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REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN, AT THE FIFTEENTH MEETING OF  
THE OSCE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

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**Main policy orientations of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the field of  
environmental protection**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to report briefly on the main policy orientations of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the field of environmental protection.

The environmental situation in Kazakhstan today may be described as follows: atmospheric emissions from stationary sources last year decreased by approximately 3 per cent compared with 2005 to around 3 million tons while discharges into water systems increased by 2 per cent to around 2 million tons.

This reflects the continued heavy anthropogenic impact on the environment.

More serious environmental problems are caused by the high level of air pollution in large cities and so-called "historical problems" such as chromium pollution in the groundwater in Aktobe and lead pollution in the topsoil in Shymkent. There is also the problem of the former test sites of the military in the Semipalatinsk, Azgir and other regions.

It should, however, be mentioned that there are also certain positive trends. For example, the extent of atmospheric emissions per unit of the gross domestic product (GDP) decreases every year. In 2006 the reduction was in the region of 14 per cent.

The principle of zero discharge for the Caspian Sea has entered into force and now no waste whatsoever should be discharged into the water.

New environmentally sound technologies have been introduced in many companies.

As a result, Kazakhstan last year went from 75th place to 70th place in the world environmental stability index.

To effectively solve the country's environmental problems, however, there is a need for further practical steps to improve environmental protection.

To this end the Ministry undertook the following main steps last year.

First, work was completed on the drafting of a new legislative basis for the work of our Ministry. This involved initially the adoption of the Environmental Code and the Conceptual Framework for Kazakhstan's transition to sustainable development during the period 2007-2024.

The Code brings our environmental legislation into line with progressive international laws and standards.

The Conceptual Framework for transition to sustainable development aims at ensuring a balance between social, economical and environmental development factors in order to improve the quality of life of the country's inhabitants.

In accordance with this Conceptual Framework, expert analyses are being carried out with the active participation of leading academics and specialists of all sectoral programmes to bring them into line with the principles of sustainable development.

A State programme has been drafted for the effective and rational use of renewable energy sources and resources in the Republic of Kazakhstan in the interests of sustainable development.

A comprehensive programme for 2007-2009 has also been elaborated to safeguard sustainable development of the Balkhash-Alakol river basin.

This programme is effectively a pilot project to help implement the Conceptual Framework for transition to sustainable development. There are plans to develop similar programmes for the other seven river basins in Kazakhstan.

Second, the Ministry is adopting a new approach to resolve the existing environmental problems in the country.

A list of environmental problems at the national and local levels has been established, which reflects the most specific and urgent issues. The list contains 205 items, 189 of which concern local problems.

All organizational and financial efforts to resolve the country's environmental problems are now guided by this list.

In 2006, Western Kazakhstan became the first regional administration to be certified in accordance with the international standard ISO 14001. The Ministry hopes to receive the certificate this year.

The transition to international environmental standards in our country is taking place on a very large scale. A total of 47 large enterprises have now received international certificates, whereas a mere eight had such certification two years ago.

For this purpose the Ministry has introduced a system of incentives for natural resource users to adopt international standards. For example, last year preferential rates of

emission levies were established for companies obtaining ISO certification. These measures will help improve the environmental situation and at the same time increase the competitiveness of domestic companies.

Third, the Ministry has an important role to play in enforcing the law and exercising State control in environmental matters.

Last year for the first time we began to adopt measures to stop companies from violating environmental protection legislation.

Compliance by mineral extraction companies with environmental protection requirements remains a serious problem.

We have managed to get all these companies to develop programmes to utilize associated gas with a view to abandoning the practice of flaring altogether. Only two countries in the world — Norway and Kazakhstan — operate a prohibition of this kind today.

Monitoring of the environmental situation in the country has an important role to play as the main source of information for elaborating environmental programmes, adopting administrative decisions and reacting promptly to changing circumstances.

