



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

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

No.SOC/1481

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 herewith the annual report by the CICA Secretary General on activities of the CICA Secretariat in 2023, which will be presented at the Senior Officials Committee meeting on 12 December 2023.

*Enclosure:
as stated,
on 23 p.*

The document is available in the restricted part of the Secretariat website:

<https://www.s-cica.org/index.php?view=page&t=general-information-12-dec-2023>

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

Astana, 7 December 2023



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



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Секретариат Совещания по взаимодействию и мерам доверия в Азии (СВМДА) свидетельствует свое уважение государствам-членам СВМДА и имеет честь препроводить ежегодный доклад Генерального секретаря СВМДА о деятельности Секретариата СВМДА в 2023 году, который будет представлен на заседании Комитета старших должностных лиц 12 декабря 2023 года.

*Приложение:
упомянутое,
на 23 лл.*

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

Астана, 7 декабрь 2023 г.



**ГОСУДАРСТВАМ-ЧЛЕНАМ
СОВЕЩАНИЯ ПО ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЮ И
МЕРАМ ДОВЕРИЯ В АЗИИ**

Қосымша:
аталған 23 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 өтетін Аға лауазымды тұлғалар комитеті отырысында ұсыну үшін Азия Кеңесі Бас хатшысының Азия Кеңесі Хатшылығының 2023 жылғы қызметі туралы жылдық есебін жолдауды өзіне мәртебе санайды.

Құжатпен Хатшылық веб-сайтының жабық бөлігінде танысуға болады:

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

Астана қаласы, 2023 жылғы 7 желтоқсан

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



Secretariat

**Report by the CICA Secretary General
on activities of the CICA Secretariat in 2023**

This report provides a brief account of major directions of work and achievements of the CICA Secretariat in 2023 in implementation of tasks set by the CICA governing bodies and in support of CICA related activities of the Chairmanship and Member States. The Secretary General expresses high appreciation to the CICA Chairmanship of Kazakhstan and other Member States for their leadership and guidance, as well as for the provision of human and financial resources enabling the CICA Secretariat to deliver on its mandate.

1. Support to CICA transformation

In the course of 2023 the main focus of Secretariat activities was placed on the implementation of tasks set by the Sixth CICA Summit in the Astana Statement on CICA Transformation (AST): to submit proposals for amendments to the relevant CICA documents and to assist the Chairmanship in making proposals on a transformation road map for consideration by the Member States.

To assist the Chairmanship and Member States in drafting and discussion of the **Road Map for CICA Transformation (RMT)**, the Secretary General held a broad range of consultations with Member States, including during his visits to capitals, aiming at collecting views on elements for inclusion in the draft RMT. The Secretary General discussed CICA transformation at most of his bilateral meetings held in 2023 with Heads of State or Government, foreign ministers, senior officials and think tank experts of CICA Member States.

On the basis of Member States' views and proposals, the Secretariat assisted the Chairmanship in drafting the RMT and developing a detailed set of ideas and specific measures for future deliberations under each cluster of the RMT, including proposals for amendments to relevant CICA documents.

Extensive consultations with and joint efforts of all Member States, steered by the Chairmanship with support of the Secretariat, as well as deliberations at Senior Officials Committee (SOC) and Special Working Group (SWG) meetings in 2023, have resulted in the successful finalization of the draft RMT on 22 August 2023. The Ministerial Council (MC) adopted the decision on endorsement of the RMT at its informal meeting in New York on 21 September 2023. The Secretariat is encouraged by this milestone achievement and timely fulfilment of the Summit task to elaborate a transformation road map.

Furthermore, in implementation of the tasks set in the AST, the Secretariat has started providing assistance to the Chairmanship and Member States within three clusters of the RMT in the beginning of 2023:

Cluster 2 of the RMT: *“Improving current modalities of implementation of CICA confidence building measures (CBMs) until completion of the transformation process and exploring focus areas of our cooperation within the future organization”* - the Secretariat provided substantive assistance in the development and discussion by the Member States of the draft ministerial document on modalities of implementation of CICA CBMs. Thereby the Secretariat has also fulfilled the task set by the SOC on 15 June 2022.

The proposed document is designed to update and supersede Chapter III of the CICA Catalogue of CBMs and it reflects all proposals made by Member States in recent years with regard to CBM implementation modalities. The text of the document was thoroughly discussed and finalized at SWG and SOC meetings in the course of 2023 with support of the Secretariat, and its final version of 22 August 2023 awaits approval by the SOC.

Cluster 3 of the RMT: *“Defining the international status of the Secretariat contracted personnel, including amendments to the Host Country Agreement”* (HCA) - the Secretariat has developed a draft Protocol on Amendments to the HCA and provided extensive support and advice to the Chairmanship in the course of 2023 within the ongoing process of consideration by the relevant authorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The Secretariat looks forward to the earliest finalization of internal procedures of the host country and signing of the Protocol. The proposed amendments would provide all contracted personnel of the CICA Secretariat and the

seconded staff of Kazakhstan with basic privileges and immunities of international civil servants which are missing in the original version of the HCA of 2006. This is in addition to the currently provided diplomatic status of secondees from all other Member States.

These amendments to the HCA would provide the CICA Secretariat with a full international status on the territory of the host country and improve the conditions of service in the Secretariat, thereby making it more attractive as an employer for citizens of all CICA Member States, and hence more internationalized. Therefore, this reform would also significantly contribute to the achievement of transformation objectives under **Cluster 8 of the RMT: “Elaborating human resources management reform, including making the Secretariat more internationalized.”**

In addition to the Summit tasks set in the AST, the 2023 New York meeting of the MC has tasked the Secretary General to support the Chairmanship in its coordination and facilitation of the negotiation process for decision-making by the Member States. The Secretariat will continue providing substantive support to the Chairmanship and the Member States in their deliberations within the transformation process.

