

INTERVIEW – Reflections on Setting-up CCAMTAC. Norbert Funke, Director CCAMTAC, December 2020–November 2025 (November 2025)



Zarina Zikrina: Norbert, it is now five years since CCAMTAC was initiated. Looking back, what are your reflections on the past five years?

Norbert Funke: The strategy set out in the 2020 program document, prepared by an interdepartmental IMF team with partner input, guided our vision to build a 21st-century capacity development center. It was a privilege for me and the team to bring that vision to life.

Every step had its small challenges — recruiting local staff virtually during COVID-19, delivering the first training online, setting up an office with rerouted shipments, navigating the January 2022 events in Almaty, and coping with tragic incidents affecting staff.

It is rewarding to see that this at times difficult journey has led to a thriving center. The CCAMTAC team did a fantastic job. We are very grateful to IMF headquarters, member countries, and our development partners for their support without which this would not have been possible.

Zarina: Are there particular accomplishments you are especially proud of?

Norbert: Absolutely. To name only a few:

- the rapid expansion of bilateral capacity development across all nine member countries and several innovative approaches to increase efficiency in delivery.
- concrete impacts on the ground, such as stronger fiscal risk analysis and awareness, with fiscal risk statements published in seven of the nine countries; improved macro-projection tools with scenario analysis, integrated into economic policy implementation; establishment of fiscal units in ministries to improve government finance statistics; enhancements in monetary operations for better monetary policy transmission; progress in revenue administration, IFRS 9 implementation, and quarterly GDP data.
- Over 4,300 unique participants attended our virtual and in-person events, including more than 1,600 unique in-person workshop attendees. It was gratifying to see greater openness among countries to share experiences, including through our research seminars.
- I am also proud we have started to forge diverse partnerships across economic blocs, improving coordination on capacity development.

Zarina: You mentioned CCAMTAC is a 21st-century capacity development center. What sets it apart?

Norbert: I would like to highlight four elements: peer learning, blended delivery channels, cooperation, and the focus on identifying and strengthening talent. First, today's issues are too complex for any one country to tackle alone; sharing experiences and building partnerships brings clear benefits. Drawing on the Joint Vienna Institute (JVI) experience, with HQ colleagues and partners, we set up high-level roundtables and peer groups in macro-fiscal areas, revenue administration, banking supervision, and statistics. Kazakhstan's Central Bank Digital Currency work enriched several events and is an excellent example of member-led peer learning. Second, our blended delivery—online,



virtual, and in-person—let us tailor approaches. The cohort training developed with JVI (two online segments plus in-person modules in Almaty and Vienna) keeps groups together, increasing learning gains and network building. Third, cooperation with member countries and partners in the delivery, such as other International Financial Organizations (IFIs), CAREC Institute, the Swiss National Bank, SECO, the Deutsche Bundesbank, and the Bank for International Settlements helped broaden perspectives and reinforced messages. Fourth, we focused on talent: a train-the-trainer pilot, delivered with CCAMTAC economists, had its first successes. In addition, regional advisors identified and coached local experts which have been added to the IMF's roster of experts. Seeing CCAMTAC staff and young officials from the region grow has been especially satisfying.

Zarina: Any regrets or things you might have done differently?

Norbert: With hindsight, some office setup choices and elements of delivery could have been fine-tuned. But given the information at each decision point, the choices were understandable.

Zarina: It was your first time living in this region. Does any characteristic of the CCAM region stand out?

Norbert: Certainly. The genuine hospitality of member countries — experienced during visits and by workshop participants — exemplifies the region's hospitable spirit and left a deep impression on my wife and me. Hearing former recipients express gratitude for the training and the networks we helped create has been especially rewarding.

Zarina: This all sounds wonderful and speaks of the passion you brought. What is next for you?

Norbert: I plan a few months' break before formally retiring from the IMF. I remain passionate about capacity development and the region and may continue with teaching, project work, or supporting authorities in training and staff development. I also imagine doing some social work and enjoying skiing and hiking in Salzburg, where we will move — a location we chose in part because it offers a similar mix of nature and culture that we loved about Almaty. But I am also enthusiastic about CCAMTAC's future under Holger Floerkemeier. I am confident the center will reach the next level under his leadership.

But most of all: My best wishes to IMF and CCAMTAC colleagues, as well as our host country Kazakhstan, member countries, and development partners. My wife and I will be forever grateful for our time here.