



Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program

**ALMATY–BISHKEK CORRIDOR INITIATIVE  
JOINT WORKING GROUP MEETING**  
22–23 December 2014, Bangkok, Thailand

## **Background**

The Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) has proposed development of economic corridors as a priority area for CAREC. A study on economic corridor development (ECD) was undertaken by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) during 2014. The study—“Operationalizing Economic Corridor Development in Central Asia”—was endorsed by the CAREC Senior Officials Meeting in Issyk Kul, Kyrgyz Republic, in September 2014, and its findings were adopted in the 13<sup>th</sup> CAREC Ministerial Conference held in Bishkek in November 2014. The study proposed a framework for corridor development in CAREC and recommended piloting ECD through the Almaty-Bishkek Corridor Initiative (ABCI).

During the Ministerial Conference, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the cities of Almaty and Bishkek to jointly work on development of the ABCI. Subsequently, the governments of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic established a Joint Working Group (JWG) to guide, monitor and implement the ABCI in its first phase of knowledge and analytical work to identify opportunities for development of the economic corridor between Almaty and Bishkek. Key outputs of the first phase include identification of infrastructure, policy and institutional requirements for successful development of the Almaty–Bishkek corridor. A list of members of the JWG is provided in **Attachment 1**. Secretariat services for the JWG are provided by the CAREC Secretariat at the ADB.

## **First Meeting of the JWG (JWG1): Objectives**

The proceedings of JWG1 will be important inputs into size, scope and design of the regional technical assistance from ADB which will support the ABCI. To that end, the JWG1 will need to provide directions related to several significant issues: (i) Identifying and agreeing on the major areas or sectors of priority to be analyzed for development of the ABCI; (ii) Developing outline terms of reference for studies and analysis linked to the identified priorities, including long-term city planning and specific sectors; (iii) Possible approaches to capacity building, wider consultation and dissemination activities linked to the analytical work for ABCI; (iv) Consideration of the role of private sector in ABCI, or how and when the private sector may be brought into ABCI development and for what purposes; and (v) Working guidelines and work plan for 2015. Other issues also may be identified given this is the first meeting of the JWG.

**JWG1 Agenda:**

The first meeting is limited to only members of the JWG.<sup>1</sup> There will be no presentations from external resource persons, though facilities for powerpoint presentations and simultaneous interpretation will be provided should any members wish to make presentations.

The CAREC ECD study identified an initial list of potential areas of focus for developing the economic corridor between Almaty and Bishkek. This includes identifying and developing potential complementarities in long-term urban planning in each city, and doing the same at sector level for some sectors. Based on the structure of economic activities in Almaty and Bishkek, the ECD study tentatively identified an initial list of the following areas: agriculture processing and trade, logistics and wholesale/retail trade, financial services, tourism, education, health and infrastructure (road, rail, aviation, energy, and ICT).

In preparation for the JWG1, members are requested to prepare their respective inputs towards the JWG1 objectives noted above. It may be useful for individual JWG members to consider addressing the following issues in their preparation for the meeting:

- What are 2 most important big questions for ABCI that need resources to be used for answering in depth?
- At a more detailed level, based on your sector experience and expertise, identify important areas or questions that need to be analyzed and why. These areas may be specific to the initial sectors noted above, or could cover other areas that may be proposed for inclusion in the ABCI knowledge work.
- Based on existing information and knowledge, what are issues should be prioritized for exchanging information between both sides, whether in long term city planning or at sector level? These may be included within the JWG work plan related to capacity building and consultation workshops in 2015.
- What are the major impediments to agglomeration in each city?
- At sector level: what are the sector specific strategies for the identified sectors of focus?

The first session of the JWG1 will allow each member of the JWG to make opening comments of up to 5 minutes (10 minutes for the lead delegate from each country). The JWG members may reflect upon these issues or others that they deem important. The discussions in the other sectors will also touch upon the types of issues noted above, allowing JWG members to elaborate further their ideas for designing the analytical preparations for development of ABCI.

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<sup>1</sup> These comprise the 7 nominated members each from Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic, including representatives from Almaty and Bishkek administrations, and the CAREC secretariat. The JWG1 will need to consider (under item (v) above) the role and scope for other participants in parts or entirety of subsequent meetings of the JWG.



## PROGRAM

### Day 1, 22 December 2014

- 08:30–9:00 Registration
- 09:00–9:10 Welcome Address  
Ms. Vicky Tan, Director, Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division (CWRC),  
Central and West Asia Department (CWRD), ADB
- 09:10–10:15 Opening remarks by JWG members
- 10:15–10:45 Group Photo/Coffee Break
- 10:45–12:00 Linking Almaty and Bishkek: Getting started  
*Short Presentation by Secretariat/ADB, followed by discussion*
- 12:00–13:30 Lunch
- 13:30–14:30 Agglomeration and Urban Planning in Almaty and Bishkek: Lessons, Perspectives and Approaches  
*Members of the JWG will present approaches towards agglomeration and urban planning in their respective countries and cities. They will also present latest updates on long-term urban development plans for Almaty and Bishkek and identify areas for further analysis of complementarities in long-term urban planning between Almaty and Bishkek*
- 14:30–15:30 Sector Discussion: Agriculture, Tourism, Finance  
*JWG members to discuss sector strategy, cooperation areas, and analytical requirements*
- 15:30–16:00 Coffee Break
- 16:00–17:30 Sector Discussion: Education, Health, Other Business Services  
*JWG members to discuss sector strategy, cooperation areas, and analytical requirements*
- 19:00–21:00 Dinner hosted by ADB

**Day 2, 23 December 2014**

- 09:00–10:30 Sector Discussion: Infrastructure (Roads, Rail, Aviation, Energy, ICT), Logistics and trade  
*JWG members to discuss sector strategy, cooperation areas, and analytical requirements*
- 10:30–11:00 Coffee Break
- 11:00–12:00 Joint Working Group: Working Guidelines  
*Short Presentation by Secretariat/ADB, followed by discussion*
- 12:00–13:30 Lunch
- 13:30–14:30 Joint Working Group: Work Plan 2015
- 14:30–15:30 Outline Terms of Reference for ABCI knowledge studies
- 15:30–15:45 Coffee break
- 15:45–16:30 Finalization of JWG1 proceedings
- 16:30–16:45 Closing remarks (KAZ, KGZ, ADB)