



UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA
(SPECA)

Eleventh session of the SPECA Governing Council

(Ganja, Azerbaijan, 23 November 2016)

REPORT

I. Introduction

The eleventh session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) was held on 23 November 2016 in Ganja, Azerbaijan. The 2016 SPECA Economic Forum entitled “Enhanced Implementation of SDGs through Cooperation” was held on 22 and 23 November 2016 prior to the session of the SPECA Governing Council.

II. Participants

Representatives of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan as well as the Executive Secretary of UNECE and the Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP participated in the session. Representatives from other United Nations agencies and programmes, international and regional organizations, as well as the academic community, private sector and the civil society participated as observers. The list of participants of the eleventh session of the SPECA Governing Council and the 2016 SPECA Economic Forum is attached (Annex I).

III. Opening of the session

The session was chaired by Dr. Sahil Babayev, Deputy Minister of Economy of Azerbaijan, the Chair country of SPECA in 2016.

The Chairperson of the annual session of the SPECA Governing Council stressed that “in the context of globalization, multilateral economic cooperation and integration processes have become increasingly important. Regional and interregional cooperation is one of the key components of modern international economic relations, as well as an important factor on achieving prosperity, sustainable development and economic growth.”

The opening statement of Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), was delivered by Mr. Kaveh Zahedi, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP. In her opening statement, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar emphasized that “the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development has presented a window of opportunity for SPECA countries to shift their development trajectory. This year SPECA events enabled the countries to take stock of progress on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and areas where strengthened regional cooperation and integration in North and Central Asia can deliver major gains, including on trade, connectivity, development of statistical capacities, and enhancing resilience to natural disasters.”

In his opening statement, Mr. Christian Friis Bach, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), stressed “the need for a comprehensive approach to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda that responds to today’s urgent social, economic and environmental challenges; a response which is based on peaceful co-existence and the rule of law, and leaves no one behind.”

IV. Adoption of the agenda

The Governing Council adopted the agenda of its eleventh session (Annex II).

V. Outcomes of the 2016 SPECA Economic Forum. Adoption of the Ganja Declaration on “Enhanced Implementation of SDGs through Cooperation”

The 2016 SPECA Economic Forum aimed to take stock of how the subregion is positioning itself in the implementation of SDGs, to assess national SDG strategies and institutional frameworks, and to examine practical approaches and modalities. Especially, participants of the 2016 SPECA Economic Forum reviewed and discussed:

- Reviving and rebalancing economic growth: review of economic performance and priority policy reforms;
- Implementation of the sustainable development goals at national level;
- Statistical assessment and statistical capacity-building needs;
- Environmental sustainability and resource-use efficiencies;
- Rebalancing development for equality, inclusion and social justice; and
- Evaluation of SPECA.

The Chairperson presented the draft Declaration on “Enhanced Implementation of SDGs through Cooperation” (Annex III).

The Chairperson proposed the adoption of the following decisions under item 3 of the agenda:

“The Governing Council notes with satisfaction the outcomes of the 2016 SPECA Economic Forum on “Enhanced Implementation of SDGs through Cooperation” held in Ganja on 22-23 November 2016. The Governing Council calls upon ESCAP and UNECE, as well as other United Nations agencies and programmes, to provide active support to regional efforts by SPECA participating countries to implement the Sustainable Developments Goals through cooperation.”

and

“The Governing Council adopts the Ganja Declaration on “Enhanced Implementation of SDGs through Cooperation.”

The proposed draft decisions were adopted (see Annex IV - Decisions 1 and 2).

VI. Evaluation of SPECA

The Chairperson proposed the adoption of the following decisions under item 4 of the agenda:

“The Governing Council notes with satisfaction the work done by the SPECA participating countries and the SPECA Thematic Working Groups on

implementing the provision of the Declaration of the tenth session of the Governing Council (Dushanbe, 11 November 2015), suggesting to make the SPECA framework an important platform for supporting progress towards many of the SDGs through the exchange of best practice, capacity-building, joint development and implementation of regional projects and sharing of experiences on the use of new financial mechanisms and partnerships.”

and

“The Governing Council welcomes the forward looking SPECA evaluation on strengthening its role as a mechanism for cooperation in implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in line with the Ganja Declaration.”

