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THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN TO THE OSCE

**Address by H.E. Mr. Kassymzhomart Tokaev,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan
at the 631st special meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council
(Vienna, 27 October 2006)**

Mr. Chairman,
Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a privilege for me to address such a distinguished audience and I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Belgian chairmanship for convening this special meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council.

Today I would like to elaborate on the issue of our bid to chair the Organization in 2009.

Kazakhstan voiced its initiative as early as in 2003 in order to give impetus to our continuous efforts to comply with the high OSCE criteria. We have been always bearing in mind special responsibility of a candidate for such an important international position.

A month ago you had an opportunity to discuss the progress on the most pressing issues with the members of the State Commission on development and concretization of the program of democratic reforms in Kazakhstan. The Commission is chaired by President Nazarbayev which reflects the importance of this instrument of the dialogue between all political forces in Kazakhstan.

The Commission adopts decisions on current agenda of democratic reforms in my country, namely: the increase of the role and status of the Parliament, the enhancement of the role of political parties and NGOs, the liberalization of media, the election of local governments, the improvement of the electoral law and practice, further implementation of administrative, judicial and legal reforms.

We have invited experts from the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe to participate in the meeting of the Working Group on Constitutional reforms headed by the leader of one of the opposition parties.

We take very seriously all OSCE recommendations while pursuing democratic reforms in Kazakhstan. The OSCE Center in Almaty and its Head,

Ambassador Ivar Vikki contribute a lot in promoting efficiency and constant progress in our joint efforts.

Since free and fair elections are a prerequisite of democracy, Kazakhstan is steadfast in improving its electoral practice, putting it into compliance with the spirit and letter of the Copenhagen Document. That is why we appreciate ODIHR's continuous involvement in addressing this issue.

In the last year and a half we have regularly discussed the follow-up mechanisms to implement recommendations of election observation missions. Our country supports this format of interaction.

To illustrate the progress, I would like to inform you that the draft amendments to the Law on Elections were adopted in the first reading at the joint session of the chambers of the Kazakhstan Parliament on the 29th of September. They remove existing restrictions on rallies after closure of polling stations and before announcement of official results. The second reading on the draft is scheduled for the 24th of November.

Kazakhstan also supports the "Copenhagen plus" Concept to complement and strengthen the Copenhagen Document. In our opinion, it introduces new and stronger commitments in the sphere of tolerance and non-discrimination; elimination of torture or other inhuman treatment or punishment; gender equality; prevention of hate crimes; moratorium and complete abolition of death penalty; fight against neo-fascism and xenophobia, etc. ODIHR calls them "specific commitments".

We are open for further dialogue. If any individual government believes that it could provide better expertise, we welcome them to join experts from the ODIHR and Venice Commission or any other domestic and international institution. We believe that it is time to switch from general calls to a routine job, and we are already doing so.

Dear Ambassadors,

The OSCE is a major European organization where Kazakhstan is an equal and full-fledged participant. It gives us an excellent opportunity to contribute to safeguarding the peace and stability in the whole Eurasia.

We represent Central Asia which did not enjoy proper attention in the recent past. Fortunately, this region now is in the focus of the international community which is sincerely interested in making Central Asia more secure, stable and prosperous. We appreciate this goodwill, and would like to reciprocate while taking measures to promote reliable partnership.

In this respect Kazakhstan is strongly committed to the OSCE basic principles.

Our strong determination to chair the OSCE in 2009 implies no unjustified ambition and pressure. Kazakhstan is eager to contribute to strengthening the potential and efficiency of the Organization.

Kazakhstan as well as the vast majority of the OSCE participating states which support our bid are subjects of consensus. In this respect, I

would like to express profound gratitude to all the countries that supported our candidacy. We really appreciate this gesture of goodwill and understanding. Kazakhstan will never forget this support.

However, our bid is facing some difficulties and misinterpretations.

We do not overdramatize them and ready to continue consultations on the issues of common concerns. Otherwise, it will create dividing lines in our Organization, which all of us, including Kazakhstan, are not interested in. What Kazakhstan as well as all partners are interested in is a stable, credible and strong OSCE, capable to address the existing problems in the area of its responsibility, particularly in Central Asia.

This is the reason why I want to once again draw your attention to our claim to head the OSCE in order to contribute to promoting stability, cooperation and democracy in our region.

We strongly believe that Kazakhstan deserves to be supported in its bid. The leadership and the multiethnic people of my country made a real progress in building democracy and civil society. We have been doing so proceeding from the understanding that we need more freedoms, more liberal values to back the economic progress based on the principles of the market economy. Within 15 years of independence Kazakhstan succeeded to make so many achievements in the area of democracy that in some countries became possible in the much longer period of time.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to assure you that this basic policy will be continued. It is a common interest, a common desire, a common determination and a common demand of our people. We want to be a genuine democratic country where the basic values and the standards reflected in the documents of the OSCE will be undoubtedly prevailing. On this way Kazakhstan has already made a lot, and therefore, from our opinion, is eligible to chair the OSCE in less than three years.

I also request you to take into account that all political forces in Kazakhstan are united in understanding of the necessity of the 2009 chairmanship. It corresponds with the logic of political and economic reforms in our country.

Kazakhstan wants to get consensus on its bid while getting ready to join the Troika. To this end we look for the practical assistance in training our experts and preparing for this important international mission.

