



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**Seventy-sixth session**

Bangkok, 21 May 2020

Item 5 of the provisional agenda**

Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific**Report of the Governing Council of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia on its fourteenth session***Summary*

At its fourteenth session, the Governing Council of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia noted with satisfaction the outcomes of the 2019 United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia Economic Forum, “Connectivity: sustainable transport and trade facilitation in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia subregion”, held in Ashgabat on 20 and 21 November 2019.

The Council calls upon the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations agencies and programmes and international development partners to provide active support for the efforts undertaken by the participating countries of the Special Programme at the national and regional levels in promoting sustainable transport and trade facilitation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Council approved the Ashgabat initiative on reducing barriers to trade and transport using United Nations legal instruments, norms, standards and recommendations while bolstering connectivity in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia subregion. In addition, it agreed to consider the establishment of a trust fund to support the implementation of the Ashgabat initiative and requested United Nations entities to provide assistance in developing the terms of reference and other documents necessary for the establishment of the trust fund. The Council decided to review the establishment of the Special Programme subregion secretariat at its fifteenth session in 2020.

The fifteenth session of the Governing Council is scheduled to be held in Kyrgyzstan in 2020, with the Government of Kyrgyzstan acting as Chair.

* Reissued for technical reasons on 3 March 2020.

** ESCAP/76/L.1/Rev.1.

I. Decisions

1. At its fourteenth session, the Governing Council of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia took the following decisions:

Decision 1 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/1)

The Governing Council notes with satisfaction the outcomes of the 2019 United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia Economic Forum, “Connectivity: sustainable transport and trade facilitation in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia subregion” held in Ashgabat on 20 and 21 November 2019. The Council calls upon the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations agencies and programmes and international development partners to provide active support for the efforts undertaken by the participating countries of the Special Programme at the national and regional levels in promoting sustainable transport and trade facilitation for the achievement of the Sustainable Developments Goals.

Decision 2 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/2)

The Governing Council adopts the Ashgabat initiative on reducing barriers to trade and transport using United Nations legal instruments, norms, standards and recommendations while bolstering connectivity in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia subregion. The Council requests participating countries and development partners to support the implementation of this initiative.

Decision 3 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/3)

In light of decision 9 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2018/9) taken at its thirteenth session in 2018, the Governing Council takes note of and adopts the updated terms of reference of the Special Programme.

Decision 4 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/4)

The Governing Council:

(a) Takes note of the updated terms of reference of the Special Programme thematic working groups. The Council adopts the terms of reference of the Special Programme thematic working group on water, energy and environment; the thematic working group on sustainable transport, transit and connectivity; the thematic working group on trade; and the thematic working group on gender and the Sustainable Developments Goals;

(b) Approves the recommendation of the Special Programme thematic working group on knowledge-based development made at its 2019 session to change the name of the thematic working group on knowledge-based development to the “United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia thematic working group on innovation and technology for sustainable development”. The Council takes note of and adopts the updated terms of reference of the working group;

(c) Takes note of the recommendations of the Special Programme at its fourteenth session on the thematic working group on statistics and requests the thematic working group to draft its updated terms of reference for consideration at the next session of the Council in 2020.

Decision 5 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/5)

The Governing Council welcomes the proposal by the Government of Turkmenistan to establish a Special Programme trust fund in the region. It requests the United Nations Secretariat to develop a first draft of the terms of reference and other documents establishing the trust fund for activities within the framework of the Special Programme.

Decision 6 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/6)

In decision 5 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2018/5) taken at its thirteenth session, the Governing Council noted the offer by the Government of Kazakhstan to host the secretariat of the Special Programme in the new United Nations common premises in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The Council decides to consider this issue further at its session in 2020.

Decision 7 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/7)

The Governing Council requests the participating countries of the Special Programme that have not yet appointed Special Programme focal points to nominate focal points in writing to the ECE and ESCAP secretariats no later than 31 March 2020.

Decision 8 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/8)

The Governing Council requests the participating countries of the Special Programme that have not yet appointed focal points for each thematic working group to nominate them and inform the ECE and ESCAP secretariats no later than 31 March 2020.

