

PRESS RELEASE

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

A regular meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO CMFA) was held on April 29, 2003, in Almaty. It was attended by the Secretary of State - Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan K. Tokaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Peoples Republic of China Li Zhaoxing, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic A. Aitmatov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation I. Ivanov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan T. Nazarov and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan I. Nematov.

The meeting has reviewed the progress of the preparation of the meeting of the heads of the SCO member states to be held on May 28-29 of this year in Moscow and the meeting of the heads of government (Prime Ministers) of the SCO member states scheduled for September this year in China.

The heads of the delegations heard the report of the Council of National Coordinators that was requested by St. Petersburg SCO summit of June 7, 2002 to prepare draft documents governing SCO bodies stipulated by the Organization's Charter, and they have decided to submit them for consideration by the heads of the SCO member states.

Views have been exchanged on conceptual approaches to the final political document of the SCO Summit held in Moscow.

The participants of the meeting have expressed their conviction that the scheduled meeting of the heads of government (Prime Ministers) of the SCO member states will give an additional impetus to the development of the SCO cooperation in practical areas, in particular, in economic cooperation. In this context, great importance will be attached to the adoption of the long-term Program of Multilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Following an exchange of views on a number of current international issues, the foreign ministers have called for the strengthened role of the United Nations and its Security Council in maintaining international stability and security.

Regarding the Iraqi crisis, the parties believe that the first priority is to ensure transition to peace in this country and address humanitarian issues. They have stressed the important role of the UN in the post-conflict settlement in Iraq.

Having exchanged views on the situation in Afghanistan, the parties have expressed support to the Interim Government of Afghanistan efforts to stabilize the situation in the country. The SCO countries believe that the latest world events should not weaken the efforts of the international community aimed at the implementation of the proclaimed goals of economic recovery in Afghanistan.

Given the emerging trend of increased illicit drug trafficking, which is the main funding source for transnational crime and international terrorism, the SCO member states plan to conclude, in a near future, a multilateral Agreement on Cooperation in Combating Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursors.

It has been confirmed that the SCO is willing to work constructively with other states and international organizations in order to ensure international security and mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields.

The heads of the official delegations were received by President N. Nazarbayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan. He has expressed satisfaction with the results of the meeting of the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers and has underlined that Kazakhstan attaches priority importance to the Organization and view it as a promising regional association possessing powerful potential.

The meeting was held in the friendly and confidential atmosphere traditional for the SCO.

Almaty, April 29, 2003