



**Bridging Borders Governance: Digital Connectivity, Investment, and Regional
Integration for Sustainable Development**
CAREC Institute 6th Annual Research Conference
Call for Papers and Book Proceeding

Co-hosted with the
Beijing National Accounting Institute (BNAI)
Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development (ISSCAD)

1. Background and Motivation

The CAREC Institute (CI) is organizing its 6th Annual Research Conference, which will be held in **Beijing, the People’s Republic of China (PRC)**, in late November 2026, in collaboration with the Beijing National Accounting Institute (BNAI) and the Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development (ISSCAD) at Peking University. This one-and-a-half-day event will bring together researchers, policymakers, development partners, and private sector representatives from across the CAREC region and beyond.

Building on the success of previous conferences, the 2026 edition will explore the theme “***Bridging Borders Governance: Digital Connectivity, Investment, and Regional Integration for Sustainable Development***”. It aims to critically examine the role of digital infrastructure and cross-border investments in fostering inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economic growth, particularly in the context of global shifts toward green and digital economies.

The 4th Annual Research Conference (2024, Almaty, Kazakhstan) focused on “*Rethinking Development Strategies: Green, Innovative, and Inclusive Development for the CAREC Region*”, while the 5th (2025, Islamabad, Pakistan) addressed “*CAREC Connectivity: Promoting Trade and Trade Facilitation*”. Both served as platforms for knowledge exchange, policy insights, and strengthened regional cooperation through evidence-based research. The upcoming 6th conference seeks to advance this legacy by exploring how digitalization and cross-border investments, supported by inclusive and sustainable policy frameworks, can unlock the region’s full

development potential.

Authors are invited to submit original articles, case-studies, and reviews pertinent to the topics elaborated below. The submissions will be commissioned by the Organizing Committee of CI, BNIA and ISSCAD, comprising independent reviewers with solid research and professional experience on the topics. Upon acceptance, **the selected manuscripts will be presented at the conference and published as conference proceedings or a book.**

2. Justification for the Title and Rationale for the Theme

The conference title, *“Bridging Borders Governance: Digital Connectivity, Investment, and Regional Integration for Sustainable Development”*, reflects a dual focus:

- Digital interconnection as a driver of economic, social, and institutional integration
- Cross-border investments as vehicles for sustainable, green, and inclusive growth

This theme aligns with the mandates of CAREC Institute, BNAI, and ISSCAD to support regional connectivity through policy-oriented research, enhance governance and accountability in infrastructure investment, and facilitate knowledge sharing within the region and the Global South.

Digitalization and investment flows present both opportunities and challenges, with uneven impacts across regions, sectors, and populations. The conference will address key questions, including:

- How can CAREC economies accelerate digital connectivity without deepening socio-economic divides?
- What roles should public and private investment play in achieving digital and sustainable development?
- How can CAREC countries leverage South-South cooperation to strengthen technology transfer, innovation ecosystems, and inclusive growth?

By emphasizing the interplay between technology, capital, and development, this theme aligns with the mandates of CAREC Institute, BNAI, and ISSCAD to promote regional cooperation and knowledge exchange. Beyond its regional relevance, it also resonates with global efforts to advance digital public infrastructure, foster regional integration, and scale up sustainable investment.

3. Objectives and Themes

The 2026 Annual Research Conference aims to foster high-quality academic and policy dialogue on digital transformation and cross-border investment as pathways to sustainable development in the CAREC region, while advancing inclusive economic participation and institutional capacity. Specifically, during the conference, the

following themes will be raised:

- Analyzing digital infrastructure gaps and investment patterns in the CAREC region.
- Discussing the implications of digital connectivity on labor markets, inequality, and regional integration.
- Showcasing innovative models of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in digital infrastructure.
- Identifying frameworks for inclusive digital governance and investment regulation.
- Strengthening academic-policy collaboration and research uptake across CAREC member countries.

Participants are invited to submit papers and presentations related to, but not limited to, the following themes:

1. Digital Connectivity and Regional Integration

- Infrastructure development and digital corridors
- Broadband access and digital inclusion strategies
- Harmonizing digital regulations across borders

2. Investment for Sustainable Development

- Financing green and digital infrastructure
- Regional investment treaties and their implications
- Investment risk mitigation in digital and climate projects

3. Digitalization and Socio-Economic Inequality

- Labor market shifts and the future of work
- Gig economy and platform regulation
- Digital skills and inclusive growth policies

4. South-South Cooperation and Innovation Transfer

- Technology partnerships within the Global South
- South-South investment flows and development finance
- Role of think tanks and universities in facilitating cooperation

5. Governance of Digital and Sustainable Transitions

- Data sovereignty and regional data governance frameworks
- Regulation of cross-border platforms and financial flows
- Ethical AI and climate-smart digital solutions

4. Submission procedure

The CAREC Institute invites the submission of papers relevant to the above-listed thematic areas. Authors should submit extended abstracts of no more than 1500 words by **15 July 2026** to emmat@carecinstitute.org, with the email subject line “2026 RC Extended Abstract Submission”. Notifications of the acceptance of the abstracts will be sent by **5 August 2026**. First drafts of full manuscripts, with a maximum of 7,000 words excluding annexes, should be submitted to the same email address by **30 September 2026**. After submitting the abstract and presenting it at the conference, the author may not publish the papers anywhere else without the CI’s prior approval. High-quality papers will be considered for inclusion in the CI’s Annual Book Publication in 2027.

All submissions are required to include the following information on a separate cover page:

- Title of the paper
- Name(s) of author(s) in intended order of authorship, their organizational affiliation(s), position(s), and e-mail address(es)
- Manuscript words count

The language of manuscript submissions and conference presentations is English. All submissions will be thoroughly reviewed based on the following criteria:

- Significance/contribution to the field
- Relevance to conference theme
- Aims and purposes
- Theoretical foundation
- Methodology
- Results and policy recommendations

5. Timelines

Timelines are shown in the schedule below:

Submission of Extended Abstract	15 July 2026
Notifications Abstract Acceptance	5 August 2026
Submission of First Draft	30 September 2026
Research Conference Dates	Late November 2026 (Specific date to be confirmed)
Submission of Final Draft	15 January 2027

6. Programme

The programme of the conference will be shared with participants once finalized.

7. Contact

For any questions concerning the announcement and content or any other request relevant to the conference, please contact Ms. Emma Tong emmat@carecinstitute.org

8. Formatting, Structure, Style, and Referencing Guidelines for the Paper (see link for publication guidelines).