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Top OSCE Official Supports Summit Next Year

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Top OSCE Official Supports Summit Next Year

Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, OSCE Secretary General, on a visit to Astana this week said he supported Kazakhstan's idea to call for the organization's summit next year.



Kazakhstan's Secretary of State – Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev welcomes OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut before their bilateral meeting in Astana on November 12, 2009.

Photo by Ilyas Omarov

relations", Brichambaut noted.

Brichambaut visited Kazakhstan November 12 to discuss final preparations the country is making before it assumes the chairmanship in the organization next January.

After the talks with President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Brichambaut said he endorses the idea of an OSCE summit in 2010 in Astana.

"This is a very good idea. The summit can give the organization a new momentum and contribute to strengthening stability in the region. This initiative enjoys broad support, and we would promote it actively. Kazakhstan may serve as model for many other nations. This particularly concerns the Kazakh leader's policy in an area of interethnic and interfaith

Secretary of State - Minister of Foreign Affairs Kanat Saudabayev briefed Brichambaut on the progress in preparations for the OSCE chairmanship.

“We have recently done a large amount of ‘homework’ in preparation for the chairmanship, defined by President Nazarbayev as a national project of strategic importance,” Saudabayev said. The two officials exchanged views on the agenda of the forthcoming ministerial meeting of the organization in Athens.

The OSCE Secretary General expressed his hope Kazakhstan’s chairmanship would help solve a range of pressing issues in regional and European security and cooperation.

Brichambaut also met Chairman of the Senate (upper house of Parliament) Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev. The Speaker informed the OSCE Secretary General on preparations for the parliamentary conference “Eurasian Dimension of the OSCE,” and invited Brichambaut to attend the event, scheduled for next May in Almaty.

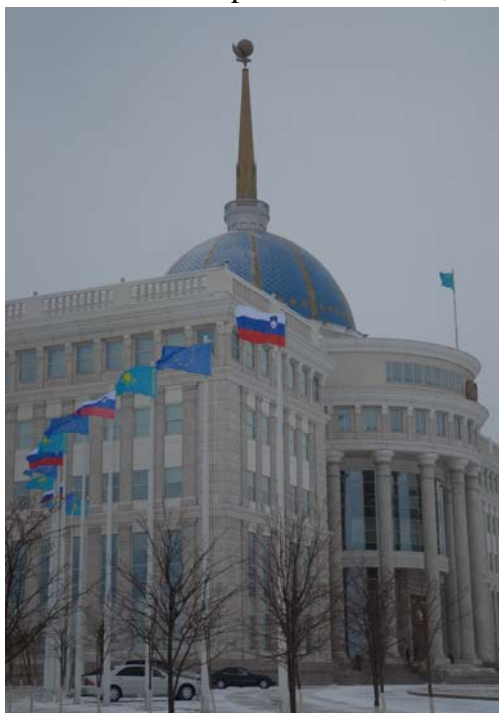
In a meeting with Chairman of the Majilis (lower chamber of Parliament) Ural Mukhamedzhanov, Brichambaut noted the importance of cooperation between parliaments. He said legislative processes should be primary means of transferring OSCE standards to public life in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan, Slovenia Seek Closer Cooperation in Economy, Politics

President Danilo Turk of Slovenia paid an official visit to Astana on November 11 and 12, meeting with President Nursultan Nazarbayev and participating in a large Kazakh-Slovenian business forum.

After a greeting ceremony at the Akorda presidential palace, Nursultan Nazarbayev and Danilo Turk discussed bilateral political and economic cooperation, as well as coordinating the two countries’ activities in the OSCE and other international organizations.

As the two presidents noted, Kazakhstan and Slovenia have many common features. Both



Akorda is ready to greet the Guest of Honor, President Danilo Turk of Slovenia.

Photo by Ilyas Omarov

nations became independent in 1991, and after eighteen years became economic leaders in their regions, South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia respectively. Astana and Ljubljana are active in international politics with a particular emphasis on multilateral coordination. Slovenian diplomats expressed readiness to share their experience of OSCE chairmanship, which the country held in 2005, with their Kazakh colleagues.

Welcoming his guest, President Nazarbayev said Astana considers Ljubljana an important partner in the European Union and expressed his hope the visit by the Slovenian leader would boost bilateral ties.

