



**SECRETARIAT OF THE CONFERENCE ON INTERACTION
AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES IN ASIA**

**СЕКРЕТАРИАТ СОВЕЩАНИЯ ПО ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЮ
И МЕРАМ ДОВЕРИЯ В АЗИИ**

№SOC/45

*Enclosure:
as stated,
on 9 p.*

The Secretariat of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) presents its compliments to the CICA Member States and has the honour to forward the minutes of the Senior Officials Committee meeting held on 12 December 2023.

The Secretariat avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the CICA Member States the assurances of its highest consideration.

Astana, 16 January 2024



**MEMBER STATES
OF THE CONFERENCE ON INTERACTION
AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES
IN ASIA**



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№SOC/45

*Приложение:
упомянутое,
на 9 л.*

Секретариат Совещания по взаимодействию и мерам доверия в Азии (СВМДА) свидетельствует свое уважение государствам-членам СВМДА и имеет честь направить протокол заседания Комитета старших должностных лиц, состоявшегося 12 декабря 2023 года.

Секретариат пользуется случаем, чтобы возобновить государствам-членам СВМДА уверения в своем самом высоком уважении.

город Астана, 16 января 2024 г.



**ГОСУДАРСТВА-ЧЛЕНЫ
СОВЕЩАНИЯ ПО ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЮ И
МЕРАМ ДОВЕРИЯ В АЗИИ**

Қосымша:
аталған,
9 п.

Азиядағы өзара іс-қимыл және сенім шаралары кеңесінің (Азия Кеңесінің) Хатшылығы Азия Кеңесіне мүше мемлекеттерге өзінің зор ілтипатын білдіре отырып, 2023 жылғы 12 желтоқсанда өткен Аға лауазымды тұлғалар комитеті отырысы хаттамасын жолдауды өзіне мәртебе санайды.

Хатшылық осы мүмкіндікті пайдалана отырып, Азия Кеңесіне мүше мемлекеттерге өзінің зор ілтипатын тағы да растайды.

Астана қаласы, 2024 жылғы 16 қаңтар

**АЗИЯДАҒЫ ӨЗАРА ІС-ҚИМЫЛ ЖӘНЕ
СЕНІМ ШАРАЛАРЫ КЕҢЕСІНЕ
МҮШЕ МЕМЛЕКЕТТЕР**



Secretariat

MINUTES OF THE SENIOR OFFICIALS COMMITTEE MEETING 12 December 2023

The Senior Officials Committee (SOC) meeting was held on Tuesday, 12 December 2023 in Astana in the hybrid format. Mr. Alibek Bakayev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, chaired the meeting.

The initial draft agenda and draft annotated agenda (SOC/2023-III/Agenda/1 of 6 November 2023, SOC/2023-III/Agenda/2 of 4 December 2023), the decisions taken (SOC/2023-III/DEC/1, SOC/2023-III/DEC/2, SOC/2023-III/DEC/3 of 12 December 2023) and the List of participants are available on the CICA website (<https://www.s-cica.org/index.php?view=page&t=soc-meeting-12-december-2023>).

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without any changes.

2. Update by the CICA Chairmanship on current issues

The Chairman briefed the SOC on key CICA achievements of the year 2023, status of major open issues on the current CICA agenda and outlook for 2024. The Chair's Statement is available on the CICA website (<https://www.s-cica.org/docs/1026068064657942c1bf901.pdf>).

China, Russia and the Republic of Korea congratulated Ms. Zhang Ling on assuming the post of Deputy Secretary General of CICA (DSG) and expressed hope that she will make a significant contribution to the work and activities of the CICA Secretariat and CICA in general.

Russia noted that CICA transformation was an important and scrupulous process. Russia thanked DSG Ms. Zhang Ling for participating in the International Forum of Civil Participation #WEARETOGETHER and its Award Ceremony in Moscow,

where representatives of CICA Member States – from Kazakhstan and Türkiye – won in two nominations. Russia noted the timeliness of introducing volunteerism as another area of interaction within CICA, highlighted the adoption of a related Ministerial Council (MC) statement in September 2023. Russia expressed hope that the draft MC decision on modalities of implementation of confidence building measures (CBMs) would be adopted in the near future as it defines concrete parameters of CBMs implementation and would be an important stage of CICA transformation.

