

SIXTH MEETING OF THE SCO FORUM AT
TASHKENT ON 27-28 MAY 2011

PAPER PRESENTED BY LT GEN PK SINGH, PVSM, AVSM (RETD)
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THE THIRD PLENARY SESSION : "PRIORITIES FOR
FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCO"

It is indeed a great privilege and honour to be invited to participate in the 6th Meeting of the SCO Forum being held at Tashkent. For us in India, Tashkent has a special significance for it was here in 1966 that a peace agreement was signed between India and Pakistan and it was here that India's Prime Minister, H.E. Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri passed away. In the next ten minutes, I shall put across my views on "Priorities for further development of the SCO in the fields of security, economy, social and humanitarian cooperation". The views expressed are my personal views and do not necessarily represent the views of the United Service Institution of India, which I represent here today.

In the ten years since it was established the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) has evolved into a powerful regional body. It is a truly Eurasian organisation as can be surmised by the composition of its members, observer states and dialogue partners. The SCO has assumed a new geopolitical role and its increasing influence can be gauged by the memoranda of mutual understanding and contacts that it has established over the years. It has consistently worked towards providing peace, security and stability in the region. In the evolving international paradigm, SCO must aspire to play an even more important role in the political, security, economic and social arenas. India has much to contribute in all these fields and has consistently spelt out its desire to play a meaningful and constructive role in the SCO. India has expressed a desire to become a full member of the SCO. India will not only contribute in a significant manner towards growth and prosperity but also help achieve peace and stability. Here I would like to quote the words of the Indian Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh who said, "Our ambitions and aspirations for growth and prosperity cannot be realised unless there is peace and tranquility that will allow our people to live and work in honour and dignity".

As regards the theme of this Plenary Session I would like to highlight a few priorities for further development of the SCO and am confident that India would support these.

The first issue that I would like to touch upon is that of "Terrorism / Extremism and Drug Trafficking". India has suffered from the scourge of cross-border terrorism and the Indian Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh has very aptly stated that "Terrorism and extremism are alien ideas to our people. They bring only death and destruction in their wake. They have no place in a civilised society". All countries of our Region are affected by terrorism and extremism and have even witnessed suicide bombings. Terrorist / insurgent activity from Afghanistan was already spreading in the Central Asian countries and this is the major destabilising factor and a real threat to collective security. This spread of terrorism from across the borders also allows homegrown extremists to have international links which if not checked can become a major security challenge in future. We have to fight this menace together. Osama Bin Laden was killed in Pakistan and although he is dead, neither terrorism nor Al Qaeda or its affiliates like the Lashkar – e – Taiba or the terrorist network in our region have been exterminated. They have a global reach and we must work together to defeat them. Today, international terrorist organisations are recruiting people from all over the world and we have to fight this challenge together. We need to eliminate terrorist bases and training camps and cut off their financial support. The aspect of State support to terrorist organisations also needs to be addressed. We cannot allow nations to use terrorism as an instrument of State policy. Related to the issue of terrorism is the issue of drug trafficking and small arms proliferation. These are major problems faced by all SCO member States. Given India's experience in dealing with the problem of terrorism and drug trafficking, it has much to contribute to alleviate these problems. India would also be willing to actively cooperate with the Regional Anti-terrorism structure of the SCO. The need is to strengthen anti-terrorism cooperation amongst all our countries.

