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Saudabayev Talks with Leaders Ahead of UN General Assembly Session



United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (R) greets Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev at UN headquarters, in New York, September 19, 2010.

Photo by Ilyas Omarov

The Kazakh delegation headed by Secretary of State and Foreign Minister, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Kanat Saudabayev is in New York this week for the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The minister is scheduled to speak at the Session's General Debate, UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, Ministerial Meeting of Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), and the High-level Meeting on Disarmament, as well as attend a number of other multilateral events and hold bilateral meetings with other participants on the General Assembly.

The first of such meetings took place on September 19 as Saudabayev met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

During the meeting both parties considered the topical issues of contemporary international relations, discussed the situation in Central Asia, particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. The UN Secretary General praised the efforts of Kazakhstan as the OSCE Chairman

in resolving the situation in Kyrgyzstan and contributing to the post-war economic and humanitarian rehabilitation of Afghanistan.

Briefing the UN chief on preparations for the December OSCE summit in Astana, Saudabayev extended the invitation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev for Ban Ki-moon to participate in this forum as the head of the global international organization.

Referring to the cooperation of Kazakhstan with the world's main international organization, Ban Ki-moon stressed the importance of first UN-arranged events marking the International Day against Nuclear Tests, which he personally attended. The day, August 29, was in December 2009 declared by

the UN General Assembly's resolution on the initiative of Astana, and notes President Nazarbayev's decision to shut down the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site back in 1991.

On September 20, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office met Presidents Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan and Roza Otunbayeva of Kyrgyzstan, as well as German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Karimov, Otunbayeva and Saudabayev discussed regional situation and prospects for international participation in further stabilization of the situation in Kyrgyzstan. The Kazakh Foreign Minister emphasised President Nursultan Nazarbayev attaches great importance to coherent and concerted actions by the regional and wider international community for the early return of Kyrgyzstan to the path of stable development.

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Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev on behalf of President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan invited Ban Ki-moon to the OSCE Astana Summit.

The cooperation on bilateral and multilateral tracks was discussed during the meeting of Saudabayev with German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Highly appreciating the results of Merkel's recent visit to Astana, the parties advocated timely and full implementation of agreements reached on July 18.

Gratefully accepting personal invitation of President Nazarbayev to participate in the OSCE summit on December 1-2, in Astana, the German Chancellor conveyed good wishes to the Kazakh President.

During his meeting with OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Saudabayev briefed him on preparations for Kazakhstan's presidency in the organization's Council of Foreign Ministers next year and outlined the main priorities within the 10-year OIC Programme of Action.

In particular, Kazakhstan will make every effort to strengthen economic and trade relations in the Muslim world. Astana plans in 2011 to host the seventh World Islamic Economic Forum.

Noting the great significance for Kazakhstan, as the OSCE Chairman in 2010 and the OIC Chairman in 2011, of strengthening the inter-civilizational dialogue and ties between the two organizations, Saudabayev stressed the considerable importance of Ihsanoglu's participation at the Conference of the OSCE High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Nondiscrimination in Astana on June 29-30.

Saudabayev also conveyed to Ihsanoglu an invitation of President Nazarbayev to the OSCE summit in Astana on December 1-2 and expressed hope for his active participation in this important event.

Electronic Voting in Spotlight of Chairmanship Expert Seminar in Vienna

Electronic voting is a promising yet problematic field for the development of electoral processes in the OSCE participating states, as it demands adopting a new international standard regulating the issue in line with democratic principles and procedures, speakers concluded following the Chairmanship expert seminar on e-voting that took place in Vienna on September 16-17. The forum was organized by Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship and brought together officials from national election authorities, international experts and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

"The choice of this topic is timely," Chairman of Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission (CEC) Kuandyk Turgankulov said in his opening speech. "The introduction of new technological solutions in the electoral process, with the development of electronic voting systems, is a complicated, multi-faceted, and in many respects, disputed issue." He urged the participants to actively share their experiences and



Kuandyk Turgankulov, Chairman of Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission, addresses an expert meeting on the use of electronic voting in OSCE participating States, Vienna, 16 September 2010.

Photo by Talgat Zhumagulov

practices of using various systems and devices of electronic voting in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses, explore their existing problems and predict possible ones.

Janez Lenarcic, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), emphasized the need for governments introducing electronic voting systems to ensure electoral safeguards are upheld.

“Electronic voting must operate in a manner compatible with the principles enshrined in OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections, and offer the same guarantees for transparency, accountability and public confidence as traditional voting methods,” he said.

