



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, H.E. Mr. Kassymzhomart Tokayev

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 27, 2006

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you, Mr. Minister, for coming to the Permanent Council today and for sharing your Government's vision of the future of Kazakhstan. Your stated commitment to stability, prosperity, and democratic reform in Kazakhstan and the broader region is indeed welcome.

The United States believes that developing democratic institutions and respecting human rights are absolutely essential for a nation's long-term stability. The United States very much wants Kazakhstan to succeed as it works to become a strong, prosperous, and democratic state. Such a development will be good, not only for the Kazakh people and the future of Kazakhstan, but also will have a positive effect far beyond Kazakhstan's borders.

In that regard, we are pleased that Kazakhstan has reaffirmed the importance of democratic development and has declared its commitment to strengthen representative institutions that invest its citizens in the political process, such as an independent media, local self-government, and free and fair elections that meet international standards. The United States also supports the Government of Kazakhstan's intentions to strengthen religious freedoms and bolster civil society, and commends the strides it has made toward promoting tolerance.

Mr. Minister, the United States welcomes Kazakhstan's aspiration for the OSCE Chairmanship in Office and would like to see it meet the high standards expected of the Chair. In this spirit, we offer a number of suggestions that, in the view of the United States, would greatly strengthen the qualifications of Kazakhstan to serve as Chairman, possibly in 2011:

- The adoption of a new electoral law that meets OSCE standards including balanced electoral commissions at all levels, and a repeal of the prohibition on demonstrations;
- The adoption of a local government law, including direct election of local authorities;
- The adoption of a new media law that fulfills OSCE commitments; and
- The easing of registration requirements for political parties, and the registration of parties seeking registration.

The United States would like to hear more about Kazakhstan's specific reform plans, and its timeline for achieving them. We also would like to hear more about Kazakhstan's goals and priorities for the OSCE if it were to assume leadership of the Organization in the future.

Let me re-emphasize, the United States applauds Kazakhstan's aspiration to take on a leadership role in the OSCE. We remain ready to work with Kazakhstan throughout this process. We are prepared to discuss technical assistance, visits, and other means by which the United States can work with Kazakhstan as it moves forward in implementing these steps.

Thank you.