

Speech CSIS

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Dear Excellencies, dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

At first I would like to thank the organizers of this conference - the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the New Democracy Institute - for setting up this event today.

The item we are discussing today - the upcoming chairmanship of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the OSCE next year - is of major importance, not only for the OSCE and Kazakhstan, but also for all Western states and the whole Central Asian region. Therefore, the timing of the conference is well chosen.

In my perspective, the 2010 OSCE-Chairmanship of the Republic of Kazakhstan is only one side of the medal and we all should define this only as a starting point for increasing and intensifying the relations between the so-called Western hemisphere and Kazakhstan. Beside the priorities of the Organization's Presidency, we all have to support Kazakhstan in achieving its main aims of closer relations with the West.

As many of you might know, Eurasian Transition Group is one of the major Western think tanks dealing with Central Asia and Kazakhstan, monitoring closely the political, economic and social development of the country over the last decade. We



frequently report to EU Parliaments, Governments and institutional bodies, work closely with the Western media.

Some might remember, my organization used to be quite critical of the political and social situation in this country. We had serious doubts Kazakhstan could move closer to integration in Europe and send common ground with international institutions. We knew Kazakhstan would have to undertake meaningful reforms in governance and human rights to meet its commitment to ... OSCE standards.

There are a couple of reasons why the ETG-perception of Kazakh policy has changed:

The Republic of Kazakhstan indeed was able and willing to start this transformation process, which in my perspective is irreversible.

Secondly, Kazakhstan became a stabilizing force in the Central Asian region and is in fact the engine of change in Central Asia.

I am convinced that both sides of the Atlantic - the US and Europe - should define a common strategy with regard to Kazakhstan's efforts to be the bridge between Europe and Asia.



As a representative from Europe, I would like to make some short remarks on the EU policy.

At first I would like to underline the fact that the European Union is far away from being an active geopolitical player in the region of Central Asia: too many different approaches of the member states, too many different interests in economy and politics.

But nevertheless, the European Union has some tools to play a more active role with regard to its relations with Kazakhstan.

I also have to underline that the efforts by the Republic of Kazakhstan are not a one way street, where Kazakhstan should play the only active part: Looking at the EU-policy and strategy towards the five Central Asian states, I personally have to admit that - although in general a positive signal and step forward - it does not reflect the political reality.

The European Union cannot and should not base its relations with this region on a general and abstract strategy, because the political reality in Kazakhstan is not comparable with the one in regional neighbours like Uzbekistan.



Therefore, the European Union will need a more detailed strategy, underlining Kazakhstan's status as the strongest and most reliable partner in the region. It is unrealistic to expect Kazakhstan to become a Western European-style democracy in a few years. Western strategy should recognize this reality, and develop a strategy that rewards progress and encourage change.

Although the Central Asia Strategy by the European Union is focused directly on the Republic of Kazakhstan, I would predict that the recently pushed Eastern European Partnership Programme by the EU can give additional prospects for the bilateral relations of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Europe.

We all have to admit that the OSCE is in a deep crisis. This has nothing to do with the Chairmanship of Kazakhstan next year, but with the structure and the political realities at the end of this decade.

Therefore, I would hope that the Kazakh Chairmanship of the OSCE next year, the first time a former Soviet state assumes the vote could serve as a catalyst for reform of the OSCE.

In 2010, we all know, the risks of ongoing territorial and ethnic struggles might return. The Caucasus is only one example. Also,



Kazakhstan is in a unique position to be a bridge between Asia and the West.

- 🎤 The Kazakhstan Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010 will be an important event for the emerging relationship between the West and Kazakhstan. The OSCE, however, currently faces almost overwhelming difficulties resulting from the lack of consensus among Participating States regarding the nature and direction of the organization- notably in regard to Russian-led opposition to key elements of the organization's 'human dimension' activities (especially election monitoring). It is essential therefore for the future of the OSCE that 2010 is a year marked by the consolidation and development of the organization rather than one in which disunity is further magnified.
- 🎤 If Kazakhstan's Chairmanship is to make the maximum contribution to the Organization and to meeting the current and emerging security challenges in OSCE area, the West will need to develop a more proactive engagement with Astana ahead of and during the Chairmanship.



- ❶ In recent years, Kazakhstan has sought to reach beyond Russia to build a stronger European component to its external relations.
- ❷ As a result, Astana has sought to develop a range of closer ties to Europe including seeking observer status at the Council of Europe, exploring the possibility of a relationship to the EU European Neighbourhood Policy and pursuing the Chairmanship of the OSCE.
- ❸ It is an opportunity not only for Kazakhstan to play a leading international role and to help to move the OSCE beyond the impasse that seems increasingly to mark the organization; it is also a chance to strengthen the European dimension of Kazakhstan's domestic and international politics and thereby to consolidate further the expanding West-Kazakhstan relationship.
- ❹ Kazakhstan's Chairmanship of the OSCE could be important for a number of reasons. Kazakhstan will be the first of the Central Asian (and indeed former Soviet) republics to take on the mantle of leading the organization. Such a move will do much to counter accusations that the OSCE is unbalanced in its political makeup — in the past



‘the East’ has been viewed by some as being essentially the object of Western interference. As a country located in the East, Kazakhstan will bring new perspectives to the difficulties confronting the organization. And Astana could play a vital role in finding new ways forward for the OSCE. At the same time, leading the organization will focus international attention on Kazakhstan’s own commitments as an OSCE Participating State, and on the need for Astana to fulfill the pledges made in Madrid regarding domestic reform as part of the agreement on the award of the 2010 Chairmanship.

