



Mid-Term Review of the CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030

For Ministers' Endorsement
24th CAREC Ministerial Conference
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Trade—as a key driver of economic growth and development—has been one of the three core traditional sectors of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program since its inception in 2001.¹ Trade remains a priority under the [CAREC 2030 Strategy: Connecting the Region for Shared and Sustainable Development \(CAREC 2030\)](#), specifically under the operational cluster of trade, tourism and economic corridors.
2. In 2018, the 17th CAREC Ministerial Conference endorsed the [CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda \(CITA\) 2030](#), consolidating trade policy and trade facilitation priorities for regional cooperation.² CITA aims to assist CAREC countries in integrating into the global economy through three pillars:
 - (i) **Trade expansion from increased market access:** Promoting the adoption of more open trade policies; deepening customs cooperation; making border and behind-the-border procedures more efficient; improving logistics services; and enhancing transit systems.
 - (ii) **Greater diversification:** Creating an enabling environment for economic diversification by supporting reforms, providing financing, and strengthening linkages between CAREC economies and regional and global value chains.
 - (iii) **Stronger institutions for trade:** Promoting better coordination of sectoral policies and priorities, and evidence-based policymaking; enhancing the capacity of government agencies; improving data collection and cross-country analysis; strengthening officials' policy analysis and negotiation skills; and increasing the participation of think tanks and the private sector.
3. The institutional mechanism for CITA implementation comprises the Regional Trade Group (RTG), the Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC), and the Regional Working Group on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures (SPS RWG). These bodies are to coordinate closely with one another and with other sectoral and thematic groups (such as the Transport Sector Coordinating Committee and the CAREC Digital Strategy Steering Committee), and report to Senior Officials Meeting. CITA 2030 is to be implemented in a phased and pragmatic manner through 3-year Rolling Strategic Action Plans (RSAPs), prioritizing projects and initiatives under CITA's overall strategic objectives. Reviewed annually by the RTG, RSAPs provide a platform for building project pipelines, mobilizing resources, and coordinating with development partners.
4. The Midterm Review (MTR) of the CAREC 2030 Strategy recommended to evaluate and recalibrate sector strategies such as CITA 2030, along with the CAREC Transport Strategy 2030 and CAREC Digital Strategy 2030.³ The MTR of CITA 2030 aims to: (i) assess the progress of CITA 2030 implementation during the period 2018–2024 (review period); (ii) ensure the continued relevance of CITA 2030 within the evolving global and regional context; and (iii) enhance its effectiveness and efficiency in fostering trade expansion and sustainable economic development across CAREC countries.

¹ The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program includes the following 11 member countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has placed its regular assistance to Afghanistan on hold effective 15 August 2021.

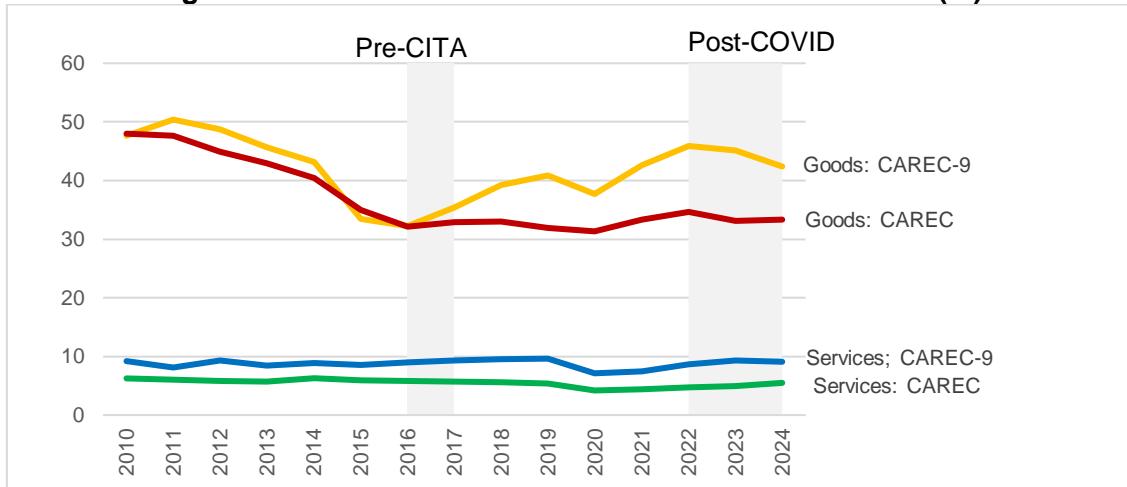
² ADB. 2019. [CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030 and Rolling Strategic Action Plan 2018–2020](#).

³ CAREC Program. 2024. [CAREC 2030 Strategy Mid-Term Review](#).

II. TRADE PERFORMANCE AND TRENDS

5. Since 2016, trade in goods of CAREC members (excluding PRC) grew as a proportion of GDP. Trade in services⁴ share was relatively constant, dropping slightly after 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On average, trade in goods expanded faster than trade in services between 2017 and 2022, but the trend was reversed in 2023 and 2024 (Figure 1). Services exports also grew faster than services imports for six of nine CAREC countries over the eight-year period (Figure 2). Intra-CAREC trade (excluding PRC) was 6.2% of their total trade in 2024 improving steadily from the 2017 share of 4.7%.

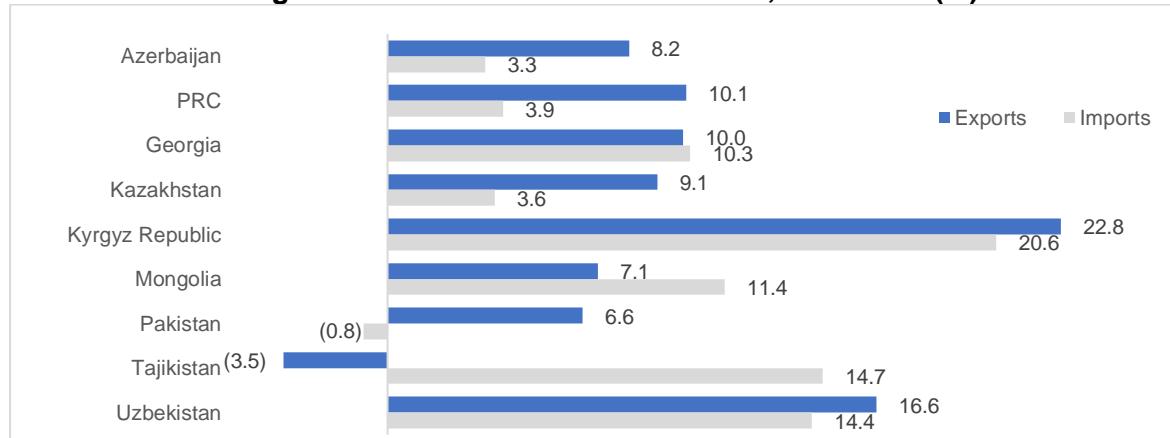
Figure 1. Trade in Goods and Services as Share to GDP (%)



Notes: "CAREC" excludes Afghanistan. CAREC-9 excludes Afghanistan and PRC. Georgia joined CAREC in 2016. Data excludes informal trade.

Source: World Bank. World Development Indicators.

Figure 2: Growth of Trade in Services, 2017-2024 (%)



Note: No data available for Turkmenistan

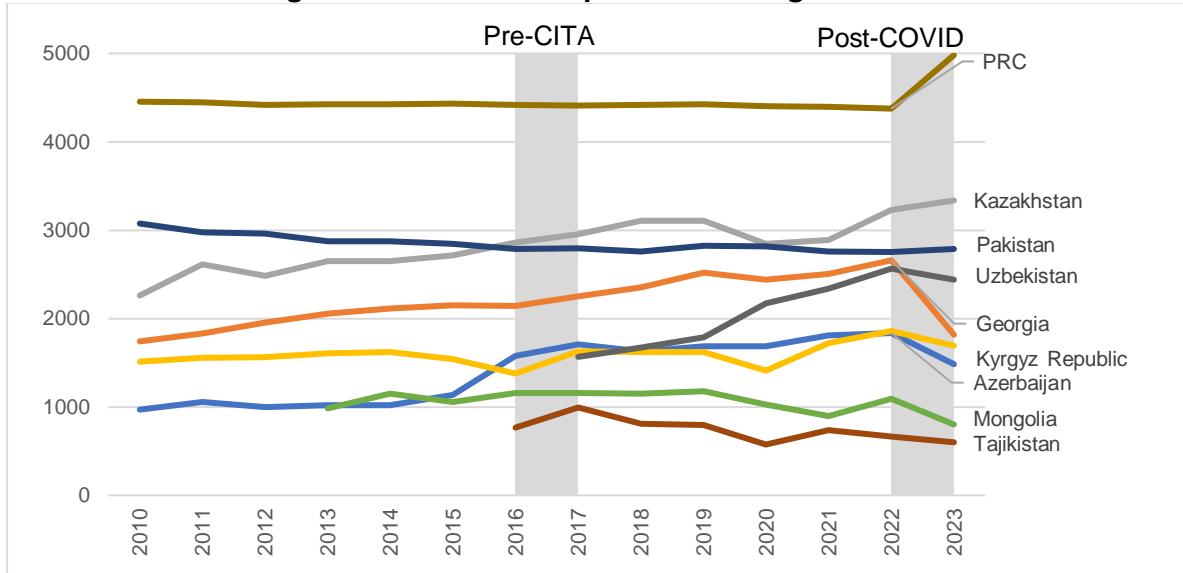
Source: WTO Stats. <https://stats.wto.org/>, accessed 11 September 2025.

