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CICA Digest



CICA Ministerial Council under Azerbaijani Chairmanship charts new institutional path with landmark decisions

Inauguration of the new CICA Headquarters in Astana

CICA Senior Officials Committee convenes in Astana, marking operational launch of new CICA Headquarters

Asia's Future in Focus: 13th CICA Think Tank Forum in Baku

Bridging regional cooperation: CICA at the SCO 2025 Summit

Deputy Secretary General participates in seminar on "Women's Role and Contribution to SMEs Development among CICA Member States"



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Foreword

Dear readers,

With profound gratitude and a deep sense of responsibility, I share these reflections as the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS) concludes its tenure as Chair of the CICA Think Tank Forum (TTF) from 2022 to 2025. The Forum's journey, however, began much earlier. Established in 2014 under the thoughtful guidance of leadership from Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the generous support of scholars from across the region, it has grown steadily in scope and influence. Through collective dedication, it has evolved into a vibrant arena for dialogue, policy innovation, and strategic cooperation. There is a timeless saying: "Many hands make a bonfire blaze high." It is precisely this spirit of shared effort that has enabled the Forum to thrive and to illuminate pathways toward greater regional trust and cooperation.

The Forum's progress in recent years has been inseparable from the commitment of Member States and the steadfast guidance of the Secretariat. The decision to elevate the Forum into a permanent dialogue platform was more than an administrative change—it was a profound expression of confidence in the capacity of academic and strategic communities to deliver insights of lasting value. This institutional leap came at a critical juncture: CICA itself was moving toward international organization status, while the global order was shifting in complex and unpredictable ways. Entrusting the Forum with an enhanced role underscored the recognition that enduring security and development challenges demand sustained intellectual engagement and well-grounded advice.



For SIIS, serving as the inaugural Chair of this upgraded institution was both an honor and a solemn responsibility. The transformation from a China-led initiative into a permanent CICA mechanism marked not only the Forum's maturity but also its growing relevance to the wider region.

The Secretariat's support has been indispensable throughout this process. Secretary-General Kairat Sarybay's personal participation in the Forum's meetings, joined by senior officials from across the membership, reflected a genuine commitment to hearing and valuing scholarly perspectives. By fostering a climate of openness, the Secretariat ensured that academic voices could resonate in policy discussions, enabling the Forum to innovate and evolve in step with CICA's broader transformation.

Crafting a Legacy of Intellectual Cooperation

1. From Blueprint to Bedrock: Building a Lasting Institution

A defining achievement of this period was the Forum's institutional consolidation. The adoption of the *Regulations of the*

Think Tank Forum of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia in October 2021 provided the legal and procedural foundation, while SIIS oversaw their implementation and translated them into practice.

With agreed rules and procedures, the Forum has now matured into a multilateral mechanism embedded within CICA's framework, and is positioned to provide consistent intellectual output and enduring support to CICA's development. The introduction of Annual Action Plans ensured that activities were not isolated events but part of a coherent sequence, aligned with strategic priorities and capable of long-term planning. This framework has given the Forum stability, predictability, and the capacity to anticipate regional needs.

2. A Confluence of Minds: Deepening Dialogue and Forging Consensus

The Forum has also distinguished itself as a premier platform for exchange, bringing together scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to forge consensus on Asia's most pressing challenges.

During the global pandemic, when dialogue risked fragmentation, SIIS organized online meetings in 2021 and 2022. These virtual gatherings reflected resilience and adaptability, keeping channels open at a time of global disruption. More importantly, they generated recommendations that informed confidence-building measures within the CICA framework.

Over time, the Forum has evolved from a venue for academic discussion into a channel that informs and shapes policymaking. Open thematic groups and hybrid formats have encouraged interactive participation and deeper engagement. Responding to CICA's evolving priorities, SIIS also introduced

youth and women's side events, creating space for emerging forces to shape regional agendas. Their energy and creativity enriched the wider dialogue, underscoring that inclusivity is not merely desirable but essential for progress.

3. Anticipating the Horizon: Asian Wisdom for a New Era

Another defining feature of this period has been the Forum's responsiveness to emerging issues. The agenda has consistently mirrored the enduring concerns of Member States—economic recovery, regional security frameworks, connectivity—while expanding to encompass new priorities of the Global South: digital transformation, sustainable growth, supply chain resilience, and small and medium-sized enterprise development.

By expanding into new domains, the Forum has shown Asia's capacity to offer distinctive contributions to global debates. As the proverb goes, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." The Forum has aimed not just to respond to immediate challenges, but to provide the intellectual tools that turn them into long-term opportunities.

These efforts echo President Xi Jinping's vision for Global Governance Initiative—anchored in equality, multilateralism, people-centered approaches, and practical action. CICA itself embodies the principle of consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, strengthening solidarity on regional affairs. Within this framework, the Think Tank Forum has become a platform for building consensus and pooling "Asian wisdom," helping all peoples participate in and benefit from governance processes, confront shared challenges, narrow the North–South divide, and safeguard the common interests of nations.

4. An Ever-Expanding Circle: Weaving a Stronger Network

Equally striking has been the Forum's growth as a network. In 2021, it encompassed 17 institutions; by 2025, it had expanded to 25 think tanks representing 23 Member States. This broader participation brought richer perspectives and deeper analytical capacity to our collective endeavors.

To amplify its voice, SIIS established and maintained a dedicated TTF website, now an essential hub for showcasing research, introducing member institutions, and publicizing events. This digital presence has elevated the Forum's visibility and strengthened its international profile.

A milestone came in 2025, when the 13th Meeting of the Forum convened in Baku, Azerbaijan—the first time it was held outside China. The seamless organization and the warm hospitality by our Azerbaijani host - the AIR Center, reflected the cooperative spirit of CICA. Most significant was President Ilham Aliyev's congratulatory letter, a gesture of high-level recognition that underscored Azerbaijan's commitment to the Forum and highlighted its rising stature within CICA's institutional architecture.

Looking Forward: Sustaining the Flame

The Forum's transformative journey from 2022 to 2025 leaves behind important lessons. **Effective coordination** from the Chair has been essential to balancing diverse perspectives while maintaining strategic focus. **Relevance** has been secured by aligning discussions with Member States' priorities and contemporary challenges. And **institutional development** has provided the foundation for lasting stability and influence.

