

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO)

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organization established on 15 June 2001 by China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to strengthen mutual confidence and good neighborly relations and to promote effective cooperation in politics, trade and economy, science and technology, energy, among others. It also aims at making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region and moving towards the establishment of a new, democratic, just and rational political and economic international order.

It was originally formed as a confidence-building forum to demilitarize borders, but the organization's goals and agenda have since broadened to include increased military and counter terrorism cooperation, intelligence sharing and regional economic initiatives.

Goals and Tasks of SCO

The main goals and tasks of SCO as mentioned in the Charter are:

- to strengthen mutual trust, friendship and good neighborliness between the member States;
- to consolidate multidisciplinary cooperation in the maintenance and strengthening of peace, security and stability in the region and promotion of a new democratic, fair and rational political and economic international order;
- to jointly counteract terrorism, separatism and extremism in all their manifestations, to fight against illicit narcotics and arms trafficking and other types of criminal activity of a transnational character, and also illegal migration;
- to encourage the efficient regional cooperation in such spheres as politics, trade and economy, defense, law enforcement, environment protection, culture, science and technology, education, energy, transport, credit and finance, and also other spheres of common interest;
- to facilitate comprehensive and balanced economic growth, social and cultural development in the region through joint action on the basis of equal partnership;
- to coordinate approaches to integration into the global economy; to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the international obligations of the member States and their national legislation;
- to maintain and develop relations with other States and international organizations;
- to cooperate in the prevention of international conflicts and in their peaceful settlement;
- to jointly search for solutions to the problems that would arise in the 21st century.

Principles of SCO

The Charter of the SCO has set the following principles:

- mutual respect of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity of States and inviolability of State borders, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, nonuse of force or threat of its use in international relations, seeking no unilateral military superiority in adjacent areas
- equality of all member States, search of common positions on the basis of mutual understanding and respect for opinions of each of them
- gradual implementation of joint activities in the spheres of mutual interest
- peaceful settlement of disputes between the member States
- SCO being not directed against other States and international organizations
- prevention of any illegitimate acts directed against the SCO interests
- implementation of obligations arising out of the present Charter and other documents adopted within the framework of SCO, in good faith

Areas of Cooperation

The following are the main areas of cooperation within SCO as envisioned in the Charter:

- maintenance of peace and enhancing security and confidence in the region;
- development and implementation of measures aimed at jointly counteracting terrorism, separatism and extremism, illicit narcotics and arms trafficking and other types of criminal activity of a transnational character, and also illegal migration;
- coordination of efforts in the field of disarmament and arms control;
- support for, and promotion of regional economic cooperation in various forms, for fostering favorable environment for trade and investments with a view to gradually achieving free flow of goods, capitals, services and technologies;
- effective use of available transportation and communication infrastructure, improvement of transit capabilities of member States and development of energy systems;
- sound environmental management, including water resources management in the region, and implementation of particular joint environmental programs and projects;
- mutual assistance in preventing natural and man-made disasters and elimination of their implications;
- exchange of legal information in the interests of development of cooperation within SCO;
- development of interaction in such spheres as science and technology, education, health care, culture, sports and tourism.

Member States

China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are the founding members of SCO. As per the decision of the 15th SCO Summit held in Ufa Russia, India and Pakistan have joined the organization as new members in 2017.

The SCO has four observer states (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia) and six dialogue partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, **Nepal**, Sri Lanka and Turkey).

Institutional Mechanism

- **Council of Heads of State:** It is the apex body of SCO which holds its regular meeting once a year.
- **Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers):** It is the mechanism to approve the budget of the organization, to consider and decide upon major issues related to particular, especially economic, spheres of interaction within organization. It also meets once a year.
- **Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs:** it considers issues related to day-to-day activities of the organization, preparation of meetings of the Council of Heads of State/Government, among others.
- **Meetings of Heads of Ministries and/or Agencies:** These meetings take place only if decided to convene by the Heads of State/Government.
- **Council of National Coordinators:** The Council prepares draft agenda and outcome documents for the meetings of Heads of State/Government as well as those of all ministerial meetings.

Secretariat

The Secretariat of SCO is located in Beijing. H.E. Mr. Rashid Alimov from Tajikistan is the current Secretary General of SCO (Jan 2016- Dec 2018).

Nepal and SCO

Nepal had expressed interest to be associated with the SCO in 2007. Subsequently, the 15th SCO Summit, and the Council of Head of State (9-10 July 2015) held in Ufa, Russia decided to grant Nepal the status of Dialogue Partner of the SCO. Nepal formally joined SCO as its dialogue partner after signing the MOU with the SCO Secretariat on 22 March 2016.

Foreign Secretary of Nepal, Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi and SCO Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Rashid Alimov signed the Memorandum on granting Nepal the status of Dialogue Partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation at the SCO Secretariat in Beijing.

Nepal as a Dialogue Partner is committed to participate in all future activities of the SCO and engage on the areas of cooperation mentioned in the Memorandum for her benefit.