To that end, the Secretariat will elaborate concrete proposals for consideration by the Member States under each cluster of the RMT, further developing the ideas and suggestions submitted earlier through the Chair’s Explanatory Note on the RMT (document SOC/2023-I/CHAIR/2/Rev.1 of 12 May 2023).

2. Supporting CICA governing and working bodies and other consultative mechanisms of the Chair

During 2023, the Secretariat continuously provided substantive, administrative and technical support to meetings of all CICA governing, working and advisory bodies. Four meetings of CICA governing bodies under the Chairmanship of Kazakhstan were supported by the Secretariat in 2023, including the upcoming 12 December meeting of the SOC.

The Secretariat assisted the Chairmanship in preparing and holding the main CICA event of the year - the **informal meeting of the CICA Ministerial Council** on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York on 21 September

2023. The Secretariat provided substantive support to the Member States in the development and finalization of key decisions taken by the MC – the endorsement of the RMT, the adoption of the statement on promoting volunteerism for sustainable development and the appointment of the next CICA Deputy Secretary General (DSG). The Secretariat ensured effective organization and smooth conduct of this highest-level CICA meeting of 2023.

During the reporting period the Secretariat provided comprehensive organizational and substantive support to the **three SOC meetings - on 19 April, 22 August and 12 December 2023.**

The first SOC meeting in April extensively discussed the initial draft of the RMT prepared by the Chair with the assistance of the Secretariat and generally welcomed it. All views expressed at the SOC were subsequently reflected upon by the Secretariat in its support to the Chair in achieving consensus on the RMT. The SOC also held its annual review of implementation of CICA CBMs with focus on new challenges and threats dimension, and considered a number of other important issues on CICA agenda. Among other matters, this SOC meeting considered the annual financial report of the Secretary General and the report of the external auditor on the financial and economic activities of the CICA Secretariat for the period 1 October 2020 – 31 December 2022. The SOC commended the Secretariat for the effective financial management and optimal use of funds to achieve CICA goals and objectives.

The August meeting of the SOC was focused on finalization of documents for the adoption by the September Ministerial, including the draft MC document on modalities of CBM implementation. The Secretariat provided intensive assistance to the Chair and Member States in the drafting and negotiation of all texts and decisions on the SOC agenda in the run-up to and in the course of this SOC meeting, which has set a stage for the successful MC meeting in New York.

In support of the upcoming last SOC meeting in 2023, the Secretariat ensured timely preparation and submission to the Member States of the two key decisions adopted annually by the SOC before the end of each calendar year – draft plan of CBM activities for 2024 and draft budget of the Secretariat for 2024.

In addition to the assistance to governing bodies, the Secretariat provided full support to the **four SWG meetings in 2023** - in **May, June, August** and **December**. The Secretariat provided substantive support to the Chairmanship, including relevant government agencies of Kazakhstan, in its consultations with all CICA Member States on specific topics, including in the preparation and holding of **six thematic expert meetings** to discuss the implementation of the CICA Chairmanship's priorities and initiatives set for its 2022-2024 term (outlined below). The Secretariat provided substantive expert advice to the Chair, which contributed to the progress achieved by these expert meetings on issues under consideration.

3. Support to CICA advisory bodies

Significant efforts were made to organize annual meetings of CICA advisory bodies. There were three such meetings in total.

The CICA Business Council held the meeting of its Board in August for preparation of its sixth plenary session and the 8th CICA Business Forum. Both events were successfully organized on 13 November 2023 gathering more than 160 government and business representatives from 20 CICA Member States. This year the agenda of the business events was focused on ensuring food security, promoting renewable energy and developing green finance in the CICA area, as well as included presentation of a number of business and investment projects in these fields. During the sixth plenary session, the CICA Business Council decided to include an item in the provisional agenda for its seventh plenary session in 2024: "Empowering women in small and medium enterprises across the CICA region - Exploring challenges, opportunities, and pathways to enhance participation and success."

Following the Business Council Board's decision on 18 August 2023, the CICA Secretary General requested the CICA Think Tank Forum (TTF) to conduct research on national approaches and incentives used by the CICA Member States to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and involvement of women in SMEs in the CICA region, focusing on the challenges they face and the opportunities available to expand their participation and achieve success. The Business Council has also decided to conduct a seminar in collaboration with the CICA TTF in 2024.

At the initiative of Uzbekistan, the sixth meeting of **the CICA Youth Council** was convened in Samarkand on 12 October 2023 and gathered around 100 participants from 18 CICA Member States and CICA Observers. The discussions were focused on youth radicalization as well as on the role of media in radicalization, promotion of regional cooperation, and organizing of meaningful leisure time for youth in the context of countering the threat of terrorism.

The eleventh meeting of **the CICA TTF** was held on 27-29 August 2023 in Xining (Qinghai Province, China). Representatives of think tanks and academia held discussions on the topic "Building Asia on the basis of mutual understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation: the role and mission of CICA". During the two-day meeting in a hybrid format, the participants considered issues of mutual understanding among civilizations and coexistence of CICA Member States, security, stability and mutually beneficial cooperation between CICA Member States, building CICA mechanisms as an international organization and conceptual innovations. Over 67 participants, including representatives of 20 CICA Member States, attended the meeting.

