

**Opening remarks by CICA Secretary General
Ambassador Kairat Sarybay
at the opening of the Sixth Plenary Session
of the CICA Business Council
(13 November 2023, Trading Hall, AIFC)**

Chair of the CICA Business Council Board Mr. Batalov,
Deputy Minister Madam Nurbayeva,
Excellencies, members of the Business Council, guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I express my gratitude to Mr. Batalov, Chair of the CICA Business Council Board, the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of Kazakhstan “Atameken” and the Chamber of International Commerce of Kazakhstan for their roles in co-organizing this event.

The CICA economic dimension is of paramount importance, especially in the context of the Asian economy's growth and its increasing significance at the regional and global levels. It is not to diminish the importance of the other dimensions - environmental, human, new challenges and threats, and military-political - which collectively contribute to peace, security and prosperity in Asia.

The Asian economy's share of global GDP is on a steady rise, estimated to exceed 50% by 2030, making the economic dimension pivotal. CICA's priority areas within this dimension encompass the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises, Energy Security, Information Technology, Tourism, Transportation Corridors, Agriculture, Finance, Trade and Investment.

Our CICA Business Council, as an advisory body, plays a vital role in this context, integrating representatives of small and medium business organizations and government authorities from our Member States. In this plenary session, three critical topics aligned with our priority areas: Renewable Energy, Green Finance and Food Security will be addressed, since they are instrumental in shaping Asia's future, contributing to its progress and supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

I extend a warm welcome to the small and medium business representatives here today. I am confident that our discussions will add value by sharing knowledge and experiences among CICA Member States, financial institutions, international organizations, and the business community.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are integral to most economies, particularly in developing countries. They create job opportunities and foster economic development. They account for about 90% of businesses globally and more than 50% of global employment, providing opportunities for vulnerable groups in labour markets such as women and young people. I am delighted to welcome Ms. Dina Amrisheva, Head of Office a.i. of UN Women in Kazakhstan. During this session, we anticipate her insights on empowering women for sustainable energy and development.

As a pan-Asian forum, CICA brings together 28 Member States, covering 90% of the Asian territory and population. We are well-positioned to offer effective solutions to promote economic cooperation in the SME sector among CICA Member States and create an environment conducive to their growth.

Further to the decision of the Business Council Board of 18 August 2023, in my address at the Eleventh Meeting of the CICA Think Tank Forum, I requested the Forum to research and hold a seminar on “National approaches and incentives used by CICA Member States to support small and medium enterprises” and prepare a progress report on “Involvement of women in small and medium enterprises in the CICA region”. These initiatives will enhance our understanding and support in these vital areas.

CICA's transformation into a regional organization launched by the Sixth CICA Summit in 2022 and endorsed by the CICA Ministerial Council this year, holds promise for strengthening economic cooperation and integration among our Member States.

Furthermore, the draft Concept Paper on Establishing the CICA Council on Sustainable Connectivity is under consideration, which will focus on developing secure and efficient transportation corridors and digital infrastructure.

I am also pleased to see the progress in establishing the Partnership Network of Leading Universities, which aims to enhance academic collaboration, research projects, and mobility of students and teaching staff. The Partnership Network has the potential to develop programmes to address industry needs and emerging labour trends.

A few words about our ongoing efforts on the establishment CICA Finance Summit. The Finance Summit was initiated under China's leadership while it was holding CICA Chairmanship from 2014-2018. Since then, three Finance Summits have been successfully organized. The Summit's agenda encompasses a diverse range of topics, including public health, green development, local cooperation, fin-tech, capital markets, inclusive finance,

poverty reduction, and economic recovery. These gatherings have proven to be an effective platform for the exchange of experiences and best practices among Member States. During the Sixth CICA Summit, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev highlighted the significance of elevating the Finance Summit to a permanent platform to foster deeper collaboration among the CICA Member States in the realm of finance.

In conclusion, there is significant work ahead to make these initiatives effective and align them with the genuine needs of small and medium enterprises of the CICA Member States. However, progress will undoubtedly be achieved through our collective and determined efforts.

Thank you for your attention.