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CICA's Quest for Asian Peace Blossoms in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's bold vision for an all inclusive and effective security organization in Asia, pursued for many years against tough competition of complicated history, ongoing conflicts and persistent skepticism has come a step closer to reality with a major summit of the 18 member Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Almaty on June 17.

Major Asian leaders gathered for the second summit of CICA in Kazakhstan's largest city and pledged in a joint declaration to develop multilateral cooperation and continue their efforts to make CICA into a "forum for political dialog through elaborating common approaches to security and cooperation on the basis of consensus." Their declaration (full text follows) expressed CICA's common clear vision of solutions to key challenges in the security area including fighting terrorism and extremism, promoting wide ranging cooperation in Asia and the world, reforming the United Nations, pursuing nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction and exploring ways to peacefully resolve regional conflicts. To give the organization a more permanent presence, the leaders moved to establish a CICA Secretariat in Almaty led by a representative of Kazakhstan.



Photo by Sergei Bondarenko

Asian leaders gather for formal photo as second CICA summit opens in Kazakhstan on June 17.

Before the summit, there were 17 CICA member states, including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Palestine Administration, Russia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. During the summit, the Republic of Korea became CICA's 18th full member, a sign of CICA's growing attractiveness as a useful mechanism for promoting peace and security. CICA observers today include Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Lebanon, Malaysia, the United States of America, Ukraine and Vietnam, as well as organizations such as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the League of Arab States.

At the summit, presidents of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and the prime minister of Thailand lead their national delegations. Israel, Mongolia and Turkey were represented by deputy prime ministers, while India sent a Cabinet-level minister and Iran sent a deputy foreign minister.

"CICA can and must become an integral part of the global system of responding to modern challenges," Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who hosted the summit, told participants.

President Nazarbayev first proposed the idea of CICA, modeled on the OSCE, to the international community at the UN General Assembly in 1992. This proposal, coming from an almost unknown country, was greeted with skepticism from many who questioned the potential of a newly independent state to succeed and the feasibility of trying to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable by bringing together countries with historical conflicts and high tensions among themselves, such as India and Pakistan, Iran, the Palestine Administration and Israel.

To the contrary, these perceived handicaps proved to be positive building blocks as support for CICA grew. First, an independent Kazakhstan was new to the world stage with no negative history in relationships with any country. Kazakhstan set out to develop positive relations with everybody and came to be viewed as an honest broker, working towards greater peace, stability and cooperation in Asia with no hidden agenda. Second, countries with ongoing conflicts increasingly came to see CICA as a useful mechanism and platform for peaceful dialog and negotiations. Still, it took a decade of hard work and perseverance from leaders and diplomats from Kazakhstan and other likeminded nations to overcome doubts about the organization. In June 2002, the first CICA summit finally took place in Almaty, instantly becoming a major success. It brought together leaders of many countries still at odds with each other, who pledged to work to reduce tensions through dialog. The 2002 summit adopted the founding Almaty Act and issued the Declaration on Eliminating Terrorism and Promoting Dialogue among Civilizations, and agreed to meet every four years. A historical development since the first summit has been the approval of the Catalog of Confidence Measures, a roadmap for avoiding and resolving problems between nations.

In his remarks to CICA's second summit, Russia's President Vladimir Putin called the group a unique forum which has proven its worth in four years of existence: "We can already point to a number of specific achievements, such as steps taken toward resolving conflicts and reducing tensions in hot spots." Putin noted CICA's potential in promoting greater cooperation among its members in fighting terrorism and fostering economic ties. He concluded: "The capabilities of our forum are not yet fully explored. We have broad prospects of cooperation in economic, environmental, humanitarian and other areas. It is important the Conference develops without duplicating and over bureaucratizing based on the principles we agree upon: consensus, free will and moving forward gradually."

President Hu Jintao of China praised the Conference as an "important forum promoting dialog among civilizations and a search for mutual understanding among different countries." Pledging Beijing's support for CICA's continued efforts to strengthen security in Asia and expand regional cooperation, the Chinese leader said: "We will continue moving forward along the path of peaceful development, pursuing a foreign policy of fostering a harmonious, secure and prosperous neighborly environment. I assure you we are ready, together with our Asian partners, to apply joint efforts for opening a beautiful future for Asia."

Other speakers at the summit drew attention to major challenges affecting their nations, calling for

greater multilateral cooperation through CICA and other bodies to help meet those challenges. Tajikistan's President Emomali Rakhmonov urged greater focus on rebuilding its neighbor, Afghanistan, while President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan called for more active cooperation in fighting drug trafficking. President Kurmanbek Bakiyev of Kyrgyzstan appealed for promoting trade and economic ties, especially developing energy sector and transport communications. Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev also called for developing transport projects as ways to promote better conditions for regional development, an important element of security and stability.

South Korea's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ban Ki-moon said his country hopes for CICA's support in negotiating with North Korea over nuclear problems. "North Korea's nuclear issue is the most serious threat to security of the Korean peninsula today. Pursuing close consultations with other parties, South Korea continues to do everything possible to resume the six party talks. With that goal in mind, I am hopeful for the continued support of CICA's member states in achieving successful negotiations. We hope CICA becomes a strong driving force for cooperative approaches to removing threats to security in Asia, much as the OSCE in Europe."

Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres commended CICA's potential as a buffer to aggression and extremism and as a mechanism for fostering mutual understanding and resolving issues: "This is a rather successful coalition, since all other coalitions are either regional, religious or strategic blocs. This is an alliance for peace, and not for any religion, ideology, war or conflict. It is a very interesting coalition and, perhaps, the first good will alliance, and it is great that it helps countries voluntarily develop economic ties." Speaking of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Peres said: "Before resolving the issue of political borders, we need to achieve peace economically. Political peace will be achieved later. We are intent on negotiating with the Palestinians, and the majority of them want peace."

Mohammed Saad Ahmed Aoud, member of the Palestine Liberation Organization's executive committee, called CICA a serious forum with major potential, saying: "We hope the CICA will not only help solve the problem between Palestine and Israel, but will bring contributions to global security."

Concluding the summit, President Nazarbayev said, "Those of us who gathered in Almaty are united by one goal, to bring about stability and security in Asia. Today, we made a very important step in that direction. The road toward this goal is long and winding. But we decided to travel that road together, and this decision is a symbol of ultimate success of our journey for the sake of peace, security and wellbeing of nations and peoples."

* * *

DECLARATION of the Second Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia

Almaty, June 17, 2006

We, the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA);

Having met in Almaty for the 2nd CICA Summit at a time when the current situation all over the world, including Asia, requires close cooperation, continuous dialogue, comprehensive exchange of views, addressing new challenges and threats, facilitating prevention of conflicts, peaceful settlement of disputes and developing feasible Confidence Building Measures (CBMs);

Reaffirming our commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and the norms and principles of international law;

Recognizing the close link between peace and security in Asia and in the other parts of the world;
Also reaffirming our commitment to the Declaration on the Principles Guiding Relations among the CICA Member States, the Almaty Act, and the CICA Catalogue of CBMs as the basis for future co-operation;

Expressing our firm belief in the CICA process as a facilitator of constructive dialogue through interaction and CBMs for promoting peace and development of our nations;

Underlining that a comprehensive approach to security includes military-political, economic, environmental and human dimensions, and therefore stressing the importance of developing and implementing CBMs in these fields;

Expressing confidence that enhancing dialogue and co-operation among the CICA Member States will lead to the improvement of security environment in Asia, resulting in a better future for our people,

DECLARE THE FOLLOWING:

I

1. We are convinced that multilateral co-operation, based on the principles enshrined in the UN Charter as well as in the Declaration on the Principles Guiding Relations among the CICA Member States and in the Almaty Act is more necessary today than ever for maintaining regional and international peace and security. To this end, we will intensify our efforts to develop CICA as a forum for political dialogue through elaborating common approaches to security and co-operation on the basis of consensus.

2. We support the ongoing reform process of the UN system aimed at improving its ability to address full range of challenges of our time.

We also support Asia's candidacy for the post of the United Nations Secretary-General.

3. We believe that direct or indirect threat or use of force in violation of the UN Charter and international law against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the states, pose threats to regional and international peace.

We call upon and continue to encourage all Member States who are parties to a dispute to settle this peacefully in conformity with principles enshrined in the UN Charter.

4. We strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and stress that there is no justification for terrorism. We are determined to enhance our efforts on national, regional and multilateral basis to combat this threat, which undermines the foundations of global peace and security. The fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations should be comprehensive, consistent and avoid double standards.

Terrorism can not be and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group.

We recognize the central role of the United Nations in the fight against international terrorism.

We continue to encourage States, which have not yet done so, to become Party to the 13 International Conventions on Terrorism adopted within the framework of the United Nations. The task of creating a comprehensive legal instrument is yet to be fulfilled. In this regard we support continuation of efforts in the UN General Assembly on conclusion of the comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

5. We reaffirm that separatism is one of the main threats and challenges to the security and stability, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of states. The Member States shall not support on the territory of another Member State any separatist movement and entities. We reiterate that our territories shall not be used by any separatist movement and entities and we shall not establish any kinds of relations and communications with separatists and shall not render them any kind of assistance.

We reaffirm the right of people to self-determination in accordance with the UN Charter and international law.

6. Cognizant of the growing threat that transnational organized crime poses to the security and prosperity of our nations and by the linkage in some cases between transnational organized crime and international terrorism, we confirm the necessity and express readiness to strengthen cooperation in accordance with respective national laws in countering transnational organized crime such as drug trafficking, financial crimes, including money-laundering, human trafficking and arms smuggling and to fight corruption.

7. We support international co-operation in combating illicit production and trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. We call upon Member States to co-operate with each other in curbing drug trafficking.

We reiterate our readiness to actively take part in international efforts, aimed at elaboration and implementation of special programmes to help tackling unfavourable social, economic and difficult humanitarian situation, which facilitates the growth of illicit drug trafficking.

