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South-South and triangular cooperation in addressing priorities in the Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries: Transit, Transport and Connectivity in Tajikistan

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I. Introduction

Landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) face constraints unique to their geography: their remoteness and lack of direct territorial access to the sea and inland economic centres hamper and raise the cost of activities crucial to their economic growth and overall development. The Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 (VPoA) thus established the development of transport policies and infrastructure as a stand-alone priority as well as raised its importance in achieving targets across all other priority areas (international trade, trade facilitation, regional integration and cooperation, and structural transformation). The next Programme of Action for adoption at the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3) elevates the interlocking nature of constraints that bear on LLDC access to markets, raising transport, transit and connectivity as one group of interconnected priorities for action, particularly at the regional and subregional levels, with cross-cutting implications for the achievement of the other priority groups.²

The present case study looks into the experience of Tajikistan in the lead-up to and within the framework of VPoA

2. The next Programme of Action proposes a new grouping for priority areas, drawing on insights from the review of VPoA implementation that urges more concerted efforts on interlinked challenges. Thus, priority area 1 is on structural transformation and science, technology and innovation; priority area 2 on trade, trade facilitation and regional integration; priority area 3 on transit, transport and connectivity; priority area 4 on enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change and disasters; and priority area 5 on means of implementation.

implementation, exploring its socioeconomic situation as an LLDC and looking into the transport, transit and connectivity constraints and prospects that bear on that situation, including their national, transborder and regional dimensions. The aim is to understand better the role of cooperation (particularly South-South and triangular cooperation (SS & TrC) across and beyond the region) in addressing constraints and helping to steer prospects of the country toward sustainable development. The study relies on reports and analysis of the transport sector in Tajikistan as well as on industry and political-economy background relating to cross-border transit and the connectivity of Tajikistan and the region. The overall objective of the study is to help inform the dialogue on the next Programme of Action for LLDCs through the development journey of Tajikistan.

Development context of Tajikistan³

The graduation of Tajikistan in 2021 from a low-income to a low-middle-income country – with an economy that may still be weak but increasingly diversifying, and with trade relations across the region and beyond that are growing – is remarkable.⁴

3. The country profile in this section is based on data from the World Bank (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=TJ>), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (<https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDPC@WEO/TJK?zoom=TJK&highlight=TJK>), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (<https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/TJ>), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) (<https://www.ebrd.com/where-we-are/tajikistan/overview.html>), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (<https://www.population-trends-asiapacific.org/data/TJK>) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/SPG&E_ch4_tajikistan.pdf).

Additional sources are noted where appropriate.

4. Data and analysis from the IMF World Economic Outlook Update, July 2023, and the World Bank Poverty and Equity Brief: Tajikistan, 2023.

Tajikistan is a landlocked country in the heart of Central Asia with terrain that is 93 per cent mountainous. This small country of 10 million people is largely rural, with close to 70 per cent of the population living far from urban centres (Tajikistan has the lowest urbanization rate in the region) and engaged mainly in agriculture. The agriculture sector plays a big role in the Tajikistan economy: although only 28 per cent of its land is used for perennial crops, the contribution of the sector to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country is about 20 per cent, accounting for about 60 per cent of total employment through the decades up to 2022.⁵

Tajikistan and the four other Central Asian countries share similar economic and demographic contours because of their common Soviet past.⁶ Tajikistan, however, faced challenges not seen in the other countries owing in large part to the five-year civil war that followed its independence. It was noted to have the lowest income among the republics of the Soviet Union until independence in 1991 (with GDP per capita of \$52.62 at current prices and -6 per cent growth rate) and has remained the lowest ranking of the Commonwealth of Independent States countries since then.

GDP growth, however, has been steady within the time frame of VPoA implementation, averaging 7 per cent annually, dipping to 4 per cent only during the coronavirus disease

5. Asian Development Bank (ADB), "Tajikistan, Key Indicators 2023", Data Library. Available at <https://data.adb.org/dataset/tajikistan-key-indicators>.

6. Izawa, Eiko Kanzaki and others, Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Tajikistan and Other Countries in Central Asia: Key Findings and Policy Options, ADB, 2021. Available at <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/691671/tvet-tajikistan-central-asia.pdf>. See also [imf https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/long-echo-of-tajikistan-s-civil-war/](https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/long-echo-of-tajikistan-s-civil-war/).

(COVID-19) pandemic in 2020 but rebounding strongly after the reopening of China, its main source of foreign direct investment (FDI) (concentrated in extractive industries and energy) and trading partner (for imports of textiles, electrical and electronic equipment, motor vehicles, etc., and for exports of cotton, ore, metals, leather, etc.). A significant pillar of Tajikistan's growth is its export of labour, primarily to the Russian Federation, and the flow of remittances that figure in the steady decline of the poverty rate in the country, from 34.3 per cent in 2013 to 22.5 per cent in 2022 (at the international poverty line of \$3.65 a day, 2017 purchasing power parity).⁷ The country has risen in the Human Development Index during the VPoA implementation (from 129 in 2014 to the 2022 ranking of 126).⁸

In 2016, Tajikistan launched a master plan for future development, the "National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period Up To 2030 (NDS 2030)", with the goal of raising the standard of living of the population. The second stage of the plan (the period from 2021 to 2025) is focused on fast growth of investments in the real sector of the economy and infrastructure to transform Tajikistan from a dead end into a transit hub for the region and major markets beyond.⁹

7. IMF, IMF News. Available at <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/28/04/53/socar042209a> and Emerging Europe, "Strong growth in Tajikistan masks underlying problems", 12 July 2023.

8. UNDP, "Tajikistan, Human Development Index". Available at <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/TJK>.