The CICA Fund was established in October 2022 by the Sixth CICA Summit. However, operation of the CICA Fund has not commenced as of now. In March 2023 the Secretariat has submitted to the Member States concrete proposals on operationalization of the Fund, including project templates, as well as opened a separate bank account for the Fund. The Secretariat is awaiting project proposals from the Member States and nomination of their representatives to the Project Review Committee. This new CICA cooperation mechanism is designed to be driven by Member States, and the Secretariat is prepared to support them in developing, funding and implementing CICA projects.

The CICA Council of Eminent Persons, established by the Sixth Meeting of the CICA MC in Astana in October 2021, still cannot start its work due to the lack of consensus on the composition of the Council. The Secretariat looks forward to the earliest resolution of this matter and stands ready to provide its support.

Overall, the entire institutional capacity of CICA has been employed this year by the Member States, which can be attributed to the increased demand for

CICA's convening power and its growing institutional and operational capabilities.

4. Supporting the 2022-2024 Chairmanship priorities

In the reporting period, the Secretariat continued to provide comprehensive assistance in the implementation of the Kazakh Chairmanship's priorities announced at the Sixth CICA Summit.

The Kazakh Chairmanship proposed to hold a **CICA Rally of Volunteer Movement Leaders** in May-June 2024 in Astana under the auspices of the CICA Youth Council. The concept paper of the event was circulated among Member States and discussed at the expert meeting on 7 November 2023. The Secretariat will continue to support the Chairmanship and Member States in implementation of this initiative.

CICA has given strong political impulse to volunteerism by the adoption of the CICA Ministerial Council Statement on Promoting Volunteerism for Sustainable Development in New York on 21 September 2023. The document encourages Member States to consider sharing information on their policies, strategies, researches and best practices in the field of volunteering for sustainable development. The CICA Secretariat was tasked with posting this information on a dedicated section on the CICA website, and it has been created right after the Ministerial.

To implement the initiative of the Kazakh Chairmanship on the establishment of a **CICA Council on Sustainable Connectivity**, the Secretariat has assisted the Chairmanship in drafting a concept paper. It was circulated in October 2023 for consideration and further discussion by the CICA Member States.

Significant progress was made in establishing a **CICA Partnership Network of Leading Universities** initiated by the CICA Chairmanship with the aim of enhancing academic collaboration, research projects, and student and teaching staff mobility. The draft memorandum on a partnership network was shared with all Member States and discussed at the online expert meeting on 17 November 2023.

The Chairmanship, with the support of the Secretariat, plans to organize a **CICA Ministerial Conference on Environmental Issues** in August 2024 to formulate joint actions to combat the negative consequences caused by climate change and environmental factors, and to engage all stakeholders in this process to increase environmental awareness in the CICA region. The concept of this specialized CICA meeting was initially discussed with the coordinators and co-coordinators of the environmental dimension, and an online expert meeting was held on 28 November 2023 to discuss the concept paper with all Member States.

The proposal to institutionalize **the CICA Finance Summit** is another important initiative which was put forth by the President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at the Sixth CICA Summit and thereafter supported by the People's Republic of China, the initiator of the Finance Summit. The Secretariat provides assistance to the Chairmanship and China in developing a concept and draft regulations for this prospective CICA institution.

The Secretariat is committed to continuing its efforts to assist the Member States in the implementation of these initiatives of the 2022-2024 Chairmanship of Kazakhstan.

5. Support to the implementation of CICA CBMs

The Secretariat continued to provide full support to the Member States in implementation of CBMs in accordance with the CICA Catalogue of CBMs updated at the Sixth MC Meeting in 2021, the SOC General Guidelines for Conducting Events on Implementation of CICA CBMs (General Guidelines) and the Annual CICA Plan of Implementation of CBMs for 2023.

The CICA Plan on implementation of CBMs and provisional calendar of CICA governing, working and advisory bodies for 2023 approved by the SOC in December 2022 consisted of 41 items. As of 30 November, 27 CICA events have been completed and two are pending, including the SOC meeting on 12 December and CBM event by Iran on 11 December. It is expected that **30 events** will be completed by the end of 2023, and the rest were postponed by organizers.

Out of the 30 CICA events of 2023, **17 were the meetings of permanent CICA bodies and consultative mechanisms** and **13 were CBM events** under the CICA Catalogue of CBMs. This high ratio in the number of meetings of regular CICA bodies indicates that this year the CICA Member States were actively involved in the continuous discussion of current issues on CICA agenda, including Summit tasks, first of all the transformation process, and Chairmanship initiatives launched at the Sixth CICA Summit.

Out of the 13 CBM events, five were in the new challenges and threats dimension (including the one expected in December), three in the economic dimension, two in the environmental dimension, two in the human dimension and one in the military-political dimension. Below is a breakdown of these 13 CBM events by the 18 priority areas of the CICA Catalogue of CBMs:

1. *Military-political dimension:*

- Offline seminar within military-political dimension, organized by Kazakhstan as coordinator of the dimension, 23-24 August 2023.

New challenges and threats dimension

2. New challenges and threats (general):

- CICA event on open-source intelligence in criminal investigations, organized by Türkiye as coordinator of this priority area, 6-10 February 2023.

3. Combating terrorism:

- CICA workshop “Counter radicalization”, organized by India as coordinator of this priority area, 2 February 2023.
- CICA virtual workshop on misuse of the Internet, organized by India as coordinator of this priority area, 25-26 May 2023.

4. Security of and in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs):

- CICA seminar on digital forensics, organized by Russia as coordinator of this priority area, 2-3 October 2023.

5. Combating illicit drugs:

- Online training course on psychological interventions in drug use disorders treatment, to be organized by Iran as coordinator of this priority area, 11 December 2023.

