



DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN TO THE OSCE

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Statement by Usen Suleimenov, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the International Organizations in Vienna at the 882nd Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on 13 October 2011

In response to the statement by the United States on New Religion Law in Kazakhstan

Excellencies,

In Kazakhstan the right to freedom of choice of faith, including those of religious, is guaranteed by Article 22 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, by corresponding laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and by the International Acts, the main of which are the Universal declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on civil and political rights.

These documents allow every citizen of Kazakhstan freely choose religious or other faiths, exercise both individually and jointly any religion *ad libitum*.

Kazakhstan undoubtedly is a leader in promoting the ideas of religious tolerance. Kazakhstan's experience of interfaith dialogue has gained recognition and support from the religious leaders throughout the world.

Today, some 4 551 religious associations are officially registered in Kazakhstan, including 2 815 Islamic, 1 283 Protestant, 306 Orthodox, 118 Roman Catholic, 25 Jewish and 4 Buddhist. In 1991, their number barely reached 700.

Kazakhstan has recently witnessed a series of events that proved the radical Islamist organizations seek to gain ground in the country. This was one of the reasons of adopting the Law.

The new law upholds the separation of the state and religion as a fundamental value of the secular state of Kazakhstan.

The international experience indicates the necessity of having similar provisions in their laws on religion. Numerous conflicts and tragedies in Europe, which had been provoked by new religious tides, have caused undertaking steps both on the governmental levels and on the levels of the European international organizations.

Thus, the European Parliament had adopted a resolution on 12 February 1996 on cults in Europe, in which it called on the Member States (I quote) "... to ascertain whether their judicial, fiscal and penal provisions are adequate to prevent the activities of such cults from resulting in

unlawful actions” (end of quote). This resolution also calls on the governments of the Member States (I quote again) “not to make the granting of religious status automatic and to consider, in the case of sects involved in undercover or criminal activity, withdrawing their status as religious communities, which confers tax advantages and certain legal protection” (end of quote).

Indeed, states differ in their laws on religion, including in their requirements for registration for religious groups. Great variety exists regarding registration of religious communities in European countries, with a numerical threshold at times reaching 20 000 adult numbers.

The delegation of Kazakhstan, unfortunately, continues to be puzzled by a selective approach of the USA to some OSCE participating States. There is an impression that Kazakhstan is a sort of “a thorn in someone’s side” and deserves to be most frequently criticized on many occasions.

Is not it surprising that the same USA never raised any current issue when in July this year one of the EU member adopted a Law which de-registered over 300 minority religions, leaving associated rights and concessions to only fourteen faiths. To regain their status as religions, organizations then had to undergo an administrative and legislative process – the most burdensome in the OSCE region – which culminates in a parliamentary vote requiring a two thirds majority.

Thank you.