CICA 20th Anniversary
1992-2012
Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia
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From talking shop to an organization with influence

A look at how far CICA has come in 20 years, celebrating the forum’s achievements and considering its aims and capabilities for the future

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991 were marked by worldwide historical events as a new era of international relations was ushered in. But questions were already being asked about how the new world order would shape up and what new alliances were going to be formed.

Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbayev stepped up to the plate with his proposals for the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). And 20 years after he first floated the idea at the 47th session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, the need for such an initiative is as relevant as ever.

President Nazarbayev’s groundbreaking proposal aimed to create a structure that had not been successfully implemented in the region before, one that promoted a multilateral approach to promoting peace, security and stability in Asia.

There was wide support among Asian nations for the creation of an intergovernmental forum that would debate, consult on and adopt decisions and measures based on a consensus about security issues in the region. They could see a clear value in creating an Asian security structure, and it was a move that was also backed by international organizations such as the UN, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the League of Arab States (LAS).

Founding principles
CICA has been built on the principles of consensus and agreement. Thanks to the efforts of its members, it has evolved into a pan-continental platform for dialogue and diplomacy that is shaping security planning and infrastructure in Asia.

In CICA’s early days, representatives of a number of Asian foreign ministries got together for three meetings. These laid the foundations for the creation of special working groups (SWGs), whose role was to prepare documents for the meetings.

A series of rules and guidelines has now been developed defining CICA’s primary goals, tasks, functions and bodies, as well as creating a wide legal framework for its activities. These include the Declaration of Principles, the Almaty Act, the Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures, the Statute of the Secretariat, the Host Country Agreement and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities.

Structure and institutions
The foundation stones that have been laid over the past few years have enabled the forum to build a strong organizational structure, which is key to its success. Its policy bodies comprise the Summit of Heads of States and Governments, which convenes every four years; the Meeting of Foreign Ministers (Ministerial Meeting), which meets every two years; and the Senior Officials Committee (SOC), which meets at least once a year. There are also two working bodies – one for SWGs plus the Specialized Meetings of Experts (SME).

The executive body has operated through the International Secretariat in Almaty, Kazakhstan since 2006. At CICA’s helm as executive director is Turkey’s ambassador Çınar Aldemir. The deputy executive director is Kanat Tumysh from Kazakhstan. Additional professional support is provided by representatives from Kazakhstan, Turkey, Russia, India and Iran.

Key milestones
Much of the 1990s was taken up with preparing for the creation of CICA. Between 1993 and 1994, drafts of basic CICA documents, such as the Rules of Procedure and the Declaration of the principles of mutual

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relations of CICA member states and its structure and institutions were drawn up. In 1996-97, Almaty played host to two meetings of the deputy foreign ministers of the CICA member states. It was also the setting, in October 1998, for the international colloquium on CICA, attended by 24 experts from 12 countries.

In September 1999, the first Meeting of Foreign Ministers was held, during which the declaration regulating relations between member states was signed. This established a legal framework for Asian security and cooperation for the first time, outlining measures and mechanisms to ensure stability in the region.

Progress made
At the first CICA summit, in June 2002, member states agreed to enable the establishment of the necessary structures and institutions required to make it a fully functioning forum, including setting up the CICA Secretariat. The summit culminated in the signing of the Almaty Act and the adoption of the Declaration on Eliminating Terrorism and Promoting Dialogue among Civilizations.

The second CICA Foreign Ministers meeting in October 2004 concluded with the adoption of the Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures, the Rules of Procedure and the Declaration of the Second CICA Ministerial Meeting. This was a landmark in Asian politics: the first time in the continent’s history that such a wide-ranging document exploring multilateral cooperation between the countries on stability and security issues had been debated.

At the forum’s second summit, in June 2006, a comprehensive policy document – the Declaration of the Second Summit – was adopted and the document setting out the basic structure of forum meetings – the Statute of the CICA Secretariat – was signed.

CICA members and observer states
The list of member states and observers reads like a roll call of leading Asian nations. CICA member states embrace approximately 90 percent of Asia’s territory and population:

**CICA members**
- Afghanistan
- Azerbaijan
- Bahrain
- Cambodia
- China
- Egypt
- India
- Iran
- Iraq
- Israel
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Mongolia
- Pakistan
- Palestine
- Republic of Korea
- Russia
- Tajikistan
- Thailand
- Turkey
- United Arab Emirates
- Uzbekistan
- Vietnam

**Observer members**
- Bangladesh
- Philippines
- Indonesia
- Qatar
- Japan
- Ukraine
- Malaysia
- United States

**Observer international organizations**
- League of Arab States
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
- United Nations

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CICA is now at the point in its development when it can play a more effective part in international relations

The Declaration reflects member states’ common vision on security and cooperation in Asia and further afield; their proposals for developing a universal approach to addressing unresolved issues; and the need for the practical implementation of the CICA Confidence Building Measures that were included in the Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures 2004.

CICA was granted observer status by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007. As part of its efforts to establish links with other organizations, it has signed Memoranda of Understanding with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The CICA Secretariat opened in Almaty during this event

The third Meeting of Foreign Ministers was held in Almaty in August 2008 and focused on the practical implementation of a cooperative approach. During the meeting Jordan and the UAE were granted full member status and Qatar joined as an observer. The CICA Progress in Implementation of Confidence Building Measures declaration and the final Ministerial Meeting decision were adopted.

The Protocol on amendments of the Statute of the CICA Secretariat, agreeing the transfer of the CICA Secretariat headquarters from Almaty to Astana, was also signed.

Turkey takes the chair

The third CICA Summit was held in Istanbul in June 2010 with the chairmanship passing from Kazakhstan to Turkey. This event was notable for its achievements with the adoption of the Declaration of the Summit, which addressed regional issues in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the broader issues of peace, security, stability, socio-economic development and culture.

Significantly, it included a resolution calling for the negotiations to establish a Palestinian state to be resumed. In addition, the Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the Secretariat, its personnel and representatives of CICA was signed.

In September 2011, the first informal meeting of CICA foreign ministers was held at the UN General Assembly. During this meeting Bahrain and Cambodia signed CICA basic membership documents.

The measures

The CICA Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures lists five key areas: fight against new challenges and threats, economic, environmental, humanitarian and military-political.

Because of the diverse profile of its member states, as well as Asia’s geopolitical landscape, it was decided to start with confidence-building measures in the fight against new challenges and threats, as well as economic, environmental and humanitarian areas. This would create goodwill among member states and strengthen mutual relations, and be the stepping stone to tackling the military-political interests.

Progress in all of these areas has already been made, with 12 member states coordinating the implementation of a number of projects aimed at building confidence. These include:

- Fighting new challenges and threats such as terrorism; general policing issues; border-control management; migration; fighting human and drug trafficking and transnational crime;
- Promoting economic growth by developing business, industry and trade; secure and effective transport systems; and IT in areas such as eGovernment and information security; energy and energy security; tourism development;
- Protecting the environment by managing disasters and combating desertification;
- Promoting cultural diversity, education, interethnic, interfaith and interreligion dialogue as well as the development of democracy.

Time for the next step?

Having taken steps to promote regional harmony and development, CICA’s journey continues. In the 20 years since President Nazarbayev proposed setting up the forum, it has developed significantly and now has the potential to become an organization that can drive security and cooperation in Asia.

It is well placed to take charge of conflict prevention, conflict settlement and post-crisis reconstruction in crisis-hit regions, and take the lead in Asian diplomacy.

In March 2012, President Nazarbayev emphasized that CICA is now at the point in its development when it can play a more effective part in international relations. The time is ripe for it to evolve from an advisory forum into an organization with global influence.
CICA: Structure and History

A tale of diversity

What do each of the CICA member states bring to the table? From Afghanistan to Vietnam, thumbnail synopses outline these very different countries’ socio-economic situations, their individual strengths and the role they play within the forum.

Creating an international forum that takes into account the diverse cultures, religions, economies and peoples of a region that spans 24 countries and a population of more than three billion people, accounting for 90 percent of the territory and population of Asia, is not for the faint-hearted. But a cursory glance at the 2012 roll call of CICA members shows an amazing breadth of peoples and governments committed to enhancing cooperation and promoting peace, security and stability in the region.

The course charted by the forum since 1992 has seen it expand from an initial 16 to 24 Asian member states. A further eight countries and three multinational organizations, including the UN, have observer status. CICA’s first members were Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. Its ranks have now swelled to also include Bahrain, Cambodia, Iraq, Jordan, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Qatar, Ukraine and the US are counted among the observer states, while observer organizations include the UN, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the League of Arab States.

