



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

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

№SOC/1104

*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 22 August 2023.

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

Astana, 15 September 2023



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



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№SOC/1104

*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 22 августа 2023 года.

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

город Астана, 15 сентября 2023 г.



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

Азиядағы өзара іс-қимыл және сенім шаралары кеңесінің (Азия Кеңесінің) Хатшылығы Азия Кеңесінің мүше мемлекеттеріне өзінің зор ілтипатын білдіре отырып, 2023 жылғы 22 тамызда өткен Аға лауазымды тұлғалар комитеті отырысы хаттамасын жолдауды өзіне мәртебе санайды.

Қосымша:
аталған,
9 п.

Хатшылық осы мүмкіндікті пайдалана отырып, Азия Кеңесінің мүше мемлекеттеріне өзінің зор ілтипатын тағы да растайды.

Астана қаласы, 2023 жылғы 12 қыркүйек

**АЗИЯДАҒЫ ӨЗАРА ІС-ҚИМЫЛ ЖӘНЕ
СЕНІМ ШАРАЛАРЫ КЕҢЕСІНІҢ
МҮШЕ МЕМЛЕКЕТТЕРІ**



Secretariat

MINUTES OF THE SENIOR OFFICIALS COMMITTEE MEETING 22 August 2023

The Senior Officials Committee (SOC) meeting was held on Tuesday, 22 August 2023 in Astana in the offline format. Mr Talgat Kaliyev, Ambassador-at-Large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, chaired the meeting.

The initial draft agenda and draft annotated agenda (SOC/2023-II/Agenda/1 of 18 July 2023, SOC/2023-II/Agenda/2 of 11 August 2023) and the decisions taken (SOC/2023-II/DEC/1, SOC/2023-II/DEC/2 of 22 August 2023) are available on the CICA website.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without any changes.

2. Draft Road Map for CICA Transformation and

3. Draft MC Decision on a Road Map for CICA Transformation

Agenda items 2 and 3 were taken up together. The draft Road Map for CICA Transformation (RMT) (document MC/2023/CHAIR/1/Rev.1 of 14 June 2023) and draft Ministerial Council (MC) decision on endorsement of the RMT (document MC/2023/DRAFT/3/Rev.1 of 14 June 2023) had been considered and finalized at the Special Working Group (SWG) meeting on 13-14 June 2023. The SWG had recommended to the SOC that it approve the draft RMT for endorsement by the MC through the adoption of the draft MC decision on the RMT. There was no objection expressed at the SOC meeting.

The SOC decision: The SOC recommended to the MC that it endorse the draft RMT through the adoption of the draft MC decision on the RMT at its informal meeting on 21 September 2023 in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly session.

4. Draft Decision of the CICA Ministerial Council on Modalities of Implementation of CICA Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)

The Chair informed the SOC that this draft MC decision was discussed at the SWG meetings on 16 May, 13-14 June and 21 August. The SWG at its meeting on 21 August was not able to finalize its work on the text of the document and recommended to the SOC to continue its consideration.

The SOC continued negotiations on the document and finalized its text but was not able to approve it for adoption by the MC as one Member State, Israel, expressed reservation on the entire document. Israel expressed regret that it was being singled out, discriminated and deprived of the right to propose and implement specific CBMs. Israel stressed that CICA cannot be used as a means of pressure against it and called on all parties to engage in a constructive dialogue within CICA.

The Chair expressed disappointment by the fact that the success of the upcoming MC meeting was put at risk, as this document was part of the transformation process. The Chair noted that instruments of CBM implementation were becoming hostage to political differences and that it was not for the good of CICA. The Chair expressed intention to continue consultations with the Member States concerned and try to finalize the document before the MC meeting on 21 September 2023.

The Secretary General expressed regret that a document on technical aspects of CICA's main work became hostage to political differences, and this situation prevented the Member States and the Secretariat from implementing the decisions of the Sixth CICA Summit and the task set by the SOC to further improve modalities of CBM implementation. The Secretary General suggested raising the issue at the ministerial level.

