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Special Election Edition

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President Nazarbayev Calls for Free and Transparent Elections As Key to Continued Economic and Democratic Development

President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced a major program of continued economic and political reforms designed to speed up Kazakhstan's modernization, and confirmed a commitment to holding of a free, fair and transparent presidential election on December 4, 2005.

Speaking at the opening of the Parliamentary session in Astana on September 1, President Nazarbayev said "our strategy and the major issue of expediting Kazakhstan's development is a harmonious combination of economic, social and democratic changes."

He noted, "Based on the solid foundation of a modern and competitive economy, Kazakhstan is working to build an open, democratic and prosperous society of free people, a state ruled by law, and a respected and responsible member of the international community. We are building a state which fully embraces major traits and traditions of our interethnic and inter-religious society."

In order to continue modernizing Kazakhstan's economy, which grew 75 percent over the past seven years, plans for the nearest future include diversification of the economy, support for small and medium sized businesses and the country's membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Democracy Building is Hard Work



Nursultan Nazarbayev

The President called for continued strengthening of democracy in Kazakhstan and invited the entire society to join in the process of growth.

Major reforms will include development of local self-government and delimitation of authority between central and local governments, including the adoption of a special law on reforms in 2006 and the introduction of elections for akims (mayors and governors) as the logical conclusion to the decentralization of power; strengthening the rights and powers of the national Parliament and its participation in forming the Government and other official bodies, as well as possibly increasing the numbers of members of the Majilis and Senate; plus, continued strengthening of the role of political parties and nongovernmental organizations.

Ensuring rights and freedoms is a critical element and will include greater protection for citizens during trials, strengthening the independence of the judicial branch, and the introduction of jury trials.

Fighting corruption will be another major priority, and the President has called for a "multi-layered national anti-corruption system" including changes in law, establishment of "one stop" service centers for

citizens, ensuring transparency in the privatization processes and the activities of state owned and private companies.

The President said this program “needs to undergo the scrutiny of the people and be supported by the majority. We also need to take into account the experience and advice of our friends from developed democracies. Major hard work awaits us.”

To ensure society’s participation in the development of this program, the President intends to chair the State Commission which will include members of Parliament, representatives from the Presidential Administration, the Government, political parties, public associations and NGOs. The Commission will have to offer concrete proposals by June 2006.

President Nazarbayev acknowledged challenges Kazakhstan will face as it moves toward greater democracy, and confirmed his strong commitment to walk this path to its end: “Indeed, we do not have established democratic traditions, and we will move forward through trials and mistakes. This will not be an easy path. We know that. We must carry out these complex historical changes in the hope that we will bring the people of Kazakhstan even closer together for the sake of our common future.”

Free, Fair and Transparent Election a Must

Speaking to Parliament on September 1, President Nazarbayev announced he “will do everything that is needed to ensure the upcoming election is absolutely free, fair and transparent, and its result does not leave even a hint of doubt with the people of Kazakhstan or the international community.”

These words were buttressed by real action on September 9, just two days after the Majilis had established the date of the next presidential election as December 4, when the President signed a special decree providing additional measures to ensure the fairness of the election.

Speaking at the Otan party congress on September 9, the President said “the Decree sends strict directives to state authorities about the need to ensure the upcoming election for the President of Kazakhstan is held correctly. Special attention is given to strengthening the prosecutorial oversight over compliance with election legislation; timely compilation and verification of voter registration lists; ensuring equal access of candidates to news media during the campaign; accreditation of observers from foreign countries and international organizations, as well as foreign news media who are coming to our country for the upcoming election.”

The head of state called on all political forces in Kazakhstan to establish a Public Control committee of influential public figures to oversee the election campaign. Public control needs to work in an open format and ensure full compliance with law at all levels.

“In the upcoming election, we must clearly follow the course toward democratic development. We must clearly understand that retreat from democratic principles is a withdrawal from the universal trends, in other words, a deadend,” the President concluded.

According to the Central Election Commission, the election campaign has already started in earnest. Today, Senator Ualikhan Kaisarov, self-nominated; incumbent President Nazarbayev nominated by the Otan party; Zharmakhan Tuyakbai, Chairman of the For Fair Kazakhstan, the Bloc of Democratic Forces; Salim Oten, president of a private firm, self-nominated; and Mels Eleusizov, the leader of Tabigat environmental organization; have thrown their hats in the ring.

Strengthening Middle Class and Private Property Protection Are Priorities

The continued building of democracy in Kazakhstan and the success of economic and, especially, political reforms, depend on the growth of the emerging middle class.

Currently, 85 percent of industrial production is produced by the private sector which employs 60 percent of Kazakhstan’s workforce.

Kazakhstan wants to strengthen the idea of private property and guarantee the sanctity of contracts. President Nazarbayev told Parliament, “Our major issue is to ensure the irreversible and stable

development of the middle class who own property and recognize their stake in society.” A single law will be adopted regulating entrepreneurial activity, and efforts to nurture respect for private property and contractual relationships will be made.

Modern Education Crucial

The crucial ingredient determining the ultimate success of Kazakhstan’s modernization drive is modern education, and the Government is eager to support this sphere.

As of this year, three thousand of the best students from Kazakhstan have a chance for education at the leading universities of the world under the Bolashak (Future) presidential scholarship. Efforts are being made to improve the quality of education at Kazakhstan’s own universities, such as the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economy and Prognosis, and the Kazakhstan-British Technical University, both of which already meet international standards. To support this effort, Kazakhstan is appropriating money for hiring of foreign professors to teach at key universities.

President Nazarbayev believes Kazakhstan needs its own national management school. “We must have a well thought out system of training the country’s future leaders, similar to Harvard or West Point. That is why the state is allocating more resources to provide our country with managers offering modern and global thinking and able to enrich the economy with new knowledge.”

In 2005, education appropriations expanded by a quarter compared to 2004, reaching 3.9 percent of gross domestic product. The Government also intends to encourage large companies to invest in human resources. All of this is “just the beginning of a comprehensive program of radical reforms of education and professional training in our country in line with 21st Century requirements,” the President noted.

He is convinced the country is on the right track: “Many people who left the country in the 1990s are coming back and are staying for good, and this is significant. The most important task now is to preserve these rhythms of progress in the economy, political and social sphere, and the expansion of democracy. We are looking to Kazakhstan’s future with optimism.”

Kazakhstan Determined to Seek OSCE Chairmanship

The President has confirmed Kazakhstan’s determination to seek the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2009. It will be an “expression of our consistent course toward expedited economic, social and political modernization and of our responsible approach to international and regional stability, security and progress,” he explained.

“I view our bid to chair the OSCE as a systemic task which meets Kazakhstan’s internal and external political goals, and importantly, corresponds to the strengthening and development of the OSCE in the 21st Century... Kazakhstan is determined to confirm its obligations as an active participant of the integration processes in the OSCE,” the President said.

He called on Parliament to quickly ratify the fundamental documents in the area of protection of rights and freedoms, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The President has called it a priority, and reminded Parliament that his decree of Kazakhstan’s accession to the covenants was issued in 2003.

President Nazarbayev believes Kazakhstan’s experience in strengthening tolerance, peace, stability, and inter-religious and interethnic accord in a society with both European and Asian traditions, will enrich the OSCE’s understanding of diversity in the modern world and the many ways of building an open and democratic society.

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