9. National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030 (EN)_0.pdf. Available at http://nafaka.tj/images/zakoni/new/strategiya_2030_en.pdf

III. Challenges and opportunities in transit, transport and connectivity

None of the five Central Asian countries has access to the sea, making overland transport and transit corridors across the region necessary, and Tajikistan sits right at its centre. The aspiration, therefore, to become a transit hub for the region, as framed in NDS 2030, presents enormous opportunities for Tajikistan. There is already a view that the Central Asian LLDCs can serve as hubs linking Europe and Asia, enable alternative corridors for quicker access to ports on both continents, and establish cost-effective links of all countries along the corridors to global markets in Europe and Asia.¹⁰

The opportunities envisaged by various efforts are prompting Tajikistan as well as other LLDCs in the region to transform their self-appraisal from being "landlocked" to becoming "land links" or "land bridges" that could promote activities beyond their economies and facilitate broader regional and even cross-regional/international trade and thus break constraints to development of many countries. The next Programme of Action for the LLDCs for adoption at the third United Nations Conference for LLDCs (LLDC3) underlines the need to consider transit corridors as "economic development corridors" that are crucial in expediting movement of goods and people across borders and emphasizes the "critical role of regional connectivity for peace and

10. United Nations, Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), *Improving Transport Connectivity for LLDCs and Building Resilient Transport Infrastructure to Support Accelerated Progress towards the SDGs*, Global Report (2020).

Table 1. Key indicators

Trade facilitation measure	1990 (WB)	2000 (WB)	2010 (WB)	2014 (ADB)	2023 (ADB)
People					
Population, total (millions)	4.1	6.27	7.62	8.3	10.28
Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines	-	-	32 (2009)	32	22.5 (2022)
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	62	63	68	69.7	71.76
Unemployment rate (% of labor force)	1.9	2.7	-	2.4	2.1 (2022)
Environment					
Urban population (% of population)	32	27	27	26.5	28.8
Urban population growth (annual %)	1.1	0.4	2.0	2.6 (WB)	2.8 (WB)
Access to energy (% of population)	-	97 (1999)	99	99	100 (2022)
CO ₂ emissions (metric tons per capita)	2.03	.35	0.33		0.20(2021)
Economy					
GDP (current US\$) (billions)	2.60	5.46	10.7		12.1
GDP growth (annual %)	-0.6	8.3	6.7	6.7	8.3
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added (% of GDP)	33	25	20	-	27 (agric.)
Industry (including construction), value added (% of GDP)	38	35	25	-	26.7 (Ind.) 46.3 (Serv.)
Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)	29	87	15	11.3	16.3 (2022)
Imports of goods and services (% of GDP)	42	89	59	58.4	49 (2022)
Net lending (+) / net borrowing (-) (% of GDP)	-	-0.9	-4.6 (2003)	-	-
Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people)	0.0	0.0	77.9	96	118.81 (2021)
Individuals using the Internet (% of population)	0.0	0.0	11.6	17.5	36.1
Global links					
External trade - Trade in goods (% of GDP)	13	170 ²	68	57	69
External debt stocks, total (DOD, current US\$) (millions)	10	1,141	3,561	-	-
Total debt service (% of exports of goods, services and primary income)	-	12.6	30.9	-	-
Net migration (thousands)	-42	-14	-34	-1.67	-1.9
Personal remittances received (% GDP)	-	6.4 (2022)	35.8	36	38.4
Foreign direct investment, net inflows (% of GDP)	.5 (1992)	2.7	1.7	3.4 (WB)	1.2 (WB)
Net official development assistance received (current US\$) (millions)	11.8	111.8	388.0	356.4	589 (2022)

Source: World Development Indicators Database and Asian Development Bank Key Indicators Database (ADB)

1. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/tajikistan> and <https://kiddb.adb.org> (Data for the period of the VPoA implementation from ADB, with 2024 updates provided where available; Earlier data, from the year before independence in 1990, are from the World Bank database; more recent data provided when available only from the WB and indicated where appropriate)

2. Note: This rapid rise coincides with the end of the civil war in Tajikistan

economic prosperity among neighboring countries”.¹¹

“Connectivity” is understood as the “economic space available for trade for each country”, marked by ease of movement and reach to external markets.¹² The Tajikistan NDS 2030 identifies enhanced connectivity as a pathway to economic growth and long-term development, particularly through integration with regional as well as global markets. This involves building the requisites for its own productivity, competitiveness and capacities for trade as well as the soft and hard components of connectivity (transportation networks and infrastructure, transborder institutional arrangements and processes, etc.) necessary to establish itself as a viable transit corridor for other countries.

The Tajikistan NDS 2030 thus includes “the need to (i) develop local airports to provide affordable air transport to all regions”, noting that much of the country is far from urban centres; “(ii) connect all regions by paved roads that are accessible year-round”, noting that Tajikistan is mountainous and faces risks related to climatic or seasonal change and natural disasters; “and (iii) develop logistics centers throughout the country” that would be crucial for internal as well as cross-border movement. “Freight turnover is expected to double from 6.3 billion ton-kilometers in 2015 to 12.3 billion ton-km in 2030” along with “passenger transport... from 10.6 billion passenger-km to 20.6

billion passenger-km)”.¹³ Much of the funding for road and transport development comes from loans or grants from development partners (see annex I), and Tajikistan aims for more strategic “public-private partnerships...to boost financial resources.”¹⁴

The review of VPoA implementation in Eurasia as well as various reports¹⁵ raises challenges inherent to Tajikistan as an LLDC as well as elements that relate to regional/subregional/global state of play beyond its control:

a. weak infrastructure. Most of the Tajikistan transport infrastructure was built during the Soviet period and was designed for the Soviet system of interrepublic linkages (for Tajikistan, that was to serve as supplier of cotton, ore, etc.). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, those linkages either disappeared or shifted, and the infrastructure was either neglected or abandoned.¹⁶ The needs of the Tajikistan infrastructure in the next decade are considered among the highest in the region and, to date, they have mostly been covered with support from external partners. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) estimates that the Tajikistan 2019–2030 financing requirements for key infrastructure could entail 16 per cent of its GDP per year, and transport takes a sizeable part of it.¹⁷

11. These proposals are in paras. 168 and 169 of the draft PoA as it stands at the time that this study is being prepared.

12. International Transport Forum (ITF), “ITF North and Central Asia Transport Outlook”, International Transport Forum Policy Papers, No. 105, p. 17 (Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Publishing, 2022). Also see Dana Skakova and Eric Livny, “Tajikistan Diagnostic” (EBRD, March 2020).

13. ADB, Tajikistan Transport Sector Assessment (Metro Manila, ADB, December 2021), p. 3 (source of data in this section unless otherwise indicated). Available at <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/755636/tajikistan-transport-sector-assessment.pdf>.

