

Joint Communiqué
following the 20th Meeting of the Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers) of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

The 20th meeting of the Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers) of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was held on 25 November 2021 via videoconference. The event was attended by Minister of External Affairs of the Republic of India Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan Askar Mamin, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Li Keqiang, Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic Akylbek Japarov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Mikhail Mishustin, Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan Kokhir Rasulzoda and Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov.

Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan Askar Mamin chaired the meeting.

Taking part in the event were SCO Secretary-General Vladimir Norov, Director of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) Executive Committee Jumakhon Giyosov, Chair of the SCO Business Council Board Jamshed Jumahonzoda, and Board Chairman of the SCO Interbank Association Sirojiddin Ikromi.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of the SCO observer states: Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus Roman Golovchenko, First Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mohammad Mokhber and Prime Minister of Mongolia Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene, as well as Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedov as the guest of the host country, and Deputy Executive Director of the Secretariat of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) Chi Fang.

The delegation heads exchanged views on a broad range of international and regional development issues and discussed trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation in the SCO space in a friendly, constructive and business-like atmosphere.

In light of the 20th anniversary of the SCO, they pointed out the Organisation's successful development as an effective mechanism of equal partnership based on the Shanghai spirit. It has taken a befitting place in the system of international organisations of multilateral cooperation and has become a full member of the main international processes.

The delegation heads expressed their appreciation of Tajikistan's SCO Chairmanship and reaffirmed the SCO member states' readiness to work energetically to fulfil the decisions of the jubilee SCO summit held in Dushanbe on 16-17 September 2021. The adoption of the SCO anthem and the Regulations on the SCO Anthem was an important step in enhancing the international authority of the organisation.

The delegation heads expressed support for Uzbekistan's SCO Chairmanship in 2021-2022.

The delegation heads pointed out, with due regard for the member states' opinions, the importance of the initiatives on promoting interaction in the development of a new type of international relations in the spirit of mutual respect, justice, equality and mutually beneficial cooperation, as well as the development of a common vision regarding the community of common destiny for mankind.

The delegation heads noted the SCO's substantial contribution to regional security, global economic development and social, cultural and scientific ties in the region.

The delegation heads emphasised that the SCO member states would continue developing cooperation in the fields of politics and security, trade, the economy, finance and investment, as well as cultural and humanitarian ties towards a peaceful, safe, prosperous and ecologically friendly planet.

The delegation heads noted that the global economy was dealing with the negative consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, as well as increased protectionism, such as unilateral trade restrictions, which is hindering sustainable and balanced economic growth. A current priority is the management of financial and economic risks rooted in climate change, the depletion of resources and environmental degradation.

They reaffirmed their countries' mutual support in the battle against COVID-19 and welcomed the adoption of the plan of joint advisory measures aimed at overcoming the negative social and economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic (17 September 2021, Dushanbe) as a major step towards national economic recovery.

In this context, the delegation heads mentioned the importance of effectively using the potential of the multilateral trade and economic cooperation created during the process of the SCO's activities. The cooperation priorities should be the expansion and deepening of ties in the fields of finance, trade, investment, industry, transport, energy, agriculture, digital economy and other spheres, including the drafting of joint programmes and projects in the interests of the sustainable socioeconomic development of the SCO member states. They also highlighted the importance of the steadfast fulfilment of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the SCO Development Strategy until 2025 (10 November 2020, Moscow), and the SCO member states' contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Organisation (UN).

The delegation heads noted the initiative to develop and adopt an Economic Development Strategy for the SCO Region until 2030.

The delegation heads supported the initiative of SCO financial institutions and development institutions that are part of the SCO Interbank Consortium (SCO IBC) aimed at restoring the stability of the global economy and stimulating its further sustainable growth, with interested member states supporting it through implementing the SCO IBC Roadmap to relieve the economic consequences of the pandemic in the region (30 October 2020, Moscow) and the Strategy for the further development of the SCO IBC for the medium term (2022-2026) (16 September 2021, Dushanbe).

