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August 29 to Be Proclaimed International Day against Nuclear Tests

The First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, which oversees disarmament and security issues, on October 30 approved a resolution put forward by Kazakhstan proclaiming August 29 'International Day against Nuclear Tests.' The approval came in the form of consensus of all 192 member states.



President Nursultan Nazarbayev addresses the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly, calling on the world to follow Kazakhstan's nuclear disarmament example.

Photo by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Recognizing the negative impact of nuclear testing on human life and the environment, as well as the importance of ending nuclear tests as one of the key means of achieving a nuclear weapon-free world, the Resolution sets out to commemorate a significant date in Kazakhstan's – and, indeed, - the world's history.

It was on August 29, 1949, that the Soviet Union conducted its first nuclear

weapon test at the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in eastern Kazakhstan. This test was followed by 455 more nuclear tests over four decades, resulting in radiation-related illnesses and deaths of more than 1.5 million people in

Kazakhstan and the radioactive contamination of land equaling the size of Germany or Italy.

On August 29, 1991, President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed a decree officially shutting down the Semipalatinsk test site which set the stage for Kazakhstan's peaceful foreign policy and the renunciation of the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal. Last June, speaking at a public rally in Semipalatinsk to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the last nuclear test at the site, President Nazarbayev called on the United Nations to mark August 29 as a special day devoted to nuclear disarmament.

By its resolution, the UN GA now invites the United Nations, civil society, academia, the mass media and individuals to commemorate this date. In the context of the international community's current positive trends in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the resolution is devoted to promoting awareness of the consequences of all explosions and the need to stop all tests.

According to statements of several UN delegations, activities on the International Day against Nuclear Tests will help accelerate the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which is an essential tool for nonproliferation.

Twenty six states co-authored the Resolution, including Armenia, Belarus, Belize, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, the Comoro Islands, Congo, Dominican Republic, Gambia, Guyana, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Qatar, El Salvador, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

The adoption of the Resolution by the UN GA is recognition by the international community of the significant contribution of Kazakhstan, under the leadership of President Nazarbayev, in strengthening international security and nonproliferation.

Resolutions of main committees of the UN General Assembly are subject to approval by the plenary before the end of the current session, meaning November or December this year.

OSCE Observers Visit Kazakh Military Facilities

Forty-five military observers from 25 OSCE member states visited an airbase and a paratrooper brigade stationed in Taldy Qorghan, an oblast centre in southeastern Kazakhstan on October 26 through 30.

The inspection took place as Kazakhstan prepares to chair the OSCE and in fulfillment of the Vienna document on confidence building measures and security. The delegation got to know the structure of a military detachment, training grounds, and military equipment, and witnessed demonstration of the Kazakh military's skills in anti-terrorist actions.

The OSCE member states adopted the "Vienna Document", based on the positive experience from earlier similar documents, at the Istanbul summit in November 1999. It came into force on January 1, 2000. The document aims at phased adoption of measures to strengthen mutual trust and security between member states, as well as at settlement of disarmament issues and restraint from using force and threats in international relations.

The latest inspection's purpose was to determine how Astana fulfills its international obligations in the military field. The experts will present their report after analyzing all data obtained during the inspection. Kazakhstan has been the only state in Central Asia, whose military opened their doors for such inspections, with previous ones held in 1996 and 2005. In their own turn this year Kazakhstan's representatives were part of similar inspections in Austria, Norway, the Czech Republic and Germany.

To mark the beginning of the inspection on October 26, Deputy Defence Minister Bulat Sembinov briefed journalists on Astana's work on fulfilling OSCE commitments in the military



Kazakhstan's Air Forces Aircrew.
Photo by the Ministry of Defense.

field. “Kazakhstan wishes to contribute to strengthening arms control, resolving the problems of shooting arms and huge stocks of conventional armaments. In total so far we have hosted over 50 military inspections”, he stated.

Bulat Sembinov further elaborated on the fact that OSCE member countries have certain disagreements about military security issues.

“Our chairmanship will aim at rapprochement of positions on many issues of the OSCE agenda, which remained unchanged for many years. The recent profound political changes indicate there is no separate European or Asian security. Instability in a particular country or a region endangers the security for the whole of Eurasia, and security is the key area of activity for the OSCE. Kazakhstan’s chairmanship is bound to enhance the Asian agenda of the OSCE and to increase the organization’s role in a dialog between the West and the East,” he concluded.