Decision 9 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/9)

The Governing Council takes note of the progress reports on the activities of the Special Programme thematic working groups since its thirteenth session and expresses satisfaction with the implementation of the activities covered in those reports.

The Council also expresses its appreciation to the participating countries of the Special Programme for supporting and hosting the thematic working group sessions and meetings. The Council is especially grateful to the Russian Federation for its support for all Special Programme activities, as well as to Kazakhstan, the European Union and the Islamic Development Bank for their support for specific activities of the Special Programme thematic working groups.

Decision 10 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/10)

In compliance with decision 3 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2018/3) taken at the thirteenth session of the Governing Council, the ECE secretariat in cooperation with the participating countries of the Special Programme had finalized the Special Programme innovation strategy for sustainable development. The Council adopts the Special Programme innovation strategy for sustainable development, noting that Uzbekistan will have enough time to consider the submitted document and provide its opinions, proposals and comments to the ECE secretariat.

The Council also expresses its gratitude to the ECE secretariat and the participating countries of the Special Programme for the development of the innovation strategy.

Decision 11 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/11)

The Governing Council considered the following documents submitted by the Special Programme thematic working group on trade: the Special Programme trade facilitation strategy, principles of sustainable trade in the Special Programme subregion and a concept note for a study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the subregion.

The Council adopts the documents prepared by the Special Programme thematic working group on trade, noting that Uzbekistan will have enough time to consider the submitted documents and provide its opinions, proposals and comments to the ECE secretariat.

The Council requests the ECE secretariat in cooperation with the Special Programme thematic working group on trade to mobilize financial resources and work on a study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the Special Programme subregion.

Decision 12 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/12)

The Governing Council adopts the Special Programme's workplan for 2020–2021 and encourages participating countries, thematic working groups, donors and partner organizations to support the implementation of the activities contained therein.

Decision 13 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/13)

The Governing Council expresses its sincere gratitude to Turkmenistan for its active work as the Chair country of the Special Programme in 2019.

Decision 14 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/14)

The Government of Kyrgyzstan confirms its proposal to assume the Chair of the Special Programme in 2020 and to host the Economic Forum and the session of the Governing Council in 2020. The Council elects Kyrgyzstan as the Chair country of the Special Programme for 2020.

The Council decides that the fifteenth session of the Council and the 2020 Economic Forum will be held in Kyrgyzstan. The dates and venue of those events will be agreed upon and communicated through diplomatic channels. The theme of the 2020 Economic Forum will be determined later.

Decision 15 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/15)

The Governing Council expresses its sincere gratitude to Turkmenistan for chairing the Special Programme events in 2019 and for the excellent organization of the fourteenth session of the Council, the 2019 Economic Forum and its side events as well as the warm hospitality offered to the participants of the 2019 Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia Days in Ashgabat.

Decision 16 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2019/16)

The Governing Council expresses its deep appreciation to the ECE and ESCAP secretariats for their efforts in organizing the events in 2019 and for their active work aimed at strengthening and supporting the implementation of the Special Programme.

II. Proceedings

A. **Outcomes of the 2019 United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia Economic Forum, “Connectivity: sustainable transport and trade facilitation in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia subregion”**

(Agenda item 3)

2. The 2019 Economic Forum focused on improving connectivity in the subregion: using sustainable transport and trade facilitation to connect people, enterprises, supply chains, regulatory agencies, information technology systems, logistics, trade and transport infrastructure networks to facilitate the movement of people and goods, while ensuring inclusive and sustainable growth in the Special Programme subregion, with the aim of supporting the participating countries of the Special Programme in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. **Terms of reference of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia and its thematic working groups, the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia trust fund, the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia secretariat and other organizational issues**

(Agenda item 4)

3. The representative of Turkmenistan made a presentation on the initiative of the Government of Turkmenistan on the establishment of the Special Programme trust fund. A number of delegations noted the need to obtain more information on the functioning, financing and management of the trust fund.

4. With respect to the offer of the Government of Kazakhstan to host the secretariat of the Special Programme in the new United Nations common premises in Almaty, the representative of Kazakhstan noted that the Government had informed all participating countries of the Special Programme of the proposal through diplomatic channels. Only the Government of Uzbekistan had responded and had confirmed that it had no objections.