As SIIS prepares to hand over the chairmanship, we do so with confidence in the Forum's prospects. The next Chair will be well placed to deepen specialized research through thematic groups, expand cooperation with other CICA bodies such as the Business Council and Youth Council, and build stronger ties with local governments and civil society.

As SIIS concludes its tenure, we take pride in the distance traveled, while recognizing the path that remains ahead. The Forum's evolution embodies the shared aspirations of Asian nations for meaningful dialogue, lasting peace, and mutual prosperity. Through continued creativity and collective commitment, the CICA Think Tank Forum will strengthen Asia's intellectual leadership in our rapidly changing world.

Looking ahead, the Forum is poised to play an even greater role as CICA advances toward full international organization status. Its contributions will extend beyond academic analysis to encompass policy support, public diplomacy, and broader societal engagement. With its established blend of intellectual rigor, practical focus, and institutional stability, the Forum serves as a compelling model for regional cooperation mechanisms.

In this endeavor, all Member States and partner institutions carry both the privilege and the responsibility of shaping not only the future of CICA but also the broader trajectory of Asian cooperation in an interconnected age.

Prof. Chen Dongxiao,

President of Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS)



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Inauguration of the new CICA Headquarters in Astana

Astana, 2 July 2025 – The Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) marked a historic milestone with the inauguration of its new Headquarters in Astana. The opening ceremony took place on July 2, coinciding with the Day of the Diplomatic Service of the Republic of Kazakhstan — the founding nation and host country of CICA.

The new Headquarters was officially inaugurated by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan H.E. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who had initiated the construction of a dedicated building for CICA, reflecting Astana's deep commitment to global and regional peace and security and its vision for strengthening the institutional foundations of multilateral diplomacy in Asia. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and CICA Secretary General Kairat Sarybay solemnly unveiled the commemorative plaque of the organization's Headquarters, followed by the raising of the CICA flag by the honor guard.

The grand opening brought together other senior officials of Kazakhstan, including H.E. Murat Nurtleu, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Zhenis Kassymbek, Mayor of Astana, as well as heads of diplomatic missions and representatives of international organizations accredited in Kazakhstan.

In his address, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev extended warm congratulations to all current and former members of



Kazakhstan's diplomatic service on the occasion of their professional holiday. Reflecting on the country's rich legacy, he highlighted the enduring values of 'Steppe diplomacy' — respect, mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence — which continue to guide Kazakhstan's foreign policy. The President emphasized the historic significance of inaugurating the CICA Headquarters in Astana,





underscoring Kazakhstan's pivotal role in initiating the Conference more than three decades ago as a visionary platform to foster stability and security across Asia. He noted that CICA's inclusive approach, rooted in cooperation, dialogue and mutual understanding, remains critically relevant amid today's global uncertainties. With Member States covering nearly 90 percent of Asia and representing over half of the world's population, CICA has become a vital component of the emerging international security architecture.

In his remarks, CICA Secretary General Ambassador Kairat Sarybay underscored that the new building is more than a functional space for the operation of



the organization's bodies, including the Secretariat. It stands as a tangible expression of CICA's transformation into a full-fledged international organization. He emphasized that the building reflects the evolution of CICA and embodies its long-term commitment to fostering dialogue, mutual trust and multilateral cooperation among Asian nations and beyond.

He expressed sincere gratitude to President Tokayev for his visionary decision to launch the construction of a dedicated CICA Headquarters and for personally inaugurating the facility, while also acknowledging his instrumental role in laying the foundations of independent Kazakhstan's diplomacy and leading the negotiation process that culminated in the adoption of CICA's founding documents — the 1999 Declaration on the Principles Guiding Relations between the CICA Member States and the 2002 Almaty Act.

The Secretary General also conveyed deep appreciation to CICA Member States for their remarkable and thoughtfully curated contributions of national artworks and architectural elements, which have imparted cultural depth and symbolic resonance to the Headquarters and its grounds. These dignified offerings — from Azerbaijan, China, India, the Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan — embody the artistic spirit, civilizational heritage and shared aspirations of Asia. Among them are: an elegantly appointed Visitors Room from Azerbaijan, reflecting the nation's refined aesthetic through ornamental carpets, carved wooden details and classical furniture; a grand wooden gate hand-carved by Tajik artisans from Istaravshan, presented on behalf of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan; a gazebo from Uzbekistan, crafted in the classical Samarkand style and gifted by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan;



a six-wall Kyrgyz yurt, symbolizing the nomadic spirit, hospitality and shared cultural heritage of Asia, presented at the initiative of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic; a three-dimensional artistic installation of the CICA logo created by renowned Chinese sculptor Wu Weishan, along with solar panels gifted

by China, symbolizing innovation and environmental responsibility; a ceramic tile panel from Türkiye capturing the timeless essence of Istanbul; a bronze Bodhisattva from the Republic of Korea representing spiritual serenity; and a sacred bronze statue of Nataraja from India, reflecting cosmic balance and philosophical depth.

The inauguration of the Headquarters stands as a powerful testament to the organization's institutional maturity and the unwavering commitment of its Member States to advancing dialogue, trust and cooperation in Asia and beyond. Purpose-built as a modern and multifunctional facility, the new Headquarters will not only accommodate the daily work of the CICA Secretariat but also serve as a state-of-the-art conference venue for CICA meetings and high-level events. It will preserve the institutional memory of CICA's 33-year journey while supporting its expanding mandate in promoting peace, security and development across the Asian continent.



CICA Ministerial Council under Azerbaijani Chairmanship charts new institutional path with landmark decisions



New York, 25 September 2025 – The Informal Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) was convened under the Chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov, in his capacity as Chair of the Meeting reaffirmed the Chairmanship's commitment to promoting peace, regional cooperation and sustainable development. Highlighting progress achieved under Azerbaijan's leadership, the Chair emphasized the importance of the establishment of the CICA Women Council, adoption of the Finance Summit regulations, operationalization of the Partnership Network of Leading Universities, and strengthening of the Secretariat. Reaffirming the Chairmanship's commitment to building stronger CICA through connectivity, digitalization and sustainable growth, the Chair underscored ongoing efforts being undertaken by the Chairmanship with the support of Member States. While informing the Member States on the ongoing elaboration process of the draft CICA Charter, Minister Jeyhun Bayramov reaffirmed full determination of the Chairmanship to drive this process forward in accordance with the key decisions of CICA through an inclusive and member-driven process.



