



Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit Conference 2022 and Pakistan's Expectations

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Abstract: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation (INGO) that was established on the edifice laid by Shanghai Five. That was established in 1996. The SCO Charter was signed on 7 July 2002 in and entered into force on 19 September 2003. The SCO focuses on cooperation with international and regional organizations. The main objectives of the SCO is to strengthen relations and promote cooperation among member states SCO initial membership of six states has increased to eight permanent members. India and Pakistan have joined SCO 2017. With Iran and Belarus joining soon, ten states will enjoy the status of permanent members of SCO. Four countries have observer status and many countries from the Middle East and West Asia have been granted the Dialogue Partners' status which displays their confidence in multifaceted cooperative agenda of the SCO. The 22nd SCO Summit was held at Samarkand on 15-16 September 2022. This year's summit attracted enormous attention from the regional and international media for obvious reasons, including: the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and expected meetings of Heads of States with Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Putin. The contemporary world is facing multiple challenges and threats, while waiting to see more equitable distribution of resources that would help them to reduce and alleviate prevailing poverty. During the 22nd Summit Meeting, Heads of State of the SCO objectively discussed various issues faced by the world and their countries and released a number of statements and documents on safeguarding global food security, international energy security, addressing climate change, and maintaining a secure, stable and diversified supply chain. The SCO has also paid due attention to address regional challenges such as security, connectivity, and economic development. The 'Declaration' released after the 22nd Summit Conference announces various new and innovative approaches to ensuring regional stability, sustainable economic development, strengthening of transport and communication links, and determination to build a more representative, democratic and just multipolar international world order. It must be kept in SCO is not a military alliance, rather it is a cooperative organization based on mutual respects and trust, mutually beneficial win-win relations, equality of nations and states, and respect for the diversity of civilizations. Pakistan fully supports the principles, purposes, objective and the activities of SCO and has played very important role in advancing regional and international peace and security, and advocating resolution of all territorial disputes and conflicts with peaceful means. Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif led the Pakistan delegation to the 22nd Summit Meeting. Pakistan fully supported all the strategic decisions made in the Summit Conference regarding the future direction of the Organization and SCO Samarkand Declaration. The Prime Minister's statement at the Summit conveyed Pakistan's vision for the strategic direction of SCO in the face of global political and economic transformation. In the backdrop of devastating effects of floods experienced by Pakistan in last two months, the Prime Minister appealed for collective action by SCO countries to combat the consequences of climate change. He expressed his deep appreciation for the support extended by SCO members for relief and assistance to the people affected by the floods and shared details of the human catastrophe and the massive devastation caused by the climate calamity that struck Pakistan. The President of Uzbekistan, on behalf of the SCO appealed to the international community to support Pakistan in overcoming the devastating consequences of the floods

Pakistan, as an important and a responsible member of the SCO fully supports all initiatives undertaken under the SCO Charters. It looks forwards to enhancing its multi directional cooperation with all SCO members. Pakistan also supports expansion of CPEC to Afghanistan and Central Asian state and advocate that SCO may be declared as 'Free Trade Zone'.

Keywords: SCO, Pakistan, China, Central Asian States, relations, trade and commerce, cooperation.