6. Epidemiological safety, public health and pharmaceuticals: no events in 2023.

Economic dimension

7. Development of SMEs: no events in 2023.
8. Energy security: no events in 2023.
9. Information technology: no events in 2023.
10. Tourism:
 - Online training course “BCG Immunization for Tourism Industry: Features Insights and Perspectives for the New Era in CICA Countries”, organized by Thailand, 7-11 August 2023.
11. Development of secure and effective systems of transportation corridors:
 - Expert meeting on the development of transit and transport potential of CICA countries, organized by Kazakhstan, 12 July 2023.
12. Agriculture:
 - Training programme “Agro-industry development and poverty alleviation for CICA Member States”, organized by China as coordinator of this priority area, 18-31 May 2023.
13. Finance: no events in 2023.
14. Trade and investment: no events in 2023.

Environmental dimension

15. Sustainable development: no events in 2023.
16. Natural disaster management:
 - CICA seminars “Towards disaster resilience through inclusive, gender-responsive and all of society approach” and “Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and adaptation approaches, strategies and practices - Bangladesh experience”, organized by Bangladesh as co-coordinator of this priority area, 31 May 2023.
17. Environment protection:
 - CICA workshop “Ecosystem Restoration in the context of Climate and other Vulnerability”, organized by Bangladesh as co-coordinator of this priority area, 26-27 July 2023.
18. *Human dimension:*
 - Plenary session “Prospects of the Volunteering Development in CICA Countries” at the International Volunteer Forum, organized by Kazakhstan as co-coordinator of this dimension, 20-21 July 2023.
 - CICA Youth Development Forum, organized by China as co-coordinator of this dimension, 31 August 2023.

Overall, the 2022 and 2023 experience of supporting Member States' CBM implementation indicates that planning CICA events in accordance with the General Guidelines significantly contributes to their timely preparation and successful conduct.

Concept papers and action plans in priority areas of CICA CBMs

Since the update of the CICA Catalogue of CBMs by the MC in October 2021, there have been significant efforts put in updating concept papers in the 18 priority areas of CICA CBMs. To date, **eight concept papers** are up to date - approved since 2021:

1. Security of and in the use of ICTs (new challenges and threats dimension);
2. Development of SMEs (economic dimension);
3. Tourism (economic dimension);
4. Development of secure and effective systems of transportation corridors (economic dimension);
5. Agriculture (economic dimension);
6. Finance (economic dimension);
7. Sustainable development (environmental dimension);
8. Human dimension.

Two concept papers were finalized at the SWG meeting on 5 December 2023 and recommended for approval by the SOC: on "Natural disaster management" and "Environment protection". **Six** concept papers have been submitted by the coordinators and co-coordinators to the Member States' consideration, but were not finalized yet:

1. Military-political dimension;
2. New challenges and threats (general) (new challenges and threats dimension);
3. Combating terrorism (new challenges and threats dimension);
4. Epidemiological safety, public health, and pharmaceuticals (new challenges and threats dimension);
5. Information technology (economic dimension);
6. Energy security (economic dimension).

The concept paper in priority area “Combating illicit drugs” in the new challenges and threats dimension needs to be updated. Last but not least, the concept paper in priority area “Trade and investment” was not elaborated yet due to lack of a coordinator.

6. Supporting CICA external relations

An important part of Secretariat activities in 2023 was pursuing and further strengthening of CICA external relations.

The main highlight of the year was the side event “**The United Nations, CICA and Regional Organizations: Global Partnership in Support of the SDGs**” held in New York on 22 September 2023 on the margins of the High-Level Week of the 78th UN General Assembly Session. The event was hosted by the CICA Chairmanship with the support of the Secretariat and was aimed at enhancing partnerships, promoting cooperation and coordination on sustainable development and climate change, and facilitating exchanges among international organizations and their members.

The event gathered senior UN officials, including Mr. Haoliang Xu, UN Under-Secretary-General (USG) and Associate Administrator of **the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**; Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, UN USG and Executive Secretary of **the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)**; and Ms. Rola A. A. H. Dashti, UN USG and Executive Secretary of **the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**.

Besides that, during his visit to New York, the CICA Secretary General held bilateral meetings with various high-level UN officials at the UN Headquarters. These discussions covered cooperation with the UN on regional and global levels, enhancing CICA's global media presence and exploring specific partnerships, as follows:

- with UN USG Ms. Rola Dashti on identifying synergies with ESCWA,
- with UN USG Mr. Haoliang Xu on identifying joint projects with UNDP in Asia related to youth, environment and development to support the SDGs and promote multilateralism,
- with UN USG and Head of **the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)** Mr. Vladimir Voronkov on practical cooperation on counter-terrorism and

possible establishment of ties between the CICA Secretariat and the UNOCT through signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU).

- with UN USG Ms. Catherine Pollard on financial and human resources management policies, including UN budget management policies,
- with UN USG and **International Civil Service Commissions (ICSC)** Chairman Ambassador Larbi Djacta on policies and practices in human resources management in the UN Common System,
- with UN USG Ms. Melissa Fleming on boosting CICA's global profile.

The Secretariat had earlier began exploring the possibility of closer ties with **UN ESCAP** in addition to already existing regular contacts between the two structures. Following the meeting between the CICA Secretary General and ESCAP Executive Secretary in May 2023 two issues are under consideration: (1) organization of a joint side-event on the margins of the 80th Commission Session in April 2024, and (2) elaboration of a draft MoU between the secretariats of CICA and UNESCAP. Corresponding concept papers on both items will be presented to the Member States in due course.