Danilo Turk agreed the meeting and accompanying events could lay foundation for a new era in mutually beneficially collaboration. He said he believes the European government and EU bodies should do more to promote partnership with Kazakhstan, noting that Slovenia would work in that direction.

“We in Slovenia put a high value on our relationship with Kazakhstan and are glad to see your country’s dynamic development in economic and international politics,” he was quoted as saying by the Kazakh media.

Talking of Kazakhstan’s forthcoming chairmanship, President Turk reminded that Ljubljana had actively supported Astana’s bid to chair OSCE. For many years the OSCE concentrated on issues that mostly interest states of the “European mainland, but Kazakhstan can break these stereotypes,” he stated.

“No one can underestimate Kazakhstan’s strategic initiative to convene an OSCE summit next year. Today, I confirm my firm intention to attend such an event,” President Turk said.

At a Kazakhstan-Slovenia business forum later in the day, President Turk said, “Today, we have signed four documents, which would allow us to enlarge our business links. And we plan to sign a few more in 2010, including agreements on avoiding double taxation and promoting mutual investments. Hopefully they would enhance the business climate and bilateral collaboration.”

More than sixty Slovenian business people flew to Astana to discuss potential projects with their Kazakh counterparts. Their interests lay in Kazakh projects in construction, energy, pharmaceuticals, transportation, and logistics.

The trade turnout between Kazakhstan and Slovenia totaled 80.8 million USD in 2008. Currently, 18 companies with Slovenian investments work in Kazakhstan, mainly in commerce, real estate, processing industries, servicing automobiles and machinery.

Kazakhstan Works to Strengthen Gender Equality

Last week, two events called Kazakh public’s attention to the issue of gender equality in the country. The Majilis (lower house of parliament) considered a bill “On equal rights and opportunities for women and men.” In another development 38 prominent women, among them members of the Senate and Majilis, one minister, and top managers of state organizations, announced forming a Club of Female Politicians of Astana.

The draft law considered by Majilis was authored by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, which is headed by Gulshara Abdulkalikova. She is currently the country’s only female minister and concurrently chairs the National Commission on Women’s Issues, Family and Demographic Policies under the President. According to her, the draft law was designed to guarantee equality of both sexes in labour relations, education, science, and other areas of public life.



Gulshara Abdulkalikova, the Chair of the National Commission on Women’s Issues, Family and Demographic Policies, works for equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

Photo by Ministry of Labor and Social Protection

During parliamentary debates, deputies raised issues such as support measures for women in relation to child care, sexual harassment, the problem of men’s significantly shorter average life span compared to women’s, and others. Some proposed amendments into legislation on public administration services, which would solve the problem of insufficient, in view of many observers, presence of women in the government. Their opponents argued introducing quotas would violate the principles of meritocracy, and hence rights of an individual, in hiring civil servants. A proposal on establishing a special government agency on gender equality, protecting rights of children and youth, was also put forward.

Dinar Nuketayeva, member of the Majilis, stressed the law and public debates should concentrate on protecting rights of both genders, and not only women as is usually the case in many post-Soviet countries.

“All proposals will be considered before including them into the amendments into the Labour Code, which are currently being prepared,” Minister Abdykalikova informed the Majilis.

Following the debates, a working group was formed by Majilis members, representatives of all ministries and agencies involved, as well as nongovernmental organizations that actively participate in the development of the new law.

The same week, a group of prominent women involved in politics and public administration established Astana’s Club of Women Politicians. Their stated aim is to prove

conservatives that Kazakh women can achieve the same social status as men. The project enjoys support from the Association of Kazakhstan's Businesswomen and the National Commission chaired by Abdykhalykova.

Deputy Chairman of governing Nur Otan Party Darkhan Kaletayev and UNDP Resident Representative in Kazakhstan Xu Haoliang attended the club's first meeting. Both men hailed the new project's importance and noted advancement of women in power is not a temporary whim but an imperative of global trends.

Members of the new club adopted a declaration stating their intention to work for achieving equal representation of men and women in state administration and public life. Among their main goals, women politicians also indicated raising social status of Kazakh women and popularizing ideas of gender equality. They agreed to meet monthly.

