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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COORDINATING UNIT FOR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

**UNECE CONFERENCE ON SPECIAL PROGRAMME
FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (UN/SPECA)**

Geneva, 23-24 June 2003

INFORMATION NOTICE

On 26 March 1998, the Presidents of four Central Asian States - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - and the Executive Secretaries of the two UN Regional Commissions - ECE and ESCAP - signed the Tashkent Declaration, which, among other, announced the establishment of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

In September 1998, Turkmenistan officially indicated its support of the Tashkent Declaration and readiness to participate in the projects of SPECA. In November 2002, Azerbaijan joined the Presidential Programme. UN Resident Coordinators in the countries concerned have played an important role in developing the organizational arrangements of the Programme and its implementation guidelines.

To assess the results of the implementation of the programme over the five-year period and to identify future directions of activities, the UNECE has decided to hold a Conference on UNSPECA in cooperation with all the SPECA member States, partner organizations and other stakeholders interested in the development and social progress of the Central Asian sub-region.

BACKGROUND

SPECA was set up to assist the participating countries in strengthening and promoting their cooperation in order to both stimulate their economic development and facilitate their integration into Europe and Asia. It has provided decision-makers of these countries with a neutral forum for discussing economic and environmental issues having an impact on the regional development, a mechanism for developing joint strategic approaches to solving priority issues of cooperation and for agreeing and promoting specific investment and cooperation projects of regional importance.

The priority areas of cooperation, initially identified by the SPECA member countries, are as follows:

- Development of transport infrastructure and border crossing facilitation (lead country - Kazakhstan);
- Rational and efficient use of energy and water resources of Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan);
- International Economic Conference on Tajikistan and a joint strategy for regional development and attraction of foreign investment (Tajikistan);
- Regional cooperation on the development of multiple routes for pipeline transportation of hydrocarbons to global markets (Turkmenistan, and now, Azerbaijan).

Both UN Regional Commissions, ECE and ESCAP, have been assisting the Central Asian countries in meeting their objectives by providing expertise and funding for projects in the area of energy, water resources management, transportation, investment mobilization, and entrepreneurship development and SMEs.

The implementation of SPECA has not been smooth due to various factors, including the reluctance of some of the SPECA member countries to participate in the process, or their *de facto* withdrawal from the programme, open internal conflict and inter-ethnic frictions that afflicted some of the countries, and, finally, the limited resources made available for the programme to achieve a noticeable change in some of the priority areas.

The overall situation in Central Asia has not been conducive to the United Nations effort to address fundamental causes of tension within and between the countries of the region, such as: unsustainable patterns of production, continuous erosion of fragile environment, institutional collapse, distortions or lack of physical infrastructure, de-industrialization and impoverishment trends, leading to a social and economic regress. These factors, if not mitigated, bear a high potential of open intra- and inter-state confrontation, exacerbating the existing tensions.

GOALS AND EXPECTED OUTPUT OF THE UNECE CONFERENCE ON SPECA

In the light of the above, the UNECE has decided to convene the Conference, bringing various stakeholders interested in the development of the Central Asian economies, including UN system agencies and bodies, regional and national governmental and non-governmental organizations, including trade and business organizations. The major goals of the UNECE SPECA Conference are the following:

- **To coordinate activities of the UN organizations and bodies in Central Asia**
- **To assess the results of the UNECE/SPECA projects and activities**

- **To hold a dialogue and exchange views with the SPECA National Coordinators**
- **To provide the SPECA member-countries to present their accomplishments and the need for investment to the donor-community**
- **To present new project-proposals of the sub-regional significance recommended by the SPECA Regional Advisory Committee at its session in April 2003 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan**
- **To enhance knowledge and understanding of the UNECE member countries of the situation in the SPECA member countries**

Apart from the above, the UNECE aims at mobilizing the participation of representatives of the UNECE member States' respective government institutions, responsible for bilateral development assistance and multilateral cooperation, as well as representatives of the business community, regional and international organizations.

The key issues to be discussed by the Conference include:

- **Institutional constraints to development and investment mobilization**
- **Sustainability of the existing patterns of production**
- **Poverty alleviation**
- **Efficient use of energy and water**
- **Transport infrastructure challenges**
- **Integration of Central Asia in the European and global economy**
- **Investment opportunities in the sub-region**
- **Trade and border-crossing facilitation**
- **Perspectives of utilizing ICT for export promotion and boosting the overall development of the sub-region**

The Conference programme, apart from addressing sub-regional cooperation issues, envisages a presentation by each of the SPECA member countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, a new member country of SPECA), highlighting the current economic situation and opportunities for international cooperation and business-to-business partnerships brought about by transition reforms.

