



# KAZAKHSTAN

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## **Statement**

**by H.E. Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev,  
Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament  
of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
at the United Nations General Assembly  
plenary meeting on agenda item 45 “Culture of Peace”**

**12 November 2008  
New York**

**Mr. President,  
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,**

Kazakhstan welcomes and supports the initiative of His Majesty the King of Saudi Arabia to convene this important forum at the UN.

We have no doubt that such universal organization as the UN has a pivotal role to play in addressing issues of ensuring peace, accord and international security.

High representatives of various states and regions coming together in this conference hall are motivated by the noble idea to hold an open dialogue among cultures and religions. Our common goal is simple and clear - to build up a more secure and stable world.

The current situation on the planet is complex and controversial. We in Kazakhstan with sincere regret get the news of new victims of terrorism, wars and conflicts arising from xenophobia, religious intolerance and civilizational contradictions.

At the same time global challenges disregard racial, ethnic or religious differences. They pose threats that affect to the same extent all the nations and peoples striving to live in peace and accord to make the world a better place for the sake of the bright future of our children.

Global challenges bring about the need of a large-scale, in essence, a global dialogue on the issues of intercultural and interfaith accord. There is no alternative to mutual understanding, respect and tolerance. The time has come for statesmen and religious leaders to get together. We will be unable to protect the world from violence and chaos unless joint efforts are undertaken.

Each nation will never give up its historic, spiritual and cultural identity. It is a right and natural tendency. Every culture, not to speak about religion, has a legitimate right to freely exist and to be mutually respected.

That is why, while recognizing and welcoming the variety of cultures, we should facilitate in every possible way the modern world's evolution towards a universal civilization based on common values of freedom, tolerance and accord. The notion of unity in diversity is extremely relevant in the modern world.

Kazakhstan as a nation where many ethnic groups and confessions have been successfully coexisting for centuries stands ready to contribute to the development of the global dialogue of religions and cultures.

Our land has historically been a place of interaction of great civilizations. A spirit of openness and cooperation has always been a part of traditions and mentality of our people.

Kazakhstan is the home country of an outstanding thinker of the Orient al-Farabi and an Islamic enlightener Akhmed Yassawi.

The remains of Father Sebastian beatified by the Russian Orthodox Church are also in Kazakhstan.

A Jewish sacred place, the grave of Lubavich Rabbi, is located on our territory.

Ancient Buddhist temples still exist on our boundless land.

Many ethnic groups have been exiled in Kazakhstan during the totalitarian regime and all of them found shelter and hospitality of Kazakhs. Now, in new historical reality, they became the backbone of such a unique institution as the Assembly of the People. The Parliament of Kazakhstan passed the law confirming a special status of this organization as a center of interaction of all ethnic groups living in our country. The Assembly has been given an exclusive right to nominate its representatives as deputies of the Mazhilis, the lower chamber of the Parliament.

Recently the Parliament passed the national legislation on freedom of faith and religious organizations. It has been improved and amended to comply with the international standards and the existing experience and practice abroad.

Only throughout 17 years of independence 15 hundred mosques, over 170 Orthodox parishes, more than 30 Catholic churches, 20 synagogues, over 1000 houses of prayer and Protestant missions have been built in our country.

Upon the initiative of President Nursultan Nazarbayev since 2003 our new capital Astana hosted two summits of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. This forum has become a unique Central Asian platform for the dialogue of world religions. I would like to ask the representatives of the global community to support the third Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions to be held on July 1-2, 2009 in Astana, this time with the participation of the UN.

The title of the upcoming Congress recently approved by its Secretariat is "The role of religious leaders in building a world of tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation". We will be delighted to welcome the representatives of governments and religious communities of the countries of the world as guests of the Congress.

We believe that the Congresses hosted by Kazakhstan do not contradict but complement similar forums held in other states.

Our country appreciates the efforts by Russia, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, Qatar, Japan, Greece, Italy and other states on promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

Our country joined the "Group of friends" of the Alliance of Civilizations initiated by the Governments of Turkey and Spain. We will do our utmost to strengthen cooperation with the Alliance.

As it was proposed by the Head of our state, the General Assembly declared 2010 the Year of Rapprochement of Cultures. We call upon countries to take concrete actions within their national programs to achieve positive results in this important culturological interaction.

Kazakhstan is planning to host the World forum of spiritual accord and dialogue of cultures.

Last month the forum entitled «Common World: Progress through Diversity» that brought together heads of foreign offices of over 50 states and representatives of international organizations was held in our country. This meeting has become an initial tangible result in the implementation of our initiative to promote dialogue between the Muslim World and the West.

Kazakhstan will chair the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 2010 and the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 2011.

Before its OSCE chairmanship Kazakhstan adopted a special program "The Path to Europe" that outlined specific tasks on a wide-scale interaction with the European countries and institutions in economic, political and cultural dimensions. At the same time, Kazakhstan as a secular state having a predominantly Muslim population, voiced its commitment to the Ten Year Program of Action of the OIC.

Kazakhstan is consistently involved in strengthening the interaction of various cultures and civilizations, in promoting active cooperation in this area within the international organizations.

Our national experience has shown an opportunity and need of rapprochement of different cultures and religions on the global scale. At the same time Kazakhstan's reality has demonstrated the practical value of this process in ensuring social and economic progress of the states.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon and General Assembly President Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann for a timely and right decision to hold this forum that no doubt will be an important landmark in promoting the ideas of cooperation and dialogue.

Thank you for your attention.