
CONFERENCE
"**KAZAKHSTAN – EUROPE: THE NEW REALITIES**"
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**Remarks by H.E. Mr. Yerzhan Kazykhanov,**Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan,
at the Royal Institute for International Relations of Belgium

***Check against delivery***

**Mr. Chairman,**
**Ladies and gentlemen,**

It is a great honor and privilege for me to address such a distinguished audience here, at the Royal Institute for International Relations, a renowned European foreign policy think tank.
That is why I am so interested in sharing with you my reading of key foreign policy issues involving Kazakhstan and the united Europe and to touch upon some aspects of international life.
Spinoza once said that understanding is the start of coming to an agreement. I do hope that what I say today will be received with understanding and that, in turn, will bring Kazakhstan’s and Europe’s views on common problems of today’s international relations closer together even further.
I would like to start with energy security, an issue which, as we see it, attracts today close attention.
In the new century, the importance of a global energy balance has increased considerably, in addition to the need to respond effectively to traditional and modern challenges and threats to international stability and security. Energy resources are crucial for the improvement in quality of life and the expansion of opportunities for all nations.
The way we interpret ‘energy security’ has started to change recently. All elements of energy chain, from supplier states and transit states to consumers and transnational energy corporations, must shoulder their share of joint responsibility for maintaining this security.
According to experts, global oil production will peak by around 2010. After that, the era of cheap oil might be over forever. Obviously, that will mean that there will be very serious changes in the entire global political and economic configuration. You will recall that in the 1970s, when oil prices increased from $ 3-4 to $ 11-12, the world was in shock. Well, we should be prepared for a barrel of oil to cost $ 100, in 5 to 7 years.
Taking into account the energy factor alone, we can deduce and identify strict empirical laws that explain the world in much more clear terms.
Oil, being a key resource of global economy, is turning into an energy basis of our civilization. Gaps in "the oil grid" covering the planet are perceived as the cause of disbalances in the modern economy.
Up to this day, when people talk about global energy balance, they usually have in mind energy needs of North America and Western Europe. For some reason, there is a view that energy demands of these two world regions unambiguously and fully determine the way global economy operates. That might have been true throughout the 20th century but in this century it is simply impossible to ignore the needs of China and India, two geo-economic super giants, and Japan and Korea, two postindustrial giants. We should not forget about the “Brazilian phenomenon” either. Energy needs of these players are already shaping the new reality.
I have given these examples to highlight existing complexities and problems involving a **traditional approach to the analysis of the new reality in international relations.** I would like to emphasize that I did not try to reveal all areas of political ambiguity of this kind.
Now I would like to say a few words about **the new Kazakhstan as a fragment of the new international reality.**
In today’s conditions, marked by globalization and stepped up global competition, facing traditional and new challenges to international security, Kazakhstan is actively pursuing a multilateral strategic dialogue with all partners. We consistently stand for a system of international relations based on collective decision-making arrangements, the rule of law and democratization, under the leading role of the United Nations.
As you know, the international reputation is a sum of a consistent and constructive foreign policy and successful domestic development.
