

Workshop on Advancing Digital and Green Trade Facilitation in CAREC Countries

Co-organized by: Asian Development Bank (ADB), CAREC Program, and Korea Customs Service (KCS)
25–27 November 2025



Concept Note/Agenda

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25-27 November 2025, Seoul, Republic of Korea

INTRODUCTION

Trade facilitation is central to unlocking CAREC countries potential as a strategic bridge between Europe and Asia. While the region's geographic location gives it a unique role in shaping global supply chains, outdated procedures, fragmented systems, and uneven infrastructure continue to impede seamless flows of goods and services. CAREC customs administrations are under growing pressure to modernize, harness digital technologies, and align with international best practices, all while responding to the global push for sustainable trade and climate-conscious policies.

This workshop brings together policymakers, customs authorities, private sector stakeholders, and development partners to collectively design solutions that make trade more efficient, inclusive, and sustainable. It serves as a platform for dialogue, innovation, and cooperation, emphasizing not only the exchange of lessons but also the co-creation of pilot initiatives that can demonstrate proof of concept and be scaled region-wide. Such collaboration is essential to ensure that reforms are interoperable across borders and resilient to evolving challenges.

Special focus areas include developing green customs performance measures, integrating e-commerce clearance systems, and strengthening linkages between Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programs and Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The workshop also highlights the digitalization of preferential certificates of origin (PCOs) and the roll-out of the CAREC Advanced Transit System (CATS) to streamline cross-border trade. By advancing these priorities, CAREC countries can accelerate modernization agendas, enhance regional connectivity, and position themselves at the forefront of digital and sustainable trade in Eurasia.

KEY OBJECTIVES

This workshop aims to accelerate digital and green customs modernization across the CAREC region by highlighting practical international models and adaptable technological innovations. Participants will learn from global best practices such as paperless trade, AI-enabled risk management, blockchain-secured data exchange, IoT-based cargo visibility, and green performance indicators. Insights from leading systems, including Korea's UNI-PASS, will demonstrate how digital solutions can enhance transparency, interoperability, and service efficiency while being tailored to CAREC country contexts.

A key focus is the E-Commerce Goods Clearance Integration Strategy developed by ADB and the Korea Customs Service (KCS), which offers a digital-first approach to managing growing small-parcel trade flows. The strategy promotes data-driven and user-centric clearance through electronic information exchange, harmonized requirements, and AI-supported risk profiling to reduce processing times and costs and position CAREC as a competitive, digitally connected trade corridor between East and West. Priority initiatives include e-Certificates of Origin, linking AEO programs with SEZs, scaling the CAREC Advanced Transit System (CATS), and piloting emerging technologies for regional integration.

The workshop also underscores the crucial role of National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) in coordinating whole-of-government digital trade reforms. By strengthening NTFC engagement with customs, line agencies, the private sector, and development partners, the workshop will support coherent reform planning and the co-development of a Regional Action Plan for Digital and Green Trade Facilitation with aligned priorities, milestones, and monitoring mechanisms.

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

The upcoming CAREC–KCS Workshop will bring together a broad and diverse group of participants from across the trade ecosystem to ensure a balanced and inclusive dialogue. CAREC customs officials and trade regulatory representatives will share institutional insights and reform priorities, while private sector voices will ground discussions in the realities of cross-border commerce. Development partners and experts from the Korea Customs Service (KCS) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) will contribute technical perspectives, global good practices, and implementation lessons relevant to digital and green customs modernization.

Structured over three days, the workshop will combine strategic discussions on regional priorities, technology adoption, and sustainability with practical sessions on pilot initiatives, interoperability, and coordinated action planning. The program will culminate in a site visit to KCS's world-class e-commerce facility at Incheon Airport, offering participants a first-hand view of advanced digital customs operations.

This blend of high-level dialogue, interactive learning, and hands-on exposure will equip participants with both strategic perspectives and actionable models to guide ongoing trade facilitation reforms and support CAREC's transition toward a more digital, integrated, and sustainable trade environment.

