

ESCAP

**United Nations Economic and Social
Commission for Asia and the Pacific**



UNECE

**United Nations Economic
Commission for Europe**

United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA)

2020 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM

“Regional Cooperation to Support Socioeconomic Recovery in the Wake of COVID-19”

18-19 November 2020

Virtual Modality

CONCEPT NOTE

Context

The objectives of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) are to facilitate economic cooperation in the SPECA region, integration of the SPECA participating countries into the world economy and to provide a platform for cross-border cooperation for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SPECA participating countries are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) jointly provide overall support to the Programme.

The crisis induced by the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected societies and economies across the globe, including SPECA countries. It has led to disruption of production, contraction in economic output and decline in employment and household incomes. Self-isolation, social-distancing and lockdown measures, necessary to contain the spread of the pandemic, have exacerbated the socioeconomic challenges. It is also threatening to reverse the development progress attained so far and the prospects of achieving the SDGs. The implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for the Decade 2014-2024 has also become quite challenging. The VPoA provides a comprehensive framework for the integration of LLDCs into the global economy through six mutually reinforcing priority areas: transit, infrastructure development for transport, ICT and energy, international trade and trade facilitation, regional integration and cooperation, structural economic transformation, and means of implementation.

ESCAP Resolution 75/1 requests the secretariat to continue to provide technical assistance to member States towards the smooth implementation of the six priorities of the VPoA. In this regard, SPECA can play an important role in the subregion to facilitate socioeconomic recovery in the wake of COVID-19 and strengthen partnerships regarding the implementation of the VPoA and an effective pursuit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2020 SPECA Economic Forum aims to strengthen cooperation in the subregion to support sustainable and inclusive economic recovery in the wake of COVID-19. The Forum provides a platform for SPECA participating countries and their partners to discuss and develop ideas for coordinated actions by Governments, United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders to respond to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, keeping in view the experiences and lessons learned from recent policy actions. The Forum will also discuss the complementarities between the implementation of short- to medium-term measures to support socioeconomic recovery and responding to the call for action to accelerate implementation of relevant international agendas such as the 2030 Agenda and the VPoA¹.

Objectives

The objectives of the 2020 SPECA Economic Forum are:

- To discuss potential opportunities for enhanced regional cooperation to support sustainable and inclusive economic recovery in the wake of COVID-19 in SPECA countries.
- To encourage knowledge sharing, experiences and lessons learned among government officials of SPECA countries and relevant stakeholders with regard to policies, strategies, and initiatives to (i) build resilient supply chains through trade and transport facilitation, (ii) promote sustainable and inclusive economic transformation to build-back better, (iii) discuss economic policies and financing strategies to support the socioeconomic recovery.
- To enhance capacity of policymakers of SPECA countries to align objectives of international agendas, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the VPoA, with their socioeconomic recovery measures.

Outcome

The purpose of the 2020 SPECA Economic Forum is to identify the potential opportunities for enhanced regional cooperation to support sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic recovery efforts in the wake of COVID-19 in SPECA countries with view to implementation of internationally agreed goals, including the 2030 Agenda and VPoA. The conclusions and recommendations emerging from the 2020 SPECA Economic Forum will be submitted for adoption to the 15th session of the SPECA Governing Council on 20 November 2020.

¹ [A/RES/74/15](#)