Russia stressed that the elaborating a draft charter of the future organization should be a primary task of the transformation process encompassing work on all other cluster of the Road Map for CICA Transformation (RMT). Russia looked forward to the CICA ministerial meeting on environmental issues in August 2024, however noted that the proposed idea to establish a council on environmental issues should be thoroughly analyzed and discussed among experts, relevant agencies and considered by all relevant CICA bodies in accordance with the existing Rules of Procedure, with the same principle being applied to the initiative of creating a council on sustainable connectivity.

On the proposal to create a CICA Partnership Network of Leading Universities Russia stressed that it was necessary to find an appropriate place for it in the already existing matrix of similar mechanisms, including within SCO, EAEU and CIS. Russia also briefed the SOC on the outcomes of the Saint-Petersburg Cultural Forum that hosted representatives of all CICA Member States, and on the IV International Conference «Combating new Coronavirus Infection and Other Infectious Diseases» held in Saint-Petersburg on 7-8 December 2023 that included a round table with participation of representatives from eight Eurasian multilateral organizations and forums, including CICA. Russia noted the importance of synergizing the potentials of leading multilateral structures of the Eurasian continent.

India expressed its appreciation to the efforts and achievements of Kazakhstan Chairmanship and CICA Secretariat in 2023 and emphasized its willingness to continue constructive interaction within CICA.

The Republic of Korea (RoK) highlighted the significance of adopting the RMT and expressed its readiness to work on its implementation. The RoK noted that one of the most important aspects of transformation was the budgetary reform and introduction of mandatory contributions from all Member States, as voluntary financial contributions made long-term planning more complicated. The RoK

announced its voluntary contribution of USD 50000 in December 2023 and called on other Member States to follow suit.

Cambodia thanked Kazakhstan for excellent CICA chairmanship in 2023, noted the importance of further institutional development and strengthening of CICA in accordance with the Astana Statement on CICA Transformation and recently adopted RMT. Cambodia commended the constructive role and commitment of the Secretariat and supported further implementation of CBMs, promotion of peace, security and stability in Asia and around the world. Cambodia noted the progress in advancing CICA's visibility, including through social media platforms and various CICA events. Cambodia expressed its commitment to working together with all CICA Member States in upholding multilateralism.

The Chairman thanked the delegations for their comments and took note of their views and promised to consider them. The Chairman proposed to all Member States to make proposals under relevant clusters of the RMT.

The SOC decision: The SOC took note of the SOC Chairman's invitation to all Member States to make proposals under relevant clusters of the RMT and request to the CICA SG to support this process.

3. Annual report of the CICA Secretary General

The CICA Secretary General (SG) presented to the SOC his annual report on the activities of the CICA Secretariat in 2023. The written report (document SOC/2023-III/SEC/1 of 7 December 2023) and SG's presentation are available on the CICA website (<https://www.s-cica.org/docs/124907799665715b0c619e3.pdf>, <https://www.s-cica.org/docs/91433664665794306c55c4.pdf>).

The Chairman thanked the SG and Secretariat's staff for the excellent work done in 2023 and for providing valuable assistance to the Chairmanship and all Member States that ensured a fruitful year.

Russia praised the Secretariat for its effective work and took note of the Secretariat's vision on preliminary schedule of implementing the RMT. Russia underlined that elaborating the draft charter should be the primary goal, and discussion on other RMT clusters should be oriented towards this goal. Russia noted that CICA was moving towards a new institutional status and during that process Member States might agree on new forms of cooperation.

The SG informed that the schedule of RMT implementation by the Secretariat was indicative and mainly for planning of the Secretariat's own "home work" in the near future. He reminded that Member States decided not to put any deadlines on the transformation process. The SG recalled that transformation was not about creating a new organization "from scratch", but rather about modernizing CICA. He also informed the SOC that the Secretariat had already started studying and analyzing charters of other international organizations, stressing that CICA is a unique structure.

The SOC decision: The SOC took note of the annual report of the CICA SG on the activities of the CICA Secretariat in 2023.

4. Decision on the Annual Plan of Implementation of CBMs for 2024

The Chairman referred to the SWG Meeting on 5 December 2023 that considered the draft Annual Plan of Implementation of CBMs for 2024 and, at the request of Russia and Bangladesh, included 4 additional events and recommended the SOC to approve the Plan. On 7 December, Türkiye requested to add one additional event, and it was reflected in item 27 of the draft Plan (document SOC/2023-III/DRAFT/1/Rev.2 of 7 December 2023).

