

SCO ASTANA SUMMIT 2024: KEY OUTCOMES

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(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



Source: SCO Website

The 24th Summit of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (CHS-SCO), held in Astana on 3-4 July 2024, focused on the major theme of ‘Strengthening Multilateral Dialogue-Striving Towards a Sustainable Peace and Prosperity.’ At a time of rising conflicts and global crises, the SCO Astana Summit can be credited as a crucial event for addressing key regional and trans-regional issues. In addition to member states, the Heads of state/government of observer states, and dialogue partners also attended the Summit. Moreover, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, was present, signifying the summit’s importance.

The Astana Summit concluded with the adaption of 25 Strategic Documents covering security, trade, energy, finance, and information security.¹ Noteworthy among these were: Astana Declaration 2024; Energy Cooperation Development Strategy until 2030; SCO Development Strategy until 2035; Program for Cooperation in Countering Terrorism, Extremism and Separatism for 2025-2027; and the SCO Anti-Drug Strategy for 2024-2029.²

- 1 Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, “SCO Summit Adopts 25 Strategic Documents in Energy, Security & Trade,” The Economic Times, July 4, 2024, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/sco-summit-adopts-25-strategic-documents-in-energy-security-trade/articleshow/111492098.cms?from=mdr>.
- 2 Dr Muhammad Khan, “24th SCO Summit: Multilateral Dialogue, Peace & Prosperity,” Pakistan Observer, July 5, 2024, <https://pakobserver.net/24th-sco-summit-multilateral-dialogue-peace-prosperity/>.

The Astana Summit also provided a diplomatic platform to advocate dialogue and diplomacy for the resolution of issues and conflicts at regional and extra-regional levels. While the summit deliberated on issues of peace, harmony, good neighborliness, and promotion of dialogue, the document ‘An Initiative on World Unity for Just Peace and Harmony’, proposed by Kazakhstan, seeks to strengthen Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and promote stable development for all the states globally.³ In crucial contemporary times of rising conflicts and security issues, which in turn accentuate international crises, the Summit’s initiatives represent an effective attempt to promote peace and sustainable resolution of deepening challenges and conflicts. The ‘Initiative on World Unity for Just Peace and Harmony’ is also an attempt to counter misperception of the SCO in certain circles of being a security-focused defence alliance and to explain the true objectives of the organization. Moreover, this initiative projects the SCO’s increasing role in helping establish a peaceful and harmonious global order, whose primary focus is not on hard power. It is worth mentioning that this initiative is predominantly relevant to the world, as SCO member states comprise nearly 45% of the global population and 27% of the global GDP, which exceeds \$23 trillion.⁴

This year’s SCO Summit is highly important, as the turnout of heads of state was very impressive. Leaders of states/governments, hailing from all member states, multiple dialogue partners, and observer states, attended the Summit. Noteworthy are Presidents Vladimir Putin of Russia, Xi Jinping of China, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Türkiye, İlham Aliyev of Azerbaijan; Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan, and Iran’s Acting President Mohammad Mokhber. The President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, also attended the Summit as Belarus was inducted as the 10th full member of SCO.⁵ Only India’s re-elected Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not present, and External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar attended in his stead.

President Xi Jinping emphasized the protection of the right to development of all states. President Putin hailed the use of national currencies instead of the U.S. dollar and called for a new payment system within the group. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif raised concerns regarding rise in terrorism

³ Roger McKenzie, “Shanghai Co-Operation Organisation Wraps up Its Summit with a Call for Unity for a Just Peace,” *Morning Star*, July 4, 2024, <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/shanghai-cooperation-organisation-wraps-its-summit-call-unity-just-peace>.

⁴ Arman Aisultan, “SCO: Astana Summit Agenda and New Member Country,” *en.inform.kz*, June 30, 2024, <https://en.inform.kz/news/sco-astana-summit-agenda-and-new-member-country-8eaac8/>.

⁵ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, “SCO Summit Adopts 25 Strategic Documents in Energy, Security & Trade,” *The Economic Times*, July 4, 2024, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/sco-summit-adopts-25-strategic-documents-in-energy-security-trade/articleshow/111492098.cms?from=mdr>.

and highlighted Israeli atrocities against Palestinians, calling for a collective stance by SCO states.⁶ The leaders of SCO states emphasized the need to curb terrorism, promote non-interference in domestic affairs, build a more representative, democratic, and fair world, and enhance cooperation across multiple sectors for sustainable development of all member states.

The Declaration of the Summit noted: “The member states consider it necessary to enhance the role of the SCO in creating conditions for strengthening global peace, security and stability, as well as building a new democratic, fair, political and economic international order. To this end, they adopt the SCO Initiative ‘On World Unity for a Just Peace, Harmony and Development’ and invite the world community to join it.” Moreover, the Summit emphasized the need for enhanced collaboration based on win-win cooperation and diplomatic dialogue among the member states, thus ‘Strengthening Multilateral Dialogue-Striving towards a Sustainable Peace and Prosperity’.

As far as Pakistan’s foreign policy is concerned, high-level participation in the Astana Summit is noteworthy. The Prime Minister, in addition to attending the Summit, held bilateral meetings on the sidelines with other world leaders, building understanding on closer cooperation in terms of addressing common security challenges and diversifying trade and economic collaboration. The Prime Minister urged member states to involve the international community when engaging with Afghanistan to promote peace and stability in the region. Moreover, during his meetings with Russian and Central Asian leaders, the Prime Minister also talked about initiating barter trade, thus seeking to reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar for trade purposes.⁷

Concluding, the SCO Astana Summit of 2024 is a significant milestone and a resounding success for member states and the overall region as it addressed pressing challenges at regional and global levels. With high-level participation, adoption of strategic documents, and important deliberations on peace, security, and economic cooperation, the Summit showcased SCO’s commitment to promoting multilateral dialogue and sustainable development. Moreover, the emphasis on a fair global order, non-interference, and adoption of innovative economic strategies such as barter trade demonstrates the evolving role SCO plays in shaping a balanced and peaceful world. As a prominent member of the SCO, Pakistan showcased active involvement and deeper diplomatic engagement. This further reinforces the prospects for collaborative efforts to resolve common issues. It also enhances significance of unity and cooperation within the SCO fold.

⁶ “At SCO Summit, Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif Raises Terrorism Concern; Urges Global Engagement with Afghan Taliban,” Deccan Herald, July 4, 2024, <https://www.deccanherald.com/world/at-sco-summit-pak-pm-shehbaz-sharif-raises-terrorism-concern-urges-global-engagement-with-afghan-taliban-3092527>.

⁷ Elena Teslova, “Pakistani Prime Minister Suggests Russia Turn to Barter Trade to Avoid Financial Sanctions,” Anadolu Ajansı, July 3, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/pakistani-prime-minister-suggests-russia-turn-to-barter-trade-to-avoid-financial-sanctions/3265276>.