According to the latest Gender Gap report published by the World Economic Forum, Kazakhstan ranks 47th in gender quality rating out of 134 countries ranked.

Kazakhstan Develops Islamic Banking Instruments

Kazakhstan plans to issue Islamic bonds, *sukuk*, for the first time in its history, Chairman of the Agency for Regulation of Activities of the Regional Financial Center of Almaty (RFCA) Arken Arystanov said November 10.

"The Ministry of Finance and HSBC group held negotiations on the possibility of Kazakhstan government issuing sukuk in international markets. We also hope similar bonds will be issued by national companies such as KazAgro, Food Contract Corporation, and possibly KazPost," Arystanov stated.

The news comes as the UAE-based Bank of Al-Hilal plans to open first Islamic bank in Kazakhstan before the end of the year. The new credit institution would carry out activities in compliance with Sharia. The Kazakh government and Arab investors reached an agreement on opening the bank during an earlier visit of President Nursultan Nazarbayev to the Persian Gulf monarchy.

The new bonds, named *sukuk* in Arabic, would be issued under a specific project which is tied to real assets, providing an additional guarantee for bonds.

A number of major Kazakh banks have already expressed interest in developing such tools. In early 2009, the nation had adopted amendments to its Civil and Tax Codes, the Law on Banks and Banking Activity and several other legal acts in order to introduce Islamic financial instruments in the domestic market.

These plans were supported by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), which stated Kazakhstan was ready to provide all necessary support for the development of Islamic finance in the country.

"This is especially important now, during the global recession, because Islamic banks have proved their stability under conditions of economic crisis," head of IDB Ahmad Mohammed Ali Al-Madani said.

Kazakhstan has already established the first company that specializes in providing services in accordance with the principles and standards of Islamic finance, the brokerage company Fattah Finance.

Islamic banking is based on the principles of Sharia. A distinctive feature of this type of financial activities is that it does not allow charging any interest on loans. To obtain income a credit institution must be an equal participant of a project, fully sharing risks, or engage in trade and to profit from the margin between the cost of acquiring goods and the sale price. According to Sharia, commercial operations involving trade of alcohol and cigarettes are prohibited.



The sukuk will be issued as a result of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Islamic countries.

Supercomputing Technologies to Be Developed in Kazakhstan

The Foundation of First President of Kazakhstan is working with Microsoft Corporation, Intel and a Russian supercomputer holding T-Platforms on a groundbreaking project to establish a centre of supercomputer technologies in Almaty.

Last week, the Foundation, Microsoft and T-Platforms signed a memorandum of cooperation in the field of building a supercomputer technology centre, the Foundation reported on its website. In July 2009, the Foundation had signed a similar memorandum of cooperation with Intel Corp., the world's largest producer of microprocessors.

The future centre would rely on Intel's multinuclear microprocessors and parallel software. Its task would be the advancement of highly productive parallel calculations to solving a wide range of scientific and engineering tasks. According to the project's managers, the new establishment would facilitate progress of Kazakhstan's science, industries and global competitiveness.

Bektas Mukhamedjanov, the Foundation's Executive Director believes obtaining strong computing capacities would be one of the key factors of the economic progress.

"Our main target is to lay foundations for further advancement of high-performance computing base, which will allow solving urgent issues in science, education and industry at a qualitatively new level, and will thus contribute to the development of strategically important industries in the Republic of Kazakhstan," he told reporters.

A supercomputer will have a capacity of 10-20 TFlops, meaning 10-20 trillion operations per second. An average modern computer is a thousand times slower. Kazakhstan will become the second CIS nation after Russia to establish its own system with a similar real performance. It



Kazakhstan plans to implement supercomputing technologies in the near future.

is planned to gradually scale the supercomputer's capacity up to 100Tflops.

The resources of the Supercomputer Centre will be used for intensive development of sectors such as energy, oil extraction, processing industries, government, science and education, health, environment, finance, social services and defense. Appropriate technologies are not only capable to reduce the time of research and development in these areas, but also to significantly decrease the costs of replacing part of the costly full-scale tests and experiments with mathematical modeling. In addition, a high-speed supercomputer will model

conditions impossible or dangerous to simulate in real life. For instance, the collapse of space objects or global climate change.

