



MILITARY

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

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The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an intergovernmental international organization founded in Shanghai on 15 June 2001 by six countries: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Its member states cover an area of over 30 million km², or about three fifths of Eurasia, with a population of 1.455 billion, about a quarter of the world's total. Its working languages are Chinese and Russian.

SCO's predecessor, the Shanghai Five mechanism, originated and grew from the endeavor by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to strengthen confidence-building and disarmament in the border regions. In 1996 and 1997, their heads of state met in Shanghai and Moscow respectively and signed the Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions and the Treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in Border Regions. There after, this annual meeting became a regular practice and has been held alternately in the five member states. The topics of the meeting gradually extended from building up trust in the border regions to mutually beneficial cooperation in the political, security, diplomatic, economic, trade and other areas among the five states. The President of Uzbekistan was invited to the 2000 Dushanbe Summit as a guest of the host state. As the first meeting of the five heads of state took place in Shanghai, the cooperation mechanism was later known as the "Shanghai Five".

On the fifth anniversary of the Shanghai Five in June 2001, the heads of state of its members and the President of Uzbekistan met in Shanghai, the birthplace of the mechanism. First they signed a joint declaration admitting Uzbekistan as member of the Shanghai Five mechanism and then jointly issued the Declaration on the Establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The document announced that for the purpose of upgrading the level of cooperation to more effectively seize opportunities and deal with new challenges and threats, the six states had decided to establish a Shanghai Cooperation Organization on the basis of the Shanghai Five mechanism.

In June 2002, the heads of SCO member states met in St. Petersburg and signed the SCO Charter, which clearly expounded the SCO purposes and principles, organizational structure, form of operation, cooperation, orientation and external relations, marking the actual establishment of this new organization in the sense of international law.

Iran appears increasingly interested in joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and form a powerful axis with its twin pillars, China and Russia, as a counterweight to a US power "unchained". The SCO was initially set up as an open and nonaligned organization and it was not initially targeted at a third party. Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Li Hui said that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) will not take in new members before its six members make serious studies. The organization is still very young and the six SCO members need to have further discussions before deciding whether or not to accept new members, Li said 01 June 2004. Mongolia's demand to participate in the organization as an 'observer' was approved at the June 2004 summit. Guidelines on the status of observer nations were approved and it was decided to award Mongolia this new status.

On 17 June 2004, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization held its annual Summit in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Attending this conference was Chinese President Hu Jintao, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Kyrgyzstan President Askar Akayev, Tajikistan President Emomali Rakhmonov, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov. Much of the pre-summit media attention included what Russian President Putin and Chinese President Hu hoped would facilitate the development of economic relations between the SCO countries. This appeared to have been successful. At the conclusion of the summit, the leaders signed a document titled the Tashkent Declaration. The declaration summarized the outcome of the SCO's work since it was set up, evaluated the activities of the organization's agencies and set new goals. They also signed agreements on cooperation in fighting drug trafficking and on the protection of secret information in the framework of the SCO anti-terrorist agency, whose headquarters were opened in Tashkent.

Several meetings were conducted on the sidelines of the Summit. Chinese President Hu Jintao met with Afghanistan Transitional President Hamid Karzai, who was a guest of Uzbek President Islam Karimov, and they discussed Afghanistan's attempts to locate and bring to justice the terrorists who attacked Chinese workers there. In other meetings, Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev handed over to Hu Jintao a written document to confirm Kyrgyzstan's stance to recognize China's full market economy status. Hu said the move by Kyrgyzstan will "greatly push forward China-Kyrgyzstan bilateral trade and economic cooperation." Hu made a four-point proposal in meeting with Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov on strengthening cooperation. Hu said the two sides should support each other on

major issues, enhance law-enforcement cooperation to fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism, as well improve economic relations and cultural exchanges. Rakhmonov said he agreed with Hu's proposals. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev visited China last month and the two sides signed a number of agreements to cement cooperation primarily in oil and natural gas as well as in other areas. Russia and Uzbekistan signed a strategic-partnership treaty, with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Uzbek President Islam Karimov hailing it as a new stage in long-term relations.

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