

Kazakhstan independence day

Kazakhstan's dramatic development over two decades

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FOREIGN MINISTER OF KAZAKHSTAN

Located on China's western border, Kazakhstan is geographically distant from Japan, but relations continue to become closer as our bilateral trade grows at a very healthy rate. Our ties are developing as part of Kazakhstan's increasing focus on Asia in response to the rising political and economic weight of the region.

Japan is an important priority for us and we see excellent opportunities for the further expansion of the relationship, particularly in the area of the economy. Japanese technology is going to play an important role in the industrial modernization of Kazakhstan. For example, we see excellent prospects for using Japanese technologies for energy- and water-saving.

Before describing our relations further, it is important to give Japanese readers a flavor of Kazakhstan and the dramatic development that we have experienced over the past two decades. Since we are a relative newcomer to the international scene, it is hardly surprising that people know less about us and our country compared to others.

I often have to point out that we are the largest landlocked country in the world located on a territory five times the size of France. We have a population of 17 million people and are rich in natural resources, including oil. We are descended from nomads who controlled a vast area in the heart of Central Asia, and this experience is at the heart of our diplomacy. We seek friendship and cooperation in all directions as part of a balanced, multivector policy.

It is only 22 years ago that Kazakhstan became an independent country when the political map of Eurasia changed overnight after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

There was little time for rejoicing as our newborn country experienced the full force of the breakdown of the Soviet economic system. Within months, 40 percent of the population was living below the poverty line and inflation reached almost 3,000 percent.

At the time, some external observers doubted whether Kazakhstan could consolidate its independence as a country with a diverse multiethnic population stretching across a territory the size of Western Europe in a challenging geopolitical environment.

Today, by contrast, Kazakhstan is a rapidly developing country with a robust market



Multilateral cooperation: Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Erlan Idrissov speaks during the general debate Sept. 27 of the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly at U.N. Headquarters in New York. EMBASSY OF KAZAKHSTAN

economy that is a generator of stability and growth in Central Asia. Our commitment to social, political and economic reform has made us a key ally and trade partner with Europe, the United States, Russia, China, India and other Asian countries in a strategically vital part of the world.

Under the leadership of President Nursultan Nazarbayev who guided Kazakhstan through independence to its position today, we have kept to a path of gradual reforms, starting with economic liberalization and moving only to political modernization once we had achieved economic stability.

From the beginning, we decided to use our vast natural resources to improve the living standards of each and every citizen. Revenues from oil production, for example, have benefited all of our 17 million citizens. Education and social welfare have always been top priorities and, since 1994, average income per capita has increased twelvefold. Unemployment remains low at a stable level.

Reform of education is central to our plans to build a modern industrial base and double GDP by 2020. A far-reaching set of reforms is under way aimed at equipping our schools, higher education institutions and research institutes to meet the demands of innovation in the

knowledge economy.

Kazakhstan's economy is the largest in Central Asia and its growth rate is among the highest in the world. Thanks to our commitment to the rule of law and political stability, Kazakhstan has been a magnet for foreign investors, attracting more than \$170 billion in foreign direct investment since 1993, which is 80 percent of all foreign investment in Central Asia.

Since independence, our GDP per capita has grown sixteenfold from \$700 to \$12,000. GDP growth averaged 10 percent per year from 1999 to 2007. It grew 7.5 percent in 2011, 5.8 percent in 2012 and is on target to reach 6 percent in 2013.

Kazakhstan was listed 49th in the World Bank/IFC's "Doing Business 2013" report that compares regulation for domestic companies across 185 economies. In the World Economic Forum's latest annual report on global competitiveness published in September, Kazakhstan gained 21 places to reach 50th position out of 148.

We remain committed to developing a modern economic base to ensure that Kazakhstan becomes a competitive player in the markets for innovative goods and services.

At the same time, we are conscious of the effects of economic

growth on the environment. We are strongly committed to sustainable growth policies. We also remember that the Soviet Union's disregard for the results of nuclear testing led to negative outcomes.

