



CAREC Institute Launches 5th Annual Research Conference Focused on Regional Trade and Connectivity

The CAREC Institute (CI), in collaboration with regional and international partners, successfully launched its 5th Annual Research Conference on 29 to 30 May 2025 in Islamabad, themed “CAREC Connectivity: Promoting Trade and Trade Facilitation.” The event brought together over 200 participants, including policymakers, researchers, business leaders, and development partners, to discuss strategies for enhancing regional integration and trade.

Pakistan’s Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, graced the event as Chief Guest and delivered the keynote address, emphasizing the region’s vast but underutilized potential. He called the conference “timely and essential” amid global climate, geopolitical, and technological shifts. Highlighting that intra-regional trade (excluding China) stands at just 7%, compared to ASEAN’s 22%, he stressed that the gap stems from logistical, regulatory, and institutional constraints—not geography. Quoting economist Paul Collier, he noted, “Geography is not destiny. It is an opportunity—if we choose to seize it.”

The opening session featured remarks from CAREC Institute Director Charymuhammet Shallyyev, Syed Shakeel Shah from the Prime Minister’s Office, Syed Aftab Haider, CEO of Pakistan Single Window, Emma Fan, Asian Development Bank Country Director for Pakistan, and Yang Guangyuan, Public Affairs Officer at the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan. Mr. Shallyyev emphasized the critical role of connectivity in post-pandemic productivity and recovery, stating: “Connectivity is not merely a facilitator of productivity; it is often its most powerful driver—how efficiently and effectively we connect people, ideas, goods, and capital.”

The two-day conference featured eight expert panel discussions that explored critical aspects of regional trade and connectivity. Key topics included enhancing port connectivity and trade facilitation, strengthening the energy investment ecosystem in the region, and connecting South Asia to Central Asia through the TIR (International Road Transports) System. Additionally, discussions addressed advancing digital and transport connectivity within the CAREC region, as well as the opportunities and challenges in linking CAREC with the GCC via intermodal transport. Other important topics included mobilizing private investment in business services to boost intra-CAREC trade, accelerating regional cooperation through digital trade and connectivity, and reimagining regional trade for the next decade, with a focus on the URAAN Pakistan initiative and its potential within CAREC. Distinguished panelists from government, the private sector, academia, and international development organizations shared valuable insights on reducing logistics costs, enhancing infrastructure resilience, improving private sector engagement, and fostering deeper regional cooperation and integration.

Six thematic research sessions presented 32 original papers by scholars from Pakistan, China, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Kazakhstan. Topics ranged from digital trade and green logistics to private sector engagement, and inclusive and ethical trade facilitation, offering actionable policy recommendations to strengthen institutional capacity.

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To mark the CAREC Institute’s 10th anniversary, a high-level networking event was held on Day One of the conference, with the participation of ambassadors from CAREC member countries. The event featured Federal Minister for Investment Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh and the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission Mukhtar Ahmed, who both delivered welcoming remarks. Their speeches underscored Pakistan’s commitment to regional cooperation and acknowledged the important role of the CAREC Institute in promoting connectivity and fostering collaboration among member countries.

A key highlight of the event was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the CAREC Institute and the University of Sargodha, marking a significant step in strengthening regional and international collaboration on pressing global agendas. This agreement demonstrated a new milestone in the network’s growth, enhancing the cooperation between member countries and paving the way for further engagement on critical regional issues.

The flagship conference reaffirmed the CAREC Institute’s role as a vital knowledge hub for regional cooperation, setting a forward-looking agenda focused on smarter policies, stronger partnerships, and deeper regional integration. In his closing remarks, Dr. Kuat Akizhanov, Deputy Director Two at the CAREC Institute, stated: “As the region advances toward green transition, digital connectivity, economic diversification, and sustainable development, the CAREC Institute is committed to supporting member countries through research, capacity building, knowledge sharing, and strategic partnerships.”

This year’s conference was successfully organized with support from national, regional, and international partners. Their collective effort helped facilitate diverse regional discussions and foster meaningful dialogue among participants.



Group photos of the 5th CAREC Institute annual research conference

CAREC Institute Enhances Collaboration with ADB and Pakistan Institutions at Annual Research Conference

On the morning of 30 May, during the 5th CAREC Institute Annual Research Conference in Islamabad, the CAREC Institute (CI) team, led by Director Mr. Charymuhammet Shallyyev, met with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Transport Team. The ADB CAREC Secretariat joined the meeting remotely. The discussion focused on strengthening CI's role in the CAREC transport sector. Both sides explored ways to collaborate in capacity building, policy recommendations, and regional connectivity.

