

Zero Round of Negotiations with CARTIF Chief Negotiators

3 June 2026, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia



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On 20 November 2025, the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) countries adopted the Bishkek Ministerial Declaration, officially launching negotiations on the CAREC Trade and Investment Facilitation Partnership Agreement (CARTIF). This marked an important milestone in CAREC countries' efforts to advance regional economic cooperation and integration in trade and investment.

The virtual Inaugural Meeting on the Negotiations for the CARTIF Agreement was held on 11 March 2026. The meeting focused on detailed discussions of the CARTIF implementation plan, the operations of the working groups, and the next steps in the negotiation process. CARTIF Chief Negotiators and country delegations expressed strong support for the initiative and emphasized their readiness to begin the CARTIF Zero-Round negotiations at the earliest opportunity. As part of the preparatory process, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) hosted a virtual meeting of CARTIF Chief Negotiators on 8 May 2026 to provide an opportunity to review the negotiation structure and modalities, ensure readiness for the launch of negotiations, and prepare for the CARTIF Zero round of negotiations.

In this context, the formal launch of CARTIF negotiations will take place during the Zero Round to be held on 3 June 2026 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, alongside relevant CAREC meetings. It is envisaged that Chief Negotiators and Focal Points will participate in person, while experts may join online using a hybrid format.

The formal launch of CARTIF negotiations will be followed by a working session on the updated negotiation modalities document, consolidated zero draft agreement text and formation of Working Groups. Chief Negotiators will be invited to discuss and adopt Negotiation Modalities and Form the Working Groups. The last session will be dedicated to the review of the Framework Agreement text by the Chief Negotiators.

Participants: Chief CARTIF Negotiators, CARTIF Focal Points, development partners, international experts, ADB staff and consultants.

Agenda

03 June 2026, Wednesday	
09:00-09:30 (30 min.)	Registration of Participants, General Announcements
	Welcome and Opening Remarks
09:30-09:45 (15 min.)	Mr. Batkhoo Idesh , State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy and Development of Mongolia Mr. Chandra Arora , Officer in Charge, Mongolia Resident Mission, East Asia Department, ADB
09:45-10:00 (15 min.)	Session 1: Official Launch of the CARTIF Negotiations and Introduction to the Agenda Speaker: Zulfia Karimova , Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, ADB (15 min.)

<p>10:00-11:00 (60 min.)</p>	<p>Session 2: Zero Round of Negotiations, Presentation of the CARTIF Negotiation Modalities, Zero Draft Text of CARTIF and Proposed Working Groups</p> <p><i>The session will provide a detailed overview of the positions provided by the countries related to Negotiation Modalities and Zero Draft of CARTIF in written form before the Zero Round. CARTIF Secretariat will propose updated prioritization list of the WGs.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Mikheil Janelidze, CARTIF Team Leader (20 min.)</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Rolando Avendano, Economist, Economic Research and Development Impact Department (ERDI)</p> <p>Open Discussion, Q&A (40 min.)</p>
<p>11:00-11:20 (20 min.)</p>	<p>Group photo and coffee break</p>
<p>11:20-12:20 (60 min.)</p>	<p>Session 3: CARTIF Chief Negotiators Statements</p> <p><i>Each CARTIF Chief Negotiator is requested to endorse the CARTIF Negotiation Modalities, including decision on working groups and “early harvest” outcomes for low-divergence protocols.</i></p> <p>Speaker: CARTIF Chief Negotiators (5 min. per each CAREC Country)</p> <p>Moderator: Zulfia Karimova, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, ADB</p>
<p>12:20-14:00</p>	<p>Lunch</p>
<p>14:00-15:30 (90 min.)</p>	<p>Session 4: Review of the Framework Agreement Text</p> <p><i>The session will provide an opportunity to discuss in detail the Framework Agreement text and collect initial positions of the Chief Negotiators. The Session will aim at reaching the decision about the need of establishing a Working Group related to the Framework Agreement and its composition.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Mikheil Janelidze, CARTIF Team Leader (10 min.)</p> <p>Moderator: Dorothea Lazaro, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, ADB</p> <p>Open Discussion, Q&A (80 min.)</p>
<p>15:30-15:45 (15 min.)</p>	<p>Coffee Break</p>
<p>15:45-16:45 (60 min.)</p>	<p>Session 5: Review of the Zero Round session outcomes</p> <p><i>The session will provide a detailed overview of the discussions held and decisions made, and Chief Negotiators will discuss the next steps.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Mikheil Janelidze, CARTIF Team Leader (20 min.)</p> <p>Moderator: Zulfia Karimova, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, ADB</p> <p>Open Discussion, Q&A (40 min.)</p>
<p>16:45-17:00 (15 min.)</p>	<p>Concluding Remarks</p> <p>Zulfia Karimova, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, ADB</p>