

## **CAREC Pilot Project on Electronic Exchange and Mutual Recognition of Product Conformity Certificates**

1. In November 2025 at the margins of the 24<sup>th</sup> CAREC Ministerial Conference in Bishkek, Azerbaijan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan signed a memorandum of understanding with ADB and Korea Trade Network to participate in the pilot project. Tajikistan subsequently expressed interest to join the pilot project. Subject to resources and government readiness, the pilot may be expanded to other CAREC members.<sup>1</sup>

2. The pilot is being implemented under TA 10730: Implementing the CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda 2030 (Phase 2): Accelerating Digital Trade ([Subproject 3](#)) approved in December 2025.<sup>2</sup> The acceptance of electronic trade documents has yet to be fully realized in most CAREC countries, although many have adopted digital strategies but have not made full use of model rules, principles, and standards for digital trade. The subproject will accelerate digitalization of trade documents to facilitate transactions, and advocate for the use of model rules, principles and standards for digital trade, a governance framework for cross-border data flows, and enablers of cross-border payments. Specifically, it aims to develop a prototype and test a model for the electronic exchange of conformity certificates and establish a framework for mutual recognition of conformity certificates, implemented in two phases:

- Phase 1 will develop and test a model for electronic exchange of conformity certificates. A comprehensive assessment will be conducted on the informatization status of the certification, testing and electronic exchange (digital public infrastructure) systems of the standard agencies in the participating countries.
- Phase 2 will design and test a mutual recognition arrangement. Based on the initial assessment and test results in Phase 1, a consultation workshop with heads of standard agencies and/or customs administration representatives will be conducted to discuss issues, gaps, and design of mutual recognition framework that can work for participating countries.

3. In April 2026, an [introductory session](#) was held virtually, with technical experts from ADB, UN ESCAP, and KTNET and representatives from pilot countries. The pilot is among the priority initiatives under the [CAREC Partnership](#) for Trade, Climate and Innovation signed in Baku in November 2024 and aligns with the [UN Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific](#). The kick-off workshop for the pilot project is held in Incheon on 1-2 June 2026.

### **Pilot Implementation Roadmap**

#### **Key Outputs**

- Baseline and Gap Analysis Report (Business Processes / Systems / Data / Legal-Regulatory Framework) (D1)
- Product Selection Rationale Document (D2)
- Pilot Scenario Definition Document (D3)
- Data Model / API Specifications / Security and Verification Design Document (D4)
- Proof-of-Concept and Test Results Report for the Electronic Exchange System (D5)
- Draft Mutual Recognition Agreement (Standard Operating Procedures / Policy Options / Responsibilities and Governance) (D6)
- Capacity Building Report (Workshops / Invitational Training Program / Technical Support) (D7)
- Final Report (D8)

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<sup>1</sup> CAREC member countries include Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, People's Republic of China (PRC), Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. ADB placed its regular assistance to Afghanistan on hold effective 15 August 2021.

<sup>2</sup> With support from the Republic of Korea e-Asia and Knowledge Partnership Fund.

Activity	Timing	Event Type	Key Output	Progress	
<b>A. PHASE 1 — PROJECT INCEPTION &amp; SITUATION ANALYSIS / DIAGNOSTICS   M1 – M6 (6 months)</b>					
<b>A.1</b>	Request designation of focal points at all 5 standards authorities (Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan). Escalate through Steering Committee if not designated within 2 weeks.	M1	Administrative / written communication	Focal point designation letters or emails from all 5 authorities	<b>Completed</b>
<b>A.2</b>	Kick-off workshop — confirm project objectives, scope, roles and responsibilities, governance structure, and regular meeting schedule.	M1	In-person workshop (Seoul; 8 persons / 3 days)	Kick-off results report; governance structure confirmed; project dashboard launched	<b>Completed.</b> Online introductory session on 21 April 2026.
<b>A.3</b>	Conduct 1st in-country field mission — simultaneous diagnostic assessment of all 5 countries using the 18-item Baseline Diagnostic Checklist (Annex 2). Analyze business processes, systems, data, and legal/regulatory frameworks. Quantify ISO/IEC 17065 operational capacity gaps.	M2 – M5	In-country field missions (5 countries; combined with remote focal-point interviews)	Diagnostic assessment data per country; ISO/IEC 17065 gap scores quantified	
<b>A.4</b>	Confirm 1st- and 2nd-priority pilot commodities using the six-criterion weighted scoring matrix (Annex 1). Finalize selection in consultation with participating standards authorities.	M5	Technical working group consultation (virtual or in-person)	D2: Product Selection Rationale Document	
<b>A.5</b>	Submit Baseline and Gap Analysis Report (D1) to ADB for review.	M6	Deliverable submission	D1: Baseline & Gap Analysis Report (Business Processes / Systems / Data / Legal-Regulatory Framework)	
Risk: If in-country visit is not possible for certain countries, substitute with remote online meetings and self-assessment by focal points					
<b>B. PHASE 2 — SYSTEM &amp; FRAMEWORK DESIGN   M7 – M12 (6 months)</b>					
<b>B.1</b>	Map certificate / test report formats of all 5 countries with reference to UN/CEFACT e-CERT and the Digital Product Conformity Certificate framework. Derive the MVD and draft API specifications and schema.	M7 – M8	Technical working group (document analysis + virtual sessions)	Minimum Viable Dataset finalized; draft API specifications	
<b>B.2</b>	Design digital signature and audit log framework. Incorporate country-specific electronic signature legal gaps. Define access control and security requirements.	M9 – M10	Technical design sessions (virtual)	Digital signature & audit log design; security & access control requirements document	
<b>B.3</b>	Draft Mutual Recognition SOP and three-tiered policy options using the APEC TEL MRA Phase I/II structure as reference. Cover roles, responsibilities, acceptance criteria, exception handling, and dispute resolution.	M10 – M11	Legal / policy working group (virtual)	Draft SOP; three-tiered policy options document (Option 1: bilateral admin arrangement; Option 2: regulatory amendment; Option 3: full institutionalization)	
<b>B.4</b>	Submit design outputs (D2, D3, D4) to ADB and participating standards authorities for review. Collect and incorporate review	M12	Deliverable submission	D3: Pilot Scenario Definition Document D4: Data Model / API Specifications / Security	

