

**Regional Cooperation and Integration (RCI) Conference:
Leveraging RCI for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth**

4-5 November 2026

Asian Development Bank Headquarters Auditorium Halls 3-4
Mandaluyong City, Philippines

***Draft Agenda
(as of 16 October 2026)***

I. Introduction

1. Asia and the Pacific faces a critical juncture. The open regionalism that helped lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty built on trade, connectivity, and collective action is under pressure from rising protectionism and geopolitical tensions. Productivity is stagnating and diverging, posing the risk of trapping many developing member countries (DMCs) in the middle-income status. Moreover, transboundary challenges are escalating across both environmental and economic domains, including climate change and disaster risks, digital fragmentation, biodiversity loss, pandemic risks, and water and food insecurity.

2. Against this background, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved in March 2026 the [Operational Approach for Revitalizing Regional Cooperation and Integration \(RCI\)](#) to guide regional engagements of ADB to meet the pressing needs and rising expectations of its members for ADB's leadership. Aiming to boost productivity through optimized economic integration and inclusion and strengthen resilience by reducing interdependence risks and addressing transboundary vulnerabilities, ADB is recalibrating the focus of its RCI operational priority areas by scaling up and upgrading connectivity, broadening and deepening trade, investment, and finance cooperation, and bolstering regional public goods.

3. Every two to three years, ADB hosts a major conference on RCI to connect with stakeholders in Asia and the Pacific, share knowledge, explore innovative RCI initiatives, and implement ADB's RCI strategies.

4. The objectives of this RCI Conference are to:

- (i) Formally launch the Operational Approach for Revitalizing RCI and disseminate it to key stakeholders in ADB's developing member countries (DMCs), development partners, relevant international organizations, and the private sector.
- (ii) Obtain the views of ADB's DMCs on innovative and effective ways to implement the Operational Approach—how they can support its implementation, what their priorities are, and what resources and collaborative efforts are needed to operationalize this approach.
- (iii) Explore potential partnerships among ADB, DMCs, development partners, international organizations, and the private sector in implementing the RCI Operational Approach; and
- (iv) Stimulate dialogue and discussion on how deeper regional cooperation and economic integration can help the region navigate challenges posed by the evolving geopolitical landscape without losing sight of the long-term vision of a more green, inclusive, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific.

II. Conference Program

Day 1: 4 November 2026 (Wednesday)	
8:30–8:50 am Registration	
9:00 am–9:30 am	Opening Session: Welcome and Keynote Address Welcome Remarks by Wempi Saputra, Vice President, Sectors and Themes, ADB Keynote Address and Launch of ADB's Operational Approach for Revitalizing Regional Cooperation and Integration by Masato Kanda, President, ADB Short Video on RCI Operational Approach
VIEWS OF ADB'S MEMBER COUNTRIES ON THE RCI OPERATIONAL APPROACH IMPLEMENTATION	
9:30 am–11:00 am	Moderator: Eugenie Zhukov, Director General, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Department (CCSD), ADB <i>A representative of each country delegation will deliver a 2-minute statement on what they see as opportunities and challenges, as well as priorities for RCI in Asia and the Pacific and how ADB and other development partners can support RCI.</i>
11:00 am–11:15 am	Group Photo/Coffee/Tea Break
THEME 1: RCI OVERVIEW	
11:15 am–12:30 pm	Session 1: RCI Trends, Emerging Challenges, and ADB's Operational Approach for Revitalizing RCI <i>This session will examine the changing landscape of regional cooperation and integration amid growing geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty, digital transformation, climate risks, and other cross-border challenges. It will introduce the key priorities of ADB's new Operational Approach and explore how deeper regional cooperation can support productivity, resilience, and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. High-level panel discussion will immediately follow the presentations.</i> Moderator: Safdar Parvez, Deputy Director General, Strategy, Policy, and Partnerships Department, ADB Presenters: ▪ Jong Woo Kang, Director, Regional Cooperation and Integration Division, Economic Research and Development Impact Department (ERDI), ADB ▪ Alfredo Perdiguero, Director, Regional Cooperation and Integration and Trade Division CCRC/CCSD, ADB

