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Institute for a Community
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21st Meeting of the SCO Council: Historical Address by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev



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On 17th September 2021, 21st meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Heads of States was successfully held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Peace, development, and security in the region, including membership expansion, Afghanistan issue, i.e., urging US-led Western countries to perform their duties, properly handle the refugee issues, and manage the risk of terrorism/extremism spillover were the main discussing points. One must remember that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a great model of extensive partnership and regionalism. Regional integration via SCO would pave the way for supranational regulatory systems and a flexible model of future alignments. Provided the multifarious nature of integration in implementing different initiatives, the most substantial contours of SCO are harmonizing national interest based on negotiations, political coordination, mutually acceptable solutions to the problems, enhancing people-to-people contacts, promoting inclusive economic development, and solid steps for collective activities. SCO has a comparative advantage that entails its broad mandate. SCO is in a position to address security, economic and human development agendas of Afghanistan simultaneously, combining support for political stability, implementation of large-scale economic projects and assistance for social capital building.





Salient Features of the Proposals by His Excellency Shavkat Mirziyoyev:

In the 21st SCO meeting, the President of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev gave a historical speech. Due to his dynamic personality and great initiatives, His Excellency, Shavkat Mirziyoyev has gained an exceptional place in the political realm. Due to this visionary leadership, Uzbekistan has emerged as a major stakeholder and regional player in contemporary times. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's far-sightedness, prudent strategies, and grand initiatives of Central & South Asian connectivity have made him the most popular and dynamic leader in the region. One can learn through this great example of excellent governance and statecraft by the adopted policies of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the connectivity leader. The salient points from the speech are as follows:

➤ **Initiatives Towards Afghanistan:**

i. **Prevent the Possible Growth of Extremism and Radical Ideology:**

Uzbekistan considers Afghanistan as an integral part of Central Asia. It was stressed that Afghanistan must not be used to launch subversive actions against any neighbouring country. The visionary leader H.E Shavkat Mirziyoyev shed light on the importance of ensuring fundamental human, women and minority rights, freedom, and justice in Afghanistan.

ii. **Unfreeze Foreign Bank Accounts of Afghanistan:**

It was emphasized that catering to peace and stability and engaging Afghanistan in major railway and energy infrastructure projects are indispensable for strengthening



regional connectivity between Central and South Asia and in the SCO space. Therefore, all countries, including the regional states, must work for the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. In this aspect, enhance cooperation in sustaining micro/macro-economic structure and FDI are crucial.

iii. Joint Efforts for Political Settlement:

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev stated that all countries must consolidate joint efforts and broadly discuss issues of political settlement in Afghanistan. In this regard, it was proposed to regularly hold high-level meetings in Tashkent in the SCO-Afghanistan format.

iv. Establishing Inclusive Government in Afghanistan:

As a major regional player and stakeholder in the Afghan peace process, Uzbekistan understands the need for all-inclusive government in Afghanistan. Thus, the dynamic leader, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, showed interest in assisting Afghanistan in establishing an inclusive government.

➤ **Cooperation Initiatives within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization:**

i. Program for the Development of Intraregional Trade:

Regional integration along with economic development is significant for a shared future and prosperity. Therefore, Uzbek President proposed to initiate a joint program to enhance intraregional trade and cooperation among SCO member countries. Such a program would help eradicate difference, bring peace, and open doors for joint ventures.

ii. Adoption of the Industrial Cooperation Program

For economic cooperation, Business-to-Business (B2B) and industrial linkages are crucial. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has rightly felt this requirement.

Therefore, he proposed to create cooperation center



in this area so that industrial linkages may establish within SCO member countries that would pave the way for mutual cooperative actions.

iii. Adoption of the SCO Strategy in Transport Connectivity:

Transport, communication, information sharing, and inclusive economic development projects contribute to establishing a cohesive global community of states countering common global issues. Along with the explicit benefits these processes bring, fundamental pillars of the new regionalism are institutions and organizations that provide integrated platforms to the countries. It builds qualitatively modern forms of interactions. In this regard, it was proposed by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev that there must be an integrated and comprehensive adaptation of an SCO strategy that can help countries to upgrade logistic, infrastructure development, and transport system in the SCO.



iv. Strengthening Cooperation for Poverty Reduction and Food Security:

Zero hunger and poverty reduction as common regional challenges. Thereby, it was proposed by H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoyev that all member countries must strengthen cooperation to eradicate poverty and food insecurity within the SCO region.

v. Establishment of the SCO Expert Forum for Information Security:

Information sharing and open access to credible information are significant among SCO member countries. In this context, it was proposed by President Shavkat that there must be an SCO expert forum to ensure information and cyber security.

vi. Introduction of the Institution of the SCO Goodwill Ambassador:

It was emphasized by the Uzbek President to create an institution of SCO goodwill ambassador to enhance cooperation, people-to-people contacts, coordination, disseminate true information and enhance soft power projection among SCO countries.

vii. Development of an Intergovernmental Agreement for Enhancing Tourism:

SCO member countries have world-class tourist attractive destinations. Therefore, it was emphasized by H.S Shavkat Mirziyoyev that all SCO countries must reach intergovernmental agreements to provide a conducive environment and visa policies to enhance tourist activities in the region. It will allow people to interact with each other, revitalize cultural linkages, and generate lucrative revenue.



The Vision of Regional Connectivity:

In a nutshell, it has been clear that the region's future depends on how countries can cooperate. In this aspect, developing and managing regional networks require cross-regional consensus. SCO governments need to investigate further and devise such plans and strategies most appropriate for practical actions. This should also extend to people-to-people contacts involving academia, the private sector, and civil society, which can influence and assist the direction and effectiveness of intergovernmental cooperation. There is still a long uphill journey for durable peace and common development in the region. Thereby, regional connectivity is a dire need of time. In this aspect, SCO can play a consecutive role as it provides a plethora of opportunities for all regional states to combat common threats and strive for a shared future.