

CAREC INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

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The CAREC Institute is an intergovernmental organization jointly owned by eleven member countries, dedicated to promoting economic cooperation in Central Asia and along the Silk Road through knowledge generation and sharing. Acting as a knowledge connector across five core themes—including economic stability, trade, connectivity, agriculture, and human development—the Institute ensures policy coherence to drive regional integration.



Institute Spotlight

Mr. Kouqing Li Meets AIB President to Advance Institutional Cooperation

On 29 January 2026, Mr. Kouqing Li, Deputy Director One of the CAREC Institute (CI), led a visit to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in Beijing, and met with AIIB President Madam Jiayi Zou.

Against the backdrop that both institutions celebrated their 10th anniversaries in 2025, the two sides reflected on a decade of progress and underscored the strong potential for further deepening their partnership in support of sustainable development across CAREC member countries.

President Zou shared AIIB’s key strategic initiatives and priorities for the coming years, highlighting the Bank’s continued commitment to infrastructure financing, regional connectivity, and green and inclusive growth. She also emphasized the strategic importance of the CAREC region to AIIB’s operations.

Deputy Director Li congratulated Madam Zou on her formal appointment as President of AIIB and briefed her on CI’s new strategic priorities and flagship initiatives, including the Tianshan Forum for Central Asia Economic Cooperation, flagship research programs, and leadership training program.

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To further institutionalize cooperation, both sides agreed to develop a Memorandum of Cooperation, accompanied by a concrete action plan. This framework will serve as a guideline for future collaboration in joint research, capacity building, knowledge sharing, and the organization of relevant events, with the aim of delivering tangible development outcomes for CAREC countries.

CAREC Institute Director Attends Tacheng's 15th Five-Year Plan Advisory Symposium



Recently, the Strategic Development Advisory Committee Symposium for Tacheng Prefecture's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030) was successfully held in Tacheng, Xinjiang. Mr. Charymuhammet Shallyyev, Director of the CAREC Institute, joined the event online to engage in in-depth discussions on the plan's formulation with government officials and experts across diverse fields.

At the event, the relevant government authority outlined the overall framework for the 15th Five-Year Plan. Industry experts offered targeted and actionable recommendations on key priorities, such as greater openness to the outside world, industrial upgrading, energy development, technological innovation, biomanufacturing, and cultural-tourism integration, to refine the plan and chart the course for Tacheng's future development.

Director Shallyyev emphasized the importance of cross-border cooperation, noting that enhanced connectivity—especially through major transport infrastructure—can further strengthen Tacheng's role in regional trade and logistics. He also underscored the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in supporting economic diversification.

In addition, Mr. Shallyyev introduced the CAREC Institute's ongoing efforts to support regional cooperation and integration through timely, evidence-based research, capacity-building activities, and knowledge sharing. He also shared plans for organizing the 2026 Tianshan Forum for Central Asia Economic Cooperation, which aims to further promote dialogue and investment cooperation across the CAREC region.



Mr. Kouqing Li Visits ADB Resident Mission for the People's Republic of China

Mr. Kouqing Li, Deputy Director One of the CAREC Institute (CI), paid a visit to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Resident Mission for the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 29 January 2026 in Beijing. During the visit, he met with Mr. Asif S. Cheema, ADB Country Director for the PRC, and Ms. Altynay Arapova, Senior Economist for Regional Cooperation.

Mr. Li introduced CI's strategic priorities and upcoming initiatives, as well as ongoing efforts to strengthen the quality assurance system for CI's knowledge products. Mr. Cheema expressed ADB's readiness to collaborate with CI by sharing ADB's operational experience and best practices in the PRC with other CAREC countries. He also indicated his willingness to contribute to CI's quality assurance processes by serving as a potential external reviewer in selected areas.

Ms. Arapova reaffirmed ADB's support for regional cooperation initiatives and agreed to facilitate communication with relevant stakeholders in preparation for this year's Tianshan Forum for Central Asia Economic Cooperation and the CAREC Think Tank Development Forum.