14. Ibid.

15. Principally ADB, Tajikistan Transport Sector Assessment, 2021.

16. ADB, Ibid.

17. ESCAP, “Infrastructure financing in Asian landlocked developing countries: Challenges, opportunities and modalities”, Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AP-IS) Working Paper Series (2020).

b. transport and transit cost. The geographic isolation of Tajikistan, its mountainous terrain and its distance to seaports and inland trading centres impose high transport costs. The country depends heavily on its road network to move goods and people internally, and the limited availability of railway infrastructure, although in need of repairs, has pushed freight traders and travellers to use it more. The transport and related infrastructure of its neighbours and transit countries, themselves developing countries, face similar challenges. The review of VPoA implementation in Eurasia noted that “the need to cross multiple borders to access sea-ports, cumbersome border-crossing procedures, and the lack of effective cooperation among the border agencies also increase the time and cost of LLDCs’ international trade and reduce the competitiveness of their exports.”¹⁸

c. weak multimodal transport and networks. Tajikistan relies heavily on road networks, with rail and air transport largely facilitating international transport to or oriented towards Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan as points of origin and destination for migrant labour and tourism, among others. “The volume of passenger transport has been increasing on average by 8 per cent per year, quadrupling from 150 million in 2000 to more than 600 million in 2018. Road transport is the primary travel mode for passengers, accounting for 99 per cent of the total passenger volume”.¹⁹ The share of

road freight volumes in international freight transport gradually increased “from 16.8 per cent in 2014 to 23 per cent in 2018”²⁰, while rail transport, which is the preferred mode for transport of heavy and bulky goods over long distances, remains low (just 5 per cent in 2019). Door-to-door service as well as road and shipping linkages with the rail network is either weak or absent, hampering transport and raising costs further.²¹

d. transit and connectivity gaps. The Tajikistan export traffic is largely to the north and west (Turkey, Switzerland and Uzbekistan), while import traffic is from the east and north (China, the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan), a trade flow that raises the cost in that it does not facilitate loops or round trips. Import and export flows are mainly through rail (98 per cent of total rail freight), with exports mainly northward, following the established lines from years back (with little or absent connections with inland or domestic transport and international shipping support services). Imports, particularly from China, rely on road transport (trucks) owing to lack of direct rail connections. Uzbekistan is the only country in the region with rail connections through four borders, and all of the rail traffic of Tajikistan requires crossing through it. Tajikistan is noted to remain dependent on the rail network in Uzbekistan to reach other countries, and traffic is deemed straightforward, including transit to Kazakhstan and on to the Russian Federation. Transit through China is not as fluid, although both countries share a border, and it is largely owing to the mountainous terrain. Different

18. United Nations, OHRLLS, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and ESCAP, “Review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 in the Euro-Asia Region” (2023), p. 17.

19. ADB, Tajikistan Transport Sector Assessment, 2021.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

gauge standards across countries and circuitous routes owing to weak linkages also pose challenges, such as double transport costs due not only to fuel and associated labour costs but also to the imposition of high tariffs.²²

e. climate-change vulnerability and disaster risks.

Tajikistan is highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change and disasters such as landslides, sudden floods on its mountainous terrains, and earthquakes that not only deter all-season accessibility to its transport networks to/from the country itself but also threaten its largely rural population and agriculture-dominated economy. Water is an extremely valuable resource in arid Central Asia and can lead to significant international disputes. Tajikistan is a water-resource-rich country, with over 1,000 natural lakes, and water disputes figure in its border clashes with Kyrgyzstan. Glaciers, which comprise 6 per cent of its territory and 60 per cent of the water source of Central Asia, are melting, with 20 per cent lost in the last 30 years, and scientists have raised its catastrophic implications not only for Tajikistan, which relies on glacier-fed rivers for hydropower, but also for all countries around the world in the context of climate change.²³

f. financial and regional integration gaps.

The soft and hard components of transport, transit and connectivity require significant investments and regional cooperation arrangements. The annual infrastructure financing needs in Tajikistan are projected at close to 4 per cent of GDP (2018–2030)²⁴ and are expected to come largely from its usual sources for public infrastructure in general (State budget, donors, public-private partnerships and FDI or grants).²⁵ One important factor in the lack of significant improvement in trade performance of LLDCs is high trade and transit costs, including cross-border transactions that require cooperation with transit neighbours as well as subregional or regional mechanisms or arrangements that require institutional commitments or high-level agreements. Tajikistan has made good progress in regional and subregional cooperation that advances its regional integration. However, some capacities to implement arrangements with clear and significant benefits such as the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, to which Tajikistan acceded in 2022, have yet to be built (such as interoperable automated customs systems and systems for e-payment and a harmonized single transaction window).²⁶

22. Ibid.

23. *Times of Central Asia*, "Tajik President: Accelerated Melting of Glaciers Threatening Central Asia's Water Resources", 19 August 2024, and ADB, Asian Development Outlook April 2024: Tajikistan, p. 85.

24. United Nations, OHRLLS, ECE and ESCAP, "Review of the implementation of the VPoA...in the Euro-Asia Region", 2023.

25. World Bank, "Tajikistan Infrastructure Governance Assessment", Report No. AUS0003362 (Washington, D.C, World Bank, 2023).

26. United Nations, Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation in the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), 2023. Available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Agendaltem3_ESCAP-2023-RP-UNTF-SPE-CA.pdf.

Table 2. Key partners financing initiatives in the transport sector in Tajikistan, 2000-2020

Development Partner	Road (Grant)	Road (Loan)	Air (Grant)	Air (Loan)	Rail (Grant)	Rail (Loan)	Total
Multilateral Partners							
Aga Khan Foundation	7.8	-	-	-	-	-	7.8
Asian Development Bank	609.6	155.3	-	-	-	-	764.9
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	-	27.5	-	-	-	-	27.5
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	2.5	219.0	-	10.9	-	-	232.4
Islamic Development Bank	-	85.2	-	-	-	-	85.2
OPEC Fund for International Development	-	106.5	-	-	-	-	106.5
World Bank	148.2	145.8	-	-	-	-	294.0
Bilateral Partners							
France	-	-	-	26.5	-	-	26.5
Japan	145.6	-	24.2	-	-	-	169.8
Saudi Arabia	-	56.0	-	-	-	-	56.0
People's Republic of China	32.9	551.0	-	-	-	72.0	655.9
Iran	21.0	21.2	-	-	-	-	42.2
Kuwait	-	58.8	-	-	-	-	58.8
United Arab Emirates	-	35.0	-	-	-	-	35.0
United States	28.0	-	-	-	-	-	28.0
Total	995.6	1,456.3	24.2	37.4	-	72.0	2,585.5
	2,451.9		61.6		72.0		