PARTICIPANTS

The workshop will convene a diverse group of participants from across the trade ecosystem. Senior officials from CAREC customs administrations and trade ministries will present national reform priorities, while the Korea Customs Service (KCS) will share advanced practices and lessons from its digital and green modernization journey. Regional expertise will be provided by the CAREC Institute, the CAREC Secretariat, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to ensure alignment with ongoing regional strategies and initiatives.

Private sector representatives, including e-commerce platforms, logistics providers, and SEZ operators, will contribute practical insights and innovative approaches that reflect real-world trade facilitation challenges, based on suggestions and coordination with KCS. This balanced mix of policymakers, practitioners, and private sector leaders will ensure that the workshop delivers both strategic direction and actionable insights, fostering collaboration to advance digital and green trade facilitation across the CAREC region.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

Moderator: Ms. Zulfia Karimova, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, Regional Cooperation and Integration Unit, Central and West Asia Department, Asian Development Bank

Day 1 – Setting Priorities and Exploring Opportunities 25 November 2025 (Tuesday)	
09:00 – 09:30	Registration of Participants
09:30 – 09:40	<p>Welcome Remarks (5 mins)</p> <p><i>Korea Customs Service (KCS) sets the tone of the workshop by welcoming participants and highlighting the shared commitment to drive digital and green trade facilitation across the CAREC region.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Ms. Ju-yeon Lim, Acting Director General, International Affairs Bureau, Korea Customs Service</p>
09:40 – 09:50	<p>Opening Remarks (5 minutes)</p> <p><i>The CAREC program underscores the importance of regional cooperation and positions the workshop as a catalyst for advancing digital and green trade facilitation reforms across CAREC .</i></p> <p>Speaker: Ms. Zulfia Karimova, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, Central and West Asia Department, ADB</p>
09:50 – 10:00	Group Photo
10:00 – 10:20	<p>Session 1: CAREC Trade Facilitation Landscape (20 minutes)</p> <p><i>This session will set the stage by reviewing progress under CAREC's Integrated Trade Agenda (CITA) 2030 and highlighting key achievements to date. Country perspectives will provide a grounded view of ongoing reforms, challenges, and opportunities across the region. Regional trends will be analyzed to identify common priorities and position CAREC economies within the broader context of global trade facilitation.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Ms. Zulfia Karimova, ADB</p>

10:20 – 10:40	Morning Coffee/Tea Break (20 minutes)
10:40 – 11:20	<p>Session 2: KCS Experience in Advancing Digital and Green Trade (40 mins)</p> <p><i>This session will showcase Korea Customs Service's leadership in pioneering digital customs solutions and integrating sustainability into border operations. Participants will gain insights into KCS innovations such as smart clearance systems, e-commerce facilitation, and green performance measures that are shaping the future of trade. The discussion will highlight how these advancements can inspire and inform CAREC countries in their own digital and green trade journeys.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Mr. Il-Hyun Baek, Assistant Director, Express Cargo and Postal Coordination Division, Korea Customs Service</p> <p>Q & A (20 minutes)</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Dennis Pantastico, ADB Consultant</p>
11:20 – 12:00	<p>Session 3: Leveraging Modern Technologies for Customs Transformation (40 minutes)</p> <p><i>This session will explore how modern technologies are reshaping customs operations and enabling smarter, more efficient trade facilitation. Cutting-edge tools such as artificial intelligence (AI) for risk management, blockchain for secure data exchange, and the Internet of Things (IoT) for real-time cargo tracking will be discussed in detail. Lessons from Korea's UNI-PASS system will demonstrate how digital solutions can be scaled nationally and regionally to improve transparency, interoperability, and service delivery. Building on these experiences, the session will also highlight emerging CAREC pilots that showcase how technology can be adapted to local contexts while laying the groundwork for broader regional integration.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Ms. Miryang Kim, Assistant Director, AI Innovation Division, Korea Customs Service</p> <p>Q & A (20 minutes)</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Hong-ik Kang, Deputy Director, External Relations Division, Korea Customs Service</p>
12:00 – 14:00	Networking Lunch (2 hours)
14:00 – 14:40	<p>Session 4: Green Performance Measures in Customs (40 mins)</p> <p><i>Customs administrations in CAREC countries are under growing pressure to balance trade facilitation with environmental protection, as they play a critical role in regulating hazardous waste, ozone-depleting substances, endangered species, and other sensitive goods. The concept of "Green Customs" embeds sustainability into border operations, moving beyond compliance toward actively supporting environmental and trade objectives. To advance this agenda, the study proposes the development and piloting of Green Customs Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that will measure and improve compliance across all stages of the cargo clearance process, strengthening risk management while incentivizing sustainable practices. With technical expertise from KCS, regional coordination through ADB, and lessons from Pakistan's Single Window, the initiative is designed to establish harmonized KPI frameworks that improve enforcement, accelerate clearance for compliant traders, and build greener, more resilient CAREC trade corridors aligned with global standards.</i></p> <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Dennis Pantastico, ADB Consultant (10 minutes) • Mr. Rongxin Zhou, Director, Department of International Cooperation, General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (10 minutes)