Kazakhstan welcomes the adoption of the rules of procedure which we consider an important step towards strengthening the OSCE. Procedural norms of decision-making on Chairmanship-in-Office, its functions and sphere of responsibility of this institution are precisely determined in Article III "Chairmanship and Troika". Its content gives clear guidelines to adopt the decision on the OSCE Chairman-in-Office being based on juridical norms rather than political considerations.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

I also would like to elaborate on the key guidelines of our Chairmanship in 2009.

They will be based on decisions of the OSCE Ministerial meetings and ensure continuity of the previous policies to maintain high OSCE standards and principles.

Kazakhstan can share its advanced expertise in many spheres and avail of its geopolitical features to increase the Organization's potential.

It is broadly recognized that Kazakhstan succeeded in maintaining interethnic and interfaith concord – a key element of humanitarian security in the whole OSCE area and beyond. The latest developments make tolerance and education critical for the global security, sustainable economic and political development. Intolerance, arrogance and ignorance are the nourishing ground for embarrassment, extremism and terrorism.

Dialogue between nations and cultures is an imperative demand of our time. That is why Kazakhstan feels obliged to contribute its expertise in order to strengthen security and expand cooperation – the primary goals of our Organization.

I believe that the OSCE should be more active in developing educational projects to promote respect of religious and ethnic diversity. We must concentrate on preventing hate crimes, xenophobia, neo-fascism and religious extremism.

Democratic and economic progress becomes unrealistic without peace and stability, based on tolerance and mutual understanding. We witness such examples all over the globe.

That is the reason we want to put tolerance and nondiscrimination on the top of our chairmanship agenda in 2009.

Kazakhstan intends to focus on non-military aspects of security as well. We need task-oriented efforts to ensure Organization's capability to deal with new challenges, to deepen cooperation with other international organizations.

Countries East and West of Vienna face growing threats which are posed by international criminal structures. Their involvement into drug trafficking, money-laundering, trafficking in human beings comes across with similar activities of international terrorist organizations. It multiplies negative impact on our societies. We must improve our strategy and tactics to efficiently combat this evil.

The role of Central Asia within the OSCE is growing. The region is close to one of the "hottest spots" – Afghanistan. We stay first on the flow of drugs, spread of religious extremism and international terrorism. The countries in this part of the world are vulnerable to such powerful trends, since they are undergoing difficult and painful changes.

That is why long-term security in Central Asia and in Afghanistan as an OSCE partner country is another top issue of our agenda. The OSCE has to be a part of international efforts to rehabilitate Afghanistan. Kazakhstan is already considering different practical ways to assist international teams and to invest in its own projects in that country. Last month I have sent an assessment team headed by my deputy to Afghanistan. Its report is being scrutinized and that requires some time. But even now, it is absolutely clear that Kazakhstan will be actively involved in the economic build up of Afghanistan. On the other hand, Afghanistan should also be actively engaged into developments in Central Asia. That is another way to address this pressing issue.

Many of the OSCE participating states, including Kazakhstan, are landlocked countries. That represents a very serious challenge to economic security not only in these states but in the whole OSCE region. I believe that Almaty Action Plan and relevant UN resolutions provide good framework to deal with this type of issues.

Kazakhstan as a future chairman is ready to coordinate efforts and contribute to the development of transport and transit potential of all OSCE participating states, which was reflected in the statement of Central Asian countries at the last Economic Forum in Prague.

One of the major prerequisites of successful reforming of the Organization is to achieve a proper balance between its three dimensions. We welcome the initiatives to revive economic and environmental as well as politico-military dimensions without diminishing the role and scope of the activities in human dimension, which is extremely important for the authority and potential of the OSCE.

Efficiency of the OSCE depends upon the success of structural and institutional improvements. We need to specify the OSCE's role and place among other international organizations which deal with the security and cooperation. It is time to evaluate the true operational potential of the Organization and to optimize its management, decision-making, field operations and institutions, etc.

The OSCE does not fully comply with the status of an international organization since it does not possess legal personality. That, in particular, affects the staff deployed in the areas of crisis. They find themselves deprived of protection ensured by diplomatic status.

That is why we support the idea to draft a Convention which would turn the OSCE into a full-scale regional organization.

I find it reasonable to enhance the Organization's environmental and economic programs. However, we need to avoid overlapping with activities of other international organizations. The priority should be given to the needs of recipient states. That would allow us to focus on result-oriented projects and spend properly our human, financial and other resources.

The OSCE proved to be a unique institution promoting democracy, the rule of law and civil societies. We sincerely hope that the Organization will be able to maintain its record.

However, the OSCE and its institutions should refrain from selective and politically motivated assessments of developments in the participating states. They must prioritize projects which are aimed at improving legislation and related practices, ensuring the rule of law, enhancing intercommunal tolerance upon request of recipient states.

General activities related to the humanitarian security must cover the whole OSCE area.

Mr. Chairman,

The potential of the OSCE remains high despite current complications. The Organization has to utilize every chance to reach the highest goals and ensure its principles. It has reliable conflict-prevention and confidence-building tools which can be applied in all of its three dimensions.

We want our unique forum to live up to the expectations of all participating states with no exception and division into advanced and developing ones. That is our direct and primary responsibility.

That is how we picture the future of the OSCE, and Kazakhstan is doing its best to increase the role and influence of the Organization at the international arena and in our part of the world in particular.

Marc Twain once said: "I can teach anybody how to get what they want out of life. The problem is that I can't find anybody who can tell me what they want".

That's a way to put it, that there is absolutely no point in choosing the road without knowing the destination.

Because success is not about the position - it's about the direction.

Thank you.