**During the** **years of its independence, Kazakhstan has formed “a belt of good-neighborliness” along the perimeter of its borders** and established relations with leading world powers and regional states, based on partnership and trust.
            Kazakhstan’s decision to renounce its nuclear legacy and to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, taken at the early stages of its independence, was probably the main outcome of its firm **commitment to nuclear disarmament**. Being a state that voluntarily renounced its nuclear arsenal – the fourth largest in the world – Kazakhstan today became a party of the Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty in Central Asia. On the 29th of August of this year an international symposium “Kazakhstan’s journey to the nuclear-free-world” took place in Astana. It was devoted to the 16th anniversary of the shutting down of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test-site. We are also aware that the EU High Commissar for General Foreign and Security Policy Mr Xavier Solana plans to host an international conference on resolution of the nuclear non-proliferation issues in Brussels in November of this year. Kazakhstan fully supports this important and timely initiative, and intends to participate in this event.
            We are also grateful to all five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council for providing security assurances to Kazakhstan in the beginning of the 90s. These assurances are of great importance to our state, which occupies a vast stretch of land in Eurasia. Basically, we are talking about a license to carry out economic and political reforms, free from any outside threats.
Consequently, we have successfully overcome an economic crisis and demonstrated the effectiveness of public administration, carried out market reforms and set up an institutional framework of an open and democratic society.
Today, Kazakhstan is leading other CIS countries, based on principal indicators of economic and social development and standards of living, and continues to post high rates of economic growth.
Just in ten years, since 1996, a per capita GDP rate has increased from $ 700 to $ 5,040. This indicator is expected to reach $ 7,000 in 2007. In other words, **Kazakhstan is confidently taking its place among middle-income states.**
Currently, we face great challenges involving the implementation of a strategy to turn Kazakhstan into one of the top 50 most competitive economies in the world. To achieve that goal, we have to maintain high rates of growth, against the background of diversification of the economy, and to effectively carry out an administrative reform.
Since the early days of its independence, for Kazakhstan **preservation of inter-ethnic tolerance** has been one of the most important factors of safeguarding its stability. The totalitarian regime has left its legacy in the form of an extremely complex ethnic configuration of the society. In the absence of any regulatory mechanisms, events could have followed an unpredictable scenario. Under such circumstances, an effective and vigorous state control was the only way to keep the situation in a constructive mode and to form necessary public institutions of inter-ethnic interaction. An inter-ethnic accord was an absolute imperative for us. I would even say that it was a condition of our survival.
Multi-confessionality was another structurally close, yet no less important, factor of stability of the Kazakh society.  **Establishing inter-faith dialogue and tolerance,** we tried to follow a classical principle of democracy: expressing the will of the majority while safeguarding the interests of the minority. Kazakhstan’s practices of inter-confessional interaction gained approval of leaders of world religions attending two congresses of world and traditional religions held in our country.
With more than 130 ethnic groups living in the country, representing over 40 confessions, each having its own cultural codes and traditions, we have opted for a controlled pace of social changes and thus we have managed to avoid serious inter-ethnic conflicts.
We strongly believe that **the liberalization of social systems can be successfully achieved only on the solid basis of economic development.** Poverty, being a bad partner for democracy, often becomes the first precondition for society’s fragmentation and the triumph of instability. The intrinsic connection between liberal economy and open society is quite clear to us.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

