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PM Massimov Says Kazakhstan Remains Committed to Sanctity of Contracts

Kazakhstan's energy policy will remain unchanged and Kazakhstan will remain a reliable energy supplier for the world, Prime Minister Karim Massimov declared in Astana on January 18.

Speaking at a meeting of the senior staff of the country's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, PM Massimov said: "Kazakhstan's energy policy will remain unchanged. It is determined by our head of state, and Kazakhstan will continue to be a reliable supplier of energy resources for the international markets."

The Prime Minister went on to underscore that "Kazakhstan is committed to the stability of contracts, and signed contracts will be respected."

He added, "At the same, I would like to note that all contracts should be put to work for the benefit of the people of Kazakhstan. As a state we must respect our obligations, but subsoil users must clearly fulfill their tasks as well."

Kazakhstan's total extractable oil reserves are estimated at 100 billion barrels. Dozens of the largest international companies work in Kazakhstan now, including American firms such as ExxonMobil, Chevron and ConocoPhillips. Foreign investment in Kazakhstan's energy sector is estimated at 80 percent of the 45 billion U.S. dollars invested in the country from abroad since its independence in 1991.

Oil and gas condensate production in Kazakhstan currently stands at 1.35 million barrels daily, of which the lion's share is exported. The production is expected to grow to 3.5 million barrels a day by 2015 which will make Kazakhstan one of the world's five largest producers and exporters of oil.



Kazakh oil workers look up at their plant and its bright future. Up is also the direction where Kazakh oil production is expected to be headed during the next decade.

Kazakhstan Makes Progress in Gender Equality

Aitkul Samakova, Chair of Kazakhstan's National Commission on family affairs and gender policy under the President, said Kazakhstan is making serious headway in ensuring gender equality, while she admitted there were continued problems and challenges that need to be addressed.

Samakova spoke at the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in New York on January 17. She presented Kazakhstan's second report on the status of women in the country since it joined the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1998.

Samakova noted that a presidential decree on gender equality in Kazakhstan for the years 2006 through 2016 and an action plan for its implementation, adopted last year, were very important steps forward in that area. Today, draft legislation on gender equality is being considered by the Parliament, and another draft law on domestic violence is on the government's agenda. She believes the measures will be adopted by the end of the year.

"That would mean the recommendations given in 2001 [when the first report was presented] have been fulfilled by Kazakhstan 100 percent," Samakova said in an interview with Kazinform news agency.

Samakova, herself a former government minister, said there are three women ministers in Kazakhstan's national government, which is 20 percent (until the reshuffle earlier this month there were four women ministers). This, she believes, is "a great achievement among the former Soviet states." Women also fill nine percent of seats in Kazakhstan's Parliament, while 17 percent of deputies of maslikhats (local assemblies) are women. To Samakova, that "is still insufficient."

Samakova said there is a presidential decree to increase the number of women in executive level positions to 30 percent by 2016. She also noted that the notion of "gender policy" is now widespread and everyone in the government leadership understands that this issue is serious.

In a January 17 interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Samakova also explained how independence in 1991 brought changes for the better for women in helping fight domestic violence. Cultural traditions have in the past meant that domestic violence was hardly, if ever, reported to the authorities in Kazakhstan and in other Central Asian states.

"The independence allowed women to feel, how should I say it - more civilized?" she said. "Women started raising this issue and we realized that the problem of domestic violence exists. We [the national government] created in most regions and towns crisis centers where victims of such violence can cope, adapt and where they are being helped with finding work, filing legal papers if necessary and going to court. Certain paragraphs in Kazakhstan's Criminal Code were enhanced to offer better protection from domestic violence."

Samakova also pointed to continuing challenges including a custom in many industries to appoint women to mid-level managerial positions, where they earn less money than their male superiors.

"Yes, [pay inequality] exists, but not because they hold equal positions but are paid different salaries - no, not at all," Samakova said. "They are paid less than their male counterparts just because their position is lower. If a man is a top executive in a given industry, women as a rule are at the mid-level. Somehow this [situation] has become routine. We recognized this [as inappropriate] and currently our commission is looking into the matter."

Kazakhstan Buys U.S. Made Police Helicopter

Marking the first time Kazakhstan acquired a foreign manufactured helicopter for law enforcement use, the country's Ministry of Internal Affairs deployed a new U.S.-made Robinson R44 Raven II helicopter to support its police force in the capital city of Astana in December.

In a ceremony, Astana Mayor Askar Mamin presented Major General Dozumov, head of the Internal Affairs Department of Astana, with keys to a blue trimmed white helicopter. Previously, the R44

Raven II's full capabilities were demonstrated for the country's parliament.

The R44 Raven II was a standard equipped Raven II helicopter. However, in addition to the standard communications radio and transponder, a dual audio controller and police radios were installed along with a public address system and siren.

The Torrance, CA-based Robinson Helicopter Company is one of the world's leading manufacturers of civil helicopters.

Things to Watch:

- The date for the release of the movie *Nomad*, announced for January 26, may now be changing. Stay tuned for updates.
- *Kazakhstan: Reaching for the Future*, a 9-minute video documentary prepared by the Embassy of Kazakhstan to the United States, tells the story of what Kazakhstan has become in the 15 years of its independence and of the importance of strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and the U.S. developed in these years. The video is available at Youtube [here](#). A limited number of copies are also available on DVD. Those who would like to receive a copy, please contact Roman Vassilenko.

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