Presenting his report, the Secretary General of CICA, Ambassador Kairat Sarybay, delivered a comprehensive overview of the organization's activities and priorities. His report highlighted the progress made in the implementation of confidence building measures across all priority areas, the elaboration of the draft CICA Charter as the legal foundation of the organization, and the ongoing preparations for the forthcoming 2026 CICA Summit to be hosted by Azerbaijan. The Secretary General further emphasized the growing synergy among CICA's advisory platforms — the Business Council, the Think Tank Forum, and the Youth Council — underscoring their contribution to the organization's overall objectives. Ambassador Sarybay reiterated the importance of transparency, consensus, and the guidance of Member States in advancing CICA's agenda. The Secretary General also drew attention to the intensification of CICA's engagement with the United Nations and other international partners, noting the organization's evolving role as a bridge-builder in Asia's multilateral landscape.

In their general statements, high-level representatives from CICA Member States reviewed progress across the organization's broad agenda, including its ongoing transformation process. They highlighted the role of the Chairmanship in promoting the institutionalisation of CICA and greatly commended its activities aimed at advancing the goals of CICA across Asia and beyond.



The meeting of the Council of Ministers adopted landmark decisions, including on the establishment of two new advisory bodies — the CICA Finance Summit and the CICA Women Council — to enhance regional cooperation in finance, sustainable development, and women's empowerment. Ministers also adopted statements marking the 80th anniversaries of the end of World War II and of the United Nations, paying tribute to historic sacrifices, reaffirming commitment to multilateralism, and emphasizing CICA's role as a platform for dialogue, trust, and collaboration in promoting peace, security and sustainable development across Asia.





July

CICA Senior Officials Committee convenes in Astana, marking operational launch of new CICA Headquarters



Astana, 21 July 2025 — The Senior Officials Committee (SOC) of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) convened in Astana at the newly inaugurated CICA Headquarters, marking the first official meeting held in the organization's permanent premises. This session signified the operational launch of the Headquarters and was held under the Chairmanship of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Opening the meeting, the Azerbaijani Chairmanship extended congratulations to the Republic of Kazakhstan, all CICA Member States as well as to the Secretary General and his team on the successful completion of the Headquarters project — a dedicated facility that embodies the organization's institutional maturity and long-term vision.

In his remarks, CICA Secretary General Ambassador Kairat Sarybay underscored the significance of holding the SOC in this

dedicated venue, which now serves as the institutional hub for the organization's governing bodies and core activities. He expressed sincere appreciation to Member States for their curated national contributions to the Headquarters, which reflect the artistic heritage, cultural richness and shared aspirations of the Asian continent, and noted the presentation of a special anniversary publication *In Pursuit of Peace*, marking 25 years since the Declaration on CICA Principles and highlighting the organization's institutional journey.

The meeting, chaired by Mr. Azer Musayev, Director of the Department of Regional Security of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, focused on a number of strategic issues outlined in the agenda.





These included the annual review of the implementation of CICA confidence building measures (CBMs), with particular emphasis on the environmental dimension — resulting in a reinforced commitment of Member States to advance cooperation in this area.

In the course of discussions, the SOC preliminary approved the draft regulations for the establishment of the CICA Finance Summit and the CICA Women Council, and recommended their adoption by the CICA Ministerial Council scheduled for September 2025.

The Committee also considered the proposal of the CICA Secretary General on updating the Staff Matrix of the CICA Secretariat, aimed at strengthening the Secretariat's capacity to effectively implement its expanding mandate, and agreed to continue deliberations on this matter.

Further, delegates discussed the possibility of engaging in contacts with relevant Afghan stakeholders through the

facilitation of the CICA Secretariat, with a view to identifying constructive avenues for enabling Afghanistan to benefit from the opportunities offered by CICA Member States.

Member States were briefed on the Secretariat's ongoing cooperation with international and regional organizations, including updates on existing observer and partner institutions, efforts to forge new partnerships and deepening engagement with global platforms for thematic collaboration.

The Secretary General further informed delegations of the status of ratification of the CICA Convention on Privileges and Immunities — a key legal instrument for reinforcing the organization's institutional foundation — noting that only one additional ratification is required for its entry into force.

Deputy Secretary General Mrs. Zhang Ling informed delegates about the current status of implementation of CBMs under the priority areas of the CICA dimensions. This was followed by Deputy



Secretary General Mr. Farid Damirli, who provided an overview of the objectives of the SME Landscape in Asia: Interactive Guidebook project, aimed at supporting small and medium-sized enterprises through practical tools for growth and regional integration.

The Committee was also updated on preparations for the upcoming 13th meeting of the CICA Think Tank Forum, the operationalization of the CICA Fund and other organizational developments. Concluding the session, the SOC reaffirmed the collective commitment of Member States to strengthening

dialogue, confidence and cooperation across Asia. It also laid the groundwork for substantive deliberations and possible decisions at the forthcoming Ministerial Council in New York.

Following the SOC, the CICA Special Working Group convened under the Azerbaijani Chairmanship at the CICA Headquarters. Member States completed the first full reading of the draft CICA Charter — a key milestone toward transforming CICA into a full-fledged international organization and strengthening its institutional framework.



CICA seminar on exchange of experience in countering use of ICTs for criminal purposes

St. Petersburg, 24 July 2025 – The seminar titled “Exchange of Experience of the Member States of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in Countering the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Criminal Purposes” was conducted on the margins of the International Conference “ICT-Crime-2025”. The event was organized in a hybrid format by the Russian Federation, the coordinator of the CICA priority area “Security of and in the use of ICTs” for 2024-2025.

The seminar brought together experts and representatives of competent authorities, academia, major banks and IT companies from CICA Member States, as well as the UNODC Regional Center for Combating Cybercrime in Doha. Welcoming remarks were delivered by Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for International Cooperation in the Field of Information Security, Director of the Department for International Information Security of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Artur Lyukmanov.

Representing the CICA Secretariat, Deputy Secretary General Farid Damirli participated in the event online, expressing appreciation to the Russian Federation for its consistent coordination of this important area and highlighting the continued interest of Member States in digital security. The initiatives of the Azerbaijani Chairmanship in this domain were mentioned, along with the

potential of CICA to serve as a platform for knowledge sharing and strengthening regional cooperation in response to ICT threats.