Profiles of CICA member states

Afghanistan
Afghanistan continues to play a pivotal role in regional and international relations. From the Cold War through the years of Taliban rule to the post 9/11 world, it has been taking steps to carve out a modern identity. In December 2005, 351 new members of parliament were sworn in as the country’s first democratically elected legislature in more than three decades. It acts as a co-coordinator for CICA’s confidence-building measures (CBMs) in combating illicit drugs and new challenges and threats.

Azerbaijan
In September 1989, Azerbaijan was among the first Soviet republics to decide to go it alone and in 1991 it achieved independence. With a population of just under 9.5 million, it is the most densely populated of the Southern Caucasus republics. Azerbaijan is a long-term and committed CICA member and coordinates the CBM aimed at developing secure and effective transport corridors.

Bahrain
As a new member of CICA (its membership was agreed at the CICA Foreign Ministers Informal Meeting in New York in September 2011), Bahrain represents a new wave of states keen to be involved in the forum. Located in the heart of the Gulf and home to a well-established business hub, the nation has a population of 1.2 million and a per capita GDP of $27,900.

Cambodia
Another newcomer (its membership was agreed at the same time as Bahrain’s), Cambodia has an estimated GDP per capita of $2,200 and a population of just under 15 million. Burdened with the legacy of decades of conflict – unexploded munitions still kill and maim citizens, despite an ongoing demining drive – the country is taking steps to address its past. In conjunction with the UN it has now established a tribunal to try the surviving leaders of the genocide years.
China
As a founding member of CICA and with the world’s largest population of more than 1.3 billion, China represents a serious chunk of the region’s territory and people. This major emerging state has been rising up the world economic rankings since it began moving towards a market-oriented economy. It became one of the world’s largest exporters in 2010 and has a per capita GDP of $8,500.

Egypt
Famous for the legacies of its ancient civilization, Egypt is the largest of the Arab countries, with a population of 83.7 million and the second largest economy in the Arab world. It declared itself a republic in June 1953 and has since continued to play a central role in Middle Eastern politics. Following unrest that saw the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak, it is now charting a new course.

India
Covering an area of almost 3.3 million square km, which extends from the snow-covered heights of the Himalayas in the north to the tropical rainforests of the south, India is ranked as one of the world’s leading emerging economies, having made significant advances since independence. It has been an active CICA member since the outset and now acts as a co-coordinator for a CBM on developing secure and effective transportation corridors, and a CBM on energy security.

Iran
An Islamic republic since 1979, Iran has large reserves of oil and natural gas, giving it a strong position in international energy security and the global economy. It has an estimated nine percent of world oil reserves and natural gas reserves that are second only to those of Russia. It’s no surprise, then, that oil accounts for approximately 80 percent of all its export earnings. Iran acts as a coordinator for the CBMs on combating illicit drugs as well as disaster management.

Iraq
In the years since the ousting of President Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003, a new Iraq has been gradually emerging. It is expanding trade and political relations with a number of countries and achieving investment and economic growth. The country continues to combat threats to its safety and to focus on reconstruction and development. It joined CICA at the third summit in 2010.

Israel
Since its inception in 1948, Israel’s population has grown almost tenfold. Its 7.6 million inhabitants comprise a mosaic of people with varied ethnic backgrounds, lifestyles, religions, cultures and traditions. Today, Jews comprise about three quarters of the country’s population, while the remainder is mostly of Arab origin. The GDP per capita is $31,400.

Jordan
Strategically located at the crossroads of what is recognized by some of the world’s major religions as the Holy Land, Jordan’s resources are limited to phosphates and agricultural produce. Services and tourism dominate its economy. Its population of 6.5 million earns a GDP per capita of $6,000, according to the World Bank. It became a full member of CICA in 2008.

Kazakhstan
The size of Western Europe and with vast mineral resources and economic potential, Kazakhstan holds considerable sway in the region and beyond. It has seen rapid economic growth since 2000. As the founder of CICA, President Nursultan Nazarbayev has continued to play a role in driving the forum forward in the 20 years since its inception. Today, the country acts as a coordinator for CBMs in the human dimension as well as a co-coordinator in the development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

Kyrgyzstan
A trade crossroad and transshipment point between Europe and Asia, Kyrgyzstan claimed independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Its population of 5.5 million encompasses 80 ethnic groups with a variety of cultures and traditions. Economic reforms are taking place and investment is being promoted. Kyrgyzstan acts as a co-coordinator for the human-dimension CBM.

Mongolia
Mongolia began political and economic reforms in 1990 and this has helped drive foreign investment in industries such as mining, which is transforming the economy and delivering strong growth. It covers 1.5 million square km of Central Asia and has a population of 3.2 million. Its main trading partners are neighboring Russia and China, with China the biggest market for its exports. According to the World
Bank, GDP per capita is $4,800. Mongolia is a coordinator for CICA’s CBM on the environment.

Pakistan
Born out of the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, Pakistan has faced regional conflict ever since. Its standing on the world stage shifted after the 11 September 2001 attacks in the US, which saw it take a place in the front line in the global war against terrorism. Its population of 190.3 million earns a GDP per capita of $2,800.

Palestine
Palestinians have been striving for self-determination for decades, but have yet to achieve more than limited control over their affairs. Although its economy is improving, Palestine remains subject to Israeli restrictions. In 2011, the Palestinian Authority made a bid at the UN for recognition as the state of Palestine but failed to get sufficient support. However, UNESCO did admit the state of Palestine to its ranks in 2011. It has a GNI per capita of $1,230, according to the World Bank.

Republic of Korea
Following the partition of Korea in 1948, the Republic of Korea has grown to become one of Asia’s most affluent countries, a major world economy and a leading exporter of cars and electronic goods. It was invaded by North Korea in 1950 and relations between the two countries have remained fraught. The demilitarized zone (DMZ) between the two is the world’s most heavily fortified frontier. Its population of 48.9 million earns a GDP per capita of $32,100. The Republic of Korea was admitted to CICA at the second summit in 2006. Its contribution to the forum includes acting as a coordinator for the CBMs on information technology and energy security.

Russia
Having emerged from a period of turmoil following the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia is continuing its race up the world power rankings. Its income from its vast natural resources is pushing growth throughout a country that spans nine time zones and has a population of 138.1 million. GDP per capita is $17,000. As an active CICA member, Russia acts as a coordinator for the CBM on the development of SMEs.

Tajikistan
Former Soviet republic Tajikistan depends on oil and gas imports. Its population of 7.8 million has a GDP per capita of $2,100. As the first stop on the drugs route between Afghanistan and the west, Tajikistan is working to address this problem. It is a coordinator for CICA’s CBMs in tourism.

Thailand
The only country in southeast Asia to have escaped colonial rule, Thailand has seen its export-led economy expand. Tourism is also a major industry and its population of 67.1 million generates a GDP per capita of $9,500. It joined CICA at the second summit in 2006 and is a coordinator for the development of SMEs CBM.

Turkey
Sitting at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Turkey’s strategically important location means it wields major influence in the region, as well as controlling the entrance to the Black Sea. It became an EU candidate country in 1999 and has since introduced substantial reforms to meet EU requirements. Its population of 79.7 million has a GDP per capita of $14,700. Turkey has been a strong supporter of CICA since the outset. In addition to acting as a coordinator for the CBM on new challenges and threats, it has also held the chairmanship of CICA since 2010.

United Arab Emirates
A country of contrasts, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a location where old meets new in a federation of seven states (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Ajman, Fujairah, Ras al Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al Qaiwain) formed in 1971. Oil wealth has raised the standard of living for the population, which includes a large number of foreign workers and expatriates. It became a fully fledged member of CICA in 2008.

Uzbekistan
Located on the Great Silk Road between Europe and Asia, Uzbekistan became a sovereign country in 1991. It is a leading cotton grower and also has significant natural resources such as oil, gas and gold. It is the most populous Central Asian country, with 28.4 million people producing a GDP per capita of $3,300.