	High-Level Panel Discussion on ADB's Operational Approach for Revitalizing RCI <i>The panel will discuss how the recently approved RCI Operational Approach of ADB, particularly the recalibrated focus of its three RCI operational priority areas and transformative regional initiatives, can help ADB's DMCs overcome global and regional challenges and progress toward faster and more sustainable and resilient growth and development.</i> High-Level Panel ▪ Genadi Arveladze, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Georgia (<i>for confirmation</i>) ▪ DMC: Indonesia ▪ DMC: India ▪ DMC: People's Republic of China ▪ DMC: PNG ▪ International Organization Representative (World Bank/AIIB) ▪ International Organization Representative (UNESCAP)
12:30 pm–1:30 pm	Lunch Break
THEME 2: SCALING UP AND UPGRADING CONNECTIVITY	
1:30 pm–3:45 pm	Session 2: Greater and High-Quality Connectivity Infrastructure <i>Connectivity remains a cornerstone of regional integration. This session will explore how investments in transport, energy, and digital infrastructure can improve connectivity between economies, facilitate the movement of goods, services, and people, and create new opportunities for trade, investment, and innovation. Discussions will highlight regional power grids, economic corridors, multimodal transport systems, and digital platforms that support more inclusive and sustainable growth.</i> Moderator: Hideaki Iwasaki, Director General, Sectors Department 1 (SD1), ADB <i>The Moderator will provide a brief overview of key trends, opportunities, and challenges related to transport, energy, and digital infrastructure connectivity.</i> Panel 1: Transport Connectivity ▪ Masato Nakane, Principal Transport Specialist, SD1-TRA, ADB (setting the scene for the sector discussion) ▪ Yuebin Zhang, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, CCRC/CCSD, ADB ▪ DMC: Uzbekistan ▪ DMC: Nepal ▪ International Organization Representative (AIIB) Panel 2: Energy Connectivity ▪ Priyantha Wijayatunga, Deputy Director General, SD1, ADB (setting the scene for the sector discussion) ▪ DMC: Lao PDR (ASEAN Power Grid)

	▪ DMC: Azerbaijan (Trans-Caspian Green Energy Corridor) ▪ Private Sector Representative–Lao-Viet Nam Monsoon Wind Power Project ▪ Lisa Sachs, Director, Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment, Columbia Climate School, Columbia University Panel 3: Digital Connectivity ▪ Pratish Halady, Director, Digital Sector, Sectors Department 2 (SD2), ADB (setting the scene for the sector discussion) ▪ DMC: Pakistan (participating in pipeline project supporting APDH) ▪ DMC: participating in pipeline project supporting APDH ▪ International Organization Representative (World Bank) ▪ Private Sector Representative
3:45 pm – 4:00 pm	Coffee/Tea Break
THEME 3: BROADENING AND DEEPENING TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND FINANCE COOPERATION	
4:00 pm – 5:30 pm	Session 3: Trade, Value Chains, Investment, and Financial Cooperation <i>Amid growing uncertainty arising from geopolitical tensions, economic shifts, and climate-related risks, economies across Asia and the Pacific face increasing challenges to trade and global value chains. This session will explore how the region can strengthen trade and investment integration, diversify supply chains, deepen financial cooperation, expand regional capital markets, and enhance disaster risk financing.</i> Moderator: Jong Woo Kang, Director, Regional Cooperation and Trade Division (ERCI), ERDI, ADB <i>The Moderator will provide a brief overview of key trends, opportunities, and challenges related to trade, investment, and financial cooperation</i> Panel 1: Trade Reforms, Free Trade Agreements, and Value Chains ▪ Neil Foster-McGregor, Principal Economist, ERCI, ERDI, ADB (setting the scene for the sector discussion) ▪ Zulfia Karimova, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, Regional Cooperation and Integration Unit, Central and West Asia Department ▪ Julian Clarke, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, CCRC ▪ Nurbek Maksutov, Head, Representative Office of Ministry of Economy and Commerce of Kyrgyz Republic in Geneva on WTO Affairs (<i>for confirmation</i>) Panel 2: Regional Financial Cooperation ▪ Alessandra Donini, Economist, ERCI, ERDI, ADB (setting the scene for the sector discussion) ▪ Kelvin Lester Lee, Senior Financial Sector Specialist, SD3-FIN, ADB (<i>for confirmation</i>) ▪ AMRO ▪ DMC: Malaysia