With regard to interaction with other organizations of the UN system in 2023, the Secretary General had a brief meeting with **UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** Executive Director Ms. Ghada Waly in October 2023, and the CICA Deputy Secretary General held consultations with UNODC Representative to Central Asia Ms. Ashita Mittal in April 2023. In March 2023 the Secretary General met with the Director General of **the International Organization for Migration (IOM)** and in November 2023 participated online in the 114th session of the Council of the IOM. The Secretary General also had a meeting with Mr. David A. Chikvaidze, Chef de Cabinet of the Director-General of **the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG)** during the Astana International Forum in June 2023. The conversation centered around exploring potential areas of cooperation with UNOG, including capacity-building for the CICA Secretariat.

In the course of 2023 the Secretariat continued working on establishment of relations with **the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** in accordance with the SOC task set on 8 December 2021. Draft concept paper on establishing ties between the CICA and ASEAN Secretariats, prepared by the Secretariat and reviewed by all CICA Members States was conveyed to the ASEAN Secretariat in April 2023.

In September 2023 the ASEAN Secretariat formally replied that cooperation between the two Secretariats may be undertaken on an ad-hoc basis or through collaborative effort to identify potential mutually beneficial activities within the mandate of Secretariat-to-Secretariat engagement without the need to formalize such relations through an MoU.

The Secretariat consulted on the issue with Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam – ASEAN Member States – who supported the idea of inter-secretariat engagement at this stage, while recommending to pursue the establishment of formal ties later whenever appropriate for both sides. Furthermore, the first ever meeting between CICA and ASEAN Secretaries General was held on 30 October 2023. Thus, it can be considered that the dialogue between the two structures has commenced.

In 2023, the CICA Secretary General attended the 23rd Meeting of the Council of **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** Heads of State (online, in July) and visited the SCO Secretariat in Beijing twice (14 April and 30 October). The Secretary General met with SCO Secretary-General Zhang Ming and discussed topical issues of cooperation between the two organizations. An intention was expressed to conclude an action plan for the implementation of the 2014 MoU between the CICA and SCO Secretariats. The draft action plan has been circulated to all CICA Member States for consideration.

In 2023, the CICA Secretariat and **the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) of the Eurasian Economic Union** began developing a draft action plan until 2025 for the implementation of the 2022 MoU between the CICA Secretariat and the EEC. To date, the draft action plan was reviewed by the CICA Member States and their proposals are being considered by the EEC.

In January 2023 the Secretary General took part in the 26th **Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)** Council of Ministers Meeting in Tashkent. He also participated in the 27th ECO Council of Ministers Meeting in Shusha, Azerbaijan, in October 2023.

Given that members of **the Organization of Turkic States (OTS)** are also Members of CICA and **TURKPA** is a CICA Observer, the Secretary General, DSG and Secretariat officials participated in events organized by the OTS and its affiliated organizations in 2023. At the Twelfth Plenary Session of TURKPA on

Parliamentary Diplomacy for a More Fair World in Ankara in April 2023 the Secretary General addressed various topics, including energy, migration and food.

In 2023, upon the invitation of Azerbaijan's Chairmanship in **the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)**, the CICA Secretariat actively participated in the events of **NAM** held in Baku. NAM events bring together representatives from 120 countries, and the practice of the CICA Secretariat's participation in these events demonstrates, in particular, its useful contribution to enhancing CICA's visibility.

Following up on the 2021 update of the CICA Catalogue of CBMs by the Sixth MC meeting, in particular the inclusion of the CBM on the empowerment of women and girls within the human dimension, the Secretariat explored avenues for possible cooperation with **the UN Women** in 2023. A representative of the UN Women in Kazakhstan was invited as a speaker to the CICA Business Council held in Astana on 13 November 2023.

The latter session of the CICA Business Council also served as a venue for interaction with other international organizations, as it was attended by representatives of **the Eurasian Bank of Development, UNESCAP Secretariat and Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS)**, who delivered statements at this meeting.

In the course of 2023 the Secretary General also met with heads of other international organizations and regional fora, such as **the IAEA, World Tourism Organization, UN Alliance of Civilizations and D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation**.

7. Visits of the Secretary General and Secretariat to Member States and participation at international fora

During the reporting period, the Secretary General carried out **21 working visits**, including to Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, India, Iran, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Thailand, Türkiye, Uzbekistan and the UN Headquarters in New York, including to high-profile international fora. Within these working visits the Secretary General held about 68 consultations with the Heads of State or Government, foreign ministers, senior officials, heads of international

organizations, diplomatic missions and think tanks of CICA Member States, Observers and partner organizations, and delivered statements at international conferences at the invitation of their organizers.

Along with other above-mentioned international events, the Secretary General took part in the 2nd Eurasian Economic Forum (Moscow, May), 79th ESCAP Session (Bangkok, May), Central Asian Security and Cooperation Forum (Astana, July), Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (Beijing, October), High-Level International Conference "Eurasian Security: Reality and Prospects in a Transforming World" (Minsk, October), 10th Beijing Xiangshan Forum (Beijing, October), VI International Transport and Logistics Business Forum "NEW SILK WAY" (Astana, October).

The DSG participated at the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of NAM "NAM: united and steadfast in confronting emerging challenges" (Baku, July); 22nd meeting of SCO Council of Heads of Government (Bishkek, October); NAM's "International Conference on Advancing the Rights and Empowerment of Women" (Baku, November); conference "15th Anniversary of TURKPA: Experience of the Past, Today's Realities, and Future Prospects" (Baku, November); International Forum of Civil Participation "We Are Together" (Moscow, December).

