European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis pays official visit to Kazakhstan

ASTANA – On 25-26 October European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis pays official visit to Astana to attend the Global Conference on "Primary Health Care: From Alma-Ata towards universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals". Commissioner Andriukaitis will deliver the keynote speech at the high-level plenary session on advancing primary healthcare towards universal health coverage, as well as during the ministerial parallel sessions in the framework of the event.

It is expected that the sides participating in the Global Conference will commit to concrete actions to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in healthcare and will adopt the Astana Declaration.

Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis noted that "Spending only 3% of our health budgets on prevention, compared with 80% on the treatment of diseases, is simply not enough. We need better access to primary healthcare so that the emergency room isn't people's first port of call. And we need to enshrine health promotion and disease prevention into all policy sectors to improve people's health and reduce pressure on health systems. In the EU we aim to support national health authorities in tackling the challenges and in making the right policy and investment choices".

During the visit H.E. Mr Andriukaitis will also have a number of bilateral meetings with Kazakhstani officials, namely Prime-Minister of Kazakhstan Mr Bakytzhan Sagintayev, Vice-Prime Minister/Minister of Agriculture Umirzak Shukeyev, Minister of Health Mr Yelzhan Birtanov, as well as with health ministers of the countries participating in the conference.

Background information

The Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between the EU and
Kazakhstan was signed on 21 December 2015 in Astana. Since 1 May 2016 the provisional implementation of the main articles of the Agreement has been launched. The Agreement provides a significant boost to economic and political ties between the EU and Kazakhstan and enhances concrete cooperation in 29 key policy areas, with an extra focus on reducing technical barriers to trade (such as technical regulations, standards, sanitary and phytosanitary measures etc.). According to the EU strategy, health promotion and disease prevention pave the way for a more effective and efficient health system. Strong primary care efficiently guides patients through the health system and helps avoid wasteful spending. Around 50 million people in the EU suffer from several chronic diseases, and more than half a million people of working age die from them every year, representing an annual cost of some 115 billion EUR for EU economies. Find out more at

**Biographical note**

Vytenis Andriukaitis is a Lithuanian politician and since November 2014 the EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety. He was a member of the Lithuanian Parliament during six terms, from 1992 to 2004 and from 2008 to 2012, and was a Deputy Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament in 2001-2004. He is also one of the founders of the Lithuanian Social-Democratic Party (LSDP), which he chaired in 1999-2000. In 2012-2014, he was Lithuanian Minister for Health, and during his office in 2014 Andriukaitis was elected as Vice-President of the World Health Assembly of the WHO. He was also a co-signatory of the Act of independence of Lithuania and the co-author of the country's Constitution (1990-92).

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