CICA Expert in the New Challenges and Threats Dimension Ambassador Adel Adaileh delivered an in-person presentation on “Balancing Crime Fighting and Human Rights Protection in the Digital Space”. The expert stressed that CICA attaches particular importance to enhancing dialogue, trust and cooperation to counter both traditional and emerging security threats, including cybercrime, cyberterrorism and digital disinformation.





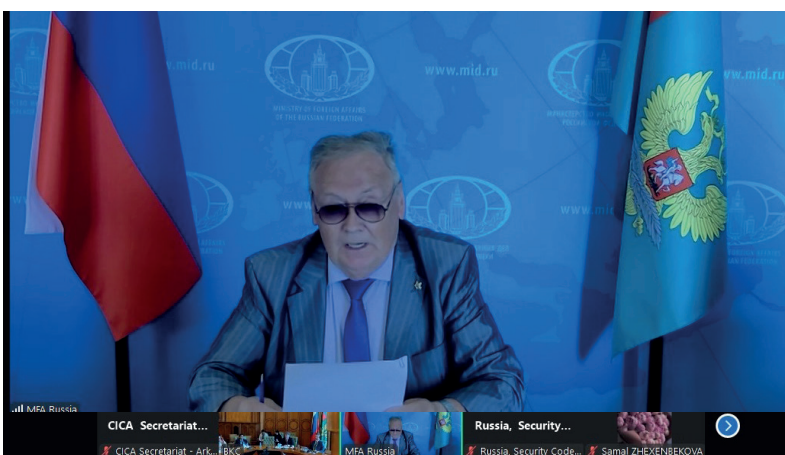
Ambassador Adailah noted that the CICA platform promotes a common understanding and coordinated action to prevent the criminal use of ICTs while respecting the sovereignty and legal systems of its Member States. A key element of CICA's approach to combating cybercrime is the exchange of knowledge and best practices, which includes joint seminars, capacity-building initiatives and technical assistance programmes. By combining the efforts of their national institutions, Member States contribute to the development of sustainable mechanisms for responding to ICT threats, thereby strengthening CICA's mission to ensure peace, stability and mutual trust across the continent.

As part of the seminar's intensive programme, participants explored a wide range of topics, including the main types of ICT-related crimes, law enforcement practices, threats to national digital

resilience, the illicit use of cryptocurrencies, blockchain analytics and cyber fraud in the financial sector. The discussions also covered preventive aspects, such as developing cyber hygiene, improving digital literacy, protecting personal data and using electronic evidence. These issues were considered in the context of expanding international cooperation, including interactions among prosecuting authorities, the private sector, international institutions and non-governmental organizations.

In addition, the seminar examined current legislative approaches to countering cybercrime, ranging from the regulation of digital evidence and international legal assistance to the improvement of public-private partnership mechanisms. The application of the UN Convention against Cybercrime, expected to be signed in Hanoi in October 2025, was a major focus of the discussions.

The seminar became a critical platform for exchanging practices, enhancing coordination and forging coherent approaches to combating cybercrime within the framework of multilateral cooperation among CICA Member States.





CICA advances partnership with OSCE at Helsinki +50 Conference

Helsinki, 31 July 2025 — The Secretary General of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) took part in the Helsinki +50 Conference, held at Finlandia Hall to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act.

Convened by the Finnish Chairpersonship, the Conference brought together more than 1,000 participants from 70 countries, including representatives of OSCE participating States, Partners for Co-operation, executive structures, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, civil society and international organizations.

The opening ceremony was officiated by Finland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Elina Valtonen. In her opening remarks, she underscored the enduring legacy of the Helsinki Final Act as a cornerstone of cooperative security and international diplomacy. The panel discussions focused on reinforcing commitment to the UN Charter and the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, while exploring how states and civil society can jointly respond to emerging global challenges.



During his visit, the CICA Secretary General met with H.E. Mr. Feridun Sinirlioğlu, Secretary General of the OSCE. Ambassador Sarybay briefed him on the key priorities of the Azerbaijani Chairmanship and updated his counterpart on the current developments and ongoing initiatives within the CICA framework. The two sides exchanged views on regional developments and agreed to enhance CICA-OSCE synergy and future cooperation across Greater Euro-Asian space.



On the sidelines of the conference, the CICA Secretary General also held discussions with heads of delegations and Permanent Representatives to the OSCE, including from CICA Member States, Mr. Rovshan Sadigbayli (Azerbaijan), Mr. Idibek Kalandar (Tajikistan), and Mr. Mukhtar Tleuberdi (Kazakhstan), as well as the Special Representative of Kazakhstan for Afghanistan, Mr. Erkin Tukumov, and Dr. Walter Kemp, Senior Strategy Adviser at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.



During these engagements, the Secretary General shared updates on CICA's ongoing activities and the strategic direction under Azerbaijani Chairmanship. The discussions highlighted the Organization's five dimensions of cooperation, its ongoing institutionalization, and key initiatives such as the establishment of new advisory bodies - CICA Finance Summit, Women Council, as well as efforts in the areas of connectivity and environment, and broader undertakings to advance multilateral engagement and regional dialogue.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has held observer status with CICA since 2002, reflecting a longstanding relationship based on shared principles of dialogue, trust and cooperative security.





August



Deputy Secretary General participates in seminar on “Women’s Role and Contribution to SME’s Development among CICA Member States”

Bangkok, 4 August 2025 – The Royal Thai Embassy in Astana, in collaboration with the CICA Secretariat, the Institute of Asian Studies at Chulalongkorn University, and Thailand’s Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion (OSMEP), successfully hosted a seminar in Bangkok titled “Women’s Role and Contribution to SME Development among CICA Member States”.

The event convened senior representatives from CICA Member States, international organizations, academia and business community. The multi-stakeholder platform facilitated valuable exchanges of knowledge and best practices, focusing on empowering women as key drivers of economic growth and sustainable development.

In her welcoming remarks, Associate Professor Dr. Pavika Sriratanaban, Director of the Institute of Asian Studies at Chulalongkorn University, extended

a warm welcome on behalf of the host institution. She highlighted the importance of academic exchange and cross-sectoral dialogue in addressing shared regional development goals.



