



# **CAREC's Knowledge and Capacity Building Pillar**

**Senior Officials' Meeting  
on Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation  
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## CAREC's Knowledge and Capacity Building Pillar

### A. Introduction

1. The work of the CAREC Program is guided by four action pillars.<sup>1</sup> The *Urumqi Declaration* states that:

“A **knowledge and capacity building pillar** will combine the research strengths of our countries and MI partners, greatly increasing our ability to conduct policy dialogue and design and implement mutually-beneficial regional initiatives. Training will be initiated to form a cadre of officials skilled in regional cooperation processes. Outreach activities will broaden the inclusiveness of the CAREC Program. To coordinate these much-needed research, training, and dialogue activities, we endorse the formation of a CAREC Institute, with advisory guidance by eminent persons.”

2. The *Comprehensive Action Plan* provides a list of example activities under this pillar:

- Research networks combining expertise in the region and the six MIs
- Initiatives toward formation of the CAREC Institute
- Regional dialogue, outreach activities, and in-country workshops
- Policy research briefs, CAREC newsletter, and web site
- Business development forums and new business concepts (global value chains)
- Capacity building, advisory positions, training, and “best practices” workshops
- Third-party, honest broker role of MIs, eminent persons

3. These activities are intended to (i) promote research and open discussion of issues central to improving regional cooperation among CAREC participating countries; (ii) expand awareness and understanding of regional cooperation, its potential benefits for the region, and areas of opportunity; and (iii) reinforce the Program’s momentum and help create an environment of support for regional cooperation.

4. This note will provide an update on activities in four areas that will help develop this pillar: (i) capacity development program; (ii) small research grants program; (iii) policy briefs series; and (iv) outreach. It is anticipated the CAREC Institute, once established, will direct activities under this pillar.

### B. Capacity Development Program

5. Work has been initiated to formulate a CAREC Capacity Development Program<sup>2</sup>. The program will seek to (a) train senior and mid-level government officials involved in regional cooperation in the skills needed to identify, plan, and effectively implement mutually beneficial initiatives; and (b) deepen understanding of the importance of regional cooperation and the costs of noncooperation. Learning activities will involve both formal training programs and learning experiences in relevant countries and subregions with experience in regional cooperation.

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<sup>1</sup> CAREC Comprehensive Action Plan. 2006. Paragraphs 9-13.

<sup>2</sup> The work is being conducted under regional technical assistance grant “Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation: Capacity Development for Regional Cooperation in CAREC Participating Countries, Phase 1.” This RETA is co-financed by the People’s Republic of China and was approved on 18 December 2006.

6. The Capacity Development Program will be launched with a learning event on 29-30 March 2007 titled: *New Ventures in Regional Cooperation* (see event overview in Appendix 1).

7. To ensure the Capacity Development Program meets the needs of target officials, an Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Needs will be conducted. The assessment will determine the relevant needs of senior and mid-level officials (what they need to know to be more effective in promoting practical, project-based regional cooperation) and how best to help them meet these needs. Country consultations will be conducted in April and May. The assessment will be finalized and a schedule of appropriate learning activities prepared. It is anticipated these activities will be relatively broad in nature and will complement, rather than duplicate, the capacity development activities of sector coordinating committees.

8. The assessment will benefit from candid input from countries on areas including (a) the specific skills/areas in which training would be most productive; (b) the appropriate length of training events; and (c) the preparation of a list of the 12-15 senior and mid-level officials (by name or position) that would most benefit from learning/training events and be able to make the greatest contribution to regional cooperation efforts in future.

9. The program will seek to develop an appropriate series of events for National Focal Points. Detailed input from National Focal Points will be critical to ensuring an appropriate (in terms of content, timing, length, location, etc.) series of practical events can be developed and implemented over the coming year.

### **C. Small Research Grants Program**

10. Work has been initiated to establish a Small Research Grants Program<sup>3</sup>. The goal of the program is (a) to stimulate research on issues relevant to regional cooperation and the work of the CAREC Program by researchers from CAREC participating countries; and (b) to support interaction among researchers from several CAREC countries and begin the development of research networks. Small grants of up to \$20,000 will be awarded to individual researchers or teams through a competitive selection process.