It is expected that the UNECE Conference on SPECA will:

- provide a new impulse for cooperation among the SPECA member countries and between the latter and the rest of the UNECE region;
- encourage the establishment of various partnerships between participating governmental and non-governmental organization, as well as business ties and contacts;
- promote new initiatives, joint projects and activities;
- improve coordination of activities of various donor organizations, and, finally;
- mobilize support for the efforts of the Central Asian societies to build up capacities and capabilities necessary for an efficient operation and functioning of the market.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The main target audience of the Conference is:

- Governments
- International and regional organizations
- Entrepreneurial circles, and
- Academia.

VENUE

The Conference will be held from 23 to 24 June 2003 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

PARTICIPATION

Participation in the Conference is open to all interested parties in the UNECE member countries, as well as other member States of the United Nations, and to representatives of UN specialized agencies, regional intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Participation from the business community is particularly encouraged.

PROCEEDINGS AND DOCUMENTATION

Organization of working sessions

The working languages of the Conference will be English, French and Russian. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided. A Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and session Chairpersons will direct the Conference proceedings. The session Chairperson will introduce the topic, animate the discussion and summarize the deliberations on the topic.

Presentations of papers will be limited to 15 minutes to allow sufficient time for discussions. Space will be provided near the Conference Hall for displaying posters. Presenters are encouraged to use audiovisual tools to support their presentations. Overhead projector and equipment for Power Point presentations will be available.

Papers

Participants, willing to present a paper and/or project proposal, should send the title, name of author(s), name of country or organization, postal address and a short summary (not longer than one page) **not later than 15 June 2003**, preferably in electronic format (Word for Windows or WordPerfect), to the following e-mail address of **Ms. Tatiana Apatenko** (UNECE Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities):

Tatiana.apatenko@unece.org

Summaries of the papers (in English, French and Russian) will be issued by the UNECE and made available to participants at the Conference.

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION

Registration

No registration fee is charged for taking part in the Conference. Travel, accommodation, medical insurance, and other expenses are to be borne by participants. Participants are requested to send by fax (+4122 917 01 78) the completed registration form (see annex) **by 15 June 2003**.

Travel and hotel accommodation

Participants should make their own travel arrangements and hotel reservations. The UNECE can provide a list of hotels, offering reduced rates. For information, please contact:

Ms. Tatiana Apatenko
Conference Administrator
Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 GENEVA, Switzerland
Tel.: +41 22 917 36 66
Fax: +41 22 917 01 78
E-mail: Tatiana.apatenko@unece.org

PASSPORT AND VISA REQUIREMENTS

Participants must have a valid passport. If necessary, participants should obtain entry visas from the diplomatic representation of Switzerland (i.e. Embassy or General Consulate) in their country of residence. Visas are to be issued free of charge. It is advisable to make such visa applications well in advance of the date required. Entry visas will be given to the participants upon the presentation of the personal letter of invitation. The letter of invitation should be requested directly by participants from the UNECE.

