
Brief on India-SCO Cooperation

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a ten-member multilateral organization, established on 15 June 2001 by the leaders of Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. These countries, except Uzbekistan, had earlier been part of the Shanghai Five, formed in April 1996. In 2001, Uzbekistan joined the grouping, thereby expanding it into the Shanghai Six. At the July 2005 Astana Summit, India, Iran and Pakistan were granted Observer status. In July 2015 in Ufa, Russia, the decision was taken to induct India as a full member. India formally joined the SCO at the Astana Summit in June 2017. Pakistan's accession also took place during the same Summit. Iran was granted the status of a Member State at the SCO Summit hosted virtually by India on 4 July 2023. Belarus joined as the tenth Member State at the Summit held in Astana on 4 July 2024. Apart from the 10 Members, the SCO has 2 Observers (Afghanistan and Mongolia) and 15 Dialogue Partners (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Turkey, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Maldives, Bahrain, Myanmar, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar). As per the SCO Charter, Russian and Chinese are the two official languages of the SCO.

Structure of SCO and it's mechanisms

2. SCO's supreme decision-making body is the Council of Heads of State (CHS) which meets annually on a rotational basis as per the Russian alphabetical order, in the country holding the presidency of the SCO. Kyrgyzstan holds the current presidency of SCO CHS (2025-2026).
3. India hosted the 23rd Summit of CHS in virtual mode on 4 July 2023. The 24th Summit was held in Astana on 3–4 July 2024 under the Kazakh Presidency, while the 25th Summit took place in Tianjin, China, on 31 August–1 September 2025.
4. The Council of Heads of Government (CHG) is the second highest decision making body of the SCO. It meets annually to deliberate on major issues of trade, economic cooperation, and the Organization's annual budget. India hosted the 19th meeting of CHG virtually in November 2020. The 23rd meeting of CHG was held in Pakistan on 15-16 October 2024. The 24th SCO CHG was held on 18 November 2025 in Moscow under the Chairmanship of Russia.
5. The Council of SCO Foreign Ministers (CFM) meets once every year, typically a month prior to the meeting of CHS, to consider draft outcome documents and review other preparations for the Summit. The most recent meeting of CFM was held in Tianjin on 15 July 2025.

6. The Council of SCO National Coordinators (CNC) is a key mechanism of SCO, which coordinates and oversees Organizations' day-to-day activities. The CNC is also responsible for making necessary preparations for meetings of the CHS, CHG and CFM. Currently, the Additional Secretary (SCO) serves as India's National Coordinator for the SCO.

7. There are also several other dialogue mechanisms within the SCO framework including the annual meetings of Ministers responsible for Defence, Economy & Trade, Transport, Culture, Tourism, Education, Health, Justice, Emergency Situations, as well as meetings of the Secretaries of National Security Councils, Supreme Court Chief Justices, Prosecutors General, among others.

8. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has two Permanent Bodies- SCO Secretariat in Beijing; and the Executive Committee of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent. These institutions are responsible for ensuring the implementation of decisions taken by the SCO's statutory bodies and for coordinating the Organization's ongoing activities.

9. The current SCO Secretary General Mr. Nurlan Yermekbaev (former Minister of Defence of Kazakhstan) assumed office in January 2025, for three year term. India contributes 5.9% to the Organization's annual budget. India has two designated posts — Deputy Secretary-General and Referent — at the SCO Secretariat, Beijing and at the SCO-RATS Headquarters in Tashkent, respectively.

10. As a key outcome of the 25th SCO Summit held in Tianjin, Member States agreed to establish the SCO Universal Center for Countering Security Challenges and Threats. The Center will serve as a coordinating platform for collective action against emerging and non-traditional security risks, including organized crime, cyber and information threats, and transnational challenges. It is envisaged to operate within the broader SCO security framework, facilitating information exchange, capacity building, and coordinated responses to evolving regional threats.

11. Similarly, the Summit also approved the establishment of the SCO Anti-Drug Center, aimed at strengthening cooperation among Member States in combating the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, and their precursors. The Center will enable intelligence sharing, policy coordination, and joint operations among Member States, thereby enhancing the Organization's overall capability to address drug-related challenges and promote regional stability.

India in SCO

12. Since our full membership, India has been actively participating in SCO and providing support to its various mechanisms. India has ensured that the SCO meetings and events are represented at appropriate levels. While the CHS Meetings are attended by the PM, the CHG Meetings are usually represented by EAM, who also attends the SCO Foreign Ministers' Meeting, prior to the Leadership Summits.

India's Chairship of CHG (2020)

13. Hon'ble Vice President Shri Venkaiah Naidu chaired the 19th Meeting of the SCO CHG hosted by India in virtual format on 30 November 2020. This was the first time that a Summit-level Meeting was held under India's chairmanship. A Joint Communiqué was adopted at the meeting.

14. During the course of its chairmanship of CHG in 2020, India undertook a lot of initiatives in a wide range of areas. India hosted (virtually) a Preparatory Seminar on Startup Forum on 11 August, first-ever meeting of Consortium of Economic Think-Tanks on 21-22 August, Seminar on Role of Traditional Medicine in achieving SDG-3 in SCO Countries on 22 September, SCO Business Conclave on 23 November, Young Scientists Conclave on 24-28 November, and Exhibition on Shared Buddhist Heritage on 30 November. India also translated 10 classics of Indian regional literature into Russian and Chinese languages. These events witnessed enthusiastic participation of SCO Member States. In addition to the two Ministerial meetings – Justice and Foreign Trade & Economy – hosted by India before the CHG meeting, India also launched the first-ever SCO Startup Forum, and initiated proposals on establishing a Special Working Group on Innovation & Startups, and setting up an Expert Working Group on Traditional Medicine.

India's CHS Presidency (2022-2023)

15. India assumed the presidency of SCO CHS on 17 September 2022 at the Summit in Samarkand and hosted the SCO-CHS Summit on 4 July 2023 in virtual format. India as the chair of SCO articulated its priorities as moving towards a 'SECURE' SCO – Security, Economic Development, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and Environmental protection. In the course of its Presidency of SCO in 2022-2023, India worked on a diverse range of themes to give a new dynamism to the multifaceted cooperation and in many areas opened up new vistas of cooperation to meaningfully enrich SCO's agenda. More than 130 institutional meetings/events were held under India's chairmanship, including 14 Ministerial-level meetings.

16. India also directed the cooperation in SCO towards five new verticals like Startups and Innovation, Traditional Medicine, Science and Technology, Youth Empowerment and Shared Buddhist Heritage. Varanasi as the 1st

SCO Cultural and Tourism Capital for 2022-23 hosted several events with the active participation from the Member States.

3 July 2026