The Shanghai Five Spirit



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The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation (INGO) that was established on the edifice laid by Shanghai Five. The Shanghai Five consisted of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan^[1]. It emerged from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks which the four former Soviet republics held with China. In 1996, the group held its first presidential summit meeting in Shanghai, the five-country group has held annual summits thereafter till it paved for establishing the SCO.^[2] With each passing year, the joint statements emerged from the summits that signaled greater and greater cooperative efforts in trade, culture, military and security affairs.^[3] The group laid great emphasis on the international security situation both within and beyond their borders. In 2000, Chinese President Jiang Zemin, in his speech before the group said, “We should strengthen mutual support in safeguarding the national unity and sovereignty of our nations and resist all kinds of threat to the security of the region.”^[4] The July 2000 Dushanbe summit decided to establish a “Council of National Coordinators” which would further foster cooperation amongst the Shanghai Five. The approach and principle adopted by Shanghai Five became the guidelines on which SCO was established after many years of mutual cooperation in various fields. The Dushanbe statement also expressed Shanghai Five’s clear vision regarding international peace and security and other aspects of international relations. The group’s stated its opposition to “use of force or threat of force in international relations without the UN Security Council’s prior approval and...any countries or groups of countries’ attempt to monopolize global and regional affairs out of selfish interests.”^[5] This, indeed, was a very courageous political and diplomatic posture adopted by regional cooperation arrangement of only five countries with in few years of its inception. Though it had clearly announced that it was not an alliance against any third country. The Shanghai Five process attained some impressive achievements, such as border disputes resolution, initiating confidence-building measures, and cooperation to combat terrorism and controlling drug trafficking in Shanghai Five region.

Inception of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its Expansion

The leaders of ‘Shanghai Five’, along with president Uzbekistan, met in Shanghai on 15 June 2001. They decided to establish a new organization, based on the ‘Shanghai Five Spirit^[6] but with deeper political and economic cooperation in mind. The SCO Charter was signed on 7 July 2002 in St. Petersburg at the SCO Heads of State Summit^[7] and entered into force on 19 September 2003^[8]. The SCO focuses on cooperation with international and regional organizations^[9]. “The main objectives of the SCO are to (i) strengthen relations among member states; (ii) promote cooperation in political affairs, economics and trade, scientific-technical, cultural, and educational spheres as well as in energy, transportation, tourism, and environmental protection; (iv) safeguard regional peace, security, and stability; and (v) create a democratic, equitable international political and economic order.”^{[10]/[11]}

SCO membership of an initial six states^[12] (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Russia, and Uzbekistan) has, at present, increased to eight permanent members^[13], with India^[14] and Pakistan joining the Organization in 2017 at the Astana Summit^[15]. Both countries were accorded observer status in 2005 and their accession process, as full members was initiated in 2015^[16]. Iran’s full membership was approved in 2021 and process for becoming permanent will be completed by April 2013^[17]. Similarly, accession of Belarus has also been approved on 16 September 2022^[18]. With addition of Iran and Belarus, ten states will enjoy the status of permanent members of SCO. At present, the SCO is the largest regional political, economic and security organization, covering approximately 60% of the area of Eurasia, 40% of the world population, and more than 30% of global GDP.^[19]

In addition to the permanent member, observer countries, Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia have status with SCO^[20], whereas six countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey^[21] are the SCO’s “Dialogue Partners”.^[22] In 2021, the decision was made to start the process of accepting and Egypt Saudi Arabia became and Qatar as dialogue partners^[23]. During the recent SCO Samarkand Summit (15-16 September 2022) a landmark leap forward was made to accept these countries as dialogue partners, completing a process that had begun last year. It was also decided to initiate the process of including Bahrain, the Maldives, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, and Myanmar as new dialogue partners^[24]. All these countries that have gained the status dialogue partner soon, and are eagerly looking forward to join SCO as its permanent members in due course of time.

Desire of joining SCO by so many countries in the Middle East, West Asia, and beyond clearly indicates the geopolitical and geo-economics advantages expected by these countries while enjoying SCO’s membership. It also displays their confidence in multifaceted cooperative agenda of the SCO that does not only promise economic development through mutually beneficial relations, it also provides guarantees and assurances in other domains of international relations, such as regional and global security and stability, win-win cooperation, without any fear of economic exploitation and military coercion, and a hope for better, fair, equitable and just multi-polar world order.