The ADB team shared their priorities and showed strong interest in CI's contributions, especially in sustainable transport development. This includes smart mobility, transport planning, and regional integration. They also acknowledged CI's growing influence in connecting member countries and promoting sustainable development. This was especially evident during this year's conference, which showcased CI's expanding academic network.

In response, CI shared updates on its current work, including the Containerization Project and its expanded role in leading the CAREC Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring (CPMM) project. These efforts aim to strengthen regional transport connectivity. The ADB team welcomed CI's contributions and invited the Institute to participate in future transport working groups and events. They also encouraged CI to further develop its in-house transport expertise and deliver focused presentations at upcoming meetings. In addition, the ADB proposed a visit to CI's headquarters for a deep-dive workshop to identify concrete actions for closer collaboration.

In the afternoon, CI held bilateral meetings with several academic institutions, including the ECO Science Foundation, the University of Sargodha, and the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics. These meetings focused on opportunities for stronger cooperation in areas such as regional trade, digital economy, climate change, and labor migration, as well as institutional development and talent exchange.



Photos of the side meeting with ADB and Pakistan Institutions

CAREC Institute Deputy Director Speaks at the 16th Asian Leadership Conference in Seoul

The 16th Asian Leadership Conference (ALC) was successfully held on May 21–22, 2025, in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The ALC, co-hosted by Chosun Media and the Center for Asia Leadership, is Korea’s premier annual international conference. It brings together global leaders from government, politics, business, and civil society to discuss and find solutions to Asia’s pressing issues.

Dr. Kuat Akizhanov, Deputy Director Two of the CAREC Institute, participated as a distinguished speaker in the panel discussion titled “Central Asia at the Crossroads: Geopolitics, Connectivity, and Regional Dynamics.” He highlighted the region’s increasing relevance in the shifting global order, emphasizing its role as a hub for trade corridors, energy transition, and international cooperation. Drawing on the CAREC Institute’s research and regional perspectives, Dr. Akizhanov also stressed the importance of inclusive and sustainable connectivity, strong regional institutions, and pragmatic multilateralism in responding to today’s complex challenges.

In addition to the panel, Dr. Akizhanov engaged in high-level discussions, including a session with H.E. Han Duck-soo, former Prime Minister and Acting President of the Republic of Korea (2024–2025), and a bilateral meeting with H.E. Djoormart Otorbaev, former Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic. These exchanges focused on Central Asia’s regional transformation, opportunities for economic collaboration, and the role of strategic foresight in fostering a more connected Eurasia.

Dr. Akizhanov’s participation reflects the CAREC Institute’s commitment to regional dialogue, evidence-based policymaking, and promoting sustainable development and trade connectivity across the CAREC region.



Dr. Kuat Akizhanov speaks at the 16th Asian leadership conference in Seoul

Successful Launch of the Seminar on “Chinese Financial Support for Poverty Reduction and Promoting Inclusive Finance for Central Asia” in Beijing

The Seminar on “Chinese Financial Support for Poverty Reduction and Promoting Inclusive Finance for Central Asia” officially commenced at the Beijing National Accounting Institute (BNAI) on May 19, 2025. This 10-day program is jointly organized by the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) of the People’s Republic of China, the Academy for International Business Officials (AIBO) of MOFCOM, the Beijing National Accounting Institute (BNAI), and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Institute.

The seminar brings together 26 distinguished participants from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Jordan. Through a comprehensive agenda of expert-led lectures and field study sessions, the program aims to share China’s experiences in poverty alleviation and financial inclusion, fostering knowledge exchange and regional cooperation.

In his welcoming remarks, Mr. Feng Zhanwu, Member of the Communist Party of China Committee and Secretary of the Discipline Inspection Commission of BNAI, extended warm greetings to delegates. He expressed appreciation for the support from the Ministry of Commerce and AIBO in organizing the seminar, as well as CAREC Institute’s strategic partnership. Mr. Feng highlighted BNAI’s legacy in fostering top financial talent, advancing degree education programs, and developing a leading financial think tank. Emphasizing China’s remarkable progress in poverty reduction and inclusive finance, he expressed hope that the seminar would deepen friendship and trust between China and other countries.

Representing the CAREC Institute, Ms. Shuai Shao, Capacity Building Specialist, commended China’s leadership in poverty alleviation and inclusive finance. She praised the collaborative efforts of AIBO and BNAI in organizing the seminar and welcomed the CAREC participants. Ms. Shao underscored CAREC Institute’s role as an intergovernmental knowledge hub based in Urumqi and its partnerships with global, regional and national institutions to deliver policy-focused capacity-building programs across member countries.

