

Statement
by Evgeny S. Sysoev
Executive Committee Director of
the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
at the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation
(May 10th, 2017, Hofburg, Vienna)

Distinguished Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is honoured to have the floor at the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation for the first time. The FSC is recognized as one of the most authoritative platforms for exchange of views on relevant European security issues and for active discussion of measures aimed at countering modern threats and challenges.

I hope that the information I am going to provide will complement the statement of His Excellency Rashid Alimov, SCO Secretary-General, allowing for a broader view of the activities of the Structure on the whole.

The preconditions for the creation of our Organization emerged in the 1960s, when the USSR and the PRC entered into negotiations on resolving territorial disputes. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, new participants of this dialogue appeared, namely Russia and the Central Asian states. It resulted in the signing of agreements in 1996-1997 between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia and Tajikistan on building confidence in the military field and mutual armed forces reduction in the border areas.

It was agreed to keep the organizational structure formed during the border issues for addressing relevant matters of mutual interest. As a result, on June 15, 2001 in Shanghai the heads of these states and the president of Uzbekistan adopted a decision on the establishment of the SCO.

At the same time, as early as at the stage of creation of the new regional organisation the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism was identified as a priority direction of the SCO activities. In order to address this task, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure was established as a permanent body.

The bodies of the Structure include the Executive Committee and the Council which comprises heads of the national agencies tasked with countering terrorism.

The Council adopts binding decisions, and the Executive Committee supports its work and facilitates the interaction and coordination of the SCO member States' activities in the area of its competence.

Mr. Chairman,

According to the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure assessment, the current situation in the world and the dynamics of its development show that existing threats remain, and new

challenges emerge from international terrorist and sectarian extremist organizations. Foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) operating in the Syrian-Iraqi and Afghani-Pakistani zones, despite considerable losses, retain their fighting capacity and are capable of carrying out coordinated terrorist attacks both in those regions and outside of them. This is also the result of the outflow of terrorists from the zones of military operations to the countries of origin due to active military pressure in the course of anti-terrorist operations.

There is a growing threat of terrorist attacks involving persons who took part in hostilities on the side of the FTO, as well as followers of the ideology of the "Islamic State" banned in the SCO space. This is supported by terrorist attacks that took place in Nice, Berlin, Istanbul, London, Stockholm, and Paris, as well as in the SCO area of responsibility – in Aktobe, Bishkek, and St. Petersburg.

Identifying and implementing adequate joint measures to counter existing threats and new challenges in the SCO space has been the main substance of activities of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure throughout the 13 years of its existence.

During this period, the Structure has accumulated considerable experience in coordination and taking practical measures, developed and formalised joint approach to organising mutual exchange of intelligence, joint operational and investigative activities and legal proceedings, and documented these approaches through respective legal acts, fostered mutual understanding and trust.

The Joint Measures on Key Areas of Cooperation adopted by the Structure's Council allow competent authorities to work jointly in bilateral and multilateral formats to identify, detain, prosecute and extradite citizens who have been put on international wanted lists on suspicion of committing crimes of terrorist, separatist and extremist nature. This activity is also supported by the Integrated Investigative Registry of this category of persons (more than 3,300 persons listed) maintained by the Executive Committee.

Given the operational environment and the way it evolves, the main priority of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure is to counter foreign terrorist fighters as the main human resource of foreign terrorist organizations. To this end, exchange of intelligence of preventive nature on the activities of foreign terrorist organisations, such as "Islamic State", Jabhat al-Nusra, Hizb ut-Tahrir al Islami, the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement and others was intensified. In addition to that, a Registry Table of foreign terrorist fighters taking part in hostilities on the side of foreign terrorist organizations is maintained (more than 2,000 persons listed).

Practical cooperation among the Parties was further strengthened by holding 14 joint anti-terrorist exercises and 4 special border operations.

These activities yield positive outcomes.

For instance, in 2013-2016 relevant authorities suppressed over 550 crimes of a terrorist and extremist nature at the preparatory stage, eliminated over 500 terrorist training facilities, prevented criminal activities of more than 1,500 members of foreign terrorist organizations and seized more than 700 improvised explosive devices, 50 tons of explosives, 6,000 firearms and over half a million rounds of ammunition.

In 2016, accounts of 2,000 persons suspected of involvement in the financing of terrorism were frozen. 200 citizens of the SCO member states were prevented from travelling abroad to join FTOs. Access to 100,000 Internet resources containing 900,000 pieces of materials of a terrorist and extremist nature was restricted.

Since 2008, the capacity of the Structure has been used to ensure security of major international events held in the SCO member States. For this purpose, a special coordination mechanism was established, that was first launched to ensure the security at the Olympic Games in China. Later, after this mechanism proved to be efficient, it was used more than 50 times.

Another objective of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure is to facilitate coordination of training and upgrading the skills of personnel for anti-terrorist units. Over the years more than 1,000 staff members have been trained, mainly in the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Chairman,

An important dimension of the Structure's activities at present is development of relations with the relevant international and regional agencies.

To date, cooperation has been formalized with INTERPOL, the Eurasian Group on combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism (EAG), the Secretariat of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Anti-Terrorism Centre and the Council of Commanders of the Border Troops of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Major steps were taken to develop relations with ASEAN and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, including formalisation of these relations.

I would like to emphasise the development of contacts with the United Nations. In particular, in 2011 and 2012, relations with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Executive Directorate of the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee were formalized. In 2016, we took part in the joint UN and SCO activities within the framework of the UN General Assembly in New York, and in 2017 participated in the 60th session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs in Vienna. These steps determined a new direction of the Structure's development and its integration into the global system of international security.

Starting from 2013, we annually hold scientific and practical conferences in the city of Tashkent, attended by representatives of relevant bodies and diplomatic missions of the SCO member and observer States, as well as more than ten international and regional organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Mr. Chairman,

When looking at the results of the international legal, organizational and practical work carried out in more than 13 years, there is every reason to state that the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure has established itself as an efficient mechanism for ensuring security in the SCO space.

Continuing to improve the interaction among the competent bodies of the Parties, we will address new tasks as well, also taking into account the upcoming accession of India and Pakistan to the SCO.

We plan to continue the process of formalising relations with a number of regional organizations, and more actively use the platforms for international cooperation, in particular the UN, to consolidate efforts in the fight against terrorism.

An important role will be given to further harmonisation of national legislation in the field of combating terrorism, as well as countering the financing of terrorism.

Dear participants of the Forum,

The gained experience clearly shows that one can only effectively counter modern terrorist threats through consistent and systematic work, by joint and consolidated efforts, creating a unified global antiterrorist front on the solid basis of the international law.

The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure is open for dialogue and consolidation of efforts and cooperation with relevant authorities and anti-terrorist bodies. We are also interested in developing relations with the OSCE and its Transnational Threats Department.

I am confident that the results of the Forum will allow us to take another step towards stronger peace based on stability, indivisible security and mutual respect.

Thank you for your attention.