H.E. Mrs. Piyapin Niyomrerks, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Republic of Kazakhstan, highlighted national efforts to promote gender-responsive policies, enhance women’s leadership in business and deepen regional and international cooperation. The Ambassador emphasized Thailand’s

active engagement in CICA's economic dimensions and related confidence building measures, particularly in the fields of capacity building and knowledge sharing.

CICA Deputy Secretary General Mr. Farid Damirli, extended his gratitude to the Thai partners and co-organizers for their invaluable support, emphasizing the importance of partnership and knowledge-sharing in unlocking the full potential of women entrepreneurs across Asia.

Mr. Farid Damirli, underscored the crucial role of women-led SMEs in fostering innovation, economic resilience and social stability across the CICA region. He also introduced two important initiatives: the CICA Women Council, a newly proposed advisory body aimed at fostering dialogue and enhancing cooperation in the field of women's affairs across Member States, and the "SME Landscape in Asia: Interactive Guidebook," a comprehensive digital resource compiling national policies, tools and support mechanisms for entrepreneurs throughout the CICA region, with particular attention to targeted measures designed to empower women-led enterprises.



Ms. Panita Shinawatra, Acting Director General of Thailand's Office of SMEs Promotion (OSMEP), emphasized Thailand's commitment to advancing women's economic empowerment through inclusive SME development. She underlined the essential role women play in the Thai economy, while also noting the structural barriers that continue to limit their full participation.

During the seminar, participants explored a broad range of issues related to women's economic empowerment and SME development across the CICA region. Discussions focused on national experiences, policy tools, and regional trends in promoting women's entrepreneurship, with a particular focus on socio-economic challenges, support mechanisms and innovative solutions.

This initiative reaffirmed the shared commitment of CICA Member States to promoting inclusive growth, advancing gender equality and supporting sustainable development through joint efforts and regional dialogue.

Egypt's contribution to CICA priority: online workshop on countering terrorism



19 August 2025 – The Arab Republic of Egypt held an online workshop of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) under the title “Advancing Integrated Solutions to Confront the Rising Threat of Extremism Leading to Terrorism”. The event was organized by the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA) in partnership with the Al-Azhar Observatory for Combating Extremism.

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss strategies to prevent and counter radicalization and extremism conducive to terrorism, share best practices and lessons learned, identify potential areas for expanding programmes on countering violent extremism and explore challenges and opportunities related to individuals formerly associated with terrorist groups, including their rehabilitation and reintegration needs. The event generated considerable interest among the participants.

The workshop represented Egypt's significant contribution to the implementation of the priority area of “Combating Terrorism” within the framework of CICA's confidence building measures. Drawing on its unique experience in countering extremism, Egypt reaffirmed its readiness to share knowledge and thereby advance practical cooperation among CICA Member States.

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TAKE ANOTHER LOOK



September

Bridging regional cooperation: CICA at the SCO 2025 Summit

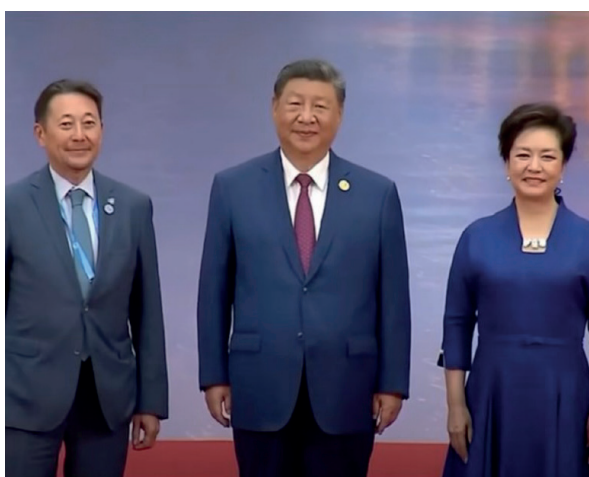
Tianjin, 1 September 2025 — The Secretary General of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Ambassador Kairat Sarybay, took part in the 2025 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, convened under the theme “Upholding the Shanghai Spirit: SCO on the Move”. This 25th meeting of the Council of Heads of State was the largest in SCO history, bringing together leaders of Member States and partner organizations to deliberate on pressing issues of regional peace, stability and cooperation.

During the SCO Plus meeting, leaders reaffirmed their commitment to universally recognized norms of international law and emphasized the need to advance effective multilateralism as a key instrument for strengthening security and ensuring sustainable development. In this context, H.E. President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China acknowledged CICA’s contribution to upholding multilateralism in international affairs, while H.E. President

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan expressed gratitude to all SCO Member States for their steadfast support of CICA’s transformation into a full-fledged international organization.

On the sidelines of the Summit, Ambassador Kairat Sarybay exchanged views with several heads of delegation, including Mr. Nurlan Yermekbayev, Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Mr. Bakytzhan Sagintayev, Chairman of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), Mr. Asad M. Khan, Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and Mr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). These high-level exchanges underscored CICA’s steadfast commitment to fostering synergy with partner organizations and advancing an inclusive framework for Asia’s security, stability and prosperity.

The institutional relationship between CICA and the SCO has been formalized since the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2014, which laid the foundation for dialogue, coordination and joint activities. Building on this basis, the CICA Secretariat remains committed to further strengthening cooperation with the SCO and other regional organizations, in pursuit of vision of a more interconnected and secure Asia.







Asia's Future in Focus: 13th CICA Think Tank Forum in Baku

Baku, 9-10 September 2025 – The Secretary General of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Ambassador Kairat Sarybay, participated in the Thirteenth Meeting of the CICA Think Tank Forum (TTF) under the theme “Resonance of Development and Security: Regional Cooperation and Governance in the Institutional Transformation of CICA”.

The Forum was jointly organized by the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS) and the Center for Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center), with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan. This annual gathering brought together leading scholars and policymakers from 20 Member States across the CICA region to address pressing issues such as regional security, governance, Asia's evolving global role, and the Conference's advancing institutional transformation as a multilateral dialogue platform.

The opening ceremony was distinguished by a historic message from the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Ilham Aliyev – the first-ever message at the highest political level in the Forum's history. The message articulated Azerbaijan's vision on CICA's role in shaping regional cooperation and inclusive dialogue, while charting the key priorities of the Azerbaijani Chairmanship, such as institutional strengthening, new councils on finance, women and climate, as well as sustainable connectivity. President Aliyev emphasized the growing role of the Global South in shaping a just world order, Azerbaijan's commitment to advancing climate diplomacy through the “Baku Breakthrough” at COP29. Stressing Azerbaijan's emergence as a key Eurasian hub, he expressed confidence that the Forum would make a valuable contribution to CICA's transformation and to Asia's sustainable future.





