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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE  
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY  
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR MICHAEL W. BANACH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE,  
AT THE 789<sup>th</sup> (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

**14 JANUARY 2010**

**RE: ADDRESS OF THE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE OF THE OSCE, MINISTER  
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN,  
H.E. MR. KANAT SAUDABAYEV**

Mister Chair:

1. The Holy See joins other Delegations in warmly welcoming H.E. Mr. Kanat Saudabayev, Secretary of State of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, to the Permanent Council and in congratulating him on the assumption of his duties as 2010 Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE. Our gratitude extends also to H.E. President Nursultan Nazarbayev for his video address, as well as for his recent visit to Pope Benedict XVI. Congratulations also to you, Ambassador Abdrakhmanov, and to your co-workers!

2. In assuming the Chairmanship of the OSCE, Kazakhstan offers much promise in these challenging times, for it is a multi-ethnic state, heir to numerous centuries-old spiritual and cultural traditions, and now on the move to new social and economic objectives. In fact, the Kazakh Presidency of the OSCE takes place almost twenty years after the proclamation of the independence of Kazakhstan, achieved following a long period of darkness and suffering. The date of 16 December 1991 is indelibly inscribed in the annals of your history. This regained freedom has rekindled a surer confidence in the future, one in which your past experience will provide a wealth of lessons from which to draw in order to move courageously towards new horizons of peace and progress. Kazakhstan wishes to grow in brotherhood, dialogue and understanding; these are the indispensable requisites for building bridges of solidarity and cooperation with other peoples, nations and cultures.

It is in this light that Kazakhstan made the bold move in 1991 to close the nuclear facility of Semipalatinsk, subsequently announcing its unilateral rejection of nuclear arms and its adherence to the Pact totally banning atomic experimentation. This decision

is based on the conviction that controversies must be resolved not by recourse to arms but by the peaceful means of negotiation and dialogue. The Holy See can only encourage this type of commitment, which lies at the heart of the OSCE, which can be strengthened by the continuing discussions in the framework of the “Corfu Process”, and which well corresponds to the fundamental demands of solidarity and peace to which human beings aspire ever more knowingly.

3. Today in Kazakhstan, which is one of the world’s largest in area, citizens belonging to over a hundred nationalities and ethnic groups live side by side, each guaranteed the same rights and freedoms by your Constitution. This spirit of openness and cooperation is part of your tradition, for Kazakhstan has always been a land where different traditions and cultures come together and coexist. This would not be possible if your country were not committed to safeguarding freedom, the inalienable right and profound aspiration of every person. In particular, Kazakhstan recognizes the right to religious freedom, which enables people to express their most deeply held beliefs. When in a society citizens accept one another in their respective religious beliefs, it is easier to foster among them the effective recognition of other human rights and an understanding of the values on which a peaceful and productive coexistence is based. Kazakhstan’s great teacher and poet, Abai Kunanbai, has expressed it well: *“All people, whatever their religion, attribute to God love and justice. Love and justice are the origin of humanity. Those in whom sentiments of love and justice prevail are the truly wise”* (Sayings of Abai, Chapter 45).

In this context, I wish to reaffirm the Catholic Church’s respect for Islam: the Islam that prays, that is concerned for those in need, that promotes true and lasting peace. Hatred, fanaticism and terrorism profane the name of God and disfigure the true image of the human person. And I would also like to assure you that my Delegation will be actively involved in the preparations and the denouement of the High Level Conference on Tolerance and Non Discrimination, scheduled for the end of June.

4. In conclusion, Mister Chairman, as Kazakhstan assumes the Chairmanship of the OSCE, my Delegation is pleased to offer good wishes for your country’s period in office. The international community recently recalled the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In this light, your nation’s chairmanship of the OSCE represents an eloquent testimony of how far the world has developed and matured. The celebration of this anniversary also provides impetus for the strengthening of those democratic gains with a view to the stable future of the region and indeed the whole world. We are confident that Kazakhstan, faithful to its native Eurasian vocation, will continue to be a land of encounter and acceptance, so that men and women “from Vancouver to Vladivostok” will be able to live long days of prosperity and peace.

Thank you, Mister Chair!