

## **Press release on the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers meeting**

On 24 April 2018, Beijing hosted a meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) attended by Foreign Minister of India Sushma Swaraj, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kairat Abdrakhmanov, State Councillor and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China Wang Yi, Foreign Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic Erlan Abdyldayev, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan Sirodjidin Aslov, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov, as well as SCO Secretary-General Rashid Alimov and Director of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure Yevgeny Sysoyev.

State Councillor and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China Wang Yi chaired the meeting.

The heads of delegations were received by President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping.

The ministers took note of progress in the implementation of the decisions of the SCO Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting that took place in Astana, Kazakhstan, between 8 and 9 June 2017, and the SCO Heads of Government Council meeting that took place in Sochi between 30 November and 1 December 2017. They pointed out that the SCO has established itself as a prominent intergovernmental

organisation of a new kind and an authoritative international actor by acting in the Shanghai Spirit, which stands for mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, coordination, respect for diversity and the determination to foster cooperative development.

The ministers strongly believe that through strict adherence to the SCO Charter and acting in the Shanghai Spirit, SCO member states will implement the provisions of the Treaty on Long-Term Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation in a consistent and effective manner alongside other SCO treaties and agreements in force. They also affirmed their commitment to develop and reinforce multifaceted cooperation on practical matters, mutual understanding and unity with the view to strengthening peace, stability and security, and ensuring sustainable development and prosperity in the region.

As part of preparations for the SCO Heads of State Council meeting that will take place in June 2018 in Qingdao, China, the ministers reviewed priorities in terms of furthering the development of the SCO in the wake of India's and Pakistan's accession to the organisation. They also discussed topical international and regional matters.

The draft Qingdao declaration of the heads of state and a press release on the outcome of the SCO Heads of State Council Meeting were approved in principle. The ministers noted that the world is rapidly developing and undergoing unprecedented change with the emergence of a multipolar world order, an increasingly globalised world economy, and enhanced connectivity and interdependence between states.

At the same time, the world is still facing the risks of instability, uncertainty, political tension, regional crises and conflicts. The destructive attempts to use unilateral restrictive measures for exerting political and economic pressure on sovereign states continue. In this connection, the foreign ministers stressed the need to follow multilateral approaches for resolving the issues the world is facing, and respond to various threats and challenges by improving global governance based on a collective approach. This in turn would facilitate the emergence of a new form of international relations based on mutual trust, justice, equality, mutually beneficial cooperation, as well as the emergence of a community of common destiny.

The ministers emphasised the accelerating transformation of the nature and geography of unconventional challenges in the world, and the need for the international community to come up with collective approaches to countering the threats posed by terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, communicable diseases, climate change, etc.

In this context, the foreign ministers noted that the adoption of the Action Plan for 2018-2022 on the Implementation of the Treaty on Long-Term Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation between the SCO Member States and the Programme of Cooperation among SCO Member States on Counter-Terrorist, Counter-Separatist and Counter-Extremist Measures for 2019-2021 will contribute to stepping up joint efforts in these areas.

The ministers stressed the growing need for the global community to stand up for the aims and principles enshrined in the UN Charter as well as other generally accepted international norms, and confirmed their commitment to step up

coordination efforts within the UN with the view to strengthening its central role in global governance and delivering on the goals of achieving universal peace, shared development and international cooperation, including in efforts to counter terrorism, separatism and extremism.

The ministers took note of the intention of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Tajikistan to apply for non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council.

The ministers emphasised the need to devise universal rules of responsible conduct by states in the information space and called for greater cooperation within the SCO under the 2009 Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Ensuring International Information Security. In this regard, they praised the results of the meeting of the SCO Expert Group on International Information Security that took place in Wuhan, China, between 24 and 26 January 2018.

The ministers noted the efforts by the government and people of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to achieve national reconciliation and build a peaceful, stable, united and prosperous state free from terrorism, extremism or drug trafficking. They called on the international community to step up cooperation, with the UN playing its central coordinating role, in order to promote a political settlement in Afghanistan and facilitate sustainable economic development and the well-being of the people of Afghanistan.

The ministers welcomed the outcome of the Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan "Peace process, security cooperation and regional connectivity" (27 March 2018) as a positive contribution to the peace process and recovery efforts in Afghanistan.

The ministers noted the results of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group meeting (Moscow, 11 October 2017) and supported holding the next regular meeting of the Contact Group in May 2018 in Beijing.

The ministers confirmed their shared belief that an inclusive political process led by the Syrians themselves is the only way to settle the crisis in Syria. The foreign ministers are committed to the inviolability of Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. They also noted the importance of the Astana and Geneva processes, as well as the outcome of the Syrian National Dialogue Congress (30 January 2018, Sochi) and their major contribution to advancing the political settlement in Syria.

The ministers expressed grave concerns about the missile strikes launched by three permanent members of the UN Security Council on Syrian territory on 14 April 2018. They believe that actions discussed at UN Security Council meeting No. 8233 on 14 April 2018 make the suffering of the Syrian people only worse. In this regard, the ministers stressed the importance of showing restraint in order to avoid further escalation and called for strengthening the key role of the UN and its Security Council as the main body tasked under the UN Charter with maintaining international peace, stability and security.

The ministers spoke in favour of consistency in implementing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme and stressed the importance of strict compliance by the parties with their obligations in order to ensure its full and effective implementation, as well as to promote peace and stability in the region.

The ministers emphasised the need to find a political settlement to the crisis in Ukraine based on rapid and full implementation of the Minsk Agreements of 12 February 2015.

The ministers noted the need to promote mutually beneficial cooperation of SCO member states with observer states and dialogue partners, as well as partner international organisations and forums.

The foreign ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan reaffirmed their support for China's Belt and Road initiative and called for using the capabilities of regional states, international organisations and multilateral bodies to build a broad, inclusive, mutually beneficial and equal partnership within the SCO.

The ministers noted the importance of stepping up trade, economic, financial, scientific and technical, cultural and humanitarian cooperation for the sustainable development of SCO member states. In this connection, they spoke out in favour of further improving the international legal framework in these areas.

The SCO Foreign Ministers' Council submitted to the Council of SCO Heads of State the candidacy of Vladimir Norov (Uzbekistan) for the position of SCO Secretary-General for the period from 1 January 2019 through 31 December 2021.

The ministers approved a report on the work of the SCO Secretariat in 2017 and a draft report on the SCO's performance in 2017, and were briefed on the activities of SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure.

The ministers also adopted decisions on a number of issues regarding the organisation's operations and the upcoming meeting of the SCO Heads of State Council in Qingdao.

The ministers praised the work of China, now presiding in the SCO, to prepare the meeting of the SCO Heads of State Council in Qingdao, and expressed confidence that it will be a valuable contribution to strengthening neighbourly relations, friendship, cohesion, mutual trust and mutually beneficial cooperation among SCO member states.

The meeting took place in the spirit of friendship and mutual understanding that traditionally characterises relations between SCO member states.