations advance, we believe it is equally important to consider the practical mechanisms that will support the future implementation of CARTIF across participating countries.

In this context, Kazakhstan would like to propose establishing a Regional Center for Trade and Investment Promotion and Facilitation in Almaty, with support from ADB and other international development partners. The Center would serve as a regional platform for CAREC countries, providing a permanent mechanism for technical assistance, policy expertise and capacity building with the objective of facilitating and promoting the regional trade and investment.

For participating countries, the Center would provide practical support to government officials in developing and implementing trade and investment policies, strengthening institutional capacity, and translating CARTIF commitments into concrete national reforms. It could also help countries exchange experience and good practices, while ensuring that regional cooperation is supported by continuous technical and methodological assistance rather than stand-alone projects.

Subject to a decision by the participating countries, the Center could also serve as the institutional platform and technical backbone for a Regional Trade and Investment Committee under CARTIF, supporting its work through expertise, capacity building and coordination of regional initiatives.

Dear colleagues,

Today, our region is facing new challenges.

The structure of international trade is evolving, while the importance of digital technologies, multimodal transport, and resilient infrastructure continues to grow. Against this backdrop, regional cooperation is becoming more important than ever.

We believe that the next stage in the development of the CAREC Program should focus on further strengthening economic corridors, not only through infrastructure development, but also by reducing cross-border barriers, digitalizing trade procedures, developing logistics, and more actively engaging the private sector.

Over the past 25 years, the Program has demonstrated that joint action enables countries to make more effective use of their respective strengths and create opportunities that would not be possible through national efforts alone.

In our view, the most important legacy of the CAREC Program lies precisely in the establishment of a sustainable platform for dialogue and practical cooperation.

We highly value the contribution of the Program to the development of our region and look forward to CAREC continuing, over the next 25 years, to strengthen connectivity among our countries, facilitate the growth of trade and investment, and create new opportunities for businesses and people.

Dear colleagues,

For its part, Kazakhstan stands ready to continue its active engagement in this work and to contribute to the further advancement of regional cooperation.

Thank you for your attention.