



THE ROLE OF UZBEKISTAN IN STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION WITHIN THE SCO

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Abstract

The international legal cooperation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an important tool for solving many international problems, including the development of cooperation between states in areas such as the economy, peace and security, protection of human rights, and improving the quality of life of citizens. Another important element of international legal cooperation is the development of regional and international standards in the field of human rights and democratic values. The SCO actively participates in international organizations such as the UN, OSCE, CSTO, and the Eurasian Economic Union.

As is known, Uzbekistan was the last of the current permanent members of the SCO to join the organization. For the first time, the leadership of Uzbekistan was invited as a guest to the meeting of the "Five" by Tajikistan in 2000. And a year later, in 2001, a full-fledged organization was created in Shanghai, which now had six member countries. Uzbekistan became a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001. In subsequent years, Uzbekistan consistently adhered to the position that the SCO, as a multipolar structure of Central Asian countries, is necessary for effective cooperation with Russia and China, as well as for discussing urgent issues between the countries of the region.

In addition, there are several features of Uzbekistan's participation in the SCO. Analyzing Uzbekistan's activity in the organization, Tashkent tries to use the SCO format for regional security and cooperation in the international arena. Many international experts note that Uzbekistan, led by then-President Islam Karimov, learned to skillfully use the SCO at the right moment to send important messages to its partners.

Over the years, Uzbekistan has chaired and hosted meetings of member states on its territory. The first Tashkent summit was held in June 2004. At the SCO summit in 2004, the Convention on the privileges and immunities, the Agreement on





cooperation in the fight against illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, the SCO Statute on the status of observer and a number of other documents were signed. Pakistan, India, Iran, and Mongolia were granted observer status in the SCO. At the initiative of the first President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, the leaders of Afghanistan were invited to the summit as guests for the first time. Later, Afghanistan was granted observer status in the SCO.

The events held during Uzbekistan's second chairmanship also took SCO work to a new level. During the visit of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to Uzbekistan in April 2010, a Joint Declaration on Cooperation between the SCO and the UN Secretariat was signed, which laid the foundation for relations between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and this global organization.

As the first chair of the SCO, Uzbekistan gave new meaning to the organization's work. On June 17, 2004, during the Tashkent Summit, the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure was created as a permanent body of the organization. The Council of the General Secretariat of the Security Council was also established. This was a key factor in strengthening peace and stability, preventing a range of threats and challenges, which is one of the main goals of the SCO.

The next SCO summit, chaired by Uzbekistan, took place in Tashkent in June 2010. At this summit, the Regulations on New Membership in the SCO and the Rules of Procedure of the SCO were approved. Agreements were signed between the governments of SCO member states on cooperation in agriculture and the fight against crime. A new agreement on cooperation in agriculture and the fight against crime was also signed between SCO member states.

During the summit, priorities for multilateral cooperation were discussed, as well as issues related to regional and global events. Muratbek Imanaliev, the SCO Secretary-General from 2010 to 2012, noted before the Tashkent Summit in 2010 that over nine years, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization had become an effective forum for equal and mutually beneficial cooperation among six countries united by a common desire to ensure peace and stability in the region. The enormous human and natural resources, impressive industrial, agricultural, and scientific and technical potential, and most importantly, strong historical ties of good neighborliness and friendship between the peoples of SCO member states allowed for optimism about the prospects for political and economic cooperation in the region.

The member states of the SCO have always adhered to the principle of respecting each other's right to choose their own paths of development in various areas, taking into account their historical experience and national characteristics. This principle is





enshrined in all the fundamental documents of the SCO, including the SCO Charter and the Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation.

As Muratbek Imanaliev emphasized, the role of the organization as an authoritative international organization has been further strengthened thanks to important initiatives by Uzbekistan. Significant contributions have been made to promoting cooperation in the field of regional security and stability, developing cooperation in the fields of economy, investment, and transport, and great attention has been paid to improving the effectiveness of the SCO's activities. The efforts of the partners have strengthened the role of the SCO as an international organization.

The active role of the chairmanship was vividly demonstrated by the Joint Declaration on Cooperation signed between the SCO and the UN Secretariat in Tashkent on April 5, 2010, which formalized the main principles and directions of interaction between the two organizations.

Thus, the SCO Tashkent Summit of 2010 was historic, as it confirmed the prospects for the SCO to enter a new stage of comprehensive development based on equal and mutually beneficial partnership in various areas and its role as a key element in strengthening regional security and stability.

In addition, as is known, in addition to meetings with the participation of the heads of state of the Organization, there are also meetings of the Council of Heads of Government, where prime ministers, foreign ministers, and other officials represent their respective countries. In November 2013, the twelfth meeting of the prime ministers of the SCO member states was held in Tashkent, where opinions were exchanged on a wide range of issues related to global and regional economic development, as well as trade, economic, and humanitarian cooperation within the SCO framework.

Decisions were made to continue work on the establishment of the SCO Development Bank and the SCO Development Fund, and a joint statement was issued by the heads of state and government of the SCO on further cooperation in the field of transportation.

Uzbekistan also chaired the SCO in 2016. On June 23-24, 2016, the SCO held its summit in Tashkent, where the main achievements of the organization's 15-year work were discussed. Delegations from observer states also participated in the extended meeting. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed regarding India and Pakistan's commitment to SCO membership.

Uzbekistan paid special attention to the development of international relations between SCO member states and the effectiveness of the organization by developing and implementing initiatives in the field of security and stability.





The heads of state and government reviewed the main achievements of the SCO's 15-year work and emphasized the organization's emergence as an important and influential player on the international stage.