The proposed draft decisions were adopted (see Annex IV – Decisions 3 and 4).

VII. Review of SPECA activities since the 10th session of the Governing Council

The Progress Reports on the work carried out by the SPECA Thematic Working Groups since the last session of the Governing Council were presented by the United Nations secretariat. After discussion, the Chairperson proposed the adoption of the following decisions under item 5 of the agenda:

“The Governing Council notes with appreciation the Progress Reports on the work carried out by the SPECA Thematic Working Groups since its last session. The Governing Council expresses satisfaction with the scope of activities and the stability of extrabudgetary funding received by SPECA projects.”

and

“The Governing Council welcomes the strengthening cooperation between SPECA, the Regional UN Development Group, UN Country Teams in the SPECA countries, and UN and other international organizations, supporting progress towards the achievement of SDGs through enhanced subregional cooperation and towards enhanced economic cooperation in the SPECA subregion. The Governing Council underscores the importance of such partnerships for the success of assistance provided to SPECA countries on the SDGs. The Governing Council invites ESCAP and UNECE and their partner organizations to continue developing close cooperation, including further development and implementation of joint projects.”

The proposed draft decisions were adopted (see Annex IV - Decisions 5 and 6).

VIII. Election of the next Chair (country), date and venue for the 2017 SPECA Economic Forum and 12th session of the SPECA Governing Council

Several representatives from the SPECA countries expressed sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the excellent chairmanship of the Programme in 2016 and proposed the adoption of the following decision under item 6 of the agenda:

“The Governing Council expresses its sincere gratitude to Azerbaijan for its active work as the Chair country of SPECA between 2015 and 2016.”

The proposed draft decision was adopted (see Annex IV – Decision 7).

With regard to the Chairmanship of SPECA in 2017 and the exact dates and venue of the 2017 SPECA meetings, the Chairperson proposed the adoption of the following decisions under item 6 of the agenda:

“The Governing Council noted that the Government of Turkmenistan is considering to assume the Chairmanship of SPECA in 2017. The decision of the Government of Turkmenistan will be confirmed through diplomatic channels.”

and

“The exact dates and venue of the 2017 SPECA Economic Forum and the 12th session of the SPECA Governing Council will be agreed upon and communicated through diplomatic channels.”

The proposed draft decisions were adopted (see Annex IV – Decisions 8 and 9).

IX. Other business

The Heads of Delegation thanked the Government of Azerbaijan for the excellent organization of the SPECA events and hospitality. They also expressed their gratitude to the two United Nations Regional Commissions for their devoted support to the Programme as a whole. The Chairperson proposed the adoption of the following additional decisions under item 8 of the agenda:

“The Governing Council expresses its sincere gratitude to the Government of Azerbaijan for the excellent organization and generous hospitality offered to the participants of the 2016 SPECA Economic Forum and the eleventh session of the SPECA Governing Council.”

and

“The Governing Council expresses its deep appreciation to the secretariats of ESCAP and UNECE and their Executive Secretaries for their efforts to organize these important annual events and also expresses its special appreciation for their active work aimed at strengthening SPECA and their continued support to Programme implementation.”

The proposed draft decisions were adopted (see Annex IV – Decisions 10 and 11).

X. Closing of the session

The Chairperson of the session, the Executive Secretary of UNECE and the Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP in their closing statements called on SPECA participating countries, the United Nations and development partners to work together on the implementation of the decisions of the Governing Council.

The Chairperson closed the eleventh session of the SPECA Governing Council.

2016 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM
“Enhanced Implementation of SDGs through Cooperation”

and

ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE SPECA GOVERNING COUNCIL

(Ganja, Azerbaijan, 22-23 November 2016)

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