Like Japan, but in a different way, we have suffered greatly from the effects of nuclear weapons. One of President Nazarbayev's first decrees was to close the nuclear testing site at Semipalatinsk where 450 nuclear tests took place over 40 years, causing suffering to an estimated 1.5 million people. Kazakhstan then voluntarily gave up its massive nuclear arsenal, the world's fourth largest, and began to work tirelessly with other nations to destroy existing nuclear weapons and to ban their manufacture.

In 2009, in recognition of Kazakhstan's contribution to non-proliferation, the United Nations declared Aug. 29 — the day we shut down Semipalatinsk — International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Kazakhstan is home to over 130 ethnic groups with dozens of religions that coexist peacefully, a feature of our history but also a reflection of our commitment to interethnic and interreligious concord.

We have continued that tradition by convening international congresses of religious leaders and working closely with international organizations. In 2010 we chaired the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and hosted this body's first summit in 11 years in our capital, Astana.

Our chairmanship of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2011-12 was a vivid testament of that policy, focused in this case on promoting better understanding between predominantly Muslim countries and the rest of the world.

We have consistently pursued multilateral cooperation. At our initiative, new organizations have taken shape to foster greater cooperation, including the 24-country Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia. The security-building initiative brings together 24 countries, accounting for over 90 percent of the territory of Asia and 3 billion people. This vast area stretches east-west from Turkey to South Korea and north-south from Russia to Thailand.

The idea of creating a regional platform for dialogue and consultation on security issues was proposed by President Nazarbayev in 1992, and reflects Kazakhstan's commitment to developing patterns of cooperation



Contemporary view: In a short period of time, the capital of Kazakhstan Astana has become one of the new centers of international diplomacy. It hosts summits and major events of a global scale. EMBASSY OF KAZAKHSTAN

in Asia to manage the diverse security challenges facing the region. These threats range from proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to separatism, terrorism and extremism, disputes over water and energy resources, as well as organized crime, illegal migration, drug trafficking and others.

Thanks to our economic success, we have transformed ourselves from a beneficiary of aid to a donor country, offering assistance to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and famine-stricken Somalia.

We have also made progress toward democracy by holding democratic elections, opening the way for free media, and developing a structure for multiple political parties to work actively in our national and local legislatures. We are committed to developing a competitive multiparty system as foreseen by our Constitution. We have a long way to go develop our institutions as we would like but we have started the process and we are committed to moving forward.

In short, Kazakhstan has made rapid progress over the last 20 years on multiple fronts. We are not resting on our laurels though. We are determined to consolidate those achievements and create the conditions for the

country's long-term prosperity.

As the largest landlocked country in the world, we have a strong interest in having the best possible access to global markets, including to our south. The stabilization of Afghanistan and its pursuit of harmonious relations with its neighbors are an important part of that process. So too is the normalization of Iran's relations with the international community.

The situation in Afghanistan and its potential consequences for the wider region are the clearest reminder that these security problems are real and require coordinated approaches by countries in its neighborhood to be managed effectively.

While Asia has enormous human and natural resources that have made it a powerhouse of economic growth in recent decades, we see it marked by stark contradictions: Dynamic economic development is often accompanied by high levels of poverty and countries that are committed to greater integration are, in some cases, caught up in protracted conflicts.

In short, the region faces multiple sources of potential instability.

Kazakhstan is also laying the foundations for closer integration within the region, and between Europe and Asia. We have established a new rail cor-

ridor linking China with Europe and are part of the project to build a 8,445-km modern highway linking Western China with Western Europe with nearly 2,800 km passing through Kazakhstan. We are at the heart of efforts to build a new "Silk Road" of trade routes across Central Asia. New energy links are being established between Central Asia and China, including from Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan's fruitful and productive relationship with Japan is an excellent example of our policy of international integration. This relationship has also delivered significant results in strengthening peace and security across the Asia-Pacific region.

