

# Kazakhstan Turns 25: Contributing To Global Good To Remain Top Priority

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On December 16, Kazakhstan will mark 25 years of independence. This is a momentous occasion which will be marked by celebrations across the country. But along with the festivities, this is also a time for us all to reflect on the significant progress we have made at home and the role we have played to help develop our common global community.

Under the wise leadership of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, our young country has developed into the economic powerhouse of Eurasia and a leading diplomatic voice on the world stage. The future of Kazakhstan is bright and the ambitious plans our Government has put forward position us well to enjoy further growth and continue to contribute to world development in the decades to come.

Born in a period of global turbulence, our country has weathered many storms and emerged as a strong and united nation. Not everyone believed this would be the case. In 1991, some observers doubted our ability to survive as a sovereign nation, given our multi-ethnic population, our diversity of religions, and a challenging legacy of nuclear weapons and infrastructure. But we have turned this challenge into an opportunity - and over a quarter of a century have made the journey from a country with no footprint on the political map to a stable nation and a respected member of the international community.

Our progress is, perhaps, best signified by our recent election to join the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member for 2017-2018. Kazakhstan,

the first country from Central Asia to sit on the UN Security Council, will use its experience to promote fighting terrorism and extremism, stabilising our regional neighbour Afghanistan, as well as strengthening nuclear non-proliferation and security. Our election is an important sign of the trust the international community places in Kazakhstan to be a firm advocate for peace, stability and justice in the world.

This is borne out by the role our country has played in resolving global disputes. For many years Kazakhstan has acted as a force for good, not only in our own region but across the world. Whether it's the role our President played in mending relations between Russia and Turkey last summer, the efforts we continue to make to help bring lasting peace to Ukraine or our leadership in the global campaign to remove nuclear weapons from the world, we can be proud of the contribution we have made to the global pursuit of peace and security. However, the world faces many crises, including conflicts in the Middle East, terrorism, extremism and climate change which require the international community to come together to find solutions. Kazakhstan is determined to continue acting as a bridge between nations to promote the widest possible co-operation and as a contributor of concrete and tangible deeds for the common good.

It is not only in diplomacy that Kazakhstan is swiftly becoming a worthy citizen of the world. We are now the most developed country in Central Asia - and just recently Kazakhstan was ranked 35th out of 190 countries in the World Bank's Doing Business rankings. Over the last two decades, more than \$230 billion in foreign direct investment has flowed into Kazakhstan and, as we make progress on reviving the ancient Silk Road, our country is well placed to become a vital trading link between China in the East and Europe in the West.

While we are proud of what we have achieved in our short history, Kazakhstan has fiercely ambitious plans for our future. Our country is aiming, by 2050, to become one of the top 30 most developed countries in the world. The Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, put forward by President Nazarbayev to diversify the economy, increase support for small and medium sized businesses and consolidate our country as a key location for inward investment, is an important step towards this goal. Kazakhstan is also aiming to implement a number of domestic measures that should provide an additional economic boost and further integrate us in the economic development in Eurasia, particularly the Nurlı Zhol (Bright Path) New Economic Policy, which includes a \$9 billion investment package.

We will start the next year with true optimism. 2017 will be an exciting 12 months for Kazakhstan. In January our representatives will formally take up their seats at the UNSC, with all the responsibilities for promoting global peace and security this brings. In June-September, our beautiful capital Astana, another Kazakh contribution to global development, will host EXPO 2017 on Future Energy, which will attract delegates from more than 100

nations and 17 international organisations. It will also see the opening of the new Astana International Financial Centre to support the growth of our financial services industry and accelerate our comprehensive privatisation programme. This will bring fresh ideas and investment to these businesses and new resources for the government to further invest in infrastructure and human development. Next January and February will also see our largest city of Almaty host the world's largest ever Winter Universiade, bringing together athletes from almost 60 countries.

The people of Kazakhstan can be proud. Our country has achieved a great deal in a short time. But we remain ambitious to build on what has been achieved at home and to step up our role in promoting peace and prosperity globally. The international community can be confident that Kazakhstan is committed to doing everything we can to help build a better and safer world for everyone.