Iran’s acceptance as a full member of SCO will open up a new horizon of multilateralism, which would accrue many advantages not only to Iran but will be beneficial for the whole region^[25]. Iran has demonstrated keen desire to pursue stronger relations with China and Russia. It is extremely important, rather crucial, for Iran to offset unjust, unfair and cruel sanctions imposed on her by US and its allies. China and Iran have already established multifaceted, wide-ranging and mutually beneficial relationship over the past few decades. Iran can take care of China’s energy requirements of China, besides fostering its cooperation with China, Russia and other members of the SCO, in order to achieve geostrategic balancing with the United States and getting rid of its economic isolation imposed by the West.^[26]

The 22nd SCO Summit Meeting of Council of Heads of States

The 22nd SCO Summit, i.e. 'Meeting of Council of Heads of State' was held at Samarkand, Uzbekistan on 15-16 September 2022^[27]. It coincided with the SCO's celebrations of 21 years of success, during which it has attained the status a very powerful and globally significant organization in the world^[28]. This year's summit attracted enormous attention from the regional and international media for following reasons:

- a. It was the first summit of the SCO Heads of States since the conflict between Russia and Ukraine took place^[29]. Russia is the leading and very important member the SCO. Thus international and western media was focusing on as to how other members of the Organization will react to the ongoing Conflict. Many expected, or at least wished, that Russia may come under some pressure to stop its military campaign in Ukraine. The United States has already pressurized the whole world to condemn Russia/s attack on Ukraine.
- b. The media also focus on sidelines of meetings of Heads of States with Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Putin in-person and on numerous other bilateral meetings.
- c. Expansion process of SCO accepting new members, observers and dialogue partners was also keenly observed by international media, political analysts and strategist.

Challenges Faced by the World and SCO's Response

The contemporary world is facing multiple challenges and threats^[30] and people across the globe are looking toward a new era of great change that paves way for more just and fair global political order in which poor countries are not destroyed to fulfill the greed and lust of powerful countries and their alliances. They also anxiously await for equitable distribution of resources allowing them better prospects of economic development which would help them to reduce and alleviate abject poverty suffered by a large segment of their population.

The 22nd Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO, having objectively discussed these global, released a number of statements and documents on safeguarding global food security, international energy security, addressing climate change, and maintaining a secure, stable and diversified supply chain^[31]. These decisions are expected to lead to more peaceful and prosperous world for all and not just for erstwhile colonial and imperialist powers.

The SCO has also paid due attention to address regional challenges such as security, connectivity, and economic development. It can mediate for peaceful conflict resolution from the SCO platform to defuse territorial tensions and other disputes between India and Pakistan that are SCO members^[32]. It can also facilitates negotiated settlement of conflict between Iran, a new member the SCO and Saudi Arabia, which has recently become a dialogue partner. Similarly, SCO can help to promote regional and global peace and stability in many other regions of the world. , the SCO can provide a platform for Iran and the Kingdom to work on their differences.

The SCO expansion, inclusion of Iran, and accepting new dialogue partners send a very positive message of regional integrity, connectivity and cohesiveness which indicate the dawn of a new era of regionalism and mutual win-win cooperation. The 'Declaration' released after the 22nd Summit Conference announces various new and innovative approaches to ensuring regional stability, sustainable economic development, strengthening of transport and communication links, and determination to build a more representative, democratic and just multipolar international world order^[33].

It must also be kept in mind that the SCO does not chose to enforce any particular political or economic system, as is desired by the United States and Europe, rather it respects each country's rights to choose their own political, economic and social development paths, and stresses that each country's national sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity must be respected by all other countries, without any interference in their internal affairs. It also opposes use of force or threat of use of force in international relations^[34].

While encouraging nuclear disarmament, the SCO members supported mutual cooperation that aims to enhance peaceful use of nuclear energy. Member countries also proposed to carry out regional economic cooperation in various other fields, creating conditions for trade and investment to achieve the free flow of commodities, capital, services and technology^[35]. Another landmark achievement was the SCO's resolution on establishing task forces of innovation, entrepreneurship, poverty reduction and traditional medicine. This must be considers as new milestone progress^[36].

