

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

A meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was held on February 25, 2005 in Astana. The meeting was attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan K. Tokaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Peoples Republic of China Li Zhaoxing, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic A. Aytmatov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation S. Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan T. Nazarov, Deputy Prime Minister - Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan E. Ganiev. The meeting was also attended by the SCO Executive Secretary Zhang Deguang.

President N. Nazarbayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan met with the ministers of foreign affairs of the SCO member states.

The meeting was chaired by the Kazakh side. In a constructive and friendly manner it has discussed a number of topical issues of deepened cooperation and exchanged views on international issues of common interest.

The heads of foreign ministries have noted that following the meeting of the SCO's Council of Heads of State on June 17, 2004 in Tashkent and the meeting of the SCO's Council of Heads of Government on September 23, 2004 in Bishkek, the SCO has launched intensive efforts to implement the agreements on the expansion of multifaceted cooperation reached at these meetings.

When discussing matters related to the preparation for the next meeting of the Council of Heads of States of the SCO members scheduled to take place in summer 2005 in Astana, the meeting has emphasized the need to focus on key problems of further strengthening the capacity of the Organization to address modern challenges and threats to security and stability in the region and fulfill practical tasks of expanding multilateral cooperation in the political, economic and cultural fields.

The ministers have noted the relevance and importance of implementing the instruction of the heads of state to elaborate a comprehensive policy document addressing new challenges and threats in view of their transnational nature and the need for a consistent consolidation of efforts of the international community through multilateral dialogue and collective action. The ministers support measures undertaken within SCO to coordinate cooperation in the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism, and attach great importance to the forthcoming meeting of the Secretaries of Security Councils of the SCO member states to be held in spring 2005.

The heads of foreign ministries have stressed the importance of strengthening the SCO for ensuring peace and stability in Central Asia, *inter alia*, of measures taken by the states in the region to this end. They have confirmed the SCO willingness to actively cooperate with the UN, other international organizations and states on the basis of equality and mutual respect. It has been noted with satisfaction that the establishment of the SCO-Afghanistan Liaison Group is nearing completion. The ministers have called for the signing of memoranda of understanding between the SCO Secretariat and the ASEAN Secretariat, the SCO Secretariat and the CIS Executive Committee. They have noted the need to strictly implement the Program of Cooperation between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Member States for 2005.

The ministers have expressed their consensus on a wide range of international and regional issues. They have particularly noted the need to prevent, in the interest of peace and stability, the appearance of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula, continue the six-party talks and settle the nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue. The negotiators and the international community

should remain patient, demonstrate flexibility and good will, prevent aggravation of the situation and continue active joint efforts towards early resumption of the six-party talks.

The importance of an early signing of the Treaty on Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia has been underlined. It has been noted that the Central Asian states intend to sign the Treaty in July 2005 in Semipalatinsk.

The participants of the meeting have noted the constructive role of the meeting of deputy heads of ministries in charge of foreign economic and trade activities that was held on February 19 this year in Bishkek, in the implementation of the Plan of Actions in support of the implementation of the Program of Multilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation, improvement of the Plan implementation mechanism, as well as assistance in coordinating priority multilateral cooperation projects. A positive assessment has been voiced of the work conducted under the auspices of the Secretariat related to the establishment of the SCO Business Council, Development Fund and Forum that are designed to promote more effective implementation of the existing policy documents and joint strategic approaches to improved Organization's operations.

The heads of foreign ministries proceed from conviction that each of the member states of the Organization in their socio-political development enjoy the sovereign right to their own way that most adequately meets historical, cultural, ideological and other traditions established by the society. They believe that political stability and development of democratic procedures are interrelated processes that contribute to the progress and prosperity of the SCO member states.

The meeting has taken note of the reports by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan on the measures being taken in both countries to ensure that, on February 27, 2005, democratic, open and transparent parliamentary elections are held. The ministers have supported the proposal to send the SCO observers to these elections.

The ministers have stressed that further strengthening of confidence, expansion of political cooperation, *inter alia*, on security matters, development of trade and economic and investment cooperation as well as cultural and humanitarian ties within the Organization is one of the most important prerequisites for effectively addressing objectives and goals defined by the SCO Charter.

Astana, February 25, 2005