As part of preparations for this event, the CEC of Kazakhstan and the OSCE/ODIHR prepared a review of international documents on electronic voting and other printed materials. In addition, Kazakhstan presented its current automated information system of voting called “Sailau” (Voting), which has been used at the country’s parliamentary elections in 2004, 2007, and the presidential ones in 2005. This time the system was used as a polling machine, and respondents were asked to vote in a kind of informal mini-referendum answering the question: “Do you support the use of electronic voting?”

The first day of seminar was devoted to reviewing the existing approaches in the use of electronic voting. The officials representing the U.S., Russian, and other countries’ electoral authorities

presented their reports on the practice of electronic voting.

This was followed by a debate in which officials from national electoral authorities and experts of non-governmental organizations took part. Most speakers expressed the need for the use of modern information and communication technologies in the electoral process and the development of single technical and operational standards to ensure compliance with international principles for democratic elections.

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The second session was devoted to the discussion of existing international standards, regulations and independent observation of electronic voting processes. The speakers of the session covered topical issues such as compliance of national electoral legislation in the field of electronic voting with international election commitments in this area, guarantees of security, transparency, certification and audits, as well as methods of observing the electronic voting.

During the third session of the seminar the participants discussed the prospects for further development of electronic voting in the OSCE region. The speakers focused on issues of organizational and technological development of electronic voting, the improvement of international standards and requirements, standardization and certification of equipment software of electronic voting, as well as prospects for education of voters on the forms and methods of electronic voting. In the ensuing debate, representatives of non-governmental organizations of Belgium, Russia, and Kazakhstan participated actively.

In the final part of the event devoted to consideration of seminar outcomes, Turgankulov noted the important role of existing and emerging international standards for electronic voting, as well as the principles and practices of observing the electronic voting.

The head of Kazakhstan’s CEC expressed hope that holding such forums would become a good tradition as it is one of the most effective methods of objective analysis of the current state and perspectives in this particular electoral sphere.

“In two days we managed to discuss a wide range of issues, identify the most important issues whose settlement will contribute to further improvement of electronic voting systems, the implementation and use of which will be consistent with the fundamental principles of democratic elections,” Turgankulov said in his closing remarks.

Rational Use of Central Asia’s Water is Vital, Aral Sea Fund Chief Believes

The situation with the perishing Aral Sea has long out-passed the limits of regional environmental disaster, raising concerns among politicians, scientists and common people throughout the world. The images of fishing vessels moored on the dried-out seabed, today became a shocking symbol of human’s attempts to outwit nature which caused a boomerang effect.

In an extensive interview with Kazakhstan's *Liter* newspaper last week, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) Sagit Ibatullin shared his views on the current state of the Aral Sea, and its future.



Sagit Ibatullin, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea.
Photo by Yaroslav Radlovski

“The problem of Aral Sea has roots stretching back into the Soviet times, when following the massive programme of irrigation development in Central Asian countries the irrigated area in Kazakhstan and other countries was expanded almost two-and-a-half times. Back then the project foresaw the complete withdrawal of Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya flows for the needs of agriculture, industry and other exigencies,” Ibatullin explained.

Indeed, the problems of Aral Sea are still intertwined with the issue of regulating water flows in the region. Due to a single state system and planned economy an efficient mechanism of inter-republic water distribution and power exchange had functioned in Central Asia until 1991. After the collapse of the USSR, this balanced system was disrupted, but a new efficient economic mechanism of intra-regional exchange working in conditions of the former

republic's political independence and hence separate power tariffs policies had not yet shaped.

The differences in seasonal needs in water cause major controversy between the two groups of Central Asian countries – the downstream (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan) and upstream ones (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). Until appropriate measures are taken to meet each nation's needs, this contradiction threatens to deepen the growing tough competition for water between the states of the region and dangerously exacerbate their relations.

“In 1992, presidents of the five Central Asian states, being well aware of the existing problems, made an important and wise decision to establish an Interstate Water Coordination Committee (IWCC) which then became part of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS),” Ibatullin continued.

“Only in the last eight years more than two billion dollars have been invested in the Aral Sea recovery project. Time has shown that despite tremendous efforts made by the countries within these years the threats and challenges of the Aral Sea are rapidly growing. For instance, the level of water supply for the population of the region has declined almost four times from 8,500 to 2,300 m³ per capita a year.

According to UN estimates, the critical point of these indices equals to 1,700 m³ per capita a year. Glaciers nourishing our rivers have lost 25% of their storage, while the rivers' water quality keeps deteriorating, thus creating new challenges,” Ibatullin said.