Member States reaffirm their commitment to fulfil the tasks set out in the Almaty Act in countering the drug trafficking.

8. We recognize that proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery poses a threat to international peace and security, and call upon all states to fulfil their respective obligations in the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation.

We call upon all States to co-operate in preventing proliferation of WMDs.

We also recognize the importance of the compliance by States with their obligations under the multilateral treaties to which they are a Party on the elimination of WMDs and promoting non-proliferation, and encourage all States to make contribution to the objectives of non-proliferation and elimination of WMDs.

We encourage efforts by all States to prevent terrorists and criminal groups from attempts to acquire WMDs and their means of delivery.

We remain committed to the goal of a nuclear weapon free world through concrete efforts to achieve this objective.

We reaffirm the inalienable rights of states to have access to nuclear technologies, materials and equipments and their use for peaceful purposes in accordance with their respective obligations emanating from relevant IAEA safeguards agreements. We strongly encourage efforts to ensure inviolability of nuclear facilities.

We encourage strengthening of co-operation with the IAEA in the sphere of nuclear safety.

We acknowledge the joint efforts of the countries of Central Asia to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. In this regard we encourage promotion of this initiative with a view to signing the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.

9. We recognize that illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons (SALW) continue to pose a serious threat, inter alia, to peace and stability. To this end we reaffirm our readiness and willingness to implement the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trafficking in SALW in all its aspects as well as relevant provisions of the CICA Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures.

We urge support for current international, regional and national efforts to combat and prevent the illicit transfer of man-portable air defence systems and unauthorized access to and use of such weapons.

10. We emphasize that since First CICA Summit of 2002 in Almaty, Asia has witnessed rapid economic growth. Our shared interest in developing the CICA process has opened up new possibilities to

increase trade, economic and environmental co-operation for achieving sustainable development of our nations.

11. We recognize that energy supply security is one of the priority issues on the international agenda. Consequently, dialogue and cooperation among producer and consumer states have become all the more important. Therefore, underlining the fact that energy security is an indispensable part of economic and social security as well as sustainable development, we invite the relevant parties to contribute to energy security and to further enhance dialogue and cooperation on energy issues.

12. We are convinced that construction and development of transportation and telecommunication networks as well as oil and gas pipelines are essential for promoting investment opportunities and strengthening wide ranging co-operation among the Member States in areas such as trade, economic, scientific, technical and energy co-operation.

We acknowledge that non-traditional threats and challenges have negative impact on the social and economic development. In this context we recognize that spread of infectious fatal diseases, including HIV/AIDS and Avian influenza, poses serious challenges to the achievement of the development goals. We call on the Member States to strengthen co-operation, co-ordination and interaction in order to build and promote capacity for dealing with emergency situations in the sphere of public health.

13. We recognize that development, peace and human rights reinforce and complement each other and are inseparable.

We also recognize that facilitating inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue and partnerships aimed at promoting tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, at both national and international levels will be our guiding principles in the conduct of our relations.

We reaffirm the importance of respect for cultural diversity and specificities of societies.

We also note with appreciation the announcement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the establishment of the "Alliance of Civilizations", as well as the establishment of the Alliance of Civilizations High-Level Group of Eminent Persons and express interest in the outcome of this initiative.

We note that in a globalized world development of countries depends also on the progress achieved in the field of education, particularly by improving the literacy level and quality of education of our peoples. We therefore confirm the necessity to increase friendly contacts and cooperation of states in the field of education.

14. We emphasize the need to promote tourism to revive the centuries old traditions of the Great Silk Way used to unite and facilitate strengthening of relations among peoples.

II

15. We emphasize that the CICA process has been steadily moving forward enhancing co-operation among the Member States, with international organizations and other States.

16. During the period since the 1st Almaty CICA Summit of June 4th, 2002, most of the tasks, which pursued the goal of further development and strengthening of the CICA, have practically been realized.

17. Our collective political will has enabled the CICA process to continue to develop.

18. We note with satisfaction progress achieved in elaborating the implementation of CBMs in economic, environmental and human dimensions as well as in addressing new challenges and threats.

19. We commend the role of the Republic of Kazakhstan as the Chairman of the Conference in strengthening dialogue and development of the CICA process.

20. We shall continue with our efforts to move forward the CICA process to achieve our shared objectives on the basis of consensus.

21. We note with satisfaction the establishment of the CICA Secretariat on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which is an important milestone in the development of the CICA.

III

22. We are pleased to note an increasing interest in the CICA. In this regard, we welcome accession of the Kingdom of Thailand in 2004 and the Republic of Korea in 2006 as full members.

IV

23. We decide to mark 5th October as the CICA Day to commemorate the initiation of the idea of convening the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan at the 47th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1992.

V

24. We decide to hold the 3rd CICA Summit in 2010.

VI

25. We believe that the CICA process has moved forward through the implementation of tasks assigned by the First CICA Summit. This Declaration is reflective of our will to take the CICA process ahead by continuing to work towards building an atmosphere of confidence and trust and enhancing co-operation in the region.

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