The next issue that I want to highlight is the security situation in Afghanistan. The security of all of us in the region is inextricably linked with the situation in Afghanistan. Geographical proximity makes it imperative for the regional countries to work together in finding a solution to the crisis in Afghanistan. The establishment of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group demonstrates SCO's commitment towards Afghanistan. India's External Affairs Minister had acknowledged the role of the SCO in Afghanistan in his statement at the Plenary Session of the Tashkent Summit of SCO when he remarked, "the SCO is uniquely fitted to provide positive contributions to the global discourse on Afghanistan. SCO can certainly add a critical regional perspective and play a constructive role in ensuring a peaceful and stable Afghanistan." What we need to remember is that no single country or organisation can win the war there – for this we have to pool in all resources and initiate a fresh regional initiative. India has emphasised the need for lasting peace in Afghanistan and has made sizeable investment of US \$ 1.5 billion in development projects and recently pledged another US \$ 500 million for various projects. Here I would like to add what the Indian Prime Minister said on 13 May 2011 in his address to the joint session of the Parliament of Afghanistan : "We hope that Afghanistan will be able to build a framework of regional cooperation that will help its nation building efforts. As Afghanistan moves towards assuming full responsibility for its security, we stand ready to widen our cooperation in the area..... This will be a long term partnership". The USA / ISAF plan to have a major draw down by the end of 2014 and therefore we have to sit together alongwith our Afghan friends and work out the contours of a regional strategy. As mentioned by Dr Manmohan Singh, India would be willing to widen its cooperation and work as a member of any regional solution.

In the security sector, India has much to offer by way of capacity building, training, skills development and security sector reforms. Its security forces are highly professional and have expertise in the entire spectrum ranging from internal security duties which include aid to civil authorities and disaster management, border management, counter insurgency and counter-terrorism operations, safeguarding territorial integrity of the country, capabilities for out of area contingencies and as a vital component of the country's comprehensive national power. India is globally recognised for its contribution to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. The United Service Institution of India (USI) has an excellent Centre for UN Peacekeeping which has trained officers from 75 countries including from Central Asian Republics apart from training Indian contingents. We would be willing to conduct peacekeeping training programmes for our SCO colleagues either at the USI or we can even conduct specific programmes at your institutions. As regards India's defence industry, we have these in the public and private sector and these would be willing to collaborate with your defence industry.

Energy security and Water Security are issues which have been debated regularly at SCO fora. Amongst the SCO partners and observer States, we have countries with energy resources, countries which are consumers and countries through which energy resources have to transit. We need to sit together and formulate an energy strategy which will harmonise and synergise the national and regional policies so as to bring about a "win-win" situation for all of us. India could meaningfully contribute in exploration, building pipelines and refineries, training personnel and also in equity participation. As regards water security it has been forecast as an emerging security challenge and we need to address this problem. India being a riparian state is fully conscious of the implications of water security and its "Indus Water Treaty" for sharing water between India and Pakistan has stood the test of time. India would be willing to participate and share its experiences in resolving water management and energy security issues. In both issues pertaining to Energy and Water security, India could also provide satellite imagery and remote sensing data.

A common framework for trade and transportation within the region can be worked out under the aegis of the SCO. Regional initiatives to connect land locked countries with China, India, Iran and other countries of South and South East Asia through large scale infrastructure project will give a boost to economic growth. President Islam Karimov's message at the June 2010 SCO Summit to start joint projects to build and reconstruct motorways and railroads as also to set up modern means of communications needs to be followed up. The recent Export Partnership Initiative held in Dushanbe on 16 May 2011 to improve exports and trade between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan is a good initiative. Indian companies have expertise in building infrastructure

projects globally and they would be willing to partner local companies to execute infrastructure projects in the road, rail, air and tele and satellite communications sectors. Indian companies would also be willing to invest in equity in these sectors.

As regards the socio-economic sectors India could cooperate in the fields of medical and healthcare sectors, in setting up pharmaceutical industry, in the field of education, in the Information Technology sector, in preservation and revival of cultural heritage and in capacity building and training of personnel. It can also facilitate dialogue between Institutions, Universities and think tanks for finding solutions to our common problems.

In the decade since the formation of the SCO, the regional as well as the global security environment have significantly altered. They provide a challenge as well as an opportunity – the immediate challenge is to overcome the menace of terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking and also evolve a framework for regional cooperation for peace, stability and nation building in Afghanistan and also our region as a whole. Simultaneously we have to work together to improve the quality of life of our people by developing infrastructure, increasing trade and improving education, medical and healthcare facilities. The SCO is a powerful regional body which is destined to play a significant role in the peace, security and stability of our region. Given India's past links with the region, its growing economy, its contribution to building peace and security, it can contribute meaningfully to SCO in fulfilling its geopolitical role.

Director's Page