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**Press Information Bureau  
Government of India  
Ministry of Culture**

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**Dr Mahesh Sharma leads the Indian Delegation to the SCO Cultural Ministers' Meeting in Sanya, China; India participates in the Cultural Ministers' Meet for first time as full time member**

**India attaches special importance to SCO in promoting multilateral, cultural, political, security, economic and people-to-people interaction in the region: Dr Mahesh Sharma.**

 <http://img2.chinadaily.com.cn/images/201805/18/5afe1cd1a3103f68b65b8819.jpeg>

*Minister of State for Culture(I/c), Dr Mahesh Sharma along with other Culture Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states at the 15th Meeting of Cultural Ministers of the SCO in Sanya, China.*

The Minister of State for Culture, Dr Mahesh Sharma led the Indian delegation to the 15th Meeting of the Cultural Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization(SCO) Member States held in Sanya, Hainan province, on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2018. India participated for the first time at the Meeting of Cultural Ministers of the SCO.

Speaking at the meet, Minister of State for Culture, Dr. Mahesh Sharma said that India has a long history of cultural exchanges with China and other SCO member states. Joining the SCO has provided a new platform, greater space and opportunities for exchanges and cooperation, the Culture Minister added.

Dr. Mahesh Sharma highlighted the role of culture in bringing the people together. It is a binding force in the development of peaceful coexistence for humanity, the Minister explained. He further added that it will be a win-win situation for China and India - both of which have a rich and diversified culture - to further explore and develop wider cultural exchanges and cooperation that could include tourism, education, science, archaeology, music, drama and even yoga.

Key discussions of the SCO meeting focused on achieving more in-depth and creative multilateral cultural cooperation and promoting regional cultural cooperation and mutual understanding of the people.

All participants agreed that cultural cooperation between SCO member states made remarkable progress in the past year, and reports presented at the meeting about diversified exchanges and cooperation clearly showed that bilateral and multilateral cooperation is growing deeper and wider.

The two-day meeting concluded with the issuance of the 2018-20 Executive Plan. The representatives also joined in a news release welcoming India and Pakistan into the SCO and encouraging more direct contacts and practical exchanges of cultural organizations within SCO member states, as well as joint creation of cultural products and works.

India became full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on 9th June, 2017 during the SCO Heads of State Summit in Astana, Kazakhstan. At this Summit, the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi had stated that from the regional and global perspective, Shanghai Cooperation Organization is one of the main pillars of peace and security.

India has been participating in Cultural initiatives undertaken by SCO like nominating World Heritage sites for the SCO-UNESCO exhibition proposed to be held in Paris in September, 2018 and signing of MoU between SCO and UNESCO.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an eight-member multilateral organization, established on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai, China by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Pakistan also became the full member of SCO along with India, taking its membership to 8. After the expansion of membership, SCO represents approximately 42% of the world's population, 20% of its GDP and 22% of the landmass.

The main objectives of the SCO are to strengthen relations among member states; promote cooperation in various fields like political affairs, economics, and education, culture, tourism, environment protection etc. and promote regional peace, security, and stability among others.

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