Vietnam
As one of south-east Asia’s fastest growing economies, Vietnam aims to be classed as a developed nation by 2020, thanks to its development into a major manufacturing centre. Business investment is strong following the opening of its stock exchange in 2000, as well as an influx of foreign investment. The US is now Vietnam’s main trading partner. Its population of 91.5 million has a GDP per capita of $3,400. It became a full member of CICA in 2010.
A Kazakhstan success story

When Kazakhstan emerged from the shadow of the Soviet era just over 20 years ago it was a relatively unknown Eurasian state. But that hasn’t stopped it from reinventing itself as a peaceful, prosperous and modern nation that is forging a path as a key international player. Yerzhan Kazykhanov, the country’s minister of foreign affairs, discusses Kazakhstan’s remarkable rise on the international stage.

On 16 December 2011, Kazakhstan celebrated 20 years of independence. Over these past two decades, it has achieved considerable success in developing its domestic and foreign policies despite complex geopolitical situations and global challenges.

“Back in 1992, President Nursultan Nazarbayev defined the central aim of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy as being to ‘create a favorable external environment for the stable development of the country on the basis of political and economic reform’. As the First President of Kazakhstan, Mr Nazarbayev’s implementation of a multi-pronged foreign policy allowed the country to become a fully-fledged, respected and important global player. In a very short period of time, it has built a reputation for being a responsible player in international relations. Our country is taking an active part in resolving current global issues and forming a new world order. Nowadays, Kazakhstan is rightly perceived in the global arena as a nation that is creating the conditions needed for stability and establishing a dynamic and flourishing model for state development.”

A mechanism for diplomacy

The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA – one of the first foreign initiatives proposed by President Nazarbayev) has become a key element of Kazakhstan’s multilateral foreign policy, as Mr Kazykhanov reveals: “President Nazarbayev’s historical initiative aimed to create a reliable and, more importantly, an effective mechanism for preventive diplomacy in Asia. It also set out to foster political, socio-economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation between Asian states. In the long term it aims to create, in the President’s words, a ‘common and indivisible security space on the Eurasian continent’. CICA is a reliable mechanism not only for creating an ‘external security belt’ around Kazakhstan, but also for strengthening security and mutual understanding within Asia.”

CICA is playing an important role in the region – and has the potential to extend its influence in the future. “Asia’s special position in the world is all down to its enormous human and natural resources and dynamic economic growth,” says Mr Kazykhanov. “Renowned as the cradle of civilization, culture and religion, it is rekindling its status as one of the driving forces for global development. Nevertheless, the continent is full of contradictions – dynamic development coupled with high levels of poverty; active integration in some areas and protracted conflicts in others. As time has shown, cooperation between states is vital to resolving issues. This is why, over the past decade, Asia has become more aware of the importance of creating a collective security structure for the whole region. It is also conscious that it must show its determination to gradually relieve existing tensions and to agree on the priorities for acting on disarmament and arms control, as well as the development of confidence-building measures. CICA is playing a key part in these plans.

A need for new ways

“Speaking at the UN General Assembly, President Nazarbayev said, ‘The world has now come close to the threshold beyond which the visible and disturbing challenges of the future will compel us to adopt new ways of coordinating affairs, and a new way of working together.’

“Political foresight and decisiveness were necessary when suggesting CICA as a mechanism for resolving problems in Asia. The President stressed that at its core, the initiative aims to
renew previously unsuccessful efforts to create a reliable and global security structure in Asia, where such mechanisms have not yet been set up.

**Reap the benefits**

“With the Cold War over and against a backdrop of rapidly changing geopolitical and geo-economic trends, the idea of convening CICA – with its promise of redefining Asia’s political landscape – won widespread support from a number of key players. Kazakhstan, along with the other states backing CICA, clearly understood the scale of the effort required to establish this level of security structure in Asia. While it was impossible to disregard the high levels of tension in certain areas of Asia, stemming from drawn-out historical conflicts and deep-rooted mistrust, it became clear that only dialogue and cooperation in a stable and secure environment would allow Asian countries to reap the benefits of globalization and to overcome new threats and challenges.

“CICA is currently a unique international structure and political platform for dialogue and consultation on security issues in Asia. Building an effective security mechanism for the continent is only possible through cooperation and mutual trust.”

**Inclusive**

CICA is a rapidly developing forum for multilateral diplomacy that aims to strengthen security and mutual understanding in Asia. Over the past 10 years the number of member states has leapt from 16 to 24, and it now represents more than 90 percent of Asia and a population of more than three billion people.

“The 2002, 2006 and 2010 CICA summits demonstrated the full scope of the collective security issues facing Asia. Most importantly, they showed that Kazakhstan’s initiative to establish CICA was an important factor in improving international relations,” says Mr Kazykhanov.

“Member states form the essential institutional and conceptual basis of the forum, while the International Secretariat and Special Working Groups carry out their work and the Senior Officials Committee holds regular meetings.

**Work together**

“It has forged links with international and regional organizations and forums. In December 2007, CICA was granted observer status by the UN General Assembly, which clearly demonstrates its growing importance. Memoranda of Understanding between the CICA Secretariat and the administrative bodies of international organizations – including the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), EurAsEC and IOM – were signed in 2008.

“Confidence-building measures to tackle new threats and challenges in economic, environmental and human areas are being fostered, as agreed in the concept papers
and action plans that have been adopted by CICA. Efforts are being made to establish mutually acceptable ways of cooperating in the politico-military area.

**Tangible results**

“If you look at the ground CICA has already covered, it can confidently be said that member states’ joint efforts have already succeeded in not only launching the forum’s work, but also in delivering tangible results in building the foundations for regional security.”

In the 20 years since CICA was formed, Kazakhstan has been working towards its key aim of establishing an enduring security structure for Asia as a whole. “Thanks to their hard work, the President and Kazakhstan’s Foreign Ministry have enabled CICA to become a practical and active institution. This was no mean feat. For the first seven years, meetings were held to draw up agreements on joint approaches at the senior level, with the meeting of ministers of foreign affairs in 1999 being the first significant achievement,” says Mr Kazykhanov. “CICA’s member states have held two summits and three meetings of ministers of foreign affairs in Kazakhstan. After signing the Almaty Act in 2002, Kazakhstan was granted official chairmanship of CICA. Our country chaired CICA for two four-year terms in a row until June 2010, when Turkey took over the chairmanship.

**Progress**

“Despite it being only a very short time since creating CICA was first suggested, a lot of work was carried out under Kazakhstan’s chairmanship. Key was the establishment of CICA’s legislative basis. The founding documents – the Declaration of Principles 1999, and the Almaty Act 2002, were signed, and the Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures 2004, Rights of Procedure 2004, Agreement on the CICA Secretariat 2006, and the Cooperative Approach 2007, were adopted.

“During Kazakhstan’s chairmanship, partnerships have been forged between international and regional organizations and forums to strengthen security, stability and peace in the CICA area. It is also noteworthy that the headquarters of the CICA Secretariat have been located in Kazakhstan since 2006. Our voluntary contributions are equal to more than 75 percent of the Secretariat’s overall budget.”

**The world is watching**

CICA’s success has been hard won and Asia continues to find itself the focus of global political attention, as Mr Kazykhanov highlights. “Issues of weapons non-proliferation, terrorism, extremism, separatism, the drugs trade, human trafficking, transnational crime and other challenges have become particularly important in Asia. The region’s inhabitants are increasingly being affected by natural disasters and environmental problems.

“A concerted effort on the part of all Asian states is needed in order to effectively combat the issues and challenges the region currently faces. Consequently, implementing and exercising CICA’s Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures is extremely important. As vital parts of an all-encompassing Asian security system, these measures cover issues relating to politico-military, economic, environmental and human areas. Not only are they very important, they are also interdependent and interlinked, and should be actively harnessed.

“CICA is making confident steps in this direction by running various educational courses and seminars, conferences and expert meetings, and enabling information sharing between member states.

“Strengthening CICA’s cooperation with other regional and international organizations and forums is also important in resolving the region’s problems. CICA’s Secretariat has forged links with the following organizations: the UN, the OSCE, the LAS, the SCO, EurAsEC, the IOM and the ECO. In addition, it takes part in working groups held under the aegis of the UN on combating terrorism in Central Asia and on Afghanistan, as well as the OSCE Working Group on preventative diplomacy and conflict prevention.”

**Ready for the future**

CICA is now ready to take its next steps in international relations. “On 2 March 2012, during an annual meeting with the diplomatic corps, President Nazarbayev revealed that CICA’s level of cooperation means it can now play a more active role in driving international relations. Consequently, he has proposed transforming CICA into an organization, highlighting that it is essential for all member states to work together to reach this goal.

