

Remarks by President of Kazakhstan Mr Nursultan Nazarbayev at Plenary Session of International Conference “Building a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World”

29th August 2016

Dear participants of the Conference,

August 29, 1991, is marked by an event of historic significance both for our country and the whole world.

25 years ago we legally stopped the most sinister experiment of militarism, which had been tormenting our land and our people for almost 40 years.

Several decades before that event, the world tried to lower the threshold of nuclear threat through the processes of nuclear weapons reduction, and a moratorium of its testing.

We, in Kazakhstan, were the first to cut the "Gordian knot" by adopting a decree on closing the largest nuclear test site in the world.

After our decision, test sites of all leading nuclear powers became silent but they have still not been closed anywhere.

Kazakhstan was the first to take such a step.

This was the will of our people.

It shows the great importance of this event for the entire planet.

Therefore, we consider the presence of high-level guests from around the world at this Conference as a reflection of the wide international recognition of Kazakhstan's achievements in the global anti-nuclear movement.

I am convinced that this Conference will make an important contribution to enhancing the process of banning nuclear tests and of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, eliminating the threat of nuclear madness for people across the world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The discovery of nuclear energy was one of the greatest achievements of science in the 20th century.

But its use for military purposes has been the greatest and most dangerous delusion in the history of mankind.

Already at the dawn of the nuclear era, great scientists, military strategists and politicians proved that winning wars with atomic weapons is an illusion. No-one can win, but everyone will lose.

And the price of this no-win situation is the destruction of the world.

The "effect of adjustment" to life under the "sword of Damocles" in terms of nuclear apocalypse has already begun to pass genetically from one generation to another.

Is humanity able to break this vicious circle?

The 25th anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site is a good reason to start a new phase of the fight for the reduction and complete ban of the Doomsday device.

The unique experience of Kazakhstan, struggling to completely eliminate the threat of the planet's nuclear self-destruction, remains the only one and is unrivalled in history.

The decision to close the Semipalatinsk test site was made when we were still a part of the former USSR.

We had to overcome powerful resistance of the Union's military command machine.

At that time, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we owned the fourth largest nuclear and missile arsenal in the world.

There were 104 intercontinental SS-18 ("Satan") ballistic missiles in our territory.

1,400 nuclear warheads were placed inside them.

Our 40 aerodromes hosted 40 Tu-95 MS strategic bombers with 370 nuclear cruise missiles.

That potential was bigger than the nuclear forces of France, Britain and China combined.

The Semipalatinsk test site had a strong research infrastructure, ready for the production and improvement of nuclear weapons.

Besides Kazakhstan controlling a quarter of the world's natural uranium reserves, it had the full cycle of its enrichment, production of nuclear fuel, reactors and facilities.

The territory of the country hosted five facilities, operating on nuclear fuel, including a nuclear reactor in Aktau.

To renounce such a powerful potential, we needed a strong political will.

Frankly, a part of our society had been exposed to the temptation to remain a nuclear power.

It took a lot of efforts to resist this false temptation.

Renouncement of nuclear weapons and nuclear status was our deliberate, sincere choice. It was a voluntary act, supported by all people of Kazakhstan.

The humanitarian dimension of this historic decision is equally important.

Nearly four decades of continuous testing of nuclear weapons in the territory of Kazakhstan have caused tremendous harm to our land and the health of the nation.

In total, 456 nuclear and thermonuclear tests were held, including 116 atmospheric ones.

Over one and a half million people lived near the test site of 300,000 square kilometers.

But the Soviet military leadership's documents about building a test site in Kazakhstan contained insidious phrases about this place being "deserted."

Not only the test site itself but also the adjacent areas were exposed to intense radioactive contamination.

This resulted in radiation pathologies affecting people living around the area as well as its wildlife.

Experts estimate that up to 500,000 people were exposed to radiation.

Several generations of Kazakh people will be affected by the consequences of those destructive experiments.

Kazakhstan and Kazakh people suffered from nuclear tests, perhaps more than any other country and people in the world.

Today, our commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world is an essential component of the Mangilik El (Eternal Nation) national idea.

Dear participants of the conference.

In a quarter of a century, using Kazakhstan's example, we have developed an effective model to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

We invite all countries to use this model. It includes the following foundations.