SCO is not a Military Alliance, rather a Mutual Cooperation Organization

Many political analysts and strategist, especially those in the West, try to draw comparison and parallels between the SCO, NATO and regional organizations. It must be kept in mind that NATO, though a politico-security organization, is essentially a military alliance that was created to guarantee security to member states the principle of 'Collective Defence'. Politically, it is aims to promote Western values, however, militarily it has indulged in interventions and occupation of many poor countries all over the world since its inception after World War II. Whereas, the SCO has been established and is being expanded by adherence to the respect Shanghai Spirit, which symbolizes the principles of mutual respects and trust, mutually beneficial win-win relations, equality of nations and states, and respect for the diversity of civilizations leading to development of communities with shared values for development and prosperity^[37].

The SCO's emphasis on to enhancing their cooperation in the areas of poverty alleviation, climate change actions, comprehensive security, including energy, food and human security and safeguards against nontraditional security threats, promotion of education and, public-health care are milestone achievements. In nutshell SCO is not an exclusive club of more powerful countries. It is, rather, an inclusive organization that is promoting the principles of peaceful coexistence and shared prosperity to achieve the dream and objective of a community with a shared future.

SCO's Relations with the United Nations and Other Regional / International Organizations

The SCO, being representative of many countries and of a largest population in the world has established very good working relations with the United Nations and other regional organizations. "The SCO has been an observer in the UN General Assembly since 2005. In April 2010, the UN and SCO Secretariats signed a Joint Declaration on Cooperation. SCO Secretariat has also established partnerships with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in addition to its ongoing cooperation with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the UN Office on Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)."^[38] Since its inception in 2001, the SCO has mainly focused on regional security issues, its fight against regional terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism. Since 2017, DPPA has deployed a Liaison Officer to the SCO in Beijing.^[39] The SCO maintains healthy and cooperative relations with other regional organization as well, such as Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building (CICA).^[40]

President Xi Jinping has always underscored the need to main maintain good relations with all such organizations in order to uphold multilateralism. He said" We should remain firm in safeguarding the UN-centered international system and the international order based on international law, practice the common values of humanity, and reject zero-sum game and bloc politics. We should expand the SCO's exchanges with other international and regional organizations such as the UN, so as to uphold true multilateralism, improve global governance, and ensure that the international order is more just and equitable."^[41]

President Xi Jing's Vision of SCO, expressed in SCO 22nd Summit Meeting

On 16 September 2022, during the 22nd Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO at the Samarkand, President Xi delivered an important statement entitled "Ride on the Trend of the Times and Enhance Solidarity and Cooperation to Embrace a Better Future"^[42]. 'President Xi noted that the world today is undergoing accelerating changes unseen in a century, and it has entered a new phase of uncertainty and transformation."^[43] He emphasized that "the SCO, as an important constructive force in international and regional affairs, should keep itself well-positioned in the face of changing international dynamics, ride on the trend of the times, strengthen solidarity and cooperation and build a closer SCO community with a shared future."^[44] He also said that "we need to enhance mutual support. We should strengthen high-level exchanges and strategic communication, deepen mutual understanding and political trust, support each other's efforts to uphold security and development interests, jointly oppose interference in other countries' internal affairs under any pretext, and hold the future of our respective countries firmly in our own hands."^[45] Having said that "we need to expand security cooperation" and highlighting the significance of deepening practical cooperation, he declared that "China is ready to work with all other stakeholders to pursue the Global Development Initiative in our region to support the sustainable development of regional countries."^[46] Clearly emphasizing the need to enhance people-to-people and cultural exchanges, President Xi Jinping said that "We should deepen cooperation in such areas as education, science and technology, culture, health, media, and radio and television, ensure the continued success of signature programs such as the youth exchange camp, the women's forum, the forum on people-to-people friendship, and the forum on traditional medicine, and support the SCO Committee on Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation and other non-official organizations in playing their due roles."^[47] Therefore, it can concluded safely the SCO has a great future. It has an important role to play in balancing the world power competition and global rivalries. SCO is like to continue expanding further. As covers more regions, its influence and ability to affect positive development will increase. In future, SCO will be forces to play more active role maintaining and ensuring regional and global peace and stability. Therefore, though already included in its Charter, SCO will have to development more diplomatic instrument for peaceful resolution of regional and global conflicts.