The Chairman reminded the SOC that regular meetings of CICA governing, working and advisory bodies were not included in the draft Plan. The Chairman also informed the SOC that Kazakhstan planned to hold in 2024 two high-level specialized events which were not CBM events - a ministerial-level conference on environmental issues and an inauguration of the CICA Partnership Network of Leading Universities (following its establishment by the CICA Member States).

The SG introduced the draft Plan and thanked Member States that submitted their proposals for 2024. He called on Member States to adhere to the General Guidelines for Conducting Events on Implementation of CICA CBMs (adopted by the SOC on 23 June 2021) as much as possible.

The SOC decision: The SOC adopted the decision on the CICA Plan of Implementation of CBMs for 2024.

5. Draft SOC decision on the Budget of the CICA Secretariat for 2024

The Chairman referred to the SWG Meeting on 5 December 2023 that considered the draft decision on the Budget of the CICA Secretariat for 2024 (document SOC/2023-III/DRAFT/2 of 14 November 2023) together with the SG's explanatory note (document SOC/2023-III/INF/2 of 14 November 2023) and recommended to the SOC that it approve the decision on the 2024 Budget of the CICA Secretariat. The SG introduced to the SOC the draft Budget for 2024 and provided additional information regarding the collection rate of voluntary contributions in 2023 and general overview of Member States' contribution of financial and human resources since 2006.

The SOC decision: The SOC adopted the decision on the 2024 Budget of the CICA Secretariat.

6. Concept papers, coordinators and co-coordinators in priority areas of CICA dimensions

6(a) Draft Concept Paper in the priority area of natural disaster management

The Chairman informed the SOC that Iran as coordinator in the priority area of natural disaster management prepared a draft Concept Paper, which was the first ever Concept Paper to be agreed in this particular area. The Chairman referred to the SWG Meeting on 5 December 2023 that considered the draft Concept Paper and recommended its approval by the SOC, with amendments made during the Meeting.

Iran introduced the draft, thanked Member States for their support and also announced that it had prepared an updated Concept paper in the priority area of combating illicit drugs which would be shared with the Secretariat and all Member States shortly.

Russia commended Iran's efforts on preparing such a comprehensive document that could be used as an example or template for draft concept papers in other priority areas. Russia also informed the SOC that it was preparing together with China an updated Concept paper in the area of security of and in the use of ICTs for the period 2024-2025.

The SOC decision: The SOC approved the concept paper in the priority area “Natural disaster management”.

6(b) Draft Concept Paper in the priority area “Environment protection”

The Chairman informed the SOC that Mongolia as coordinator in the priority area of environment protection prepared a draft Concept Paper. The Chairman referred to the SWG Meeting on 5 December 2023 that considered the draft Concept Paper and recommended its approval by the SOC.

Mongolia introduced its draft noting that environment protection, in particular land conservation and combating desertification, was relevant for CICA Member States.

The SG informed the SOC that on 12 December 2023 the Secretariat had received some proposals on cooperation in the area of environment protection from Kuwait. The Chair suggested that these ideas be considered by the coordinator and other Member States in due course. No objections were raised to the approval of the draft Concept Paper proposed by Mongolia.

The SOC decision: The SOC approved the concept paper in the priority area “Environment protection”.

6(c) CBM coordinators and co-coordinators

The Chairman reminded the SOC about the absence of a coordinator in the priority area of trade and investment and encouraged Member States to apply for the vacant position of coordinator in such an important priority area.

The Chairman reminded the SOC about two pending offers for co-coordinator roles: from Iraq for the priority area “Combating terrorism” and from Israel for the priority area “Sustainable Development”. The Chair welcomed both offers and encouraged all Member States to support these proposals, called on all involved Member States to engage in constructive dialogue with each other and to inform the Chair on the results as soon as possible. He noted that it was for the first time when Member States’ bids to assume the role of co-coordinator had become a contentious issue.

Türkiye announced that it would soon submit its offer to assume the role of co-coordinator in the priority area “Combating terrorism”.

7. Applications for CICA Observer Status, if any

The Chairman informed the SOC that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in accordance with paragraph 12.1 of the CICA Rules of Procedure, submitted a request in writing to the Chairmanship with the statement expressing its intention to become an Observer State. The Chairmanship, in accordance with paragraph 12.2 of the CICA Rules of Procedure, circulated the application of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, together with a respective draft Ministerial Council decision (document MC/2023/DRAFT/7 of 1 December 2023) for consideration by the SOC.

