

Testimony by
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to appear before you today to testify on issues related to Kazakhstan’s 2010 OSCE Chairmanship. We register such a positive fact that it’s a second hearings on Kazakhstan in the Congress during past several months.

First of all, let me begin with words of **appreciation for your, Mr.Chairman, and your colleagues’ participation in the work of this year’s Summer Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**. Ambassador Idrissov and officials in Astana have asked me to pass once again their thanks to you for your continued support of the development processes in Kazakhstan.

Astana was honored to extend its hospitality to such a strong delegation of the US Congress. I am sure the visit provided good opportunities for discussions on many important subjects, including Kazakhstan’s 2010 Chairmanship and the road that leads to it.

In my testimony today I will try to contribute to these discussions by informing the Commission about the major developments around the Kazakhstan’s Chairmanship, including the work we do to implement steps announced by Foreign Minister Tazhin last December in Madrid.

Indeed, the road that led us to the Madrid is rooted to the consistent foreign and internal policy our country implements since very first days of our independence. **Kazakhstan has been demonstrating responsibility and full adherence to the international law and commitments.**

We are proud to say that with our partners, including the United States, in the span of these 16 years we have jointly written **multiple success stories in two OSCE’s dimensions of the security – military-political and economic/ecological ones and now my country is ready to replicate success in Organization’s third, humanitarian dimension**. According to distinguished US politicians and representatives, including NGOs, the most notable **achievements, setting examples for other OSCE members in terms of commitment** to their international obligations, are:

1. **Nonproliferation record.** Kazakhstan has shown and continues to show leadership in these area (decisions to close down the world’s largest nuclear testing site in Semipalatinsk and to eliminate country’s fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world). Much of this work has been done within the framework of the Nunn-Lugar Initiative. In 1994, Kazakhstan transferred more than a half-ton of weapons-grade uranium to the United States. In 1995 Kazakhstan removed its last nuclear warheads. In May 2000 with U.S. assistance our country completed the sealing of 181 nuclear test tunnels. Export control system in Kazakhstan was recognized as a model for NIS.

Kazakhstan has signed the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (1992), the START Treaty (1992), the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1993), the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (2001).

2. **Leadership in strengthening Regional Security.** In 1992 Kazakhstan initiated a new regional concept of security and cooperation through **confidence-building measures in Asia, envisioned along the lines, principles and goals of the OSCE**. Since then the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) has been institutionalized and enjoys broad support in Asia. It provides a platform for interactions between various nations: India, Pakistan, Israel, Palestine, Russia, China, Japan and others. Member-states seek to enlarge cooperation, create and strengthen the atmosphere of peace, confidence, and friendship on the Asian continent in order to promote regional security.

Kazakhstan takes steps in furthering security in the “Greater Central Asia”. **Kazakhstan is the only CIS nation to adopt a Governmental Plan of Assistance to Afghanistan.** Astana has allocated \$ 3 mln. of state funds to build a road, a hospital and a school in different provinces of Afghanistan. In addition, we’re providing **training for Afghani border and security forces as well as for civil technical personnel.** We fully support the US efforts to widen international involvement in this process whether individually or through multilateral structures, including the OSCE.

Kazakhstan has been also contributing to the antiterrorist operation providing **thousands of free-of-charge over-flight rights to international coalition forces, operating in Afghanistan.** NATO’s leadership has praised Kazakhstan on various occasions for being one of the most active and effective partners in the framework of Partnership for Peace Program. *According to our American partners, they are very much satisfied with the cooperation between US and Kazakhstan special agencies in combating various extremist and terrorist organizations in Afghanistan.*

Our country has been one of the active participants and supporters of the strengthening of the **Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE)** which regulates, among other things, member-states’ activity in such an important region as Caucasus. In 2006, Kazakhstan effectively presided over the Third Conference on Review of the CFE Treaty and has held the OSCE Conference on Tolerance.

In 2003 Kazakhstan became the **first Muslim nation to send its military personnel to Iraq** to assist in reconstruction process and clear the cities, towns and villages from the dangerous explosives. During these five years our team of military engineers has destroyed more than 5 millions of explosive ordinance creating safe zones (up to 170 sq.m) for both Iraqi civilians and US forces engaged in security operations. In addition, our soldiers provide **training for the Iraqi military.** While other coalition members were announcing troop reductions and withdrawals Kazakhstan continued to stay in Iraq helping its people to return to peaceful life. Nine rotations of Kazakhstan military unit have been made since 2003.

