

Kazakhstan constitution day

Core values ensure progress and prosperity

Akylbek Kamaldinov
AMBASSADOR OF KAZAKHSTAN

Today, Aug. 30, we celebrate the Constitution Day of Kazakhstan and dedicate this message also to the International Day against Nuclear Tests on Aug. 29.



Kazakhstan of the 21st century could materialize the centuries-long hopes and aspirations of Kazakhstani people for freedom and independence.

We accomplished our main tasks, such as building a strong state and economy, ensuring the welfare of the people, becoming a respectable member of international community. Today, our achievements are recognized throughout the world and this is the result of the implementation of the constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The constitution strengthened our core values — independence, peace and stability. It strengthened the role of the Parliament, political parties, independent judiciary and local governance. It determines Astana as the new capital of our country. Astana for us is a symbol of creativity and prosperity.

Today, Kazakhstan is a responsible and respected partner of the international community; it is a key country of Central Asia.

The first article of the constitution says Kazakhstan is a democratic, secular and social state whose highest values are an individual, people's life, their rights and freedoms.

Kazakhstan is a party of multilateral international acts related to various aspects of human rights. On the basis of the constitution, Kazakhstan has carried out fundamental reforms in all spheres of life. The fundamental principles of the state are social harmony, political stability, economic development, democratic solutions to problems.

As a result, the achievements of the country over the years are impressive. Kazakhstan created its own statehood, laid the foundations of independence, ensured territorial integrity, created a market economy and successfully integrated it into the world economy. But the most important significance of the constitution is that people live in peace and harmony.

The constitution also fixed a balanced and multi-vector foreign policy for Kazakhstan. Our country under the leadership of Nursultan Nazarbayev could achieve positive results in the international arena.

Having experienced the negative effects of the use of nuclear weapons, Kazakhstan is an active participant in international movements for nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

On Aug. 29, 1991, President Nazarbayev signed a decree closing the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, the second-largest in the world, and a year and a half later Kazakhstan voluntarily renounced the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal.

With these steps, Kazakhstan paved the way for a nuclear-free world and appealed that dialogue and peaceful cooperation with other countries are more important for successful development and security rather than large stocks of powerful weapons.

In 2009, the U.N. General Assembly unanimously approved the initiative of President Nazarbayev, declaring Aug. 29, the closing date of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. It should be particularly emphasized that the coauthors of this resolution were 26 states, including Japan.

Kazakhstan's example is particularly relevant and in demand today as the world faces the further spread of weapons of mass destruction and the threat of its use by terrorist organizations.

I would like to note that on

Aug. 27-29, 2012, Astana hosted the international conference "From Nuclear Testing to a Nuclear Free World," organized by the Parliament of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev Center and the international association Parliamentarians for Nonproliferation and Nuclear Disarmament. This forum, which gathered parliamentarians and scientists from more than 75 countries, was another important step toward strengthening closer international cooperation in the field of nonproliferation and nuclear disarmament, and supporting Kazakhstan's international initiatives in this area.

Kazakhstan as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state fully supports the global process aimed at promoting dialogue between civilizations and religions. At the initiative of Kazakhstan, UNESCO declared 2010 as International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, and 2013-2022 as the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures.

Kazakh soil hosted congresses of leaders of world and traditional religions. Over the past nine years, four times Astana has gathered together leaders of major world and traditional religions, including the leaders of the Japanese Association of Shinto Shrines.

These meetings serve as an important and effective international policy instrument for peace and stability in the world. Congresses bring together political and religious leaders for convergence of civilizations, peoples and countries.

In this context, I would like also to note the initiative of President Nazarbayev to convene the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), which brings together 24 states occupying 90 percent of the Asian continent.