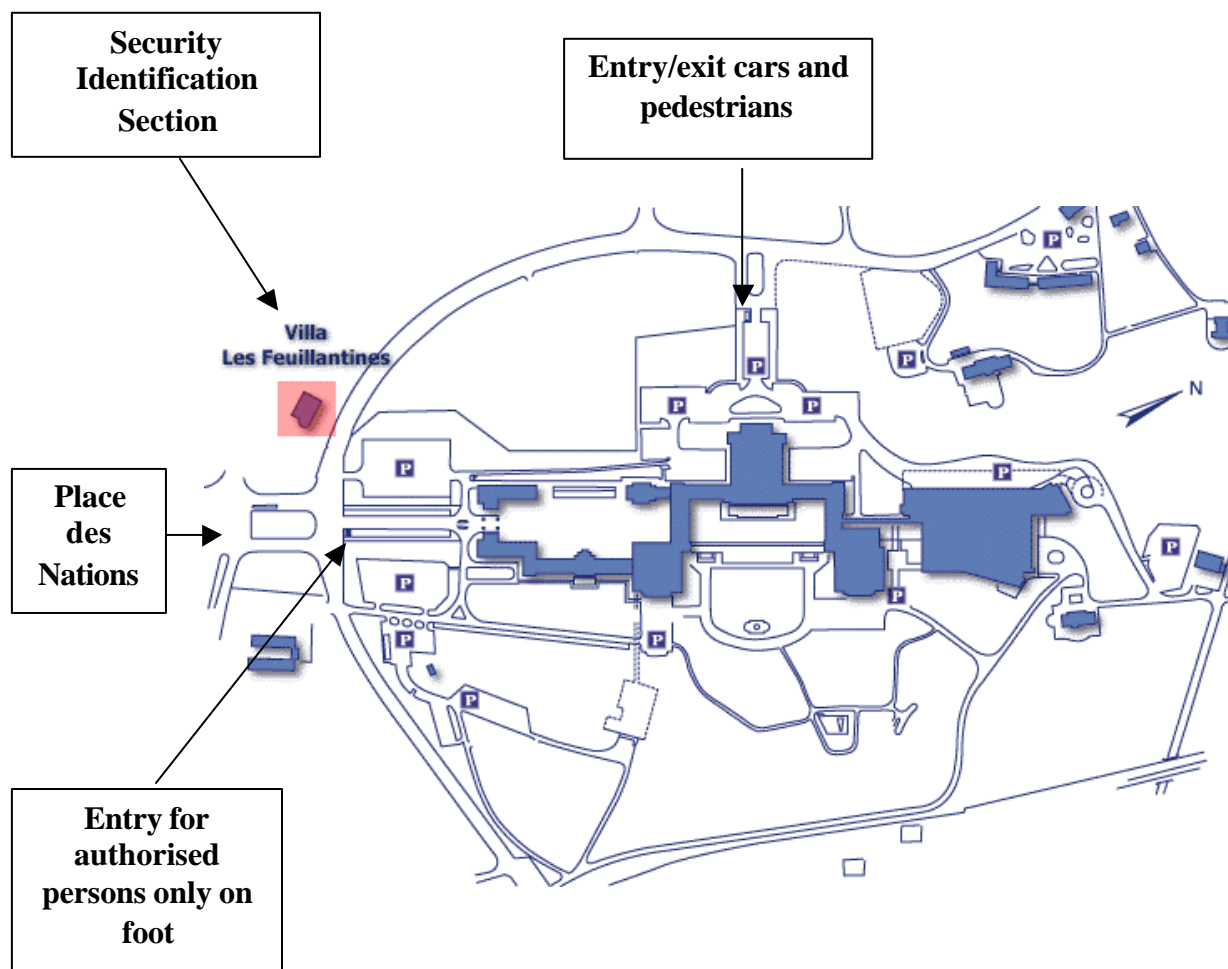
ENQUIRIES AND CORRESPONDENCE

All enquiries and correspondence concerning the Conference should be addressed to:

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Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities
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Palais des Nations
CH-1211 GENEVA, Switzerland
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Fax: +4122 917 01 78
E-mail: Larissa.kapitsa@unece.org

REGISTRATION OF DELEGATES: Access to the Palais des Nations

Security measures have been strengthened at the Palais des Nations and delegates attending meetings are required to have badges issued by the Security Unit and bearing their names, which will give access to the Palais grounds. Delegates are invited to complete the **Conference Registration Form** and send it to the ECE secretariat by fax (+ 41 22 917 01 78) not later than **15 June 2003**. Once in Geneva, delegates will be required to proceed with the original of the form to the Security Identification Section situated at the **Villa Les Feuillantines** (as indicated on the map below; opening hours: 08:00 a.m.-05:00 p.m.), where the entrance badges will be awaiting. Delegates should plan on about an hour to obtain the badge and reach the meeting room.





UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA

Conference Registration Form

Please Print

Please send by fax (+41 22) 917 0178 or by E-mail:
tatiana.apatenko@unece.org

Title of the Conference

Date _____

Conference on UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia

Delegation/Participant of Country, Organization or Agency

Participant

Mr. ☐ Family Name _____ First Name _____
Mrs. ☐ _____
Ms. ☐ _____

Participation Category

<u>Head of Delegation</u> <input type="checkbox"/>	Are you based in Geneva as a representative of your Permanent Mission? YES NO (delete non applicable)	Observer Organization <input type="checkbox"/>
Delegation Member <input type="checkbox"/>		NGO (ECOSOC Accred.) <input type="checkbox"/>
Observer Country <input type="checkbox"/>		Other (Please Specify Below) <input type="checkbox"/>
...		
Participating From / Until		
<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>

Document Language Preference English ☐ French ☐ Other _____

Official Occupation (in own country) Passport or ID Number Valid Until

Official Telephone N°. Fax N°. E-mail Address

Permanent Official Address

Address in Geneva

Accompanied by Spouse Yes ☐ No ☐

Family Name (Spouse)

First Name (Spouse)

On Issue of ID Card Participant Signature Spouse Signature Date	Participant photograph if form is sent in advance of the conference date. Please PRINT your name on the reverse side of the photograph	Spouse photograph if form is sent in advance of the conference date. Please PRINT your name on the reverse side of the photograph	Security Use Only Card N°. Issued Initials, UN Official
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