Japan is one of Kazakhstan's key strategic partners in Asia. We have worked together closely on a multilateral basis in many international organizations such as the U.N., IAEA, IMF, World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

We also collaborate closely in the "Central Asia + Japan" dialogue established on Japan's initiative in August 2004. Since its creation, the forum has proved to be a solid platform for the exchange of ideas and opinions between Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The forum has raised relations between Japan and Central Asia to a new level by

creating an enhanced framework for cooperation in areas such as peacekeeping and democracy, the economy, intraregional cooperation in the Central Asia region and addressing intraregional disparities.

There has been notable recent progress in terms of economic development between Kazakhstan and Japan, and there is a number of other obvious synergies between us. Japan's leadership in the development and introduction of innovative technologies presents great opportunities for future collaboration with Kazakhstan, given our commitment to modernize our economy and reduce our dependence on raw materials exports. Our economy will only be able to develop with strong investment in the best technologies. Tokyo is also a global financial center, and Kazakhstan is ready and eager to learn from Tokyo's success in developing this capability.

We believe that it is time to raise the level of strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and Japan. The rapidly growing bilateral trading relationship provides us with the opportunity to do this. In 2012, trade between Kazakhstan and Japan exceeded \$2 billion. We hope that economic ties will receive a further boost in 2014 when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visits Kazakhstan.

In fact, Kazakhstan is well placed to become a regional hub for introducing Japanese technology, and for promoting Japanese business interests in Central Asia and our immediate neighborhood. Membership of the Customs Union together with Belarus and Russia, also gives Kazakhstan greater scope to act as a conduit for Japanese trade. Kazakhstan's stable business climate gives foreign companies first-rate opportunities to create high-tech production facilities in the country. Goods can be exported directly and freely throughout the territory of the Customs Union.

For its part, Kazakhstan is very interested in collaborating with Japan in the areas of education and science. We need to improve the level of education and scientific research in the country. In little over three years' time, Astana will host EXPO-2017 on the theme of "Future Energy." In the run up to this major event, we are putting heavy focus on facilitating projects with international partners aimed at developing and introducing energy-saving technologies, and hope that Japanese businesses and research institutes can be involved.

There are other sectors of the economy where there is significant potential for cooperation between our two countries such as energy, engineering, mining, petrochemicals, metallurgy, transport, communications and agriculture.

Kazakhstan is ready to develop its partnership with Japan in all directions. We look to the future with great optimism — the possibilities of our partnership are endless.



Nature's bounty: (Left) The lakes and pine-covered mountains of the Burabay resort area have long been regarded as Kazakhstan's "Switzerland." EMBASSY OF KAZAKHSTAN

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Timeline of Kazakhstan's freeing itself of WMD

The following is a brief overview of some of Kazakhstan's efforts to free itself of weapons of mass destruction.

1991

Aug. 29: President Nursultan Nazarbayev of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic issues a decree shutting down the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site, four months before the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was on this same day Aug. 29, but 42 years earlier, in 1949, that the USSR conducted its first nuclear test at Semipalatinsk.

Dec. 16: The Republic of Kazakhstan declares its independence.

Dec. 26: Kazakhstan and the United States establish full diplomatic relations. The fate of the nuclear arsenal in Kazakhstan is of paramount priority for the leaders of both countries.

Dec. 30: The USSR formally ceases to exist. Kazakhstan inherits the world's fourth-largest nuclear arsenal, including 1,040 nuclear warheads for intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) of 1 megaton TNT-equivalent each, 104 RS-20 ICBMs, as well as a squadron of 40 TU-95 heavy bombers armed with Kh-55 air-land cruise missiles with 370 tactical nuclear warheads.

1992

May 23: Kazakhstan signs the Lisbon Protocol to the Treaty between the U.S. and the USSR on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START I Treaty), by which it renounces the possession of nuclear weapons and accepts obligations to ensure the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons.

