

Newsletter



15th CAREC Institute Governing Council Meeting Concludes in Astana

The 15th Governing Council meeting of the CAREC Institute (CI) concluded successfully on 9 November in Astana, Kazakhstan, following the 23rd CAREC Ministerial Conference. During this meeting, high-level representatives from CAREC member countries, including Azerbaijan, the People’s Republic of China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, alongside officials from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), convened to review CI’s progress and outline its strategic path forward. The meeting agenda included a comprehensive assessment of CI’s progress report, rolling operational plan, budget, recruitment, and revitalization plan.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Sanzhar Bolotov, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Economy and Commerce and CAREC National Focal Point of the Kyrgyz Republic, who emphasized the necessity of unified support from all member countries and the critical role of the Governing Council in steering CI’s strategic direction. In her opening remarks, Ms. Lyaziza Sabyrova, Regional Head of the Regional Cooperation and Integration Division at ADB, commended recent CAREC advancements in climate change, connectivity, and digitalization, underscoring the importance of reinforcing regional collaboration. She highlighted the CAREC Institute’s essential role in driving these transformative efforts and emphasized the importance of ongoing reforms and consultations to shape the Institute’s future.

CI Director Mr. Kabir Jurazoda presented a comprehensive update on the Institute’s 2024 achievements, emphasizing several significant developments. These included the acquisition of new office space, the success of flagship events such as the 8th Think Tank Development Forum and the 4th Research Conference, and the introduction of in-person fellowships under the Visiting Fellowship Program. Mr. Jurazoda also highlighted the establishment of five new partnerships, the initiation of five regional joint projects, and the completion of 20 capacity-building activities along with key research publications targeting common regional challenges. The Governing Council commended these accomplishments, recognizing their vital role in advancing sustainable development and regional integration throughout the CAREC region.

In addition, Dr. Kuat Akizhanov, CI Deputy Director Two, introduced the Rolling Operational Plan for 2025-2026, which identifies key priorities in trade, connectivity, climate resilience, and digitalization. CI Deputy Director One, Dr. Huang Jingjing, provided an overview of the proposed 2025 budget and recruitment plan, aimed at strengthening CI’s financial management and attracting expertise to enhance operations. The Governing Council expressed strong support for these proposals, acknowledging their alignment with the evolving priorities of the CAREC region.

Furthermore, the Governing Council highlighted the need for initiatives tailored to the specific challenges of individual member countries. The recently adopted CAREC Climate Plan was emphasized as a critical framework for advancing regional climate resilience, with a particular focus on sustainable infrastructure and transport. Members encouraged CI to prioritize strategies for climate change adaptation and resilience, ensuring that research and knowledge products align with member country needs to maximize impact.

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Group Photo from the 15th CAREC Institute GC Meeting

The revitalization of CI was a key topic of discussion, receiving broad support from the Governing Council. Members advised CI to focus on budget efficiency, talent acquisition from both regional and global sources, and securing long-term financial sustainability. They recommended developing a detailed action plan to ensure the effective implementation of the revitalization strategy, laying a solid foundation for the Institute's future success.

As the highest decision-making body of the CAREC Institute, the Governing Council plays a critical role in maintaining strategic oversight, shaping policy direction, and guiding CI's operations. The outcomes of this meeting underscore the Institute's commitment to fostering sustainable development and regional integration, positioning it for continued success in 2025 and beyond.

Appointment of New Director at the CAREC Institute



A Photo of Mr. Charymuhmet Shallyyev

The Governing Council of the CAREC Institute is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Charymuhmet Shallyyev as the new Director of the CAREC Institute, effective November 20th, 2024.

Mr. Shallyyev, a distinguished academic leader with expertise in economics and management, brings over three decades of professional experience to the CAREC Institute. His extensive background in both academia and the public sector will be invaluable in advancing the Institute's mission and strategic objectives. Throughout his career, Mr. Shallyyev has made significant contributions to research, curriculum development, and professional growth, earning recognition for his commitment to academic excellence.

