



PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT BY NORWAY IN RESPONSE TO H.E. MARAT TAZHIN,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

As delivered to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 30, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

The Norwegian Delegation warmly welcomes H.E. Marat Tazhin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan to the Permanent Council. We thank him for his comprehensive statement on recent developments in Kazakhstan.

Norway holds its relationship with Kazakhstan in the highest regard. Kazakhstan plays a leading and important role in ensuring long-term security and stability in Central Asia. We see this role as key to our common endeavour to meet new security challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

Norway welcomes the information that a new and more liberal draft media law has been introduced to Kazakhstan's Parliament, and we are pleased to note that this draft was prepared with input from local non-governmental organizations. We encourage the authorities to adopt new media legislation which fully introduces the concept of media freedom in Kazakhstan.

In introducing Kazakhstan's new development strategy in his recent annual address to the nation, President Nazarbayev pointed to ten main problems to be resolved in the next ten years, including modernization of the political system and implementing further democratic reforms. We have duly noted that reforms will be introduced aiming at broadening the powers of the Parliament, enhancing the role of political parties in the Parliament, changes in the election system, decentralization and strengthening of local administration, reinforcing the independence of the judiciary, as well as the further strengthening of institutional mechanisms for the protection of human rights and freedoms.

In the follow-up of the report by the State Commission on the Development and Concretization on the Programme of Political Reforms, we have positively noted the establishment of the Working Group on constitutional reforms. Norway welcomes the information that the Working Group already has started considering proposals for concrete amendments to the Constitution aimed at strengthening the role of the Parliament, and that this process will be accelerated so that amendments may be submitted before the end of the year.

Norway looks forward to additional information about the progress regarding the implementation of the concrete measures in core areas of democratic reform in Kazakhstan.

Mr. Chairman,

The close co-operation between the Kazakh authorities and the OSCE Centre in Almaty is highly valued by my Delegation. We are confident that the relocation of the Centre to Astana, while maintaining a liaison office in Almaty, will contribute to a further strengthening of the close relations between the Centre and the Kazakh authorities.

Norway welcomes Kazakhstan's candidacy for the OSCE 2009 Chairmanship. We consider this candidacy as a sign of Kazakhstan's dedication to the OSCE and its commitment to full compliance with OSCE standards and values. We encourage Kazakhstan to vigorously implement its programme for democratic reforms and its OSCE commitments in all three dimensions at a high speed.

I thank you.