

ADB APPROVES GRANT TO HELP CENTRAL ASIAN GATEWAY EXPAND COVERAGE

TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN (1 March 2007) — ADB today signed a grant agreement to provide the Central Asian Gateway Project (CAG) with financial support to expand its coverage and strengthen efforts to build a network of research institutes in Central Asia and neighboring countries.

ADB will provide \$76,500 for the joint project, according to a memorandum of understanding agreed among ADB, CAG, its implementing partner the Uzbekistan Center for Economic Research (CER), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The UNDP and CAG will support the agreement through \$13,450 worth of inputs of staff time and office facilities.

“The Central Asian Gateway is a valuable source of information for researchers working on development issues facing the region,” says Craig Steffensen, head of ADB’s Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Unit.

“We believe it can also be a powerful tool to help support greater regional cooperation, and are pleased to join forces with the Gateway and the UNDP to expand the project’s country coverage and support efforts to build a strong network of researchers interested in regional cooperation and integration among Central Asia and neighboring countries.”

CAG project activities currently focus on four Central Asian countries—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The grant will help expand the program to include the remaining members of the CAREC Program, namely, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Mongolia, and PRC.

The grant will be used to help expand an existing electronic directory of think tanks to cover all CAREC countries, to pilot an informal forum of think tanks to support development of a consolidated position on regional cooperation, and to broaden the project’s database of statistical information on socio-economic development and cooperation in the CAREC region.

The CAG project (see www.cagateway.org) was launched by CER in 2003 with support from the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS countries. It aims to facilitate knowledge sharing and information exchange and to promote networking among socio-economic research institutions and other development stakeholders in the region and abroad.

The CAREC Program is an alliance of eight countries and six multilateral institutions—ADB, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank, United Nations Development Programme, and World Bank. CAREC’s overarching goal is development through cooperation, leading to accelerated economic growth and poverty reduction. For the three-year period 2006-2008, the CAREC Program’s six partner multilateral institutions plan to provide approximately 42 loans totaling

more than \$2.3 billion in support of regional investments in the priority areas of transport, energy and trade-related infrastructure.

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