**Declaration of the " Model Shanghai Cooperation Organisation" Heads of State Council**

On June 17, 2023, the "Model SCO" hosted by Weihai Vocational College was held inWeihai. SCOLAR Network and Weihai Vocational College jointly organized the conference as a simulation session of the SCO Summit of the Council of Heads of States. The conference was attended by representatives of the Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Indian side chaired the meeting. The topic of the Conference was **"How to promote the economic development of the SCO region through vocational education."**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a permanent intergovernmental international organization with 8 member states, 4 observer states, and 9 dialogue partners. The total area of the SCO member states is more than 30 million square kilometers, accounting for about three-fifths of the Eurasian continent; the population is more than three billion, accounting for 44% of the world's population. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization follows the principle of the “Shanghai Spirit," characterized by " *mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity and pursuit of common development*," aimed at moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

SCO member states have made great contribution to facilitate vocational education that supports its economic growth. China has established the world's largest vocational education system, boasting 11,000 vocational colleges and technical schools, enrolling 12.1 million students and producing 8.8 million graduates by the end of 2021. For some SCO countries there is a great growth potential. For example, Tajikistan has the youngest population (median age 22.4 years), the highest population growth rate, and the highest fertility rate, with young people aged 15–24 years making up 17.2% of the total population. And Uzbekistan is one of the youngest countries in Asia, with almost 60% of its population under 30 years old. 101 educational institutions are operating in the system of vocational education (VET) of the Kyrgyz Republic, more than 30 thousand people are trained in the vocational education system. In Russia, vocational education plays an important role in its education system. According to the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation in 2021, over 3.4 million people received SVE, and the number of students enrolled in vocational education is approaching the number of students studying in universities. In countries like India, Pakistan and Kazakhstan, the vocational education is getting more attention. The government of India has allocated special funds to support the development of vocational education. Of the funds for vocational training reform, 75% is allocated by the federal budget, 25% by the cantons. Pakistan initiated the technical and vocational education and training TVET system in 2015. At the same time, during the implementation of the "Kazakhstan 2050" strategic development program, former President N.A. Nazarbayev placed special emphasis on the modernization of technical and vocational education.

Despite notable advances achieved, member states have a concern that affects the general well-being of the region. Firstly, in some member states the percentage of trained specialists through vocational education is still low, while demand for qualified labor is growing, as well as Artificial Intelligence technology that competes with human development. Secondly, there are misconceptions and social biases about prestige and potential benefits which provide vocational education still prevail in society. In addition, vocational education remains inaccessible to master for vulnerable population and people from rural areas.

Thus, given the current situation, the SCO member states delegations have proposed the following initiatives:

**1. Establishment of the SCO Vocational Education Platform**

Establish the SCO Vocational Education Platformwhichincludes the creation of a certification system, provision of scholarships, teacher training programs, annual vocational skills competitions and improvement of educational infrastructure. The platform will serve as a robust financial mechanism to support vocational education initiatives within the SCO region. The budget for the platform and annual vocational skills competitions will be derived based on the financial position of the country according to the cost calculation for the implementation of the initiative and approved by consensus between member states.

**2. Expansion of access to vocational education in rural areas**

Increase investments in infrastructure development, teaching resources and technologies to expand the outreach of vocational education in rural areas targeting NEETS (Not in employment, education and training). The detailed educational plans, informational materials on woman's involvement in vocational education and a plan of action to address possible barriers will be elaborated among the SCO member states, which will include scholarship programs and financial incentives giving access to vocational education for women, disadvantaged groups, individuals from low-income backgrounds and people from rural areas.

**3. Signing a consensus to support vocational schools' graduates**

Signing a consensus between the SCO member states to support graduates from vocational schools in their countries to work in foreign and multinational companies operating in the SCO region will not only emphasize domestic employment options but also provide cross-border employment prospects. The formulation of a clear mechanism for the fair and balanced distribution of cross-border employment opportunities among states needs to be performed. This will allow graduates to gain valuable work experience, develop new skills, and promote the exchange of expertise and culture among member states. This will open access to a pool of skilled workers to companies in SCO member states, which will help to promote economic growth and development in the regions.

**4. Renew teaching materials and broaden teaching personnel**

The renewing of teaching materials and broaden teaching personnel will help to increase skilled personnel in the SCO region, which will be accomplished by financing vocational colleges from SCO budget for education. Further, it could be enhanced by cooperation of local vocational colleges with high-ranked universities, companies in the SCO region and engaging international organizations, such as The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and International Labor Organisation (ILO) to provide technical assistance and expertise.

**5. Establishment of the SCO Collaborative Educational Platform**

Establishment of the SCO Vocational Education Enhancement Platform (SCO VEEP) will create a space for effective collaboration between the SCO member states. In this platform, the best industry practices, resources, teaching methodology and experience of curricula frameworks will be exchanged fostering cooperation in vocational education for the economic development. This platform will provide opportunities for joint research and internships projects to address common challenges, develop common standards, certifications, identify emerging advanced industries, promote labor mobility and enhance employment opportunities within the SCO countries.

**6. Addition of vocational colleges to the database of educational institutions of the SCO University**

In the database of the SCO universities, add one high-rating vocational college in each country, which provides a transdisciplinary curriculum with the most similar sets of subjects. Further, open a separate set for the program with the cooperation of SCO University and launch the trial program for information security and other branches of information technologies, as well as engineering. For the implementation of the program, additional funds will be allocated for students from the state budget during the exchange semesters, including travel and accommodation expenses in host country. The fund will be presented to students based on their competitiveness, academic performance, motivation and extracurricular activities. Monitoring and evaluation of the program execution will take place at the meetings of the Ministers of Education of the SCO region, held every two years.

**7. Establishment of Entrepreneurship and Start-up Incubation**

The establishment of entrepreneurship and start-up incubation to introduce special programs within vocational education institutions, involving enterprises, social partners, and stakeholders. These innovation centers or business incubators will be formed as part of the initiative, which will provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge to start businesses, fostering innovation, industrial partnerships and economic growth within the member states.

**8. Launching of the SCO Vocational Education Programs**

Launch a joint vocational education program organized by SCO member states, which includes two-year programs or short-term exchange programs, where first three semester will be hosted at the best vocational colleges in different countries or schools. In addition, the collaboration with SCO Universities could be aimed through this program by facilitating language trainings, internships and academic and professional exchanges between students, teachers and skill workers within member states to promote culture and economic development. The program expects to recruit at least 500 students from the SCO countries each year mainly focusing on the majors like agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, natural resource management, energy power, and tourism.

Representatives highly appreciated the Chairmanship of the Delegation from India and expressed their gratitude for the seminal work of all participants in the discussion.

Weihai, China,

June 17, 2023