	DMC: CAREC
Day 2: 5 November 2026 (Thursday)	
8:30–9:00 am Registration	
THEME 4: BOLSTERING REGIONAL PUBLIC GOODS	
9:00 am–10:30 am	Session 4: Nature and Environment, Climate Adaptation and Resilience, and Disaster Risk Management <i>This session will discuss how a strategic approach to the management of shared natural resources and disaster risks and strengthening of regional institutions can address climate and environmental challenges faced by ADB's DMCs.</i> Moderator: Eugenie Zhukov, Director General, CCSD, ADB <i>The Moderator will provide a general overview of key trends, opportunities, and challenges related to climate, environment, disaster risks</i> Joint Presentation on Environment, Climate Resilience, and Disaster Risk Management by Yoko Watanabe, Director, Nature and Environment Division, CCSD, ADB and Arghya Sinha Roy, Director, Adaptation and Resilience Division, CCSD Panel 1: Environment and Biodiversity - Muhammad Ehsan Khan, Director General, East Asia Regional Department - Tipamat Upanoi, Marine Resources Management Specialist, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Department of Marine and Coastal Resource (<i>for confirmation</i>) - DMC: Fiji (Circular Pacific via Regional Recycling Network) - DMC: Nepal (Second SASEC Highway) Panel 2: Climate Resilience and Disaster Risk Management - Samantha Cook, Director, Disaster Risk Management Division, CCSD - Thomas Kessler, Principal Finance Specialist, SD3-FIN, ADB (Risk Layered Disaster Relief Finance Program) (<i>for confirmation</i>) - DMC: Tajikistan - DMC: Sri Lanka - DMC: Naoero
10:30 am–10:45 am	Coffee/Tea Break
10:45 am–12:15 pm	Session 5: Cross-Border People Mobility <i>This session will discuss how regional cooperation and capacity building of regional institutions can support cross-border people mobility by strengthening regional health security, improving regional education</i>

	<i>services, promoting mutual recognition of skills, providing social protection, and advancing tourism competitiveness and sustaining remittances.</i> Moderator: Alfredo Perdiguero, Director, CCRC <i>The Moderator will provide a general overview of key trends, opportunities, and challenges related to cross-border people mobility</i> Presentation on Labor Mobility supported by Health, TVET, and Social Protection, Shanti Jagannathan, Director, Human and Social Development, SD3 Panel 1: Labor Mobility ▪ Shanti Jagannathan, Director, Human and Social Development, SD3 ▪ Manuela Prina, Principal Education Specialist, SD3-HSD, ADB ▪ DMC: Philippines Department of Migrant Workers ▪ DMC: Republic of the Marshall Islands ▪ ILO Manila Office on ASEAN MRAs and Skills Recognition Presentation on Sustainable Tourism, Jessie F. McComb, Senior Tourism Industry Specialist, Water and Urban Development Sector Office, SD2-WUD, ADB Panel 2: Sustainable Tourism ▪ Jessie F. McComb, Senior Tourism Industry Specialist, Water and Urban Development Sector Office, SD2-WUD, ADB ▪ Ashish Narain, Principal Public Sector Economist, SD3-PSMG, ADB ▪ Verna Buensuceso, Undersecretary, Department of Tourism, Philippines (<i>for confirmation</i>) ▪ DMC: Uzbekistan
12:15 pm–1:30 pm	Lunch Break
THEME 5: RCI KNOWLEDGE AGENDA	
1:30 pm–2:30 pm	Session 6: Supporting Operations through RCI Knowledge Work <i>This session will examine how evidence-based knowledge work can support RCI operations by identifying cross-border constraints, opportunities, and collective action challenges. The session will also explore how ADB can further strengthen the use of knowledge and diagnostics to support the design, prioritization, and implementation of future RCI initiatives.</i> Moderator: Albert Park, Chief Economist and Director General, ERDI, ADB <i>The Moderator will provide a brief overview of ADB's knowledge work in RCI and trade.</i>

	Presentation on Leveraging RCI Knowledge for Greater Development Impact, Kijin Kim, Senior Economist, ERCI/ERDI, ADB Panelists ▪ Bridging Knowledge Work and Operations, Abdul Abiad, Deputy Chief Economist, ERDI ▪ Asad Aleem, Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration Unit, Central and West Asia Department, ADB ▪ Pavit Ramachandran, Deputy Director General, SERD (<i>for confirmation</i>) ▪ DMC: India ▪ DMC: Indonesia
2:30 pm–2:45 pm	Coffee/Tea Break
2:45 pm–4:45 pm	Interactive Session: Way Forward–Priority National and Regional Actions and Required Support from ADB and other Development Partners Moderator: Alfredo Perdiguero, Director, CCRC, ADB Breakout - Group Discussions (one hour) DMC participants will be divided into subregional program groups [ASEAN (GMS/BIMP-EAGA/IMT-GT), CAREC, SASEC, Pacific Islands]. Discussions covering institutional arrangements, financing models, and project design, among others, will be facilitated by: ASEAN: CAREC: Dorothea Lazaro, Senior Regional Cooperation Specialist, Regional Cooperation and Integration Unit, Central and West Asia Department, ADB SASEC: Pacific Islands: Group Presentations (one hour) One or two representatives from each group will provide a summary of the discussions and highlight priority needs of DMCs in terms of support from ADB and other development partners.
4:45 pm–5:00 pm	Closing of the Conference Key Takeaways and Closing Remarks: Mr. Scott Allen Morris, Vice-President (East and Southeast Asia, and the Pacific), ADB