



REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

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Statement by

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of the Republic of Kazakhstan**

at the

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**Mr. Chairman,
Madam High Commissioner,
Distinguished delegates,**

The present session of the Human Rights Council is being held on the year of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – one of the most important landmarks in the history of world civilization. Let me, first of all, congratulate everyone on this remarkable occasion.

I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on being elected to chair this session and wish you every success in your noble work.

Let me also use this opportunity to welcome the High Commissioner for Human Rights Mrs. Louise Arbour to whom we wish to extend our full support. We are confident that Mrs. Arbour will continue to provide vibrant leadership for the Office of the High Commissioner in promoting and protecting human rights worldwide.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Kazakhstan strongly supported the creation of the Human Rights Council with the hope that human rights mechanisms will be further reinforced and strengthened. Kazakhstan believes that a reasonable balance between political and civil rights, on one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights, on the other, must always be maintained.

In recent years our world has gone through fundamental changes that often have a negative effect on international security and stability. We witness the emergence of new threats and challenges, which demand an adequate response from the international community.

Global threat of terrorism, various forms of discrimination and xenophobia, natural disasters, internal conflicts, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, problems of refugees and displaced persons, trafficking in women and children affect the protection of human rights and freedoms. Therefore, the Human Rights Council should address all these challenges in an effective and consistent manner.

The Council has a unique mission to accomplish - it is the most important institution to set global human rights standards and the focal point for international mechanisms in this sphere. There is no doubt that the establishment of the Council was a historic event within the framework of reforms aimed at improving the UN human rights system.

Kazakhstan welcomes the adoption of the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism, which should serve as a cooperative instrument based on objective and reliable information and on the interactive dialogue promoting the universality, interdependence, indivisibility and inter-relatedness of all human rights.

Respect for human rights, universal values and fundamental freedoms is the key to progress and safe future for everyone. In this regard let me stress that Kazakhstan has always been open and collaborative with the international community.

Kazakhstan supports the efforts of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to further perfect the human rights standards and principles with due regard to everyday needs of all people, and mainly, the vulnerable and affected groups. Kazakhstan will continue to work in close cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner and with its treaty bodies and special procedures in a constructive and cooperative spirit.

Mr. Chairman,

In 2010 Kazakhstan will chair the Organization for Cooperation and Security for Europe (OSCE). The three dimensions of its activity allow to give equal consideration to political and military issues, economic development and environmental protection, and human rights.

Kazakhstan believes that the human dimension is fundamental in the OSCE work and considers it to be one of the most important pillars of its future activity as the Organization's political leader.

In this regard I would like to provide a short overview of our future Chairmanship in the context of human dimension.

We support the OSCE efforts on strengthening civil society, rule of law, human rights and democratic reforms in the OSCE Participating States.

It is well known that one of the most significant Kazakhstan's achievements in the human dimension is the maintenance of interethnic and interreligious accord.

Kazakhstan intends to use its experience in this and other areas in its work with the institutes, responsible for the OSCE goals in human dimension domain.

Kazakhstan supported the establishment of three Personal representatives of the Chairman-in-Office on religious tolerance: for anti-Semitism, Muslims and for Christians and other religions. Freedom of conscience and religious tolerance are amongst the core principles, which the OSCE follows.

Kazakhstan's experience in promoting these principles could be regarded as exemplary. Our country hosted two Congresses of the leaders of the World and Traditional Religions, which brought together spiritual leaders of the major world confessions, as well as the OSCE High Level Meeting on Tolerance. Kazakhstan is a member of the group of friends of the "Alliance of Civilizations". This October we will host the forum of foreign ministers of Muslim and Western countries "Common World: Progress through Diversity".

In our view, the dialogue of civilizations and religions can turn diversity into a factor that does not divide but brings countries and nations closer together.

Mr. Chairman,

As we look back at the path Kazakhstan has traveled since gaining its independence, we can state that our country has made significant achievements. A stable developing economy has been created and more than 5,000 NGOs are actively participating in political and social life of the country. Freedom of speech is guaranteed, censorship is prohibited, independent mass media exists, over 85 percent of media outlets are privately owned. More than 130 ethnic and 40 religious groups live in harmony in Kazakhstan. Special attention is given to the rights of women and children.

This positive trend goes on. Last year Kazakhstan entered a new stage of its democratic development. In May 2007, Kazakhstan's Parliament approved several amendments to the Constitution, further strengthening legislative power, developing local self-governance, increasing the role of political parties, transferring the sanction for arrest from the prosecutor's office to the court and significantly narrowing the scope for the capital punishment. Following the constitutional reform, on August 18, 2007 Kazakhstan, for the first time in its history, held elections for the Majilis (Lower House) of the Parliament by a proportional system.

We are determined to continue our policy of democratization in conformity with international human rights standards.

Stemming from belief that promotion and protection of human rights should be based on the world's best practice, Kazakhstan joined the majority of the UN human rights conventions and treaties, including both the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Another important step in providing citizens with greater opportunities to protect their rights and improving national human rights mechanisms was taken this January when we adopted the Declaration recognizing the competence of the Committee against Torture to consider individual complaints under Articles 21 and 22 of the Convention against Torture.

We are also finalizing internal legal procedures on ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, signed by President Nazarbayev last September in New York on the margins of the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly.

We have a clear understanding that despite the importance of joining the international human rights instruments, the main difficulty is their proper implementation. Therefore, I would like to reaffirm the intention of the Government of Kazakhstan to continue its efforts to ensure compliance of its legislation and law-enforcement practice with international standards and to guarantee effective domestic remedies against human rights violations, including through increased capacity of national human rights institutions and a transparent and effective judicial system.

In addition, I would like to note that Kazakhstan has recently issued the Baseline Report on Human Rights, which presents a comprehensive analysis of

the national legislation and law-enforcement practice with respect to its compliance with international human rights standards. The conclusions and recommendations of the Baseline Report will lay the foundation of the National Human Rights Action Plan to be elaborated in accordance with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action later this year.

We strongly believe that such an Action Plan is critical for the achievement of more effective, consistent and coherent policy in the human rights domain with the involvement of state agencies, NGOs and international organizations.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion I would like to reiterate that Kazakhstan firmly believes that human rights must be a key factor in drafting legislation and administering public policy and justice. Individuals, in particular vulnerable groups, should be able to freely enjoy their human rights.

One of the most prominent Genevians of the past – Voltaire – being a patriarch of the European enlightenment and an advocate of the spirit of freethinking, stated that: “Great deeds require tireless constancy”. I would like to reaffirm Kazakhstan’s strong adherence to further cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner and Human Rights Council whose great task is to stand guard over human rights and liberties worldwide.

Thank you for attention.