Prior to his appointment, Mr. Shallyyev held several prominent positions, including Chair of the Management Department at the Turkmen State Institute of Economics and Management, Manager of the Internship Department at the Specialized Banking School under the Central Bank of Turkmenistan, and Senior Lecturer at Magtymguly Turkmen State University. He also participated in the Civil Servants Training Program, organized by the Royal Institute of Public Administration of the United Kingdom at the Magtymguly Turkmen State University. These roles have allowed him to shape key educational initiatives and foster strong connections between academia and industry.

Mr. Shallyyev's academic journey began with a specialist degree in economics from the Turkmen State Institute of Economics and Management. He further expanded his expertise through international programs at Tokyo International University in Japan, Indiana University's Kelley School of Business in the United States, and Santiago de Compostela University in Spain. His work in curriculum development, financial management, and research supervision has consistently elevated the institutions with which he has been affiliated.

He is also the author of several important academic texts, including the two-volume English-Turkmen Economic Dictionary, a two-volume Macroeconomics textbook for university students, and Fundamentals of Economics for secondary school students.

In accordance with the CAREC Institute's governance procedures, the Director is nominated by the government of the respective member country and appointed by the Governing Council for a two-year term.

The Governing Council looks forward to Mr. Shallyyev's leadership and the contributions he will make in advancing the Institute's objectives in the coming years.

CAREC Institute at the 23rd Ministerial Conference in Astana

The 23rd Ministerial Conference of the CAREC Program was successfully convened on November 7–8, 2024, in Astana, bringing together high-level representatives from CAREC member countries, development partners, and senior leadership from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Under the theme “Building a More Integrated and Resilient CAREC Region,” the conference focused on enhancing regional cooperation to promote sustainable and resilient growth across the CAREC region.

Key topics of discussion included improving regional energy security, leveraging artificial intelligence for innovative climate solutions, and the strategic development of CAREC Corridor 2—a vital trade and transit route for regional connectivity. Among the significant outcomes were the endorsement of the CAREC Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) and the launch of the CAREC Climate and Sustainability Project Preparatory Fund (CSPPF). These initiatives are aimed at strengthening climate resilience and promoting low-carbon growth, underscoring CAREC’s ongoing commitment to sustainable development.

During Session 2: Regional Outlook and the Way Forward, CAREC Institute (CI) Director Mr. Kabir Jurazoda emphasized the critical need for sustainable growth in light of evolving economic challenges in the region. He highlighted the importance of regional cooperation and strategic investments in areas such as climate adaptation, green development, and digital transformation as key drivers for fostering a diversified and resilient economy.

Following the conference, Mr. Jurazoda engaged in a productive discussion with Mr. Song Qichao, Assistant Minister of Finance of the People’s Republic of China. He expressed deep gratitude to the Chinese Ministry of Finance for its continuous support, which has significantly advanced the mission of the CAREC Institute and enabled an ambitious reform agenda. Mr. Song reaffirmed China’s strong commitment to supporting the CAREC Institute’s initiatives and future endeavors.

Additionally, the CI team held constructive dialogues with the ADB transport sector team, exploring avenues for enhanced collaboration on transport studies, capacity-building programs, and the development of critical CAREC corridors to further strengthen regional connectivity.

The 2024 Ministerial Conference provided a key platform for reaffirming commitments, setting strategic priorities, and strengthening partnerships across CAREC’s focus areas, laying a strong foundation for sustainable, integrated growth in the region.