Ibatullin noted he hopes to see the important international conventions on water, such as the Helsinki Convention on international watercourses, work in the region. So far only two (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) out of five Central Asian governments have signed on to the document.

“In December 2008, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on granting the IFAS an observer status [at UN meetings]. The prominent tribune of this organization allows the IFAS member states to inform wider international audiences of the Aral's plight and of the need for donors' support in solving environmental and social problems,” he said.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was visibly moved by what he saw during his visit to the Aral Sea's disaster zone last April, including all the states of the region. He said the drying out of the Aral Sea is the toughest environmental disaster of the globe.

Today, the Aral Sea has only 9% of its former water storage and 15% of its area, having broken up into several independent reservoirs.

“Even if we hypothetically abandon the diversion of water from Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya, the Aral's former level will restore only in a century. Therefore, we must save what is left. Kazakhstan, though in very tough economic circumstances [back in late 1990s], has set a good example in its efforts to restore the Aral Sea, which is widely recognised by the international community,, Ibatullin stressed.

“**Kazakhstan, though in very tough economic circumstances [back in late 1990s], has set a good example in its efforts to restore the Aral Sea**”

Following the construction of the Kokaral dam, based on the decision made back in 1990s, Kazakhstan has managed to retain a portion of the Kazakh part of the sea - the so-called Small Aral. Due to the dam, Syr-Darya's flow is now accumulated in the Small Aral. The salinity of water has decreased, and a few species of freshwater fish were revived. And this is just the beginning.

According to Ibatullin, today the Fund's executive committee faces three major tasks. "First, we need new proposals for improving the structure and introducing amendments into the regulatory documents of the Fund. Second, we need new common legislative mechanisms for joint regulation of cross-border water resources with due account to the interests of all countries of the region. Third, we need a new action plan to assist countries in the Aral Sea Basin for 2011-2015".

In drawing this action plan, the third one in IFAS's history, Ibatullin says they look more scrupulously at the proposals. Nearly 400 projects are now being studied by the international experts. "Only those will be backed which meet the entire region's interests," he concludes.

Kazakhstan Joins World Tennis Elite by Reaching Davis Cup World Group

Team Kazakhstan produced a major shock in the Davis Cup, the premier national teams' competition in male tennis, by smashing strong favourites Switzerland 5-0 in the World Group play-off on September 17-19 in Astana. This result allows the Kazakh players to join the World Group of the sixteen top-flight nations to challenge the Davis Cup next year. The result came thanks to a great work by team members Andrei Golubev, Mikhail Kukushkin, and Yuri Schukin.



Team Kazakhstan with national flag celebrates the breakthrough into the Davis Cup World Group following their victory in doubles against Switzerland in Astana, Kazakhstan, September 18, 2010.

Photo by AP

Kazakhstan has competed in the Asia-Oceania Zone of the Davis Cup since 2006. In this year's edition of the tournament, after defeating South Korea 5-0 and China 4-1 in the Asia-Oceania play-off this May, Kazakhstan got a place in the World Group play-offs.

The draw brought to Astana a strong Swiss team, whose regular leader, the powerful Roger Federer is the third in the current ATP ranking but is more famous as a holder of the historical record of sitting for 237 consecutive weeks (between February 2004 and August 2008) at the top of the list of the world's best tennis players.

Federer declined coming to the tie in Astana citing his tiredness following the recent US Open, but the participation of Switzerland's second best player Stanislas Wawrinka, #20 in ATP World Ranking, still looked as a sufficient safeguard against the presumable weaker Kazakh opposition, whose leader Golubev is #39 in the same rating.

"Of course, we would have liked to have had Roger for this match, but we were prepared for this possibility," the Swiss Davis Cup team captain Severin Luethi said before the event.

The historical tie was held at the National Tennis Centre in Astana. The Swiss team was represented by Wawrinka, Marco Chiudinelli, Michael Lammer and Yves Allegro.

To a great disappointment of the guests, Kazakhstan managed to seal victory after just two days. On Friday, 17th, Golubev beats Chiudinelli 6-4, 6-4, 6-4. Wawrinka faced Kukushkin, a player the Swiss had beaten a few weeks ago in the first round at the US Open. Nonetheless, the Kazakh athlete fought for every point and eventually took a sensational victory in five sets 3-6, 6-1, 6-4, 1-6, 6-3, calling it "the biggest victory of my career".