Experts and professional personnel of the Secretariat participated in the following international events: the Multilateral Meeting on Strategies for Preventing and Combating Organized Crime in Central Asia and the South Caucasus (Tashkent, March); side event on the margins of UN ESCAP's Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2023 (Bangkok, March); conference "The role of national parliaments in promoting security and stability through green economy, connectivity and sustainable development" organized by the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan and OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (Baku, May); Regional Conference "Counter-Terrorism Early Warning Network for Central Asia" (Tbilisi, October); 9th International Scientific and Practical Conference of the SCO RATS on Cooperation in the Field of Combating International Terrorism and Extremism (Tashkent, November); Annual Programme Steering Committee Meeting of the UNODC Programme for Central Asia 2022-2025 (Bishkek, November); roundtable on Promoting Sustainable Development in Central Asia by Eurasian Development Bank (Almaty, November), 30th meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council (Skopje, 30), IV International Conference

«Combating new Coronavirus Infection and other Infectious Diseases» (Saint-Petersburg, Russia, December).

8. Raising visibility of CICA

In 2023, with support of the Chairmanship and Member States, the Secretariat successfully executed various initiatives and efforts aimed at enhancing CICA's visibility and influence.

The Secretariat further intensified its ongoing efforts to enhance CICA's presence in public domain and media coverage. In the reporting period, about 50 unique materials were published on CICA and related issues, including articles and interviews with the leadership of the Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan, CICA Secretary General and experts of the Secretariat. All these materials can be found on the CICA website. Additionally, CICA activities and events were reflected in over 150 materials published in international media outlets, accompanied by a series of briefings by the Secretary General.

Interviews of the Secretary General were published or broadcasted in such media outlets as "Report" information agency (Azerbaijan), "Ekonomim" newspaper (Turkiye), "Haber 1" (Turkiye), "Hindustan Times" (India), "The Economic Times" daily newspaper (India), "Iran daily" newspaper (Iran), "Press TV" news and documentary network (Iran), "Kuwait Times" (Kuwait), "Chinese Social Sciences Today" journal (China), "People's Daily" (China), "The Paper" (China), "Trend" news agency (Azerbaijan), "AzTV" channel (Azerbaijan), "Khabar 24" channel (Kazakhstan), "Qazaqstan" channel (Kazakhstan), "Uzbekistan 24" channel (Uzbekistan), "The Diplomat" magazine (USA), "Belarus Today" newspaper (Belarus), "BelTA" telegraph agency (Belarus) and "Society" magazine (Austria).

The Secretariat continued to publish quarterly the newsletter "The Voice of Asia: CICA Digest" to inform Member States and general public about ongoing CICA activities.

The presence of the CICA Secretariat in the most popular social networks - Facebook, Twitter (currently "X") and Instagram - has been systematically increasing. Over the course of 2023 (the number of followers of the Secretary General on "X" exceeded 1400) and on Instagram by 206 to 1091, and number

of subscribers on Facebook increased by 57 to 775. The Secretariat has established and continuously maintains an active YouTube channel where it regularly publishes content. The Secretariat has launched in a pilot mode a Telegram channel 'CICA Daily News' providing news in the fields of security, economy, energy, environment and other key areas related to CICA mandate and geographic region, and plans to expand the channel to the CICA TTF focal points.

With a view to widely promoting a positive public perception of CICA activities and raising its visibility, the Secretariat initiated two competitions among journalists and youth from the CICA region.

1. The contest aimed at encouraging the best media coverage of the CICA development process. The results of this competition were announced in the first decade of August. A press tour was organized for the winners where they could get a closer look at and raise their awareness about CICA activities.

2. The essay writing contest among young people of the CICA region with the theme "The Asian Future We Want: Our Ideas and Actions" proved to be extremely popular. The Secretariat received 122 applications, of which 31 were selected for participation in the competition. The results of the competition will be announced in January 2024 and the winners will receive modest prizes.

These contests not only help raise awareness of the organization's objectives and activities, but also promote engagement of diverse groups of population in the CICA region in discussing and shaping the future of Asia.

Several impactful visibility raising events were organized in 2023, including the first CICA Ski Tour involving ambassadors and representatives of diplomatic missions in Astana, a traditional tree planting ceremony on the CICA Alley in Astana, the CICA Bicycle Tour, and the historic raising of the organization's flag on Kanysh Satpayev Peak near Almaty, Kazakhstan. Through these engaging initiatives, CICA successfully reached a broader audience, effectively showcasing its commitment to collaboration, environmental stewardship, the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, and diplomatic engagement.

Furthermore, the CICA Secretariat leadership and experts have been delivering regular lectures for students in universities on the history of CICA, current

agenda of the organization, and its future prospects in ensuring peace, security, and cooperation in Asia.

Following up on the aforementioned meeting between the CICA Secretary General and H.E. Ms. Melissa Fleming, UN USG for Global Communication, in New York in September 2023, the Secretariat envisages stepping up its cooperation with the UN Secretariat with a view to further improving its public communication activities.

9. Financial and human resources of the Secretariat

In the course of the years 2021-2023 under the Chairmanship of Kazakhstan, there was a significant breakthrough in further development and strengthening of CICA. These include establishment of new CICA institutions and mechanisms of cooperation, updating the CICA Catalogue of CBMs and boosting CBM implementation, the launch of the CICA transformation process and adoption of the RMT, as well as adoption of three very important thematic documents by the CICA Summit and MC paving the way for new avenues of cooperation within CICA. All of these indicate to the increased interest and strong demand for CICA by all Member States.