The delegation heads reaffirmed that the SCO member states consider it important to further improve the architecture of global economic governance, and to consistently strengthen an open, transparent, fair, inclusive and non-discriminatory multilateral trade system based on the principles and rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). They will promote the development of an open global economy based on the principles of

multilateralism, mutual consultation and mutual benefit, maintaining a smooth and stable operation of sustainable and diversified industrial supply chains, and they will oppose unilateral protectionist policies.

The delegation heads underlined the importance of improving the efficiency of the WTO as a key platform for discussing the international trade agenda and the adoption of multilateral trading system rules. In this regard, they reiterated their support for an early implementation of an inclusive reform of the WTO, with an emphasis on its development and adaptation to modern economic realities, as well as on the effective implementation of its monitoring, negotiation and dispute resolution functions.

The delegation heads noted the results of the 20th Meeting of Ministers of the SCO Member States Responsible for Foreign Economic and Foreign Trade Activities (14 October 2021, via videoconference).

The delegation heads, guided by the Joint Statement of the Heads of SCO Member States on Trade Facilitation (10 June 2018, Qingdao), called for continued efforts to develop and improve approaches to trade facilitation in the region.

The delegation heads commended the approval of the Concept for the SCO Economic Forum (17 September 2021, Dushanbe), a new platform to contribute to the development of and further deepening of trade and economic ties between the member states. They also noted the importance of the second meeting of the SCO Consortium of Economic Analysis Centres (27 September 2021, via videoconference), which should further develop proposals for hands-on implementation of its programme documents, and help draft new SCO trade and economic cooperation agreements.

The delegation heads noted the importance of joint promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives in line with the Memorandum of Understanding on Promoting Cooperation within the SCO in the field of micro, small and medium-sized businesses (10 June 2018, Qingdao).

The delegation heads highlighted the importance of a consistent implementation of the Programme for the Development of Interregional Cooperation of the SCO Member States (14 June 2019, Bishkek).

They praised the outcome of the second SCO Member States' Heads of Regions Forum (28-30 September 2021, Chelyabinsk), as well as China's initiative to create a China-SCO Local Economic and Trade Cooperation Demonstration Zone in Qingdao.

In order to give effect to the general understanding of the importance of unlocking the economic potential of the SCO reached at the highest level, including providing financial support for project activities, the delegation heads spoke in favour of continuing consultations on the creation of the SCO Development Bank and the SCO Development Fund (Special Account), as well as developing a draft roadmap on the gradual increase of the share of national currencies in reciprocal payments by the interested member states.

The delegation heads noted the need to continue interaction within the region's existing multilateral banking and financial institutions in the interests of financing joint projects.

As part of the development of financial cooperation between the SCO member states, the delegation heads praised the results of the Meeting of the SCO Finance Ministers and Central (National) Bank Governors (3 September 2021) via videoconference.

The delegation heads noted the contribution of the SCO Business Council and the SCO Interbank Consortium to the development of economic cooperation within the SCO. They emphasised the importance of the practical implementation of the agreements reached during the meetings of the SCO Interbank Consortium (15-17 September 2021, Dushanbe) and the SCO Business Council Board (7 September 2021, Dushanbe) in order to further involve these entities in promoting the SCO economic agenda.

The delegation heads welcome the adoption of the Strategy for the Further Development of the SCO Interbank Consortium for the Medium Term (2022-2026) (16 September 2021, Dushanbe), which is an important programme document related to adaptation to the current economic environment.

Emphasising the importance of creating favourable conditions for boosting trade within the SCO, the delegation heads stand for improving industrial and investment cooperation between the member states. The implementation of joint infrastructure

projects in these areas will help improve the integration of economies and diversify production processes in the interests of the comprehensive development of the SCO region.