5. **Kazakhstan has become a true exemplary model of ethnic and religious tolerance, which is one of the core principles of the OSCE.** In 2003 Kazakhstan initiated and hosted in Astana the Congress of World’s and Traditional

Religions. Second event took place in 2006. Next Summit will be held again in Astana in 2009, this time under the aegis of the United Nations.

On September 22nd, 2001 during his State visit to Kazakhstan Pope John Paul II said: **“It is with affection that I kiss this Land, which has given rise to a multi-ethnic state... Today in your Country, citizens belonging to over a hundred nationalities and ethnic groups live side by side, each guaranteed the same rights and freedoms... This spirit of openness and cooperation is part of your tradition...”** (*The Pope John Paul II called Kazakhstan “an example of harmony between men and women of different origins and beliefs.”*)

We will continue vigorously promote these values while chairing the OSCE in 2010 using experience and well-established practices of the member-states.

6. **Development of the Market Economy** is the pillar of Kazakhstan’s future progress that will contribute to the world’s economic security. Kazakhstan was the first among the CIS nations to receive “market economy status” both from the United States (in 2001) and the European Union (in 2002). Long term vision of our leadership is based on clear, well established principle: free market economy allows people, goods, capital and services to move freely within the country and abroad. This, in turn, provides a **solid platform for the country’s economic and political development, and simultaneously contributing to sustainable development of our neighbors.**

Today Kazakhstan, being one of the **leading investors in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan** strengthens their economic independence and security. Our country invests in various sectors of economy in **Ukraine**, as well as such countries-members of EU as **Germany, Romania, Bulgaria and Baltic states.**

In coming years we plan to intensify our efforts to promote market economy in the broader region as part of our 2010 OSCE Chairmanship agenda.

7. **Environmental Security.** Kazakhstan has inherited a number of major ecological disastrous as a legacy left by the Soviet Union: drying up Aral Sea, mitigating Caspian ecosystem, contaminated Semipalatinsk nuclear test-site, extremely polluted cities, desertification, and lack of mechanisms for regional transboundary water management. Despite the scale of the task, Kazakhstan, jointly with the World Bank, has managed to stop and **reverse the desiccation of the Northern Aral.** According to international and US environmental experts, this fact constitutes **“the first case of reversal of an environmental catastrophe of such magnitude in the history of humankind”**. The sea water has come back 30 miles in the span of the last few years. As a result, environmental and health conditions drastically improved, new jobs and opportunities for the local population were created, environment-associated illnesses has dropped significantly in the area.

6. **Energy Security.** The Government of Kazakhstan contributes to the global energy security by continuously increasing supplying of oil and gas to the world markets, including Georgia, Ukraine and other common partners in Eurasia. Among other things, this demonstrates **Kazakhstan’s commitment to the decisions of G8 summit in 2007** (President Nazarbayev was invited to the summit taking into account Astana’s growing role in this sphere and responsible energy policy).

7. **Contributing to the Food Security.** Kazakhstan, being one of the world's top 5 grain exporters, provides food security for Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Caucasus states. As part of our joint with the US efforts to rebuild **Afghanistan**, we provide this young democracy with food grain and seeds to help overcome local farmers' dependence on producing heroin poppy crops. Last delivery from Kazakhstan was 8,200 tons of grain.

This list can go on and on and each and every statement reflecting **Kazakhstan's exemplary records in the "OSCE's area of responsibility" can be backed up by the statements of distinguished representatives of the international community.**

Another point is that all of those instances of Kazakhstan's policy and actions have had positive effect on both, regional and global levels. **Constructiveness, consistency, reliability and responsibility – are the pillars of Kazakhstan's policy.** I would like to underscore the opinion of some American foreign policy experts who believe that, unlike other new "beacons of democracy" in our part of the world, Kazakhstan is more reliable and independent from any of the existing world "power houses", big or small ones.

Mr. Chairman,

When it comes to **internal political progress Kazakhstan adheres to similar principles of development – consistently and confidently** implementing step-by-step goals and commitments outlined in the Strategy 2030 and other long- and short term development plans.

During the years of independence Kazakhstan like no other former Soviet republic has been successful in implementing systemic and interconnected socio-economic reforms: pension, tax, administrative, banking and financial, utilities reforms, which a number of international institutions and experts call "models for the nations in the area of OSCE's responsibility".

Kazakhstan to big extent follows the historical path of major Western democracies, including the United States. True – we are in different geopolitical circumstances and at a different historical period. Nevertheless, we did what others had done: doing **greater accent on market and diversified economy and the development of nation's middle class – that is a bearer of free entrepreneurial spirit and universal values, or a backbone of a free democratic society.** As the observers here in America and in Europe have found, **the middle class in Kazakhstan has grown from 0% 15 years ago to, by various sources 25-40% of last year.** This is to compare with Ukraine's 8.9% of this layer of society (according to 2008 data of one of Canadian specialized information agency with 10 years experience and international personnel). In Russia corresponding figure is about 10-30%.

