



PERMANENT MISSION OF
THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AT GENEVA

STATEMENT

by

H.E. Mr. KASSYMZHOMART TOKAYEV

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

at

**THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT
61st SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

Geneva, March 15, 2005

Check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,

Let me express my confidence that under your guidance the current session of the UN Commission will be a success. I would also like to pay tribute to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Louise Arbour, for her contribution to strengthening the role of the Commission, and wish her further success in her highly responsible and difficult mission.

Kazakhstan attaches great importance to the functioning of the Commission, which it considers a key body in the sphere of human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Positive developments in the protection of rights and freedoms have become irreversible and a natural part of our political and social life. Kazakhstan now has the wherewithal legal, political and institutional grounds to further strengthen democracy.

In his recent Address to the people of Kazakhstan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev presented a package of concrete measures for political and economic modernization. The National program represents an integrated approach to the transformation of state, political and public institutions in the light of international experience and in line with the traditions and history of our multinational, multi-confessional nation.

Today, the major objectives of our political reforms include government decentralization, the introduction of local self-government, further improvements to electoral legislation and large-scale reform of the judicial system in accordance with generally recognized international standards.

Kazakhstan is a presidential republic. This system has helped us to pursue the economic reforms that have made my country a success story and a regional power. However, we are in permanent search of a political model to suit Kazakhstan in the face of emerging challenges, one that will enhance the country's democratic credentials.

The role of Parliament is expected to be further strengthened, ensuring greater representation of the people in governance. Other aspects of political reform are also on the agenda of the specially created National Commission on Democracy and Civil Society, which reports to the President.

We strongly believe that effective measures must be taken to change the judiciary in Kazakhstan. We therefore, appreciate the assessment by the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights on the independence of judges and lawyers Leandro Despouy, of the pace of democratic transformation of the judiciary in Kazakhstan, simplification of legal proceedings, growing independence for judges, an enhanced role to lawyers in criminal proceedings and court decisions and the introduction of jury trials. A Special Commission has been established to coordinate the reform of the judiciary.

The powers of the Ombudsman have been also considerably expanded. The Ombudsman can now take part in court hearings, request the courts or public prosecutor to review court sentences, decisions or findings and request parliamentary hearings to investigate citizens' complaints.

Our eagerness to further improve the legal system in Kazakhstan will be evidenced by our impending ratification of International Covenants on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Kazakhstan firmly believes that the key condition for the modernization of society is the maintenance of civil peace, interethnic and interreligious tolerance. This is our strategic priority. Currently, 130 nationalities and ethnic groups live peacefully together in Kazakhstan building a new country, which is going to meet all national standards in terms of protection of human rights, and developing democracy. My country demonstrated its peacemaking potential by hosting the First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which sent a strong message to the international community.

We consider interreligious harmony to be pivotal to national stability. The policy of supporting all ethnic groups and minorities is being realized, in accordance with the Constitution, in the Assembly of the peoples of Kazakhstan - itself a unique institution in the post-Soviet area.

Our country's achievements in interreligious harmony and dialogue were acknowledged in the special resolution "Promotion of interreligious dialogue" passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations last November, which expresses the international community's unanimous support for the efforts of Kazakhstan to promote and strengthen the dialogue among civilizations.

Kazakhstan intends to improve the status of women and children radically. The protection of motherhood and childhood is an issue of high priority for Government, which has passed a number of State programs, policy outlines and laws. In 2003, a National outline for gender policy was approved by the Government.

Micro-credit for the least protected population groups, acknowledged throughout the world as one of the most efficient ways of combating poverty, is current Kazakhstan policy. Two thirds of the beneficiaries of Micro-credit are women living in rural areas.

Mr. Chairman,

Today's globalized world the threat of international terrorism has become a global phenomenon with ever-increasing tragic consequences. Everyone is aware that terrorism is one of the most serious crimes against humanity and one of the worst violations of human rights.

Kazakhstan is seriously concerned by the religious extremism, which is widespread in the region, by drug trafficking, illegal migration and the smuggling of conventional weapons.

We are actively cooperating with all countries involved and international organizations to address this problem.

We realize that only joint efforts by the international community and effective cooperation will allow us to take adequate steps to diminish the existing threats and challenges. However, we strongly believe that countering terrorism should not entail violations of the legal right of those who practice a religion. The fundamental right to the freedom of conscience must not be the target of interference and abuse by governments.

Kazakhstan has repeatedly demonstrated its support for the central role of the United Nations and its agencies in the global fight against terrorism. As was noted at the session of Counter-Terrorism Committee of the UN Security Council in Almaty (January, 2005), our combined efforts should not undermine the values targeted by terrorist attacks, including the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude my speech I would like to express our strong support for the idea of reforming of the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights and its structures in order to amplify its potential for legal protection. We believe that the recommendations contained in the Global Report of the High-level Group on threats, challenges and transformations concerning the UN Commission on Human Rights, namely enhancing the versatility of the Commission, producing an annual global report on human rights, and financing, require further discussion so that action in furtherance of these ideas does indeed assist the UN Commission on Human Rights in fulfilling its mandate and functions.

Kazakhstan is open for dialogue and will be working with the legal protection mechanisms of the United Nations and other countries to reach global partnership in guaranteeing comprehensive human rights for everyone.

Thank you for your attention.