Group Photo from the 23rd CAREC Ministerial Conference in Astana

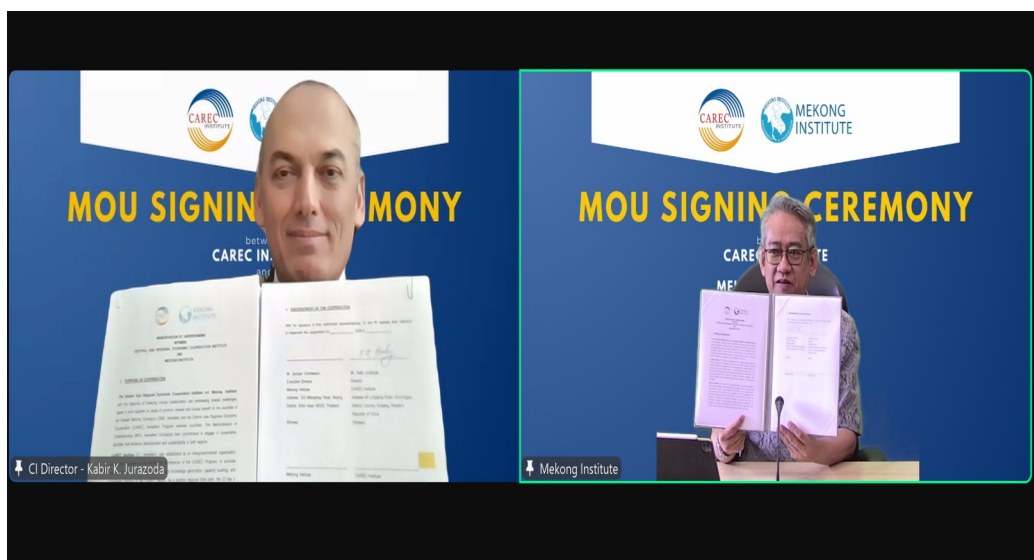
CAREC Institute and Mekong Institute Forge Strategic Partnership with Signing of Memorandum of Understanding

The CAREC Institute (CI) and the Mekong Institute (MI) have formalized a pivotal partnership aimed at enhancing regional cooperation through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) during an online ceremony held on November 14, 2024. This strategic alliance is designed to advance sustainable development across the CAREC and Great Mekong regions by fostering collaborative research, capacity-building initiatives, and policy development.

In his address, Mr. Kabir Jurazoda, Director of the CAREC Institute, underscored the significance of the MOU as more than a mere formal agreement. “This MOU symbolizes our unwavering commitment to collaboratively advancing the development and sustainability of both the CAREC and Great Mekong regions. By leveraging our combined expertise and resources, we aim to devise innovative solutions that will benefit our member countries and communities,” stated Mr. Jurazoda. He further highlighted that this partnership would facilitate joint research projects, training programs, and the exchange of critical knowledge, all aimed at empowering stakeholders and fostering long-term progress.

Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Executive Director of the Mekong Institute, also emphasized the importance of the agreement, noting the integral role both institutions play in regional development. “The Great Mekong and CAREC sub-regions are pivotal drivers of economic growth, not only in trade, investment, and logistics but also in forging pathways for more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable development. As we approach the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, institutions like CI and MI are crucial in advancing our shared goals and ensuring a transition to a more sustainable future,” remarked Mr. Vichitlekarn. He also highlighted the shared challenges and opportunities facing the two regions and the potential for mutual benefit through policy development, knowledge sharing, research collaboration, and expertise leveraging.

The MOU establishes a comprehensive framework for cooperation, enabling both institutions to explore joint initiatives, collaborate on research proposals, and engage in personnel exchanges. The agreement was witnessed by senior management and division chiefs from both organizations, marking a significant milestone in strengthening ties between the two institutes and reinforcing their collective commitment to regional development.



MOU signing between the CAREC Institute and the Mekong Institute

CAREC Institute and MCDF Launch Workshop on Debt Sustainability for Central and West Asia

The CAREC Institute (CI) and the Multilateral Cooperation Center for Development Finance (MCDF) co-hosted the inaugural Workshop on Debt Sustainability for Central and West Asia from November 18 to 21, 2024, at the CAREC Institute headquarters in Urumqi, with support from the Shuimogou District. This event marked a significant milestone as CI's first workshop dedicated to debt sustainability in the region and the first collaboration between the two organizations.

The workshop seeks to tackle pressing challenges in sovereign debt management and fiscal stability, convening over 40 participants, including senior officials from the debt management offices of nine CAREC member countries—Azerbaijan, Georgia, the People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. It also brings together representatives from leading multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization Development, the Eurasian Development Bank, alongside key Chinese financial institutions.

Dr. Kuat Akizhanov, Deputy Director Two of the CAREC Institute, welcomed participants and underscored the importance of the event in fostering regional cooperation and tackling fiscal challenges. In his opening remarks, Mr. Zhongjing Wang, Chief Executive Officer of MCDF, emphasized the center's commitment to transforming debt into a tool for sustainable development. "This workshop exemplifies MCDF's mission to turn debt from a financial burden into an opportunity for long-term development," he said, stressing the alignment with the region's goals of fostering responsible borrowing and lending practices amid shifting macroeconomic realities.