“As a founding country, Kazakhstan aims to promote the initiative to transform CICA into an organization that can fulfill the forum’s goals and principles more effectively and that can provide a common and indivisible security base for Asia.

“Astana will continue to make every effort to improve cooperation in all key areas of CICA’s mandate under the banner of security and sustainable development in Asia.”
The 1990s marked a major turning point in worldwide security relations. Profound changes in Eurasia resulted in a completely new security environment. The changes that altered how we approached security in the decade were striking not only because of the way they happened but also their unprecedented consequences. It soon became evident that what we thought was a new era of promise was instead a time of challenges and upheavals more serious than anyone could have foreseen. Security problems have become more decentralized and for some regions more specific. Regional cooperation has become vital.

When Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbayev suggested setting up CICA back in 1992, Turkey was one of the initiative’s first backers. “There was already a variety of international and regional organizations in Asia,” says Ambassador Tulun. “Although they had the necessary organizational mechanisms in place and had the potential to be effective, their membership was limited. Some of these organizations operated effectively on economic security but they were not

Turkey takes the helm

Sitting astride Europe and Asia, Turkey plays a key strategic role in Eurasian politics. Ambassador Bulent Tulun, chairman of the CICA Task Force at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, talks about the value of the forum to the region and discusses the role Turkey is playing in furthering an organization that was set up in the aftermath of the Cold War to address the security concerns of the new world order.
as keen on the politico-military aspects. Asia needed an organization that could embrace all aspects of security, including the human factor. An organization that would take into account the security priorities of each individual Asian nation was called for.

“We believed that CICA could play a prominent role, then and in the future, in addressing all of Asia’s security needs. Naturally, it was not an easy task to establish such an organization in the region, where there are some very different approaches to security. This was the main challenge facing CICA during its formation.”

**A major game player**

CICA has a diverse membership profile with a range of very different foreign-policy approaches and political systems. So the creation of the forum has been a real achievement. “Asia’s security issues will remain high on the world agenda in the near future and establishing a culture of trust across the continent is a priority for maintaining peace globally,” says Ambassador Tulun. “Currently, there are a significant number of international issues that have their roots in Asia. Problem areas stretching from Afghanistan to the Gulf to the Middle East and to South Asia are directly linked to Asia. CICA has the potential to be a key international organization with influence in these problem areas, particularly given Asia’s growing economic importance.”

**Cooperation has become a key word in bringing together states with different values and divergent interests**

Turkey has continued to promote CICA’s five confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the economic, environmental, human, new threats and challenges, and politico-military areas. “During our chairmanship, we’ve gone out of our way to promote CICA’s economic interests. The second CICA Business Forum, held in April 2012, yielded promising results. The small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that took part made business-to-business contacts and took steps towards cooperation,” says Ambassador Tulun.

“We addressed the new challenges and threats remit by hosting the CICA Experts Meeting on Combating Terrorism, in Ankara in March 2012. The UN Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force, the OSCE and the SCO Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure all participated in the meeting at which efforts to combat international terrorism were discussed. CICA can play a prominent role in the region by supporting the security priorities of its member states. During our chairmanship we have made considerable efforts to strengthen CICA’s cooperation mechanisms and to transform it into an international organization that encourages stability and engenders an atmosphere of confidence.”

CICA members recently gave Turkey’s chairmanship their approval by agreeing to extend its chairmanship by two years until June 2014. “Turkey’s chairmanship vision for CICA is to build a system of cooperative security in Asia, explains the ambassador. “In developing this vision, we have analyzed the basic security concepts in CICA’s founding documents. We have taken into account member states’ declared commitment to achieve openness and mutual trust, and their determination to improve confidence and cooperation in the interests of stability, and economic and social development in their region and globally.

“The changing political and security environment at the end of the 20th century has opened up new avenues for working together on security. Cooperation has become a key word in bringing together states with different values and divergent interests. To ensure security, there needs be a willingness to cooperate.

**Cooperation needed**

“Cooperative approach to security is a pertinent way of bringing together states with different values and divergent interests. Cooperative security does
not require a specific adversary. It is inclusive, non-adversarial and non-confrontational. There is no loser with cooperative security. It aims to create a win-win situation. In fact, cooperative security is a non-zero-sum game. It rests on the underlying premise that security is indivisible. A cooperative security order is a transparent order. There are no hidden agendas in cooperative security.

“As the chairman of CICA, Turkey, over the past two years, has tried to promote political and security dialogue among its membership. We have worked to create an enabling atmosphere for dialogue and invited member states to share their concerns and ideas about security issues with each other. This approach has already been successful. Member states are now more comfortable with sharing their visions about security.

“A significant example of this is the presentation delivered to CICA members by the Russian Federation and China about the Joint Russian-Chinese Initiative on Strengthening Security in the Asia Pacific Region. They expressed their aim of establishing a transparent security architecture in the Asia Pacific region. This example shows us that even delicate issues such as security can be discussed when there is an atmosphere of constructive dialogue.”

Ambassador Tulun believes that the past decade has confirmed that it is only through interaction and dialogue that a new order of cooperative security can be built in Asia. “It seems that economic power is shifting towards the east and this trend means we must safeguard our growth and well-being by boosting confidence and cooperation. Building this cooperative security infrastructure in Asia is undoubtedly a gigantic task. Nevertheless, Turkey believes that if we are patient CICA can accomplish this task. It’s going to take time, and patience will certainly be the key word in our discussions and negotiations.

“Don’t forget that 20 years ago, when President Nazarbayev first brought up the idea of CICA at the UN General Assembly, it was only a vision. For some people, it was only a dream. Yet CICA is a good example of how a dream can be turned into reality. Turkey, as the chairman of CICA, will continue to work hard to promote the idea of building cooperative security throughout Asia.”
Looking beyond the region

Forming enduring relationships with regional and international organizations will be key to CICA’s ongoing success in an increasingly interdependent world. So which groups are already onboard and in what ways are they cooperating with CICA on shared issues?

When English poet John Donne penned his verse *No Man Is an Island* in the 17th century, he could just as easily have been talking about post-Soviet international relations. In his poem, Donne puts forward the idea that people are not isolated from one another but interconnected. It’s much the same with nations and regional organizations that are interdependent and recognize that it is better to work collectively with each other rather than to exist in isolation.

It’s with this in mind that, in the 20 years since CICA was proposed at the 47th session of the UN General Assembly, the intergovernmental forum has been steadily forging relationships with key international organizations. CICA is now a body with considerable clout, both in Asia and internationally. As such it is seeking to establish links with regional and international organizations to support its efforts to enhance peace, security and economic development in the region. This activity is governed by the Guidelines for CICA’s External Relations, which were agreed at a meeting of the forum in Bangkok, Thailand, in May 2007.

Interdependent world

It’s an approach that’s essential in today’s globalised, multilateral and interdependent world. Nguyen Thi Doan, vice president of Vietnam, emphasized its importance in her delegate statement at the third CICA Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2010: “Regions, as well as nations, cannot single-handedly cope with the risks and challenges of the 21st century, no matter how strong that particular region or nation may be. This means CICA has to focus its attention more on cooperating with other regional organizations such as the OSCE, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and more. Vietnam trusts that ASEAN and CICA will work together to improve their activities and roles internationally.”

Working collectively is a key part of the guidelines set out by the UN and other international groups to foster peace, understanding, tolerance and respect for diversity, economic well-being and mutually beneficial cooperation among all states. This is why CICA is dedicated to developing good working relationships regionally and internationally, an approach recognized by President Nazarbayev as necessary if the goal of advancing the forum is to be achieved.

In his delegate statement at the 2010 CICA Summit, then prime minister of Russia, Vladimir Putin, highlighted the importance of setting up a network of multilateral associations in the Asia-Pacific region. This would be a very important step forward, he said, because many regional organizations still operate independently and do not coordinate their actions, resulting in decreased efficiency. “By cooperating, regional institutions can focus on developing their trade and economic ties as well as their respective infrastructures, and promote integration and economic projects, all with one key aim: to ensure the prosperity of the Eurasian nations.”

Founded on international relationships

From the outset, the move to create CICA was not only backed by international organizations, such as the UN, but also by regional groups, including OSCE and LAS. Since then, it has continued to build its profile, having been granted observer status by the UN General Assembly in December 2007. As part of its drive to establish links with other organizations, it has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with ECO, EurAsEC and IOM. CICA is also attempting to forge relations with other regional organizations, such as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Additionally, it is considering agreeing MoU with SAARC and SCO.