Activity	Timing	Event Type	Key Output	Progress
comments before proceeding to development.			& Verification Design Document	

Risk: If design is delayed due to country-specific electronic signature legal discrepancies, segregate legal/regulatory gaps into separate policy options for parallel processing alongside the technical development schedule

### C. PHASE 3 — DEVELOPMENT & TESTING | M13 – M20 (8 months)

<b>C.1</b>	Develop the electronic certificate exchange system. Implement API integration with the IT systems of all 5 participating standards authorities. Prepare fallback (file-upload mode) for any authority where direct API integration is not feasible.	M13 – M16	Software development + API integration (onsite technical support)	Operational electronic exchange system; API integration confirmed with 5 national systems
<b>C.2</b>	Conduct invitational training program — share development outputs, review and discuss SOPs, begin hands-on system operation training.	M17	In-person training (Seoul; 9 persons / 7 days)	Training completion report; operational readiness of participating authority technical staff
<b>C.3</b>	Conduct 2nd in-country field mission — interoperability testing across all 5 countries. Run normal scenarios (issuance → exchange → verification → acceptance; ≥5 cases each) and exception scenarios (signature mismatch, expired documents, connectivity failures; ≥5 cases each). Pre-validate KPI-2 (verification success rate ≥ 95%).	M17 – M20	In-country interoperability testing missions (5 countries)	Test results per country; KPI-2 pre-validation evidence; draft user and technical manuals
<b>C.4</b>	Submit Proof-of-Concept and Test Results Report (D5) to ADB.	M20	Deliverable submission	D5: Proof-of-Concept & Test Results Report for the Electronic Exchange System

Risk: If API integration with a specific standards authority is not feasible, prepare fallback (e.g., file upload); API integration with internal systems of standards authorities will be performed by their own technical staff (proposer provides technical support)

### D. PHASE 4 — PILOT OPERATION, IMPROVEMENT & CAPACITY BUILDING | M21 – M23 (3 months)

<b>D.1</b>	Execute live pilot operation — conduct ≥60 actual certificate / test report exchanges with technical staff of all 5 standards authorities. Review results and implement system improvements through bi-weekly iterations. Monitor ≥10 exchanges per country pair. If 60-exchange target appears at risk, assess at M22 and supplement by adding commodities or country pairs.	M21 – M23	Live pilot operation (joint with all 5 standards authorities)	Pilot transaction records; KPI-1 (≥60 exchanges) and KPI-2 (≥95% success rate) tracking reports; bi-weekly iteration logs
<b>D.2</b>	Conduct closing local workshop — share pilot operation results; finalize and agree on SOPs and three-tiered policy options with all participating standards authorities.	M23	In-person workshop (12 persons / 4 days)	Agreed SOP and policy options; closing workshop proceedings
<b>D.3</b>	Submit Draft MRA Agreement (D6) and Capacity Building Report (D7) to ADB.	M23	Deliverable submission	D6: Draft Mutual Recognition Agreement (SOPs / Policy Options / Responsibilities / Governance) D7: Capacity Building Report (Workshops / Invitational

Activity	Timing	Event Type	Key Output	Progress
			Training / Technical Support)	
Risk: If 60-exchange target appears unachievable, assess exchange count at M22 and supplement by temporarily adding commodities or country pairs				
<b>E. PHASE 5 — KPI EVALUATION &amp; FINAL REPORTING   M24 (1 month)</b>				
<b>E.1</b>	Conduct final measurement of KPI-1, KPI-2, KPI-3, and KPI-4. Perform evidence-based performance analysis versus baseline using system transaction logs, pilot records, and authority operational reports.	M24	Internal evaluation (desk analysis)	KPI performance analysis report; evidence package (logs, transaction records, operational reports)
<b>E.2</b>	Conduct closing presentation to ADB and all participating standards authorities — present final results, lessons learned, and recommendations for scale-up.	M24	In-person closing event (16 persons / 3 days)	Closing presentation proceedings; lessons-learned record
<b>E.3</b>	Prepare standalone Reference Package (data models, API specifications, SOPs, policy options summary) for reporting to the CAREC Policy Forum or Digital Trade Working Group. Submit all deliverables.	M24	Deliverable submission	D8: Final Report & all project deliverables submitted to ADB Reference Package for CAREC-wide replication

Notes: ADB = Asian Development Bank, APEC TEL MRA (Telecommunications and Information Mutual Recognition Arrangement) of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, API = Application Programming Interface, CAREC = Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation, IEC = International Electrotechnical Commission, ISO = International Organization for Standardization; KPI = key performance indicator, M = month; MRA = mutual recognition arrangement, MVD = Minimum Viable Dataset, UN/CEFACT e-CERT = United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business electronic messaging format, SOP = standard operating procedure,