Dr. Jingjing Huang, Deputy Director One of the CAREC Institute, highlighted the urgency of addressing sovereign debt distress, particularly in the post-pandemic context. "Sovereign debt distress remains a significant challenge with long-term implications for economic stability and growth," she remarked. "This workshop equips policymakers with the tools necessary to build financial resilience and implement sustainable fiscal policies."

The event featured in-depth discussions on key topics such as debt management strategies, annual borrowing plans, liability and risk management, debt sustainability analysis, and debt restructuring. Leading experts in public debt management facilitated these sessions, providing practical insights into addressing sovereign debt challenges.

Over the course of the workshop, interactive sessions and peer-to-peer learning will foster open dialogue between borrowers and lenders. This collaborative approach will enable participants to develop actionable strategies for sustainable debt management, strengthen borrower-lender relationships, and share best practices. By focusing on aligning debt strategies with sustainable development goals, the workshop is set to reinforce the crucial role of regional cooperation in ensuring long-term economic resilience and prosperity across Central and West Asia.



Group Photo from the Workshop on Debt Sustainability for Central and West Asia

Workshop on Advancing Climate Resilience in Uzbekistan's Water, Agriculture, and Energy Sectors through Sustainable Financing and Private Investment

From November 25 to 27, the CAREC Institute, supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), hosted a workshop in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, focused on advancing climate resilience in Uzbekistan's water, agriculture, and energy sectors. The event aimed to address the challenges posed by climate change and explore innovative financing options to strengthen resilience in these key sectors, which are crucial to the country's economy. Stakeholders discussed the current status of these sectors, identified investment gaps, and explored mechanisms to encourage private sector involvement in Uzbekistan's climate adaptation strategies.

The workshop featured keynote addresses, panel discussions, and interactive sessions over three days, with each day dedicated to one of the three sectors. Ms. Kanokpan Lao-Araya, ADB's Country Director in Uzbekistan, emphasized the bank's commitment to supporting the country's sustainable development efforts. Mr. Vadim Sokolov, Director of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), stressed the need for collaboration to tackle the environmental crisis in the Aral Sea region.

Dr. Asif Razzaq, Senior Research Specialist at CAREC Institute, discussed the impacts of climate change on agriculture, water, and energy in Uzbekistan, setting the stage for subsequent discussions on financing and resilience strategies. His presentation provided key context for Dr. Georg Petersen, General Manager of HYDROC GmbH, to explore the financing gaps in Uzbekistan's water sector. The session then focused on developing a comprehensive water financing action plan, identifying opportunities for regional cooperation, and reviewing case studies of successful water financing initiatives. Dr. Yuliy Yusupov, Scientific Supervisor at the Centre for Economic Development in Uzbekistan, further shared valuable insights on the challenges and potential solutions related to financing the water sector in Uzbekistan.

On the second day, the workshop focused on agriculture, with Dr. Abdurasul Kayumov leading discussions on climate-resilient agricultural financing and investment opportunities. Dr. Shakhboz Akhmedov presented on national policies supporting sustainable agriculture. The final day addressed energy sector challenges, with Dr. Asif Razzaq outlining strategies to attract investment in Uzbekistan's energy sector. Dr. Umidbek Narzullaev presented proposed reforms to enhance energy sustainability, underscoring the need for a strategic framework that balances foreign investment with environmental sustainability.

The last day of workshop featured a panel discussion on "Enhancing Climate Resilience: Navigating the Water, Agriculture, and Energy Nexus in Uzbekistan" moderated by Ms. Rose Shao, Capacity Building Specialist at the CAREC Institute, ensuring a focused and productive exchange among the international experts and national policymakers. The workshop concluded with Ms. Shao delivering closing remarks in which she highlighted the key outcomes of the workshop, emphasizing the concrete steps taken towards enhancing climate resilience in Uzbekistan and the tangible results achieved through collaborative efforts.