A concept for the establishment and application of a uniform system for monitoring the environment and natural resources has been approved. It will allow us to direct our monitoring activities towards specific problems in co-ordination with control activities at the national level.

One effective method of State control of environmentally sound use of natural resources is the work of the interdepartmental committee to stabilize the quality of the environment involving members of parliament, department representatives, scientific organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), natural resource users and academics.

An environmental audit procedure is being developed. On the initiative of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, a national board of environmental auditors has been established for the first time and has conducted several audits of industrial enterprises.

International co-operation in the field of environmental protection is increasing.

Kazakhstan attaches great importance to co-operation with the OSCE in safeguarding the country's environmental security. The Conceptual Framework for the sustainable development of the Republic of Kazakhstan makes provision for securing the OSCE Chairmanship as one of its current main tasks.

For its part, within its environmental mandate, the OSCE attaches great importance to the implementation of the principles of the Aarhus Convention. The OSCE has given Kazakhstan considerable assistance in ratifying the Convention. With the support of the OSCE Centre in Kazakhstan a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the *Majilis* (lower house) of the Parliament of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and NGOs in Kazakhstan. Implementation of the Aarhus Convention involves co-operation with the OSCE in environmental education. A project is currently under way to

promote education in sustainable development within Kazakhstan's official and unofficial education system.

Work is being completed on ratification of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Rotterdam Convention on Hazardous Chemicals. Particular attention needs to be paid to ratification of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

A UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization) regional ministerial conference has been organized on the strategic role of renewable energy in sustainable development in Central Asia, and a regular meeting of the ministers of the environment of the members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has also been held.

The creation of a consultative body on energy co-operation with Norway is under consideration. A memorandum has also been signed between our Ministry and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Nuclear Safety of Germany on co-operation on the introduction of non-waste technologies, modern waste treatment facilities and alternative energy sources.

At the instigation of the Head of State, the establishment of a solar centre for renewable energy sources in Astana — in collaboration with Germany and the Eurasian water centre — is being considered in co-operation with the Russian Federation.

It should be emphasized that our work with international organizations is bearing real fruit. On 28 April 2006 in Cape Town the steering committee of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) approved a grant of more than 1 billion US dollars for the implementation of the Central Asian programme. In addition, a grant of around 200 million US dollars has been obtained from donors to help solve Kazakhstan's environmental problems.

We have proposed an initiative for the consolidation of European and Asian sustainable development processes in a single Eurasian process through the creation of a secretariat in Astana and also the holding of the Third World Summit on Sustainable Development in Astana in 2012. A set of measures has been approved and the relevant work has already started.

Co-operation with NGOs is an important aspect of environmental protection. A declaration on interaction and co-operation in environmental protection has been signed with the most active organizations in this field.

A public environmental council has been set up within the Ministry to consider proposals and recommendations and analyse the environmental impact of national strategies and programmes.

Co-ordination centres have been established including the Centre for Sustainable Manufacturing and Consumption and the Centre for Climate Change.

Expert public assessments of the environment are being carried out. The practice of compulsory accountability to the public for the work of our regional authorities has been introduced.

The following priority tasks have been identified for 2007.

First, in each region of Kazakhstan a set of environmental targets needs to be defined and gradually achieved. All regional environmental programmes and all departmental activities should be geared towards the achievement of these targets.

This year the anthropogenic impact on the environment needs to be reduced in all regions of the country. To this end, the Ministry has tightened the requirements for the establishment of emission limits by issuing permits which take into account the need for environmentally sound and non-waste technologies.

Proposals are to be made for the introduction of the internationally recognized practice of “green purchasing” by which the State budget will consider only those suppliers that comply with environmental requirements. The Ministry will devise a draft national “green oil” programme in which international certificates will be issued to exporters who guarantee to comply with strict environmental standards in the extraction of hydrocarbons.

Many of the issues confronting the Ministry are new and we shall make every effort to resolve them.

Thank you for your attention.