Speaking at the third CICA summit in Istanbul in June 2010, OIC secretary general Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said: “As CICA is now a full-fledged forum for dialogue and the search for solutions to problems in Asia, there
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CICA’s aim is to develop Asia into a single region where all states coexist peacefully. They will consult annually and at scheduled meetings. In addition, representatives of the two parties will be invited as observers to participate in appropriate CICA and ECO events.

In his statement at the 2010 CICA summit, Mohammad Yahya Maroofi, secretary general of ECO, said: “CICA and ECO have commonality of purpose. Successful economic cooperation can only be attained within a peaceful and secure environment. Peace and development are interdependent. Peace and security encourage economic development, and confidence among states makes peace more sustainable.”

The August 2008 MoU between CICA and EurAsEC set out the two groups’ aims of developing a mutually beneficial and constructive relationship. They agreed to cooperate and consult on issues of mutual interest; exchange information, best practices and expertise in key areas of development; and to facilitate joint programs and activities aimed at strengthening and developing their cooperation. CICA and EurAsEC representatives will also be invited to attend the two bodies’ events as observers.

The 2010 Declaration of the third Summit of CICA member states highlighted their recognition of the importance of the forum’s external relations and the need to strengthen their collaboration with other regional and international organizations and groups. It welcomed the Third Asia–Middle East Dialogue Meeting in Bangkok and hoped this would further strengthen the bond of friendship between its member states. It also confirmed plans to explore CICA’s involvement in the International Research Centre for landlocked developing countries in Ulan Bator, Mongolia.
A regional approach to global problems

Terrorism, extremism, cybercrime, money laundering, and drug and human trafficking: CICA member states are sharing ideas, information and law-enforcement measures to fight the organized crime that blights their region and the world at large.

The region encompassed by CICA includes some of the world's hotspots for terrorism, money laundering, and drug and human trafficking. As such, the organization's members are acutely aware of the crucial role they can play in combating threats to both regional and global security.

At the heart of CICA's approach to security in its catalogue of confidence-building measures (CBMs) is a desire not only to make life better in its own backyard but also across the world. In fact, one of the main reasons the forum was set up was because member states, irrespective of their political or ideological orientation, needed to strengthen security both individually and collectively. As a result, CICA has produced a raft of documents that set out the ways that members have agreed to improve regional security and cooperation.

Words of encouragement

Heads of state have welcomed CICA's moves in this area. In his statement to delegates at the third CICA Summit in 2010, Hamid Karzai, president of Afghanistan, said: "Over the years, terrorism, transnational organized crime and illicit drugs have become interlinked, thus aggravating the threats to our common security. In response, we must make concerted efforts to expand our cooperation in preventing crime, intelligence exchange, security consultations and training, as well as efficient border management. For Afghanistan, the problem of narcotics production and trafficking is a by-product of three decades of conflict. Countering this problem requires time, patience and, most importantly, enhanced collaboration between transit and consuming countries."

Echoing President Karzai's words Dai Bingguo, state councilor of China, said: "We must work together for a secure and stable Asia. We should stay committed to the new security concepts of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, which require us to not only value our respective national security, but also accommodate the legitimate security concerns of other nations and respect each other's core interests. We should respect the rights of all countries to safeguard national unity, territorial integrity and ethnic solidarity, respect the rights of all countries to independently choose development paths and formulate domestic and foreign policies, and respect the equal rights of all countries to participate in international affairs and seek development. We should commit ourselves to peaceful approaches to disputes and differences and firm and joint response to all kinds of threats and challenges, including terrorism, separatism, extremism, drug trafficking and organized transnational crimes, so as to maintain long-term security and stability in the region."

Terrorism, separatism and extremism

Terrorism has been a blight on the region for decades. But in the 20 years since the creation of CICA, the region has been the focus of global initiatives aimed at driving out terrorism and clamping down on separatist and extremist organizations. Member states are working together to fight crimes that not only affect regional stability but ultimately have an impact on every aspect of life on the continent – from economic development to culture and society.

CICA has taken a very strong stand against terrorism and its position vis-à-vis countering this threat has been articulated in the Almaty Act and Declaration on Eliminating Terrorism and Promoting Dialogue among Civilizations, mainly focusing on addressing terrorism. It is of significance that member states, who have diverging political and economical perspectives on a number of issues, agreed on condemning "all forms and manifestations of terrorism, committed no matter when, where or by whom, as barbaric offences and criminal
acts indiscriminately directed at the life and well-being of individuals and peoples as well as threatening the peaceful coexistence among nations”.

Furthermore, the CICA Senior Officials Committee, at its meeting held in Istanbul on 26 January 2011, adopted a Declaration on Terrorist Attacks in the CICA region, where member states strongly condemned terrorist attacks in Russia (the Moscow Domodedovo airport), Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt and Pakistan, mentioning that killing of innocent people cannot be justified by any political, religious, national or other motives. In this regard the CICA member states stress that the terrorist threat is of trans-boundary character and is equally dangerous for all states – and for this reason combating terrorism requires joint coordinated efforts by all states.

Speaking at the 2010 CICA summit, Anand Sharma, India’s Minister of Commerce and Industry, said: “I believe that in CICA we need to reaffirm our resolve to root out this menace [terrorism]. I would like to underline the importance we attach to the early adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. This would be an important step towards strengthening the international legal framework against terrorism.”

CICA members have developed a collective approach to one of the 21st century’s greatest challenges. Information sharing is the cornerstone of their efforts, with international organizations helping them to draw up a template setting out how this can be achieved.

**Drug trafficking**

Illicit drug production and trafficking pose a considerable threat to the region’s security as well as causing political, social, economic and cultural harm. Consequently, CICA members are determined to eradicate the root causes. The Concept Paper on Cooperation among CICA Member States in Combating Illicit Drug Production and Trafficking and Precursors was approved by SOC on 23 August 2008. According to the Concept Paper, among the steps they are taking is a commitment to exchange information on anti-drug trafficking measures and to coordinate their law-enforcement efforts. Member states are working together to coordinate cross-border investigations, prosecutions and judicial proceedings related to illicit drug production, trafficking and associated crimes. They also aim to cut the demand and supply of drugs, suppress transportation and
eliminate sources of supply, cultivation and production. Efforts are being made to develop agricultural alternatives to deter drug production and cultivation. In addition, with help from the international community, members are stepping up their work to prevent conditions conducive to the production and cultivation of drugs.

There is now a greater emphasis on exchanging information about drug detection and seizure. This extends to data about new types of drugs, as well as details of the latest drug-detection equipment and technologies to boost anti-production and trafficking efforts. There is also a focus on cooperating in areas of legislation and exchanging legal information. To back the counter-drugs policy, work is being done on raising public awareness about the risks of taking illegal drugs.

Border controls
Knowing who is entering and leaving a country as well as why they’re travelling and what and who they are travelling with is central to the security and stability of a nation. Strategies are being implemented around the globe to help keep people on the move while removing the weak links that pose significant threats. CICA members have met with international border control and management experts. They have also taken steps to provide border-control and management training, raise awareness about trafficking, and promote voluntary information exchange among originating, transit and destination countries.

Policing
The First CICA Chiefs of Police Meeting was organised by Turkey on 26-27 May 2010 in Antalya. The aim of the first meeting was to bring together the relevant high-level decision-makers of the member states in the area of police matters to discuss and make concrete proposals on a broad range of issues, where strengthened coordination and cooperation is needed among the police agencies of member states in order to further enhance security and stability in the CICA geography.

Human trafficking
The trafficking of citizens for sexual exploitation, slavery and even organ harvesting is a concern for countries worldwide. CICA members recognize the role they can play in preventing this international trade and took part in an IOM Briefing for CICA Consular Officers on international migration and addressing trafficking in human beings, held on 24 January 2012 in Ankara, Turkey. Organizing this kind of briefing on a regular basis in future will help government agencies, consular officers and the IOM to better coordinate their common efforts to find effective and practical ways to counter human trafficking and irregular migration.
CICA member states are working together to successfully develop areas such as tourism, transportation, energy, SMEs and information technology - all key to securing a healthy economic future for the region and ensuring it remains competitive globally.

Asia’s rapid economic ascent has been viewed with envy by the rest of the world since the 1990s, as its tiger economies scaled the global GDP rankings and the emerging economies of Russia, India and China became the three to watch in the 21st century. CICA is playing its part in ensuring sustained development across the region by promoting economic cooperation between its member states in a number of key areas.

