



Draft

**Inaugural Meeting for the negotiations of the CARTIF Agreement
11 March 2026**

CAREC Countries Statements

The People's Republic of China (PRC)

Mr. Jin Jiankai, Director, Department of International Trade and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Commerce

I would like to thank the ADB and experts for their very great efforts to facilitate the process of the CARTIF negotiation. First, I would like to clarify PRC's position. We fully support ADB and CAREC members' efforts in promoting CARTIF, and we will participate in the negotiations of all protocols as negotiating party.

Regarding the mechanism of negotiations presented by Mikheil, we fully support its practical and flexible approach. We support the approach if negotiations can start for the framework agreement and initial protocols in parallel.

For the protocols that do not have many disagreements between countries, it could be finalized in a written form. In addition, for other protocols with many differences between countries, we can negotiate them in hybrid format, or even face-to-face if there is a need. We are very flexible in these approaches.

We have to proceed with starting of the negotiation process, as soon as possible, in the way that is the most efficient for us. PRC has also provided some written comments on the Implementation plan to the CAREC Secretariat, and we are flexible to discuss the comments that we have provided. We are happy to follow the suggestions introduced by the ADB experts and the members.

The first point that we have suggested is that we need to set an "early harvest" in the middle of the negotiation process, so that we can estimate our negotiation efforts. The second point - we can have a final goal on concluding of our negotiations. It does not matter - 1 year, or 2 years, or longer, since it will depend on the practical ways, and also considering the situation with negotiations — that can be decided by experts and all CAREC members. However, the important thing - it would be better to have the final goal, or timeframe, when and how we can conclude the negotiations. I think it is a very important point that we have to discuss and decide.

Georgia

Ms. Mariam Gabunia, Head, Foreign Trade Policy Department, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, CAREC sector focal - trade policy

Georgia has already provided its position with regard of the CARTIF Agreement and the approach to the negotiation process. Once again, I would like to thank the ADB, the CAREC Secretariat for their continuous support to CARTIF. This is a very important and comprehensive

agreement and the strengthening of regional cooperation is very important, especially now, in such international circumstances. And, as CAREC member country, we understand why soonest starting of the CARTIF negotiations is very important for us.

I would like to highlight that Georgia is ready to be engaged and negotiate the framework agreement and all protocols. We are ready to nominate the relevant lead negotiators and experts for each working group. Georgia is very flexible with regard of the negotiation approaches and versions that have been presented to us. We support a hybrid format and face-to-face negotiations and I encourage once again the CAREC members and the CAREC Secretariat to start the actual negotiations as soon as possible.

Kazakhstan

Mr. Nurlan Kulbatyrov, Managing Director, JSC "Center for Trade Policy Development "QazTrade"

On behalf of the Ministry of trade and integration let me thank the ADB for inviting us to this Inaugural meeting. We fully support CARTIF Implementation plan, including the general governance, negotiation structure and different stages of the negotiations. Since we have new experts within our established working groups I would like to suggest to expedite the capacity building and training programs to improve capacities of national experts. We are using online training materials from the CAREC Institute website but it would be very useful to have additional training programs. Kazakhstan is ready to be a part of all negotiation initiatives, which are not contradicted to our international commitments. I would like to outline that we are using UNESCAP's TINA platform, which is very useful to identify pluses and negative impacts in negotiation process.

Kyrgyz Republic

Ms. Rimma Kiseleva, Head of Foreign Trade Division, Trade Policy and Government Services Development Department, Ministry of Economy and Commerce

Thanks for organizing this meeting and for useful presentations. We are in the process of establishing of an inter-ministerial working group on CARTIF where representatives of different government agencies related to the CARTIF protocols will participate. We believe that all respective government agencies should participate in the CARTIF negotiation process from the beginning. The Kyrgyz Republic has already nominated the Chief Negotiator and we will inform him about the outcomes of the meeting.