In his remarks, Ambassador Sarybay emphasized that CICA is entering a decisive stage in its transformation into a full-fledged international organization, pointing to new institutional initiatives such as the Finance Summit and the Women Council, as well as practical projects like the SME Landscape in Asia: Interactive Guidebook. The Secretary General stressed Asia's growing global role and CICA's unique value as a platform for dialogue, while encouraging think tanks to provide research and innovative policy ideas, including through the CICA Fund.

The meeting was enriched by lively discussions on CICA's ongoing transformation, with experts underscoring the growing relevance of multilateral organizations in addressing today's geopolitical realities and noting that CICA is uniquely positioned to broaden its role as a platform for dialogue and cooperation. Another central theme was regional connectivity, where participants highlighted Asia's comparative advantage in building sustainable supply chains and stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation along key transport corridors. They emphasized that connectivity must serve as a driver of mutual benefit through enhanced trade, renewable energy partnerships and greener economic development across the region.

Participants stressed that the Think Tank Forum must remain actively engaged in this evolution, not only by contributing policy expertise but also by fostering deeper research cooperation and academic exchange among Asian institutions. The debate reflected a shared aspiration for regional security and stability, while also pointing to the value of drawing on best practices and norms from other regional organizations, consistent with the UN Charter.

The Forum also marked a milestone as the first ever to be held outside of China, signaling a shift toward more geographically diverse venues for future CICA events. Since its inception in 2014, the Think Tank Forum had been capably led by the Shanghai





Institutes for International Studies (SIIS), which convened 12 annual meetings across different regions of the People's Republic of China. Ambassador Sarybay expressed deep appreciation to SIIS for its decade-long stewardship, which laid a solid foundation for the Forum's evolution.



Against this backdrop, participants welcomed the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) as the incoming Chair for 2026–2027. The Secretary General conveyed his best wishes to ICWA, expressing confidence in its capacity to build on this strong legacy and to develop an ambitious Plan for the Forum's next year.



A side event themed "The Shaping of a New Asian Order" was held on 10 September, focusing on the critical role of women in national development, the contribution of youth-led initiatives to addressing global challenges, and the importance of institutional partnerships in strengthening CICA's capacity-building efforts.



On the sidelines of the Forum, the Secretary General also shared his perspectives in interviews with The Paper (China), AnewZ TV (Azerbaijan) and TRT Avaz (Türkiye), highlighting CICA's transformation agenda and its role in shaping Asia's collective future.



Message of His Excellency, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, to the 13th TTF Participants

Dear event participants,

I welcome you to the 13th Meeting of the Think Tank Forum of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia. Welcome to Azerbaijan! It is a pleasure that this forum, being held outside China for the first time, is taking place here in Azerbaijan.

My productive state and working visits to China this year, the signing of numerous documents - most notably two agreements on strategic partnership - and the lifting of the reciprocal visa regime are clear examples of the close partnership and friendly relations between Azerbaijan and China.

In the modern world, think tanks play a vital role in the development of states and societies. Their research across various fields provides a crucial foundation for addressing global challenges - from security and economic issues to technological and environmental concerns. Thus, think tanks contribute to more effective and well-informed decision-making at both the national and international levels. In this regard, cooperation among think tanks from CICA member states creates favorable prospects for strengthening mutual understanding between countries and peoples, as well as for deepening regional integration.

Today, Asia is rapidly emerging as one of the world's centers of power, both in terms of economic potential and its

influence on global affairs. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that countries of the Global South, including those on the continent, remain underrepresented in the decision-making process on key global issues.

During its successful chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement from 2019 to 2023, Azerbaijan opposed the injustices faced by countries of the Global South and worked to reinforce the Movement's position on the international stage. It is commendable that the founding conference of the Global South NGO Platform was held this year in Baku. At the same time, in our capacity as COP29 Chair, we have prioritized advancing the perspectives of Global South countries on the climate agenda and addressing the needs of the least developed nations, particularly small island states. The successful outcomes of COP29, held in Baku last November, have gone down in history as the 'Baku Breakthrough.'

One of the historical injustices faced by the Global South has been colonialism, which has left painful marks on the destinies of the peoples of Asia and Africa. In the contemporary era, Azerbaijan has initiated a new phase in confronting the shameful legacy of colonialism and exposing manifestations of neocolonialism. We will continue, with determination, to mobilize international solidarity on this crucial issue.

We believe that countries of the Global South must play an active role in shaping a new, just world order and contribute

meaningfully to this endeavour. In this context, it is essential to implement necessary reforms at the United Nations and to ensure adequate representation of Global South countries among the permanent members of the Security Council. The Security Council has long become an institution that does not reflect the realities of our time. Azerbaijan, as a country that ensured the implementation of Security Council resolutions calling for the liberation of its occupied territories - resolutions that had remained merely on paper - understands this very well.

Following the restoration of our country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the peace agenda we promote in the region opens new horizons for our foreign policy and serves as a key factor in giving it a broader, more global dimension. Last month's initiating of a peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia creates favourable opportunities not only for the region but also for the wider geography.

Situated along the East-West and North-South corridors, Azerbaijan is emerging as one of the most important transport and logistics hubs in Eurasia. I have no doubt that the Zangezur Corridor, as a branch of the Middle Corridor, will soon serve as a vital transport link connecting the continents. I am confident that all these transport routes will also foster closer cooperation among CICA member states.

Dear Forum participants,

Organizing regionally and globally significant high-level events has become a well-established tradition in our country. In July of this year, Azerbaijan hosted the Summit of Heads of State of the Economic Cooperation Organization in Khankendi, and in October, it will host the Summit of the Organization of Turkic

States. Furthermore, the hosting of the 13th Session of the United Nations World Urban Forum and the Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2026 will serve as further manifestations that our country has become a reliable global venue for internationally significant events.

