

**Statement of the Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation
Organization Bolat K. Nurgaliev at the Diplomatic Academy of the
Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
(Vienna, 21 July, 2009)**

Ladies and gentlemen!

I would like to express my gratitude to the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna for its invitation to speak about the role and the potential of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. I would also like to acknowledge the Embassy of Kazakhstan's part in arranging this event. I am grateful to Professor Kornprobst for his kind introduction.

The SCO serves as a common platform for China, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in their commitment to build coherent frameworks for joint action while coping with pressing issues that affect their shared interests, countering new challenges and threats, maintaining peace, security and stability, and creating favorable conditions for sustainable socio-economic development.

The Organization's evolution through the 8 years of its existence has been a positive, dynamic process. Its members are determined to play to

their undisputable advantages of being long-term neighbors and traditional friends. Our approach to security and cooperation was based from the outset on mutual trust and equality, despite the vast differences in the political and economic clout of the member states.

China and Russia, being two permanent members of the UN Security Council, share unique responsibilities for maintaining global peace and security. Their role in enhancing the SCO's authority and effectiveness is very positive.

For obvious reasons, the significance of Central Asia in the context of energy, food, and transportation security, both regional and global, will continue to increase and bring about relevant changes in those countries' negotiating capacities.

The SCO member states are united by a mutual understanding of the nature of shared threats and risks, and a common philosophy of seeking out approaches to even the most difficult problems all the while respecting each others' interests. Among their top priorities are: a) safeguarding good neighborly relations; b) searching for conciliatory solutions; and c) proliferating the belief that differences, disputes, and contradictions should be resolved on the constructive foundation of dialogue and consultation, restraint and concession. These priorities are not only enshrined in the

mission statement, they are practiced in the day-to-day affairs of the SCO. All of the member states have equal rights and an equal role in the decision-making process. Throughout my two-and-a-half years' experience as Secretary General of the SCO I cannot recollect a single case when a view of a certain partner was ignored or, on the contrary, given special consideration because of the size of that country's political or economic might. This singularity manifests itself in the course of the annual meetings of the heads of state and heads of government, as well as in the regular meetings of ministers and senior officials in charge of different spheres of activities.

On June 15-16, 2009 the ninth meeting of the council of Heads of State was held in the heart of the Urals – the city of Yekaterinburg. The CHS evaluated the most important issues facing the Organization's development and assessed new trends emerging in the international and regional situation. This shared assessment was reflected in the summit's Declaration and Joint Communiqué, which encompassed corresponding measures to promote multifaceted cooperation in solving pressing problems, and presented an outlook on world affairs. In the Yekaterinburg Declaration, the leaders of the six member states stressed their commitment to maintaining peace, security, and stability in our region. By

successfully promoting their economic growth, and social and cultural development, in spite of the current global financial crisis, the SCO member states are showing a good example for other regions to follow. Our leaders underlined the fact that the tendency towards true multi-polarity is irreversible and pointed to the growing significance of the regional aspect in settling global problems.

The foremost role of the SCO is to serve as a common platform for coordinating efforts in countering transborder challenges and threats with the aim of strengthening security and stability in the Eurasian space. We are capable of achieving this task by promoting multifaceted, long-term cooperation based on a prevailing principle: together we are more effective, and united we are stronger – by combining our resources we can ensure a better, safer life for our citizens.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization deems it important to further cement the legal foundations of international relations determined by generally accepted principles and norms of international law and international obligations of states. What remains as an urgent task is the strengthening of the central and coordinating role of the United Nations in world affairs, enhancing the effectiveness of its mechanisms with the aim of adequately responding to modern challenges, such as a changing political

and economic reality. The reform of the UN Security Council must gain a wider consensus from members of the international community.

The SCO member states intend to strengthen coordination on the issues of reforming the UN and its Security Council.

The SCO is concerned that the scale and acuteness of threats of terrorism, separatism, and extremism are not diminishing. That is why the sphere of security is a top priority. The main coordinating bodies for security cooperation are the Secretariat of the SCO in Beijing and the Regional Counterterrorist Structure based in Tashkent. We have a legal obligation to share information about terrorists and terrorist organizations so that competent services will be able to trace them on the territory of any member state. This proved to be an effective mechanism resulting in the achievement of specific goals. Cooperation in this field will be intensifying. All six members of the SCO are determined to prevent terrorists and extremists of different kinds from destabilizing the situation in the region. Within the SCO we always stress that terrorism has nothing to do with specific faiths. The fight against international terrorism should not spill over into hostility against any particular religion and definitely not transform into islamophobia.

Security and stability can not be strengthened without a competent national economy. Within the SCO we have a solid legal foundation and organizational structure for developing economic cooperation. We adopted the Program of multilateral trade and economic cooperation aimed at moving towards the free flow of capital, goods, services and technology within the next 20 years. Economic priorities include the implementation of a number of pilot projects of a regional dimension in energy, transportation, and information technology. Our aim is to modernize the energy and transportation infrastructure of member states – a major prerequisite for eventual regional integration.