The delegation heads welcomed the holding of the first Meeting of the SCO Industry Ministers (16 July 2021, Dushanbe), aimed at building mutually beneficial cooperation in industry in the SCO space. They noted the importance of initiating the mechanism of meetings of SCO Industry Ministers, including the adoption of the relevant regulations.

The delegation heads spoke in favour of further developing the projects related to the Programme to Promote Industrial Cooperation between Business Circles of the SCO Member States, and the data bank of investment projects in industry of the SCO member states, designed to create favourable conditions for the development of cooperation ties in the SCO space.

The delegation heads underscored the importance of the further development of cooperation between SCO member states' customs services. They noted that the electronic exchange of information about the cross-border movement of goods and transport vehicles, protection of intellectual property rights, interaction in the development and use of a risk management system and joint efforts to counter customs violations are the necessary steps towards improving cooperation in the customs area. In this regard, they consider it important to initiate the creation of a mechanism of conferences between the heads of the customs services of the SCO member states.

The delegation heads noted the increasing role of innovative technologies in ensuring the sustainable development and digital transformation of the economies in the SCO space. While noting the need for the practical implementation of the Concept for Cooperation of the SCO Member States in Digitalisation and ICT (14 June 2019, Bishkek) and the Statement by the Heads of State Council of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on Strengthening Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation (17 September 2021, Dushanbe), they welcomed the launch of the mechanism of meetings of

SCO ministers and heads of agencies responsible for the development of information technologies.

The delegation heads believe that coordinated efforts are important to overcome the socioeconomic consequences of the digital divide between the SCO member states, to intensify knowledge and experience exchange in the sphere of the digital economy and the use of digital technologies, and to conduct joint research by scientific and educational institutions and organisations dealing with digitalisation, innovation and ICT. They spoke against discriminatory measures under any pretext that impede the development of the digital economy and communication technologies.

The delegation heads welcomed the adoption of the SCO Concept to Create a Pool of Technology Parks (25 November 2021, Nur-Sultan). Its implementation would make it possible to harmonise efforts to move national economies to the path of innovations, expand the limits of the innovative ecosystem, and improve the competitiveness and investment potential of the SCO national economies.

Noting significant growth of e-commerce during the pandemic, the delegation heads spoke in favour of resuming the work of the Special Working Group on E-Commerce in order to deepen cooperation in this sphere to ensure the fastest recovery of the SCO member states' economies.

The delegation heads noted that the creative economy could become an element of the development of the parties' innovative potential. They believe supporting creative industries will help boost the economies' competitiveness, develop small and medium-sized businesses and expand the SCO employment market.

The delegation heads believe it important to speed up the creation of the SCO Special Working Group on Startups and Innovations.

Considering that issues related to poverty reduction in the SCO space are becoming more important for the common prosperity, security and stability in the region, the delegation heads advocate giving effect to the proposal on creating a mechanism of conferences for relevant ministries and/or agencies.

The delegation heads believe it important to speed up the establishment of the SCO Special Working Group on Reducing Poverty.

The delegation heads reaffirmed the commitment of the SCO member states to the effective use of the SCO's transit potential, the creation of regional transport and transit corridors, and the implementation of large projects that would help strengthen transport connections in the SCO space. They emphasised the importance of creating new international motor roads, railways, multimodal transport corridors and logistics centres, and upgrading the existing ones, as well as introducing digital, innovative and energy efficient technologies, improving cross-border procedures in accordance with the best international practices, and implementing joint infrastructure projects.

In this connection, the delegation heads welcomed the results of the third meeting of the SCO Joint Commission on International Road Transport Facilitation (12-13 May 2021, Dushanbe), as well as the third meeting of the SCO Railway Administration Heads (18 August 2021, Dushanbe).

The delegation heads believe that the practical implementation of the Agreement between the SCO Governments on International Road Transport Facilitation (12 September 2014, Dushanbe), as well as the Concept for Cooperation between Railway Administrations of the SCO Member States (2 November 2019, Tashkent) will help further expand transport routes between the SCO member states.