The CICA Summit is scheduled to take place in the autumn of 2026 under Azerbaijan's chairmanship. CICA, which brings together 28 member states and covers 90% of the Asian continent, is an institution of great importance for strengthening trust in the region and fostering inter-state cooperation. Azerbaijan approaches its 2024–2026 chairmanship of CICA with a strong sense of responsibility. The work of our chairmanship is being carried out under the theme: 'A Stronger CICA: Connectivity, Digitalization, and Sustainable Growth in Asia.'

During our chairmanship, we have prioritized the organizational strengthening of CICA, its formal establishment as an international institution, the expansion of cooperation into new areas, and the consolidation of its role within the international relations system. At the same time, we have set as our goals the convening of a CICA Finance Summit and the establishment of a Women's Council, a Sustainable Connectivity Council, and a CICA Climate Council.

I am confident that the current Forum, with the participation of prominent think tanks, will make a valuable contribution to the discussion of globally significant issues on CICA's agenda, including the priorities of Azerbaijan's chairmanship.

I wish the Forum every success and hope that it produces fruitful outcomes.

CICA reaffirms its commitment to water diplomacy at Baku Water Week

Baku, 8–11 September 2025 – The Secretary General of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Ambassador Kairat Sarybay, paid a working visit to Baku to participate in Baku Water Week, and a series of high-level consultations.

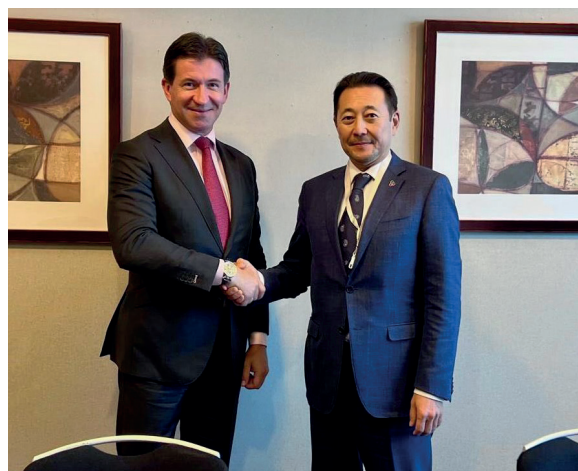
During Baku Water Week, Ambassador Sarybay spoke at the panel session “Water Diplomacy: Cooperation Beyond Borders”, underlining the growing importance of water diplomacy for confidence building and regional cooperation among CICA Member States. Secretary General stressed that water is no longer only a resource sustaining life, economies, and ecosystems, but has become a key test of diplomacy.

The Secretary General also highlighted recent milestones, including the Ministerial Conference on Environmental Issues in Astana in August 2024 and the side-event on Water Security and Climate Resilience held in Dushanbe in

May 2025. These initiatives, he noted, reinforced by the groundbreaking outcomes of COP29 under Azerbaijan’s leadership, provide a solid foundation for advancing joint action on climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable water management. He further underlined the constructive role of the Think Tank Forum, Youth Council and volunteer movement leaders in mobilizing expertise and fostering youth engagement, thereby broadening participation beyond the governmental level.

Throughout his visit, Ambassador Sarybay held consultations with senior Azerbaijani officials. In a meeting with H.E. Araz Azimov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, he commended Azerbaijan’s active Chairmanship and the progress achieved on the draft regulations of the Women Council and Finance Summit, while discussing forthcoming steps for their implementation, as well as preparatory work for the upcoming Ministerial Council Meeting on the margins of the 80th session of UNGA. He expressed gratitude for Azerbaijan’s financial contribution, the secondment of diplomats, and its support in enhancing CICA’s new headquarters.





In talks with H.E. Khalaf Khalafov, Special Representative of the President of Azerbaijan, the Secretary General welcomed the successful conclusion of the first round of Charter discussions, noting it as a critical step in CICA's institutional transformation, with Azerbaijan's role being highly valued.

Ambassador Sarybay also met with Ms. Bahar Muradova, Chairperson of the State Committee on Family, Women and Children's Affairs, to review draft regulations of the CICA Women Council ahead of the Ministerial Council Meeting.

Additionally, Ambassador Sarybay held discussions with Dr. Kirill Babaev, Director of the Institute of China and Contemporary Asia of the Russian Academy of Sciences, to outline future intersessional activities under the Think Tank Forum.

The visit underscored significant progress in CICA's institutional development and strengthened momentum for enhanced cooperation.

Interfaith dialogue & peacebuilding: CICA at 8th Congress of World and Traditional Religions

Astana, 17-18 September 2025
– The Secretary General of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Ambassador Kairat Sarybay, took part in the 8th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions at the invitation of the Head of the Congress Secretariat, Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan H.E. Maulen Ashimbayev.

The Congress was inaugurated by H.E. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, President of Kazakhstan, who presented a keynote address to the participants. He emphasized the unique mission of spiritual leaders as “messengers of peace acting under the banner of humanism”. Against the backdrop of geopolitical divisions and rising tensions, the President underlined the primacy of constructive diplomacy as a means of overcoming alienation, strengthening dialogue, and building trust in international affairs. In this context, the President noted the importance of enhancing the role of regional structures, emphasizing CICA in this regard, and stressed that the synthesis of spiritual wisdom and expert knowledge can be key to finding effective solutions to pressing global and regional challenges.



On the second day of the Congress, Ambassador Sarybay moderated the thematic session “Faith against Extremism: the Peacebuilding Potential of Religions”. In his remarks, he presented CICA’s relevance to the debate as a pan-Asian platform uniting 28 Member States and 10 Observers across 90% of Asia. He underlined the Organization’s commitment to implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy through the CICA Plan of Action adopted at the 2022 Astana Summit. The Secretary General highlighted that the notions of interfaith and intercultural dialogue are deeply aligned with CICA’s goals and principles. He also engaged in insightful exchanges with representatives of various religious and international organizations, emphasizing shared responsibility in countering extremism and harnessing the peacebuilding potential of religions.

Ambassador Sarybay also gave an interview ahead of the Congress, where he stressed the importance of the forum as a unique platform for dialogue among civilizations and underlined the complementary missions of the Congress and CICA — the former fostering interfaith understanding, and the latter advancing interstate confidence building — both serving the common goal of strengthening peace and stability in Asia and beyond.



