

English Translation of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's Remarks at the 23rd SCO Summit

July 04, 2023

Excellencies,

Namaskar!

Today, at the 23rd SCO Summit, you all are warmly welcomed. In the past two decades, the SCO has emerged as a significant platform for peace, prosperity and development in the entire Asian region. The thousands of years old cultural and people-to-people ties between India and this region are a living testament to our shared heritage. We do not see this area as an "extended neighborhood", but as an "extended family".

Excellencies,

As the Chairperson of the SCO, India has made continuous efforts to take our multi-dimensional cooperation to new heights. We have based all these efforts on two fundamental principles. Firstly, "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," which means the whole world is one family. This principle has been an integral part of our social behaviour since ancient times. It continues to serve as a source of inspiration and energy for us in modern times. The second principle is SECURE, which stands for Security, Economic development, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and Environmental protection. It reflects the theme of our chairmanship and the vision of our SCO.

With this perspective, India has established five new pillars of cooperation within the SCO:

- Startups and Innovation,
- Traditional Medicine,
- Youth Empowerment,
- Digital Inclusion, and
- Shared Buddhist Heritage.

Excellencies,

Under India's chairmanship, we have hosted more than one hundred forty programs,

conferences, and meetings within the SCO. We have actively involved all Observer and Dialogue Partners of the SCO in fourteen different programs. In the fourteen Ministerial-level meetings of the SCO, we have collectively prepared several important documents. With these we are adding new and modern dimensions to our cooperation – like

- Cooperation on emerging fuels in the energy sector.
- Collaboration on decarbonization in the transportation sector and digital transformation.
- Cooperation in the field of digital public infrastructure.

India has made efforts to ensure that cooperation within the SCO is not limited to governments alone. Under India's chairmanship, new initiatives have been taken to enhance contact and engagement among people. For the first time, the SCO Millet Food Festival, Film Festival, SCO Surajkund Craft Mela, Think Tanks Conference, and International Conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage were organized.

The first tourism and cultural capital of the SCO, the eternal city of Varanasi, became a center of attraction for various programs. To harness the energy and talent of the youth from SCO countries, we organized new forums such as the Young Scientists Conclave, Young Authors Conclave, Young Resident Scholar Programme, Startup Forum, and Youth Council.

Excellencies,

The present times mark a crucial phase in global affairs.

In a world surrounded by conflicts, tensions and pandemics; food, fuel, and fertilizer crises is a significant challenge for all nations.

We should collectively ponder upon whether we are capable, as an organization, of fulfilling the aspirations and expectations of our people?

Are we equipped to tackle modern-day challenges?

Is SCO evolving into an organization that is fully prepared for the future?

In this regard, India supports proposals for reforms and modernization within the SCO.

We would be happy to share India's AI-based language platform, Bhashini, with everyone to remove language barriers within the SCO. This can serve as an example of digital technology for inclusive growth.

SCO can also become an important voice for reforms in global institutions, including the UN.

I am happy that today Iran is going to join the SCO family as a new member.

I extend my congratulations to President Raisi and the people of Iran on this occasion.

We also welcome the signing of the Memorandum of Obligation for Belarus' SCO membership.

The interest of other countries in joining SCO today is a testament to the importance of this organization.

In this process, it is essential for SCO to maintain its primary focus on the interests and aspirations of the Central Asian countries.

Excellencies,

Terrorism has become a major threat to regional and global peace. Dealing with this challenge requires decisive action. Regardless of its form or manifestation, we must unite in our fight against terrorism. Some countries use cross-border terrorism as an instrument of their policies, provide shelter to terrorists. SCO should not hesitate to criticize such nations. There should be no place for double standards on such serious matters. We need to enhance mutual cooperation in dealing with terror financing as well. The RATS mechanism of SCO has played a significant role in this regard. We should also take proactive steps to prevent the spread of radicalization among our youth. The joint statement issued today on the subject of radicalization symbolizes our shared commitment.

Excellencies,

The situation in Afghanistan has directly impacted the security of all of us. India's concerns and expectations regarding Afghanistan are similar to those of most of the SCO countries. We must come together to strive for the well-being of the people of

Afghanistan. Humanitarian assistance to Afghan citizens; the formation of an inclusive government; the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking; and ensuring the rights of women, children, and minorities are our shared priorities. Between the people of India and Afghanistan, there have been centuries-old friendly relations. In the past two decades, we have contributed to the economic and social development of Afghanistan. Even after the events of 2021, we continued to provide humanitarian assistance. It is important that Afghanistan's territory is not used to spread instability in neighboring countries or to encourage extremist ideologies.

Excellencies,

Strong connectivity is crucial for the progress of any region. Better connectivity not only enhances mutual trade but also fosters mutual trust. However, in these efforts, it is essential to uphold the basic principles of the SCO charter, particularly respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Member States. Following Iran's membership in the SCO, we can work towards maximizing the utilization of the Chabahar Port. The International North-South Transport Corridor can serve as a secure and efficient route for landlocked countries in Central Asia to access the Indian Ocean. We should strive to realize its full potential.

Excellencies,

The SCO represents approximately 40 percent of the world's population and nearly one-third of the global economy. Therefore, it is our shared responsibility to understand each other's needs and sensitivities. To resolve all challenges through better cooperation and coordination, and make constant efforts for the well-being of our people. We have received constant support from all of you in making India's chairmanship successful. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for this. On behalf of the whole of India, I convey my best wishes to the next Chairman of the SCO, the President of Kazakhstan and my friend President Tokayev.

India is committed to actively contributing, together with everyone, for the success of the SCO.

Thank you very much.

DISCLAIMER - This is the approximate translation of Prime Minister's remarks. Original remarks were delivered in Hindi.