

**Statement by Mr. Hugh Riddell
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Colleagues, Excellencies, distinguished ministers and partners—on behalf of the World Bank Group, let me begin by congratulating CAREC member countries, CAREC and, especially the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic for another productive year of CAREC activities and fantastic organization of 24th Ministerial Conference. Your leadership in convening regional partners at this pivotal moment is timely and inspiring. CAREC's track record of practical cooperation across infrastructure, trade, health, and energy shows what is possible when countries align around shared goals. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this dialogue.

Let me briefly present the World Bank Group's regional work in Central Asia contributing to CAREC 2030 strategy. Over 2014–2025, the Bank provided US\$893 million of investments in regional projects, anchored by connectivity and energy initiatives such as CASA-1000 and regional transport connectivity. Looking ahead, 2025–2026 marks a step-change: an expanded regional pipeline of about US\$8.2 billion backed by an initial US\$1.8 billion in World Bank financing. This pipeline aligns with CAREC priorities—jobs, energy security, water security, and pandemic prevention. Early results show impact: under the Central Asia Water Efficiency and Conservation program, water users are gaining improved irrigation and drainage, and energy savings are materializing through efficiency measures—evidence that regional cooperation delivers gains for people, firms, and public finances.

How can such dramatic increase in financing be achieved? A key instrument enabling scale and coherence is the Multiphase Programmatic Approach (MPA). MPAs sequence reforms and investments over time, with coordinated national operations that cumulatively deliver regional outcomes. They embed regional grant components to support cooperation, allow countries to join when ready, and invite partners to co-finance and align support. New approach also provides excellent opportunities for joint financing by several development partners, increase scale and decreasing costs of operations and we have good examples of such joint efforts in several projects already.

Five flagship regional MPAs—approved or expected by mid-2026—translate strategy into action:

One Health (pandemic prevention): a coordinate program of 5 countries to prevent, detect, and respond to zoonotic diseases, food safety risks, and antimicrobial resistance in Central Asia already under implementation in all Central Asia countries.

Central Asia Water Efficiency and Conservation (water security): increasing water-use efficiency and resilience, approved for Uzbekistan and expected for Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and potentially Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Regional work through IFAS and ICWC will deliver systems to support regional cooperation and allow preparation of future transboundary investment.

REMIT—Regional Electricity Market, Interconnection and Trade (energy security): piloting a day-ahead power market, establishing regional market institutions, and modernizing

transmission. Today, about 2.5% of demand is met through regional trade and ~40% of interconnection capacity is used—leaving efficiency gains on the table. REMIT will help the countries to transfer those opportunities into real gains.

Kambarata-1 Hydropower (transformational energy-water security): a three-government initiative—Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan—with IFI support; preliminary financing needs are around US\$4.2 billion to be provided by pool of development partners.

Transforming Rail and Connectivity in Kazakhstan (connectivity and trade): supporting the Trans-Caspian Corridor, starting with the 322-km Mointy–Kyzylzhar section to relieve bottlenecks and improve reliability.

To conclude, the World Bank Group is ready to deliver this expanded, MPA-anchored program in partnership with CAREC members and development partners. Together, we can convert this pipeline into concrete results—more and better jobs, cleaner and more reliable energy, resilient water systems, safer trade and transport, and stronger preparedness—so that Central Asia is greener, more connected, and more secure. Thank you.