The delegation heads welcomed the launch of a meeting mechanism of the SCO energy ministers (12 August 2021, Dushanbe) as a platform for building practical cooperation in this area within the SCO. They welcomed the adoption of the SCO Energy Cooperation Concept (12 August 2021, Dushanbe).

The delegation heads expressed firm confidence that it was necessary to continue expanding cooperation in the field of agriculture, plant quarantining and veterinary science. They praised the results of the Meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture of the SCO Member States, which involved experts from SCO member states' ministries and agencies responsible for food security, veterinary and phyto-sanitary matters (12 August

2021, Dushanbe). They also noted the need for consistent implementation of the previously approved regulatory legal documents in this sphere.

The delegation heads underscored the importance of ensuring the uninterrupted work of the agro-industrial complex and the stable supply of agricultural produce at a time when the region is consolidating its food security. They praised the approval of the Joint Statement of SCO Heads of State on Food Security (17 September 2021, Dushanbe).

Considering the need to draft subsequent measures to ensure food security, the delegation heads noted the significance of holding the UN Food Systems Summit (23 September 2021, New York) and praised the successful organisation of the FAO-SCO Food Systems Summit Independent Dialogue to develop sustainable food systems (9 August 2021, via videoconference).

The delegation heads noted the importance of approving a concept for setting up the SCO training and demonstration base for agricultural technology exchange (12 August 2021, Dushanbe) and a plan for the practical implementation of the memorandum of understanding between the authorised agencies of the SCO member states on technological cooperation in preventing and combatting trans-border epizootic diseases (12 October 2018, Dushanbe). These documents will help implement the Agreement on Agricultural Cooperation between the Governments of SCO Member States (11 June 2010, Tashkent).

The delegation heads emphasised the growing relevance of expanded cooperation between SCO member states in the field of healthcare and of ensuring sanitary and epidemiological well-being, especially during the continued spread of the novel coronavirus infection. They expressed sincere gratitude, while noting the tireless efforts of healthcare workers, doctors and other medical specialists, scientists and researchers in SCO member states to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

They noted the need for the consistent implementation of the comprehensive action plan of the SCO member states to combat the threat of epidemics in the SCO region (10 November 2020, Moscow) that was drafted to give effect to the SCO

Statement on Jointly Combating the Threat of Epidemics in the SCO Region (10 June 2018, Qingdao). They noted a proposal on holding the 7th Meeting of the SCO Heads of Services in Charge of Ensuring Sanitary and Epidemiological Well-Being (9 December 2021, St Petersburg).

Speaking against stigmatisation in connection with COVID-19, the delegation heads called for developing international cooperation to counter the pandemic, including through cooperation between the SCO and the WHO as well as other multilateral associations, and dealing with the global, primarily economic and social, fallout. Their position is that the SCO needs to work on mutual recognition of vaccination papers.

The delegation heads praised the Final Declaration and the Plan of Basic Measures for Promoting SCO Member State Cooperation in Healthcare for 2022-2024, which was adopted at the 4th Meeting of the SCO Healthcare Ministers (30 June 2021, Dushanbe). They noted the initiative to draft a Concept for Cooperation between the SCO Member States in Telemedicine.

The delegation heads noted the holding of the SCO Forum of Traditional Medicine (28-30 July 2021, Nanchang) as a useful step in promoting cooperation in this area.

The delegation heads consider it important to expedite the creation by interested SCO member states of a Special Working Group on Traditional Medicine.

Emphasising the need to focus on environmental problems and their negative consequences for the SCO member states' socioeconomic development, the delegation heads spoke in favour of strengthening interaction on environmental protection within the SCO space.

The delegation heads noted the importance of cooperation in environmental protection, environmental safety, prevention of the negative aftereffects of climate change, conservation and use of biodiversity and exchange of experience and up-to-date information on these issues. The SCO member states believe that the lack of access to safe drinking water, basic sanitation services and healthy hygiene represent serious

problems in our times and noted the need to focus on sustainable development and integrated water resource management.

