



2023 REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION CONFERENCE
Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration through
Economic Corridor Development

5-7 September 2023
Tbilisi, Georgia

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Economic corridor development (ECD) plays a crucial role in promoting regional cooperation and integration (RCI). A successful ECD will increase connectivity through trade integration and infrastructure development leading to increased regional economic growth. ECD becomes more important for post-COVID-19 recovery and growth, providing holistic solutions for digitalization, services trade, supply chain restructuring, and greening economies.

2. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) initiated ECD into its RCI operations almost a quarter century ago. ADB's RCI operations initially emphasized improving regional connectivity amongst the developing member countries (DMCs). Investments in transport infrastructure were soon complemented with "software" or policy and institutional components of RCI (e.g., coordination in border procedures and standards for trade and transport facilitation) to move goods across borders, facilitate access to raw materials, and promote integration into regional and global value chains.

3. This basic framework, centered on cross-border transport routes and transport and trade facilitation, has defined ECD under ADB-supported subregional cooperation programs (especially in their earlier years) even if conceptually it was recognized that development of economic corridors had a broader scope. The initial utility of this transport-centric approach to ECD has diminished considerably over the 25 years of growth and changes in the Asia-Pacific region. The approach is at risk of not matching up to the demands of member countries for ECD nor to the best practices already in use in Asia-Pacific and beyond. The altered development context calls for a new and broader framework for ECD in ADB's RCI operations. Subregional cooperation programs in ADB have started moving in the past decade towards a more expanded approach to ECD. Actual implementation of the spatial approach has not been easy, and progress is varied, with little coordination across subregions.

4. The 2023 RCI Conference will provide a venue to (i) present the ECD framework and operational guidelines developed to mainstream ECD operations in ADB projects; (ii) share experience on ECD among ADB-supported subregional cooperation programs; and (iii) explore ways to expand and enhance ECD operations in ADB RCI operations.

5. The participants of the Conference will include: (i) senior officials of ADB's DMCs responsible for ECD, and (ii) representatives of development partner agencies, and regional cooperation organizations. The Conference will be conducted in hybrid format, i.e., combination of physical and virtual event.

*Program is in Georgia Time (UTC/GMT +4)

II. PROGRAM

Day 1: 5 September (Tuesday)	
09:30 am–09:45 am	Opening Session Welcome remarks: Ms. Eka Guntsadze Deputy Minister Ministry of Finance, Georgia Opening remarks: Ms. Lyaziza Sabyrova Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration (RCI) Central and West Asia Department (CWRD) Asian Development Bank
09:45 am–10:40 am	Session 1: Guidance Note on Economic Corridor Development and its Pilot Use <i>ADB will present the report on “Guidance Note on Economic Corridor Development: From Conceptual Framework to Practical Implementation”. The presentation will highlight the refined ECD framework and operational guidelines to facilitate Asia’s emerging transition towards a broader approach to ECD.</i> Moderator: Mr. Yuebin Zhang , Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, Regional Cooperation and Integration and Trade Division, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Department, ADB Presenter: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Pradeep Srivastava, Economic Corridor Development Specialist (ADB consultant) (20 mins) Open discussion (20 mins)
10:40 am–11:00 am	Coffee Break and Group Photo
11:00 am–12:00 pm	Session 1: Guidance Note on Economic Corridor Development and its Pilot Use (continued) Each delegation will deliver a 5-minute intervention, summarizing its comments and suggestions on how the guidance note could be implemented in their respective countries. ¹ Development partners will also be invited to make comments.
12:00 pm–01:30 pm	Lunch Break

¹ The draft Guidance Note will be circulated at least one month before the Conference.

