

## SCO countries' experts to discuss information security issues



On September 6, Tashkent will host a Scientific and Expert Forum of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on information security.

The event is held by the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the support of the Ministry for the Development of Information Technologies and Communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan together with the Executive Committee of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure.

The dialogue on information security issues, organized in a hybrid format with the online connection of foreign participants, plans to bring together more than 30 leading experts of relevant ministries and agencies, scientific, academic and analytical circles of the SCO member states.

The representative composition of the participants will allow discussing of the latest trends and achievements in digitalization, as well as exchanging the best national experience in countering threats to information and cyber security in the context of ensuring human rights and the rule of law in the SCO space.

The initiative to hold this forum was put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Dushanbe SCO Summit on September 17, 2021.

Taking into account the observed steady growth in the adoption of digital technologies and online activity around the world, the organization of this event is very relevant. The rapid digitalization of the life of society, business and the state raises several objective problems. In particular, the pandemic caused a sharp increase in cybercrime in the information space. According to experts, in 2021 the number of cyber attacks in the world increased by 50% compared to 2020. The damage from cybercrime in 2021 exceeded \$6 trillion compared to \$3 trillion in 2015.

The problem of protecting critical infrastructure from cyber threats remains relevant. According to experts, the most frequently attacked sectors are energy, industry, defense and the public sector.

Along with this, the information space began to be regarded by extremist ideologists as the most attractive platform for conducting ideological propaganda.

The above negative trends require the SCO member states to develop comprehensive approaches to protecting cyberspace and ensuring information security. The cross-border nature of these threats dictates the need to complement national efforts with joint actions at the regional and international levels.

It should also be emphasized that today the SCO has already established cooperation on issues of ensuring international information security. Since 2006, the Expert Group on International Information Security has been functioning within the framework of the SCO, which is a permanent body of the SCO and coordinates relevant ministries and agencies.

In turn, the Agreement among the Governments of the SCO Member States in ensuring international information security, signed on June 16, 2009, is the basis for cooperation in information security.

In November 2020, the Joint Statement of the Heads of SCO Member States on Cooperation in Ensuring International Information Security was adopted.

In 2021, following the SCO Summit in Dushanbe, the Plan of Interaction on ensuring international information security for 2022-2023 was signed, developed with the active participation of Uzbekistan.

Currently, without exception, all SCO countries are implementing national strategic and conceptual documents aimed at developing a digital society, transferring public administration, financial and economic sectors to digital format.

In this context, the important and timely initiative of the President of Uzbekistan to hold a forum will allow the participants to develop specific proposals and practical recommendations for the formation of a unified policy to counter threats and challenges in information security, as well as agree on common approaches to ensuring free and unhindered access to information for citizens of SCO countries.

To consider the full range of issues, the agenda of the forum is divided into 3 thematic sessions:

- I. "Expanding access to information is an important factor in the development of modern society";
- II. "Information and ideological threats and the development of effective response measures";
- III. "Protection of objects of critical information infrastructure in the conditions of dynamic development of ICT".

In general, the upcoming event will strengthen regional cooperation and increase the potential of the SCO member states in countering threats in information and cyberspace.

**Source**