5. The ESCAP secretariat noted that not all participating countries had nominated their focal points to assist the Special Programme national coordinators, as well as the ECE and ESCAP coordinators and deputy coordinators of the Special Programme, in the proper management of the Special Programme. Focal points must also be nominated for each thematic working group to assist the ECE and ESCAP secretariats of the thematic working groups to ensure successful delivery of the programmes of work. The participating countries that had not yet appointed focal points were requested to make their nominations.

C. The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia activities since the thirteenth session of the Governing Council
(Agenda item 5)

6. The ECE secretariat presented a brief overview of the activities carried out by the Special Programme thematic working groups since the thirteenth session of the Council.

7. A representative of the ECE secretariat noted that, in line with decision 3 (SPECA/GC/Dec/2018/3) taken at the thirteenth session of the Council, the ECE secretariat in cooperation with the participating countries of the Special Programme had finalized the Special Programme innovation strategy for sustainable development and had presented the strategy to the Council for its consideration.

8. The Chair requested delegations of the Special Programme participating countries to consider the documents submitted by the Special Programme thematic working group on trade: the Special Programme trade facilitation strategy, including a draft road map for its implementation (submitted for information only), the principles of sustainable trade in the Special Programme subregion, and the concept note for a study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade in the subregion.

9. Representatives of the participating countries of the Special Programme expressed their appreciation for the work carried out by the ECE secretariat and the Special Programme thematic working group on trade.

10. The representative of Turkmenistan noted the importance of the work of the thematic working group on statistics to the participating countries and requested the other participating countries to reject the proposal to disband the thematic working group on statistics. In addition, the Council decided that the thematic working group on statistics should develop new terms of reference.

D. Adoption of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia workplan for 2020–2021
(Agenda item 6)

11. The ECE secretariat made a short presentation on the Special Programme workplan for 2020–2021.

E. Election of the next Chair country of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
(Agenda item 7)

12. The representative of Kyrgyzstan confirmed the proposal made at the thirteenth session of the Council for the Government of Kyrgyzstan to assume the Chair of the Special Programme in 2020 and host the fifteenth session of the Council and the 2020 Economic Forum. The participating countries decided that the fifteenth session of the Council and the 2020 Economic Forum would be held in Kyrgyzstan.

F. Date and venue of the 2020 United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia Economic Forum and the fifteenth session of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia Governing Council

(Agenda item 8)

13. The dates and venue of these events would be agreed upon and communicated through diplomatic channels. The theme of the 2020 Economic Forum would also be determined at a later date.

G. Other business

(Agenda item 9)

14. The representative of Tajikistan proposed to organize, in the future, one-day economic forums in order to make more effective use of time, noting that the schedule was packed and there was not always enough time for presentations and discussions. There was also a need to reduce the number of presentations and plan more time for discussions.

III. Organization

A. Opening, duration and organization of the session

15. The fourteenth session of the Council of the Special Programme was held in Ashgabat on 21 November 2019. The session was jointly organized by the Government of Turkmenistan, the Chair country of the Special Programme for 2019, ECE and ESCAP.

B. Participants

16. Representatives of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well as the ECE and ESCAP secretariats participated in the session. Representatives of other United Nations member States, United Nations agencies and programmes, international and regional organizations, as well as the academic community also took part as observers.

C. Agenda

17. The Council adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Adoption of the agenda.
3. Outcomes of the 2019 United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia Economic Forum “Connectivity: sustainable transport and trade facilitation in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia subregion”.
4. Terms of reference of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia and its thematic working groups, the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia trust fund, the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia secretariat and other organizational issues.

5. The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia activities since the thirteenth session of the Governing Council.
 6. Adoption of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia workplan for 2020–2021.
 7. Election of the next Chair country of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia.
 8. Date and venue of the 2020 United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia Economic Forum and the fifteenth session of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia Governing Council.
 9. Other business.
 10. Adoption of decisions.
 11. Closing of the session.
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