There is an ongoing **dialogue-process between the Government and the businesses** including foreign ones in the country.

We fully subscribe to the principle, that our Western partners and international organization want us to implement. We also entirely agree with argument that protection and promotion of **social, cultural and economic rights is the precondition of any development of any society**. We also completely realize those clear reasons Human Rights Watch relying upon when its web-site informs that organization is switching focus from political and civic rights to economic, social and cultural rights today. As it is outlined in the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, **“In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human rights, the ideal of free human beings... can only be achievable if... everyone may enjoy his economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his civil and political rights”**.

Our western partners are united in their opinion that **free entrepreneurial spirit is the strongest in Kazakhstan** among all post-soviet states.

We simultaneously pursue the implementation of provisions of the Covenant (article X) – the **protection and assistance to the family, furthering healthcare and education**.

34% Kazakhstan’s national budget are allocated on implementation of the social programs. Starting from 2000 **expenditures on education, healthcare and social security have increased 5-folds**. Today 5 million people, or one third of the population, benefit from the social security (two times more than in 2003). We **spend on education and healthcare per capita on par with several new EU member-states**. In 5-6 years from now Kazakhstan will reach the corresponding levels of many **developed Western European democracies**.

We believe that democracy, as one of its definitions states, is **“the informed decisions of enlightened citizens or individuals”**. Today Kazakhstan is developing **American-style “economy of knowledge”**. It is in full compliance and priorities of our society President Nazarbayev has launched the new national project **“Intelligent Nation 2020”** January this year at meeting with students. As many of you know, “Bolashak” presidential scholarship is a unique program that has allowed 15 years ago dozens, then- hundreds and now- thousands of young Kazakhstan people to study in leading academic centers of the United States and Europe. This year the scholarship’s budget has grown to an unprecedented **\$125 million**.

Mr. Chairman,

During the OSCE PA Session in Astana few weeks ago Assembly’s **President Goran Lennmarker said**: “We are confident that **Kazakhstan will continue to work toward meeting the commitments outlined by Kazakhstan at the OSCE Ministerial in Madrid** last year in good faith and in a transparent and inclusive manner. The OSCE stands ready to support Kazakhstan in this process.”

Mr. Lennmarker based his firm confidence on a clear record of significant achievements that the Government of Kazakhstan has made not only in terms of implementing its international commitments, as it was described above, but more

importantly in terms of keeping the pace in fulfilling its obligations before its people by providing protection and furthering their social and economic as well as political and civic rights.

Having reminded above mentioned facts (and *our American friends keep saying us that we should do it constantly*) let me bring your attention to the fact that **it is very offending for us to hear when someone continuously doubts the sincerity of Kazakhstan's efforts to further our own goals and priorities coinciding with the international community's ones.** Moreover, there are questions being raised in Kazakhstan within the society – is it mere lack of information and understanding of the facts, is it “short memory” or even some “geopolitical games”?

We wonder, how can there be any suspicion based on our record that Kazakhstan might abandon its course and destroy the logic and consistency of its sustainable development.

Let me reiterate that there should be no doubts whatsoever that Kazakhstan, having achieved with its partners such an impressive **joint successes in two of OSCE dimensions – politico-military and economic-environmental** – will be able to implement and **contribute accordingly in the same reliable, responsible and consistent manner to the humanitarian dimension of the OSCE.**

Let me also assure you that **Kazakhstan is pursuing its political modernization agenda consciously and independently from anyone's pressure to the East, West, North or South from us.**

I'd like to inform you on what has been done with regard to implementations of the **Madrid declarations** made by Foreign Minister Tazhin 8 months ago. We should stress here that already **in January the Government** has put together a **Plan for implementation of these declarations and established interagency working groups.** From our part, here in D.C. **the Embassy reached out to various partners – in the Congress, Department of State, think tanks and NGO** community requesting their advises and suggestions in regard to advancement of common goals within the potential agenda for Kazakhstan's CiO. The Embassy have held a series of round tables and the NGO community and think tanks reacted promptly. We defined issues of common interests and started working on them already (we also were promised to have DOS's official response soon). The Embassy has yet to receive a reply to its relevant diplomatic note.

Freedom of the Media

The main point of concern here was the issue of criminal **liability for defamation and libel in the Media.** After two rounds of consultations with the Office of the High Representative on Freedom of the Media (OHRFM) Mr. Miklos Harazsti the working group had put together a set of amendments to exclude defamation from a list of criminal offenses and libel from a list of offenses punishable by imprisonment.

