



**DELEGATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN TO THE OSCE**

ENGLISH only

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Statement

**by Usen Suleimen, Ambassador-at-Large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Kazakhstan at the Closing Plenary of
the OSCE Conference “Internet 2013”**

Vienna, 15 February 2013

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The delegation of the Republic of Kazakhstan expresses sincere thanks to the Office of the Representative for Freedom of Media for an excellent arrangement of the Conference with almost 400 participants – the biggest ever we recollect since several years ago. We also commend inviting professional speakers and moderator, whose views and valuable insights will, we hope, contribute to promoting free media in the OSCE area.

Already been given a great deal to reflect on by the contributions and discussions we have heard. We don't, for a moment, believe in Kazakhstan that we have all the answers about the digital space or that we have got everything right.

We recognise there is more to do to get the correct balance right between harnessing the internet's extraordinary potential to drive prosperity and social and individual development and the need to protect the safety of our citizens and stability of our society.

These threats are, of course, a problem for all countries. But it is a particularly real for Kazakhstan which is located in an unstable region where sadly violent extremism has got a foothold in neighbouring countries. And a special danger for a nation like ours, which has taken the deliberate decision to create an open society.

But our strong growth has been matched by an equally impressive rise in internet use. Over 40 per cent of our citizens are now web-users, an almost three-fold increase since 2008. The number of domain names registered in our country is rising by 25 per a year. It is not, of course, as good as many developed countries with their near universal access but it is good both for our region and the relative development of Kazakhstan.

As a Government, we understand the importance of spreading these opportunities as widely as possible. We are investing significantly to provide the infrastructure needed to tackle the digital divide and allow the power of the web to be harnessed by all our regions and all our citizens. This includes reducing costs and maximising coverage so that the internet can be accessed from mobile phones.

There is a concerted drive to move as much of Government on-line as possible for citizens to reduce costs, cut delays and limit the opportunities for corruption. We are keen to provide as much content as possible in Kazakh, in Russian and in English.

And, of course, our young people, like their generation across the world, have adopted social media as their own. Even some Kazakh politicians have turned to twitter to get their message across to wider audiences.

All of this explains why Kazakhstan was ranked the country with the most improved performance in the global index of the World Web Foundation. We were placed 28th out of 61 in the Index which measured the impact of the web around the world.

But we are determined to do better still. We also know that the WWF criticises us for what it calls ‘periodic’ censorship of the web within the country. It is a criticism echoed, I know, in other forums. We want to move as quickly as possible to a position where expression is free unless it directly threatens the stability of our society.

After all, freedom of expression is guaranteed under our constitution.

In recent years, we have seen moves to bring Kazakhstan in line with other countries. We have, for example, moved to make defamation a civil rather than a criminal offence – and prevent organisations claiming penal costs for damage to their reputations. But understand we have to go further – and with the help of our partners will do so.

The internet is providing extraordinary opportunities for economic, social and personal development. We are determined that our country and people will benefit from them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.