6. Most CAREC countries are gradually becoming more diversified through time, based on the number of commodities classified at the HS-6-digit level that they export. Out of a maximum of 5,113 lines at sixth digit level of Harmonized System Code (HS-6), CAREC (excluding PRC) exported 2,083 lines on average in 2022. Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan were the most diversified, with numbers exceeding this average. Fuels

⁴ "Services" refers to commercial services, i.e. all services categories except government goods and services, n.i.e., See p. 48 of https://www.wto.org/english/resebooks/wtsr_2023_ch4_e.pdf

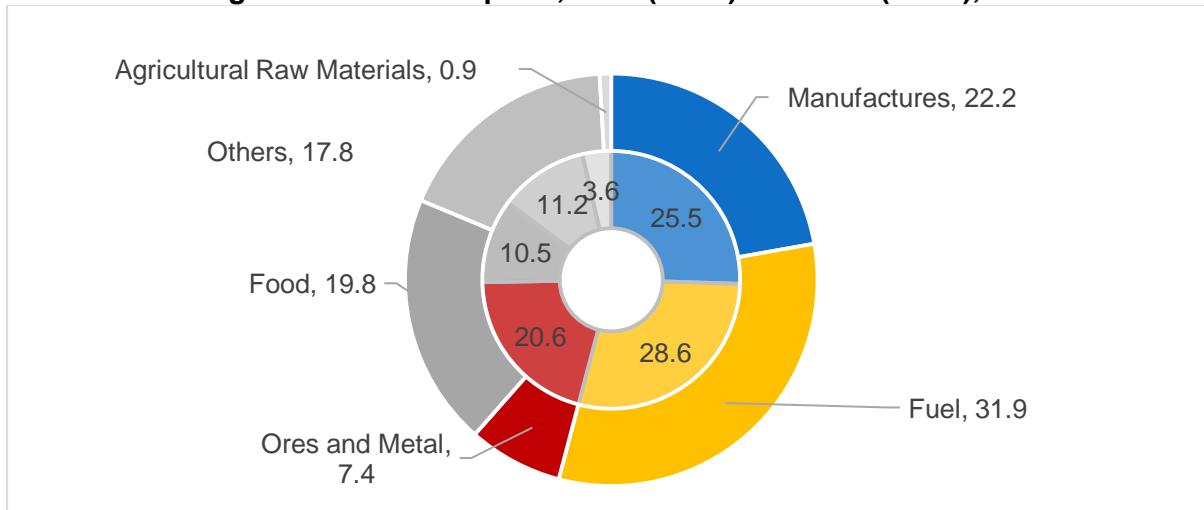
continue to dominate the export basket, comprising a third of total goods exports in 2024; its share also increased slightly from 2017, together with food, in contrast to the drop in shares of ores and metal and manufactures (Figures 3-4). The top 5 merchandise exports constituted 53% of total exports in 2023.

Figure 3: Number of Exported HS 6-Digit Products



Source: WITS accessed 11 September 2025.

Figure 4: CAREC Exports, 2017 (inner) and 2024 (outer), %



Note: CAREC excludes PRC, and Turkmenistan for which no data is available.

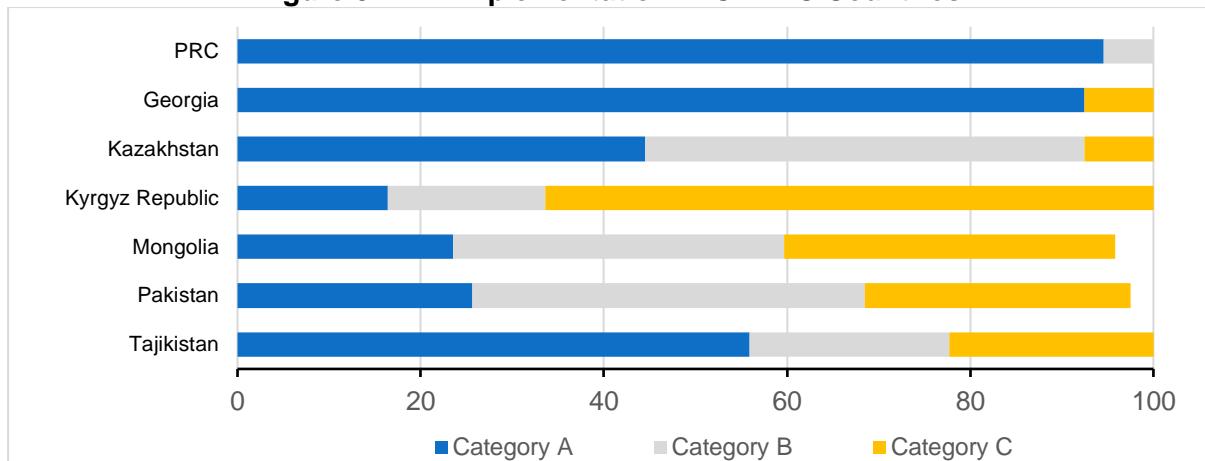
Source: World Development Indicators, accessed 11 September 2025

7. **Trade Facilitation.** Commitments under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement have been fully implemented by five of the seven CAREC countries that are WTO members, i.e. PRC, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan, and almost completely by Mongolia (95.8%) and Pakistan (97.5%) (Figures 5-7).

8. Actual progress with trade facilitation reforms may be gleaned from the *UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation*, which covers 62 measures related to transparency, formalities, institutional arrangement and cooperation, transit facilitation, cross-border paperless trade, trade facilitation for agriculture, SMEs, women, and e-commerce, green trade facilitation, and trade finance. Nine CAREC countries with data from 2017 to 2025

all advanced, six of which started with low baselines. Four of the latter improved substantially. The Customs scores of four countries under the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) also showed marked progress.

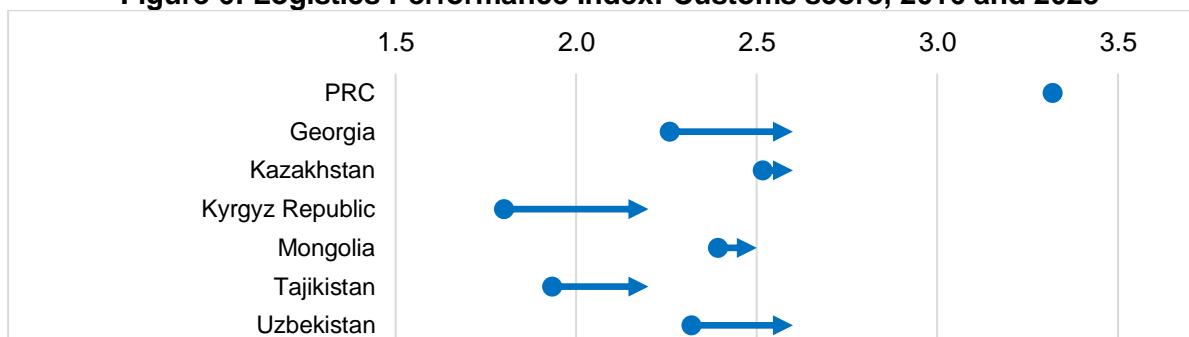
Figure 5: TFA Implementation in CAREC Countries



Note: Members designate provisions either as Category A, for implementation upon entry into force of the Agreement or within 1 year after for least developed country members; Category B, for implementation on a date after a transitional period of time following the entry into force of the Agreement; Category C, for implementation on a date after a transitional period of time following the entry into force of the Agreement and requiring the acquisition of implementation capacity through technical assistance.

Source: Trade Facilitation Agreement database. <https://www.tfadatabase.org/en> (accessed 11 September 2025)

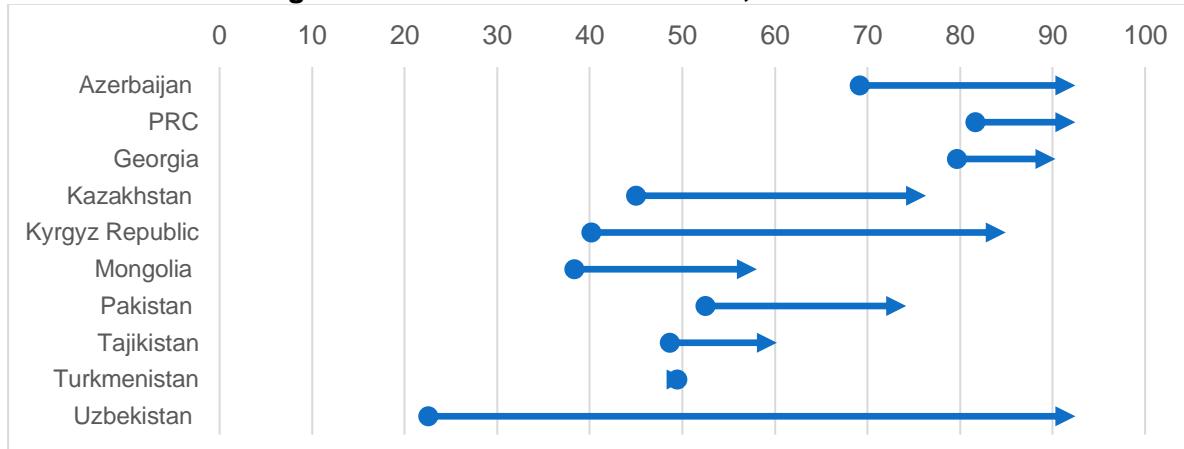
Figure 6: Logistics Performance Index: Customs score, 2016 and 2023



Note: Logistics Performance Index (LPI) is derived through a combination of a global survey and large-scale, high-frequency data on international supply chains. One of the six components measures efficiency of customs and border management clearance.

Source: Logistics Performance Index database. <https://lpi.worldbank.org/index.php/international> (accessed 11 September 2025)

Figure 7: Trade Facilitation Scores, 2017 and 2025



Note: The scores cover the indicators for Transparency, Formalities, Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation, Paperless Trade, Cross-Border Paperless Trade, Transit Facilitation, and Agricultural Trade Facilitation. The figures for Georgia are for 2019 and 2025; for Turkmenistan, 2023 and 2025.

Source: UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation database.

<https://www.untsurvey.org/economy> (accessed 11 September 2025) and CITA 2030 MTR team's computations.

9. Using the CAREC Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring data, CAREC Institute reports that trade facilitation indicators reveal mixed performance of for regional road transport in 2023. The average border crossing time increased by 11% to 11 hours, while costs decreased by 37% to \$131, and the total shipment cost fell by 14% to \$814. Average speeds also improved slightly, speed without delay rising from 42 km/h to 43.7 km/h, and speed with delay increasing from 23.4 km/h to 24.9 km/h.⁵

III. THE EVOLVING GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

10. Since the endorsement of CITA 2030 in 2018, the global and regional trade landscape evolved significantly. From 2018 to 2025, several major events and trends—such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the geopolitical tensions, rising protectionism, increasing climate change risks, increasing transition to clean energy, and the rapid advancement of digital technologies—affected the performance, needs, and priorities of CAREC countries with respect to cross-border trade and investment and overall regional cooperation.