The main purpose of CICA is to strengthen cooperation through multilateral approaches



Memorial: The monument "Stronger than Death" in Semey commemorates the victims of nuclear tests at the Semipalatinsk testing site. Right: Dynamically growing Astana is bidding to host the 2017 World Expo. EMBASSY OF KAZAKHSTAN

to peace, security and stability in Asia. Today, CICA has come to a level of interactions that involves a move to a more efficient system of international relations in Eurasia. We are talking about the prospects to create a new international Organization for Cooperation and Confidence Building Measures in Asia.

Countries of the Middle East and Southeast Asia are showing their interest to participate in CICA. Japan is now an observer of CICA, but we hope Japan will also become a full member of the forum in the near future.

As part of the 20th anniversary of CICA on Sept. 12, Astana will hold the Jubilee Session and Fourth Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of CICA.

The value of the constitution has already been tested by time. It is the key for social stability, especially in the conditions of the deteriorating global economy.

Kazakhstan continues to show sustainable economic development while remaining one of the countries with the highest growth rates. In 2011, gross domestic product (GDP) growth

was 7.5 percent, GDP per capita exceeded \$11,000 and according to the World Bank, Kazakhstan entered the category of middle-income countries. In the first half of 2012, Kazakhstan's economic growth was 5.6 percent, while real income grew by 12.8 percent. By 2016, we plan to maintain an annual GDP growth of 7 percent.

Stable and dynamic development promotes more intensive cooperation with foreign partners. Kazakhstan has accumulated more than 80 percent of investment flows to Central Asia. Just last year, the volume of investments amounted to \$18 billion. In 2011, Kazakhstan's foreign trade grew by 40 percent to \$126 billion. Kazakhstan's export products to international markets amounted to \$88 billion.

At the same time, a favorable geographical location, political and economic stability, direct access to the markets of the customs union, the European Union and the favorable investment climate open up new prospects for expanding more profitable cooperation with foreign partners.

I would also highlight the

enormous potential of the international specialized exhibition "EXPO 2017: Energy of the Future" in Astana, where Kazakhstani and foreign partners can showcase their latest achievements and developments in green energy. We hope that Astana's bid to host Expo 2017 will receive broad support from all members of the international community.

Also, I would like to mention the relations of Kazakhstan and Japan. Japan was one of the first countries that recognized the independence of Kazakhstan. All these years Japan has been and remains a reliable and constructive partner of Kazakhstan.

The last few years have been a breakthrough in bilateral economic and trade relations as a result of the burgeoning cooperation in industry, energy and finance. In 2011, bilateral trade amounted to \$1.688 billion. According to the National Bank of Kazakhstan, in 2011 Japanese foreign direct investment (FDI) to the Kazakh economy grew by 15.1 percent to \$747.3 million. Starting from 1993, the gross in-

flow of Japanese FDI to Kazakhstan has exceeded \$4 billion.

Bilateral trade and economic partnership received a powerful impetus in 2008 during the visit of President Nazarbayev to Japan when the parties identified new paths and perspectives of economic and investment cooperation. In May 2012, during the visit of Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Yukio Edano to Astana, the two countries adopted a road map to strengthen economic and investment relations in the implementation of major investment projects in nuclear and petrochemical industries, mining sector, technology transfer. Closer economic ties are also maintained by the activities of joint committees and commissions of government and private sectors for economic cooperation.

Political dialogue also develops very dynamically based on inter-parliamentary contacts between parliamentarian friendship groups. I would like to highlight the high contribution of the chairman of Japan-Kazakhstan Parliamentary League, former

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama.

The constitution of Kazakhstan, of course, is not as old as other countries', but on the scale of performed tasks, it is quite comparable with the oldest ones. All significant achievements of Kazakhstan in recent years are the concrete results of implementation of the constitution and laws based on it.

Kazakhstan's constitution reflected modern legal concepts of the dreams of many generations of our ancestors: the freedom and the opportunity to manage our own destiny, the state, where the government serves the interests of its people and an independent country respected all over the world.

The embassy would like to inform readers of the The Atom Project: an international campaign designed to do more than create awareness surrounding the human and environmental devastation caused by nuclear weapons testing. For information, visit www.theatomproject.org/en.