11. ADB, as CAREC secretariat, will issue a call for submission of research proposals in April 2007. The call for proposals will explain the criteria on which submissions will be judged and include the rules and regulations that will guide the program. Proposals will be screened in a two-step process (first by ADB staff, second by a small group of experts) and grants will be offered by end-August. Final research reports will be delivered to the CAREC secretariat by end-April 2008. A peer review process will be used to evaluate the final research papers. ADB will consider publishing a volume of research papers, subject to the quality of the final papers.

12. The program will be open to (a) individuals or teams from CAREC participating countries, or (b) individuals or teams from an ADB member country in partnership with national(s) of CAREC participating countries.

### **D. Policy Briefs**

13. Work has been initiated to begin publication of a "CAREC Policy Brief" series. The series will seek to (a) develop concise reports (1,000-3,000 words) capturing the key findings of

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<sup>3</sup> An initial \$140,000 has been allocated for this program under ADB RETA 6375 *Capacity Development for Regional Cooperation in CAREC Participating Countries, Phase 1*.

relevant research; and (b) deliver these messages to senior decision-makers in CAREC participating countries, and beyond, in an efficient manner. The briefs will be published in English and Russian.

14. The secretariat intends to produce four-to-six briefs annually, beginning in 2007. Two policy briefs are now under preparation on (a) trade barriers in CAREC economies, and (b) accessing global value chains. A list of further topics and publication dates is being developed. Early briefs are expected to draw on existing research.

## **E. Outreach**

15. A wide range of outreach activities have been conducted and planned since the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference.

- The Strategic Framework of the *CAREC Comprehensive Action Plan* has been published in booklet form in English, Chinese, and Russian and distributed widely in CAREC participating countries and beyond.
- A CAREC Newsletter was published in January and distributed.
- Outreach seminars introducing the CAREC Program and the findings of *Increasing Gains from Trade through Regional Cooperation in Trade Policy, Transport, and Customs Transit* were held in Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan.
- Briefings on the Small Research Grants Program were held with researchers in People's Republic of China (PRC), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan.
- A Seminar on Implementation Challenges in Joint Customs Control, Risk Management and Post-Entry Audit was organized by the Customs Coordinating Committee. The seminar focused on challenges in the implementation of joint customs control, risk management, and post-entry audit.
- Participating countries were encouraged (and financial resources were made available) to conduct broad-based in-country discussions in preparation for the March Senior Officials' Meeting. It is anticipated the secretariat will support similar meetings prior to future Senior Officials' Meetings and Ministerial Conferences.

16. In addition, ADB's CAREC Unit signed a grant agreement to provide the Central Asian Gateway Project (CAG) with financial support to expand its coverage and strengthen efforts to build a network of research institutes in Central Asia and neighboring countries. Under a memorandum of understanding agreed among ADB, CAG, its implementing partner the Uzbekistan Center for Economic Research (CER), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ADB will provide \$76,500 for the joint project. The UNDP and CAG will support the agreement through \$13,450 worth of inputs of staff time and office facilities.

17. CAG project activities currently focus on four Central Asian countries—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The grant will help expand the program to include the remaining CAREC participating countries (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, PRC, and Mongolia). The grant will also help (a) expand an existing electronic directory of think tanks; (b) pilot an informal forum of think tanks to support regional cooperation efforts; and (c) broaden the project's database of statistical information on socio-economic development and cooperation in the CAREC region.

18. Planning has begun for a series of high-level seminars to discuss key issues surrounding regional cooperation in Central Asia and neighboring countries and to raise the profile of the CAREC Program among key development partners. The secretariat is exploring

options to hold high-level seminars in the United States, Japan, and Europe in 2007. The seminars would involve a number of senior representatives from CAREC participating countries and the academic, think-tank, government, and business community in each location.

19. ADB's CAREC Unit regularly updates the CAREC web pages on ADB.org ([www.adb.org/CAREC](http://www.adb.org/CAREC)) and intends to revamp these pages in the coming months to improve usability and establish a useful repository of CAREC-related research and information. All parties involved with CAREC are encouraged to share any relevant research or reports with the secretariat for posting as appropriate.

20. Finally, it is proposed that publication of the CAREC Newsletter be ceased and future editions be prepared in electronic format. It is anticipated future editions would be posted on ADB's web site and would be made available by email through a registration system.