Source: Asian Development Bank and Tajikistan Ministry of Transport

IV. Landscape of South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation in Tajikistan

Regional cooperation and integration in Central Asia are fundamental to economic prosperity not just for the more than 60 million people who call the region home but also for their neighbours whose economies are tied to the viability of the region as a land bridge between Europe and Asia. A study conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) before the adoption of the VPoA pointed out that regional cooperation would double the regional GDP in 10 years (above the level achievable without cooperation), particularly if addressing collectively the trade costs and constraints posed by being landlocked (transport and connectivity being central). Regional cooperation in Central Asia in years just after the independence of the countries was challenging, however, given how each one prized and protected sovereignty and how conflict over control of resources (such as water and energy between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) impeded new relations.²⁷

As soon as Tajikistan became independent, it pursued regional cooperation and integration in Central Asia. It also engaged in global processes that represented the interests of the Global South and supported South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation from the global to the regional level – from joining the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in December 1992, to then being the only one of the Central Asian

27. ADB and UNDP study referenced in the paper "Central Asian regional integration and cooperation" by the Eurasian Development Bank. Available at <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/10-regional-integration-and-cooperation-linn.pdf>.

countries to sign the Declaration on the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) at the 2005 Asian-African Summit in Jakarta, where objectives for revitalizing South-South cooperation in the twenty-first century were set, to joining the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Havana in 2009, and then being the only former Soviet republic to participate in the sixteenth session of the United Nations High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation in February 2010.²⁸

Transit, transport and connectivity in Tajikistan and Central Asia are inherently South-South and triangular cooperation endeavours. During the implementation period of the VPoA, Tajikistan was greatly assisted by these cooperation modalities, particularly in building new or enhancing outdated infrastructure; building the necessary capacities (from human to operational and institutional) to manage new flows of and channels for moving goods and people with new trade partners; and advancing the parallel non-physical requirements, such as compliance with regional and international standards on customs processes, ensuring interoperability of systems first across transit territories that are now sovereign like itself, and building resilient multimodal transport networks across challenging terrains to ports and markets beyond its immediate sphere. Reports reviewed for this case study point to the following observations:

- **South-South and triangular cooperation were fundamental**, particularly in infrastructure initiatives that require significant investments. Tajikistan established cooperation with partners such

28. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), OSCE Academy, "Tajikistan in the Global South: Developing diplomacy, non-traditional security and international prestige", Central Asia Policy Brief, No. 27 (Bishkek, OSCE Academy, 2015).

Box 1.

“South-South cooperation is a common endeavour of peoples and countries of the South,.. based on common objectives and solidarity, and guided by, inter alia, the principles of respect for national sovereignty and ownership, free from any conditionalities. Operationally, South-South cooperation for development is a process whereby two or more developing countries pursue their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how and through regional and interregional collective actions, including partnerships involving Governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions. South-South cooperation is not a substitute for, but rather a complement to, North-South cooperation. (SSC/19/3)

Triangular cooperation involves Southern-driven partnerships between two or more developing countries supported by a developed country(ies)/or multilateral organization(s) to implement development cooperation programmes and projects. ... in many instances, Southern partners in development cooperation require the financial and technical support and expertise of multilateral and/or developed-country partners in the course of assisting other developing countries (see TCDC/9/3)”

– “About South-South and triangular cooperation,” UNOSSC (<https://unsouthsouth.org/about/about-sstc/>)

as the Aga Khan Foundation, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Arab Economic Development Fund, the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Islamic Development Bank, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the World Bank. Through such cooperation, it has established 54 investment projects totalling \$1.8 billion, building more than 2,227 km of roads, 259 bridges, 6 tunnels and 7 avalanche corridors. Some 12 State investment projects in the areas of roads and transport are under way totalling \$1.551 billion.²⁹ (See annex III for key investments, loans and grants secured by Tajikistan for its transport, transit and connectivity priorities through partnerships.)

- **South-South and triangular cooperation were crucial in building multimodal (road, rail and air) transport pathways and networks that cross borders**, linking Tajikistan to regional and global markets. Key initiatives include the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Programme, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA), the Trans-Asian Railway Network, the Caspian Sea-Black Sea International Transport Corridor (also known as the Middle Corridor) and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. In 2023, Tajikistan took steps to advance the Lapis Lazuli transport corridor, which will establish a corridor that will enable Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to access Europe through the Caspian Sea.³⁰ Some of these key initiatives are discussed later in this study.

29. Tajikistan, Ministry of Transport, “Information on the evaluation of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for the decade 2014–2024 in the transport area of the Republic of Tajikistan” (Dushanbe, 2023). Available at https://www.un.org/ohrrls/sites/www.un.org.ohrrls/files/national_report_2022_vpoa-tajikistan.pdf.

30. The Jamestown Foundation, Nuray Alekberli-Museyibova, “Tajikistan aims to revitalize transportation corridor to Europe”, Eurasia Daily Monitor, vol. 20, No. 9, 15 July 2023.

- South-South and triangular cooperation were instrumental in various intergovernmental, regional and cross-regional agreements on transborder transit and connectivity.** During the VPoA period, Tajikistan also increased transit and connectivity capabilities by establishing cooperation agreements with various partners, starting with neighbours and transit countries and then with destination ports: opening the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan-China route; expanding access to more countries in Europe through the Black Sea by establishing agreements with Georgia on connectivity to its water ports of Batumi and Poti;³¹ and opening a new railway transit route through the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line to connect North and Central Asia with Turkey and Europe (this route offers the shortest link between the Caspian Sea and Europe).³² It also engaged with regional and subregional mechanisms such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Goods in Transit, in force since 2000 and involving several key protocols (such as on customs systems, transport of dangerous goods, and railway border and interchange stations).³³ It collaborated with neighbours within the framework of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, which was launched in 1998 with the aim of strengthening regional cooperation in Central Asia and the integration of the

region into the world economy; countries involved are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.³⁴ The movement of international transport through its 18 border checkpoints had been negotiated with transit neighbours Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan as well as destinations such as the Russian Federation and Afghanistan. Diplomatic and other avenues played a key role in establishing those agreements.

