

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION



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Transcript of Remarks and a Reply to a Media Question by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Press Conference Following SCO Council of Foreign Ministers Session, Shanghai, May 15, 2006

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Foreign Minister Lavrov: First of all, great thanks to our Chinese partners for the excellent organization of the meeting. This helped us take decisions which will ensure the effective holding of the anniversary session of the SCO Council of Heads of States also here in Shanghai in June this year.

The summit is called upon to approve a serious of documents of a principled, conceptual character, just as decisions of a practical nature to raise the effectiveness of the SCO's work in all fields. In today's discussion we noted that over the last five years the Organization had really become a mature structure that took shape on the basis of the combining of the natural geographical, historical, and economic advantages of member countries, which well perceives the problems of this region and is in a position to tackle these problems effectively, both on its own and in cooperation with interested countries which are ready for that. The decisions adopted today and the documents being prepared for the summit will certainly reinforce and enhance the effectiveness of the Secretariat of the Organization, invigorate its engagement with the Regional Antiterrorist Structure and enhance the role of economic cooperation projects in SCO activities. Our antidrug cooperation, including that with the participation of Afghanistan, must become more substantive. We expect that such a new thrust in SCO activities as observation of presidential and/or parliamentary elections and of referendums in the member countries of the Organization will help to establish in practice mutually respectful, comprehensible and transparent rules without double standards in this highly important area of democracy development. Interest in the SCO is growing, and in response to the applications from another five organizations we have entrusted the Secretariat with the task of holding talks and concluding cooperation memorandums with them.

Question from ITAR-TASS (Shanghai): It is known that a number of states, including Iran, are currently expressing a wish to develop ties with the SCO in the most diverse formats. Is this matter being examined in the Organization and to what forms of cooperation is priority going to be given? And also, as an addition to the question, could you specify the names of the five organizations or countries with which you are planning to sign cooperation memorandums at the Summit. Thank you.

Foreign Minister Lavrov: There are several forms in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in which its cooperation with other states can be effected. It is observer countries, dialogue partners and guests. The SCO observers are: Mongolia, India, Iran, Pakistan, and, as we have informed you, we today approved a draft regulation on observers which we hope will be approved by the Heads of State and will enable cooperating with the observers in a better structured way and acquiring a practical experience of such cooperation. Afghanistan, for example, participates in individual SCO undertakings as a guest. So that the forms may be most diverse. As for the five organizations with which we have asked the leadership of our Secretariat to negotiate and sign cooperation memorandums, they are the Eurasian Economic Community, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the United Nations Development Program, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the Secretariat of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

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