Pakistan and SCO

Pakistan has very strong relations with all founding members of the SCO. In addition to sharing traditional common historical, religious and cultural heritage with Central Asian States, Pakistan has enjoyed enviable bilateral relation with China, which proverbial known as Iron brother Relations, higher than Himalayas, deeper than oceans and sweeter than honey, have now been transformed into Strategic Partnership.. Moreover, launching of China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as flagship project of China's unique global infrastructural project called Belt and road Initiative (BRI), has highlighted geostrategic and geo-economics significance of Pakistan for South and Central Asia. Pakistan became an SCO member on June 9, 2017^[48]. "Pakistan supports the principles, purposes, objective and the

activities of SCO. Pakistan has vital stake in the security, stability and wellbeing of the region. It was, therefore, natural that Pakistan was amongst the first countries to seek an association with the SCO.^[49] Since joining SCO, Pakistan has played very important role in advocating regional and international peace and security, resolution of all territorial disputes and conflicts with peaceful means and negotiations, and promoting connectivity, order to enhance and facilitate trans-border commerce and trade. In additions, Pakistan has also emphasized on strengthening of people to people contact through enhanced cooperation in cultural exchanges, greater cooperation in education and technology sectors and providing common grounds to fight against terrorism and transnational crimes within SCO member states on multilateral and bilateral basis.

Though relatively new, yet Pakistan has a unique place in the SCO. Pakistan's important geographic locations affords it an exceptionally significant geo-strategic important^[50]. Pakistan maintains very cordial and friendly relations with most SCO members, observers, and dialogue partners. Particularly, Pakistan enjoys very special relations with China, Russia, all Muslim countries. Pakistan looks forward to developing and improving its relations with all members of the SCO in political, diplomatic, economic and security domains.

Due to Pakistan's naturally gifted geographic location with a long coast along with Arabian Sea / Indian Ocean, Pakistan can provide and easy link with many land locked member countries of the SCO with rest of the world. Most Central Asian States are enormous national resources, especially hydrocarbon energy (oil and gas) and other precious metals, including rare earth materials. These resources have been developed for lack of access through sea lanes of communication. Pakistan can facilitate such access that will attract large scale foreign direct investment in these countries, through a multilateral arrangement. All such rail. Road and pipelines will have to run through Pakistan and Afghanistan. Now, Afghanistan is looking to join SCO. It, desperately, needs foreign investment to mitigates devastating effects of 40 years civil war and war against foreign (US and NATO) occupation. China, the leading and most influential and economically strong member of SCO can become instrumental in promoting long lasting peace in Afghanistan and promoting commerce and trade related connectivity by extending BRI and CPEC to Afghanistan and other Central Asian States.

Pakistan's Expectations from SCO

Pakistan has always accorded very priority and great importance to SCO. Pakistan has participated in all SCO Summit Conference at highest political. It has also ensured its contributions at all ministerial and diplomatic levels consultations, which is evident from various proposals proffered by Pakistan.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif led the Pakistan delegation to the Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of Shanghai Cooperation Organization that was held in Samarkand on 15-16 September 2022^[51]. Pakistan has fully supported all the strategic decisions made in the Summit Conference regarding the future direction of the Organization. The Prime Minister had the opportunity to meet President Xi Jinping and President Putin in person and many other world leaders as well, including President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey, President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimukhamedov, who were invited as special guests to the Samarkand by the President of Uzbekistan in the capacity of the SCO Chair^[52].

Prime Minister of Pakistan and Pakistani delegation gave their full support for adopting SCO Samarkand Declaration which articulated the collective stance of SCO on important global and regional issues. In addition, four Joint Statements on Climate Change, Food Security, Energy Security and the Statement on Maintaining Reliable International Supply Chains were also adopted^[53].