However, the level of tangible support to ongoing CICA activities through voluntary contributions or seconded personnel falls far short of the high added value of CICA for its Members, although CICA remains a “lean” organization providing the best value for money.

The 2023 budget of the CICA Secretariat was approved at the level of 2 860 000 USD. At the moment, the collection rate of contributions to the budget in 2023 amounts to **69 per cent**, or 1 973 450 USD. This amount covers only 95 per cent of actual expenses incurred in 2023 so far. The Secretariat expresses deep appreciation to those **five Member States** which contributed to the 2023 budget to date – to Kazakhstan, China, the United Arab Emirates, Türkiye and Tajikistan.

The Secretariat extends its gratitude to all Member States that make voluntary contributions to the Secretariat on a regular basis. Since the establishment of the CICA Secretariat, only **16 Member States** contributed to its budget, with Kazakhstan, China, Türkiye and the Republic of Korea being the largest

contributors with cumulative shares respectively 76.6, 12.9, 4.3 and 2.8 per cent of all funds received to date. *Charts 1.A and 1.B in the attachment show the cumulative amount of contributions of these 16 Member States and the percentage.*

The Secretariat extends its gratitude to all Member States that second staff to the Secretariat on a regular basis. Since the establishment of the CICA Secretariat, only **eight Member States** provided secondees to the Secretariat, with Kazakhstan, China, India, Russia and Türkiye being the largest contributors of staff with cumulative ratings of 47, 15, 15, 15 and 9 “person-per-year” respectively. *Charts 2.A and 2.B in the attachment show the cumulative amount of “person-per-year” contributions by these eight Member States and the percentage.*

During 2023 the Secretariat welcomed three new secondees: new DSG Ms. Zhang Ling from China, who was appointed by the CICA Ministerial Council, and two Officers from Kazakhstan. The Secretariat expresses its appreciation to China, India, Kazakhstan and Russia for continuing secondment of their highly professional and well-qualified personnel to the Secretariat in 2023. Currently the Secretariat continues to have two open contracted positions of experts for hiring on a competitive basis, and recommendation of candidates from Member States are welcome.

The Secretary General kindly encourages Member States to follow the example of those Members, which demonstrate commitment to CICA principles and goals through regular contribution of financial and human resources, as generosity of only few Member States cannot guarantee long-term financial sustainability, effectiveness and practical impact of CICA activities. Furthermore, secondment of personnel by Member States does not only strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat but also increases the ownership of Member States over the organization and broadens geographic representation in the staff of the Secretariat, making it more international.

Last but not least, the Secretariat extends its deep gratitude to the Republic of Kazakhstan for its decision, taken upon the initiative of President of Kazakhstan H.E. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, to provide a separate new building for the CICA Headquarters in Astana, which is expected to be built in the course of 2024.

10. Ratification of the CICA Convention on Privileges and Immunities

The Secretariat is continuing its efforts to bring the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Secretariat, its Personnel and Representatives of Members of CICA (Convention) into force. In 2023, the People's Republic of Bangladesh has signed and ratified the Convention. The Secretariat expresses its deep appreciation to Bangladesh for implementing the decisions of the Fourth and Fifth Meetings of the CICA Summit and CICA MC on the early signature and ratification of the Convention.

This achievement has brought the number of instruments of ratification of the Convention submitted thus far to the Secretariat to **eight**, and the number of ratifications required for the entry of the Convention into force to **six**. The Secretariat kindly requests the Member States, who have not yet done so, to sign/ratify the Convention to enable its early entry into force. To that end, the Secretariat has sent to all Member States a brief presentation of the Convention and an updated status of its signature and ratification.

Attachment: four charts on 2 pages.

Chart 1.A All contributions since 2006 (in USD)

