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Azerbaijan and CICA: Chairmanship Prospects and Regional Initiatives

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The Foundation of CICA

The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, or CICA, is an international organization that works to promote cooperation with the vision of attaining sustained peace and security in the region. Founded on the notion that stability in Asia is tied to the global order, CICA furthers dialogue and interaction as basic tools that help create a common space where independent coexistence and development can be peacefully developed among nations.

Essentially, CICA originated from a shared feeling that in modern Asia, an efficient mechanism was needed to make peace and stability sustainable in the region. While other regions had well-established frameworks for regional security, Asia lacked a similar structure, and previous attempts to create one had not achieved the desired results. This current initiative, however, got significant support from nations in Asia, recognizing the importance of the issue at hand¹.

There are currently 28 CICA members, as well as 10 observer countries and some international organizations such as the United Nations, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), International Organization for Migration (IOM), League of Arab States, and TURKPA².

Azerbaijan's Pivotal Role in CICA

Azerbaijan has generally taken an active part in the core activity process of CICA, particularly with regards to coordination in enhancement processes regarding safe and efficient transport corridors. By assuming the CICA chairmanship in December 2024 until 2026, Azerbaijan has expressed its determination to facilitate regional peace and stability. Due to its geographical location, Azerbaijan participates actively in several key international energy and transport projects, as well as various security programs.

Azerbaijan places a lot of emphasis on confidence-building measures, with a particular focus on post-conflict reconciliation following the outcomes of the Second Karabakh War. CICA provides a platform for enhancing regional security, implementing counterterrorism measures, and developing projects focusing on transnational crime. From an economic perspective, the organization helps

¹ Совещание по взаимодействию и мерам доверия в Азии (СВМДА).

<https://www.scica.org/ru/index.php?view=page&t=about>.

² Азербайджан избран председателем СВМДА на 2024-2026 годы (2024).

https://azertag.az/ru/xeber/azerbaidzhan_izbran_predsedatelem_svmda_na_2024_2026_gody-2953755 (Accessed: February 3, 2025).

Azerbaijan develop and promote its energy, transport, and trade industries. Moreover, under the framework of CICA, Azerbaijan is involved in cultural dialogue, protection of historical heritage, and education development. In fact, Baku has hosted several international conferences on intercultural dialogue.

Azerbaijan's Chairmanship of CICA

The chairmanship of CICA allows Azerbaijan to further strengthen diplomatic relations with other nations in the region and expand its role in international cooperation. The role of a key contributor to CICA will strengthen both Azerbaijan's position as a regional mediator in ensuring security and have a domestic economic impact on its spheres like the country's infrastructure and transport. The chairmanship will also deepen the engagement of Azerbaijan with Asian countries in energy, trade, and investment, and in cultural exchanges under the auspices of CICA.

Azerbaijan actively engages in the CICA initiatives on regional stability and security. Azerbaijan has repeatedly reiterated its view that dialogue and confidence-building are the cornerstones of the peaceful settlement of conflicts. It underlines the importance of initiatives that prevent armed escalation and strengthen regional stability by forging international partnerships, ensuring this way lasting peace and economic development.

CICA's 2025 agenda consists of 44 planned initiatives, with approximately 20 proposed by Azerbaijan. These initiatives span five key dimensions: economic, environmental, humanitarian, military-political, and emerging security challenges. Azerbaijan's proposals emphasize inclusive dialogue and cooperation, strengthening multilateralism while addressing the interests of all member states.

Among the major planned initiatives:

- *Economic and Digital Transformation*: CICA will host a Conference of Heads of Ports to enhance regional connectivity, a Digital Transformation and Innovation Forum for CICA member states to promote technological advancements, and an SME Exhibition within the annual CICA Business Council meeting to support knowledge-sharing in small and medium enterprises.
- *Environmental Sustainability and Food Security*: Key projects include the "Circular Green Tourism" initiative to promote ecological sustainability and cultural exchanges, as well as an International Summit on Agricultural Sector Insights.
- *Culture and Innovation*: CICA will hold a Cultural Heritage Protection Conference to preserve shared traditions and the Artificial Intelligence in Art Competition to integrate technology into the cultural sector.

- *Sustainable Development and Youth Initiatives*: The "SDGs in Action" event at the CICA Youth Council's annual meeting aims to promote sustainability awareness among young leaders³.

The Secretary-General of CICA, Kairat Sarybay, underlined that Azerbaijan has attached particular importance to the questions of youth policy, women's rights, science and education, intercultural dialogue, and civilizational exchange. In this respect, scientific and educational cooperation has become one of the priorities of the presidency of Azerbaijan, having created a Partnership Network of Leading Universities. This has turned CICA into an active actor in research and higher education⁴.

Conclusion

The chairmanship of CICA by Azerbaijan coincides with two important processes: the transformation of the organization into a full-fledged international institution but also far-reaching geopolitical and economic changes in Asia, turning the region into a leading center of innovation, economic growth and political cooperation.

Azerbaijan's involvement in CICA forms a significant part of its foreign policy, aimed specifically at strengthening diplomatic relations, developing economic cooperation, and ensuring regional stability. Its chairmanship has been a meaningful step towards achieving the national interests that have to date consolidated Azerbaijan's status as a responsible and influential actor in international relations.

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³ Secretary-general: Azerbaijan's presidency intends to transform, increase CICA's efficiency (2025). <https://amman.mfa.gov.az/en/news/3152/secretary-general-azerbajians-presidency-intends-to-transform-increase-cicas-efficiency>.

⁴ Генсек: Председательство Азербайджана нацелено на трансформацию и повышение эффективности СВМДА (2025). <https://report.az/ru/vneshnyaya-politika/gensek-predsedatelstvo-azerbajdzhana-naceleno-na-transformaciyu-i-povyshenie-effektivnosti-svmda/>.