At the welcome luncheon, Ms. Zhang Jing, Director of the Academic Affairs Department at BNAI, warmly welcomed participants with a quote from Confucius: “Isn’t it a joy to have friends coming from afar?” She expressed hope that all attendees would feel at home during their time at BNAI and emphasized the seminar’s role in fostering mutual understanding and regional cooperation.

The afternoon session featured a lecture by Professor Yang Zhiqiang of BNAI on “Overview of China’s National Conditions.” Professor Yang introduced participants to China’s rich history, cultural heritage, and economic development through interactive dialogue.

中亚国家中国财政支持减贫与推进普惠金融研修班

2025.5.19-28 北京国家会计学院



Group photo from the seminar on Chinese Financial Support for Poverty Reduction and Promoting Inclusive Finance for Central Asia

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Representatives from CAREC countries actively contributed by sharing insights and experiences during the event. Ms. Saltanat Yeralina, Deputy Director of Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, expressed gratitude to the organizers for facilitating such a meaningful platform for knowledge exchange. Mr. Akhror Kamarov, Chief Economist at the Central Bank of Uzbekistan, underscored the importance of inclusive financial policies in fostering sustainable economic growth and thanked the hosts for bringing together regional experts. Mr. Erkinjon Obidinov, Chief Specialist from Uzbekistan’s Ministry of Economy and Finance, presented Uzbekistan’s recent poverty reduction strategies, emphasizing the integration of innovative approaches and cross-sectoral collaboration to achieve impactful results. Their contributions enriched the discussions and underscored the commitment of CAREC member countries to advancing inclusive development.

The seminar serves as an enriching platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration, advancing inclusive finance and sustainable development across Central Asia. Framed as a key capacity building event, it offers policymakers opportunities for dialogue, skill development, and the cultivation of long-term partnerships in the region.

CAREC Institute Contributes to “Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Finance” Program

As part of the jointly organized seminar on “Chinese Financial Support for Poverty Reduction and Promoting Inclusive Finance for Central Asia,” the CAREC Institute (CI) hosted a lecture by Ms. Marina (Rui) Wang, Senior Researcher from CI’s Chief Economist Team, on 25 May. She gave an overview of the World Trade Organization (WTO), covering its history, core functions, and the need for reform to address global economic challenges.

Ms. Wang highlighted the importance of multilateralism and the WTO’s role for countries in Central Asia and the Middle East. She explained the WTO accession process, focusing on Uzbekistan, and provided policy recommendations in areas such as agriculture, clean energy, cross-border e-commerce, and dispute resolution. She also suggested ways to strengthen regional cooperation through coordinated policies and multilateral trade rules.

The seminar drew strong participation, especially from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Ms. Wang’s presentation led to lively discussions and deeper exploration of the topics. Her participation also showed the important role of women in finance and development. This reflects the CI’s commitment to gender inclusion and equal opportunities. The Institute continues to support professionals, especially women, by providing a platform to share knowledge and promote regional cooperation.

In addition, the seminar also supported regional efforts in inclusive finance and sustainable development. It highlighted the CI’s role as a hub for knowledge and training. By encouraging dialogue and cooperation, the event helped build economic resilience in Central Asia and reinforced CI’s position as a regional advisor.



Group photo from the seminar on “Chinese Financial Support for Poverty Reduction and Promoting Inclusive Finance for Central Asia”

CAREC Institute and EFSD Successfully Conclude Policy Dialogue on Debt and Financial Sustainability

On 13 May 2025, The CAREC Institute, in partnership with the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development (EFSD), successfully held a webinar on “**Debt and Financial Sustainability in the EFSD and CAREC Regions.**” The dialogue built on the recent outcomes of the [Residential Workshop on Debt Sustainability](#), a joint EFSD-CAREC Institute paper on [country-level interest rate risk impact on debt and fiscal sustainability](#), and the EFSD’s working paper [“Assessment of the Potential Impact of Natural Hazard Events on Debt Sustainability of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.”](#) These findings formed the foundation for in-depth expert discussions on enhancing debt management and fiscal strategies.



Group photo from the policy dialogue on debt and financial sustainability

Dr. Ghulam Samad, Chief of Research Division of the CAREC Institute presented joint research emphasizing the need for stronger fiscal frameworks and targeted reforms. He stressed the importance of domestic resource mobilization and accurate debt tracking. Emphasis was placed on examining the effects of government liabilities with floating interest rates on debt and fiscal sustainability. It was observed that the interest rate risk levels in the analyzed countries remain within ranges that support the maintenance of public debt sustainability. Additionally, most countries possess the capacity to optimize debt servicing costs and mitigate risks to debt sustainability by leveraging domestic liabilities with floating rates and inflation-indexed instruments.