The SOC decision: _____ The SOC considered the draft MC decision on modalities of implementation of CICA CBMs and agreed that consultations among Member States on this document would continue.

5. Draft Statement of the CICA Ministerial Council on Promoting Volunteerism for Sustainable Development

The Chair informed the SOC that this draft statement had been considered by the SWG at its meetings on 13-14 June and 21 August 2023. The SWG had not been able to finalize its work on the text of the document and recommended to the SOC

to continue its consideration. The SOC continued negotiations on the text and achieved consensus on the document.

Russia thanked all Member States for their support to the document initiated by the Russian side. It proposed to continue supporting volunteerism, keep it on the CICA agenda and deepen cooperation in specific directions mentioned in the draft statement, including appointing national focal points responsible for such matters.

With regard to implementation of paragraph 15 of the document, India and Russia proposed that the information on volunteerism submitted for placing on the CICA website should be reviewed by all Member States before publicizing. The Secretary General proposed that the Secretariat, upon receiving such information, would place it in the restricted part of the website for two weeks, invite comments if any from all Member States, and thereafter make this information open for the general public. The SOC agreed to this working modality.

The SOC decision: The SOC recommended to the MC that it adopt the draft Statement of the CICA MC on Promoting Volunteerism for Sustainable Development at its informal meeting on 21 September 2023 in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly session.

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

The Secretary General updated the SOC on the current status of concept papers in priority areas of CICA dimension and informed the meeting that the Secretariat began compiling the CICA Plan on Implementation of CBMs and Provisional Calendar of CICA Governing, Working and Advisory Bodies for 2024. The Secretary General called on the Member States to submit their proposals and inputs to the Plan before 1 October 2023, in accordance with the General guidelines for conducting events on implementation of CICA CBMs. He drew the attention of the SOC to the uniform template for such inputs prepared by the Secretariat to assist Member States.

The SOC decision: The SOC called on Member States to submit to the CICA Secretariat before 1 October 2023 preliminary information about CBM events planned in 2024, including their brief concept, expected title, purpose, organizer(s) and other available information about the event, for the inclusion in the CICA Annual Plan of Implementation of CBMs for 2024 to be approved by the SOC before the end of 2023.

6(a) The SOC then considered four offers from Member States to assume the role of coordinator or co-coordinator in priority areas under the CICA Catalogue of CBMs:

- Offer of the Russian Federation to assume the role of coordinator in the priority area “Security of and in the use of ICTs” for 2024-2025;
- Offer of China to assume the role of co-coordinator in the priority area “Security of and in the use of ICTs” for 2024-2025;
- Offer of Iraq to assume the role of co-coordinator in the priority area “Combating Terrorism”;
- Offer of Israel to assume the role of co-coordinator in the priority area “Sustainable Development”.

The Chair noted that the SWG considered offers of the Russian Federation and China and recommended to the SOC to approve them. No objections were raised.

Russia thanked all Member States for support and informed the SOC on the upcoming online CICA Seminar on Digital Forensics to be held on 2-3 October 2023. China also thanked all Member States for their trust and highlighted great importance given to the information security within CICA.

The SOC decision: The SOC approved the Russian Federation as coordinator and China as co-coordinator in the priority area “Security of and in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs)” for 2024-2025. The SOC accordingly amended the list of coordinating and co-coordinating countries for implementing CBMs under priority areas of CICA dimensions (contained in document SOC/2023-II/DEC/1 of 22 August 2023 available at the CICA website).

The Chair noted that the SWG considered offers of Iraq and Israel but did not agree on either of them and agreed to submit these issues for consideration by the SOC. The Chair reiterated that it welcomed the offers of Iraq and Israel to take up the role of co-coordinators and encouraged all Member States to support these proposals.

Palestine, Kuwait, Russia, Qatar, Iran supported the offer of Iraq for co-coordinatorship in the priority area “Combating Terrorism”. Israel stated that it was not in a position to give its consent and requested additional time to consider Iraq’s proposal. Iraq thanked all the countries that supported its offer to assume

the role of co-coordinator in the priority area "combating terrorism" during this meeting and the previous meeting.