Participants noted that international terrorism, extremism, and other manifestations of these threats pose a danger to all countries in the world. The only way to deal with these challenges is through joint efforts and the activation of the international community's efforts.

In accordance with the provisions of the SCO Charter and other documents, the development and implementation of measures to jointly combat terrorism, separatism, extremism, illegal production and trafficking of drugs, illegal arms trade, ammunition, and explosives, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means will remain among the priorities of cooperation within the organization.

The parties noted the need to intensify joint efforts to create a safe, neutral, and open information space based on the principles of cooperation, respect for national sovereignty, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.

The meeting discussed the priorities of multilateral cooperation, as well as current issues related to regional and global events.

Special attention was paid to taking effective measures to counter economic downturns, introducing innovative technologies, creating a favorable investment and business climate, implementing long-term mutually beneficial projects in priority areas of cooperation, and exchanging experiences in infrastructure development.

Special attention was paid to the progress achieved in cooperation in the fields of transport and communication, energy, and culture.

The heads of observer countries' delegations also participated in the meeting: President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani, President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, Prime Minister of the Republic of India Narendra Modi, President of Mongolia Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Mamnoon Hussain, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif, and the guest of the summit - President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. Also present were the Secretary-General of the SCO at the time, Rashid Alimov, and Evgeniy Sysoev, Director of the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure.

The meeting was also attended by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Jeffrey Feldman, the Chairman of the Executive Committee and Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Sergei Lebedev, the Secretary-





General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Nikolai Bordyuzha, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, Le Luong Minh, and the Secretary-General of the Conference on Confidence-Building Measures and Regional Security in Asia, Gun Jie. An important event in the process of expanding the SCO was the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding at the Tashkent Summit, according to which the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan became members of the SCO. It was emphasized that with India and Pakistan becoming full members of the SCO, the potential of the organization will increase, and it will further strengthen its role on the international stage as a multilateral mechanism for solving current problems of security, stability, and sustainable development in the region and around the world. The summit leaders welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, which granted the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Cambodia, and Nepal the status of SCO dialogue partners. The summit made decisions on the approval of the Tashkent Declaration dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the SCO, the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Development Strategy until 2025 for 2016-2020, and the Cooperation and Development Program for SCO Member States in the field of tourism. The achievements of Uzbekistan during its presidency in the SCO were highly appreciated at the meeting. The then Secretary-General of the SCO, Rashid Alimov, emphasized the historical significance of Uzbekistan's presidency in the SCO, the high level of organization of the presidency, and the Tashkent Summit as a whole.

Furthermore, the importance of Uzbekistan's role in the SCO is not limited to security matters. The country has also been actively promoting economic cooperation and regional integration within the organization. During its presidency, Uzbekistan has been working to enhance trade and investment ties among member states, as well as to promote the development of transport and communication infrastructure in the region.

In addition, Uzbekistan has been actively promoting cultural and humanitarian cooperation within the SCO. The country has been hosting various cultural events and exchanges, as well as educational and scientific programs, aimed at promoting mutual understanding and respect among member states.

Overall, the Tashkent Summit of the SCO in 2016 was a significant milestone in the organization's history, as it marked the expansion of its membership and the strengthening of its role as a key player in regional and global affairs. Uzbekistan's presidency of the organization during this period was instrumental in achieving these goals, and the country's active engagement in promoting economic, cultural, and





humanitarian cooperation within the SCO has been widely recognized and appreciated by member states and international partners alike.

At the Tashkent summit, the heads of state and government continued to promote multilateral cooperation in the field of transport and the creation of international transport corridors to connect Asia and Europe, as well as the need to implement joint infrastructure projects to expand the economically justified transport and communication potential and realize the transit potential of the region.

The summit leaders also expressed their support for further expanding mutually beneficial cooperation with observer states and dialogue partners to enhance the potential for joint activities within the SCO framework. In this regard, it is important to fully engage the SCO Business Council and the SCO Interbank Consortium.

The decision of the Tashkent summit gave a new impetus to the development and further progress of the organization. At the same time, its goal remains unchanged, clear, and simple: peace, stability, and development in the "SCO region". With its decisions, the organization has made a significant contribution to the situation in Eurasia and global stability. The summit confirmed that the SCO is a living and constantly developing organization, but at the same time firmly adhering to established traditions and a culture of dialogue.

Another historic summit of modern times that took place in Uzbekistan was the Samarkand Summit of 2022. At the SCO summit held in Samarkand on September 15-16, 2022, a decision was made to admit six new dialogue partners, including four Arab countries. It was also decided to begin the process of Belarus joining the SCO. About 40 documents were signed at the Samarkand summit, including a comprehensive plan for implementing the Convention on Long-term Good-neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation. In addition, a concept for cooperation in developing mutual relations and creating effective transport corridors, a program for industrial cooperation, and a provision on the honorary title of "SCO Ambassador of Goodwill" were signed. Speaking at the SCO summit in Samarkand, UN Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo stated that the UN supports contacts with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which "leads regional diplomacy in Eurasia," on many issues, including security, the situation in Afghanistan, and the fight against terrorism.

Uzbekistan, as a chair country, has striven and strives to strictly adhere to the principles of continuity and stable strengthening, mutually beneficial development that meet the interests of the SCO member states and ensure the steady growth of the organization's authority in the international arena.





Actual tasks remain the development of measures to build up joint efforts in the fight against terrorism, extremism and separatism, the preparation of adequate responses to modern challenges to international and regional security, and the sustainable economic and human development of all SCO member states. In order to strengthen the role of the SCO as a reliable guarantor of regional stability and development, measures to strengthen interaction between member states and further develop relations with the UN, other international organizations and interested countries will be of great importance.

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