	<p>Q & A (20 minutes)</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Adilzhan Temirzhanov, Deputy Head of the Risk Management Division, Department of Analysis, Statistics and Risk Management, State Revenue Committee, Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Kazakhstan</p>
14:40 – 15:10	<p>Afternoon Coffee/Tea Break (30 minutes)</p>
15:10 – 16:00	<p>Session 5: Regional Interoperability through CATS (50 minutes)</p> <p><i>Regional interoperability through the CAREC Advanced Transit System (CATS) is vital to creating seamless, efficient, and predictable trade corridors across CAREC. By advancing corridor digitalization, CATS enables real-time information exchange, reduces duplication, and simplifies procedures for both customs administrations and traders. The initiative is closely aligned with WCO and WTO standards, ensuring that regional practices are consistent with global trade facilitation commitments. Panelists from CAREC Member States will share their perspectives and experiences, highlighting practical lessons and opportunities to strengthen interoperability across the region.</i></p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Mr. Ying Qian, ADB Consultant (10 minutes) b) Official from Uzbekistan Customs (10 minutes) c) Official from Georgia Revenue Service (10 minutes) <p>Q & A (20 minutes)</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Zulfia Karimova, ADB</p>
16:10 – 16:50	<p>Session 6: Crucial Role of the National Trade Facilitation Committee in Advancing Trade Facilitation Initiatives (50 mins)</p> <p><i>The National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) plays a pivotal role in coordinating whole-of-government trade reform efforts across CAREC countries, ensuring alignment among customs, line ministries, and the private sector. It provides a structured platform for dialogue, joint planning, and monitoring, enabling stakeholders to identify priorities, address bottlenecks, and harmonize procedures within and across CAREC economies. Through this collaborative approach, the NTFC drives the implementation of digital, green, and efficiency-enhancing initiatives, strengthening cross-border trade, improving compliance, and supporting regional integration throughout the CAREC region.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Mr. Dennis Pantastico, ADB Consultant (30 minutes)</p> <p>Q & A (20 minutes)</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Zulfia Karimova, ADB</p>
16:50 – 17:00	<p>Summary and Wrap-Up of Day 1 (10 minutes)</p> <p><i>The first day will conclude with a summary and wrap-up session that distills key discussions, highlights lessons learned, and sets the stage for deeper exploration on Day 2.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Ms. Zulfia Karimova, ADB</p>