Throughout the event, participants from government, international organizations, and the private sector collaborated to identify practical solutions and foster partnerships for boosting investment and innovation. The workshop concluded with a commitment to advancing climate resilience and sustainable development in Uzbekistan, with participants agreeing to continue their collective efforts to address the country's climate-related challenges.



Group Photo from the Workshop

CAREC Institute Contributes to COP29 Side Events in Baku, Azerbaijan

On November 17, 2024, the CAREC Institute participated in the COP29 side event in Baku, hosted by ADA University, ADBI, and ADB. The event featured the launch of the Asia-Pacific Climate Report by ADB Chief Economist Albert Park, which focused on mobilizing private finance and developing policy solutions for climate action.

Dr. Asif Razzaq, Senior Research Specialist at CAREC Institute, presented key findings from the Renewable Energy Investment Ecosystem project, a collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade. The research outlines a framework for assessing foreign direct investment in renewable energy across Central Asia, covering key areas such as government commitment, regulatory frameworks, infrastructure, and public-private partnerships.

Dr. Razzaq emphasized the critical role of Investment Promotion Agencies in improving investment conditions. He proposed a phased Investment Promotion Programme to enhance renewable energy investment, suggesting pilot implementation in one country over 1–3 years with regional capacity-building through workshops and technical assistance.

These contributions align with COP29's goal to accelerate the low-carbon transition by increasing private-sector investment and innovative policy solutions. Dr. Razzaq's work addresses key barriers to renewable energy investment in Central Asia and supports COP29's objective of creating transparent and effective climate finance mechanisms.

Additionally, Dr. Razzaq discussed challenges in implementing carbon markets in developing countries, including fossil fuel dependence, governance issues, and limited access to climate finance. He highlighted the need for phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and improving data transparency to better integrate carbon markets and support low-carbon transitions.

Earlier, on November 15, Dr. Razzaq also participated in a side event at Azerbaijan Technical University (AzTU), presenting on renewable energy investment barriers in Central Asia in the session "Smart and Low-Cost Solutions for Energy Transition."

These COP29 side events provided a platform for climate experts, policymakers, and environmentalists to discuss strategies for addressing the global climate crisis. The CAREC Institute's contributions underscored the importance of collaboration, innovation, and targeted investment in achieving COP29's climate goals and supporting regional sustainable energy transitions.



Dr. Asif Made a Presentation at the COP29 Side Events in Baku,

CAREC Institute's Quarterly Economic Monitor No. 14

The CAREC Institute's Quarterly Economic Monitor #14 provides a comprehensive update on economic trends in the CAREC region. In the first half of 2024, real GDP growth accelerated across most CAREC economies, primarily driven by growth in the services and manufacturing sectors. However, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) anticipate a slowdown in growth for most CAREC economies in 2024 overall, as well as in 2025 compared to 2023. Mining activity has remained volatile in most CAREC countries, while export growth for oil and gas exporters has decelerated. Inflation rates have declined, and monetary policy has become more accommodative. Credit to individuals has continued to expand robustly, and corporate credit has also grown, though at a slower pace. Exchange rates have remained broadly stable throughout 2024.

Additionally, this edition provides an overview of a range of monetary and fiscal policy measures adopted by the PRC to re-accelerate growth, primarily aimed at stimulating consumer and investor spending and addressing local government debt reform. A special feature highlights the persistent characteristics of CAREC economies over the past two and a half decades, such as the share of GDP spent on consumption and investment, net-exporting and net-importing countries, and the size of government spending. However, there have been fluctuations in these compositions, which impact the development paths of CAREC countries and may be of interest to our readers.



Another Contribution to COP29 Side Event

The CAREC Institute (CI) participated in a pivotal side event at the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) on November 14th, titled "Towards a Sustainable Kyrgyz Republic: Opportunities in Green and Climate Finance." This event was successfully organized by the Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Climate Finance Center under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic, OJSC "Eldik Bank," and UNDP in the Kyrgyz Republic, taking place in the Pavilion "Kyrgyzstan: Sustainable Mountain Development" in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The event focused on identifying potential areas of cooperation for deploying mechanisms and tools to mobilize green and climate finance in the Kyrgyz Republic. It also aimed to enhance collaboration among government agencies, investors, and international partners to effectively mobilize resources for green initiatives.