Republic of Korea supported the offer of Israel to become co-coordinator in the priority area "Sustainable development". Palestine, Kuwait, Qatar, Iran, Iraq objected to Israel's proposal.

The Chair expressed its regret that this was for the first time when a Member State's bid to assume the role of coordinator or co-coordinator had become a contentious issue, noting that such an unhealthy situation goes against the spirit of CICA and beats the main purpose of our organization to build trust and confidence among all Member States without exception. The Chair stressed that any objections to the good will of a Member State to become a co-coordinator of CBM implementation undermine the equality of Member States in their equal right to provide additional contribution to CICA.

Israel underlined that due to political reasons it was deprived of the equal right to provide additional contribution to CICA.

7. Any other business

7(a) Appointment of a new CICA Deputy Secretary General

The Chair informed the SOC that the People's Republic of China had nominated a candidate for the post of CICA Deputy Secretary General (DSG), as the three-year term of office of the incumbent DSG, Ms. Chi Fang, would expire soon, as was communicated to all Member States through the Secretariat on 7 August 2023. The Chair briefed the SOC on the candidacy of Ms. Zhang Ling, senior diplomat from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, and explained the nomination and appointment procedure. The Chair requested the Secretary General to provide his recommendation on the candidacy of Ms. Zhang Ling, in accordance with the established procedure of appointment, requiring SOC consultations with the Secretary General.

The Secretary General informed the SOC on the results of the interview he conducted with Ms. Zhang Ling. The Secretary General noted that her extensive working experience in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the SCO Secretariat, together with the information and impression he got during the interview, suggested that Ms. Zhang Ling was qualified to serve as CICA Deputy Secretary General. The Secretary General recommended the candidacy of Ms. Zhang Ling for the appointment as the next CICA DSG.

The Chair expressed full support to the candidacy of Ms. Zhang Ling.

China presented the candidacy of Counsellor Ms. Zhang Ling for the position of CICA DSG, citing her profound experience in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, including in CICA matters, and high command of Russian and English languages. China underlined the importance of the CICA process for China and China's strong support to the activities of the CICA Secretariat.

Palestine expressed its strong support to the Chinese nomination.

Pakistan thanked China for the nomination of the next DSG, noted Secretary General's recommendation and Chair's overview and fully endorsed the candidacy of Ms. Zhang Ling. Pakistan thanked the incumbent DSG Ms Chi Fang for her work.

Thailand appreciated the work of the incumbent DSG and her personal contribution to CICA and strongly supported the nomination of Ms. Zhang Ling.

Russia fully supported the candidate from China and thanked Ms. Chi Fang for her work and contribution to the CICA process.

Egypt appreciated the nomination by China, noting China's continuous contribution to CICA, supported the candidacy and expressed special thanks to the incumbent DSG.

India expressed its reservation on this issue and noted that it would provide its remarks in writing for the inclusion in the minutes of the SOC meeting, and these are reflected below. India is not in a position to support the proposal under discussion. This is largely on procedural counts as follows:

(i) Whenever there is an upcoming vacancy in the Secretarial staff at international fora or organisations, and where the vacancy is to be open for candidatures from all Member States, it is a norm for the Secretariat to circulate a notification about the upcoming vacancy among all Member States along with all relevant details such as those related to remuneration, allowances, terms of service, tenure and extension, etc. More than one official from more than one Member State could be interested in applying for the position. The information so circulated is therefore important since it is then used by the nodal personnel and the administration related agency in each of the Member States for inviting interest from all possible interested officers. If interest is received from more than one official—which is very likely in the case of an important regional forum such as CICA which is on the way to become an important regional international

organisation—procedures would have to be followed by the nodal agencies in the Member States to select the best among the interested candidates for eventually forwarding to the CICA Secretariat for consideration.