Pakistan also supported approval of a new initiatives regarding Comprehensive Action Plan for 2023-2027 on the implementation of the Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation; Concept for Cooperation of the SCO Member States in Developing Connectivity and Creating Efficient Economic and Transport Corridors; Regulations on the Honorary Title "Goodwill Ambassador of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization; Roadmap for Gradual Increase in the Share of National Currencies in Mutual Settlements of the SCO Member States^[54]. The Prime Minister's statement at the Summit conveyed Pakistan's vision for the strategic direction of SCO in the face of global political and economic transformation. Pakistan's commitment to the principles and purposes of SCO Charter and to the 'Shanghai Spirit', as a core value of SCO, was also reaffirmed^[55].

In the backdrop of devastating effects of floods experienced by Pakistan in last two months, the Prime Minister presented a convincing case for collective action by SCO countries to combat the consequences of climate change^[56]. He shared details of the human catastrophe and the massive devastation caused by the climate calamity that struck Pakistan. The Prime Minister, expressing deep appreciation for the support extended by SCO members for relief and assistance to the people affected by the floods, appealed for more help to mitigate and alleviate sufferings of over 3 million people who have faced unprecedented suffering.

Though, Pakistan has suffered from destruction caused by floods earlier as well yet the damage and devastation experienced in recent flood is unparalleled and untold. Over 1600 people have dies, more than 30 million displaced, around one million houses demolished, many thousand villages and hundreds town totally destroyed and many cities badly damaged. The floods have caused untold damage to infrastructure, many hundred bridges and many thousand km roads and railway tracks were total washed away. Another devastating blow is destruction of rural economy, over one

million acres are still inundated with water and around one million animals / livestock had either drowned or died due to these floods that has completely ruined the livelihood of millions of people living the villages and small towns.

The rehabilitation, reconstruction and recovery will take many years if not a complete decade. The President of Uzbekistan, on behalf of the SCO appealed to the international community to support Pakistan in overcoming the devastating consequences of the floods. Most SCO leaders expressed their support and solidarity with Pakistan at this critical time. The Prime Minister of Pakistan has repeated the same appeal for help from international community while addressing the UN General Assembly on 23 September at New York.

The Prime Minister, during his address at SCO Summit, highlighted that after 40 years of conflict in Afghanistan, there was a real possibility to establish sustainable peace in that country. He called for a new approach for conflict resolution between Afghanistan and the international community and emphasized the need for constructive engagement by international community and the SCO members with the Afghan interim authorities. Pakistan has always advocated that without just peace and genuine reconciliation in Afghanistan, there could be no long lasting in the South and Central Asian regions^[57]. Peace and development in Afghanistan is essential for success of BRI and CPEC and for allowing trans-border trade and commerce.

The Prime Minister also reaffirmed Pakistan's active role in maintaining regional peace and security, and in counter-terrorism through the SCO-RATS platform. He highlighted Pakistan's contribution towards global counter-terrorism and the immense sacrifices and economic losses incurred over the last decades.

On the sidelines of the SCO Summit, the Prime Minister held a number of meetings with leaders including the Presidents of China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Turkey. Participation in the Samarkand SCO Summit provided a unique opportunity to present Pakistan's view point on important national, regional and global issues.

Pakistan, as an important and a responsible member of the SCO fully supports all initiatives undertaken under the SCO Charters. It looks forwards to enhancing its multi directional cooperation with all SCO members. Pakistan supports expansion of CPEC to Afghanistan and Central Asian states, in order to promote transnational commerce and trade. Pakistan also advocate that SCO may be declared as 'Free Trade Zone'. Pakistan looks forward that it would be able to buy Oil and Wheat from Russia under favourable terms, as an SCO member. Similarly, it seek purchase of oil and gas from other SCO members on better terms and conditions, especially from Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. In short run, Pakistan expects that all SCO members will extend their maximum help to handle the large scale devastation caused by the recent floods.

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