- South-South and triangular cooperation served as catalysts for the technical cooperation among neighbours and development entities in addressing the non-physical challenges and barriers related to transport, transit and connectivity.** Cross-border transit and connectivity are a collective priority for LLDCs, with initiatives requiring bilateral, regional and multilateral agreements and involving non-physical components such as building the necessary human and institutional capacities. In operationalizing connectivity through the Eurasian Central Corridor, for instance, agreements eased movement through the 16 border crossing points of the region (transshipment is required only between Afghanistan and Pakistan), with the most common permit system (the single round-trip permit) and permit-free bilateral transport arrangements having been established along this corridor, enabling Turkmenistan-the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan

31. Tajikistan, Ministry of Transport, "Information on the evaluation...Government of Tajikistan" (2023).

32. ESCAP, "Connectivity along the Eurasian Northern Corridor". Available at <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Ch%201%20Connectivity%20along%20the%20Eurasian%20Northern%20Corridor.pdf>.

33. <https://asean.org/asean-framework-agreement-on-the-facilitation-of-goods-in-transit/>.

34. https://unece.org/speca_

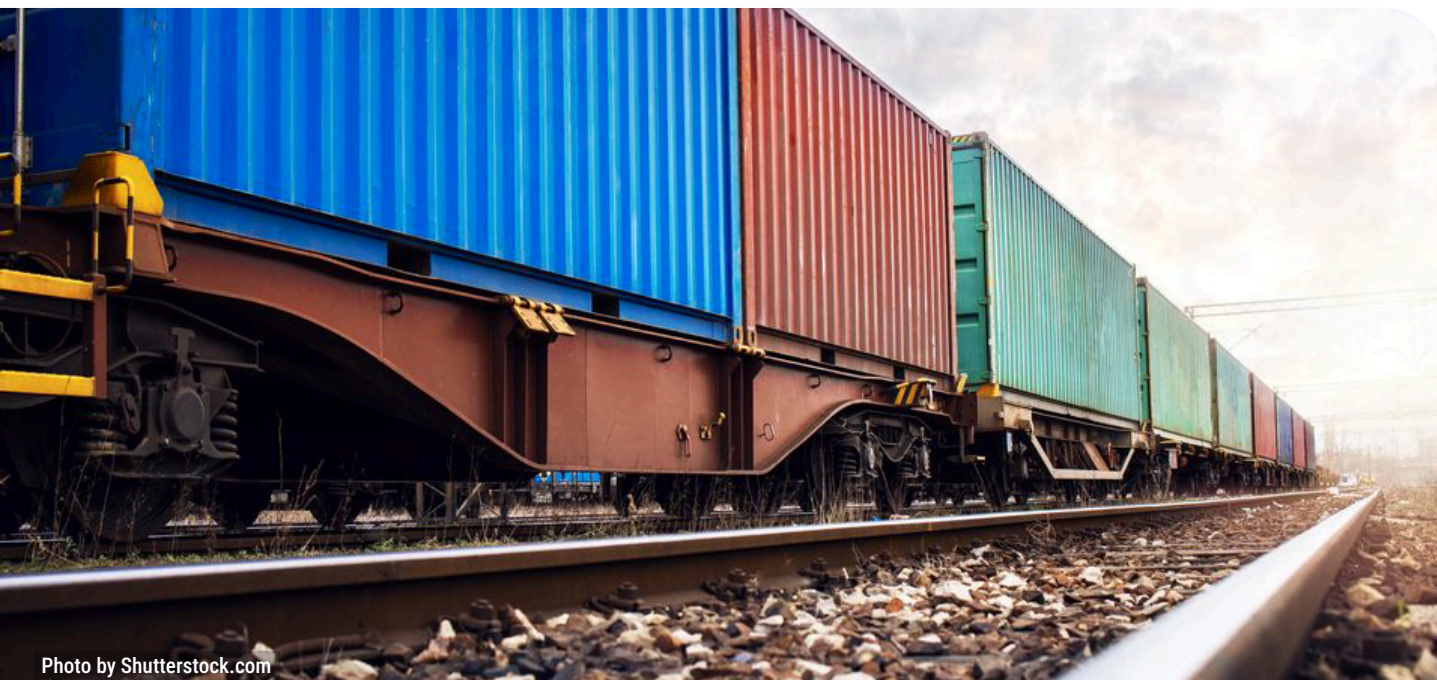


Photo by Shutterstock.com

round-trip connections).³⁵ Tajikistan has also established cooperative agreements with 14 countries to facilitate international road transport (including nine transit corridors and 18 State border crossings), collaborating on meeting international standards. Its cooperation with Uzbekistan on transit-of-dangerous-goods protocols has helped to establish friendly relations and has facilitated cost-effective and safe passage across their borders.³⁶ Tajikistan is part of a Republic of Korea-backed e-government partnership in Central Asia that, in collaboration with UNDP, facilitates the exchange of knowledge and expertise to build government capacities for increasingly digitalizing public and transborder processes. Other countries involved are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,

Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.³⁷

A diagnostic on South-South and triangular cooperation in LLDCs noted that a common thread across the efforts that it reviewed is the “distinctive identification of the specific needs of LLDCs and the corresponding countries capable of meeting those needs. The traditional donor, acting as a pivotal or facilitating partner, then enables collaboration between these countries to provide essential support that enhances conditions for improved economic outcomes, resilience and shared prosperity among the partners. Though an integral aspect of the collaborative model is its inclusivity, partners have distinctive roles...[and] the major role played by developed countries and partners from the North is the provision of financial and

35. ITF, “ITF North and Central Asia Transport Outlook”, International Transport Forum Policy Papers, No. 105, (Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Publishing, 2022).