(ii) As has been pointed out by the Chair, after receiving the mentioned NV, the Indian side was in touch with the Secretariat to seek clarity on a few queries. In the process, the understanding that India had on the matter was reconfirmed by the CICA Secretariat. Accordingly, while there is general clarity on all issues related to the final appointment of a candidate, there is relative lack of clarity on one aspect. As per the Statue and Staff Regulations of the CICA Secretariat, if more than one candidature comes up for consideration for the post of CICA DSG, the SOC has to discuss the issue and the final decision would have to be taken based on advice of the SG. While India reposes complete faith in the SOC and the wisdom of the SG, it would be useful to know what would be the specific parameters that would be employed in making the final decision in case of more than one candidature being presented. This information is important since the nodal agencies mentioned in the point above, who would make significant investment of time, energy and resource for identifying the best possible candidate from a Member State, would need to know what would be the logical conclusion of the process.

(iii) The CICA Statue and Staff Regulations provide that while appointing the DSG, 'equal opportunity requirements' and 'widest possible representation of the Member States' shall be taken into account. India has had previous cases of consecutive Dy. EDs/Dy. SGs from the same Member State. While the Indian side values the work done by the dignitaries who have occupied the position, at a watershed moment when CICA is evolving to an important regional international organisation, India believes that every avenue towards ensuring this widest representation among the Member States should be exhausted before the appointment to the important position of DSG of CICA is made.

The Secretary General clarified that the Secretariat strictly followed all the existing provisions stipulated in the CICA documents, stressing that there was no requirement to inform Member States on the expected vacancy in advance and to have more than one candidate for the position. The Secretary General stressed that the post of DSG is a seconded position and the term of appointment of the current incumbent, which started in August 2020, was known to all Member States, and that all Member States were duly informed of the nomination as soon as it was received. The Secretary General noted that the Secretariat had provided comprehensive and timely answers to the questions raised by the Indian side.

India expressed the following additional remarks in response:

(i) While India fully understands the provisions of the existing procedure within CICA, it believes that the provision for ensuring widest possible representation while appointing DSG, merits due consideration and all efforts towards providing opportunity to all Member States to nominate a candidate for an important position should be exhausted, as explained in India's first intervention on this matter.

(ii) Also, the procedure do mentions the requirement of consensus at the time of appointment of the DSG. India believes that this provision has been made so that, when an eventuality which is not foreseen earlier shows up, Member States may be able to express their views and concerns, and make constructive suggestions towards overall improvement of our forum, which is precisely what Indian delegation is doing in the present instance.

The Chair stressed that it was also following all existing provisions and called on the Member States to show wisdom and reach consensus.

Pakistan called on the Member States to follow the existing procedures indicated by the Secretary General.

Russia noted that while no other Member State offered to take up such a responsible position, China continues to demonstrate serious attitude and its approach deserves the strongest support.

Iran supported the Chinese candidate and noted that there was enough time to consider the nomination, which was the only one.

The Republic of Korea noted that the existing provisions were met properly and it was fair to consider the only existing nominee. The Republic of Korea suggested that the appointment procedure could be revisited in the future.

Palestine and Qatar suggested that voting on the nominations could be introduced in the future.

India replied that the procedure could be followed in a better way and more time was needed to come up with the best possible candidate and reach consensus.

The Chair and the Secretary General called on Member States to continue consultations on the issue and resolve it as soon as possible in order to ensure continuous and effective functioning of the CICA Secretariat.

The SOC decision: The SOC considered the nomination of Ms. Zhang Ling by China as the next CICA Deputy Secretary General, held consultations with the CICA Secretary General and agreed that consultations among Member States on this matter would continue.

7(b) Informal Ministerial Council Meeting

The Secretary General informed the SOC on the upcoming Informal CICA Ministerial Council Meeting in New York on 21 September 2023 on the sidelines of the High-level Week of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, as well the Side Event titled “The United Nations, CICA and Regional Organizations: Global Partnership in Support of UN Sustainable Development Goals” to be held at the UN Headquarters on 22 September 2023.

The SOC adopted its decisions, as contained in document SOC/2023-II/DEC/1 of 22 August 2023 available at the CICA website.