

Speech of CAREC Institute Director Syed Shakeel Shah
The 4th CAREC Think Tanks Development Forum
09:00-09:10, 27 August
Shangri-La, Xian, PRC

Mr. **Xu Datong**, Deputy Governor of Shaanxi Province

Mr. **Shixin Chen**, Vice President of Asian Development Bank

Mr. **Liu Weihua**, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Finance, PRC

Government officials, directors, managers of the International Organizations,
Representatives of Think-Tanks, Academia and Research Institutions,

Welcome to the Fourth CAREC Think Tanks Development Forum!

Starting from its physical launch in 2015, the CAREC Institute has supported regional knowledge capacity through strengthening research and networking capacities of regional think tanks.

CI serves as secretariat to the CAREC Think Tank Network (CTTN) and hosts annually think tanks development forum, bringing together the best think tanks, academia and research institutions together in the region.

CAREC Institute hosted the first annual CAREC Think Tanks Development Forum in Kazakhstan in June 2016 under a theme “Promoting Economic Cooperation for an Integrated Central Asia”, the second CTTDF in Urumqi, PRC in September 2017 with a theme "Exploring Knowledge Solutions for Regional Cooperation and Integration", and the third CTTDF in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic in July 2018 under a theme “Building Knowledge Corridors along the Silk Road”. We believe the Think Tank Forums create great avenues for deliberations of ongoing pressing issues and challenges and finding together the collaborative and intellectual solutions and proposals to towards these challenges.

This year, we bring you all to the heart of China, in Xian, one of the oldest and most historical cities in China and the oldest of Four Great Ancient Capitals of China. This

is also the busy moment, when the People's Republic of China will soon celebrate its 70th Year Anniversary in a month time.

Year by year, we are witnessing growing interest, attendance and visibility of our Think Tanks Forum. This year we have highly esteemed guests to our Forum, including Deputy Governor of Shaanxi Province, Vice President of Asian Development Bank, former Deputy Prime Minister of Mongolia, Deputy Minister of Tajikistan and management and leadership of many highly reputable international, regional organizations and think tanks from all over Asia and the beyond.

CAREC Think Tanks Development Forum is not a gathering of thinks tanks and policy makers to discuss abstract issues or ideas, rather it provides a powerful platform to policy think tanks in the region to augment the policy making for improving lives of millions in the region through evidence based research for planning and implementation of CAREC Program projects and initiatives .

CI directly work with Ministries of Economies and Finance, conducts discussions with and policy makers in broad areas of economy, trade, financial stability, investment, tourism, economic corridors and provide research and capacity building support to Government officials on best global and regional practices and participates in high-level platforms, such as CAREC Ministerial Conference and Senior Official Meetings, where we convey our ideas and proposals policy makers of CAREC countries and development partners . Think Tanks Forums feed relevant research in these interactions.

CAREC Institute also links CAREC Think-Tank Forum discussions with our ongoing research and capacity building activities and deliberate specific topics during our Advisory Council and Governing Council Meetings, which bring the senior officials from Governments in the region

Our previous three forums were thematically linked by one core concept; promoting regionalism in CAREC. This year's forum is focused on trade under a theme "Trading for Shared Prosperity". Trade is one of the most tangible drivers of regionalism, as it creates regional and global positive dependencies and drives economic growth.

Trade liberalization under multilateral trading system has provided a solid base for growth in international trade for several decades. Despite periodic shocks, global trade has maintained an upward trajectory over a long period of time, providing countries with opportunities for growth and development, and ultimately lifting millions out of poverty. However, these patterns and arrangements are facing unprecedented threats in the form of lingering and escalating trade disputes among major trading partners. This also present CAREC countries with new challenges, as they now must carve out new paths for shared vision of development in more uncertain setting.

Rather than being silent observers, we wanted to bring these issues on table to think about how this impact livelihoods, businesses and prospects of our own region and own countries. Distinguished delegates in this hall represent intellectual brains in the region, and we hope to see the possible explanations and resolutions to these issues.

During these two days we will have the opportunity to listen the research outcomes from the successful candidates of CTTN Research Grants Program which CI launched in January 2019. Being a new initiative, we have high expectations from it.

Also we would welcome presentations on CAREC Regional Integration Index by Dr. Saeed Qadir and Dr. Tess which is our flagship research output to see our strengths and weaknesses and statuses on integration in the CAREC region. This will be a comprehensive mapping of “As is” status of regional integration in CAREC countries and help us in defining our “to be” strategies.

As being in Xian, we will listen a bit of historical aspect of trade and integration with a greater focus on the Silk Road. We will have a chance to listen about the intensifying US-China Trade War – birth of neo-mercantilism from Dr. Masahiro Kawai from ERINA and its implications to the region by Dr. Ye Jiandi from IEFI.

Ms. Dorothea Lazaro form Asian Development Bank Mr. Bahodir Ganiev will make a detailed presentation on the CAREC Integrated Trade Agenda (CITA) 2030: Key Pillars and Strategic Action Plan.

Tomorrow, we will focus on more positive side of global economy, how technology and e-commerce is shifting the way business is done. We are grateful to have Dr. Ian Watt, Founder & CEO, NeXTRADE World and Vice Chair, UN/CEFACT and UNECE and Dr. Hong Xue, Director of Beijing Normal University Institute for Internet Policy & Law (IIPL). There will be presentation by Mr. Tengfei WANG from UNESCAP in Bangkok on CAREC's readiness for e-commerce. Mr. Victor Tseng, Vice President of Corporate and Investor Relations, Pin Duoduo, Shanghai, PRC will tell us Chinese success story of E-commerce.

In our last session, CAREC Institute will deliberate on CAREC Think Tank Network progress and roadmap.

Before closing my speech, let me convey our appreciation to a number of institutions, who bring all of us here and made our Forum possible.

We are thankful to the ADB for their financial and intellectual leadership and regular support to us. We are honored and grateful for Vice President of ADB, Mr. Shixin Chen in attending our think tank forum. We are thankful to ADB-PRC RCSI for collaborating with us on this Forum and providing financial and technical support.

We are thankful for the People's Republic of China for hosting the CAREC Institute and providing all types of necessary support to make this Institute and network to grow. We are particularly thankful to the Ministry of Finance of China. Thank you for International Economics and Finance Institute (IEFE) under Ministry of Finance for co-organizing this Forum.

Finally, my appreciation goes to all participants, who made their time and contribution available this week during your busy time of year. We hope your contribution and voice will be helpful to strengthen our CAREC Think Tank Network and policy making in our countries.

We hope your network, connections and discussions will not be limited to the CAREC Think Tank Network activities only, but will continue further beyond.

Wish you all our best for very productive and fruitful discussions!