The Chairman supported the application by Saudi Arabia and proposed the SOC to recommend to the Ministerial Council to adopt the draft decision on granting CICA Observer Status to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through silence procedure with the deadline of 26 December 2023, 12 noon by Astana time.

China, Jordan, Iraq, Russia, Pakistan, Palestine, Bahrain, Iran, Bangladesh, Israel, Thailand, Egypt and Kuwait expressed their support to Saudi Arabia becoming CICA Observer State. Palestine expressed hope that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would become a full-fledged CICA Member State in the near future.

The SOC decision: The SOC considered and recommended to the MC to adopt the draft MC decision on granting CICA Observer Status to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (document MC/2023/DRAFT/7 of 1 December 2023) through silence procedure with the deadline of 26 December 2023, 12 noon by Astana time.

8. Establishing relations with other international organizations

The Chairman reminded the SOC that establishing relations with other international organizations was one of the priorities of the Kazakh Chairmanship, actively supported by all Member States, and thanked the Secretariat for its hard work in this direction and for making significant progress in recent years.

The SG briefed the SOC on cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the process of establishing relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and interaction with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT). Relevant information is contained in the Annual report by the CICA Secretary General on activities of the CICA Secretariat in 2023 (available on the CICA website).

The Chairman noted that it appreciated the work in developing the action plan on the implementation of the 2014 Memorandum with CICA partner organization SCO, expressing confidence that effective synergy between these organizations shall be beneficial for the whole Asian continent.

Russia expressed its support to the Secretariat for strengthening ties with other international organizations. Russia noted that it would submit its comments to the draft action plan on the implementation of the 2014 MoU between the secretariats of CICA and SCO. Russia suggested that relevant paragraph could be included in the decisions of the SOC meeting.

The SOC decision: The SOC took note of the draft action plan for the implementation of the 2014 Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretariats of CICA and SCO which was submitted for comments of CICA Member States.

The Chairman thanked the Secretariat for the hard work done to establish relations with ASEAN in implementation of the SOC decision of 8 December 2021 and proposed that the SOC take note of the dialogue commenced between the CICA and ASEAN Secretariats and support further mutually beneficial interaction between the two structures.

Türkiye noted that it supported establishing and strengthening CICA's external relations in principle, especially with ASEAN – central regional organisation in Asia-Pacific. Türkiye reminded the SOC that it supported the decision to establish ties with EAEU and ASEAN with understanding that similar interaction will be explored in regard to the Organisation of Turkic States (OTS).

The SG noted that the Secretariat needed a mandate from Member States to start establishing ties with OTS.

The SOC decision: The SOC took note of the dialogue commenced between the Secretariats of CICA and ASEAN and supported further mutually beneficial interaction between the two structures.

The Chairman expressed its gratitude for the Secretariat's continuous interaction with the UNOCT and fully supported the establishment of formal relations between the organizations, also taking into account that the UN as a whole already had the CICA Observer Status and that the CICA Plan of Action for the Implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was elaborated and

adopted in 2022 with the assistance from the UNOCT. The Chairman proposed to the SOC to agree on establishing partnership relations between CICA and UNOCT, and task the Secretariat with preparing necessary documents to that end.

China and Russia requested additional time to consider this proposal and suggested to adopt the relevant SOC decision through the silence procedure. In the course of the meeting the Chairman proposed to the SOC the text of a draft SOC Decision to that end (document SOC/2023-III/DRAFT/3 of 12 December 2023) doe adoption by the SOC through the silence procedure with the deadline of 26 December 2023 (12 noon by Astana time).

9. Any other business

Russia pointed out the need to strictly observe all rules of procedure when appointing and setting the term of office of the CICA Secretary General. Russia expected that such matters will consistently be addressed in this manner. The Russian side stated that it had no objections to Mr. Kairat Sarybay serving as CICA Secretary General until 2026. Palestine expressed support to the position of Russia on the process of the SG's appointment, calling for strict adherence to the existing Rules of Procedure. China noted that it was desirable to work on procedures and criteria for selecting and appointing CICA SG and DSG, including taking into account the real contribution from Member States to CICA.

The Chairman noted the importance of following the Rules of Procedure, reminded that the decision on the appointment of Mr. Kairat Sarybay for the position of CICA Secretary General for the term of 2022-2026 was approved by the CICA Summit based on due process and that the SOC could not revisit any decisions taken by the highest governing body of CICA. The Chairman agreed with Russia that it was relevant to further discuss procedures and criteria for selecting and appointing CICA SG and that this was expected to be done under Cluster 6 of the RMT.