The EU firmly ranks as our No.1 partner, if we take the last several years. In its turn, Kazakhstan has become the second, after Russia, most important economic partner of the EU, among the CIS countries.
Many issues of political and economic relations between Kazakhstan and the European Union are being projected to the inter-regional level and become the subject of discussions involving neighboring states.
During two “EU Troika – Central Asian countries” ministerial meetings, a new regional EU strategy for 2007-2013 was introduced. The following areas of an emerging dialogue were identified:

1. support of social and economic development;
2. free trade and investment;
3. addressing common threats and challenges;
4. education and professional training;
5. the rule of law and human rights;
6. energy and protection of the environment.

The list can be expanded in the future. I would like to note that this dialogue became known unofficially as the **“Astana process’,** after the name of the place where the first meeting had been held.
It is encouraging to note that during the elaboration of that strategy Kazakhstan's and other Central Asian countries’ suggestions and proposals were taken into account. For us, this has become yet another signal of European side’s readiness for dialogue on deeper cooperation based on equality.
It is no secret that the attractiveness of Central Asia, including for the European Union, is mostly determined by significant reserves of mineral resources, first of all, hydrocarbons.
As for Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries possessing energy resources, they are interested in the diversification of export routes to the fullest extent. In this connection, I would like to draw your attention yet again to our readiness to consider any projects, including those involving the construction of TransCaspian pipelines, that meet our interests and cost-effectiveness requirements.
Striving for cooperation with the EU in the energy sector based on equality, in the future we will give preferential treatment to those companies and countries that would provide us with equal access to European markets.
We are also interested in an enhanced interaction with the EU in the development of the transit and transport capacity of Kazakhstan and the entire region, including joint implementation of such inter-regional projects as TRACECA and INOGATE and possible joining of the Trans-European transport network system.
However, a potential for development is not limited to the transport and energy sector.
In this regard, it is encouraging to note that the new EU strategy, to a large extent, is aimed at the promotion of a comprehensive social and economic development of Kazakhstan and the Central Asian countries, strengthening of regional cooperation and integration of Central Asia into the world economy.
Availing myself of this opportunity, I would like to recall our proposal to **form shared zones for cooperation**, to prepare several "road maps" for substantive implementation, to work out a list of priority projects in such areas as economic cooperation, energy, political dialogue and democratization, security, cultural and humanitarian dimensions, among other things. With this in mind, we offer to enlarge the framework of the dialogue "EU Troika - Central Asian countries" and to institutionalize regular high-level sectoral meetings in accordance with such a format.
**Favorable consideration of Kazakhstan's bid  for the OSCE Chairmanship in 2009** can become an important factor in the promotion of universal values in Central Asia and the strengthening of the region's role in the area of responsibility of the OSCE.
You will recall that during the last four years Kazakhstan has consistently moved towards reaching that priority goal within the framework of its cooperation with the OSCE. Over these years, a lot has been done both to increase the role and significance of Kazakhstan within the OSCE community and to improve the political system of our state and to further adapt the national legislation to the high standards of the OSCE.
We are aware that with certain disagreements still remaining with regard to our application, much will depend on the position of the European Union, whose members make up almost half of the OSCE participants.
In this regard, I would like to note that quite a few of our priorities as a prospective OSCE Chairman agree with key provisions of the EU strategy for Central Asia.  First of all, it concerns regional security and stability, the prime focus of the strategy.
We intend to continue the policies of preceding chairmanships and concentrate our attention on urgent issues of comprehensive security, which are a matter of concern for the entire OSCE community.
Kazakhstan considers cooperation with other prestigious European and Euro-Atlantic organizations as a way to promote active exchange of values and develop integrated interregional dialogue.
**Granting to Kazakhstan of an observer status in the PACE** is one the main items in the agenda of our cooperation with the Council of Europe. That step would provide an opportunity for our country to participate, systematically, in the activities of the oldest and the most authoritative European structure. It will give us a direct access to accumulated European experience in democratic development as well as to the wide range of conventions and other international legal instruments of the Council of Europe. I have no doubt that, through Kazakhstan, such experience will become available to other Central Asian countries.
**Relations with NATO** represent anotherpriority track of our foreign policy. Today, Kazakhstan is one of the most active partners of the Alliance among the Central Asian countries and the only country of the region, which cooperates with NATO on the basis of Individual Partnership Action Plan.
**Reconstruction of Afghanistan** is one of the important issues of mutual interest to the EU, NATO and the Central Asia countries.
Aware of its responsibility for the region’s future security and wishing to help Afghanistan to become a full-fledged member of the international community, Kazakhstan is making considerable efforts to step up cooperation by making investments into Afghanistan’s economy and providing highly specialized and technical training to the country’s youth. Within the framework of humanitarian aid, we are considering issues involving supply of grain and seeds of staple crops, construction of civil facilities and motor roads.