Kazakhstan Welcomes Kin to Historic Homeland

Since independence in 1991, the Kazakhstan government has pursued a policy of stimulating foreign-born ethnic Kazakhs to return to their historic homeland. According to scholarly estimates, around two million ethnic Kazakhs live worldwide, mostly in adjacent regions of China, Russia, Uzbekistan and Mongolia.

In most cases, their ancestors were forced to leave the country in the tragic early decades of the twentieth century due to the hardships of the Tsarist oppression, the Civil War, forced sedentarization and collectivization of nomads. Those moving to Kazakhstan are called “oralmans”, the Kazakh for “ones who return home”. A recent public campaign has urged to change the name to “otandastar”, meaning compatriots.

In accordance with a special state program, the President of Kazakhstan annually fixes the number of Kazakh immigrants that the government is capable to assist in their resettlement. Those coming beyond quota are also welcome but can count only on indirect help from the authorities. This year, eight thousand oralman families are expected to be resettled in Kazakhstan as part of the government’s new program “Nurly Kosh” (Bright Resettlement). Every year, Kazakhstan allocates 13 million USD for the program of resettling ethnic compatriots.

Last week, Kabylsaia Abishev, Chairman of the Committee on Migration at the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, said of all those arrived since 1991, the total of 21,133 oralman families came from China (77,245 thousand people), 21,955 families (107 988 people) moved from Mongolia, and 177,822 families (457,241 people) originated from Uzbekistan.

The arrival of each oralman family costs the state 890,000 tenge (KZT 150 = US\$ 1).

“Social assistance to the head of family equals 19,440 tenge. Each family member receives a separate allowance of 12,960 tenge. He or she is also given 129,600 for housing and 12,600 tenge for travel. For each private car an oralman receives additional 64,800 tenge,” Kabylsaia Abishev said.

He also reported about an ongoing construction of a large center of adaptation and social integration of oralmans in the city of Aktau in southwestern Kazakhstan. The one billion tenge project is to be completed by the end of the year. Currently, there are three large centers of adaptation and social integration for oralmans in the country. Kazakhs, who moved to their historic homeland, live there six months, learn the Kazakh and Russian languages, obtain some professional skills. They are not forced to obtain the citizenship of Kazakhstan, but the vast



Everything’s gonna be alright! –
The Myrzabayev family gets a new
life in Kazakhstan.

Photo by Express-K newspaper.

majority of them do so, contributing to the country's continually growing population and workforce.

Anti-Crisis Measures Adequate, Timely and Precise, Samruk-Kazyna Claims (National Wealth Fund's Chairman Kairat Kelimbetov Comments on Activities)

Kairat Kelimbetov, Chairman of the Samruk-Kazyna National Wealth Fund said Monday the government's anti-crisis policies have been adequate, timely and precise.

"Despite gloomy expectations from some pundits, we managed to escape a serious failure. Even if the results of 2009 indicate recession, it would still be minimal. Unemployment decreased from nine percent in March to 6.4 percent in August. Inflation stabilized at six percent, although we had double digits in 2007-2008," Kelimbetov said, speaking at the National Business Forum in Almaty.

He highlighted the positive impact of government's stimulus packages of three billion USD in 2007 and 10 billion USD in 2008, as well as of the so called "Road map" program.

"Overall these measures stabilized the economy and the 'patient's' health began to recover," Kelimbetov stated and outlined major outcomes of the state's stimulus package to support the most affected elements of national economy.

Of the 1,075 trillion tenge (close to 10 billion USD at the time of release in fall 2008), 211 billion remain on the Samruk-Kazyna's deposit at the National Bank and wait to be invested into the programs aimed at completing frozen construction projects. The rest went into supporting the banking sector, assistance to small and medium sized enterprises, and refinancing population's mortgage loans. Of the total sum, the Samruk-Kazyna spent 480 billion tenge on purchasing dominant shares in BTA Bank and Alliance Bank, and roughly one fifth of shares in Kazkommetsbank and Halyk Bank.

"Banks are veins of our economy. Anti-crisis packages worldwide were based on supporting financial sectors", Kelimbetov noted.

