

**Approaching the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe  
Chairmanship: Kazakhstan 2010**

**June 11, 2009**

I'm pleased to be here to talk about U.S. policy towards Kazakhstan and its upcoming OSCE Chairmanship. I also want to thank our hosts, the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Institute for New Democracies, for their interest and engagement on U.S. policy in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan is an important international partner for the United States. It is geographically strategic, ethnically diverse, and resource rich. Kazakhstan established its credentials for leadership early. It was the first country to renounce its nuclear weapons voluntarily after the break-up of the Soviet Union. From 2003-2008, Kazakhstan deployed engineering troops to Iraq, who disposed of explosive ordnance. Kazakhstan allows over flights, emergency air diverts, and the transit of non-lethal supplies, which support U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan. In addition, Kazakhstan delivered almost \$3 million in assistance for Afghanistan for 2008, including funds for food and seed and to build a hospital, road, and school. Kazakhstan has established a peacekeeping battalion, which is being trained and equipped to be compatible with NATO forces.

Kazakhstan is a key partner for the United States on non-proliferation. Through the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program, Kazakhstan has cooperated with the U.S. for over a decade on a host of projects to eliminate its Soviet-legacy weapons of mass destruction infrastructure, secure materials of proliferation concern, and redirect former weapons scientists to peaceful purposes. U.S.-Kazakhstan cooperation has ensured that Weapons of Mass Destruction-related materials and technical knowledge will not fall into terrorist hands. Recently on June 2, President Nazarbayev signed the law that extends our bilateral Cooperative Threat Reduction agreement for an additional seven years, allowing programs and projects to continue uninterrupted.

The United States-Kazakhstan partnership has three primary goals. First, we seek to advance democratic and market economy reforms. Second, we aim to bolster Kazakhstan's sovereignty and independence, fight terrorism, stem narcotics trafficking and prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Third, the U.S.-Kazakhstan partnership seeks to foster the development of Central Asia's significant energy resources. U.S. companies are cooperating with Kazakhstan to develop its tremendous oil and gas resources. They hold major stakes in Kazakhstan's three largest oil and gas projects, Tengiz, Karachaganak, and Kashagan.

Kazakhstan has been among Central Asia's leading countries in the development of democratic political institutions, civil society and the independent media. However, these institutions remain under developed and under stress.

We continue to have concerns about Kazakhstan's human rights record. In recent months, we have raised questions about several unexplained attacks on journalists, seemingly targeted blockage of opposition-oriented Web sites and public blogs, and criminal charges against several opposition figures.

That being said, we see new signs everywhere that civil society is growing in Kazakhstan. Government-approved "public associations" provide platforms for open public discussion of a broad range of public opinion. The print media regularly expose public corruption and government abuses of authority. Bloggers in Kazakhstan recently protested the draft internet law as a threat to free speech in the country's virtual chat rooms. The Committee structure in Parliament is also growing stronger and provides for publicized testimony of a broad range of opinion.

We regularly encourage the government to move forward by taking concrete steps toward reform, and we have assistance programs to promote democratic reform, respect for religious freedom, and the development of civil society and independent media.

We backed Kazakhstan's candidacy as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, because we believe that the Chairmanship should be open to all participating States, because Central Asia is of increasing importance to the OSCE, and because we felt Kazakhstan would bring a strong desire to serve as an effective proponent of OSCE values and institutions. Recognizing Kazakhstan's mixed record on political development, we asked Kazakhstan to delay its Chairmanship from 2009 to 2010 so that it would have time to undertake several democratic reforms. At the 2007 Madrid Ministerial, Kazakhstan publicly pledged to pass legislation that would modernize the election and media laws and liberalize the treatment of political parties by the end of 2008. It also vowed to support the OSCE's Human Dimension and the autonomy of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

On February 6 and 9, President Nazarbayev signed into law the amendments to the election, political parties, and media laws, which were aimed at fulfilling Kazakhstan's Madrid Ministerial commitments. While not accepting all of the

OSCE's recommendations, this legislation marks a step forward on Kazakhstan's democratic reforms. We hope Kazakhstan will take further steps to bring the laws fully into compliance with OSCE commitments.

On April 14, the Presidential Human Rights Commission unveiled Kazakhstan's first National Human Rights Action Plan. The Action Plan for the period 2009-2012 is now before President Nazarbayev for signature. Among other proposals, the Action Plan recommends further liberalization to the recently amended laws on elections, political parties and media. We strongly encourage Kazakhstan to put this plan into action.

I know there was and continues to be debate about Kazakhstan's fitness to be OSCE Chairman. But, as I said at my testimony before the Helsinki Commission last month, the spotlight will be on Kazakhstan next year. It will shoulder a great responsibility and its Chairmanship as the first among those states that emerged from the Soviet Union will be historic.

Looking forward to Kazakhstan's chairmanship, the United States believes that a successful Kazakhstani chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe will be one in which Kazakhstan defends the human, economic and political principles upon which the organization was founded, and to which Kazakhstan has committed itself as a participating State. Kazakhstan has stated that its agenda as Chairman-in-Office will embrace all three core dimensions: human, economic, and security. We encourage Kazakhstan to follow through on this and on its pledge to uphold the autonomy of ODIHR.

We welcome Kazakhstan's intention to work towards the solution of protracted conflicts during its chairmanship. The United States fully supports this approach, particularly given our role as Minsk Group co-chair, our work in the 5+2 mechanism, and our strong interest in maintaining a robust OSCE presence in Georgia. We urge Kazakhstan to keep in mind fundamental OSCE principles of confidence building as it pursues these efforts.

The United States is prepared to participate in a broad dialogue on European security and is open to ideas for improving security. We strongly believe that any such dialogue must take place within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and build upon the existing institutions and, most importantly, the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, which encompasses all three dimensions of human security.

We look forward to close coordination and frequent communication with Kazakhstan as it prepares to take this role. And this has started. Foreign Minister Tazhin visited here in early May and he and our leadership agreed we would be in close if not continuous contact as Kazakhstan prepares for its Chairmanship. The visit to Washington this week of Kazakhstani officials responsible for OSCE matters underscores this commitment to consult and work together. And we are encouraging other OSCE states also to work cooperatively with Kazakhstan.

I will leave it to the Kazakhstanis, who will speak at this forum, to outline and discuss their country's priorities for their chairmanship. We acknowledge the right of each chairman to choose the areas on which they want to focus their greatest attention. But, we also acknowledge that every chairman must uphold and defend the basic principles and institutions of the OSCE. The United States will oppose any attempt to dilute or diminish the core principles of the OSCE on human rights and freedoms. These principles form the backbone of the organization and have sustained it through the many years since the Helsinki Final Act was signed.

Kazakhstan must show leadership, wisdom and openness as it assumes this heavy responsibility. The issues and challenges facing the organization are great and many have defied resolution over the years. The United States has no desire to see the organization weakened or its purpose deflected or diminished. It remains one of the pillars of security and stability in the broader Euro-Atlantic-Eurasian region. Our efforts are directed at enhancing its effectiveness and encouraging all its members to fulfill their solemn commitments to uphold the principles of the Helsinki Final Act.

We are committed to working with Kazakhstan to these ends. We approach this as an equal member of the OSCE respecting Kazakhstan as a valued partner. As Chairman Kazakhstan will have to reconcile many contending views and seek consensus – and even, at times take difficult decisions to try to forge consensus. The United States stands ready to help.

Thank you and I'd be happy to take your questions.

SCA/CEN/Kazakhstan DAS Krol remarks for CSIS-IND Conference on Kazakhstan and the OSCE 06-2009

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