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01:30 pm–03:15 pm	<p>Session 2: Economic Corridor Development in ADB-supported Subregional Programs</p> <p>GMS, IMT-GT, and BIMP-EAGA Experience <i>Southeast Asia has long been a region with dynamic RCI initiatives that have included ECD as one of their key pillars for enhancing economic integration. The GMS, IMT-GT and BIMP-EAGA are all at different levels and stages of ECD, but the overlapping country memberships and the geographical contiguity has led to a continuous sharing of knowledge and good practices amongst them. This session will divulge lessons on important elements such as the network effects of corridors, the archipelagic features of ECD, the growing importance of inter-regional connectivity, and the benefits from sub-corridor section prioritization. Three ECD cases/experiences from GMS, IMT-GT and BIMP-EAGA will be used to illustrate these important elements of ECD (specifics will be provided soon).</i></p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Alfredo Perdiguero, Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration (RCI), Southeast Asia Department (SERD), ADB</p> <p>Presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ADB: Mr. Antonio Ressano Garcia, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, SERD, ADB (20 mins)• Thailand: Mr. Vudhidej Chamnikij, Senior Analyst Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (8 mins)• Philippines: Ms. Janet Lopez, Executive Director, Undersecretary of Mindanao Development Authority (8 mins)• Malaysia: Mr. Paarteeben A/L Subramaniam, Deputy Director II, Regional Development Division, Ministry of Economy (virtual) (8 mins)• Malaysia: Mr. Dato' Ragu Sampasivam, Chief Operating Officer, East Coast Economic Region Development Council (8 mins) <p>Discussants (30 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thailand: Mr. Vudhidej Chamnikij, Senior Analyst Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council• Philippines: Ms. Janet Lopez, Executive Director, Undersecretary of Mindanao Development Authority• Malaysia: Mr. Paarteeben A/L Subramaniam, Deputy Director II, Regional Development Division, Ministry of Economy (virtual)• Malaysia: Mr. Dato' Ragu Sampasivam, Chief Operating Officer, East Coast Economic Region Development Council• Lao PDR: Mr. Vanpheng Sengmanothong, Deputy Director General Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Planning and Investment• Cambodia: Mr. Suon Sophal, Director, Department of Public Relations and Promotion of Private Investment, Council for the Development of Cambodia• ADB: Mr. Antonio Ressano Garcia, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, SERD, ADB <p>Open discussion</p>
03:15 pm–03:30 pm	Coffee Break

03:30 pm–04:45 pm	<p>Session 2: Economic Corridor Development in ADB-supported Subregional Programs (continued)</p> <p>CAREC Experience <i>ECD has gained strong momentum in the CAREC region. CAREC countries have made meaningful progress in adopting cross-border economic corridor concept in their national development strategies. The Almaty-Bishkek Economic Corridor (ABEC) saw transformative regional investment projects being developed and financed. The Shymkent-Tashkent-Khujand Economic Corridor (STKEC) is being initiated with the formulation of a road map for STEKC development. Cross-border economic zone is also being developed between PRC and Mongolia, contributing to ECD. This sub-session aims to share CAREC’s experience on ECD, and discuss lessons, challenges and opportunities in implementing the Guidance Note on ECD in CAREC.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Lyaziza Sabyrova, Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration (RCI), Central and West Asia Department (CWRD), ADB</p> <p>Presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Dairbek Maksatbekov, Head of Donor and Technical Assistance Coordination Division, Ministry of Economy and Commerce, Kyrgyz Republic, on Almaty-Bishkek Economic Corridor (15 mins) • Ms. Xinglan Hu, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRD, ADB, on Shymkent-Tashkent-Khujand Economic Corridor (10 mins) <p>Discussants (40 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Solehzoda Ashurboy, First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Tajikistan • Mr. Abdulla Khashimov, Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade, Uzbekistan • Ms. Bibigul Masserbayeva, Deputy Director, Department of International Economic Cooperation, Ministry of National Economy, Kazakhstan • Mr. Kristian Rosbach, Economist (Regional Cooperation), CWRD, ADB • Ms. Dorothea Lozaro, Regional Cooperation Specialist, CWRD, ADB (virtual) <p>Open discussion</p>
04:45 pm–05:00 pm	Brief Wrap Up of Day 1
06:00 pm–07:00 pm	Dinner
Day 2: 6 September (Wednesday)	
09:00 am–10:30 am	<p>Session 2: Economic Corridor Development in ADB-supported Subregional Programs (continued)</p> <p>SASEC Experience <i>Individual SASEC countries have pursued the development of economic corridors as a major tool for bringing economic transformation and promoting inclusive growth. Under the SASEC program, ECD has featured prominently in pursuit of synergies among SASEC members, involving the development of</i></p>