The delegation heads underlined the SCO member states' conviction on the unacceptability of using the climate agenda for imposing measures that restrict trade and investment cooperation. Efforts will be made to establish a dialogue with relevant international institutions in order to attract investment and finance joint projects and programmes in environmental protection and introduction of innovative, environmentally friendly technologies, as well as increasing the share of the green economy.

In this context, highly praising the outcomes of the Meeting of the SCO Heads of Ministries and Departments in Charge of Environmental Protection (29 July 2021, Dushanbe), they welcomed the adoption of the Action Plan for 2022-2024 for Implementing the Concept of SCO Member State Cooperation in Environmental Protection (17 September 2021, Dushanbe), which is designed to make a meaningful contribution to promoting the SCO environmental agenda and to achieving harmony between humans and nature.

The delegation heads stressed the SCO member states' commitment to building a sustainable economic system, including by promoting green and environmentally friendly technology, as well as creating inclusive approaches to social development. They consider the adoption of the SCO Green Belt Programme an important step.

The delegation heads advocate further coordination of the SCO member states' actions to prevent and overcome the consequences of large-scale and transboundary emergencies, to develop cooperation programmes, including professional development programmes. In this context, they spoke in favour of deepening interaction between the SCO and the UN as well as other international organisations.

The delegation heads noted the need to regularly conduct international exercises for the SCO member states' search and rescue services, and also spoke in favour of continued implementation of the 2020-2021 Action Plan for the Implementation of the Agreement between the Governments of the SCO Member States on Cooperation in Providing Relief during Emergencies (8 November 2019, New Delhi).

The delegation heads positively assessed the results of cultural and humanitarian cooperation and spoke out for the future development of multilateral ties in this sphere. They emphasised the importance of preserving and increasing the unique cultural heritage of the SCO member states with a view to using their creative potential.

The delegation heads mentioned the results of the Meeting of the SCO Culture Ministers (18 August 2021, Dushanbe) for the further development of cultural cooperation in the SCO space.

The delegation heads welcomed the adoption of the Agreement between the Governments of the SCO Member States on Cooperation in the Protection of Cultural Heritage Sites (17 September 2021, Dushanbe) and the Memorandum of Cooperation between Higher and Secondary Education Establishments in Culture and Arts (17 September 2021, Dushanbe), which are designed to promote increased interaction in this area.

They called for the implementation of the Regulations on the SCO Tourism and Culture Capital (17 September 2021, Dushanbe) and the Regulations on the Gala Concert of the SCO Arts Festival (18 August 2021, Dushanbe).

In praising the results of the Year of SCO Culture, which included gala concerts, festivals, contests, exhibitions, seminars and conferences, including the SCO Museum Forum (7 October 2021, Tula), the delegation heads pointed out that these activities helped create new opportunities for promoting cultural values and strengthening mutual respect for the historical and cultural heritage of the SCO member states. They also welcomed the proposal to set up an alliance of museums of the SCO member states.

The delegation heads reaffirmed the importance of using the instruments of people-to-people diplomacy to strengthen mutual understanding and cultural and humanitarian ties in the SCO space, in particular, China's Committee on Good-Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation, the SCO Centre for Public Diplomacy in Uzbekistan, the SCO Cultural Integration Centre in Bishkek and the SCO Friendship and Cooperation Centre in Dushanbe.

The delegation heads deem it necessary to continue implementing the SCO Agreement on Cooperation in Physical Fitness and Sport signed between the member states' relevant agencies (14 June 2019, Bishkek).

The delegation heads welcomed the regular SCO Marathons held in Kunming (People's Republic of China) and the Issyk-Kul Region (Kyrgyz Republic).

The delegation heads believe that the 2022 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in Beijing will strengthen friendship, mutual understanding and harmony among nations.

