



## **DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN**

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### **Round table “The Implementation of the “Kazakhstan-2050” Strategy and the Role of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the International Community” (15 September 2014, Astana)**

#### **Speech of the Head of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan, Ambassador H.E. Aurelia Bouchez**

MMr Chairmen, Minister, Excellencies,

Let me first thank the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan for hosting such a topical event, devoted to Kazakhstan's long-term development goals.

This meeting gives me an occasion to praise once again President Nazarbayev's Strategy 2050, which is more needed than ever in the current context of regional tensions and global economic crisis.

Let me focus on some of the key merits of the Strategy.

**First, it is comprehensive**, yet structured around clear priorities, which take into account the necessary synergy between economic, institutional and political reforms. Just one example on this: you cannot improve FDIs attractiveness without justice reform. Both items are in the Strategy.

Kazakhstan has already identified in its previous Strategies the importance of moving forwards on all fronts. Kazakhstan ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in the Global Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum, but its performance much varies from one field to another. Labour market efficiency and the macroeconomic environment are assessed very positively, but positions are health and primary education, financial market development, the competitiveness of companies and innovations hold weaker positions.

A comprehensive approach to economic modernization is therefore required, as set out in Strategy 2050 – and as developed in the new Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA). The EPCA negotiations were concluded last week. It is a cooperation agreement, not a political association nor economic integration agreement. It is fully compatible with Kazakhstan's other commitments. The negotiations lasted for more than three years and built notably on Kazakhstan's "Path to Europe" programme. It paves the way for a very active cooperation with a broad scope, since it covers 29 areas of cooperation between the European Union and Kazakhstan, namely economic and sustainable development, trade and investment, justice and legal cooperation, people-to-people relations, civil society cooperation, cooperation in education, culture, research and innovation. These fields coincide with many 2050 Strategy goals and the EPCA should provide a valuable support to its implementation.

Another of the many merits of the Strategy is the quest for **qualitative development**. Kazakhstan has already achieved impressive quantity results. It is a young, but mature State. But more is required to become part of the 30 most developed countries in the world, as intended by Kazakhstan, and also to be able to respond to the citizens' higher expectations.

As the country further develops, the citizens will ask for a better social protection, for revenues gap reduction, for more opportunities to become successful entrepreneurs, more say in local affairs, more democracy. These fields are covered by the by the 2050 Strategy – and by the new EPCA. Let me quote two examples. The cooperation on trade and trade related issues and the regulatory convergence will help Kazakhstan to maximize benefits from its future WTO membership, this will help Kazakh companies to become more competitive on international markets. The prospect in the EPCA for a visa facilitation agreement will boost the contacts between the EU and Kazakh societies.

Let me mention a third key feature of the Strategy 2050 – a major one indeed. Strategy 2050 is showing the **way for stability**. I was impressed by the 10 challenges list at the start of the Strategy. And the situation in the region is even more tense now than two years ago. This makes Kazakhstan's role as a stability producer and exporter even more crucial. Kazakhstan's prosperity, inter ethnic tolerance, and friendly, peace seeking foreign policy is a key asset for the region and beyond.

We view with great interest Kazakhstan's active role in the revival of Silk Road concepts such as the Western Europe-Western China transport corridor. We appreciate Kazakhstan's active support for the EU-CA Strategy. We appreciate the efforts of Kazakhstan to call the parties engaged in Ukraine crisis for a peaceful resolution and stop the bloodshed. Let me underline that the EU highly values Kazakhstan's multivectoral policy and economic pragmatism.

In our view, the ongoing security challenges in the world demand preventive soft power policies. Sustainable state institutions, based on inclusive consensus and economic performance, attachment to and respect for international law, support to global policies – all are key requirements and they are part of Kazakhstan Strategy 2050. Stability starts inside, and the country's prosperity and unity thanks to the interethnic concord and culture of tolerance around Kazakhstan's "Eternal nation", are key assets in this regard.

This is why Kazakhstan is our main partner in the region, not only for trade and investment, but also for political dialogue, dialogue on foreign and security matters.

The conclusion of the new EPCA is, before everything, **a sign of trust** from the EU to Kazakhstan as a partner and a sign of confidence in the future of this country.