

PRESS RELEASE

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

A regular meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (hereinafter referred to as the SCO or the Organization) was held on May 11, 2012 in Beijing. The meeting was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan E. Kazyhanov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Yang Jiechi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic R. Kazakbaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation S. Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic Tajikistan H. Zarifi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan A. Kamilov.

The meeting was chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Yang Jiechi.

The SCO Secretary General M. Imanaliev and Director of the Executive Committee of the SCO Regional Antiterrorist Structure D. Dzhumanbekov participated in the meeting.

The ministers were received by Chairman Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China.

In the context of the preparation for the meeting of the Council of Heads of SCO member states to be held on June 6 - 7, 2012 in Beijing, the meeting discussed the issues of further deepening and improvement of multifaceted cooperation within the Organization and enhancing the SCO role in the international and regional affairs. A thorough exchange of views took place on the situation in the world and the region, as well as on the expansion of SCO relations with other countries and multilateral organizations.

The ministers stated that since the meeting of the Council of Heads of SCO member states (June 14-15, 2011, Astana) to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Organization, the member states had worked hard to strengthen practical cooperation in politics, security, economy and humanitarian ties as well as in establishing international and regional level partnerships, which made a significant contribution to regional security, stability, development and prosperity.

The ministers believe that the current international situation remains complex with persistent instability and uncertainty, non-declining terrorism-related threats, continued turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa. These factors represent a potential threat to the stability in the region.

The ministers expressed concern over the current situation in Afghanistan and noted that the developments in this country affected the peace and stability in the region. The parties support the central role of the UN in resolving the situation in Afghanistan, as well as the desire of the Afghan people to restore peace and revive the country. They have reiterated that the SCO advocates Afghanistan becoming an independent, peaceful, neutral and prosperous nation. The ministers decided to submit to the Council of Heads of SCO Member States the issue of granting a SCO observer status to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

The foreign ministers agreed to submit for approval by the forthcoming meeting of the Council of Heads of SCO Member States a new edition of the Regulation on political and diplomatic measures and mechanisms of SCO response to situations threatening peace, security and stability in the region.

The ministers reaffirmed the intention to deepen cooperation in areas such as joint struggle against terrorism, separatism and extremism, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. They have noted the importance of the elaboration of a Program of cooperation of SCO member states in combating terrorism, separatism and extremism for 2013-2015 for the consolidation of the member states' efforts in these areas.

The ministers noted the importance of cooperation between member states in ensuring international information security both within the SCO and in other international organizations and forums.

The parties note that strengthened mutually beneficial cooperation among the SCO member states in trade, economic, investment, financial, transport, telecommunications, agriculture, and innovation areas contributes to their sustainable development. They have expressed willingness to intensify efforts aimed at the preparation of joint projects in these areas, continue work on the establishment of the SCO mechanisms of the financial support to the project activities, *inter alia*, on a phased establishment of the SCO Special Account, SCO Development Bank and other financial and credit institution the parties agree to, taking into account the forthcoming meeting of finance ministers and chairmen of national (central) banks of the SCO member states scheduled for May 16-17, 2012.

The ministers believe that the establishment of the legal framework underpinning improved favorable conditions for international road transport would give a significant impetus to the intensification of trade and economic cooperation within the Organization.

The ministers were pleased to note that the success of the activities that were part of the “SCO Year of Good-neighborliness and Friendship” helped to strengthen the traditional friendship between the peoples of the Organization’s member states and enhance opportunities for their further cooperation.

The ministers called for further development of cooperation in the scientific, technical, cultural and humanitarian fields, as well as in public health and tourism and natural and manmade disasters relief.

They have submitted for the review and approval by the Council of Heads of State, draft Guidelines for the SCO mid-term development strategy. This document defines the benchmarks for the cooperation among the member states in the future and aims to improve the capacity of the Organization to efficiently address the tasks faced by it that relate to the consolidation of peace in the SCO region.

They stressed the need for greater involvement of the SCO observer states and dialogue partners with the practical cooperation within the Organization. The SCO confirmed readiness to further strengthen cooperation in international and regional affairs with the UN and other international and regional organizations.

The ministers decided to submit to the Council of Heads of SCO Member States the issue of granting a SCO dialogue partner status to the Republic of Turkey.

The SCO Secretary-General M. Imanaliev presented a Report on the Secretariat work over the past year, which was approved by the ministers.

The meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the SCO member states was held in a traditional spirit of friendship and mutual understanding.