The delegation heads called for the strengthening of cooperation in the area of education and science, pointing to the need for the further development of educational cooperation pursuant to the Agreement between the Governments of the SCO Member States on Cooperation in Education (15 June 2006, Shanghai).

The delegation heads endorsed the results of the meetings held by the SCO Standing Working Group on Cooperation in Science and Technology (30 March, 23 July, and 2 September 2021, via videoconference) and the 2nd Startup Forum (27-28 October 2021, via videoconference). They called for further joint work to establish a SCO Technology Transfer Centre in Qingdao, China.

The delegation heads noted the ongoing work to draft the Concept of an Association of Secondary Vocational Training Organisations of the SCO Member States.

The delegation heads welcomed the results of the Third SCO Women's Forum (10 June 2021, Dushanbe), which contributed, among other things, to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as other international conventions on human rights and the rights of women and children.

The delegation heads welcomed the adoption of the Agreement on Cooperation in Youth Affairs signed between the authorised agencies of the SCO member states (17

September 2021, Dushanbe), which defines the main areas of youth policy cooperation in the SCO space.

The delegation heads gave a positive assessment to the results of the Meeting of the SCO Tourism Administration Heads and the Tourism Forum (15 July 2021, Dushanbe). They also stressed the need for the consistent implementation of the joint action plan to implement the SCO Programme of Cooperation in Tourism for 2021–2023 (15 July 2021, Dushanbe) under the new conditions. An agreement was reached to continue joint efforts to develop collective measures for stepping up tourism cooperation, including for the purpose of improving the SCO legal and regulatory framework in this area.

They noted the initiative to establish cooperation between the International Tourism and Hospitality University in the city of Turkestan (Republic of Kazakhstan) and interested higher educational establishments in other SCO member states, as well as to assign quotas for enrolment of representatives of SCO countries in the Silk Road International University of Tourism in Samarkand (Republic of Uzbekistan).

The delegation heads deem it important to implement the Agreement between the Governments of the SCO Member States on Cooperation in Mass Media (14 June 2019, Bishkek) and agreed that creating favourable conditions for broad reciprocal dissemination of information strengthened mutual understanding among the peoples of the SCO member states and laid a firm foundation for the further development of mutually beneficial cooperation.

They welcomed the results of the 3rd SCO Media Forum (6 August 2021, Dushanbe), which helped improve the information support for SCO activities, promote media contacts, and bring about a convergence of approaches to developing a unified information strategy of the SCO member states.

The delegation heads underscored the need to use the potential of the region's countries, international organisations and multilateral associations in the interests of forming a Eurasian space for broad, open, mutually beneficial and equitable interaction in compliance with international law and respect for national interests. In this regard, they

noted the initiative to create a Greater Eurasian Partnership bringing together the countries of the SCO, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as other interested states and multilateral associations.

Reaffirming their support for China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan highlighted the ongoing work on the joint implementation of this project, including efforts to bridge the development of the Eurasian Economic Union and the BRI.

The delegation heads emphasised the importance of further expanding the SCO partnership with the Astana International Financial Centre (AIFC) in order to develop financial markets, capital markets, trade and investment cooperation, as well as protect the rights and interests of consumers of financial services and investors.

Appreciating the outcome of the meeting of the SCO national coordinators with authorised representatives of the SCO observer states and dialogue partners (17 June 2021, Tashkent), the delegation heads reaffirmed their readiness to increase cooperation with them, including under the relevant Roadmap (22 May 2019, Bishkek).

The delegation heads approved the SCO Secretariat Report on the events and meetings held as part of the Programme of Multilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation and the SCO budget for 2022, and also made several decisions related to the financial and organisational activities of the permanent bodies of the SCO.

The delegation heads thanked the Kazakh delegation for the excellent organisation of the SCO Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers) meeting.

The next meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers) will be held in 2022 in the People's Republic of China.