11. **The COVID-19 pandemic.** The COVID-19 pandemic—from 2020 to 2023—was a major adverse shock to the world economy, including the CAREC countries. Trade in tourism-related services was among the hardest hit, reflecting the impact of international mobility restrictions. Pandemic-related measures severely disrupted cross-border trade and investment flows in the region. However, the situation also accelerated digitalization efforts across the region, spurring greater use of paperless trade and expansion of e-commerce. This heightened the case for integrating risk management, resilience, and response capacities into trade facilitation and strategies for cross-border trade and investment.

12. **Geopolitical tensions.** The geopolitical headwinds and regional dynamics—those surrounding Afghanistan since August 2021, the prolonged Russia's war in Ukraine, and conflicts in the Red Sea and in the Middle East—have disrupted regional and global supply chains. These add to the challenges and already high transport and logistics costs faced by CAREC members, especially the landlocked countries. Enhancing connectivity and facilitating trade along the CAREC corridors are receiving increased attention, most notably, the CAREC

⁵ CAREC Institute. 2025. [Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring Annual Report 2023](https://www.untsurvey.org/economy).

Corridor 2 (which largely coincides with the so-called Middle Corridor). Substantial investments both in terms of physical and soft infrastructure are required.

13. **Risk of global trade fragmentation.** Unilateral tariff escalations, retaliatory or trade-restricting measures, and policy uncertainties are increasing the risk of global fragmentation. These developments increasingly undermine the multilateral, rules-based trading system anchored in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and weaken the global demand for sustainable growth. While the impact on CAREC countries is mixed, there is a need to diversify trade and strengthen regional cooperation to mitigate such external shocks.

14. **Rising climate change impacts.** CAREC countries continue to experience rising temperatures, more frequent and severe extreme weather events—such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves—and accelerated glacial melt, particularly in the mountainous areas of the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan. The resulting damage to transport infrastructure and disruption of supply chains have affected countries' trade performance. This calls for resilient and climate-smart infrastructure to support sustainable trade networks in the region.

15. **Advancement of digital technologies.** Digital technologies—including artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, blockchain, and the Internet of Things—have advanced rapidly, reshaping global trade, investment, and economic development. Countries began to adopt digital and paperless trade solutions such as e-certification and national single windows. While these efforts increase efficiency and reduce costs, digital divide in connectivity, digital literacy, and access to online services limit the benefits to traders, particularly among small and medium enterprises. It is also important to invest not only in digital infrastructure and innovation ecosystems, but to also in harmonizing policies to promote data flows, cybersecurity, and trusted digital services. CITA 2030 can play a catalytic role in supporting digital trade integration and fostering innovation-led growth.

IV. CITA 2030 PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

16. At the program level, the progress of CITA 2030 is monitored through CITA's Results Framework. The framework includes 11 indicators—seven at the outcome level and four at the output level. Targets for the seven outcome level indicators and the first two output-level indicators were proposed in 2019.

17. For the period 2018 to 2023, progress on the indicators for the CITA outcome—i.e., CAREC countries are *more integrated into the global economy*—was mixed. In particular, the median ratios of trade in nonfuels within CAREC and trade in fuels and nonfuels with the rest of the world to gross domestic product (GDP) rose significantly in CAREC countries (except the PRC) between 2017 and 2023 (Table 1). However, the ratios of trade in services and of inflows and outflows of foreign direct investment to GDP fell over the same period.

18. There was modest progress on the indicator for Output 1: *Trade expansion from increased market access*. The median value of the ratio of exports of goods and services to GDP for CAREC countries (except the PRC) and the corresponding ratio for the PRC both increased slightly between 2017 and 2023. By contrast, CAREC countries made substantial progress on the indicators for Output 2: *Greater diversification* and Output 3: *Stronger institutions for trade*. The median share of the top five merchandise exports in total goods exports in CAREC countries (except the PRC) declined markedly between 2017 and 2023. The corresponding indicator for the PRC also decreased, albeit more modestly. In terms of

institutional development, RTG was established in 2018. Nine CAREC countries had operational national committees on trade facilitation in 2023, up from seven in 2017.⁶

Table 1. Value of Selected CITA Indicators, 2016 and 2023^a

Results Level	Indicator	2016 ^b	2023
Outcome	Trade in fuels within CAREC (% of GDP)	2.38 [0.08]	2.11 [0.14]
	Trade in fuels with the rest of the world (% of GDP)	3.92 [1.73]	6.00 [3.10]
	Trade in nonfuels within CAREC (% of GDP)	7.33 [1.56]	15.73 [1.16]
	Trade in nonfuels with the rest of the world (% of GDP)	21.22 [29.44]	24.37 [28.96]
	Trade in services (% of GDP)	18.97 [5.79]	13.39 [4.90]
	Net inflows of foreign direct investment (% of GDP)	6.28 [1.56]	1.62 [0.24]
	Net outflows of foreign direct investment (% of GDP)	0.55 [1.93]	0.35 [1.04]
Output 1	Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)	33.84 [19.58]	36.78 [19.74]
Output 2	Share of the top five merchandise exports in total exports of goods (%)	68.09 [14.29]	52.98 [12.47]
Output 3	Regional Trade Group is operational	No ^c	Yes
	Number of CAREC countries with an operational national committee on trade facilitation	7 ^c	9

^a Values represent median estimates for the CAREC countries (except the PRC) for which data are available. Figures for the PRC are in brackets. 2016 is the baseline year for most CITA indicators, and 2023 is the latest year for which data on most CITA indicators are available.

^b Some figures in this column differ from the corresponding data in Table 2.1 due to data revisions and the exclusion of the CAREC countries for which 2023 data are unavailable.

^c Values/figure is for 2017.

Sources: CAREC Secretariat, Trade Map, UNCTADstat, World Development Indicators database, and ADB staff estimates.

19. Most CITA indicators are outcome-level indicators, usually dependent on factors beyond the scope of CITA. It is therefore difficult to determine to what extent the positive changes in their values during the period 2017–2023 were attributable to CITA. Actionable or granular indicators and specific targets are needed to effectively assess and improve CITA’s effectiveness. The indicators and targets can be drawn from the existing data sources such as the CAREC Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring mechanism, the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, and the Logistics Performance Index (See **Appendix 1**).

20. **CAREC interventions under CITA 2030.** ADB and development partners supported CAREC members to achieve the CITA 2030. For instance, ADB approved the financing of 16 technical assistance projects (estimated at \$23.9 million) and five trade-related investments valued at \$759 million approved between 2018–2024.⁷ From 2018 to 2024, a broad range of activities (including from technical assistance and investment projects approved by ADB prior to 2018) contributed to overall CITA objectives. A new cluster TA (Phase 2) to implement CITA was approved by ADB in December 2024, includes five subprojects: (i) trade policy; (ii) trade facilitation; (iii) digital connectivity for trade; (iv) climate actions in trade; and (v) services trade for diversification. **Appendix 2** details the CITA 2030 interventions and activities per pillar, as

⁶ Since most CITA indicators are influenced by a wide range of factors beyond the scope of CITA, it is difficult to determine to what extent the positive changes in their values during the period 2017–2023 were attributable to CITA.

⁷ Including [Mongolia: Regional Improvement of Border Services Project \(Additional Financing\)](#) (2019); [PRC: Inner Mongolia Sustainable Cross-Border Development Investment Program](#) (2020); [Mongolia: Developing the Economic Cooperation Zone Project](#) (2020); [Mongolia: Border Efficiency for Sustainable Trade Project](#) (2023).

well as the overall achievements by CAREC countries, including outcomes of CAREC interventions from 2018 to 2025.

21. Under *Pillar 1: Trade expansion through better market access*, countries adopted more open trade policies and improved border processes to facilitate trade. Reforms and capacity-building were undertaken to align with international standards and best practices to facilitate trade. The remaining non-WTO members CAREC members—Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—are making good progress in their accession efforts. Policy commitments to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement were fully implemented by five of the seven WTO members, and at very high implementation rate for the remaining two.

22. Border infrastructure, facilities and systems were upgraded or underway under the Regional Improvement of Border Services (RIBS) and Border Efficiency for Sustainable Trade projects. National single window (NSW) systems were established by most countries, with varying functionalities. Several countries have instituted authorized economic operator programs. Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan are accelerating the testing phase of the prototype for CAREC Advanced Transit System (CATS) and Information Common Exchange initiative since signing the CATS Memorandum of Understanding in October 2023. Members continue to leverage emerging technologies including with support from the CAREC Program, such as robotic process automation or artificial intelligence (AI) for Georgia's trade procedures and blockchain or digital ledger technology for Mongolia's electronic certificates of origin.

23. Significant progress was made in pursuit of the CAREC Common Agenda for Modernization of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures for Trade. National SPS Working Groups were organized, and each formulated action plans to ensure plant and animal health and food safety. The SPS Regional Working Group was constituted to direct and oversee regional initiatives, policy advice and dialogues, pilot projects, training workshops facilitated country efforts to align with international SPS standards. Three members have successfully integrated into the global system, while others are in testing phase to exchange electronic phytosanitary certificates under the ePhyto Solution.

24. Under *Pillar 2: greater economic diversification*, opportunities for digital trade and linking with regional and global value chains are being expanded. The CAREC Digital Trade Form, a cross-learning network of stakeholders, was established to discuss challenges and innovative solutions. Participation in the Global Digital Trade Expo and study tours to e-commerce exposed CAREC countries to best practice and have led to partnerships to cooperate and promote digital ecosystem in the region. The adoption of international agreements and best practices such as the Agreement on Cross Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific and UN Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records were promoted through capacity-building and awareness-raising

25. The crucial importance of the services sector for economic diversification continued to gain priority in CAREC countries' national development plans. A study recommended seven particularly critical sectors for the CAREC region, and enabling conditions that are essential for services' robust development, including regional cooperation.⁸ A cross-border economic zone, a policy tool for promoting economic transformation, is being developed by Mongolia

⁸ The 2021 CAREC study on developing the services sector in CAREC countries concludes that the services sector is a key driver of economic development and crucial for diversification in the region. The study identifies several services subsectors as particularly important for achieving diversification in CAREC economies. These include freight transport, logistics, tourism, financial, telecommunication, information, education, research and development, and agriculture-related services. ADB. 2021. *Developing the Services Sector for Economic Diversification in CAREC Countries*. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/760456/services-sector-economic-diversification-carec.pdf>

and the PRC. Most countries have started investing in economic zones of various types, providing facilities, services, and incentives.