Our Government also encourages the activities of Kazakhstan’s development agencies and private companies in Afghanistan, which intend to take part in projects involving construction of railways, power lines, pipelines, and development of mineral deposits. We are firmly committed to continue our work to provide assistance in Afghanistan’s reconstruction in the years to come, in partnership with the country’s authorities and other members of the world community.
It should be pointed out that today there is no such thing as only European or only Asian security. Consequently, **mutually complementary efforts of various regional organizations and international institutions** can and should become the cross-cutting item in the agenda to ensure long-term security.
As is generally known, Europe has had security structures for many decades and is united by common cultural roots and shared centuries-old historical experience. The continental bonds are so strong that important attributes of state sovereignty are being delegated to the European Union.
Asia, where the level of mutual trust is not as high as in Europe, lacks strong multilateral political institutions capable of responding to urgent security problems.
However, there is a well-known saying: «A journey of thousand miles starts with a first step». In recent decades, active processes have started to take root in the Asian part of our continent, facilitating decision-making and action-taking with regard to security problems. I refer to the activities of such institutions as the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Kazakhstan is an active participant in these structures.
Initially established to address boundaries issues within the framework of agreements on confidence-building in the military area, the SCO has evolved into a quite dynamic and influential organization. The Shanghai process, which unites countries of Islamic, Christian, and Buddhist civilizations, is a vivid example of mutual understanding and trust.
The SCO summit, held on August 16, has played an important role in the consolidation of regional security and further expansion of trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation. There have been specific proposals on continued cooperation in the area of regional security and the implementation of programs and projects of economic cooperation, including priority areas of energy and transport. Close attention has been paid to the issues of regional environmental security, the efficient management of water resources of trans-boundary rivers and the development of exchanges between the youth and educational institutions of the SCO member countries.
The SCO had shown its openness to the outside world and readiness to cooperate with other international and regional structures and states.
From this podium, I would like to reiterate that the **SCO is not a military block or a closed alliance directed against anyone:** it is an open organization geared to wide international cooperation in opposing terrorism and extremism.
Kazakhstan, as an active SCO participant, stands for closer partnership co-operation with the European Union.
Yet we have to acknowledge that cooperation between our organizations and forums, regrettably, is still sporadic. The transcontinental dialogue has to be dramatically intensified.
The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA), another regional arrangement, works to ensure regional security in Asia. It is a forum and a unique arena for exchange of views, analyses of the situation in the region and a search for compromises.
The composition of the Conference is unique: it brings together 18 states, which are world and regional players from various parts of Greater Asia. It is necessary to note **that the CICA is the only structure that envisions the creation of a Pan-Asian security mechanism.**
That forum quickly adapts to the changing world conditions. The CICA is consistently developing cooperation with the OSCE, which has an observer status at the Conference. We should not rule out the establishment some time in the future of a certain joint structure dealing with security issues and confidence-building measures in the entire Eurasian region.
The issue of cooperation between the West and the Islamic world prompts all countries concerned to search for ways to normalize the situation and overcome the mutual suspicion and intolerance.
Drawing on our country’s experience in promoting inter-faith dialogue, we are planning to convene a forum, **at the level of foreign ministers,** with as broad agenda, fitting the «Muslim World – the West» format. We have already enlisted the support of key Muslim countries and the General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.
Preliminary study of this matter reveals the interest of many partners for Kazakhstan, taking into consideration its experience in the promotion of inter-faith dialogue and internal social stability, to initiate an exchange of ideas between government officials and practicing politicians.
In doing this, we seek to gear the dialogue, which in itself is not a new idea, to the search for practical solutions to this global problem.
We have to find a way for joint participation in the implementation of programs to ensure greater mutual tolerance and higher level of social adaptability of Muslims to life within the fabric of Western societies. Joint efforts of Western countries and the Muslim world, in our opinion, should be directed towards, first of all, meeting educational and employment needs of the **Muslim youth,** involvement of **Muslim women** into social and economic life of Western countries as well as participation of **mass media in** reducing – instead of inciting - inter-faith tensions .

There is a reverse side of the coin too. The ease with which a notion of «Islamic threat» has gained currency nowadays seems to suggest that it is time to speak not of the threat from Islam but about real protection of Islam itself.
Aware of the negative potential of Islamophobia, we believe that it is in the interests of the Western expert community, politicians and journalists to jointly oppose speculations concerning the subject in order to find a way out of that dead-end.
I believe that it is in our common interest to do away with dangerous stereotypes, which divide people and put global security in jeopardy.

**Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In my address today, I have tried to share our view on the most important issues of international life as well as to highlight main aspects of my country’s domestic and foreign policies, which are relevant for today’s meeting. I assume that you might have some questions, which I am ready to answer.

**Thank you for attention.**