Day 2 – From Concepts to Pilots and Action Plans 26 November 2025 (Wednesday)	
09:00 – 09:30	Registration of Participants
09:30 – 10:10	<p>Session 7: Leveraging Technologies for Priority Trade Facilitation Initiatives in CAREC (40 minutes)</p> <p><i>CAREC's unique location as a strategic trade bridge between Europe and Asia offers immense economic potential, but border delays, fragmented systems, and infrastructure gaps continue to constrain competitiveness. Modern technologies, such as Single Window platforms, e-Customs, AI-driven risk management, blockchain documentation, IoT cargo monitoring, and cloud-based systems, can streamline clearance processes, reduce costs, and strengthen transparency across the corridor. The initiative seeks to build a smart, interoperable trade ecosystem aligned with WCO standards and CITA 2030, supported by capacity development, infrastructure upgrades, and active public-private dialogue.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Mr. Dennis C. Pantastico, ADB Consultant</p> <p>Q & A (20 minutes)</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Hong-ik Kang, Deputy Director, External Relations Division, Korea Customs Service</p>
10:10 – 11:00	<p>Session 8: Trusted Trader Programs and SEZ Connectivity (50 minutes)</p> <p><i>The Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) program is a trusted trader framework that enhances supply chain security, accelerates customs clearance, and promotes predictability in cross-border trade. When integrated with the CAREC Advanced Transit System (CATS), AEO benefits can be amplified by ensuring expedited border crossings, harmonized transit procedures, and reduced duplication of inspections. For operators within Special Economic Zones (SEZs), this synergy provides a critical advantage, transforming compliance into a driver of competitiveness, investment, and growth.</i></p> <p><i>Through SEZ-based AEO pilots, CAREC countries will be able to test digital integration with CATS, strengthen risk-based management, and establish best practices for regional interoperability. The initiative also helps lay the groundwork for mutual recognition agreements (MRAs), positioning CAREC economies more firmly within global supply chains. This session will present lessons from AEO–CATS integration, share early outcomes from SEZ pilots, and include an interactive Q&A to guide future scale-up and regional adoption.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Mr. Dennis C. Pantastico, ADB Consultant</p> <p>Q & A (20 minutes)</p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Zulfia Karimova, ADB</p>
11:00 – 11:30	Morning Coffee/Tea Break (30 minutes)
11:30 – 12:10	<p>Session 9: Digital Certificates of Origin (PCO Application) (40 minutes)</p> <p><i>The Preferential Certificate of Origin (PCO) is a vital tool for exporters to access tariff preferences, yet in many CAREC countries, the process remains manual, creating inefficiencies, compliance costs, and risks of fraud or rejection. To address this, the CAREC Program is developing a CAREC PCO Application, drawing from ASEAN's success with the electronic Form D under ATIGA to enable secure, efficient, and interoperable certificate issuance and verification. The system will be integrated into CATS and national single windows, with a phased rollout from national digitization to regional interoperability and eventual alignment with international platforms like the ASEAN Single Window and UNESCAP's Cross-Border Paperless Trade Agreement. By streamlining processes, reducing paper use, and fostering inclusion, the CAREC PCO Application will advance transparency, competitiveness, and sustainability, positioning CAREC economies as stronger players in digital and global trade.</i></p>

	<p>Speaker: Mr. Seung Hyun Cha, SW Project Manager, Customs Uni-Pass International Agency(CUPIA)</p> <p>Q & A (20 minutes)</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Hong-Ik Kang, Deputy Director, External Relations Division, Korea Customs Service</p>
12:10 – 14:00	Lunch Break (1 hour and 50 minutes)
14:00 – 14:20	<p>Session 10: CAREC Trade Facilitation Breakout Session Activity (20 mins)</p> <p><i>In this culminating activity, CAREC country representatives will be divided into three groups, with each group selecting one of the four focus areas: the crucial role of NTFC, green customs, E-Commerce Goods Clearance Integration Strategy, or Digital Certificates of Origin (PCO Application). Each group will analyze their chosen area, identify key challenges, and propose actionable strategies that can be implemented nationally and coordinated regionally. Participants will draw on workshop presentations, international best practices, and lessons from KCS and ADB experiences to develop practical recommendations, priority actions, and potential enablers, including technological, procedural, or institutional measures.</i></p> <p><i>Following the group discussions, each team will present a 5-minute summary of their proposed roadmap, highlighting solutions, cross-border collaboration opportunities, and measurable outcomes. A facilitated plenary discussion will then synthesize these outputs into a collective CAREC Action Framework, capturing shared priorities and innovative approaches across all four areas. This activity will consolidate workshop learnings, promote peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, and provide participants with tangible strategies to advance digital, green, and integrated trade facilitation initiatives in their respective CAREC economies.</i></p> <p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate workshop learnings into actionable strategies. • Identify practical solutions, priority actions, and regional collaboration opportunities. • Develop a collective CAREC Action Framework for digital, green, and integrated trade facilitation. <p>Facilitator: Mr. Dennis Pantastico, ADB Consultant</p> <p>(Briefly explains objectives and the four focus areas (Crucial Role of NTFC, Green Customs, E-Commerce Goods Clearance Integration Strategy, and Digital Certificates of Origin (PCO Application). Each group chooses one area based on interest/expertise. Provide guidance on expected outputs: a 5-minute roadmap summary including key challenges, proposed actions and solutions, stakeholders/partnerships needed, and indicators of success or measurable outcomes)</p>
14:20 – 15:00	<p>Session 11: Group Work (40 minutes)</p> <p>Groups will brainstorm solutions and develop a roadmap for their chosen focus area, guided by facilitators who circulate to clarify points and ensure discussions remain regionally relevant. Each group is expected to identify the top 3–5 priority actions, determine the necessary institutional or technological enablers, and propose ways for CAREC countries to coordinate or collaborate regionally. They will also define success indicators or milestones to monitor progress and measure the impact of their recommendations.</p> <p>Participants will explore how the initiative can be implemented efficiently at the national level, identifying practical steps and responsible stakeholders to ensure effective execution. They will also consider the cross-border or regional coordination mechanisms needed to harmonize procedures and facilitate collaboration among CAREC countries. Finally, participants will examine how technology, policy, and procedural reforms can support their recommendations, enhancing efficiency, transparency, and overall impact.</p>