The government's stimulus package for SMEs, a sector of the economy employing two million people, was executed in three transfers, each of about one billion dollars, Kelimbetov informed. Around 30 thousand families used a chance to decrease their mortgage interest rates to nine to eleven percent from the initial 16 percent, thanks to the 120 billion tenge program within the government's stimulus package.

Another package of 120 billion tenge was used for the replenishment of the share capital of the Development Bank of Kazakhstan, a government run institution investing into mid- and long-term industrial and infrastructural projects in the economy.

The remaining 240 billion tenge are targeted at supporting the construction sector. The government defined 128 residential construction sites in need of financial support. Thirty-three billion tenge have already been invested into completing some of them. The remaining ones are expected to be completed by the end of 2009, and later, in 2010-2011.

The Chairman of the National Wealth Fund also reminded that despite the strengthening of the economic role of governments in all countries, the state presence should concentrate on performing the function of regulating economic processes.

"There must be a stronger financial watch and stricter rules in real estate markets," Kelimbetov stated.

He claims the government has no expansionist plans concerning Kazkommetsbank and Halyk Bank.



Samruk-Kazyna Chairman
Kairat Kelimbetov

“Our role in these banks is minimal. We are not in their boards of directors, because we fully trust their managers. Watching them is the task of the National Bank and the appropriate government agency. We are passive shareholders only,” Kelimbetov stated.

The Samrul-Kazyna National Wealth Fund is the government’s main instrument in investing in the national economy.

Internet Usage, Geographic Coverage Increase in Kazakhstan

About three million people or 30 percent of Kazakhstan’s adult population use the Internet more or less regularly, Chairman of the nation’s Agency for Information and Communication Kuanyshbek Yessekeyev said.



Kazakhstan e-government’s logo.

“The country has about three million regular users, including 1.2 million subscribers. You have to distinguish the terms ‘user’ and ‘subscriber’. When saying a ‘subscriber’, we mean a single internet connection. There are many more users, since on average there is one connection per household, but at least two or three users”, the chief of Agency added.

According to the Agency’s newest data, there are about 20 major providers in Kazakhstan with their own channels of communication. Both domestic and international companies compete on the country’s Internet market. Their revenues reached 40 billion tenge (KZT 150 = \$ 1) in the first six months of 2009. Revenues from data services in the same period saw an increase of 78.7 percent, while Internet access grew by 31.5 percent.

The growth rate of Internet access services to the population was even higher and constituted 66.8 percent. In addition, the Internet is actively developing in rural areas: revenues coming from these regions grew in the first half of the year by 114.6 percent.

Additionally, the number of Kazakh surfers accessing the Internet via GPRS is growing fast, as well as the number of free Wi-Fi hotspots, which are now available for free in many hotels, international airports, and the fast train between Astana and Almaty. In 2008, services of the “third and a half” generation (3.5G) Wi-Max became available in several of Kazakhstan’s largest cities. Compared to Wi-Fi, the new technology allows to transmit data at even higher speeds, while base stations using it have a wider coverage area (up to 10 kilometers), allowing a small number of stations to cover the whole city.

Kazakhstan’s government pays serious attention to improving access to the Internet service for businesses and individuals, since advantages of this are evidently a big factor in contemporary global economy. The state also works to make most of public administration services available online. Electronic document management is being implemented widely in state organizations as well.

An ‘e-Government’ project was launched in 2004, which includes information on all kinds of state services for population and direct access to 41 of them. The recent trend saw heads of government agencies opening their blogs, which are regularly updated.

“The e-Government project increased confidence in the Government and its work,” Kuanyshbek Yessekeyev said.

Internet in Kazakhstan started on September 19, 1994, when the first “.kz” website was officially registered. Today, more than 35,000 sites are registered in the Kazakh section of the Internet, also known as Kaznet.

Almaty and Kuala Lumpur Get Closer

Air Astana, Kazakhstan's national carrier, operated its inaugural flight from Almaty to Malaysia's capital city of Kuala Lumpur on October 31. Two hundred and twenty passengers on the eight hour flight included top managers from Kazakhstan Civil Aviation and Air Astana.

Kuala Lumpur is Air Astana's sixth Asian destination after Bangkok, Beijing, New Delhi, Seoul and Urumqi (Xingjiang, China). Almaty-Kuala Lumpur and Kuala Lumpur-Almaty services will operate every Saturday and employ Boeing 767.