The SCO is trying to maintain a balance between political cooperation and economic interaction, the latter of which needs to be brought up to the same height of importance as the political aspects of our activities. Such a conception reflects the linkage between promoting socio-economic progress and alleviating dissatisfaction among certain groups within the population which may be susceptible to involvement in terrorist and extremist activities.

Besides the security aspect there is another advantage to maintaining a stronger focus on economic cooperation. Within the Organization we do not divide states into different categories because of the volume of their

GDPs or the richness of their natural resources. Although our countries differ in sizes of territory, population, economy, and resources, we are united by a common desire to pool our advantages in order to neutralize our weaknesses. So, the main challenge is to create a common political, economic, and informational space and to instill in the peoples of the six nations a sense of having a shared destiny. Of course, it will take time and intense effort. What is important is that there is a political will – something convincingly demonstrated at the summit in Yekaterinburg.

By its charter, the SCO is an open organization. We welcome establishing ties with any interested state or international organization. Currently we have four observer states: India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan. At the Yekaterinburg session of the CHS, Belarus and Sri Lanka were granted the status of partners in dialogue. Our efforts to contribute to the normalization of the situation in Afghanistan are directed through a special SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group. Our serious concern about the threats of terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime caused by instability in Afghanistan was voiced at the Moscow special conference under the aegis of the SCO last March. Speaking at the conference, the ministers of foreign affairs of the SCO member states called for a joint response to the terrorist

and narcotic threats, both of which pose a serious danger to Afghanistan in the same degree as to all other states within the region alike.

In the framework of the international program for providing aid to Afghanistan, the SCO member states are making a concrete contribution by rendering economic and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan on a bilateral basis, including the construction of road infrastructure, communication lines, energy units, hospitals, and schools. The total amount of combined free aid provided by the SCO states to Afghanistan stands at around 220 million dollars. A number of the SCO states have written off quite considerable sums of Afghanistan's overdue debts. Training courses are conducted for the personnel of the IRA's government institutions and law enforcement agencies.

Just like any other regional organization, the SCO plays its part in supporting the work being carried out on a multilateral level by the UNO and other bodies, and contributes to the efforts being taken on the national level by every SCO member state.

In assessing the situation in Afghanistan one has to acknowledge that despite the reinforcement of certain capabilities of the central government, the gravity of the threat from resurgent Taliban militants and continuing instability in the southeastern regions of the IRA remains on the rise. 98%

of opium poppy is grown in 7 provinces of Afghanistan, where the positions of the Taliban and organized criminal groups are strong, which shows a cause and effect connection between drug trafficking and never-ending conflict. The ability of drug dealers and their terrorist supporters to sell more than 600 cubic tons of pure heroin per annum is generating profits that exceed the expenditure part of Afghanistan's whole annual budget. Eurasian and European countries are severely exposed to the expansion of heroin of Afghan origin. At the Moscow Conference it was stressed that Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, the Central Asian states, Russia, China, and India should join forces with other countries involved in the effective struggle against drug trafficking and money-laundering.

In the Yekaterinburg Declaration it was stated that the effective settlement of existing problems can be possible only with due regard for the interests of all parties – through their involvement in the ongoing process, and not through isolation. I am confident that this conclusion of the SCO states vis-à-vis the general principles of maintaining international security is fair as far as the assessment of the potential role of Afghanistan's neighbors goes.

The SCO member states are immediate neighbors of Afghanistan. Historical, cultural, economic, and political links between our countries and

peoples are closely intertwined. By staging the Special Conference in Moscow the SCO states reaffirmed their unconditional solidarity with the efforts of the international community to restore law and order in every part of Afghanistan, and put this long-suffering country on the road to steady progress, ensure due regard for the state sovereignty of Afghanistan and the right of the Afghan people to choose their own way of development.

The SCO is expanding practical interaction with regional institutions such as The Commonwealth of Independent States, The Collective Security Treaty Organization, The Eurasian Economic Community, the ECO, ASEAN, and ESCAP. The same holds true for our readiness vis-à-vis other international and regional organizations. On June 25, 2009 I participated at the Security Forum of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council organized by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the capital of Kazakhstan, Astana. In my presentation I stressed that everything on the agenda of the SCO main bodies is transparent, and the decisions adopted within the Organization are forthright. We would like for everybody to have a correct understanding of the goals and activities of the SCO, whose aim is to contribute to the creation of a new global security architecture with no rift between the strong and the weak. The increasing stature of the SCO and its willingness to develop its own solutions to the challenges facing the

region should not alarm those who share the goals of making the world and the Eurasia region more secure, stable, tolerant, and mutually supportive.

The decision to hold the Security Forum of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in Astana was adopted by the North-Atlantic Council with the consideration of the positive contribution of Kazakhstan in maintaining regional security. For the first time the SCO participated along with NATO in the discussion of pressing issues of global and regional character including the increasing role of Central Asia, the situation in and around Afghanistan, and energy cooperation.

I believe that the SCO will increase its involvement with the activities of other relevant organizations, including the OSCE. Intensive preparations are under way for Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE next year. It is considered to be a crucial challenge for Kazakh diplomacy whose intention is to expand and enhance European cooperation in many fields, from conflict prevention to national minorities' rights, and from transportation security to the rule of law.

Thank you for your kind attention.