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	<p><i>efficient multimodal transport networks, quality infrastructure and a business-friendly policy framework with efficient business procedures. This sub-session aims to share SASEC member experience in ECD, highlighting challenges and lessons learned.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Thiam Hee Ng, Regional Head, Regional Cooperation and Integration (RCI), South Asia Department (SARD), ADB</p> <p>Presenter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview: Development of Priority SASEC Corridors by Mr. Soumya Chattopadhyay, Senior Programs Officer, SARD, ADB (15 minutes) <p>Panelists (60 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bangladesh: Mr. Md. Ashfaquul Amin Mukut, Joint Secretary, Economic Relations Division • Bhutan: Ms. Gaki Wangmo, Senior Planning Officer, Department of Macroeconomic and Development Finance • India: Ms. Sumita Dawra, Special Secretary (Logistics), Ministry of Commerce and Industry • Maldives: Mr. Niushad Saeed, Research Analyst, Ministry of Economic Development • Nepal: Mr. Narayan Dhakal, Undersecretary, Ministry of Finance • Sri Lanka: Mr. Udaya Nishantha Mallawaarachchi, Director, Department of National Planning <p>Open discussion</p>
10:30 am–10:45 am	Coffee Break
10:45 am–12:00 pm	<p>Session 3: Supporting Economic Corridor Development through Partnerships</p> <p><i>Representatives from development partners will share their experience in supporting ECD in different subregions. Presentations will highlight opportunities and challenges in mainstreaming ECD in DMC operations, and how development partners can support it. Development partners will also highlight the importance of enhanced partnerships.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Mr. Yuebin Zhang, Principal Regional Cooperation Specialist, Regional Cooperation and Integration and Trade Division, Climate Change and Sustainable Development Department, ADB</p> <p>Presenters: (15 mins each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Yuanjiang Sun, Manager, Institutional Engagement and Cooperation, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank • Mr. Kadir Basboga, Senior Regional Integration Economist, Islamic Development Bank • Mr. Yann Duval, Chief of Trade Policy and Facilitation Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, UNESCAP • Ms. Shruti Vijayakumar, Transport Specialist, World Bank <p>Open discussion</p>

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12:00 pm–02:00 pm	Lunch Break
02:00 pm–03:30 pm	<p>Session 4: Measuring the Benefit of Economic Corridor Development</p> <p><i>Tracking progress and offering standardized measures of RCI in Asian economies has been critical to inform regional policies. Measuring the benefits of RCI projects, is also important for developing member countries to reach consensus on collective action. ADB has developed the Guidelines on the Economic Analysis of RCI projects to measure the benefits and costs of RCI projects, either quantitatively or qualitatively. ADB continues to conduct research on its subregional programs to help improve the monitoring and measuring of cross-border spillovers of economic corridor development.</i></p> <p>Presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Rolando Avendano, Economist, Regional Cooperation and Integration Division, Economic Research and Development Impact Department (ERDI) • Mr. John Weiss, Consultant and Ms. Rowena Cham, Senior Economics Officer, Economic Analysis and Operational Support Division, ERDI <p>Discussant: Mr. Kijin Kim, Senior Economist, Regional Cooperation and Integration Division, ERDI</p> <p>Open discussion</p>
03:30 pm–03:45 pm	Wrap Up and Closing Session
03:45 pm–05:30 pm	Open networking and/or bilateral meetings
<p>Day 3: 7 September (Thursday): Visit to the Tsiteli Khidi (Red Bridge), Border Crossing Point between Georgia and Azerbaijan</p>	
09:45 am – 10:00 am	Assemble at the Lobby
10:00 am– 11:00 am	Leave promptly from hotel to Tsiteli Khidi Border Crossing Point (BCP)
11:00 am – 01:00 pm	Tour of the BCP
13:00 pm – 02:00 pm	Travel from BCP to the Lunch Venue
14:00 pm – 03:30 pm	Lunch
15:30 pm– 04:00 pm	Travel back to the hotel