Malaysia's Ambassador to Kazakhstan, Dato' Saw Ching Hong commented on the news at the festival celebrating his country's national cuisine in Almaty. "The new direct flight between our countries' largest cities would facilitate growth in Kazakh-Malaysian tourism and business exchanges", he said.

The two countries cooperate on a wide range of issues relating to security in Asia, interreligious and intercivilizational dialog, as well as trade, mutual investments, education, culture, and tourism. The Ambassador noted more Malaysian business people are looking to invest into Kazakhstan. He also said about 600 Kazakh students are studying at Malaysian universities.

The South-East Asian nation is one of the growing destinations on a global tourism map. In 2007, 20 million people visited Malaysia, a five-time growth in a decade. More than five thousand Kazakh citizens visited Malaysia in the first nine months of this year, a 25 percent growth compared to the corresponding period last year, Malaysia's BERNAMA national news agency reported.

The country's tourist authorities believe the opening of Tourism Malaysia office in Almaty had contributed to the rise adding officers would be sent there if response continued to be encouraging. They also hope the involvement of Kazakhstan's national carrier will also help promote Malaysia in Central Asia and Central Europe.

Air Astana operated its maiden flight in May 2002 following the company's establishment late in the previous year. Fifty-one percent of the company's shares are held by the Samruk-Kazyna National Welfare Fund JSC, with the remaining 49 percent belonging to Britain's BAE Systems.

According to the company's website, the airline's mission has remained to provide quality domestic and international air services to the highest standards of safety and service using modern generation aircraft. In 2008, Air Astana was officially registered with IATA (International Air Transport Association) Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) among only six post-Soviet airlines.

With the current fleet of 21 western aircraft (average age of five years), the company has recently placed an order for new Airbus 320 family and Boeing 787 aircraft to grow its fleet to 34 aircraft by 2014 and to 63 aircraft by 2022. Air Astana's 2.3 million passengers are served by a staff of over 2,000 highly-trained men and women, the majority of whom are from Kazakhstan, supplemented by experienced foreign personnel. The carrier's network line currently includes more than 50 domestic and international routes.



Air Astana's plane in flight.
Photo by Almaty International Airport.

Also in the News:

- President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan visited the United Arab Emirates November 1 through 3. On November 2, he held talks with the President of UAE, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The two sides discussed the wide range of bilateral cooperation, with particular stress on economic links. President Nazarbayev also attended

the final races of Formula One where he met King Juan Carlos I of Spain, King Carl XVI Gustav of Sweden and the Crown Prince of Bahrain, Salman ben Halid Al Halif.

- Kazakhstan considers applying for the Winter Universiade of 2017. Either Almaty or Astana, which are going to host jointly the Asian Winter Games of 2011, could stand as a candidate city, Rector of Kazakh Academy of Tourism and Sports Kairat Zakiryanov said. Universiade is a biannual analogue of Olympics for students. The bidding campaign for the 2017 games will start in September next year.
- The First International Forum of Kazakh speaking journalists is to take place in early December in Astana, with participants expected from Kazakhstan, Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Turkey, and the EU. “We would discuss challenges facing the Kazakh language mass media, their role in shaping new socially relevant ideas, issues of professional training and a certain conservatism of our journalists,” the organizers said on November 2. Today, more than half of the media in Kazakhstan is in Russian. The forum will seek ways to increase the share of Kazakh language media and improve its quality.

Things to Come:

- This week President Nursultan Nazarbayev will pay official visits to Jordan, Italy, and the Vatican. On November 3-4, in Amman the President will meet King Abdullah II, co-chair the gathering of a bilateral business council and witness the opening of a festival of Kazakhstan’s culture in Jordan. On Nov 4-6, in Rome Nursultan Nazarbayev will hold negotiations with Italy’s President Giorgio Napolitano and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. During his visit to the Holy See, President Nazarbayev will meet Pope Benedict XVI.
- The summit of Islamic Conference Organization will take place in Istanbul, Turkey, on November 5-9. Apart from debating the pressing issues facing the alliance, the meeting will also commemorate 25 years since the foundation of the ICO’s Permanent Committee on Economic and Trade Relations. Deputy Prime Minister Omirzak Shokeyev would lead the Kazakh delegation at the summit.
- President Danilo Turk of Slovenia is to pay an official visit to Astana on November 11 and 12 and is expected to be accompanied by more than 60 Slovenian businessmen interested in Kazakh projects.



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