EFSD analysts presented an innovative methodology for evaluating the potential impact of natural disasters on countries’ debt sustainability. Through case studies of Armenia, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan, various geographical, climatic, and other factors that could intensify debt risks were examined. This approach facilitates the assessment of natural disasters’ effects on key macroeconomic and debt indicators and aids in devising preventive strategies to minimize financial losses.

During the panel discussion, Ms. Neda Mukhtar, Publication Management Specialist at the Asian Development Bank (ADB), highlighted the critical need for tax reform, enhanced performance of state-owned enterprises, and the development of export strategies. Mr. Norbert Funke, Director of the Capacity Development and Technical Assistance Center, emphasized the complexities involved in long-term debt forecasting and introduced tools from the International Monetary Fund for analyzing the connections between debt and economic growth.

Mr. David Knight, Lead Economist and Program Leader at the World Bank, cautioned against neglecting long-term development goals in debt planning. Echoing this sentiment, Mr. Juan Pradelli, a consultant with the Multilateral Cooperation Center for Development Finance, stressed the importance of aligning debt strategies with the SDGs. Additionally, Mr. Feng Beilin, Senior Researcher at the Chinese Academy of Fiscal Sciences, called for a comprehensive approach to public debt measurement that includes state-owned enterprises and advocated for improved tax administration. Mr. Hamza Ali Malik, Director of Macroeconomic Policy and Financing for Development Division at the UNESCAP, drew on his central banking experience to underscore the significance of sound fiscal policies in managing debt risks.

The insights shared during the panel discussion illuminated several critical policy recommendations essential for addressing the challenges countries face in managing their debt. A recurring theme was the necessity for regional collaboration, as panelists emphasized the importance of continued cooperation among nations to tackle shared challenges and unique circumstances affecting debt sustainability.

Sound fiscal management was identified as a cornerstone of effective debt management, with discussions highlighting the need for countries to adequately prepare for potential risks associated with interest rate fluctuations and external shocks. A holistic approach to debt sustainability was advocated, focusing on broader economic reforms that enhance supply capacity, domestic revenue mobilization, and export potential—strategies vital for fostering long-term economic resilience.

Furthermore, the experts stressed the importance of strengthening existing frameworks to withstand future challenges, including the reinforcement of fiscal and legal structures that support sustainable development. Stronger debt management practices were deemed essential, particularly concerning market risks and the effective use of various financial instruments.

The policy dialogue underscored the necessity for policy reforms that extend beyond traditional debt management. By implementing these reforms, countries can bolster their economic resilience and growth potential, paving the way for a more sustainable financial future.

CAREC Institute Launches Knowledge Sharing Series on Economic Monitoring Insights in the CAREC Region

On 21 May 2025, the CAREC Institute—a knowledge hub promoting economic cooperation and sustainable development in the CAREC region—launched the first session of its Knowledge Sharing Series based on the Quarterly Economic Monitor (QEM) to increase awareness and utilization of its QEM among policymakers, economists, businesses, development partners, and others interested. This would help to facilitate evidence-based policymaking, promote regional cooperation, and support sustainable economic growth.



Group photo from the knowledge sharing series on economic monitoring insights in the CAREC region

The session featured four presentations by the CAREC Institute’s Chief Economist team, highlighting key findings from the latest QEM and emphasizing the importance of data-driven analysis in guiding national strategies amidst uncertainties.

Dr. Hans Holzacker, CAREC Institute’s former Chief Economist, focused on recent developments and outlook in GDP growth and inflation, underlining the region’s solid performance amidst heightened uncertainty. Dr. Elvira Kurmanalieva discussed the possible impact of global trade tensions on CAREC economies and stressed the critical role of coordinated multifaceted policy response to turn global uncertainty into a chance for long-term prosperity in the region. Mr. Tim Lu provided general information on the People’s Republic of China’s 2025 “Two Sessions” and introduced the country’s key economic targets and prioritized working areas for 2025. Dr. Marina Wang provided an overview of Central Asian countries’ WTO accession history, including the progress of Uzbekistan’s negotiations. She also offered a global perspective on Turkmenistan’s ongoing negotiations and noted that, despite the current challenges, the multilateral trading system holds promise.

Looking ahead, the CAREC region should continue adapting to global challenges while seizing new opportunities to ensure sustainable growth and continued economic resilience.

The CAREC Institute’s latest Quarterly Economic Monitor (No. 16) is now available for download in [English](#), [Chinese](#), and [Russian](#).

CAREC Institute Joins Program on Digital Finance for Inclusive Growth



Group photo from the program on digital finance for inclusive growth

The *Global Developing Country Finance Capacity Building Program: Emerging Digital Finance Trends—Embedded Finance for Innovation, Inclusivity, and Shared Growth* was successfully held from May 17 to 21, 2025 in Shenzhen. The Tsinghua University PBC School of Finance (PBCSF, with PBC referring to the People’s Bank of China), the Finance Center for South-South Cooperation, and the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI) co-organized the event.