26. Under *Pillar 3: stronger institutions for trade*, CITA is promoting better coordination of policies and priorities, evidence-based policymaking, and enhanced capacities of government agencies. The Regional Trade Group was established as the institutional mechanism for bringing trade agencies together to prioritize interventions through 3-year rolling strategic action plans. It coordinates closely with the Customs Cooperation Committee, the body responsible for customs-related matters. Working and expert groups on technical areas such as SPS are organized under the RTG.

27. Capacities for designing, negotiating, and implementing trade agreements were built, through a series of needs-based training workshops. These led to the concept preparation of the CAREC Trade and Investment Facilitation (CARTIF) Partnership, a beyond-WTO agreement and solid framework for moving the regional trade, investment cooperation, and economic diversification agenda forward.

28. CAREC knowledge products on trade continue to support evidence-based policy making. Since CITA 2030 implementation, the trade sector published at least 14 knowledge products, and a few blogs and videos (Appendix 4). Over 157 regional and subregional policy dialogues and seminars, including national consultations on specific topics and high-level policy discussions, training courses and study tours, were delivered which reached over 9,000 senior and mid-level government officials, and various sectors of ADB and under the CAREC trade program.

29. The [CAREC Trade Information Portal](#) provides the trade statistics at country level, and the [CAREC Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring](#) (CPMM) offer trade facilitation indicators at country and corridor level.⁹ The [CAREC Trade Insights and News](#) provides quarterly updates on CAREC trade activities.

V. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

30. From a series of stakeholder consultations for the MTR, there is a strong consensus that CITA 2030 remains relevant, responsive and aligns well with national priorities of CAREC members.¹⁰ However, emerging issues, implementation challenges, and evolving landscape identify areas for achieving CITA objectives and priorities.

31. **Scope and modality.** The overall scope of CITA was quite broad and ambitious, reflecting the diverse needs of CAREC countries in trade and participating in global value chains. This led to resource constraints limiting depth, sustainability, and effectiveness. While the number of knowledge products and services to support CITA implementation (para 27) is considered substantial, these require time and consistent follow-up to be impactful. Focused interventions—for example, upgrade of BCPs and trade-related measures and systems—are needed but they remain scarce. Only few CAREC investments were approved under the trade sector (para. 19) despite the wide range of needs for physical and soft infrastructure

⁹ The Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring (CPMM) mechanism, launched in 2009, provides valuable on-the-ground information about the movement of goods along CAREC corridors. CPMM data helps identify bottlenecks for policymakers to address. The CPMM web portal facilitates awareness and use of its data.

¹⁰ Consultations were held through survey questionnaire and country consultations held jointly with the MTR consultations of CAREC transport and digital strategies on 11-13 March 2025 for Kazakhstan, 17-20 March 2025 for the PRC, 4-8 April 2025 for Azerbaijan, 10-11 April 2025 for the Kyrgyz Republic, 21-25 April 2025 for Uzbekistan, 28-29 April 2025 for Tajikistan, 6-7 May 2025 for Georgia, 16 May 2025 for Turkmenistan, 2-3 June 2025 for Pakistan, and 28 July 2025 for Mongolia. The preliminary findings of CITA 2030 MTR were presented at the CAREC Regional Trade Group Meeting on 13 June 2025 and CAREC Senior Officials Meeting on 18-19 June 2025 held in the Kyrgyz Republic.

connectivity in the region. To streamline border operations, CAREC will upgrade BCP facilities and equipment, implement electronic queue management systems, and introduce green lanes. Greater coordination of border controls within and between countries will be pursued, alongside efforts to simplify border-crossing procedures. The proposed *Borders Upgrades for Integration, Logistics, and Development (BUILD) facility* will support the preparation and implementation of CAREC BCP improvement projects and enhance stakeholder coordination.

32. There is a need for longer-term and programmatic support for CITA implementation through policy-based programs and investment projects. CAREC trade work must continue its momentum in promoting alignment with international agreements and good practices in trade policies and trade facilitation measures. Services trade and FDI are increasingly recognized as key drivers of economic diversification and development. CITA activities may explore the feasibility and suitability of investment programs and projects to implement much needed reforms, for example:

- adoption of national single window or implementation of WTO agreements on trade facilitation, SPS, and standards;
- diversify and promote trade in services (i.e., logistics, tourism, communications, and business services) and facilitate cross-border investments (e.g., FDI in new and green technologies and development of high-tech and green value chains); and
- accelerate digital trade and promote cross-border trade flows (data-sharing, interoperability, and use of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and blockchain).

33. **Institutional structure.** CITA's institutional mechanism functioned reasonably well during the review period but highlighted the need to improve coordination among the CITA 2030 bodies. Insufficient interaction among them limits the responsiveness and effectiveness of CITA 2030—especially in implementing cross-cutting initiatives, with multiple stakeholders for activities involving several countries and agencies (e.g., the CATS/ICE initiative). Convening joint meetings of the bodies under CITA (RTG, CCC, and other thematic subgroups) and other CAREC sectoral and thematic strategies (Transport Sector Coordinating Committee and Digital Sector Steering Committee) will ensure better coordination. However, given the timing and resource constraints, frequent virtual meetings may be organized for this purpose.

34. **Cross-sectoral priorities.** CITA 2030 has a strong linkage with the CAREC *Transport Strategy 2030*, particularly in trade facilitation and transport and logistics services. Both strategies support development of multimodal transport and trade corridors with CITA 2030 focusing on soft infrastructure—from digitalization of trade systems, integrated border management, and regulatory harmonization. Efforts under CITA 2030 to accelerate digital trade and facilitate cross-border investment in green industries should be closely aligned with the interventions under CAREC *Digital Strategy 2030* and CAREC *Energy Strategy 2030*.

35. The trade-technology-sustainable development nexus is also well-recognized. The [Baku Declaration on CAREC Partnership for Trade, Climate, and Innovation](#), signed at COP29 in November 2024, is an example of such a regionally coordinated approach with cross-cutting dimension. It supports CITA 2030, in expansion of digital trade, including e-commerce and paperless trade to facilitate trade across the CAREC region. On the other hand, the [Regional Action on Climate Change: A Vision for CAREC](#) identifies transport, transit and trade among seven priority areas. For some countries, this also requires responding to emerging trade-related policies from external markets (e.g., EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) and exploring new growth opportunities.

36. **Engagement with development partners and private sector.** Numerous development partners provide support to CAREC countries in areas covered by CITA 2030. Several stakeholders suggested that coordination among them be strengthened to avoid fragmentation and duplication, reduce pressure on the limited absorptive capacity of government agencies, and achieve greater synergies and development impact.

37. While efforts have been made to expand the private sector participation in CAREC activities (e.g., study tours, trade fairs, and training in digital marketplaces), there is room to expand and strengthen private sector engagement. Increasing awareness and connecting various stakeholders—small and medium enterprises, chambers of commerce, e-commerce providers, logistics providers, and trade operators—with each other under the CITA 2030, will help identify and address trade bottlenecks from the perspective of beneficiaries and support implementation of concrete and practical solutions.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

38. The MTR recognizes the early gains and outcomes of the CAREC Program's comprehensive trade strategy. Leveraging on current momentum and learning from the regional experience amid rapidly evolving global and regional landscape, the MTR suggests focusing CITA 2030's implementation on initiatives aimed at enhancing regional trade, investment, and connectivity while enhancing supply chain resilience and promoting green and digital trade. This requires prioritizing trade projects and activities and implementing them closely with other sectoral and thematic strategies to yield concrete and impactful outcomes. Longer-term and programmatic support for CITA implementation through investment projects and policy-based programs (including policy reforms as part of WTO accession and post-accession of CAREC members) would be ideal.

39. The MTR consolidated the proposed interventions and priorities in the draft **CITA 2030 Rolling Strategic Action Plan 2025-2028 (Appendix 4)** to support CAREC countries in integrating into the global economy. Below are the key recommendations:

(i) Modernize BCPs and trade facilitation measures

40. Modernizing BCPs and customs process remain a priority. Improvement of trade-related systems and border operations are as crucial as infrastructure projects supporting connectivity. The Regional Improvement of Border Services projects provide a suitable model of an integrated and holistic approach to upgrade BCP facilities. CAREC trade work is crucial to develop and enhance legal and regulatory frameworks, harmonize customs processes from inspection to risk management, and introduce electronic queue management systems and green lanes. The establishment of the *Borders Upgrades for Integration, Logistics, and Development (BUILD) facility* as part of the MTR for the CAREC Transport Strategy, will serve as a strategic instrument to accelerate the implementation of border modernization projects across the region, harmonization of standards, and mobilization of resources for preparation of RIBS projects, as well as those related to development of multi-modal trade networks and trade logistics hubs.

(ii) Advance digital trade and promote cross-border e-commerce

41. A related trade facilitation priority is the adoption of cross-border paperless trade and specifically deploying NSWs. There is a further need to achieve interoperability among NSW systems and consider the feasibility and desirability of establishing a CAREC Regional Single Window or a regional digital platform, which may initially cover customs procedures to gradually expand to other trade or border agencies. Other priorities in adoption of paperless trade initiatives includes CAREC members' participation in global trade solutions (e.g., ePhyto), adoption of information customs exchange under the CAREC Advance Transit

System, and the pilot on electronic exchange of trade and conformity certificates. In terms of promoting e-commerce, CAREC members highlight the need to enhance regulatory framework on e-commerce, adopt uniform rules on e-commerce and data protection in CAREC and explore feasibility of developing CAREC-wide cross-border payment system.