Transportation
Good transport infrastructure is at the heart of all successful economies, so CICA members are working together to develop secure and effective transportation corridors and links.

Member states’ commitment to this goal is reflected in the declaration signed during the second CICA Summit: “We are convinced that the construction and development of transportation and telecommunication networks as well as oil and gas pipelines are essential for promoting investment opportunities and strengthening wide-ranging cooperation among the member states in areas such as trade, the economy, science, technology and energy.” This was further emphasized in a statement issued by the third CICA Foreign Ministers Meeting: “We shall continue to develop effective and secure transportation corridors in the CICA region which will significantly contribute to the integration of a global transportation network, eliminate barriers to trade and stimulate cooperation in other economic areas as well as improving confidence.”

Member states have sought to improve links between the peoples of the region through confidence-building measures (CBMs) in two key areas:

- Enabling easier movement across the region by developing secure and effective corridors of transport. Taking inspiration from historic routes such as the Great Silk Road, which have in the past nurtured local markets and increased cooperation among neighboring territories, member states agreed to cooperate on improving transport links.
- Encouraging understanding of other nations in the region by improving tourism links between member states.

Azerbaijan and India are the respective coordinator and co-coordinator responsible for implementing CBMs aimed at developing secure and effective transportation corridors. To kick-start the work on this project, Azerbaijan organized and hosted the first meeting of CICA experts in its capital, Baku, in April 2011. The meeting suggested establishing border-control training centers, building a database of bilateral and multilateral legal agreements governing the security of transportation corridors, and an annual exchange of information on best practices.

Travel and tourism
Asia is reaping the rewards of the global boom in tourism. One of the big trends is tourists visiting multiple Asian states on their trips to the region. So it has been a natural step for CICA members to ramp up cooperation in this area by exchanging information and encouraging liaison between their respective tourism organisations. The CICA region is rich in culture and packed with fantastic tourist attractions, from the man-made beauty of its temples, palaces and mosques to the natural beauty of its oceans and mountains. These, as well as cross-border wonders such as the Great Silk Road, have attracted travelers for centuries.

But tourism isn’t just about showcasing a country; it also enables states to develop international links,
improve trade and transportation, and expand insurance operations and capital-investment services. Scientific, technical and cultural links are being forged between countries, which helps to enhance relations between nations and encourage cultural exchange.

Tajikistan has been a key mover in coordinating efforts in the tourism sector, and in 2008 it presented a concept paper on *Cooperation among CICA Member States in the area of Tourism*. This set out coordinated ways of publicizing and protecting tourist destinations and establishing partnerships between member states’ tourism agencies. It also looked at how tourism could be boosted by sharing information, providing professional training for staff, and harmonizing tourism legislation and administration.

In September 2008, Tajikistan organized an Experts Meeting in its capital, Dushanbe, to plan how to implement these ideas. Member states subsequently approved an action plan for 2010. This aimed to organize meetings for tourism experts where they could discuss cooperation and prepare for the CICA Tourism Ministers Meeting. Another target was to come up with a definitive list of the areas of tourism member states needed to concentrate on and to organize the linking of their tourism ministries/departments’ websites with CICA’s.

The overall aim was to boost the region’s economic fortunes by capitalizing on its tourism potential and to promote the peaceful coexistence of CICA states. Once the project is fully up and running, national tourism agencies will share information, exchange standards and start collecting statistics about the industry’s performance.

CICA is undertaking other work to boost the number of visitors to the region. They are also encouraging the adoption of bilateral and multilateral agreements that promote member states’ cooperation, including organizing special tourist routes and promoting the diverse cultures of the region.

Member states have a wealth of knowledge that they are sharing in areas such as marketing, advertising and tourism performance statistics. They are also promoting tourism through major international exhibitions, the mass media and web platforms. This includes regional programs focused on specific themes, such as selling the benefits of touring the Great Silk Road.

Investment is key to what CICA is trying to achieve, so members are exchanging information about opportunities that will aid the development of tourism and help boost cooperation between the various national tourist agencies.

With the travel industry vital to economic growth and boosting trade and investment, members are also keen to work together to streamline visa requirements for people doing business in the region.
Energy security
The CICA region is rich in energy resources, but like the rest of the world its members are concerned about how best to ensure energy security. This includes protecting supplies of affordable and ecologically secure energy, and safeguarding the interests of everyone involved in the energy chain. Energy security, sustainable development and environmental protection are closely linked, so CICA has produced several documents that aim to achieve energy security by harmonizing economic, ecological and security policies. This includes the Almaty Act. In particular, members are cooperating to develop and enhance the efficiency and safety of energy supply routes.

They have also identified common interests in the energy sector and are discussing the introduction of balanced and diversified energy policies. By working together members aim to develop efficient, environmentally friendly and flexible energy systems and technologies to prevent a fuel crisis and overcome vulnerabilities.

To ensure the stability of energy markets, CICA is encouraging the use of mechanisms that will contribute to member states’ economic growth; harmonize their energy policies; establish constructive ways of consulting with producers and consumers, and improve the transport of energy resources in the region.

They are taking joint measures to manage fuel supplies by encouraging the opening up of new reserves; stockpiling crude oil and oil products; building new energy infrastructure; facilitating investment in the industry; ensuring the security of the maritime energy supply chain and carrying out geological exploration to find new energy reserves.

There are plans jointly to upgrade existing energy technologies and develop new ones that promote conservation and efficiency and improve use of renewable resources. Members are sharing expertise through meetings and training at institutions and research centers that specialize in energy research.

ICT
Asia’s rise in the global economic rankings has been helped by the enormous advances and innovations in technology of the past two decades. This has seen some countries leapfrog straight to the most high-tech systems and devices, putting them ahead of competitors in Europe and North America, which are stuck with legacy systems. Digitalization and the convergence of networks, devices, services and applications have revolutionized how the world does business. But this has also made it more difficult to pursue a coordinated policy, which is why CICA members are working together in this area. They realize the importance of the information and communications technology (ICT) sector to the region’s future economic and societal growth. So, driven by the Republic of Korea, they are cooperating in areas such as policy and regulations, as well as eGovernment.

With the internet, digital services and devices now such a big part of the everyday lives of citizens around the world, IT security is becoming more and more important. CICA members are cooperating in this area to protect against potential criminal, terrorist or even military attacks.

They are sharing their knowledge of going digital and the convergence of networks, devices, services and applications with an emphasis on policies and regulations. They are also sharing information on best practice in IT management and organizational reorganization. The states intend to exchange information about regulatory policies that address newly introduced IT services, such as the remote exchange of legal data and electronic authentication.

Another focus is coordinating policies and regulations that aim to clamp down on illegal online activities, such as piracy and cyberattacks, and exchanging information about approaches to social and user ethics on the internet. A further aim is to establish advanced broadband networks to overcome the digital divide and provide better access to the internet for the general public.

As the global demand for eServices increases, CICA members are looking at how eGovernment can help them interact with their citizens while improving efficiency. Governments are taking innovative steps to create an eGovernment system that can coordinate intra-governmental communications as well as provide better and more efficient access for citizens. Open networks such as the internet need to be secure so people can use them without the fear of being hacked. This is another area of focus for CICA members.

Member states are sharing knowledge about eGovernment and how to apply network and information technologies to develop systems that are vital for business. They are working together on designing eGovernment policies and providing technical assistance in key areas of IT, including information security. They are encouraging the involvement of businesses that can advise on establishing the infrastructure needed for eGovernment and can help local companies to build their capabilities.
CICA members have agreed to implement measures to strengthen cooperation in the IT sector, including identifying key areas of interaction, such as policy and regulation; promoting the industry; eGovernment and security; and combating cybercrime. The Republic of Korea hosted a workshop about the challenges of regulating existing IT services and information security in 2010.

SMEs

With small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) contributing significantly to the wealth of many CICA nations, the forum has prioritized this as a sector to boost economic development. Members aim to create an effective and competitive SME sector by establishing a favorable legal and economic environment that facilitates its expansion. They are sharing knowledge about regulations and best practices that promote the development of SMEs. Because technology is so important, members aim to introduce SMEs to eCommerce and ICT to enhance their competitiveness and broaden their opportunities regionally and further afield.