First, a voluntary decision based on a broad national consensus to close the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, renounce the possession of nuclear weapons and prohibit their deployment in the territory of the country at any time in the future.

Second, we have gained our Independence without a nuclear test site!

We have created and strengthened our independent country, achieved a high international credibility without nuclear weapons.

The Semipalatinsk Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia was signed in 2006.

In 2015, all its members, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, received security assurances from the P5, issued as a special protocol.

Thus, taking into account the Budapest Memorandum signed in 1994 by the nuclear powers, our country has double security assurances.

Third, Kazakhstan is a party to all fundamental international treaties in the field of nuclear safety.

Fourth, based on international agreements, we undertook a full cycle of transparent and practical actions to receive a nuclear-weapon-free status.

Fifth, Kazakhstan's model of denuclearization is based on broad international cooperation of our nation with Russia, the US and several other countries, as well as with international organizations.

A crucial role was played by the Cooperative Threat Reduction program adopted and implemented at the initiative of former US senators Samuel Nunn and Richard Lugar.

As part of the program, the work to dismantle all military nuclear facilities in Kazakhstan was financed and carried out.

In 2012, the Joint Statement of the Presidents of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and the United States of America Regarding the Trilateral Cooperation at the Former Semipalatinsk Test Site was adopted.

We have always felt the support of the United Nations, which adopted a number of resolutions on the rehabilitation of people and the affected lands of the Semipalatinsk region.

Kazakh people particularly appreciate the contribution of Japan and European Union countries, to decontaminate and restore the ecological balance in the territory of the former test site; these countries also provide medical assistance to victims of radiation.

We hope to strengthen the assistance of the international community in the work to eliminate the consequences of radioactive contamination.

Sixth, by abandoning our nuclear status, this country has managed to develop civil nuclear energy including nuclear power and the production of nuclear fuel.

We have created a successfully working National Nuclear Center and the KazAtomProm National Atomic Company.

We have become the depositaries of an international bank of low-enriched nuclear fuel.

This underlines the high level of Kazakhstan's security and our solid international reputation.

Seventh, in today's world, Kazakhstan is the leader of the global anti-nuclear movement.

We have initiated the ATOM Project (Abolish Testing – Our Mission), the essence of which is to unite all people for the comprehensive ban of nuclear weapons.

I am convinced that the world community will see value in it and will use these seven fundamental pillars of Kazakhstan's experience for the future movement towards a nuclear weapon-free world.

Ladies and gentlemen.

In the 21st century there is no reasonable alternative for a world free of the threat of a global nuclear war.

The development of human civilization, which is just a step away from a new stage of scientific and technological progress - the 4th Industrial Revolution - makes the issue of non-proliferation and destruction of nuclear weapon a matter of survival of the human race.

The feeling of common threat of a world nuclear conflict is partially put to sleep.

Some people rely on the system of international arrangements, formed in recent decades.

However, the reality is that the adopted agreements did not hinder the extension of the nuclear powers club at the end of the 20th century.

International law, unfortunately, includes a lot of ambiguities, allowing bypassing the regime of bans on military atomic use.

A way for freeing the planet from the threat of nuclear suicide will certainly not be easy.

It will require deep mental changes, new multilateral political solutions, as well as confidence in international relations at the highest level.

There is a need for a well-developed program and concerted algorithms for actions of the whole world community.

Firstly, in the 21st century humanity reached such a development point, when not even an amount of accumulated nuclear weapons is a mortal challenge for global security but the mere fact of its presence.

The probability of falling it into the hands of international terrorists is more dangerous.

This is a serious argument for the joint participation of all the world countries in the non-proliferation process.

Secondly, success or failure of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament process directly depends on the capability of the world community to overcome militarist anachronisms.

It is necessary to leave behind military blocs. Their existence itself becomes provocative and meaningless.

I represented my vision of the world universal anti-military measures in the Manifesto "The World. The 21st century" that could be a basis for the gradual demilitarization of the world.

In this action I see the chance to minimize the threat of nuclear self-destruction of the planet.

Thirdly, the nuclear arsenal reduction process should be multilateral, with the engagement of all states, who de-facto possess such types of military power.