(iii) Adopt a formal framework for trade and investment through CARTIF negotiations

42. The proposed CARTIF aims to establish a structured and flexible framework for an effective and progressive trade and investment partnership among CAREC members. It is guided by the principles of differential treatment, voluntary participation, and gradual and modular integration. CARTIF remains committed to multilateral trading system, while recognizing the complementary role of regional initiatives in enhancing connectivity, economic resilience, and inclusive development.

(iv) Increase investments in trade in services and cross-border investment

43. Many CAREC countries attach high importance to promote trade in services and attract cross-border investments, in efforts to diversify trade markets and participate in regional value chains. Future technical assistance, policy-based loans, and investment programs could focus on:

- *Developing economic corridors or green trade corridors.* Economic corridors, such as the Almaty-Bishkek Economic Corridor (ABEC), offer a coordinated approach to designing key projects such as proposed ABEC RIBS Project and the Almaty–Issyk-Kul Alternative Road Project.
- *Developing sustainable tourism clusters and tourism-related services.* CAREC has significant potential for tourism, which can contribute to regional trade and economic diversification. Capacity building, knowledge sharing, the harmonization of tourism standards and protocols, use of smart solutions, can promote regional tourism.
- *Promoting cross-border investment in green and high-tech sectors.* Support may be extended to the development of export-oriented industrial parks or economic zones focused on high-tech and environmentally sustainable industries to foster innovation, create jobs, and develop services ecosystems.
- *Building capacity for resilient and inclusive trade and investment policies.* CAREC needs to strengthen institutional capacity for sustainable cross-border trade and investment, including through establishment of a Regional Investment Group and diagnostics on CAREC members' services trade restrictiveness and investment policy regimes (e.g., leveraging international frameworks such as that of UNCTAD and OECD).

(v) Mainstream innovation and climate action in CITA priorities

44. There is a need to operationalize existing cooperation framework, such as the [Baku Declaration on CAREC Partnership for Trade, Climate, and Innovation](#), which aim to pursue regional actions and innovative solutions in addressing climate change and trade issues and achieving sustainable development. Among the priority activities include to: (i) pilot and deploy scalable and adaptable technology solutions—leveraging robotics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchain, and internet of things—to optimize cross-border trade and transactions while supporting climate mitigation and adaptation measures; and (ii) explore the feasibility of establishing a regional fund of funds, to serve as a catalyst in deployment of venture capital for startup ecosystem to support economic diversification.

(vi) Strengthen CITA 2030 institutional framework

45. Strengthening collaboration between CITA 2030 bodies and the national institutions of CAREC countries can better align regional efforts with national priorities and foster stronger country-level engagement. As countries identify and scale up the investment portfolio of CAREC trade projects or discuss crucial trade policy agenda, the RTG may consider elevating the discussions with participation at higher level (minister or deputy minister level of economy, trade or commerce) during meetings.

46. To enhance the agility and effectiveness of the CITA 2030 institutional mechanism, time-bound technical working groups (TWGs) could be established to carry out specific tasks or discuss specific topics such as cross-border investments, standards, and digital trade. Participation in each TWG would be open to interested CAREC countries, depending on their policy priorities and implementation needs. The TWGs would carry out most or all their activities virtually and could be dissolved upon completion of their tasks, in line with practices in some other regional organizations and programs.

(vii) Strengthen coordination among development partners

47. A dedicated development partner coordination group for CITA 2030 could serve as a platform for information-sharing, alignment of project priorities and timelines, and identification of potential opportunities for collaboration. The group could operate under simple terms of reference, and its meetings could be held virtually to enable wide participation and minimize logistical costs. This could help mobilize financing for the priority projects and activities included in the CITA 2030 RSAPs and provide more comprehensive overview of the ongoing and planned assistance relevant to CITA 2030 priorities. The group can also help strengthen South-South cooperation.

(viii) Deepen private sector engagement

48. Stronger and more systematic private sector engagement in the implementation of CITA 2030 is essential. Private sector input can help identify practical barriers to cross-border trade and investment, devise efficient ways to remove or reduce them, and support implementation of reforms. A structured mechanism—such as a private sector or business forum—for regular public–private dialogue under CITA 2030 can be explored. Coordination with national chambers of commerce and industry and other business associations (including those representing SMEs) should be strengthened, through their involvement in consultation meetings for CITA 2030. In addition, targeted technical assistance, training, and knowledge-sharing initiatives could help build the capacity of private sector actors—especially new exporters, traders, SMEs, startups, and business innovators—to take advantage of regional trade and investment opportunities.

(ix) Improve tracking of CITA’s progress and effectiveness

49. To better assess the impact of CAREC activities at program level, it would be useful to complement the existing CITA 2030 indicators with more granular performance indicators and specific targets. **Appendix 1** presents suggested indicators that depend fully or to a considerable degree on the activities under CITA 2030 and are aligned with its existing high-level indicators. Incorporating at least some of these into the monitoring framework will make the links between the activities under CITA 2030 and its current high-level indicators more explicit, given that the latter are influenced by many factors beyond its scope.

Appendix 1: CITA Results Framework Indicators: Some Recommendations

It is proposed that some indicators are added, and a few are replaced as follows:

- Outcome: Replace Trade in fuels within CAREC (% of GDP) and Trade in nonfuels within CAREC (% of GDP) with Intra-CAREC trade (% of total trade), with a 2017 baseline of 4.7%.
- Output 1: Replace Exports of goods and services (% of GDP) with WTO accession by at least 1 of 3 remaining non-WTO members with a 2017 baseline of 0, and WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement implementation rate with a 2017 baseline of 50.4%
- Output 2: Add Number of exported HS6-digit commodities with a 2017 baseline of 1882; Measure facilitating e-commerce is adopted by at least 1 country; and Services is a priority in at least 1 national economic development plan, with a 2017 baseline of 5 countries including PRC.

Results Level	Indicator	2016 ^b	2023
Outcome	Trade in fuels within CAREC (% of GDP)		
	Trade in fuels with the rest of the world (% of GDP)		
	Trade in nonfuels within CAREC (% of GDP)		
	Trade in nonfuels with the rest of the world (% of GDP)		
	Trade in services (% of GDP)		
	Net inflows of foreign direct investment (% of GDP)		
	Net outflows of foreign direct investment (% of GDP)		
Output 1	WTO accession by at least 1 of 3 remaining non-WTO members		
	WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement implementation rate		
	Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)		
Output 2	Number of exported products at HS6 level	1,469 [4,991]	1,731 [4,980]
	Measure facilitating e-commerce is adopted by at least 1 country		
	Services development is a priority in at least 1 national development plan		
	Share of the top five merchandise exports in total exports of goods (%)		
Output 3	Regional Trade Group is operational		
	Number of CAREC countries with an operational national committee on trade facilitation		

Notes: Indicators in yellow are proposed indicators, while those in grey were the original.
Source: CAREC Trade Sector Report, ADB staff estimates.

List of Supplementary Indicators

No.	Indicators	Data Sources
1.	Non-weighted average time required for border controls of cargo shipments at key BCPs along CAREC corridors ^a	CPMM database. https://cpmm.carecprogram.org/
2.	Non-weighted average Customs score in the Logistics Performance Index	Logistics Performance Index database. https://lpi.worldbank.org/
3.	Non-weighted average trade facilitation score for Institutional Arrangement and Cooperation	UN Global Surveys on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation database. https://www.untsurvey.org/
4.	Non-weighted average trade facilitation score for Paperless Trade and Cross-Border Paperless Trade	
5.	Non-weighted average score for Transit Facilitation	
6.	Non-weighted average score for Agricultural Trade Facilitation	
7.	Non-weighted average score for Trade Facilitation for E-Commerce	
8.	Number of CAREC countries that have acceded to the UN Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific	United Nations Treaty Collection. https://treaties.un.org/
9.	Number of CAREC countries that have acceded to the UN Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts	
10.	Number of CAREC countries that have introduced electronic phytosanitary certificates (e-Phyto)	IPCC ePhyto Solution. https://www.ephyltoexchange.org/landing/
11.	Number of CAREC countries that have introduced electronic certificates of origin	CAREC Regional Trade Group
12.	Number of CAREC countries that have introduced electronic certificates of conformity	
13.	Number of CAREC countries that have implemented the CATS/ICE	CAREC Secretariat
14.	The number of CAREC countries that have joined the CARTIF	
15.	Number of knowledge products developed under CITA 2030	
16.	Number of knowledge-sharing and capacity-building events conducted under CITA 2030	
17.	Number of government officials and private sector representatives from CAREC countries who participated in the CITA 2030 knowledge-sharing and capacity-building events	
18.	Average percentage of participants who rated the CITA 2030 knowledge-sharing and capacity-building events as useful	Post-event feedback surveys

BCP = border crossing point, CAREC = Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation, CARTIF = CAREC Trade and Investment Facilitation Partnership, CATS/ICE = CAREC Advanced Transit System and Information Common Exchange, CITA = CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda, CPMM = Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring, UN = United Nations.

^a This indicator should be computed separately for road and rail transport and for export, import, and transit shipments.

Source: CAREC Secretariat.