The ultimate aim is to boost entrepreneurial activity nationally and internationally, as well as to increase the number of SMEs operating in CICA member states. Members are establishing legal, political and economic guarantees that promote the conditions SMEs need to develop and thrive. These also aim to promote their wider involvement in business activities in the region. They are attempting to make SMEs more competitive and more appealing to investors by encouraging them to use the latest electronic and network technologies. Additionally, CICA members are working to create effective financial credit mechanisms, improve state mechanisms for combating unfair competition and develop private/public partnerships to support SMEs.

Russia has been coordinating the CICA project to implement CBMs that aim to develop SMEs, in conjunction with co-coordinators Thailand and Kazakhstan.

Economic Sub-Group Meetings are convened regularly to discuss new ideas about promoting cooperation in their respective SME sectors. CICA also organized Business Forums in Bangkok, Thailand, in March 2011 and Istanbul, Turkey, in April 2012. These provided a platform for SMEs to meet in an environment specifically aimed at the business needs of the CICA region.

Russia has taken the lead in preparing project proposals based on feedback from member states that have shown their interest in getting involved, either individually or together with other members.

CICA has proposed establishing a networking tool, which will contain data about members’ SME sectors. This could provide prospective investors with all the information they need to make an investment decision. Thailand has taken the initiative to design the tool and collect data from member states.

Another Russian proposal in the pipeline is the establishment of the CICA Business Council, which will comprise business experts from each member state. This will handle business cooperation issues between members. A draft paper on establishing the Business Council is currently being discussed.

At the fifth meeting of the Economic Sub-Group, Russia floated the idea of setting up Business Missions as the next step after the Business Council has been established. It proposes that all member states supply a list of companies specializing in medicine, pharmaceuticals, textiles, shipbuilding, spas and other sectors. They will also provide profiles and presentations about these companies and their product lines and proposals for joint projects. This information will be pooled and then uploaded to the CICA website. This will give member states interested in joint projects the information they need to set up meetings and forge cross-sector business links.
A call for tolerance

A wide range of religious and ethnic groups make up the CICA member states. To foster tolerance and respect, their leaders aim to promote an understanding of the region’s common cultural heritage and encourage dialogue and exchanges between nations.

As a forum for nations that covers East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and the former Soviet states, CICA represents a diversity of religious and ethnic groups. Its member states encompass approximately 90 percent of Asia’s territory and population with a wealth of languages, alphabets, cultures, foods and architectures, as well as social and moral philosophies.

So it’s not surprising that when CICA was established 20 years ago, one of its founding aims was to promote cultural diversity, education, interethnic and interfaith dialogue, plus the development of democracy.

Since then, it has made significant progress in promoting regional harmony. Shin Kak-Soo, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, emphasized CICA’s cross-cultural achievements in his declaration at the forum’s Third Summit in 2010: “Encompassing all the regions of northeastern, southeastern, central and southwestern Asia as well as the Middle East, CICA covers a vast area with great historical and cultural diversity. Yet this diversity has not presented an obstacle. Rather, CICA has tapped this diversity and channeled it positively. Through a whole range of regional dialogues and confidence-building measures, it is fostering trust amid diversity, and making a huge contribution to the promotion of peace and security in the region.”

Priorities for cooperation

Its priorities in its bid to improve cooperation include promoting dialogue about member states’ respective cultures and religions, based on the recommendations of the UN High Level Group’s 2006 Alliance of Civilisations report. Member states have also agreed to promote cultural exchange, cooperation and awareness to foster tolerance and understanding. In addition, they plan to encourage national information agencies and the media to promote CICA’s Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). Another aim is to get individual citizens involved in cross-cultural activities, including scientific, educational and sporting exchanges. There are also plans for joint archaeological expeditions that aim to unearth evidence of the region’s common cultural heritage and so promote greater mutual understanding and respect.

Almaty Act

The 2002 Almaty Act agreed a number of joint projects aimed at promoting the cultures and traditions of the region, mutual respect and good intercountry relations. Also on its agenda was encouraging cross-regional contacts and exchanges between scientific and educational institutions and non-governmental organizations. Kazakhstan volunteered to coordinate the promotion of CICA’s CBMs in human dimension following their adoption by member states in October 2004 and the approval of the Cooperative Approach for the Implementation of CBMs in March 2007.

Respect and freedom

CICA’s concept paper for the implementation of the CICA CBMs in human dimension set out a number of goals. These include developing democracy in CICA member states; protecting citizens’ fundamental rights and freedoms within the provisions of the UN Charter, the Almaty Act and other CICA agreements; implementing the objectives agreed in the areas of culture, education and science; working jointly to study, popularize and protect cultures; facilitating cooperation in the fields of culture and education; and improving cooperation among the peoples of the CICA region.

Education, harmony and tolerance

Members are already making big efforts to achieve the paper’s objectives. This is no mean feat, considering the diverse range of jurisdictions and governments in Asia. Their CBM action plan details proposals for events that promote religious harmony, tolerance and non-discrimination. It also suggests setting up joint
archaeological expeditions; sharing experiences in the field of museums and libraries, and the restoration and preservation of historic and cultural heritage sites; exchanging exhibits from state museums, national galleries and national archives; organizing annual international conferences, seminars and round tables centering on the region’s historic and cultural heritage; producing media programs about national cultures; organizing joint research programs about the cultural legacy of the Great Silk Route; running educational courses for exchange students; and holding CICA international conferences focusing on education, youth policy and human rights.

Tolerance for diverse traditions
Asian leaders have welcomed CICA’s efforts in promoting interethic, interfaith and inter-religious dialogue as well as culture, education and democracy. The Declaration of 2010’s CICA Summit highlighted that, as it was the UN’s International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, the forum wanted to reaffirm its commitment to promoting an extensive dialogue among its member states to enhance respect and tolerance for the region’s diverse social, cultural, ethnic and religious traditions. As such, CICA welcomed the three UN Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) forums, held in Madrid, Spain, in January 2008, in Istanbul, Turkey, in April 2009, and in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in May 2010. It also stated its support for CICA becoming a member of the UNAOC’s Group of Friends.

CICA member states backed Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s initiative to convene Leaders of World and Traditional Religions congresses in 2003, 2006 and 2009, and the Common World: Progress Through Diversity event, held in Astana, Kazakhstan, in 2008. These concluded with the adoption of important motions calling for interfaith dialogue and unity that respects diversity.

At the 2010 CICA Summit, Russia’s then prime minister, Vladimir Putin, said: “The unique format of this conference demonstrates the diversity of our region and the vast range of its spiritual, cultural, economic and social traditions. This is our common heritage and gives our region a significant competitive edge. The most important thing is that the mood of this summit speaks of the participating countries’ willingness to build a brand-new partnership for the sake of the security and prosperity of Eurasia.”
Working for future generations

Flooding, desertification and airborne pollution are just some of the environmental challenges facing Asia. CICA member states favour information sharing and working with international organizations to help combat the threat.

When it comes to the environment, it isn’t the responsibility of just one nation. Some of Asia’s most magnificent rivers pass through several countries, and pollution in one state inevitably leads to problems in others, just as the adverse effects of desertification and carbon dioxide production aren’t confined to the region in which they originate. Water shortages, flooding, airborne pollution and a myriad of other environmental challenges that could affect the area have the potential to cause economic hardship to millions, threatening regional stability and leading to unrest.

Recognizing the need to work together on the environment, CICA members have been committed to cooperating on this core challenge since the forum was founded 20 years ago. Since then, the region has witnessed its fair share of natural disasters and industrial challenges, such as flooding in India, drought in China, the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident in Japan and oil spills in the Timor Sea.

So there’s a stronger desire than ever among CICA member states to work together to resolve issues in this area. And because environmental challenges know no boundaries, CICA is also collaborating with other international organizations to tackle the threats.

A toxic issue

The link between protecting the environment and other CICA confidence-building measures was highlighted by Ruslan Kazakbayev, Kyrgyzstan’s minister of foreign affairs, in his statement to delegates after the third CICA Summit in Istanbul in 2010: “One of the hallmarks of our Nuclear Weapons Free Zone is its focus on the environment.

“The presence of a large number of underground storage sites containing highly toxic and radioactive uranium waste and other harmful waste is a matter of huge concern in the Central Asia region. These facilities pose a great danger to public health and the cleanliness of our rivers and are a threat to our arable lands. We call upon foreign partner-donors and international organizations to deliver financial, technical and other assistance to the region to eliminate the problem of uranium-waste storage.”

CICA is concentrating on a number of areas of environmental cooperation. At the top of its list is encouraging member states to share best-practice information about national environmental protection policies. Member states are also working together to develop guidelines for cooperating on the development of disaster-management systems, national environmental and disaster-monitoring strategies and early warning systems. They plan to set up joint training programs and investigate the provision of shared search and rescue operations.