 The West should already, ahead of the Kazakhstan Chairmanship, begin an active dialogue with Astana on concrete and common agendas for the Chairmanship. Three possible areas of cooperation suggest themselves.

1. Kazakhstan, with the support of the EU and US, could take the lead in building consensus with the OSCE region on the legitimate means to address the issues raised in respect to Russia’s intervention in Georgia.
2. The EU and Kazakhstan could work closely on how best to deal with the radicalisation of groups, including



nationalist and religious communities, to the point where they are prepared to engage in violence, and in particular how to avoid this process and to promote deradicalisation. Comprehensive methods need to be developed, focusing on the early phases of radicalisation. The development of effective strategies in this area should draw upon, in an integrated way, all of the dimensions of OSCE approach to security. The common challenge around this issue, both East and West, and the wide experience across the region suggest that such an approach could command broad support among Participating States.

3. The EU and US can make a contribution to assisting Kazakhstan in abiding by the obligations it took upon itself in the human dimension in Madrid in 2007 and more broadly help the country to achieve its OSCE commitments. In the past, much of the work by the OSCE to assist in the development of new legislation in Kazakhstan has faced considerable difficulties, and has rarely been implemented in an effective fashion. An issue that cannot be avoided is, thus, not just the development of new legislation but the strengthening of



Rule of Law in the country. The West should be frank, but discrete, in its dialogue with the authorities in Astana about the need to introduce genuine change in line with the expectations created by the Madrid commitments. The Kazakhstani authorities will clearly have to lead in taking seriously and implementing the commitments that have been made, but the West can facilitate these reforms. A strong political signal from the EU for example - perhaps inviting Kazakhstan to participate in the Eastern Neighbourhood initiative or elements of the European Neighbourhood Policy - coupled with the practical and technical assistance that the country will need in the future, would do much to ease the introduction of sensitive domestic reform and provide the EU with stronger leverage to encourage Kazakhstan to live up to its European ambitions.

Especially for the West, those aspects mentioned above will play an important role. ETG recently conducted an opinion poll, asking Western policy-makers what they expect from the Kazakh Chairmanship in 2010.

Recipients were members of political think-tanks and international NGO's focussing on Central Asia, international



institutions (e.g. OSCE, European Parliament, Council of Europe), members of Western national parliaments and staffers, and Western governments (foreign ministries, human rights departments of governmental bodies).

The survey was sent to 983 individuals in Europe and the US, 721 persons answered.

Let me point out some interesting results of the survey, because it might give all of us not a new, but maybe a more realistic view on the discussion.

Asking, if the upcoming Chairmanship will have a direct impact on the reliability of the organization, 46 % said that this will not be the tact, 43% say that it would have so.

Asking, which topics will be of main importance to the OSCE during the Kazakh Chairmanship in 2010, 76% underlined that security issues within the Organization would be of main importance, followed by 59 % that see a focus on the better cooperation with the CIS member states, 43% bringing Central Asia closer to the Western institutions.

Still, a huge majority of 86% has the opinion that the 2010 Chairman will support the Russian reform plans of the OSCE,



only 12% believe that the Presidency will also support the reform process in the country itself.

Looking at the linkage between granting Kazakhstan the presidency to the OSCE and pressing for more domestic reforms the policy experts still have the hope that there is a connection, but they do not know whether it will have a positive impact or not.

I wanted to adress a new European fairytale that seems to have been overlooked by the American media, which bases its reporting on facts, not innuendo and rumour: The book by former Ambassador and Deputy Foreign Minister Aliyev attempts to undermine the efforts we all are trying to achieve for Kazakhstan. I won't dissect every innacuracy in his book or debunk every false allegation made by his multi million dollar PR campaign, but it is clear to everyone familiar with the situation that Aliyev is simply trying to create an opening for his return to power.

Our oranization has conducted an intensive investigation into allegations of Aliyev's own improprieties in the area of arms trafficking, kidnapping, extortion and narcotics smuggling, even close ties to Islamistic terrorists could be proved. I would be



happy to share our findings with any interested members of this panel.

But now back to the focus of this conference.

There are risks and chances regarding the 2010-Chairmanship, and I hope that in December 2010, all 56 participating countries of the OSCE will look back and say that this was a good year for the OSCE.

Thank you.