The program aimed to equip participants with insights into building inclusive digital payment ecosystems, drawing on China’s experience. It has two components: the Global Finance Forum from May 17 to 18, which hosted high-level discussions on global financial trends, and the capacity-building sessions from May 19 to 21, which offered technical deep-dives into the evolution of China’s digital payments infrastructure.

Key topics included regulatory frameworks, data-sharing practices, and developing and implementing China’s central bank digital currency (CBDC), the e-CNY. The program also addressed how digital finance can expand access to financial services, particularly for women and women-led micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

Mr. Charymuhammet Shallyyev, Director of the CAREC Institute, participated in the program and engaged in active knowledge exchange with representatives from regulatory and financial institutions across China and other participating countries. As part of the program, attendees visited leading technology companies such as Huawei Cloud and Lexin. They gained firsthand insights into the practical application of financial innovations in advancing inclusion and supporting economic growth.

The event provided a valuable opportunity to examine China’s experience and draw practical lessons for CAREC member countries advancing digital transformation and inclusive finance—aligning closely with the CAREC Institute’s efforts to support its members through policy research, capacity building, knowledge sharing, and networking to promote regional cooperation and inclusive development.

CAREC Institute Strengthens Partnerships in Xiamen



Group photo with the Belt and Road Research Institute, Xiamen University

From May 14 to 15, CAREC Institute Director, Mr. Shallyyev Charymuhammet, and the Acting Deputy Director One and Chief of the Human Resource and Finance Division, Mr. Hu Xiao, visited Xiamen to strengthen academic collaboration with leading local institutions.

On May 14, the delegation visited Xiamen University, where they met with representatives from the Office of International Cooperation and Exchange, the Belt and Road Research Institute, and the Intellectual Property and Innovation Research Centre at the university's Malaysia campus. Both sides introduced their organizations, research teams, and strategic priorities. Mr. Shallyyev highlighted the CAREC Institute's main research areas, flagship programs, and work in the region. The two sides discussed the alignment between CAREC initiatives and the Belt and Road Initiative, and explored opportunities for collaboration in research, training, knowledge sharing, event participation, and staff exchanges. Both parties showed strong interest in future cooperation.

On May 15, the delegation was welcomed by senior management at the Xiamen National Accounting Institute (XNAI), including President Mr. Ding Yougang and Vice President Mr. Deng Jianping. Over the years, CAREC Institute and XNAI have built a solid partnership through co-hosted workshops on e-commerce, digital economy development and integrity, and sustainable development topics. During the visit, both sides discussed enhancing collaboration in knowledge sharing, training, and policy dialogue. They also agreed to explore co-organizing a session at the upcoming CAREC Institute Development Forum and initiating a joint research project on regional strategic priorities.

The visit demonstrated the CAREC Institute's commitment to building lasting academic partnerships in the region, promoting growth, and fostering a vibrant network of shared expertise among partner institutions.

CAREC Institute Contributes to International Exchange Capacity Building Training for Social Organizations



China NGO Network for International Exchanges, in collaboration with the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Foreign Affairs Office and the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences, successfully held the International Exchange Capacity Building Training for Social Organizations in Urumqi from May 13 to 15, 2025. The event attracted over 80 participants from government agencies, social organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions.

The CAREC Institute (CI) was invited to lead a specialized seminar. On May 15, Ms. Marina (Rui) Wang, Senior Researcher with the CI's Chief Economist Team, presented on the Institute's vision, mission, history, key research areas, and its role in promoting regional

cooperation within the CAREC region. Ms. Wang highlighted how the CI supports the socio-economic development of the CAREC region through its flagship initiatives, research reports, capacity building programs and networking. She also emphasized CI's efforts to help its host province, Xinjiang, build stronger connections and work more closely with other regional partners. To further demonstrate the Institute's contributions, Ms. Wang discussed recent analytical research on global and regional trade issues.

The seminar provided valuable insights into regional cooperation, specifically tailored to the audience's needs. Through this exchange, CI seeks to further deepen societal understanding of regional cooperation and offer meaningful reference to relevant institutions looking to expand international exchange opportunities.

Visiting Fellow Program Report Highlights the Impact of Horticulture on Women’s Well-being in Uzbek Villages

A visiting fellow program paper titled **“Horticulture versus Cotton: A Comparative Qualitative Analysis of Women’s Well-being in Uzbek Villages,”** authored by Ms. Suray Charyyeva, sheds light on the significant differences in women’s well-being associated with horticultural and cotton farming practices in Uzbekistan. Conducted under the auspices of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Institute, this research emphasizes the critical role of agricultural practices in shaping the socio-economic landscape for women in rural areas.