36. Tajikistan, Ministry of Transport, “Information on the evaluation...Government of Tajikistan” (2023).

37. United Nations, OHRLLS, “Review of South-South cooperation in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries in the Decade 2014–2024” (2024). Available at <https://www.un.org/ohrls/news/new-paper-south-south-cooperation-landlocked-developing-countries>.

technical resources, while LLDCs largely provide local knowledge and expertise that are upgraded through knowledge sharing and capacity building activities...All stakeholders, including the concerned LLDCs, actively participate in decision-making and execution.”³⁸

Initiatives relevant to VPoA implementation in Tajikistan that demonstrate the dimensions and observations mentioned earlier include:

a. Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Programme

CAREC emerged from a regional initiative for Central Asia that was started by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in the late 1990s. The regional initiative Transport and Trade Facilitation Strategy 2020 (TTFS 2020), launched in 2013, identified six priority transport corridors traversing Central Asia east to west and north to south and connecting with Eurasian transport arteries. For each corridor, TTFS 2020 identified challenges that require significant investments to address: infrastructure bottlenecks, streamlining of processes concerning border crossing points, and aligning or advancing complementarity of needs to improve border transit and logistics arrangements. A core component of TTFS 2020 was a corridor monitoring programme that measures time and cost of transit based on regular vehicle surveys, which enables CAREC to assess where investments and procedural improvements can affect progress. CAREC has built on TTFS 2020 with the launch of the CAREC Transport Strategy 2030, with the objective of enhancing

infrastructure and economic connectivity with a focus on resilience and sustainability.³⁹

CAREC membership comprises 11 countries (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and seven multilateral institutions (the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which serves as Secretariat; the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB); the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB); UNDP; and the World Bank).⁴⁰

CAREC is focused on regional cooperation involving principally the development of regional trade, transport and energy corridors. It is not a formal treaty-based organization but rather a forum of partners operating in an organizational structure that involves annual ministerial meetings complemented by more frequent meetings of senior officials and supported by technical committees that prepare the strategic plans and investment programmes. CAREC has the strong support and active participation of China.

The participation of the multilateral agencies is the unique aspect of CAREC, one not seen in other regional organizations. It enables cooperation and coordination not only among the member countries but also among the key financial supporters of regional integration and global development partners. The principal goal of CAREC is development through cooperation, based on the vision articulated in its motto: “Good neighbours,

38. Ibid., p. 35.

39. CAREC Transport and Trade Facilitation Strategy 2020 and CAREC Transport Strategy 2030.

40. CAREC, “About CAREC”. Available at https://www.carecprogram.org/?page_id=1729.



Photo by <https://www.carecprogram.org>

good partners, good prospects”. It has made the case for why regional integration and cooperation matter not just for Central Asia but also for its neighbours, putting its location as the core of Eurasian continental economic space that is dynamic and has enormous growth potential, which can transform its traditional handicap of being landlocked into an advantage of land-linked development.⁴¹

b. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)⁴²

The Belt and Road Initiative is a large project that aims to improve regional cooperation through better connectivity among countries along the ancient Silk Road and beyond. It includes the Silk Road Economic Belt for the land part and the 21st Century Maritime Silk

Road for the naval part. It involved 64 economies at the start but its scope has since broadened to over 100.

The overall vision of the Initiative is “growth through connectivity”, and the focus on connectivity within it is the facilitation of trade and investment, which is presented as development of neighbouring countries but is also understood as the way in which China strategically shores up its energy and food security by taking a regional leadership role with its vital neighbours. The scope of the vision is broad, encompassing economic, strategic and cultural connectivity.

The approach of the Belt and Road Initiative is to improve bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms, focusing on communication, infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation, capital flow and people-to-

41. https://www.carecprogram.org/?page_id=31.

42. <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/> and <https://www.ebrd.com/what-we-do/belt-and-road/overview.html>.

people exchanges. It establishes or strengthens transport infrastructure in the Belt and Road Initiative corridors, an undertaking that advances the development of multimodal transportation, integrating road, rail, water and air channels, building logistics thoroughfares across channels, and strengthening infrastructure across major routes and at major ports of entry.⁴³ One of the six corridors (the China, Central Asia, West Asia Economic Corridor) will link Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.

c. Multiparty initiatives establishing alternative and fast-route corridors between Europe and Asia (Europe-Asia Transit Corridor/Trans-Caspian Corridor)

Various cooperative arrangements have been made and are being taken forward that develop Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries as a viable option for connecting Europe with Asia. These include the study and subsequent initiatives undertaken by EBRD (led and funded by the European Union) on the Europe-Asia Transit Corridor⁴⁴ and the multiparty investment forum that aims to establish the Trans-Caspian Corridor envisaged to cut end-to-end transit time to 15 days. The Investors Forum that convened in January 2024 brought together the Group of Seven countries and European Union Member States, countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus, and Türkiye as well as financial institutions and the private sector. The Investors Forum builds on the findings of a study conducted by EBRD that identified 33

hard infrastructure needs and 7 soft connectivity areas for action that will advance the envisioned economic development corridor through Central Asia.⁴⁵

V. Findings and conclusions

Central Asia is strategically important given its geographic location: it connects Eastern Asia with the European continent and could thus serve as a geographic corridor for regional and global markets. The economic benefits from this connectivity are clear, foremost in terms of the costs reduced by quicker routes for movement of goods and people across territories as well as for the various economic and other activities stemming from or enabled by such connectivity. Despite this strategic location, however, including the shortest path for automobile trade between the East, particularly China, and Europe and the Mediterranean, access to and through the region and access by the region itself to markets beyond remain low. The trading costs of the region, and specifically of Tajikistan, thus remain among the highest in the world, exceeded only by those of developing countries in the Pacific Islands.⁴⁶ This case study views the following findings particularly instructive:

Significant challenges lie ahead but Tajikistan also is poised for greater progress. Tajikistan, which is right in the middle of the region, has the highest connectivity gaps of the Central Asian LLDCs and has the most barriers (and costs) to trade. However, it is also poised for greater progress, building on achievements

43. World Bank, "Connectivity along overland corridors of the Belt and Road Initiative", Macroeconomics, Trade, and Investment (MTI) Discussion Paper Series, No. 6 (Washington, D.C., 2018).

44. EBRD, "Sustainable transport connections between Europe and Central Asia", 30 June 2023.

45. European Commission, "Global Gateway: EU and Central Asian countries agree on building blocks to develop the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor", 30 January 2024.