	Facilitators: Ms. Zulfia Karimova – Group 1, Mr. Dennis Pantastico – Group 2, Mr. Byunginn Son , External Relations Division, Korea Customs Service – Group 3
15:00 – 15:20	Afternoon Coffee/Tea Break (20 minutes)
15:20 – 15:50	<p>Session 12: Group Presentations (30 minutes)</p> <p>Each group will present a 5-minute summary of their roadmap, highlighting key challenges, proposed solutions, opportunities for regional collaboration, and measurable outcomes. This presentation allows participants to share insights, compare approaches, and showcase practical strategies for advancing digital and green trade facilitation within their chosen focus area.</p> <p>The facilitator will capture common themes, innovative ideas, and areas of overlap among the groups, synthesizing these insights to identify shared priorities and potential synergies. This process ensures that the collective outputs contribute to a cohesive CAREC Action Framework, providing actionable recommendations that can be adapted and implemented across the region.</p>
15:50 – 16:10	<p>Session 13: Plenary Synthesis & Action Framework (20 minutes)</p> <p>The facilitator will lead a plenary discussion to consolidate the group outputs into a collective CAREC Action Framework, highlighting shared priorities across all four focus areas and identifying opportunities for regional collaboration. Key takeaways and next steps for post-workshop follow-up will be summarized, ensuring clarity on actionable recommendations. Deliverables from this session will include the group-specific 5-minute roadmap summaries covering challenges, solutions, enablers, and indicators, as well as the consolidated CAREC Action Framework capturing shared priorities and practical strategies for implementation.</p> <p>Facilitator: Mr. Dennis Pantastico, ADB Consultant</p>
16:10 – 16:20	<p>Summary, Wrap-Up of Second Day, and Next Steps (10 minutes)</p> <p><i>The second day will conclude with a summary of key insights and discussions, highlighting emerging priorities and areas of consensus. The session will also outline next steps, including follow-up actions, pilot initiatives, and commitments to sustain momentum beyond the workshop.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Ms. Zulfia Karimova, ADB</p>
16:20 – 16:30	<p>Closing Remarks (10 minutes)</p> <p><i>The closing remarks will emphasize the collective commitment of participants to advancing digital and green trade facilitation across the CAREC region. They will also reaffirm the importance of continued collaboration, innovation, and partnership in sustaining the momentum generated by the workshop.</i></p> <p>Speaker: Ms. Zulfia Karimova, ADB</p>
Day 3 – Site Visit	
27 November 2025 (Thursday)	
08:00 – 08:10	Assembly of Participants
09:30 – 10:50	<p>Site Visit</p> <p><i>The site visit hosted by Korea Customs Service (KCS) will showcase cutting-edge innovations in customs modernization, offering participants a firsthand look at advanced facilities such as an e-commerce logistics terminal or AI-driven risk management systems. This experience will demonstrate how technology can streamline clearance processes, enhance security, and support green and digital trade facilitation. By observing these best practices in action, participants can draw lessons relevant to CAREC countries and explore opportunities for adaptation within their own contexts.</i></p> <p>Host: KCS</p>