The study reveals that women engaged in horticulture experience enhanced well-being compared to their counterparts in cotton farming. Through extensive interviews with 43 respondents, including farmers and workers, the research highlights how horticulture not only provides better economic opportunities but also fosters greater autonomy and empowerment among women. The findings suggest that the cultivation of diverse crops leads to improved household nutrition and economic stability, thereby positively influencing women’s roles within their families and communities.

Ms. Charyyeva advocates for policy reforms that prioritize horticultural development as a means to uplift women’s status in rural Uzbekistan. She calls for increased support from local governments and agricultural institutions to facilitate access to resources, training, and markets for female farmers. By promoting horticulture, the study argues, stakeholders can significantly enhance women’s well-being and contribute to sustainable agricultural practices in the region.

This research serves as a vital resource for policymakers, development agencies, and scholars interested in gender equality and agricultural development. It underscores the importance of understanding the nuanced impacts of different farming practices on women’s lives and offers actionable recommendations to foster a more equitable agricultural landscape in Uzbekistan.



Visiting Fellow Program

Horticulture versus Cotton: A Comparative Qualitative Analysis of Women's Well-being in Uzbek Villages

May, 2025

Suray Charyyeva

Visiting Fellow Program Report Appeals for Enhancing Cross-Border Trade: Insights from SMEs in Kazakhstan

The Visiting Fellows Program Report titled **“Drivers of Kazakhstan’s and Kyrgyz Republic’s Cross-Border Trade with China: The Voices of Businesspeople,”** authored by Ms. Zalina Enikeeva, offers a focused examination of the evolving trade dynamics between Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and China, with particular attention to the experiences of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The study identifies e-commerce as a promising driver of economic growth in the region, while pointing to persistent gaps in trade infrastructure and data transparency that continue to hinder cross-border commerce.

Ms. Enikeeva’s research finds that SMEs in Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic are eager to expand trade ties with China but face a range of challenges—from bureaucratic inefficiencies to a lack of accessible and reliable trade data. To help address these barriers, the report puts forward several practical recommendations, including the establishment of a visa-free regime between the Kyrgyz Republic and China, improved systems for data collection and sharing, and increased outreach to raise awareness of trade opportunities among local businesses.

Beyond the economic data, the report emphasizes the broader need for stronger regional collaboration. By capitalizing on the strategic location of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic as key transit corridors, the study argues for a more coordinated approach to regional trade development. Such efforts could pave the way for greater economic integration and cooperation among neighboring countries. As Central Asia continues to navigate a shifting global trade environment, the insights from this study offer timely and actionable guidance for policymakers and business communities alike.



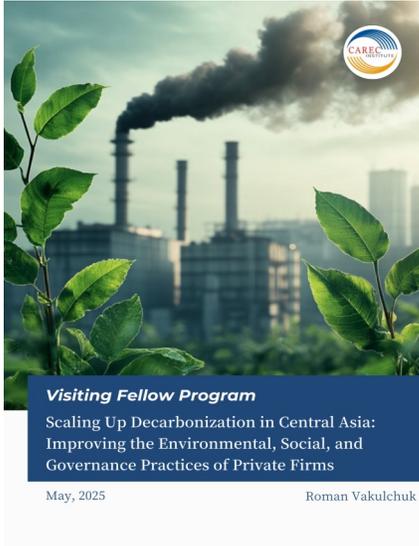
Visiting Fellows Program

Drivers of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic’s Cross-Border Trade with China: The Voices of Business People

May, 2025

Zalina Enikeeva

Visiting Fellow Program Report Highlights Enhancing ESG Practices in Central Asia for Sustainable Development



A visiting fellows program report titled “[Scaling Up Decarbonization in Central Asia: Improving the Environmental, Social, and Governance Practices of Private Firms](#)” by Dr. Roman Vakulchuk underscores the urgent need for strengthened ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) practices among private firms in Central Asia. Supported by the Asian Development Bank under the CAREC Institute’s Visiting Fellow Program, the research emphasizes the crucial role robust ESG frameworks play in driving sustainable economic growth and fostering regional cooperation.

The study reveals significant gaps in ESG reporting and practices across the region. In the study, 65% of surveyed firms noted that ESG regulations are likely to have a significant impact on their operations over the next 5-7 years. However, firms often lack risk management tools to assess the impact and prepare adaptation strategies. They also lack the necessary instruments to effectively measure and communicate their sustainability performance. Dr. Vakulchuk advocates for the adoption of internationally recognized standards, such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or other similar tools, to enhance transparency and accountability. This approach, he argues, will help firms align their operations with global sustainability goals, ultimately boosting the region’s resilience to climate change.