The draft of the legislation has been sent to the OHRFM for the final review. Both the Government and **Mr.Harazsti's Office are satisfied with the dynamics**

and character of the cooperation. If this pace is kept, the **draft will be sent to the Parliament already this fall.**

While this work is under way, we ask our partners to bear in mind that many other OSCE members, like **Austria, Germany, France, Poland, Spain, Denmark, Finland, Latvia and Lithuania have maintained criminal liability for defamation and libel** in their national legislation.

Another issue of concern that we have been able to reach some progress on is the **further lessening of bureaucratic barriers that might affect the activities of the media.**

As High Representative Harazsti acknowledged during a round table, the Government has done a lot **“to decriminalize libel and de-monopolize media in the country and also to provide legal framework for protection of journalists’ confidential sources”.** This round table with the participation of OSCE experts and Union of Journalists has resulted in a package of recommendations for further amending the legislation on media.

This package is the key document that has been taken as the basis for deliberations by **the Working Group** that consists of the representatives of the Government, and relevant NGOs (**Internews Network, International Foundation for Protection of Freedom of Speech, Union of Journalists, Club of Chief Editors, National Association of TV and Radio Broadcasters and OSCE experts**).

Even the **main critic** of the existing legislation, the President of the International Foundation for Protection of Freedom of Speech **Ms. Tamara Kaleeva, has acknowledged that journalists in Kazakhstan enjoy freedom that their colleagues in many of other OSCE members do not have.** She has also expressed her commitment to continue participating in the work of the Working Group and her belief in ability of the WG to come up with the draft legislation that would satisfy the journalist community.

- **Improving Election Legislation.**

The ODIHR together with the Central Election Commission have held a **series of round tables** that included participation of the NGOs and all political parties’ representatives. These round tables have produced **250 recommendations, much of them were incorporated into the draft of the new Law on Elections.**

These amendments would **eliminate various limitations on registration of candidates, regulate more thoroughly the work of the election commissions, counting of votes, including electronic voting, as well as provide more clear rules of campaigning.**

It is expected that **several OSCE recommendations, such as providing guaranteed equal media coverage of candidates and their campaigns, lessening requirements for candidates and elimination of preferential treatment of ethnic minorities, will be incorporated** into the draft as well.

This draft is planned to be sent for Parliament's consideration September or October of this year.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission,

Immediately after the Government had began working on implementation of the Madrid declarations in close cooperation with the OSCE institutions, the Embassy has initiated here the discussion of Kazakhstan's Chairmanship agenda. The Embassy have held a series of round tables with Washington's leading think tanks and NGOs. Our partners from non-governmental sector has taken a very active role in this work and we have already reached agreements formally on this issue. We have approached few months ago the State Department with similar proposals. The Embassy has yet to receive a reply to its relevant diplomatic note.

Let me reiterate once more that Kazakhstan is fully committed to **strengthening of the ODIHR mandate**. We believe that this is a unique institution of equal dialogue that we must preserve. We will never let the traditions and values of the ODIHR to be diminished. The Embassy recently received a request from Central Election Commission in Astana to arrange a visit to the US of their team to observe the 2008 Presidential Elections. This would afford a wonderful opportunity for them to receive a first-hand experience and knowledge of "democracy at work". The CEC has approached with similar inquiries a few other OSCE members which will hold elections this year as well.

We are confident this type of cooperation, among other things, would have a strong positive impact on the process of implementation of Kazakhstan's Madrid declarations.

In 2010 Kazakhstan will continue its predecessors' work in OSCE's traditional areas: frozen conflicts, promotion of human rights and democratic values. We also plan to include in our agenda the following topics:

- assisting Central Asian nations in finding solutions to the regional problems;
- **continue efforts to stabilize and rebuild Afghanistan;**
- building bridges of dialogue between OSCE and OIC, OSCE and CICA to tackle common and similar challenges;
- **strengthening inter-religious tolerance.** Kazakhstan intends to apply historical experiences. This issue is of particular importance for entire OSCE neighborhood;
- **strengthening of the energy security** including through the development of the cooperation on new clean energy technology;
- **assisting the economic development of the OSCE nations.**

Kazakhstan's 2010 OSCE Chairmanship will catalyze deeper political modernization in the country. Moreover, we believe, this would send a clear positive signal to other transitional nations that a young state, responsible member of the OSCE can reach for higher standards both in economy and politics and, moreover, demonstrate leadership in these areas.