Mongolia

Ms. Erdenetuya Darinchuluun, Head of Economic Cooperation Division, Economic Cooperation and Integrated Trade Policy Department, Ministry of Economy and Development

I would like to highlight and reassure it once more, that we are committed to the CARTIF initiative. Although we have already appointed the chief negotiator, which is myself, I am also the CAREC national focal point, we have to go through our internal procedures that are pending at the moment. Of course, we will provide our feedback to the CAREC Secretariat officially.

However, in this type of negotiations, it is very important to have a capacity-building component and proper consultations, as I have already highlighted during my previous statement. We have gone through this process before, and as chief negotiators from our member countries,

of course, it is important that we have regular consultations and regular communication. That is very important.

I heard from the CAREC Secretariat if there are any opportunities to tap into other resources to raise funds for technical assistance to provide support to our member countries — because at the end for this to be successful, we do need resources. We need technical advisory support, so I hope the CAREC Secretariat will be paying close attention to this. I hope that continued effort is put into this, and I wish all of us great success under this initiative. Thank you so much.

Just one more comment — for operation of the working groups, on behalf of the Ministry of Economy and Development, we support Version 3. I just wanted to put that in the record.

Pakistan

Ms. Maria Kazi, Joint Secretary (FT-II), Ministry of Commerce

Thanks to ADB and CAREC Secretariat for arranging this meeting. Pakistan looks forward to participating in the CARTIF negotiation process and to be a member of all working groups, since we have already signed the Ministerial declaration. We will be staying in touch — me and Mr. Ali Raza Hanjra, our focal point from Pakistan Customs, who is also attending here. So we will be there, and once nominations for working groups are requested, we will share those as well, and we'll be looking forward to being part of the process.

Tajikistan

Mr. Umedjoni Davlatzod, Deputy Head of the Main Department of Trade Policy and Consumer Market, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade

Thank you very much again for organizing such an event for member states. Really, both from your side and from our side, we made such big efforts to join the Bishkek Ministerial declaration in early of March, Tajikistan officially signed the declaration and we are doing our efforts to finalize all positions regarding the practical and drafts under these CARTIF initiative. Regarding the nomination of a CARTIF chief negotiator and focal point, we will be sending our position to the CAREC Secretariat. For practical implementing of the thematic groups, we are interested joining the negotiation process and we will present our position. In the end, I would like to thank the Secretariat of CAREC and ADB for such efforts to do and to organize such a segment. Thank you again.

Turkmenistan

Ms. Nahida Allalyeva, Chief Counsel of State Division for Economic Legislation and Regulatory Affairs, Legislation Department, Ministry of Justice

We thank ADB for today's very productive meeting and we have received answers to the most questions we had before. Signing of the Ministerial declaration by Turkmenistan and our presence in the meeting today confirms Turkmenistan's commitment to be a part of the CARTIF negotiations process. We would like to highlight that we are interested to participate in all working groups since we are in the process of WTO accession and participation in CARTIF working groups from the beginning will be beneficial for Turkmenistan. We are looking forward to next meetings where we will have detailed discussions to find mutual understanding.

Uzbekistan

Mr. Avaz Makhmudov, Head of the Department for Regulation of Foreign Trade, Ministry of investment, industry and trade

Thanks to ADB and CAREC Secretariat for arranging this meeting and all efforts for strengthening the regional trade and investment cooperation. Uzbekistan gives very high importance to development of the regional cooperation and creation of the favorable conditions for trade within the CAREC region. In this regard, we consider CARTIF as important initiative for strengthening regional economic coordination, lowering administrative trade barriers and development of the investment cooperation among the countries. The proposed Implementation Plan has a flexible approach to the negotiation process, including the Zero round and subsequent operation of the working groups. We find this approach very constructive and this requires efficient coordination and sufficient technical background.

Uzbekistan confirms its interest and commitment to be an active partner in the CARTIF negotiation process and make proper inputs. Regarding the preference of the approaches to the operation of the working groups, we need to coordinate it with the experts in our established working groups and we will provide our response additionally.