The report highlights the profound implications for Central Asia, a region increasingly vulnerable to environmental challenges. By prioritizing ESG practices, private firms can enhance their competitiveness and attract vital green finance, which is essential for long-term sustainable development. The study calls for collaborative efforts among governments, businesses, and civil society to create an enabling environment that facilitates the transition to a low-carbon economy, ensuring a sustainable future for Central Asia.

In conclusion, Dr. Vakulchuk’s findings serve as a compelling call to action for stakeholders across Central Asia to embrace ESG principles as a pathway to sustainable development. Integrating these practices is not just a trend, but a necessity for the region’s economic and environmental well-being, paving the way for a more sustainable and prosperous future.

Accelerating Electric Vehicle Adoption in the CAREC Region: Insights from the 2024 Economic Brief

This Economic Brief by Mr. Shiliang Lu, Research Specialist at the CAREC Institute, presented an [overview of the Electric Vehicle \(EV\) and its infrastructure development across the CAREC region](#) in 2024.

The brief showed that aligned with the robust global EV sales in 2024, growth of EV imports (in USD terms) in the CAREC region (excluding the PRC) increased by 23%. While the PRC’s New Energy Vehicle (NEV) sales grew by 40% in 2024, sales of the imported NEVs fell by 47.1% yoy. The rise of domestic EV brands and the acceleration of local production of international EV models significantly weakened the country’s EV imports.

In view of rather insufficient provision of EV charging infrastructure in the region, Mr. Lu urged respective member countries to accelerate the process of building high-quality charging infrastructure networks to support their transition to e-mobility. He suggested countries roll out robust regulatory frameworks to guide relevant practitioners, upgrade the current grid networks to meet the increasing charging needs, offering incentives to bring more private capital to participate in infrastructure construction, develop information sharing platforms to facilitate the charging process, and cultivate maintenance professionals to ensure sustainability of the infrastructure.

By fostering a conducive environment for EV use, the CAREC region can not only meet its sustainability goals but also position itself as a leader in the global to shift towards e-mobility. The economic brief serves as a call for policymakers to consider and embrace these recommendations and accelerate the transition for a greener future.



Economic Brief

The CAREC Region’s Electric Vehicle (EV) and Charging Infrastructure Development Recap 2024

By Shiliang Lu

May 2025

CAREC Institute Chai Talk on Global Trade Tensions and Potentials for Intra-Regional Trade in the CAREC

Trade tensions have disrupted global supply chains and altered international investment flows. Existing trade barriers, including tariffs and controls on exports and imports, have already contributed to declining trade and caused trade diversion. Further restrictions risk not only exacerbating bilateral trade frictions but also reshaping global trade dynamics, distorting investment patterns, undermining economic stability, and straining international relations.

As of 2024, China remains a dominant force and a key player in the global economy, including within the CAREC region. Current economic trends in China include moderate growth, a focus on economic stability, a shift toward green development, and an expansion of consumption and services—all while its global trade relations continue to evolve.

With trade tensions intensifying, Central Asia is gaining greater strategic importance as countries seek to diversify trade routes and supply chains. This shift presents both opportunities and challenges. The current tariff environment could offer Central Asian economies a chance to diversify supply chains and strengthen regional cooperation.

The upcoming CAREC Institute Chai Talk, scheduled for **9 July 2025, from 14:50 to 16:30 (Beijing Time)** via Zoom, will delve into these trade developments and explore the evolving role of the CAREC region in global supply chains, highlighting both emerging risks and potential opportunities.

Registration:

Please use the following link to register for this insightful event:

https://carecinstitute-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_UEjBGsNtTOOeCUBfyZdUg

Note: This event may be photographed or recorded. By participating, you consent to the possible use of your name and likeness in future publications. Simultaneous interpretation in English and Russian will be provided via Zoom.

About the CAREC Institute Chai Talk:

The CAREC Institute Chai Talk is an informal discussion forum designed to foster meaningful dialogue among experts, policymakers, and stakeholders from across the CAREC region and beyond. These sessions create a relaxed environment where participants can enjoy tea (“chai”) while engaging with expert speakers who offer insights on current topics such as economic trends, public policy, and sustainable development.

The Chai Talk format encourages interactive discussion, allowing participants to ask questions, exchange views, and explore ideas. It also offers valuable networking opportunities to support partnerships and collaboration. By addressing pressing regional challenges, the Chai Talk series aims to promote knowledge sharing and advance economic development and cooperation within the CAREC region.



