

Statement of the Chairman of the Board of the Foreign Policy Research Institute under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Bolat Nurgaliyev at the Tenth Meeting of the CICA Think Tanks Forum, December 1, 2022

It is a pleasure to greet the participants of Session 3, devoted to discussion of achievements of the Conference since its outset, as well as challenges and prospects for future development of the process of turning the CICA into a full-fledged international organization.

As a person who was directly involved in early stage of implementation of the Kazakh initiative, I would like to stress that at least in my humble opinion, it is wrong to count the establishment of the CICA from October 5, 1992. To set the record straight and with the purpose of being intellectually correct we within the CICA community (member states, Secretariat, Think Tanks Forum, Business Forums, Non-Governmental Forum and so on) should agree to date our organization from some auspicious event. It could be the First Meeting of CICA Ministers of Foreign Affairs on September 14, 1999 when the Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations Between CICA Member States was signed by high representatives of 15 countries. Or it could be the First Summit in Almaty on June 4, 2002. Because in the 7-year period between the announcement of the initiative and the First Ministerial in 1999 the CICA process could be compared with pregnancy. A child's life in most Asian societies is measured from the actual date of birth, not from the date of conception. When President Nazarbayev made his CICA proposal in 1992 the desired outcome was not guaranteed. The evolution of the idea underwent through several phases in terms of organizational, substantial and conceptual issues which were resolved on a step-by-step basis and demanded a lot of devotion of foot soldiers who were diplomats from the original circle of participating states.

When we held in April 1993 in the outskirts of Almaty the first meeting of senior officials representing 12 Asian countries which initially supported the Kazakh proposal to set up a unified platform for

collective security and cooperation, the challenge was enormous. Not everybody, to put it mildly, was convinced that the initiative would be eventually implemented, expressly grounding their sceptic assessments on the belief that if previous attempts to establish an all-Asian security structure by such mighty global player as the former Soviet Union failed, how could a young Republic of Kazakhstan successfully convince others to join the effort, how would “unexperienced” Kazakh diplomats coordinate preparatory work and navigate through numerous disagreements, discords, clashes of conflicting interests and egos. Some who initially decided to participate, within a couple of years lost patience and conviction and dropped out. Some, including certain “experts” in Kazakhstan, were predicting failure and gloating over “naivety” of the initiative. A popular notion was that unlike Europe, Asia was too diverse, too divided, too detached from shared priorities and that individual countries were too concerned with their national agendas to be able to work out a common understanding and agree on an encompassing approach to pressing security problems of the continent. The sceptics are now eating dust. As many speakers before me indicated, the CICA process evolving through trials, ups and downs steadily became an undisputed factor of contemporary international relations. Stage-by-stage, step-by-step the participating states were persistently moving forward to their shared goal (to put it in the Chinese: *Ibu ibu dadao mudi*), putting aside bilateral problems for the sake of finding compromise formulas in order to advance the process.

There were not only political challenges to overcome. I remember rather harsh conditions under which we were initially drafting basic documents, including “Rules of Procedure”, “Declaration on the Principles Guiding Relations Between the CICA Participating States”, “Catalogue of Confidence Building Measures”. The heating system in the then building of the Kazakh MFA in Almaty was defective and it was so cold in winter season of 1994-95 inside the conference room that we were wearing our overcoats and some even had their gloves and fur hats on. And computerization level of the Ministry being at its infancy, we were manually typing drafts, making and distributing copies,

arguing over the language, retyping, remaking copies and redistributing them, arguing again over this or that word, taking hours long coffee breaks to consult with capitals and repeating the process ad infinitum. But the atmosphere was warm, cooperative and enthusiastic, in general all the participants were optimistic in spite of the complexity of the task. I would like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to my dear colleagues who were especially active in the early stage of the CICA process and personally contributed to drafting basic documents: Ambassadors of China Zhan Deguan and Chen Di, Ambassadors of India Kamlesh Sharma and Rajiv Sikri, Ambassadors of Pakistan Riaz Mohammad Khan and Sultan Hyat Khan, Ambassador of Israel Bentzion Karmel, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea Kim Jang Yen and many other senior, mid-level and junior diplomats from the Asian countries and Kazakhstan. Of course, senior and mid-level diplomats are retired now, those who were junior presently occupy key positions in their respective governmental structures. What unites them is well-deserved pride in being involved in setting up the CICA and realization that if it were not for their dedication and integrity we would not be at this juncture and would not be taking for granted our participation in the 10-th meeting of the CICA Think Tanks Forum.

Special mention, certainly, deserves the role of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. He used his diplomatic skill to convince sceptics, wavering advocates of cautious, “go-slow” approach and outright pessimists that the CICA initiative was feasible, worthwhile, that it was possible to overcome difficulties and reconcile seemingly confrontational views. He used every opportunity to promote the idea with his foreign counterparts even when some of them did not want to hear about the CICA, believing that it was such a distant goal and therefore impractical to waste time on its discussion.

Referring to our future activities I would like to call the TTF to concentrate on the realm of confidence building measures implementation with equal distribution of focus on military-political and socio-economic dimensions, in the totality of all six of them. The

Foreign Policy Research Institute that I am heading is ready to be fully involved and reconfirms commitment to cooperate with the CICA Secretariat and the Chair of TTF – the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies in the fields of their choice. The CICA analytical structures need to pull together their resources to become a convener of research of pressing security issues of Asia. We should strive to achieve such level of networking as to become an authoritative provider of deep analysis and thoughtful recommendations for alternative approaches by policy makers. Practical suggestion is for the Secretariat to increase its consultancy budget and include in it research grants to be distributed among analytical structures like those represented at today's meeting and academic institutions in member states.

Thank you for your kind attention.