Deputy Director Kuat Akizhanov Participates in Qazaqstan NEXT Forum to Facilitate Regional Development Discussion

On January 28, Dr. Kuat Akizhanov, Deputy Director Two of the CAREC Institute, attended the Qazaqstan NEXT Forum, which was co-hosted by KAZMEDIA HOLDING and AmCham Kazakhstan. The forum brought together policymakers, business leaders, and experts to discuss key topics including AI and digital trust, energy, creative economy, education and innovation, as well as the future of work and human capital. It focused on exploring trends in these areas and their impacts on Kazakhstan’s economic growth, investment climate and competitiveness.



At the forum, Dr. Akizhanov moderated the panel titled “Three Engines of the Future: Energy, Cities, Economy,” which focused on structural transformations shaping Kazakhstan’s long-term development and that of the broader region. The panel featured Mr. Magzum Mirzagaliev, Adviser to the President of Kazakhstan; Mr. Carlos Torres, Vice President at Rystad Energy; Mr. Francesco Di Salvo, Global Director at S&P Global Commodity Insights; and Mr. Aset Shyngyssov, Managing Partner at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP. Participants discussed the links between energy transition, urban development and economic transformation, and analyzed the strategic choices for resource-rich emerging economies in a rapidly changing world. Dr. Akizhanov guided this dialogue and stressed the need for integrated development approaches that balance economic resilience, sustainability and social outcomes.

As a regional think tank, CAREC Institute will continue to advance regional development through evidence-based research and policy dialogue.

CAREC Institute Participates in FAO Online Consultation on Agrifood Trade in Vulnerable Countries

Food security is a critical global issue, with Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) among the 92 vulnerable developing countries most affected. These economies face long-standing structural barriers in building sustainable agri-food systems, and international trade is key to improving their food security by filling supply gaps and expanding access to affordable food.

On this context, the Markets and Trade Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) conducted a study entitled “Agrifood Trade in Vulnerable Developing Countries: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities.” From January 21 to 22, 2026, it organized an online technical consultation on the draft report to discuss agrifood trade and food security issues concerning vulnerable countries.

Technical experts from relevant international organizations joined the online consultation. Discussions focused on collecting comments on the report, identifying practical food security measures, refining policy recommendations, and clarifying FAO’s follow-up priorities to enhance inter-institutional collaboration.

Dr. Ghulam Samad, Chief of the CAREC Institute's Research Division, participated as a panelist. He noted that poor connectivity constrains LLDC agrifood trade and food security, with trade costs (not tariffs) as the main barrier, and trade corridors as essential food security infrastructure.

Dr. Samad added that border delays pose hidden food security risks, given LLDCs' over-reliance on distant suppliers and underuse of regional corridors. He advised that trade facilitation reforms could be prioritized for food-critical corridors through corridor-specific measures and noted that CAREC findings show that climate-resilient corridors are becoming as important for food security as climate-resilient farming.

Findings from institutions like the CAREC Institute will inform FAO's final policy recommendations, supporting inter-institutional cooperation on vulnerable countries' agrifood trade.



"LLDCs' food security problem is fundamentally a connectivity problem"

—Dr. Ghulam Samad

CAREC Institute Knowledge Product

CAREC Institute's Quarterly Economic Monitor No. 19

The CAREC Institute has published its latest Quarterly Economic Monitor. Main conclusion about the region's economic performance in 2025: Resilient growth amid divergent inflation pressures and trade patterns sets the stage for a moderating outlook.

In 2025, the CAREC region sustained resilient economic growth, with average GDP expansion estimated at 5.6%. This strong performance was achieved despite heightened global uncertainty and was underpinned by robust domestic demand, continued public and private investment, and selective gains from commodity and services exports. However, the composition of growth increasingly reflects demand-led and externally contingent dynamics, raising questions about its durability as global conditions normalize.