Appendix 2: Summary of Key CITA 2030 Activities, Outcomes and CAREC Countries Achievements, 2018–2025

Area/Topic	CAREC Interventions and Activities ^a	Outcomes or CAREC Achievements ^b
Pillar 1: Trade Expansion from Increased Market Access		
Accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subregional forum and roundtable sessions in partnership with the WTO and other development partners (e.g., 2nd Central Asia Trade Policy Forum) Advisory and capacity-building support to Turkmenistan in drafting its Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime Ex-ante assessment of Azerbaijan's WTO accession, and review of Azerbaijan e-commerce legislation with UN Model Laws and international best practices Review of Uzbekistan's legislations alignment with WTO agreements including on sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical regulations and support for Uzbekistan's membership to the International Plant Protection Convention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have made notable progress towards WTO accession. Turkmenistan became a WTO acceding member in 2022 and is finalizing internal government approval of Memorandum on Foreign Trade Regime for submission to WTO Members. Uzbekistan achieved substantial progress in its bilateral negotiations with WTO members and is focused on concluding its negotiation at the WTO 14th Ministerial Conference in 2026. Azerbaijan's reform initiatives and preparation for the 17th Working Party meeting in 2025 reinforced its determination to join the WTO.
Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional, subregional and national workshops on WTO TFA implementation including readiness assessments and preparation of road maps Capacity-building and investment projects for Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan and Tajikistan to support in establishing or upgrading their national electronic Single Windows Trainings on authorized economic operator (AEO) schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of May 2025, five of the seven CAREC members that are WTO members (Georgia, PRC, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan) fulfilled their commitments under the TFA, while Mongolia and Pakistan's compliance are at 95.8% and 97.5%. By end-2024, most CAREC countries had established electronic Single Windows with varying functionalities, and six CAREC countries (Azerbaijan, PRC, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan) had instituted AEO programs.
Customs modernization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops, seminars, and study tours to share knowledge and experience in implementing International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (the Revised Kyoto Convention), electronic data exchange, risk management, and Smart or Green Customs Assistance to Uzbekistan in implementing the Roadmap on Customs Information and Communication Technology Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2021, all CAREC countries had ratified the Revised Kyoto Convention. Most CAREC countries had established automated customs systems, allowing for electronic declaration, payments and clearance, and introduced risk management. Between 2017 and 2023, many CAREC countries recorded improvements in their Customs score in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index.
Modernization of sanitary and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical assistance in development of CAREC countries' strategies and action plans to enhance their national SPS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAREC countries have made considerable headway in aligning their national SPS standards and regulations with international standards. Azerbaijan transitioned to risk-based control, and instituted voluntary

Area/Topic	CAREC Interventions and Activities ^a	Outcomes or CAREC Achievements ^b
phytosanitary (SPS) measures	<p>systems, as part of the Common Agenda for the Modernization of SPS Measures for Trade (CAST)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to CAREC members in aligning their systems with international standards under the International Plant Protection Convention, World Organization for Animal Health, and Codex Alimentarius; as well as adoption of new processes (e.g., food safety management; regional pest surveillance; transboundary animal disease control, risk-based border inspection); and upgrading SPS laboratories Investment in Mongolia for its Regional Upgrades of SPS Measures for Trade (MUST) Project, experience-sharing on joint Customs-SPS inspection from the PRC and Georgia agencies Pilot initiative in the Fergana Valley to enhance horticultural value chains and market access Knowledge-sharing and advisory support for the adoption of electronic phytosanitary certificates (ePhyto) and integration into ePhyto Solution, a global platform for the exchange of ePhyto managed by the IPPC 	<p>certificate of conformity. Georgia established a national animal identification and traceability system. Pakistan integrated its plant protection agency and laboratories into its single window. Tajikistan adopted 60 regulations in compliance with its WTO obligations. Turkmenistan aligned its SPS laws with international norms. Uzbekistan simplified its documentary requirements. Many CAREC countries have upgraded their SPS laboratories.</p>
Upgrade of customs facilities and integrated border management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Improvement of Border Services (RIBS) projects to upgrade facilities and equipment at key border crossing points (BCPs) and information systems (including establishment of national single windows) in Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, and Tajikistan Pilot project on joint customs control at the Zamyn Uud (Mongolia)–Erenhot (PRC) BCP. Scoping for Azerbaijan and Georgia in designing a joint BCP with joint customs controls; assessment of Fotehobod (Tajikistan)–Oybek (Uzbekistan) BCP for coordinated operations Promotion of electronic queue management and risk-based controls at BCPs Capacity building and introduction of One Health mechanism at the borders in Mongolia's Border Efficiency for Sustainable Trade (BEST) project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inauguration of sanitary, phytosanitary, and veterinary laboratories along the CAREC 4B Corridor in Mongolia. SPS facilities modernized and SPS inspection mandate integrated with Customs agency. Diagnostic and pest surveillance capacities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. As of May 2025, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan have adopted e-Phyto and began exchanging them with over 100 countries through the ePhyto Hub. The PRC, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and the Kyrgyz Republic are in testing phase. Between 2018 and 2023, most CAREC countries recorded improvements in their Agricultural Trade Facilitation scores based on the results of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. BCP facilities modernized and national single window (NSW) systems launched or being established. By 2024, Pakistan established the Integrated Transit Trade Management System at the Chaman and Torkham BCPs The PRC and Mongolia have introduced electronic unified cargo manifests as part of joint customs control. Scoping studies on joint BCPs form part of dialogue for cooperation. Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan have established electronic queue management for vehicles at BCPs. Turkmenistan set up a data center. Mongolia is developing climate-resilient border facilities and establishing One-Health coordination at the borders According to the results of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, institutional arrangements and cooperation for trade facilitation improved in many CAREC countries between 2018 and 2023.

Area/Topic	CAREC Interventions and Activities ^a	Outcomes or CAREC Achievements ^b
Customs transit facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot on CAREC Advanced Transit System and Information Common Exchange (CATS/ICE), a regional electronic customs transit system, capacity building and trainings A study on transit trade facilitation in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan Series of knowledge-sharing with UNESCAP (e.g., Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan signed an MoU to pilot-test CATS using virtual transit scenarios, and the prototype is being enhanced based on updated user requirements. Turkmenistan participated as an observer. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and several other CAREC countries adopted transit trade facilitation measures. Between 2018 and 2023, most CAREC countries showed improvements in their Transit Trade Facilitation scores based on the results of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation.
Pillar 2: Greater Diversification		
Development of e-commerce and digital trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity-building and outreach on adoption of electronic trade documents, legal and regulatory frameworks enabling e-commerce and digital trade Study on legal, regulatory and infrastructure aspects of developing cross-border e-commerce in the CAREC region Launch of CAREC Digital Trade Forums, study tours, webinars leveraging global events (e.g., Global Digital Trade Expo) Pilot project in adopting the UN Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records for PRC and Georgia Pilot project on use of AI or robotic process automation in customs declaration processes for Georgia Development of a minimum viable product to digitalizing certificates of origin using the blockchain technology or digital ledger technology for Mongolia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seven CAREC countries (Azerbaijan, PRC, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) acceded to the <i>UN Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific</i>; three CAREC members (Azerbaijan, the PRC, and Mongolia) acceded to the <i>UN Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts</i>. Six CAREC members revised/enacted legislation on e-commerce; Kyrgyz Republic enacted its Digital Code (2025); Pakistan adopted policies on cybersecurity, cloud first and telecom infrastructure sharing. MOUs or letters of intent were signed by CAREC members and/or private sector entities on e-commerce and startup developments. Cross-border e-commerce is being facilitated through countries' systems (e.g., PRC's Internet+Customs and Kyrgyz Republic's Elcart). Azerbaijan's TradeLens, powered by blockchain technology is integrated into its Customs system to track cargo and share data. According to the results of the UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, CAREC countries made considerable progress in facilitating paperless trade between 2018 and 2023.
Development of trade in services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive study on developing the services sector for economic diversification in CAREC countries, which identified 7 core services to be prioritized and recommended policy, infrastructure, and collaborative interventions for their growth. Capacity building workshops on tourism promotion; a study on visa policies of CAREC countries; support for the Tourism Satellite Account projects in the Kyrgyz Republic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PRC established a negative list management model for cross-border trade in services nationwide in 2024. Many CAREC countries have eased visa requirements for international tourists; they have a relatively high tourism visa openness index. In several CAREC countries (including the PRC, Georgia, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan) international tourism receipts increased between 2018 and 2024 (despite the sharp declines in 2020).

Area/Topic	CAREC Interventions and Activities ^a	Outcomes or CAREC Achievements ^b
Development of economic corridors	<p>and Tajikistan; launch of the CAREC tourism portal (Visit the Silk Road)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity-building and a guidance note on economic corridor development Technical assistance aimed at developing the Almaty-Bishkek Economic Corridor (ABEC) and the Shymkent-Tashkent-Khujand Economic Corridor Investment projects in the health, agriculture, and tourism; ABEC RIBS project and Almaty–Issyk-Kul road project for approval Prefeasibility study of the International Center for Industrial Cooperation (ICIC) between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan; and a Trade and Logistics Center in Tajikistan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Azerbaijan, PRC, Georgia, Kazakhstan are among the top 70 in the Global Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index Increased awareness among CAREC countries on developing and practical implementation of economic corridor development. Under the ABEC framework, the Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic meet regularly and with high-level delegation (e.g., Intergovernmental Council Meeting) to agree on joint projects to develop the corridor. ABEC is the pilot economic corridor in the CAREC program that is being replicated in other economic corridor developments. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have each allocated 50 hectares of land for the ICIC and agreed on a roadmap for ICIC development. Uzbekistan's part of the ICIC given the status of a free economic zone.
Development of special economic zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parallel investment projects to develop a cross-border economic cooperation zone in Zamyn-Uud (Mongolia) and Erenhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (PRC) A forum on developing sustainable economic zones in CAREC countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mongolia and the PRC coordinate joint masterplan for the economic cooperation zone CAREC members increased awareness of best practices and expanded network with other free zones, including via the World Free Zones Organization
Pillar 3: Stronger Institutions for Trade		
CAREC Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring (CPMM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing measurement and monitoring of the performance of the CAREC corridors, disseminated through (i) interactive online CPMM database; and (ii) publication of annual CPMM reports, flagship report and other CAREC knowledge products based on CPMM data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPMM data and analyses enable policymakers to address bottlenecks at BCPs. For example, based on country analysis on issues along the Torkham BCP, Pakistan improved clearance procedures and resumed 24/7 operations, offered priority processing to perishable and essential goods and installed Web Based One Customs (WeBOC). CAREC policymakers and researchers have access to 15 years of time-series data on transport times and costs for international shipments along the CAREC corridors.
Engagement with the private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for and collaboration with the CAREC Federation of Carriers and Forwarders Associations (CFCFA), an instrument for public-private partnership for the development of logistics service in the region Development of standards on logistics operations and supply chain management, including gap analysis to determine acceptance of standards, a manual on trade logistics practices and carrier management handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAREC Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC) works closely with CFCFA for constructive customs-business dialogue on areas of common interest National associations in Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan adopted some of the standards on logistics and supply chain management