July 2: Kazakhstan's Parliament ratifies the START I Treaty.

1993

Jan. 14: Kazakhstan signs the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction.

Dec. 13: Kazakhstan's Parliament ratifies the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. On the same day, in Almaty, President Nursultan Nazarbayev and U.S. Vice President Albert Gore sign the Framework Agreement opening the way toward implementation of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (Nunn-Lugar program) in Kazakhstan.

1994

Feb. 14: President Nursultan Nazarbayev presents ratification documents to U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington, D.C., by which Kazakhstan formally accedes to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as a nonnuclear-weapon state.

February: Kazakhstan joins the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). All 40 TU-95 heavy bombers are removed from Kazakhstan to Russia.

November: 581 kilograms of highly enriched uranium are removed to the U.S. from the Ulba Metallurgy Plant in northeastern Kazakhstan through a joint Kazakhstan-U.S. secret operation code-named Project Sapphire.

This material, left at Ulba from the time of nuclear fuel production for Soviet submarines, would have been enough to produce 20-25 nuclear warheads.

December: The U.S., the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation, the states depositors of the NPT Treaty, sign the Memorandum on Security Assurances with Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine, as countries who have renounced nuclear weapons. In short order, France and China, two other nuclear-weapon states, provide similar guarantees to Kazakhstan.

1995

April: All 1,040 nuclear warheads for ICBMs and all 370 nuclear warheads for ALCMs are removed from Kazakhstan to Russia.

May: The last nuclear device is destroyed at the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site, after being left there since 1990. In September 1996, Kazakhstan becomes one of the first signatories to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

1996

September: All 104 ICBMs are removed from Kazakhstan to Russia for destruction, three years ahead of schedule required by the START I Treaty.

1997

October: The U.N. General Assembly approves the first resolution calling on member states to provide assistance to regions of Kazakhstan that suffered from nuclear testing.

1999

September: All 148 ICBM silos are destroyed in four regions across Kazakhstan. The Tokyo conference on Semipalatinsk is held resulting in a decision to implement 38 rehabilitation projects in the Semipalatinsk region.

2000

March: Kazakhstan ratifies the Chemical Weapons Convention.

July: The last test tunnel is destroyed at the Degelen mountain complex at the Semipalatinsk test site. A total of 181 tunnels and 13 unused test holes were destroyed at the test site.

September: The capacity of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (Nunn-Lugar program) in Kazakhstan is eliminated.

2001

July: The joint Kazakhstan-U.S. project concludes at BN-350 fast-breeder reactor in Aktau whose aim was the security of more than 3,200 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium, enough to produce 400 nuclear bombs. The reactor had been shut down for several years before that.

2002

February: The joint project between the Nuclear Threat Initiative, the Kazatomprom national nuclear company of Kazakhstan, the Ulba Metallurgical Plant and the Nonproliferation Support Centre begins to securely transport fresh highly enriched

uranium fuel from BN-350 reactor and blend it down at Ulba.

May: Kazakhstan is accepted into the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which sets principles of export controls in nuclear-related trade.

2004

December: Kazakhstan and the U.S. sign an amendment to the Framework Agreement on cooperation in nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which moved the two nations toward a new level of cooperation in fighting the spread of biological weapons and the threat of bioterrorism.

2005

April: The U.S. Senate unanimously adopts Resolution 122, recognizing the historic efforts of Kazakhstan to reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction through cooperation in the Nunn-Lugar/Cooperative Threat Reduction Program.

July: Kazakhstan joins the Proliferation Security Initiative, also known as the Krakow Initiative. Its aim is to draw all countries into the interdiction of air and sea vessels as well as land transport suspected of carrying weapons of mass destruction-related materials.