46. ITF, "ITF North and Central Asia Transport Outlook", International Transport Forum Policy Papers, No. 105, (Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Publishing, 2022).

during the period of VPoA implementation. The World Bank noted that it exceeded expectations as its economy rebounded quickly from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, growing by 8.3 per cent in 2023. Also notable is the fact that this growth was broad-based, with the largest contribution coming from its major sector (agriculture), followed by industry and construction. In fact, construction showed a 22.5 per cent boom due in part to investments in transport.⁴⁷

Massive financial investments remain necessary, as do other requisites. The challenges faced by Tajikistan as an LLDC (see section III) underline the continuing need for massive investments for building the soft and hard parts of critical infrastructure for transit, transport and connectivity. The key initiatives meeting this need (see section IV) demonstrate the breadth of such investments and the partners able to provide them. International and regional financial institutions, multilateral development banks, governments, the private sector and development agencies with significant financial and funding envelopes will continue to be necessary, particularly for taking Tajikistan through the next Programme of Action for LLDCs. This, however, could mask or deflect attention from the other needs, such as capacity-building for maintaining and operating new infrastructure according to regional and global standards, for strengthening institutional effectiveness, for enhancing productivity and competitiveness, and even for securing peace and enhancing the business environment (including for

women and youth in small and medium-sized enterprises) and for brokering transborder agreements.

Strategic prioritization across areas crucial for becoming a land bridge or transit hub is needed. A range of priorities go into building Tajikistan as an attractive transit hub and viable land bridge, such as ensuring that infrastructure is built according to regional and global standards, and accession to necessary regional and global agreements and instruments (including on road safety, ease of customs and transit procedures, effective border management and compliant cross-border inspection protocols, and efficient multimodal networks). These also need to figure in the development support to Tajikistan and other LLDCs aiming for similar trajectories.

Climate action is integral to all of Tajikistan's goals. Tajikistan is considered one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change risks in Central Asia. Its terrain is predominantly mountainous, and 6 per cent of its territory is covered by glaciers. Its fragile mountain ecosystems and the threat of melting glaciers make Tajikistan prone to floods, landslides and mudslides. It is familiar with and sensitive to natural hazards and thus considers climate action as a critical part of its resilient and sustainable future.⁴⁸ In building its transport systems, Tajikistan is moving away from fuel-based transportation to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It intends to produce 100 per cent of its energy by using green-energy

47. World Bank, "Tajikistan economic update: Focusing on the footprint of State-owned enterprises and competitive neutrality" (Washington, D.C., 2024).

48. World Bank, Climate Change Knowledge Portal for Development Practitioners and Policy Makers, "Climate Risk Country Profiles, Tajikistan". Available at <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/tajikistan/vulnerability>.

sources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to a minimum by 2037 (the President of the Republic, H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon, announced that “As one of the leading countries in terms of development of ‘green economy’, Tajikistan will truly become a ‘green country’ by 2037.”⁴⁹). It is also raising sustainable use of water and glacier preservation as linked priority agendas, enhancing efforts for climate action at the regional as well as the global level, and these also need to be viewed as part of the priorities for integrated development support.

More needs to be done to advance regional cooperation and integration. One important factor in the LLDC lack of significant improvement in trade performance is high trade and transit costs, including cross-border transactions that require cooperation with transit neighbours as well as subregional or regional mechanisms or arrangements that require institutional commitments or high-level agreements. Tajikistan has made good progress in regional and subregional cooperation that advances its regional integration, such as CAREC, SPECA, the Asian Highway Network and the Trans-Asian Railway Network, and some new infrastructure developments under the Belt and Road Initiative, including railways across Central Asia. However, implementation had been challenging; therefore, intraregional trade and regional value chains remain weak. Tajikistan has signed agreements on international road transport with 15 countries; opened more international passenger routes (for a total of 23) with neighbours Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan,

Kazakhstan and Afghanistan (and the Russian Federation); and signed agreements on multimodal cargo transport with Uzbekistan, Georgia and Pakistan. However, some capacities to implement arrangements with clear and significant benefits such as the Framework Agreement on Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, to which Tajikistan acceded in 2022, have yet to be built (such as interoperable automated customs systems and systems for e-payment and harmonized single-transaction windows).⁵⁰

Investments and partnerships remain crucial. Road and transport infrastructure development in Tajikistan has been funded largely through loans or grants from development partners and international financial institutions, and the role of national leadership (particularly of the President of the Republic) has been deemed instrumental in facilitating them. Over the last three decades, Tajikistan has implemented 60 investment projects in the transport sector for a total of over \$2 billion. Those projects entail more than 2,200 km of highways of international importance and other transport infrastructure meeting modern standards, 259 bridges, six tunnels, and seven avalanche corridors, among others. About 17 more

49. Asia-Plus, “Rahmon promises to turn Tajikistan into the country with “green economy”, 28 December 2023.

50. For details on bilateral and other agreements that Tajikistan signed in the period of VPoA implementation, please see the Tajikistan National Assessment Report on the implementation of the VPoA transmitted to OHRLLS in February 2024. Available at https://www.un.org/ohrrls/sites/www.un.org.ohrrls/files/national_report_2022_vpoa-tajikistan.pdf. For details and progress on the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific, please see “Framework Agreement on Facilitation... (available at <https://www.unescap.org/projects/cpta>), UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation: Global Report 2023 (available at <https://www.untfsurvey.org/region?id=ESCAP>) and UN Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation: Global Report (available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/AgendaItem3_report-digital-sustainable-2023-global.pdf).

investment projects totalling over \$1 billion are being implemented in this sector as of the writing of the present case study.⁵¹ Tajikistan is also an active participant in international conventions as well as regional and international initiatives and has devised strategies to develop the country into a viable transit country. It is working with partners on priority trade and transit corridors from east to west and from north to south within the framework of CAREC (#2, #3, #5, #6), the Asian Highway (AN-7, AN-65, AN-66), the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) (T-23, T-34), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Economic Cooperation Organization.

Climate action is critical to progress.

Tajikistan has taken on global efforts such as serving as the host of the United Nations High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, in Dushanbe in 2018;⁵² Co-Chair of the UN 2023 Water Conference; and organizer (and host) of the 2024 third High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable

Development”, 2018–2028.⁵³ It is also the main proponent of efforts that led to the adoption of a United Nations resolution establishing 2025 as the International Year of Glacier’s Preservation (A/RES/77/158). More needs to be done to elevate climate action also as part of the transport, transit and connectivity efforts.