Dr. Vladislav Zavadskiy, Senior Research Specialist at the CAREC Institute, was a key speaker at the session on "Investment Opportunities for Development Partners and Prospects for Cooperation." He emphasized significant avenues for growth and partnership, highlighting the consequential impacts and benefits for all stakeholders involved. Additionally, he stressed the importance of regional cooperation within the CAREC region and the critical role of the CI as a think tank in driving research activities.

Mr. Sanzhar Bolotov, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic, highly praised the CAREC Institute's contributions, noting "the insights provided by CI expert in sustainability and climate finance significantly enriched our discussions and underscored the importance of collaboration in tackling the urgent challenges posed by climate change".

Throughout COP29, Dr. Zavadskiy actively participated in discussions with other scholars, industry experts, and development practitioners at various side events, further demonstrating the CAREC Institute's commitment to advancing green economy initiatives in Kyrgyzstan and across CAREC region.



Dr. Vladislav at the COP29 Side Event

CAREC Institute Engages in the 2024 World Internet Conference Intelligent Transportation Forum

On November 22, the Intelligent Transportation Forum, a key side event of the 2024 World Internet Conference, convened in Wuzhen, Zhejiang, the People's Republic of China (PRC). With the theme "Smart Connectivity for Boundless Mobility: Co-Creating a New Ecosystem for Intelligent Transportation," the forum explored how technological innovation can improve transportation efficiency, safety, sustainability, and convenience for a greener and more secure mobility future.

The forum brought together over 150 participants, including representatives from government agencies, international organizations, leading enterprises, academia, and media. Attendees engaged in high-level discussions and shared insights on emerging trends and best practices in intelligent transportation.

Dr. Hans Holzacker, former Chief Economist and consultant for the CAREC Institute, delivered a speech titled "ITS Priorities for CAREC." In his presentation, Dr. Holzacker highlighted the critical need for intelligent and green transcontinental corridors that are multimodal, digitalized, interoperable, electrified, and reliant on modern fuels. He also emphasized the importance of intelligent and sustainable public transportation systems in urban centers that offer sufficient capacity, affordability, electrification, and digitalization. Addressing the region's outdated vehicle fleet, he advocated for its renewal, particularly through the adoption of electrified and digitalized solutions.

Dr. Holzacker noted that vehicles are a major export from the PRC to other CAREC countries, with the value of electric vehicle (EV) exports to the region increasing approximately sevenfold annually since 2021. His remarks underscored the transformative potential of EV adoption for sustainable mobility in the CAREC region. Following his presentation, Dr. Holzacker and Mr. Lu Shiliang, the Research Specialist at the CAREC Institute, engaged in discussions with academic researchers and industry experts, further deepening the forum's dialogue on intelligent transportation systems (ITS).

The forum was hosted by Huolala and co-organized by the ChinaEU Digital Association. It served as an important platform for advancing global dialogue and fostering cooperation in building smarter, greener, and more sustainable transportation ecosystems worldwide.



Dr. Hans Made a Presentation at the 2024 World Internet Conference Intelligent Transportation

New Report Analyzes Interest Rate Risks and Fiscal Sustainability among EFSD Member States

A recent joint working paper produced by CI and ESFD, entitled “[Country-Level Interest Rate Risk Impact on Debt and Fiscal Sustainability: Potential Use of Floating-Rate and Inflation-Indexed Liabilities](#),” offers an in-depth examination of the effects of rising interest rates on the sovereign debt portfolios of member states of the Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development (EFSD). The working paper specifically examines Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan, shedding light on the challenges posed by fluctuating interest rates and their potential impact on fiscal sustainability.

The working paper (Dr. Ghulam Samad of the CAREC Institute (CI), who was one of the contributors) underscores the necessity for countries to adapt their debt management strategies to current economic conditions. “As interest rates rise, it is crucial for governments to explore the benefits of floating-rate and inflation-indexed liabilities to mitigate risks associated with traditional fixed-rate debt,” The authors highlight the significance of adopting innovative financial instruments to maintain fiscal stability.