Area/Topic	CAREC Interventions and Activities ^a	Outcomes or CAREC Achievements ^b
Capacity building for designing, negotiating, and implementing trade agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A study on the theoretical and operational aspects of free trade agreements (FTAs); training seminars and FTA Guidelines, national and regional workshops and dialogue Capacity-building and analysis of good practice FTAs. Development of the concept of the CAREC Trade and Investment Facilitation (CARTIF) Partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced negotiation skills and improved implementation of bilateral FTAs signed by CAREC member countries CAREC bilateral Accelerated discussions on CARTIF and draft text including the framework agreement and initial protocols
Knowledge products and services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trade Information Portal Several knowledge products completed and disseminated (See Appendix 4 for details) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAREC members established national trade information portals as one stop shop of information to traders, regulators, researchers, and the private sector CAREC members maintain open policy dialogue with other members at subregional and bilateral level, learning from other member countries
Establishment of trade sector bodies and coordination with development partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment and regular dialogues among members of the Regional Trade Group (RTG); Customs Cooperation Committee (CCC); SPS Regional Working Group and national SPS policy coordinating group Cross-sectoral coordination (e.g., Transport Sector Coordinating Committee, CAREC Digital Strategy Steering Committee, CAREC Climate Change Working Group) Close coordination with development partners working in the region (e.g., CAREC Institute, WTO, World Bank, UNESCAP, UNCTAD, UNCITRAL, ITC, GIZ, former USAID, KCS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing exchange of experience and sharing of knowledge among CAREC member countries to support more coordinated policy and project development Signing of COP29 CAREC Partnership for Trade, Climate and Innovation in Baku in November 2024, which promotes coordinated approach to implement 3 CAREC sectors/themes (trade, climate and digital) and identify concrete projects to address climate and trade issues through innovative solutions Improved awareness and synergies created among various trade-related initiatives in the region

Acronyms of entities or organizations: ADB = Asian Development Bank, GIZ = Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, IPPC = International Plant Protection Convention, ITC = International Trade Centre, KCS = Korea Customs Service, UN = United Nations, UNCITRAL = United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, UNCTAD = United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNESCAP = United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, USAID = U.S. Agency for International Development, WTO = World Trade Organization.

^a Include CITA-related activities undertaken during the review period under ADB projects approved prior to 2018.

^b Include achievements to which CITA may have contributed only partially.

Source: CAREC Secretariat based on various CAREC reports, including TA and activity documents.

Appendix 3: CAREC Trade Knowledge Products since CITA 2030 implementation

- Key Publications

No.	Knowledge Product	Description
1	<p>Transit Trade Facilitation in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan (2024)</p>	<p>The publication suggests how to support transit trade in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan to boost shared prosperity among CAREC Program.</p> <p>Link: https://www.adb.org/publications/transit-trade-facilitation-azerbaijan-kazakhstan-uzbekistan</p>
2	<p>Progress in Trade Facilitation in CAREC Countries: A 10-Year Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring (CPMM) Perspective (2022)</p>	<p>The report outlines progress made in CAREC Program's trade facilitation efforts from 2010 to 2020 and evaluates the efficiency of cross-border trade across six CAREC transport corridors using the CPMM.</p> <p>Link: https://www.adb.org/publications/progress-trade-facilitation-carec-countries</p>
3	<p>E-Commerce in CAREC Countries: Infrastructure Development (2022)</p>	<p>The technical study examines the state of e-commerce infrastructure among CAREC countries looking at internet payment systems, delivery, and logistics infrastructure.</p> <p>Link: https://www.adb.org/publications/e-commerce-carec-countries-infrastructure-development</p>
4	<p>CAREC CPMM Annual Report 2020: The Coronavirus Disease and Its Impact (2021)</p>	<p>The report presents the performance of road and rail transport in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Link: https://www.adb.org/publications/carec-cpmm-annual-report-2020</p>
5	<p>Developing the Services Sector for Economic Diversification in CAREC Countries (2021)</p>	<p>The study underscores the potential for greater economic diversification through robust development of seven key services subsectors and industries in the CAREC region.</p> <p>Link: https://www.adb.org/publications/services-sector-economic-diversification-carec</p>
6	<p>E-Commerce in CAREC Countries: Laws and Policies (2021)</p>	<p>The study examines the legal environment on electronic transactions along with opportunities and challenges in developing electronic commerce in the CAREC region.</p> <p>Link: https://www.adb.org/publications/e-commerce-carec-laws-policies</p>
7	<p>Expanding Agri-Trade in Central Asia through the Use of Electronic Certificates (2021)</p>	<p>The brief outlines the readiness of countries in the CAREC Program to use electronic phytosanitary certificates (ePhyto) to support safer and expanded agricultural trade.</p> <p>Link: https://www.adb.org/publications/agri-trade-central-asia-electronic-certificates</p>
8	<p>CAREC CPMM Annual Report 2019 (2020)</p>	<p>The report presents the analysis of data on the efficiency of the six CAREC transport corridors as part of the 2019 CPMM.</p> <p>Link: https://www.adb.org/publications/carec-cpmm-annual-report-2019</p>
9	<p>CAREC CPMM Annual Report 2018 (2019)</p>	<p>The report analyzes 2018 data from the CPMM mechanism that assesses the efficiency of the six CAREC transport corridors.</p> <p>Link: https://www.adb.org/publications/carec-cpmm-annual-report-2018</p>

No.	Knowledge Product	Description
10	Modernizing Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures in CAREC: An Assessment and the Way Forward (2019)	This publication assesses the plant health, animal health, and food safety measures of member countries of the CAREC Program. Link: https://www.adb.org/publications/modernizing-sanitary-phytosanitary-measures-carec
11	CAREC Common Agenda for Modernization of SPS Measures for Trade (2019)	The CAREC Common Agenda for the Modernization of SPS Measures for Trade Facilitation will (i) promote concerted reforms and modernization in the implementation of SPS measures consistent with international standards in ways that facilitates safe trade within and outside the region; and (ii) identify and prioritize investment needs to modernize SPS measures and their implementation. Link: https://www.carecprogram.org/?publication=carec-common-agenda-modernization-sps-measures-trade
12	CAREC Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring Annual Report 2017 (2019)	The CPMM provides country- and corridor-specific snapshots, and key recommendations to improve the efficiency of trade along the CAREC corridors. It helps guide infrastructure investment and trade facilitation reform and modernization. Link: https://www.carecprogram.org/?publication=carec-corridor-performance-measurement-monitoring-2017
13	CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030 and Rolling Strategic Action Plan 2018–2020 (2019)	The strategy outlines how the CAREC region can support CAREC members integrate better in the global economy, through increased market access, economic diversification, and stronger institutions for trade. Link: https://www.adb.org/documents/carec-trade-agenda-2030-action-plan-2018-2020
14	CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030 Issues Papers (2019)	The publication introduces key trade issues in Central Asia on technical barriers to trade, trade in services, regional trade agreements, and special economic zones. Link: https://www.adb.org/publications/carec-trade-agenda-2030-issue-papers

Key CAREC Trade Videos

#	Video	Description
1	Modernizing Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures for Trade in the CAREC Region	The CAREC program is helping its members facilitate safe trade and improve access to global agricultural value chains. Modernizing sanitary and phytosanitary measures will facilitate trade and manage transboundary risks to human, plant, and animal health in the CAREC region and beyond. Link: https://www.adb.org/news/videos/modernizing-sanitary-and-phytosanitary-measures-trade-carec-region
2	Trade Facilitation in CAREC: A 10-Year CPMM Perspective	The CAREC program is helping Central Asia to monitor the efficiency of its transport corridors and identify bottlenecks at border-crossing points. Since 2010, the CAREC's Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring project has contributed to evidence-based policymaking for Central Asia. Resilient and efficient border operations ensure seamless supply of vital goods to CAREC member countries in Central Asia and beyond. Link: https://www.adb.org/news/videos/trade-facilitation-carec-10-year-cpmm-perspective

**3 20th Year Anniversary
of the CAREC
Customs Cooperation
Committee**

The CAREC Customs Cooperation Committee has been a long-standing partnership that has helped countries introduce reforms, simplify customs procedures, and adopt innovation to facilitate trade in Central Asia and beyond. Customs authorities from member countries gather to discuss achievements, emerging priorities, and next steps in customs cooperation. Link: <https://www.carecprogram.org/?event=21st-carec-customs-cooperation-committee-ccc-meeting>

Appendix 4: CITA Rolling Strategic Action Plan 2025-2028 (Indicative)

Area	Project /Activity	Type or Modality	Proponent
Pillar 1: Trade Expansion from Increased Market Access			
1	Trade policy and measures	Roadmap for transformation of trade policy and trade facilitation; customs and tax reform support program (Policy-based loan or PBL for UZB) Harmonization of policy and regulations (PBL for AZE)	Policy dialogue, Investment project Policy dialogue, Investment project
		Simplification of customs, border and transit procedures and liberalization of cross-border trade; link Customs clearance and risk management systems	Policy dialogue
		Institutional reforms in border management (through PBL), including preliminary customs clearance or joint inspection procedures and Green Corridors for perishable goods with separate simplified lane	Investment project
		WTO accession and post-accession support, e.g. reforms in trade procedures, tariff rates, subsidies ensuring alignment of national legislations/measures and compliance with WTO agreements	Knowledge products and services
2	Border infrastructure and facilities	Modernize border infrastructure (inspection equipment, technical control, customs warehouses, logistics centers) e.g., Port of Baku connectivity	Investment project
		Establishment of a border crossing point (BCP) regional facility: Borders Upgrades for Integration, Logistics and Development (BUILD) Facility	Investment project
		Almaty-Bishkek Economic Corridor (ABEC) Regional Improvement of Border Services (RIBS)	Investment project
		Reconstruct Yallama, Dustlik-Aytodorozhny, Sariyasiya and integrate digital solutions	Investment project
		Construct and equip BCPs at Bedel, Yntymak, Karamyk, Issyk-Kul; add Bedel to Corridor 1, open and include Yntymak in Corridor 2, upgrade Karamyk to international status; modernize Torugart and Irkeshtam BCPs; equip Issyk-Kul and Karakol airports with inspection and control systems.	Investment project
		Modernize Kharlachi, Ghulam Khankhel and Agoor BCPs	Investment project
		Joint BCP infrastructure, harmonized customs procedures, coordinated management	Investment project
		Develop multimodal/intermodal logistics centers (dry ports, terminals) near key BCPs and key routes	Investment project
		Develop logistics hubs in Navoi, Tashkent and Termez for multimodal transit between PRC, South Asia and Caucasus	Investment project
		Use of scanners, automated or contactless systems, and electronic queue management system in BCPs	Investment project
		Digital infrastructure for seamless Customs operations	Investment project