THE CENTRAL ASIA REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION INSTITUTE

Chai Talk

Global Trade Tensions and Potentials for Intra-regional Trade in the CAREC

📍 Webinar 📅 9 July 2025

🕒 14:50 - 16:30 (Beijing Time)

zoom
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Invitation to Participate: AIIA 2025 Artificial Intelligence Pioneer Case Collection

Artificial intelligence (AI), as a strategic technology leading the new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, profoundly changes the way humans produce and live.

The CAREC Institute is proud to join the Artificial Intelligence Industry Alliance (AIIA) 2025 Artificial Intelligence Pioneer Case Collection as a partner. This initiative, originally launched by the AIIA, the Press and Publicity Center of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of the People's Republic of China, and the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, seeks to identify and promote exemplary applications of artificial intelligence across diverse sectors, driving innovation and supporting the growth of the global AI ecosystem. Through its participation, the CAREC Institute aims to enhance cooperation in the field of AI among CAREC countries and with other regions worldwide.

Target applicants include government agencies, industrial parks, academic institutions, enterprises, industry associations, and business alliances.

Submission Topics

This initiative, focused on AI technologies and applications, invites submissions in four key areas: new industrialization, industry applications, technology base, and people's livelihood and government affairs. It highlights the deployment of foundation models and generative AI across all stages of production, operations, management, and business processes.

Case Requirements

- **Technological Breakthroughs:** Showcase core innovations in AI across areas like data, models, algorithms, computing power, security, value alignment, embodied intelligence, or software engineering. Submissions must highlight clear technical advancements and their practical relevance.
- **Business Model Innovation:** Present new products, service models, or business formats enabled by AI, including solution innovation, expanded application scenarios, and secure, trustworthy governance practices.
- **Proven Impact:** Cases must be deployed at scale and demonstrate tangible economic or social value.

Submission Guidelines

Applicants are required to submit a soft copy of the completed submission form, stamped with the official seal, to AIIA at aiaa@caict.ac.cn and copy garyh@carecinstitute.org at the CAREC Institute.

To submit a case nomination, please complete and submit the [Submission Form](#).

Deadline

All submissions must be received by **August 15, 2025**. The evaluation and selection process will be completed by **September 2025**.

Benefits for Selected Cases:

- Publication in the "AIIA 2025 Artificial Intelligence Pioneer Case Collection".
- Opportunity to present at the AIIA annual conference and other key events.
- Widespread distribution of cases across multiple media channels.
- Priority consideration for presentation opportunities at future AIIA events.
- Inclusion of contributions in AIIA research reports.

About AIIA

The Artificial Intelligence Industry Alliance (AIIA) is an industry organization established in 2017 under the guidance of multiple ministries of the People's Republic of China. AIIA serves as a public service platform for promoting the development of the AI industry, driving digital economic growth through AI empowerment. With a commitment to becoming a globally influential platform for AI industry advancement, AIIA plays a pivotal role as both a facilitator and practitioner in harnessing AI to empower the digital economy.

Job Advertisement: Senior Research Specialist (Energy & Water)

The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Institute is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to promoting economic cooperation in Central Asia and along the Silk Road through knowledge generation and sharing. The Institute is headquartered in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The CAREC Institute is jointly shared, owned, and governed by eleven member countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, the PRC, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. It is a knowledge support arm of the CAREC Program, which is a proactive facilitator of practical, results-based regional projects and policy initiatives critical to sustainable economic growth and shared prosperity in the region, guided by the overarching vision of "Good Neighbors, Good Partners, and Good Prospects."

The Institute acts as a knowledge connector among the five CAREC clusters (Economic and Financial Stability, Trade, Tourism, and Economic Corridors, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Agriculture and Water, Human Development) to ensure coherence in the design and implementation of policies, programs, and projects to promote regional economic cooperation and integration. CI's main operational activities include research, capacity building, knowledge management, and networking and forging partnerships.

The CAREC Institute invites applications for the position of **Senior Research Specialist – Energy & Water**, an international staff position in the Research Division. Applicants should meet the qualifications and requirements stated in the Terms and Reference (TOR). **This is an internationally recruited professional staff position, open to qualified candidates from across the globe.**

Application Procedures

Applications should be emailed to **Jia Ni** (hr@carecinstitute.org, jjiani@carecinstitute.org) by **7:00 p.m., 20 June 2025 (Friday), Beijing time**. CAREC Institute is an equal opportunity employer, and women are encouraged to apply. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

Candidates are required to certify that all information provided on any employment application form, resume, or CV is complete, true, and accurate to the best of their knowledge. Candidates should understand that information may be verified, and any misrepresentation of facts may be considered the cause for dismissal, regardless of when it is discovered by the CAREC Institute.

[TORs – Senior Research Specialist – Energy&Water](#)



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