

BBG

TALKING POINTS - COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)

31 MAR 1994

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TALKING POINTS FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
MEETING WITH THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)

Background

1. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was founded on 8 December 1991 by Presidents Yeltsin and Kravchuk and the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus, Mr. Stanislav Shushkevich. The three Slavic leaders proclaimed that "the Soviet Union had ceased to exist as a subject of international law and as a geo-political reality". On 21 December 1991, eight other republics of the former USSR (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) formally joined the CIS at its first summit conference at Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan. On 25 December 1991, ex-Soviet President Gorbachev, who had opposed these actions, resigned from his post and the USSR ceased to exist.
2. The three Baltic republics never joined the CIS. The "Popular Front" government in Azerbaijan discontinued its CIS membership in 1992 because it regarded Russia, the predominant country in the CIS, as biased towards Armenia in the conflict over Nagorny-Karabakh. However, last summer, Azerbaijan re-joined the CIS after the return to power of Mr. Gaidar Aliyev, the republic's former Communist leader.
3. After the return of former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to Georgia, the latter consistently stated that his government had no intention of joining the CIS. But after its defeat in Abkhazia in early October 1993, the Georgian government joined the CIS and received Russian military support to cope with an anti-Shevardnadze insurrection in the Mingrelia region of Georgia.
4. Since its inception, the CIS members have held a total of 14 summit meetings, the most recent one took place on 25 December

1993 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. At these summits, the leaders of the CIS countries primarily engaged in bilateral talks to deal with economic matters and with the continuing regional conflicts in the CIS area. The next summit will take place on 15 April in Moscow.

CIS Charter and Collective Security

5. Numerous resolutions and declarations have been adopted at the CIS summits. The most important CIS documents are its Collective Security Treaty and the CIS Charter. On 15 May 1992, six CIS members (Armenia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) signed the Collective Security Treaty. In the meantime, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Belarus have also acceded to the treaty but Ukraine did not. The CIS Charter was adopted on 22 January 1993 at the summit in Minsk. Ukraine, Moldova and Turkmenistan refused to sign this document because, in their view, the Charter jeopardizes their newly-gained sovereignty. Especially Ukraine rejected the Charter, stating that it would create a Russian tutelage over the rest of the CIS. (The Charter's provisions envisage the co-ordination of foreign, security, defence and finance policies of all CIS members).

CIS Peace-keeping

6. On 6 July 1992, the CIS adopted a resolution on the dispatching of CIS "peace-keeping" troops to inter-ethnic conflict areas in the ex-USSR. Such a force has been deployed in Tajikistan. It is primarily composed of Russian troops but also involves contingents from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan itself. The Tajik government has formally appealed to the Security Council to grant this force the status of a UN peace-keeping operation. At the same time, Russia has been extremely active in international and regional fora, including the UN and the CSCE, to make the point that CIS "peace-keeping" operations are conducted in full accordance with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter (especially with Art. 52). A joint statement

dated 29 March 1994 by the Russian Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs explicitly refutes allegations of Russian "neo-imperialism" in the CIS area and underlines its "peace-keeping" activities pursuant to Art. 52 of the Charter (see S/1994/357).

UN Observer Status

7. At their recent summit in Ashgabat, the CIS members decided to apply for UN observer status in the General Assembly. This decision was the result of a Russian initiative (Russia is currently holding the chairmanship of the CIS Council of Foreign Ministers). On 24 March 1994, the draft resolution on observer status for the CIS was adopted without a vote. In the brief debate, several Western countries (US, EU, Nordics, etc.) stated that they regarded this resolution as procedural in nature, i.e. without juridical implications on the status of the CIS as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII. Ukraine, which had opposed the request for UN observer status at the summit in Ashgabat, explicitly noted that the granting of such status to the CIS should not be interpreted as recognizing the CIS as a regional arrangement.

8. The Secretary-General may wish to:

- engage his interlocutors in a discussion on future prospects of the CIS as a regional arrangement of sovereign states, especially in view of Ukraine's present position (will it become an exclusively Russian-dominated body on the territory of the ex-USSR? This view is not only held in Western capitals);

- note the most recent proposal by Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev to create a new "Eurasian Union" on the territory of the former Soviet Union and discuss this suggestion which seems to be aimed at replacing the CIS (Nazarbayev, who originally favoured a new Union Treaty with ex-President Gorbachev, has recently been an outspoken critic of Russia's approach towards

the CIS);

- discuss the actual work done by the small CIS Secretariat in Minsk (it is not entirely clear what this new bureaucracy has been doing in addition to the preparation of meetings, etc.);

- enquire from his interlocutors at the CIS Secretariat whether they expect to be endowed with real executive functions similar, for example, to the Commission of the European Union in Brussels;

- enquire about the economic and monetary co-ordinating functions, if any, of the CIS Secretariat (most of the CIS members are in the process of difficult economic transformations);

- inform his interlocutors about the well-established procedures of the Security Council regarding the setting-up of UN peace-keeping operations.

H. Heitmann, Europe Division, DPA
31 March 1994

PROFILE

MR. IVAN M. KOROTCHENYA, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

In May 1993, Mr. Ivan Mikhailovich Korotchenya was appointed to be the first Executive Secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Born in Minsk, Mr. Korotchenya, 45, is a national of Belarus. In 1975, Mr. Korotchenya graduated from the Belorussian Agricultural Academy. He completed his higher political education in 1986. Prior to his present appointment, he held various positions in the nomenklatura of the Byelorussian SSR. He was elected to the Supreme Soviet in March 1990 and served as a member of the Presidium and as a Chairman of its "Commission on Openness, the Media, and Human Rights". Mr. Korotchenya began his work for the CIS in January 1992 as Coordinator of the Working Group of the CIS Council of Heads of State and of its Council of Heads of Government.

H. Heitmann, Europe Division, DPA
31 March 1994