The working paper also addresses the evolving investment strategies of regional insurance companies, which are increasingly shifting away from government securities due to mark-to-market accounting requirements. This trend underscores the need for policymakers to re-evaluate debt issuance and management practices to ensure economic resilience in a dynamic financial landscape.



CAREC Institute Contributes at ASM 2024 Edition Launch in Manila

The launch seminar of Asia Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Monitor (ASM) 2024 Edition was successfully held at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) headquarters in Manila from November 20–22, 2024. The ASM supports ADB’s developing member countries in promoting evidence-based policy design for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) development by providing a unique data platform and delivering high-quality analyses on MSMEs. This seminar, themed “Designing an MSME Ecosystem for Resilient Growth in Asia and the Pacific,” brought together experts, policymakers, and development practitioners to discuss MSME development trends, financing, and innovative policy approaches.

Dr. Ghulam Samad, Chief of the Research Division at the CAREC Institute, presented during the session on MSME Participation in Global Value Chains, emphasizing the role of global value chains in scaling small businesses, enhancing competitiveness, and driving inclusive growth. He also participated in a panel discussion on Regional Cooperation and Integration, offering insights into fostering regional collaboration to support MSME growth.

Dr. Samad highlighted the need for economic diversification through privatization and deregulation to boost MSME contributions to GDP. He stressed the importance of leveraging financial technologies, addressing low financial development, strengthening banking relationships, and advancing regional integration to enhance MSME trade financing. Additionally, he called for investments in digital infrastructure, including internet connectivity, payment systems, logistics, and regulatory harmonization, to enable MSMEs to thrive in e-commerce markets.

The seminar reaffirmed the pivotal role of MSMEs in driving sustainable growth and underscored the importance of innovative strategies and regional collaboration to enhance their resilience in an evolving global landscape.



Dr. Samad at the ASM 2024 Edition Launch in Manila

Visiting Fellow Talk: Improving ESG and Green Finance Practices by Private Firms in Central Asia: Gaps, Risks, and Opportunities



Dr. Roman Made a Presentation at the CI Headquarters

On November 22, 2024, Dr. Roman Vakulchuk delivered an insightful talk addressing the state of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices among private firms in Central Asia. Private firms in Central Asia need to enhance their efforts to promote sustainable environmental practices and better reflect on their own environmental, social and governance performance. He highlighted that while the awareness of potential ESG benefits is increasing, many firms still fall short adopting effective instruments to measure firm's carbon footprint, comprehensive risk management systems and foresight tools.

During his presentation, Dr. Roman revealed significant gaps in ESG understanding and implementation among firms in Central Asia. He underscored the risks that firms face when failing to adopt ESG policies and outlined the opportunities available to those who integrate these frameworks into their operations. To address these challenges, he advocated for greater knowledge-sharing initiatives and capacity-building efforts, which would enable businesses to better manage risks and capitalize on ESG-driven opportunities for resilience and growth.

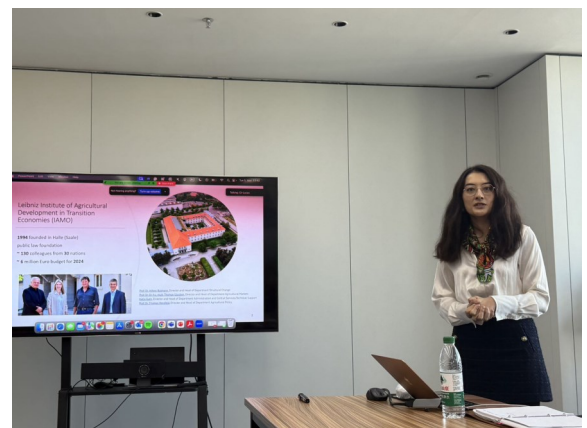
The talk has contributed to advancing discussions about green finance and sustainable environmental practices among private firms across Central Asia, an area that has received only limited expert and scholarly attention thus far. By sharing actionable insights and highlighting the need for forward-thinking ESG strategies, he also outlined efforts to foster a more responsible and resilient private

Visiting Fellow Talk: “Horticulture Versus Cotton” Explores Women’s Well-being in Uzbek Villages

On November 5, 2024, the CAREC Institute hosted a Visiting Fellow Talk featuring Ms. Suray Charyyeva, who presented her research titled “**Horticulture versus Cotton: A Comparative Qualitative Analysis of Women’s Well-being in Uzbek Villages.**” Held at the CI Headquarters, the session invited CI staff who actively participated and contributed to the discussion.

