



DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

Remarks of Ambassador Aurélia Bouchez, Head of the European Union Delegation to the Republic of Kazakhstan, at AmCham Economic Policy Forum "Healthcare Reform in Kazakhstan: Protecting the Nation's Health"

18 October 2013, Astana

Honourable Vice-Minister,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased with the opportunity to welcome you at this very important Forum. I would like to express my appreciation to the organisers for this excellent initiative.

Today we will be discussing topics of utmost importance and where effective solutions can be achieved through strong cooperation of governmental institutions, experts and businesses. I would like to seize this opportunity to share with you our experience and co-operation developing between the EU and Kazakhstan.

As well as being a value in itself, health is a precondition for economic prosperity. People's health influences economic outcomes in terms of productivity, labour supply, human capital and public spending.

In line with the Communication 'The EU Role in Global Health' (2010), the EU pursues a rights-based approach to health and provides support to countries to develop national health policies and to strengthen health systems. In addition, the EU promotes a 'health in all policies' approach to ensure that underlying determinants of health are addressed, such as in the area of gender equalities, water and sanitation, education, food and nutrition security, decent work and social protection, environment and security.

In the Communication 'An Agenda for Change' on the EU development policy, the EU commits to allocate at least 20% of the 2014-2020 aid budget to human development, including health. Furthermore, the 2013 Communication on the post-2015 global development goals lays out the EU's intention to provide a balanced approach to poverty eradication and sustainable development, ensuring basic living standards, including health for all.

A key challenge we are facing today is to prevent the economic slowdown from triggering a health crisis. On the other hand, we are trying to seize the opportunities to push reforms, to think more freely, to embrace and develop new ideas and concepts that perhaps we might not have embraced in a calmer economic climate.

This year the European Commission has adopted the working programme "*Investing in Health*". This document complements the Commission *Communication Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion*. It outlines the need of smart investments in health based on the three core principles:

Spending smarter - but not necessarily more - in sustainable health systems;

Investing in people's health, particularly through health-promotion programmes;

Investing in health coverage as a way of reducing inequalities and tackling social exclusion.

Innovation is another key element, which holds great promise for the future of healthcare systems. Indeed, there is a tremendous potential for such innovation and businesses have an important contribution to make – for patients, for the healthcare sector, for health professionals and for the wider economy.

EU-KAZAKHSTAN COOPERATION IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

Being an upper middle income country in terms of GDP per capita, Kazakhstan and its citizens deserve a healthcare system commensurate with the country's ambition to become one of the 30 most developed countries in the world.

While Kazakhstan has a wealth not only of financial but also of human resources, we nevertheless believe that know-how transfer, exchange of experience and learning from European countries with highly developed medical services can be beneficial for Kazakhstan's own reform strategy.

Therefore, since 2007, the EU allocated approx. 5m€ for 8 projects aimed at supporting reforms in Kazakhstan's health sector.

With these funds, and in collaboration with government authorities, hospitals, universities, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, we:

- supported improvements in Mother and Child healthcare through a project implemented by the WHO, which was recognised by EU independent monitoring team as one of the most successful in the region. A commemorative plaque was opened by the Ministry of health, EU side and WHO at the National Research Centre for Maternal and Child Health in April 2011.
- supported infectious disease control through a project implemented together with the Sanitary and Epidemiological Centre in Almaty,
- provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Health on implementing the National "Salamatty Kazakhstan" Strategy
- supported strategies and instruments to ensure HIV prevention, diagnostic, rehabilitation and care

While most of these actions have come to an end, we plan to start soon a smaller health related action in Kyzylorda oblast, as part of our engagement in supporting regional development in Kazakhstan, with an overall budget of 17m€. This grant totalling over 349 thousand EUR is aimed at addressing health related issues, as diseases prevention, first aid, HIV awareness campaign, health care regional policies.

I believe that the main EU programme on Innovations "Horizon 2020" will bring new opportunities for the EU-Kazakhstan cooperation in medical research area.

We are confident that through these programs, the EU was able to make a sustainable and valuable contribution to improving health services for the citizens of Kazakhstan.

Let me conclude by calling upon all stakeholders, experts and businesses to exchange their "*know how*" and knowledge today. I am confident that jointly we can achieve better health services for the population of Kazakhstan.

Thank you very much for your attention.