The roles of South-South and triangular cooperation need elevating.

The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) “Review of South-South cooperation in the implementation of the VPoA for Landlocked Developing Countries in the Decade 2014–2024”⁵⁴ details examples of significant partnerships and collaborations that go beyond the high-cost infrastructure projects in the Central Asian LLDCs. Much of the progress seen in the case of Tajikistan required cooperation with neighbours and transit countries (themselves developing countries) and cooperation among LLDCs themselves. The literature is often silent on these roles of South-South and triangular cooperation.

South-South and triangular cooperation could be leveraged further and more strategically. One of the most instructive experiences of Tajikistan in VPoA implementation is how South-South and triangular cooperation provided the platform on which neighbouring countries just gaining

51. Data from the report to OHRLLS submitted by the Ministry of Transport on February 2023 and May 2024 updates provided by the Ministry. Available at https://www.un.org/ohrls/sites/www.un.org.ohrls/files/national_report_2022_vpota-tajikistan.pdf.

52. See Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (available at https://www.jica.go.jp/Resource/english/our_work/types_of_assistance/tech/projects/activities/activities_07.html

53. See Dushanbe Water Process in support of the successful implementation of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028; “Tajikistan’s leadership in global water policy”; and Dushanbe Water Process, “Co-Chairs messages”, 2024.

54. United Nations, OHRLLS, “Review of South-South cooperation in the implementation...” (2023).

independence and deeply protective of their sovereignty could begin to collaborate on matters linked to territorial access and competitiveness. The principles of South-South and triangular cooperation, which are founded on respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty and on mutual benefit, provided the framework for collaboration on which new partners can lean, and, as shown in the illustrative initiatives, this was part of or made to happen through triangular cooperation. This dimension, namely, South-South cooperation, is also muted or not recognized in the literature reviewed for this case study and needs elevating.

As Tajikistan builds on its progress during the VPoA implementation, it is intent on attracting investments in infrastructure for the development of border crossings, leveraging digital technologies for integrated border management and investments to expand key railway lines to boost multimodal networks and investments in green energy. It recognizes that its challenges are immense, such as the continuing low competitiveness of its national economy, continuing underdevelopment of key infrastructure, and geographical remoteness from the sea and large export markets (exacerbated by underdeveloped transportation services). The country views its success to be defined largely by the level

of its transport services (which requires building railways, since they are the primary connections to other countries) and good economic relations with the major export markets in the Eurasian region.

In terms of opportunities and immediate priorities, Tajikistan considers its land links to other countries an asset, which is boosted by good relations in the region and therefore provides an opportunity for leveraging. It sees the need to deepen regional economic integration and therefore views as critical the development of up-to-date international transit infrastructure that can mitigate the effects of its geographical remoteness, improve the competitiveness of its national economy and improve its investment attractiveness, and it also sees the need to build productivity and develop export-oriented production clusters across the country alongside efforts around transport, transit and connectivity.

As an LLDC, Tajikistan views its prospects as linked to those of its neighbours and transit countries. South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation will be crucial, therefore, in strengthening collaborations among the Central Asian LLDCs as one another's main trading partners and to create the conditions for their collective sustainable development.

Annex I. Tajikistan direction of trade

Exports	Imports
1. Kazakhstan	1. Russian Federation
2. Türkiye	2. Kazakhstan
3. Switzerland	3. China, People's Republic of
4. Uzbekistan	4. Uzbekistan
5. Afghanistan	5. Türkiye
6. Russian Federation	6. Germany
7. China, People's Republic of	7. India
8. Belgium	8. United States
9. Algeria	9. Iran, Islamic Republic of
10. Iran, Islamic Republic of	10. Japan

Source: ADB, "Tajikistan: Key indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2023", Data Library.

Annex II. Snapshot of transit, transport and connectivity components (CAREC Transport Strategic Framework—Two Objectives and Five Pillars)

Transport Pillar	Connectivity Objective	Sustainability Objective
<p>Cross-Border Transport and Logistics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of transport facilitation agreements and conventions and fostering regional transportation dialogue • Improvement of border crossing facilities and procedures • Development of ports and logistics centers facilities and operations to support seamless interoperability of all modes of transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced cost of trade, increased trade, and economic growth • Increased efficiency and integrity of public institutions • Improved safety and security
<p>Roads and Road Asset Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient allocation of funds for construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of roads • Strategic long-term planning for development of the regional and national transport networks to meet growing social, economic, and trade connectivity needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved economic and social conditions through better connectivity • Strong focus on life-cycle costing and quality for more sustainable infrastructure investments • Financing allocation based on robust analytical and decision support tools, such as the Road Asset Management System (RAMS) • Institutional and procedural reforms for improved national road asset management • Increased private sector participation in road operation and maintenance
<p>Road Safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved propensity to travel due to increased safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased road safety leading to reduced life and health impacts, and economic losses.

Transport Pillar	Connectivity Objective	Sustainability Objective
Railways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction, rehabilitation, modernization and maintenance of railroads • Development of stations and intermodal facilities • Purchase and maintenance of rolling stock suited to emerging needs • Effective commercial and efficient operational practices • Digitalization of railways to improve operational coordination and to support management decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved economic and social conditions through reduced service cost and improved quality of service • Sustainable operational practices, inclusive financial and life-cycle cost management, railways assets management and upgrade, staff qualifications • Enhanced safety and security for all users, especially women • Improved environmental sustainability through modal shift, energy efficiency improvements, and fuel switch
Aviation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of airports and public transport linkages • Regional and national policies and agreements to foster open markets competition and cooperation • Improved efficiency of air freight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased economic opportunities through trade, industry, and tourism • Increased efficiency, safety, and security • Improved economic and social conditions through reduced service cost and improved quality of service

Source: CAREC Transport Strategy 2030. Available at <https://www.carecprogram.org/uploads/CAREC-Transport-Strategy-2030-1.pdf>



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**South-South and triangular
cooperation in addressing priorities
in the Programme of Action for the
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Transit, Transport and Connectivity in
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United Nations
Office for South-South Cooperation