

# Statement by EAM at the SCO Heads of States Summit

June 15, 2011

Your Excellency, President Nazarbayev,  
Distinguished Heads of State and Government of the Members and Observers of SCO,  
Representatives of Dialogue Partners,  
Secretary General of the SCO,  
Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is a privilege for me to join you in this dazzlingly modern city of Astana, to represent India at the 10th Anniversary Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. It was here in 2005 that India participated in the SCO Summit for the first time, after being inducted as an Observer and we are delighted that we celebrate today the 10th Anniversary of the forum in this beautiful city. I would like to begin by thanking the Government and the people of Kazakhstan for their gracious hospitality and warmth.

Excellency, India attaches great importance to our association with the SCO and values the consistent and mature contribution made by the organisation to peace, stability and prosperity in the region. India has demonstrated its strong commitment to the SCO by participating constructively at SCO meetings open to Observers. It is of great importance to us that most SCO member countries are our neighbours or belong to our extended neighbourhood, with a strong historical and cultural legacy of centuries binding us together.

We are impressed that the SCO has taken several significant initiatives in recent years especially in two major areas: in combating terrorism; and in the promotion of economic cooperation in the region. SCO's emphasis on the need for all countries to cooperate in the fight against terrorism, extremism and narcotics is the only meaningful approach to this global menace that threatens us all equally.

Terrorism and extremism show no respect for boundaries. India is only too familiar with this evil, which not just wantonly claims human lives, but threatens the social and economic progress of our societies. India would like to see the SCO zone emerge as a terror-free zone, free of safe havens and sanctuaries for terrorists and free of infrastructure of terrorism that poisons our common region. Regional counter-terrorism cooperation can indeed play an important role in supporting action taken by individual countries. We see the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) as an important regional answer to the terrorism challenge. We look forward to India's greater engagement with RATS and in counter-terrorism exercises in the region.

SCO has played a constructive and forward-looking role in contributing towards peace in Afghanistan. SCO's discussions on Afghanistan and particularly the recent initiatives by Russia, have all added to our understanding of the difficult situation there and helped us examine regional solutions. India on its part, is doing its best for the reconstruction of Afghanistan to improve the social and economic lives of the friendly people of Afghanistan who have been suffering from conflict for the last almost three decades. We are helping our Afghan friends even at the cost of the lives of our people. India stands committed to the prosperity of the Afghan people and our Prime Minister was in Afghanistan recently to reaffirm India's unwavering commitment to this cause. Afghanistan has the promise of becoming a geo-strategic bridge between Central Asia and South Asia as well as a trade and transit hub with modern infrastructure.

Connectivity between SCO countries is in fact central. One bottleneck to trade and economic activity among the SCO members and observer countries is the lack of viable transport linkages. SCO can address the problem of limited connectivity through regional solutions and break barriers that inhibit trade and investment

flows between our countries. India is ready to cooperate with member countries to find viable solutions to this problem and contribute to the endeavour to build bridges between Central and South Asia.

Ten years since its founding, the SCO faces a historic moment. Like other successful multilateral organisations, it must choose the path of its evolution. The draft of the Memorandum of Obligation being discussed by this Summit would pave the way for expansion of the organisation in a natural process of its evolution. India would be happy to play a larger and deeper role in the SCO when the rules and criteria for full membership are clear. We value the role of the SCO in bringing security, stability and development to our region and stand ready to contribute more to the SCO for the common good of the people of our region. We have friendly ties with all the member states and we wish to bring to the table our technical expertise, markets and financial commitment, all of which equip us to fulfil greater responsibilities in this forum.

SCO members and observers could cooperate more in the future on regional and global threats arising out of climate change, environmental security, food security, energy security, particularly non-conventional sources of energy and other emerging issues which require a joint response for sustainable development. India stands ready to make a constructive contribution in these areas.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to once again thank the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the wonderful arrangements. I take this opportunity to wish the people of Kazakhstan continued peace and prosperity in the coming years and congratulate Your Excellency for successfully organising this important Summit.

Thank you.

**Astana**  
**June 15, 2011**

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*Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Gov. of India*