Growth performance across the region remained uneven. Fast-growing economies such as the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan expanded above the regional average, largely supported by construction activity, services expansion, and strong consumption. In contrast, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Azerbaijan recorded slower growth due to sector-specific constraints, most notably in extractive industries. Mongolia and the PRC provided a stabilizing anchor to regional growth, while agriculture rebounded sharply in Mongolia following weather-related disruptions in the previous year.



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CAREC Leadership Training Workshop on Leveraging AI for Social and Economic Transformation in the CAREC Region

This report summarizes the key discussions and outcomes of the CAREC Leadership Training Workshop on Leveraging AI for Social and Economic Transformation in the CAREC Region, which was organized by the CAREC Institute and its partners. The event was held in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, People's Republic of China, on December 4–5, 2025.

For more details, please access the [full report](#).

Related:

- [CAREC Leadership Training Workshop Successfully Held in Urumqi on Leveraging AI for Social and Economic Transformation – CARECInstitute](#)
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Inflationary pressures moderated toward the end of 2025, with average consumer price inflation easing to around 5.8% year on year. This disinflation was largely policy-driven, reflecting tighter monetary conditions in economies with elevated inflation, including Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan. At the same time, inflation accelerated in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Pakistan, pulling the regional average above the median. Persistent domestic demand pressures remained evident in continued rapid broad money growth, particularly in the Kyrgyz Republic, where strong expansion of consumer and mortgage lending boosted demand and contributed to rising inflation.

External balances weakened for several commodity exporters amid softer global energy prices, while precious metals exporters benefited from strong gold demand. Regional trade remained exposed to global commodity price fluctuations but also showed signs of reshaping and deeper integration. Oil and gas exporters experienced shrinking surpluses, while gold exporters saw improvements. The PRC recorded a record-high surplus driven by high-technology manufacturing exports. Azerbaijan and Georgia strengthened their roles as transit hubs, supported by improvements in cross-border infrastructure. The PRC remained the largest source of foreign direct investment to the region, although FDI inflows to landlocked CAREC economies contracted sharply in 2024.

Looking ahead, regional growth is projected to moderate to 4.6% in 2026 and 4.5% in 2027. This slowdown reflects diminishing returns from domestic-demand-led expansion, tighter financial conditions, and softer external demand. Sustaining growth will require structural vulnerabilities, including over-reliance on remittances and specific commodities, as well as accelerating export diversification and productivity-enhancing reforms.

Job Opportunities

(Senior) Research Specialist

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The main operational activities of the CAREC Institute include research, capacity building, knowledge management, and networking and forging partnerships. It is the 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.

According to the CAREC Institute Strategy 2026–2030, Transport and Connectivity will be a key priority for CI's research activities, and the Institute now invites applications for the position of (Senior) Research Specialist, an international staff position in the Research Division.

This is an internationally recruited professional staff position, open to qualified candidates from across the globe. Applicants should meet the qualifications and requirements stated in the [Terms and Reference \(TOR\)](#).

Application Procedures

- Applications should be emailed to **Jia Ni (hr@carecinstitute.org)** by **7:00 p.m., 27 February (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 of dismissal regardless of when it is discovered by the CAREC Institute.



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Research Specialist

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Research Specialist

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According to the CAREC Institute Strategy 2026-2030, Trade and Trade Facilitation will be a key priority for CI's research activities, and the Institute now invites applications for the position of Research Specialist focused on trade, trade facilitation and related issues.

This is a nationally recruited position open to qualified candidates who are nationals of the People's Republic of China. Applicants should meet the qualifications and requirements stated in the [Terms of Reference \(TOR\)](#).

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(Senior) Knowledge Management and Communication Specialist

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According to the CAREC Institute Strategy 2026-2030, knowledge management, outreach, and visibility activities will be a priority area, and the Institute now invites applications for the position of (Senior) Knowledge Management and Communication Specialist, an international staff position in the Knowledge Management Division.

This is an internationally recruited professional staff position, open to qualified candidates from across the globe. Applicants should meet the qualifications and requirements stated in the [Terms and Reference \(TOR\)](#).

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(Senior) Knowledge Management and Communication Specialist

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