Russia's T-Platforms holding is ready to design optimal configuration for the computer system and train specialists of the Centre. It is the only commercial company in Russia whose supercomputers have repeatedly appeared in the TOP 500 list of the most powerful computers in the world. Since its founding in 2002, the company has successfully implemented more than 150 supercomputing projects.

Microsoft Corporation, through the Department of EMEA Incubation Sales is ready to contribute to the creation of the centre and provide training to its specialists in practical deployment and efficient operation of applications on the basis of the Microsoft Windows HPC Server 2008 operating system.

The Foundation of First President of Kazakhstan is an NGO aiming at promoting socially important projects and initiatives in various fields of science, culture, and philanthropy. It was established in 2003 and is based in Almaty.

Also in the news

- President Nursultan Nazarbayev presented awards to the winners of “Altyn Sapa” (Golden Quality) competition on November 12. The annual competition for awards was held for the fourth time. The award winners for 2009 are KazChrom Corporation (Best Industrial Product), Mélange Company (Best Consumer Product), and Damu Industrial-Logistics Centre (Best Service).
- President Nazarbayev signed amendments to the law “On Ratification of the Istisna’a Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Islamic Development Bank on the reconstruction of the road “Border of South-Kazakhstan oblast – Taraz” in the framework of the project of “Western Europe – Western China” road. A 20-year long IDB loan of 170 million USD has a 4-year grace period. Istisna’a is a contract of exchange with deferred delivery in Islamic banking, which is applied to specified made-to-order items.
- Copyright experts and scholars, professional judges from 12 post-Soviet countries, Kazakh officials, and representatives of leading international copyright-owners gathered in Astana on Wednesday for an international conference “Copyright in the 21st century: Prospects for advancing copyright and its judicial protection in the CIS.” Event organizers included Kazakhstan’s Supreme Court and Public Administration Academy under the President, Interstate Fund for Humanitarian Cooperation of CIS nations, the Russian Academy of Justice, and German Technical Cooperation Society. Speaking at the event, Chairman of Kazakhstan’s Supreme Court Musabek Alimbekov stressed the need for a national legal regulation of copyright on the worldwide web, and explained measures Kazakhstan is undertaking to tackle the issue.
- Kazakhstan government allocates additional 15 billion tenge (KZT 150 = US\$ 1) for concessional education credits. Those eligible include students who are orphaned, disabled, come from families with many children or live below poverty line, and have single, disabled, or retired parents. Compared to the similar previous program, the loan period was increased from 15 to 17 years and a grace period from 6 months to a year. If a collateral is unavailable, a guarantee will be provided by a Financial Center, established by the Ministry of Education and Science.
- The Majilis (lower chamber of parliament) approved in first reading a draft law, “On Refugees.” According to its authors, the bill eases procedures for filing and registering applications for refugee status. As of October 2009, there were 622 registered refugees in Kazakhstan, mostly from Afghanistan. Kazakhstan is a signatory to the UN Convention on Status of Refugees, which is based on principles of non-deportation, access to awarding refugee status, family reunification, maintaining secrecy and others.

Things to watch:

- Deputy Prime Minister Yerbol Orynbayev leaves for Brussels for a brief working visit on November 16 to discuss the current state and prospects of Kazakhstan-EU partnership.
- The Fifth National Congress of Judges would gather in Astana’s Palace of Independence on Thursday, November 18.
- “Investfunds Expo 2009,” the first exhibition of financial products for population is to be held in Mega Almaty Trade Centre on November 16-17. The event is a part of the government’s Program on increasing the population’s culture of investing and financial knowledge and is supported by the State Agency on Regulation of Activities of RFCA (Regional Financial Centre of Almaty City).
- On November 19-21, Astana will host the first external session of the Committee of permanent representatives at the Joint Institute of Nuclear Research. The Institute is an international research organization comprising 18 member states, established in 1956 with headquarters in Dubna, Russia. Kazakhstan has been a member since 1992 and actively contributes to the project’s research of nuclear materials for use in the exclusively peaceful purposes.

- On November 15, Astana Arena football stadium, the Kazakh capital's newest and largest sport facility, would for the first time host the final game of the Kazakhstan Cup. The two finalists include Shakhter Qaraghandy and FC Atyrau, which finished third and sixth the country's Premier League this year.



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