Recognizing that protection of the environment is key to the long-term sustainable development of the region, members are developing and applying common environmental protection programs. Importantly, they have agreed to exchange information about natural and industrial disasters that may affect their neighbors.

Global warming

Member states each have their own particular environmental concerns. For Pakistan, it is how global warming could affect it and its neighboring territories. The country’s foreign minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, said in his statement to delegates after the 2010 CICA Summit: “Some parts of the CICA region are considered vulnerable to climate change. The Central and South Asian regions, which largely depend on glacial and rainwaters for their fresh water supplies, will be most affected by global warming.

“The environmental assessment undertaken by our own experts indicates that Pakistan is in the region most susceptible to the adverse impact of climate change. We aim to benefit from other CICA members’ expertise to overcome the challenges posed by global warming.”
CICA: The Next 20 Years

Resource shrinkage
Shukurdzhon Zukhurov, speaker of Tajikistan’s parliament, has also voiced his worries about the environment. In his statement to delegates in 2010, he echoed many of Mr Qureshi’s concerns: “[A] problem causing concern is global climate warming with its ecological and social consequences. One of the key consequences of this process is intensive glacial melting. According to experts, global climate warming will lead to the loss of a great mass of ice formations. In the past few decades, glaciers in Tajikistan have shrunk by more than one third. The history of Central Asia shows the suffering caused by the depletion of natural resources. That the Aral Sea has been destroyed is a fact; we should not allow the glaciers that are a source of life in this large region to disappear, too. Consequently, we hope to gain support for our proposals at the summit to set up an international fund supporting the preservation of glaciers. This could unite the efforts of countries in the region and the international community in this strategically important sector.”

Since the 2010 summit, CICA has continued to make progress on the environment. In September 2011, Mongolia’s capital, Ulan Bator, played host to the first CICA Experts Meeting on combating desertification in Asia. Representatives from Turkey, Mongolia, China, India, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea and Russia, as well as participants from the observer states of the US and Japan, were able to exchange information about the latest technologies and research. They also found out more about Mongolia and the Republic of Korea’s joint Green Belt project in Gobi Aimak, which has been running since 2007 and aims to combat desertification.

Central Asia’s history shows the suffering caused by the depletion of natural resources

Member states are putting plans in place to avert or combat environmental disasters, such as the depletion of the Aral Sea in Kazakhstan.
CICA prepares for the future

Asia is a key world region, enjoying economic expansion and growing political influence. CICA knows cooperation is the best way to handle the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The world scene has been anything but dull over the past 20 years. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War have given way to angst about new conflicts being fought on new fronts by different combatants. Asia has been at the centre of this upheaval. Globalization has continued apace, with Asia again at the heart of this development. Asia has also driven the development of new technologies and improved infrastructure, which, in turn, has propelled economic expansion. Some struggling former Soviet republics and developing economies have evolved into major emerging markets with a growing middle class that fascinate international business and politicians alike.

But the path to development has not always been smooth, with the region being hit by recession and the global financial crisis. It is also an area that continues to suffer from the devastating effects of environmental disasters. CICA has been playing a key role during the ups and downs of the past two decades and is now well placed to coordinate future dialogue in the region.

Politico-military measures come to the fore

As members’ confidence has grown, CICA has taken steps to implement politico-military Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). These include exchanging information about members’ respective armed forces, defense budgets, foreign military bases in CICA territories and planned exercises. They also suggest inviting observers from member states to military exercises and enabling military authorities to take part in exchange visits. Other areas of information exchange include sharing details of the careers of top military personnel and the status of agreements on arms control, disarmament and space.

The meeting of the Voluntary Group on CBMs in the military-political dimension was held as part of the CICA process. Participation by a large number of member states was a reflection of the importance they attached to this topic. Member states appeared to have realized that the implementation of CBMs in the military-political dimension was going to be purely on a voluntary basis. They were free to decide whether or not to participate in any particular measure. By joining the consensus on implementation of CBMs in the military-political dimension, they were not placing themselves under any obligations and participation in the measures would not have any impact on the bilateral treaties and agreement.

The most important highlight of the meeting was that the participants agreed in principle for implementation of the following four measures, proposed by the deputy minister of defense of Kazakhstan, that are included in the Catalogue of CICA CBMs:

(i) Mutual visits by the military authorities and representatives of defense colleges;
(ii) Mutual invitations among armed forces for participation in national holidays, cultural and sporting events;
(iii) Information exchange on the CVs of top military personnel;
(iv) Exchange of information on the status of their accession to or ratification of multilateral instruments on arms control and disarmament, as well as conventions on outer space.

Kazakhstan took the first step towards implementing CBMs in the military-political dimension by inviting the participants to visit the Military Institute of Land Forces in Almaty, which took place on 7 February 2012.

Joint Russian-Chinese initiative

Russia and China launched a joint initiative to strengthen security in the Asia-Pacific region in 2010. They identified the main threats as including terrorism; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; organized crime; cybercrime; pollution and territorial disputes.
To tackle the challenges facing the region, Russia and China put forward a joint initiative featuring an open, transparent and multilateral approach to security and cooperation. They called on all countries in the Asia-Pacific region to embrace mutual cooperation.

**A call to the region**

They also appealed to them to adhere to the following principles: to respect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; to commit to equal and indivisible security; to confirm that their military policy was defensive; to commit to not using – or threatening to use – force; to not undertake or support actions aimed at overthrowing governments or undermining the stability of other states; to resolve mutual disagreements by peaceful political and diplomatic means; to strengthen cooperation on countering non-traditional threats to security; to develop bilateral and multilateral military cooperation not directed against third countries; to cooperate in border areas and to strengthen contacts between the region’s many peoples.

**Transparency, please**

Russia and China highlighted that it had become increasingly obvious that the existing security set-up in the Asia-Pacific region – based on non-transparent military alliances – was no longer fit for purpose. Not only did it not reflect the realities of the modern multipolar world, it could not counter the nature and scale of the multiplying threats and challenges faced by the region. It still lacked a well-structured institutional and legal system able to guarantee peace and stability across this vast area.

These factors all highlighted the urgent need to strengthen security in the region. In addition, the increasingly important role the area has been playing on the global economic and political stage meant its nations needed to put their differences aside and work together to improve the way the region collectively was managed.

Steps have already been taken to set up a regional security system that is open, transparent and equal. The SCO has established official relations with the UN, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), ASEAN and a number of other organizations. Links have been forged between ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and ASEAN and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC). CICA has established official contact with the UN, OEC, IOM and EurAsEC. Other organizations that operate in the region, such as counter-terrorism, counter-drug and counter-piracy groups and disaster relief centers, are also starting to establish partnerships.

**An example to us all**

Russia’s 1996 and 1997 multilateral agreements with neighbors Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China and Tajikistan on strengthening military confidence in border areas have been held up as models for CICA. “Some elements of these agreements could be used in a broader regional context,” say those behind the joint initiative.

**Power shift**

With its plentiful resources, and its financial, industrial and technological potential, Asia is a key world region. And the centre of political activity is shifting towards the continent as its new economic powers flex their muscles. But while this is a story of economic expansion and growing political influence, it is also a tale of how to deal with the challenges of globalization, such as terrorism, drug trafficking, maritime piracy, cybercrime and natural disasters. There are already three established nuclear powers in the Asia-Pacific region, while a number are building their nuclear capacities. With this comes the danger of nuclear arms proliferation. The region is also witnessing an uncontrolled conventional arms race with some long-running disagreements and territorial disputes threatening to erupt into full-blown conflicts.

The global financial crisis, environmental catastrophes, cross-border crime and terrorism highlight how every part of the world is interconnected and have led to a profound transformation of international relations. A new polycentric world structure where regional cooperation is vital has been emerging. CICA has performed an important role in the region since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is now uniquely placed to forge a path that enables the area to develop and prosper while facing up to the realities of the new world order.

With more countries becoming fully fledged members, CICA is spreading its wings throughout the continent. New regional opportunities and threats are emerging as old alliances fall by the wayside and new relationships are forged. The international relations rule book is being ripped up as globalization and multilateral initiatives take off. CICA has been there through all the twists and turns of the tumultuous 20 years of post-Soviet politics. As it evolves into a full-blown organization, it is ready to play an even more effective part in international relations and provide a common and indivisible security base for Asia.