First informal consultation held at new CICA Headquarters on Afghanistan engagement

Astana, 27 August 2025 – The Secretariat of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) convened its first-ever informal consultation at the new CICA Headquarters, bringing together Ambassadors and representatives of several CICA Member States. The meeting served as a platform to exchange views on possible avenues of the Secretariat's engagement with relevant stakeholders in Afghanistan, reflecting the continued attention of CICA to regional stability and cooperation.

CICA Secretary General Kairat Sarybay briefed the participants on previous ad hoc engagements with Afghan counterparts under the CICA framework. In November 2024, at the invitation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, an Afghan business delegation took part in the 9th CICA Business Forum - reflecting Afghanistan's growing engagement with

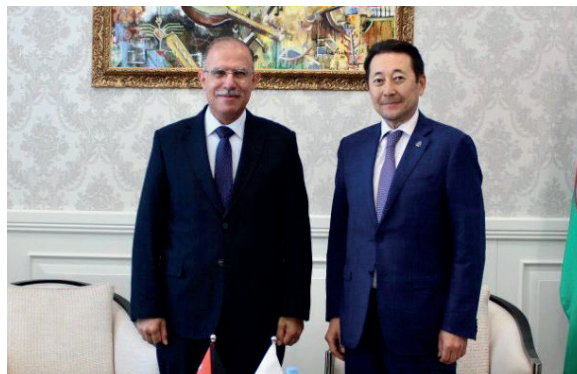
regional economic initiatives. In March 2025, the first-ever project under the CICA Fund was approved by its Project Review Committee: Advancing Wheat Cultivation for Sustainable Development in Central Afghanistan. Proposed by Kazakhstan and jointly developed by CICA and the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS), the initiative was co-financed by IOFS, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), and the CICA Fund. The project was designed to strengthen food security and self-sufficiency in vulnerable communities, marking a milestone in regional cooperation for sustainable development. More broadly, these efforts reflect CICA's evolving role as a platform for practical cooperation and confidence building, while supporting Afghanistan's integration into regional processes.

By hosting this consultation, the Secretariat reaffirmed its readiness to work closely with its Member States in identifying constructive avenues for engaging with Afghanistan, with the aim of advancing peace, security and sustainable development across Asia.





CICA Secretary General Ambassador Kairat Sarybay welcomed H.E. Ms. Rosalba Lo Bue Antico, Amb of Venezuela to Kazakhstan on courtesy visit to new CICA Headquarters. They exchanged views on global & regional developments, role of CICA in promoting confidence & peace. During the visit, they agreed to maintain dialogue on bridging Asia & South America through multilateralism



CICA Secretary General Kairat Sarybay welcomed Amb of Jordan to Kazakhstan H.E. Hamzeh Alomari at new CICA Headquarters & provided tour of Secretariat facilities. Parties discussed CICA Transformation process, HR matters & potential secondment opportunities. CICA Secretary General expressed appreciation for Jordan's steadfast support to all CICA CBMs



CICA Secretary General met with CMI Finland delegation led by Amb. Antti Turunen. Sides discussed CBMs, mediation, connectivity, postconflict rehabilitation in Asia & beyond, agreeing to explore ways of collaboration through CICA TTF & CICA Fund



CICA Secretary General met w/ H.E. Khaled Al-Jalahma, UnderSec of Bahrain Ministry of Foreign Affairs on sidelines of UNGA80. He briefed on preparations for CICA Informal Ministerial Council & encouraged Bahrain's engagement within CICA framework, including contributions to budget & CICA Headquarters. Sides agreed to continue discussion through reciprocal visits



CICA Secretary General Kairat Sarybay welcomed H.E. Khairullo Ibodzoda, Amb. of Tajikistan, to CICA Headquarters. Secretary General expressed gratitude for Tajikistan's active engagement in CICA process & generous donation of Great Gate to new premises. They also discussed water & energy issues in Central Asia, as well as exchanged views on Tajikistan's role in promoting regional peace & security.



CICA Secretary General Ambassador Kairat Sarybay welcomed IOFS Director General Berik Aryn as part of his courtesy call to new CICA Headquarters. Sides reflected on successful joint CICA-IOFS-TiKA project advancing wheat cultivation in Afghanistan & discussed avenues for future cooperation



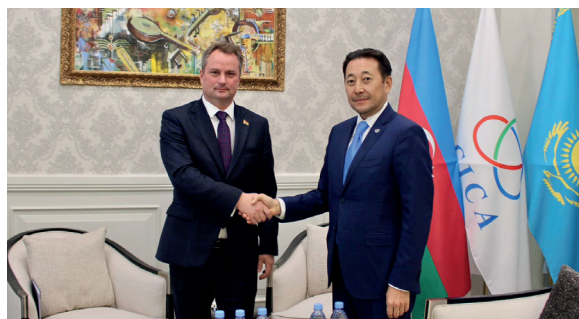
CICA Secretary General Kairat Sarybay welcomed H.E. Levan Diasamidze, Amb. of Georgia, to new CICA Headquarters during his courtesy call. Secretary General briefed on CICA history & ongoing CICA Transformation process. Parties exchanged views on new developments in South Caucasus as bridge connecting Asia to Europe & issues of mutual interest



CICA Secretary General participated in the solemn commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II in Beijing



CICA Secretary General expressed his gratitude to H.E. Amb. Nagendra Prasad & Government of India for donating magnificent Nataraj statue to adorn new CICA Headquarters. He extended his sincere best wishes to H.E. Amb. Nagendra Prasad upon completion of his mission in Astana



Ambassador Kairat Sarybay welcomed H.E. Mr. Pavel Utyupin, Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus to CICA Headquarters. Parties discussed Belarus' active role as CICA Observer State & explored avenues for further cooperation. CICA Secretary General also commended Belarus' initiative on convening Minsk International Conference on Eurasian Security



Ambassador Kairat Sarybay welcomed Prof. Dr. Shahin Mustafayev, President of Turkic Academy, at new CICA Headquarters. Secretary General informed on CICA Transformation progress, Az Chairmanship priorities & academic exchange within CICA TTF. They also explored cooperation between CICA & Turkic Academy in framework of CICA PNLU



Read the full interview of CICA Secretary General Kairat Sarybay for the Astana Times, where he underlined complementary missions of the two platforms: the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions fosters dialogue among faiths & denominations in the spirit of peaceful coexistence, while CICA advances interstate confidence building as the cornerstone of peace & security in Asia — both striving for the common goal of mutual trust & stability

brehtaking landscapes
striking architecture



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