September: In addition to all 12 U.N. counterterrorism conventions, Kazakhstan accedes to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

December: The U.N. General Assembly unanimously adopts a resolution calling upon the international community to continue to support Kazakhstan in addressing the challenges of the rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region and its population, taking additional actions, including by facilitating the implementation of the Kazakhstan national program on addressing the prob-



World leader: President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan (front row, sixth from left) attends the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., from April 12 to 13, 2010. At the summit and at the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, Kazakhstan was recognized as a de facto leader of the global nonproliferation movement. EMBASSY OF KAZAKHSTAN

lems of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in a comprehensive manner.

2006

February: The joint Kazatomprom-NTI project on secure transportation of fresh highly enriched uranium fuel from BN-350 reactor and its down-blending at UMP is completed. Almost 3 tons of highly enriched uranium, enough to produce two dozen nuclear bombs, were down-blended and turned into low enriched uranium usable only in peaceful purposes.

May: Kazakhstan and the U.S. sign an agreement under the Second Line of Defense program of the U.S. Department of Energy calling for greater cooperation in preventing illicit trafficking of nuclear materials through the supply and deployment of special radiation detection equip-

ment.

July: Kazakhstan becomes one of the founding members of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism announced by Russia and the U.S. The U.S. House of Representatives unanimously adopts Resolution 905, congratulating Kazakhstan on the 15th anniversary of the closure of the world's second-largest nuclear test site in the Semipalatinsk region. The resolution notes that "Kazakhstan's leadership and cooperation with the United States on nonproliferation matters is a model for other countries to follow."

September: In Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, together with four other countries of Central Asia — Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, — signs the Treaty on the Central Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (CANWFZ), making an important collective contribution

to strengthening regional and global security.

2007

July: Astana hosts the 3rd meeting of deputy foreign ministers of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

2008

September: Kazakhstan hosts the Integrated Field Experiment organized by the CTBT preparatory commission. This large-scale endeavor brought a meaningful contribution to strengthening the nonproliferation regime.

November: Kazakhstan is accepted into the Zangger Committee.

2009

March: The Treaty on the Central Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (CANWFZ), signed in September 2006 in Semipalatinsk, enters into force following

Aug. 29: The International Day against Nuclear Tests is marked at the U.N. and throughout the world for the first time.

November: In another critical nuclear nonproliferation milestone, Kazakhstan, in close cooperation with the U.S. and the IAEA, completes a large-scale 12-month project to ensure long-term secure storage for more than 10 metric tons of highly enriched uranium and 3 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium from the BN-350 reactor in Aktau — enough material to make about 800 nuclear weapons. The fuel is now safely stored in Eastern Kazakhstan.

2011

Aug. 29: The 20th anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site.

2012

Jan. 24: Kazakhstan officially joins the Global Partnership countries' Group of Eight (G-8) against the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

March 27: President Nursultan Nazarbayev reaffirms his strong commitment to strengthening the international nuclear security framework and calls for bolder actions of the international community in the nuclear field while addressing the participants of the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul.

Aug. 29: President Nursultan Nazarbayev announces the launch of The ATOM project in a speech at an international parliamentary conference in Astana as a mechanism to generate global public support for a final and irrevocable ban on nuclear weapons testing, and for the ultimate eradication of nuclear weapons.


2010

April: U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visits the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and says: "To realize the world free from nuclear weapons is the top priority for the United Nations, and most ardent aspiration of mankind. Here, in Semipalatinsk, I call on all nuclear-weapon states to follow suit of Kazakhstan." Later, President Nursultan Nazarbayev participates in the Global Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., and outlines Kazakhstan's contribution to and vision of a world free from nuclear weapons.

2013

Feb. 25-26, April 5-6: Kazakhstan hosts two rounds of talks on Iran's nuclear program. President Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiative to offer Kazakhstan as the ground for talks in Almaty was designed to contribute to creating an atmosphere of trust between Iran and the group of international negotiators as well as giving a positive impetus to the negotiations.

Congratulations
 to the People of the
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 on the Occasion of
 the 22nd Anniversary of
 Their Independence


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