This should be preceded by the full legalization of status of the states that are currently related to the “threshold” group.

All nuclear powers should negotiate the development of a comprehensive treaty for the reduction of nuclear arms.

Fourthly, the international legal framework of nuclear security in the 21st century should be solidified.

On December 7, 2015, under the initiative of Kazakhstan, the UN General Assembly for the first time in human history adopted the Universal Declaration for the Achievement of a Nuclear Weapon-Free World.

Now it is important to codify all international laws relating the issues of nuclear security.

There is a necessity to develop a legally binding system of assurances of nuclear powers for states who voluntarily abandoned atomic weaponry, as well as those having non-nuclear status.

An actually operating mechanism of strict measures against holding and proliferation of nuclear weapon should be developed.

Such international agreements should be approved by resolutions of the UN Security Council.

Kazakhstan is seeking the adoption of a UN convention on a full and comprehensive ban of nuclear weapons.

Fifthly, we need new mechanisms to regulate relations between large powers and new key players.

Moreover, I believe it is necessary to establish new international organizations or reform the already existing institutions for conflict prevention.

There is a need to create a risk management system for relations between great powers.

It is essential to enforce the control over proliferation of conventional weapons and new military technologies.

I appeal to all states to accept new obligations on further strengthening of international agreements institutions that make the basis of nuclear security.

I also call upon all the parliamentarians who represent today their nations to contribute actively to these actions.

Kazakhstan's activity as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2017-2018 shall be aimed at these and other measures to strengthen international peace and security.

The permanent member countries of UN Security Council that have the greater arsenal of nuclear weapon bear specific responsibility before the whole world.

We appeal to them so that these countries, in particular, would regulate this work and lead the way.

Sixthly, a wide civic movement for the strengthening of nuclear security, against nuclear weapon testing and advancements shall give a new impetus to our emancipation from nuclear threat.

Dear friends,

I am sure that in the 21st century humanity can manage to make a worthy way to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

By marking the 25th anniversary of the closure of Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, we again urge the world to recognize the never disappearing threat of nuclear self-destruction.

I believe that the will and intellect of the world community multiplied by energy of well-calibrated collective actions will not permit our planet to step into the abyss of nuclear disaster.

Today there is still a chance to make the world safer, releasing it from the most destructive weapons.

I am sure that calls and proposals to be voiced from this tribune will be heard by politicians and scientists, by all people of good will.

First of all, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to all the participants of the conference for warm words about Kazakhstan and its people.

Thank you for your constructive ideas and proposals, focused to achieve a non-nuclear world.

They will be considered during the preparation of the outcome document of the conference and will be conveyed to international organizations.

It is symbolic that our Conference is held today - on August 29. Five years ago, in 2011, the International Forum for a Nuclear-Free World adopted the Astana Declaration for a Nuclear-Free World.

The presence of a number of most prominent figures today demonstrates the extreme urgency and importance of the issues discussed at our Forum.

This is an expression of the collective will of the best part of humanity to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

It is extremely important not to limit ourselves with calls but to take concrete actions to move our planet towards a nuclear-weapons-free future.

It is vital for the happiness and prosperity of the future generations of the planet's citizens, in the interests of all countries and peoples.

One of the concrete steps in this direction is the development and adoption of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons. I look forward to your support in this.

The convention must establish a ban on nuclear weapons, set specific dates for their elimination, including in countries that possess them today.

We do not rule out the adoption of other legally binding documents that will delegalize nuclear weapons.

I would like to once again express my deep gratitude for appreciating our country's contribution and my humble personal contribution to global nuclear disarmament.

I am also grateful for the initiative to establish a Kazakhstan President's Prize for Global Peace and Security. I am supportive of this initiative but it would probably be more correct to call it the Nuclear Disarmament Prize. We should reflect on the name a bit more. We will think about it and make a decision on the establishment of such a Prize.

I would like to inform you that in November at my initiative the capital city of Kazakhstan will host the Astana Peace Summit.

It will bring together the heads of states, governments, prominent political and public figures, scholars and businessmen from many countries. We could talk about the establishment of this prize and its awarding to the first winner at this very summit.

I once again thank all the participants of the conference.

I wish you great success in your work.

Thank you for your attention!