Area	Project /Activity	Type or Modality	Proponent
	Develop CAREC Corridor 2 (Middle Corridor) with common standards, joint investment projects, inclusive regional mechanism	Policy dialogue	GEO
	Regional strategy to improve logistics services, including logistics hubs and terminals	Policy dialogue	TKM
3 Digital trade processes and documents	Digital and regulatory alignment, scale up digital innovations regionally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digitalization of cross-border process, electronic document management, new digital services, cybersecurity • Establish national single window (NSW), facilitate advance manifest of import, export or transit cargo 	Knowledge products and services, Investment project	AZE, GEO, KAZ, KGZ, MON, PAK, TAJ, UZB, TKM
	Common digital system or regional platform for documentation, verification, data sharing; electronic exchange of trade documents	Policy dialogue, Investment project	GEO
	E-Corridor integrating NSWs or regional Electronic Pre-Parcel Information (EPI) system for all members	Policy dialogue, Investment project	UZB
	National Single Window for trade based on international standards (through PBL for UZB)	Investment project	UZB
	Pilot to expand Pakistan Single Window to more regulatory agencies from CAREC members through bilateral arrangements, a precursor to integrating SW regionally	Investment project	PAK
	Use of disruptive technology for Customs performance	Investment project	MON, GEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot of a CAREC regional transit scheme based on comprehensive and risk-based guarantees, and a customs information common exchange • Private sector engagement in CATS/ICE parallel testing • Expansion of pilot implement to other countries 	Policy dialogue, Investment project	AZE, GEO, UZB KGZ, PAK, TAJ, TKM
5 AEO program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building and mutual recognition on authorized economic operators • Expand membership to manufacturers, freight forwarders, customs brokers, international postal services, and Customs-to-Customs/Customs-Business partnership 	Knowledge products and services	AZE, MON, PAK
6 Risk management	Capacity building on customs risk management and intelligence	Knowledge products and services	PRC, MON, PAK
7 SPS measures	Align national SPS legislation and procedures with international standards	Knowledge products and services	TKM, UZB, GEO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade border inspection posts for SPS control, e.g., Batumi port 	Investment project	GEO

Area	Project /Activity	Type or Modality	Proponent
8 Technical regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct modern SPS laboratories at the borders e.g., Syrdarya, Fergana Modernize quarantine posts 		UZB TKM
	Mutual recognition arrangements for SPS certificates	Policy dialogue	UZB
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitalize SPS control systems (e-certificates, automate procedures) Establish single register of permits and procedures at national and regional level Integrate SPS system into NSW 	Investment project	KGZ, TKM PAK
	Adopt or expand ePhyto system	Investment project	KAZ, MON, PAK, UZB
	Adopt electronic veterinary certificates	Policy dialogue	UZB
	SPS risk assessment and risk-based inspection at selected BCPs	Knowledge product and services	KGZ
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centralized database on SPS-related information Establish a regional center for SPS risk assessment Regional mechanism for early warning and joint response to SPS threats 	Policy dialogue, investment project	MON, PAK, UZB TKM, KGZ
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International accreditation for testing laboratories Strengthen SPS laboratory and diagnostic capacity Training of stakeholders on SPS compliance Technical assistance on improvement of SPS systems 	Knowledge products and services	KGZ, PAK, TKM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align technical regulations with international standards Mutual recognition arrangements Recognition of certificates of conformity and standards esp. in food and textile industries 	Policy dialogue	UZB
	Pilot mutual recognition and electronic exchange of e-certification of conformity certificates	Investment project	KGZ, PAK, TAJ, UZB
9 Non-tariff barriers	Integrating e-conformity certificates into National Single Window	Investment project	MON
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platform for monitoring and eliminating non-tariff barriers (NTBs) Create national portal on trade barriers where businesses can file complaints 	Knowledge products and services	UZB
Pillar 2: Greater Diversification			
10 Trade reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align legislation with international standards in competition, standardization and certification, protection of intellectual property rights Promote green trade and sustainable development, Create mechanism for green certificates of origin, regional training platform and unified standards for green trade 	Policy dialogue	UZB
		Policy dialogue	TAJ
		Policy dialogue	PRC GEO

Area	Project /Activity	Type or Modality	Proponent
11 Services trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage CAREC Trade and Investment Facilitation (CARTIF) Partnership to expand, diversify and promote sustainable trade • Promote green supply chains and environmental trade 	Knowledge products and services	
	Reforms of trade procedures in services e.g. freight, logistics, finance (through PBL); Consider participating in global reviews (e.g., OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index)	Investment project	UZB KAZ
	Digitalization of trade and investment services	Knowledge products and services	AZE, TKM
12 Investment facilitation	Financial services reforms e.g., liberalization of foreign exchange regulations (through PBL)		TAJ, UZB
	Investment promotion strategies tailored to industrial parks and Special Economic Zones (SEZs); leverage investment agreements	Policy dialogue	AZE, PAK
	Legal harmonization, regulatory simplification, digital transformation	Policy dialogue	GEO
	Harmonize investment policies: create regional investment portal, ensure transparent investment protection mechanisms	Policy dialogue	KAZ
	Reforms in investment protection (through PBL)	Investment project	UZB
13 Cross-border e-commerce	Attract private sector e.g. concessions for management of warehouse terminals	Investment project	TAJ KGZ
	Create regional innovative hub		
	Enhance regulatory framework on e-commerce and digital trade, Policy reforms (PBL)	Policy dialogue, Investment project	AZE, KAZ, TKM, UZB
14 Tourism	Uniform rules on e-commerce and data protection in CAREC, pilot project	Policy dialogue	UZB, TKM
	Develop cross-border payment system	Policy dialogue	UZB
	Establish CAREC e-Payment portal for payment of duties and taxes	Policy dialogue, investment project	PAK
15 Regional value chains	Promote cross-border green tourism services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital readiness assessments, benchmarking green tourism practices, and harmonized regional frameworks • Pilot digital solutions at key BCP, including e-visas and mobile travel apps 	Knowledge products and services	KGZ, TAJ
	• Develop RVCs, including cooperation in agriculture and light industries	Policy dialogue, investment project	TAJ AZE
	• Promote green trade corridors through use of renewable energy and low-emission logistics; develop cross-border agro-logistics hubs		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop export-oriented critical minerals 		Knowledge products and services	KAZ GEO, KAZ

Area	Project /Activity	Type or Modality	Proponent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness and capacities on carbon standards (e.g., adapting to EU's CBAM) 			
Pillar 3: Stronger Institutions for Trade			
16	Regional trade agreement	CARTIF, including capacity building, experts' recommendations Address regulatory inconsistencies, NTBs, promote mutual recognition Technical assistance for FTA negotiation and implementation; use of online course such as ESCAP's TINA	Policy dialogue Policy dialogue Knowledge products and services MON, PAK, KAZ, UZB
17	Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring	Continue to measure and assess the competitiveness of CAREC corridors develop an online portal to facilitate wider awareness and use of CPMM data, reports and activities. ADB-Cl partnership to elevate the CPMM annual report and its dissemination. Develop CPMM briefs on country-specific trade facilitation recommendations to CAREC governments for evidence-based policymaking Studies on trade corridor efficiency	Knowledge products and services Knowledge products and services Knowledge products and services REG
18	Staff and institutional capacity	Training, seminars, and capacity building for trade, customs, logistics and technical regulatory agencies to strengthen their institutional capacity Establish mechanism for NTFCS to exchange ideas and identify new approaches and includes the private sector Establish regional centers of excellence in trade and investment Regional Border Management Academy to train customs and border services	Knowledge products and services Knowledge products and services Knowledge products and services KAZ, TAJ, TKM, UZB GEO TKM UZB
19	Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop M&E for all projects under CITA • Create common mechanism for M&E of reforms and projects Regular audits of border crossing procedures with the participation of independent experts and private sector	Knowledge products and services Knowledge products and services KAZ, UZB, AZE UZB

Area	Project /Activity	Type or Modality	Proponent
20 Private sector participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish platform for regular public-private dialogue to identify problems and joint solutions to improve trade and investment environment; Regular forums with private sector; Involve private sector in business innovation, and e-commerce, supply chain services, banking and finance projects 	Knowledge products and services	TAJ, TKM, UZB, KGZ, PAK
	Support for trade promotion agencies, trade fairs, training on access to global markets, financial assistance and facilitation, promotion of startups	Knowledge products and services	GEO, KAZ, TAJ, KGZ
21 Support to SMEs	Technical and financial assistance to SMEs in entering foreign markets including through e-commerce networks, certification centers, export accelerators, training, tools for accessing finance including guarantees, microloans, and factoring for exporters	Knowledge products and services	KAZ, TAJ, UZB, GEO, KGZ
	Support for MSMEs and women traders/entrepreneurs through programs, legal framework (SAFE AEO criteria), awareness	Knowledge products and services	MON
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital payment system projects for small exporters and logistics providers Logistics hubs (fulfillment centers) for small exporters in Tashkent and Samarkand 	Investment project	UZB
22 Link with other initiatives in the region	Expand initiatives to link with global networks and initiatives by other development partners and other programs (e.g., Trans-Caspian Corridor, Digital Economy Program)	Policy dialogue	UZB

AZE = Azerbaijan; PRC = People's Republic of China; GEO = Georgia, KAZ = Kazakhstan, KGZ = Kyrgyz Republic, MON = Mongolia, PAK = Pakistan, TAJ = Tajikistan, TKM = Turkmenistan, UZB = Uzbekistan

Source: Compiled by CAREC Secretariat based on CAREC members proposals via survey and consultations.