Ms. Charyyeva’s analysis underscored the profound impact of shifting from cotton monoculture to horticulture on the well-being of rural women in Uzbekistan. Her findings indicate that adopting horticultural crops not only enhances financial stability for women farmers and daily wage workers but also improves their access to education and health services. However, the research suggests that, while horticulture positively influences economic conditions, it does not significantly alter the social dynamics within the community.

In her recommendations, Ms. Charyyeva emphasized the importance of supportive policies to facilitate this transition, including improved access to financial resources and education for women. She urged stakeholders to recognize the unique challenges faced by rural women and to promote initiatives that empower them through sustainable agricultural practices. The talk concluded with a call for further research to explore the long-term impacts of these agricultural shifts on women’s livelihoods and community well-being.



Ms. Suray Made a Presentation at the CI Headquarters

CAREC Institute and XNAI Successfully Host Workshop on Digital Economy Development and Integrity

The CAREC Institute, in collaboration with the Xiamen National Accounting Institute (XNAI), successfully concluded the Workshop on Digital Economy Development and Integrity, held virtually from November 26 to 28, 2024. The event convened over 70 distinguished participants, including government officials, experts, and academics from CAREC member countries, to explore the evolving dynamics of the digital economy.

The workshop featured insightful lectures and engaging discussions led by experienced experts. Key themes included the state of digital economy development in Central Asia, data asset management strategies, and critical issues of compliance and governance. Participants gained valuable insights into the importance of robust regulatory frameworks and enhanced digital security measures to foster sustainable growth and innovation in the region.

Dr. Zheng Yong, Vice President of XNAI, opened the workshop by emphasizing the significance of international collaboration in harnessing the potential of the digital economy. She highlighted the urgent need for innovative solutions to address digital transformation challenges, particularly in advancing integrity and compliance. Dr. Huang Jingjing, Deputy Director One of the CAREC Institute, delivered a welcome address that built upon these themes. She underscored the transformative role of knowledge sharing and capacity building in driving sustainable economic growth and positioned regional cooperation as a catalyst for innovation and resilience. Their remarks inspired participants, setting a collaborative and action-oriented tone for the workshop.

On the first day, Mr. Lu Shiliang, Research Specialist at the CAREC Institute, presented on **“Current Status and Cooperation Opportunities in Digital Economy Development in Central Asia.”** He highlighted notable advancements in digital adoption across CAREC member countries while addressing key challenges, including limited internet access and cybersecurity vulnerabilities, underscoring the need for regional collaboration to drive digital transformation.

Dr. Ghulam Samad, Chief of Research Division at the CAREC Institute, followed with an engaging session on **“Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in the CAREC Region.”** He highlighted the transformative potential of digital technologies in streamlining trade and reducing costs while stressing the importance of integrating sustainable practices to align economic growth with environmental goals.

The subsequent sessions featured contributions from esteemed XNAI Associate Professors. Dr. Li Xiping presented on **“Compliance and Governance in the Digital Economy,”** emphasizing effective governance frameworks to mitigate integrity risks. Dr. Jian Wei’s session on **“Data Asset: Management and Compliance”** provided an in-depth exploration of regulatory compliance and the critical importance of securing data assets.

This workshop reflects the CAREC Institute and XNAI’s commitment to advancing regional connectivity and economic policymaking, providing a platform for collaborative solutions to shared challenges in the digital economy.



Photos from the Workshop on Digital Economy Development and Integrity

About CAREC Institute

The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Institute is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to promoting the economic cooperation in the Central Asia and along the Silk Road through knowledge generation and sharing. The CAREC Institute is jointly shared, owned, and governed by eleven member countries.

The Institute acts as a knowledge connector among the five CAREC themes—economic and financial stability; trade, tourism, and economic corridors; infrastructure and economic connectivity; agriculture and water; human development—to ensure coherence in design and implementation of policies, programs, and projects to promote regional economic cooperation and integration.