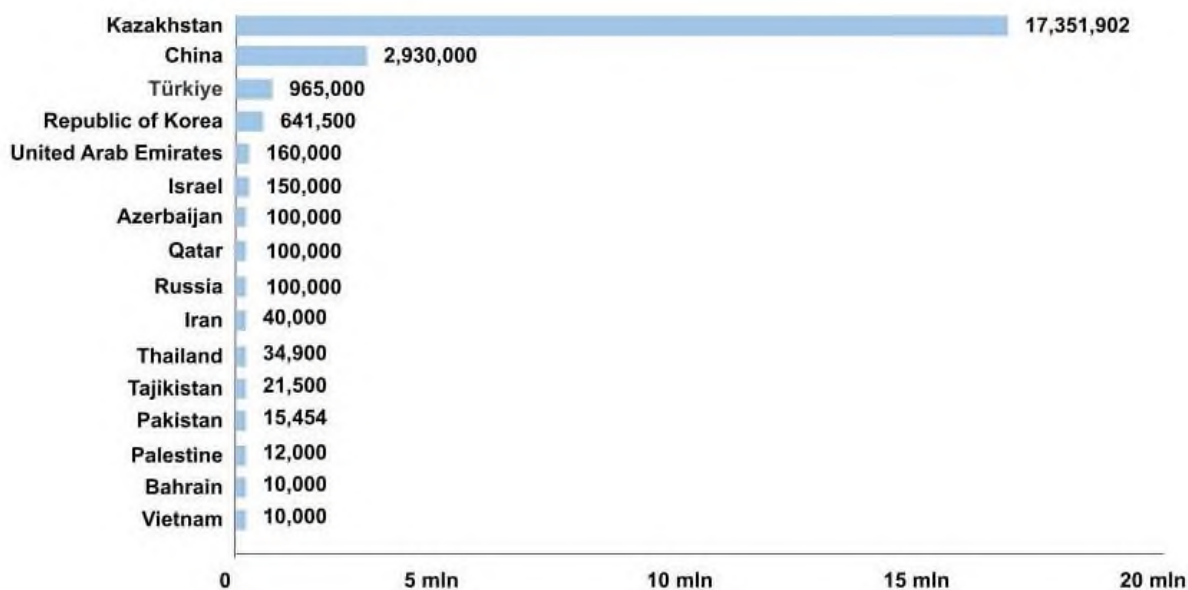


Chart 1.B All contributions since 2006 in percentage

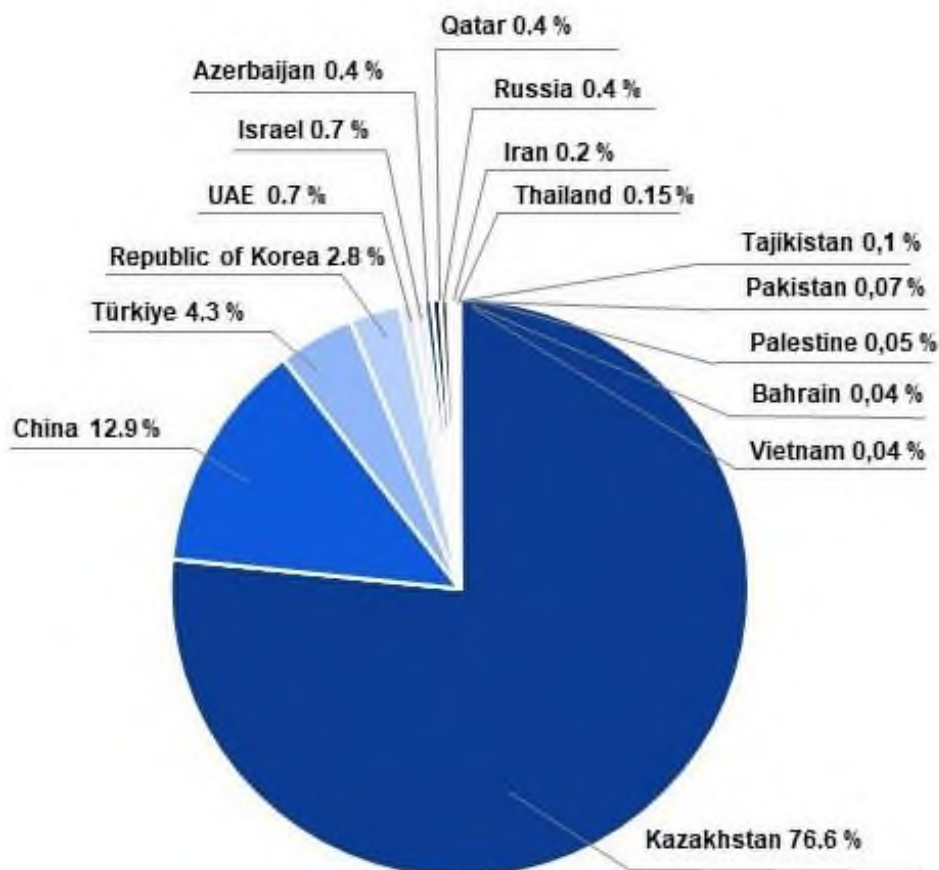


Chart 2.A “Person-per-year” contributions since 2006

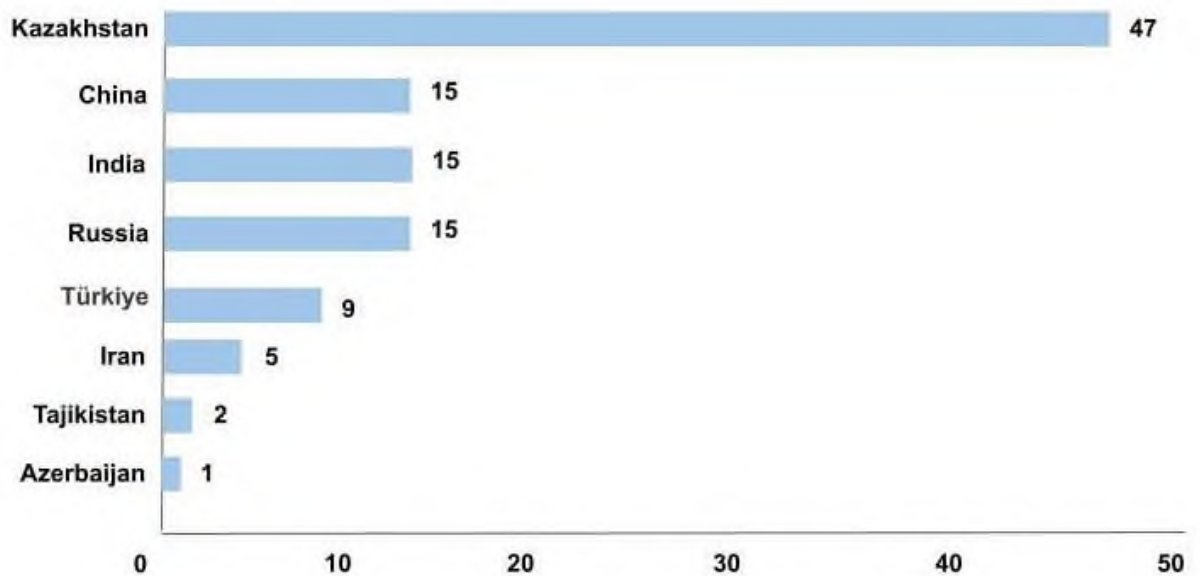


Chart 2.B “Person-per-year” contributions since 2006 in percentage

