

*Activities and Institutions.* The principal organs of the CIS, according to the agreement concluded in Alma-Ata on 21 Dec. 1991, are the *Council of Heads of States*, which meets twice a year, and the *Council of Heads of Government*, which meets every three months. Both councils may convene extraordinary sessions, and may hold joint sittings. There is also a *Council of Defence Ministers*, established in Feb. 1992, and a *Council of Foreign Ministers* (Dec. 1993). The Secretariat is the standing working organ.

At a summit meeting of heads of states (with the exception of Azerbaijan) in July 1992, agreements were reached on a way to divide former USSR assets abroad; on the legal cessionary of state archives of former Soviet states; on the status of an Economic Court; and on collective security. In 1992 an *Inter-Parliamentary Assembly* was established by seven member states (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan).

At a subsequent meeting in Jan. 1993 Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan agreed on a charter to implement co-operation in political, economic, ecological, humanitarian, cultural and other spheres; thorough and balanced economic and social development within the common economic space; interstate co-operation and integration; and to ensure human rights and freedoms. Heads of State established an *Inter-State Bank* and adopted a Provision on it. Its charter was signed by ten Heads of State (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan) on 22 Dec. 1993.

In accordance with the Agreement on Armed Forces and Border Troops, concluded on 30 Dec. 1991, it was decided to consider and solve the issue on the transference of the management of the General-Purpose Armed Forces in accordance with the national legislation of member states. On 14 Feb. 1992 the *Council of Defence Ministers* was established. In 1993 the Office of Commander-in-Chief of CIS Joint Armed Forces was reorganized in a Staff for Coordinating Military Co-operation. Its Chief of Staff is appointed by the Council of Heads of State.

On 24 Sept. 1993 Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed an agreement to form an *Economic Union*. Georgia and Turkmenistan signed later (14 and 23 Jan. 1994). Ukraine became an associated member on 15 April 1994. In Oct. 1994 a summit meeting established the *Inter-State Economic Committee (MEK)* to be based in Moscow. Members include all CIS states except Turkmenistan. The Committee's decisions are binding if voted by 80% of the membership. Russia commands 50% of the voting power; Ukraine 14%. The Committee's remit is to co-ordinate energy, transport and communications policies. A *Customs Union* to regulate payments between member states with nonconvertible independent currencies and a regulatory *Economic Court* have also been established.

On 29 March 1996 Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia signed an agreement increasing their mutual economic and social integration by creating a *Community of Integrated States* (Tajikistan signed in 1998). The agreement established a Supreme Inter-Governmental Council comprising heads of state and government and foreign ministers, with an integration committee of Ministers and an Inter-Parliamentary Committee. On 2 April 1996 the Presidents of Belarus and Russia signed a treaty providing for political, economic and military integration, creating the nucleus of a *Community of Russia and Belarus*. A further treaty was signed on 22 May 1997, instituting common citizenship, common deployment of military forces and the harmonization of the two economies with a view to the creation of a common currency. The Community was later renamed the *Union of Belarus and Russia* and signed subsequent agreements on equal rights for its citizens and equal conditions for state and private entrepreneurship. In March 1994 the CIS was accorded observer status in the UN.

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*Website (Russian only):* <http://www.cis.minsk.by>  
*Executive Secretary:* Sergei Lebedev (Russia).

#### Further Reading

Brzezinski, Z. and Sullivan, P. (eds.) *Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Documents, Data and Analysis*. 1996

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## International Air Transport Association (IATA)

Founded in 1945 for inter-airline co-operation in promoting safe, reliable, secure and economical air services, IATA has approximately 230 members from 115 nations worldwide. IATA is the successor to the International Air Traffic Association, founded in The Hague in 1919, the year of the world's first international scheduled services.

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*Website:* <http://www.iata.org>  
*Director-General:* Giovanni Bisignani (Italy).

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## International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is a Swiss-based impartial, neutral and independent organization ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of war and other situations of violence.

Established in 1863, the ICRC is a founding member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and of international humanitarian law, notably the Geneva Conventions.

The ICRC is mandated by the international community to be the guardian and promoter of international humanitarian law. It has a permanent mandate under international law to take impartial action for prisoners, the wounded and sick, and civilians affected by conflict.

The ICRC aims to ensure that civilians not taking part in hostilities are spared and protected; to visit prisoners of war and security detainees and ensure that they are treated humanely and according to recognized international standards that forbid torture and other forms of abuse; to transmit messages to and reunite family members separated by armed conflict; to help find missing persons; to offer or facilitate access to basic health care facilities; to provide food, safe drinking water, sanitation and shelter in emergencies; to promote respect for, monitor compliance with and contribute to the development of international humanitarian law; to help reduce the impact of mines and explosive remnants of war on people; and to support national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to prepare for and respond to armed conflict and situations of violence. In order to assist people affected by armed conflict, the ICRC speaks with all parties. It supports efforts of arms carriers to respect international humanitarian law or other fundamental rules protecting persons in situations of violence.

The ICRC is a global presence with offices in over 80 countries and some 11,000 staff worldwide. Its HQ is in Geneva, Switzerland.