On Saturday, Kazakhstan doubles pairing of Golubev and Schukin, played another intelligent match and managed to beat the Swiss pair of Allegro and Wawrinka 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, securing their 3-0 lead and a ticket to the Davis Cup World Group.

No one from Kazakhstan Davis Cup team could have predicted what has unfolded in Astana over the last weekend, the Davis Cup's official website reports. "Before the match we couldn't even have dreamt that we would win the tie 3-0, as we were playing a strong team. But before the tie, we said we

would be thoroughly prepared and every player would give 150 percent, so that's why I think we managed to win in just two days", Golubev commented after the game.

The Swiss team, including Roger Federer, is now relegated to Euro-Africa Zone Group I for 2011, meaning they cannot win the Davis Cup until they make it back to the World Group. "We came here to win, and now we are in the Euro-Africa zone again. We are not very happy with the result, but we have to accept that the Kazakh team was the better side this week," Luthi said.

The victory of Kazakhstan's number one, Andrey Golubev, was very important not just from the perspective of the positive result, but psychologically the win has also inspired the rest of the team.

"I was aiming at the victory no matter what and with whom I would have to play. I was making good efforts and the spectators' support was very helpful, it's always nice to play at home," the leader of Team Kazakhstan said.

"To be honest, I am really tired. I have almost no strength left. I even lost my voice during the game. I just kept encouraging myself, screaming 'Come on! Come on!'", Mikhail Kukushkin commented after his victory. Hence, the matches of the third day have become a formality. And even though, Schukin and Golubev said they will play for the pleasure they managed to win on the third day of the event also, making it a complete victory over the Swiss team.

The result comes as a continuation of Kazakhstan's tennis feast in 2010, which has included the great performances from the nation's best female tennis player Yaroslava Shvedova. She has already claimed Kazakhstan's two earliest Grand Slam victories, following triumphs in women's doubles at the Wimbledon and US Open along with her US partner Vania King, as well as her individual achievement of making it to the quarterfinals of the French Open in early June.

The patronage of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, a tennis lover himself, has significantly affected the increase of interest for the game among the country's citizens. A strong contribution to raising the Kazakh flag high on the international tennis stage has been made by the President of the National Tennis Federation, Bulat Utemuratov, who is also the country's prominent businessman.

"We are set to make tennis one of the mass sports in Kazakhstan. We will create all the necessary conditions for raising the skills of our professional players. That means not only the contacts but also tough competition with our neighbours Russia", he said commenting on his goals in leading the tennis federation.

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The Davis Cup victory has allowed Kazakhstan team to play in the World Group, competing among the 16 strongest teams of the world.

As a result of the efforts to popularise tennis, more than 200 tennis courts have been built throughout the country, including the first tennis academy in Astana that opened in 2008, providing a new framework for domestic tournaments.

In 2008, Kazakhstan Tennis Federation (KTF) had hosted an ITF junior development event. "This is just the first step and the start of bigger and better things for Kazakhstan tennis. I feel these championships have generated excitement and motivated more young children to take up the game more seriously. The KTF now looks forward to forging a stronger relationship with the ITF by organizing more ITF development events as well as entry level professional events," Vice President of the KTF Adil Borlibayev stated in 2008.

The Davis Cup victory has allowed Kazakhstan team to play in the World Group, competing among the 16 strongest teams of the world, where Kazakhstan will find out their next opponent following Wednesday's draw.

"The achieved result is very important not only for the tournament. The current match of Davis Cup is a new plank, which the new generation of Kazakhstan tennis players will try to aspire to. Perhaps, we are setting new traditions for the national tennis, to win and be the strongest ones," Utemuratov said.

Also in the News:

- Prime Minister Karim Massimov instructed the Ministry of Communication and Information to study the possibility to employing Long Term Evolution (LTE) technology in the development

of e-government services during the Cabinet's special meeting on September 21. "First, we need the fastest development of the LTE system in Kazakhstan, as well as availability of the broadband internet," Massimov said. "Don't miss the LTE moment. 3G is a completed stage," he added

- On September 17, Executive Secretary of Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry Rapol Zhoshybaev and the Chairman of UNICEF in Kazakhstan Hanaa Singer have signed an agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United Nations Organization to release the owners of UN passports (Laissez-Passers) from the visa requirements. The agreement marks another step towards the development of mutually advantageous cooperation between the UN and Kazakhstan
- Senior representatives of large companies and financial institutions participated in the investment cooperation forum between Kazakhstan and the UAE in Astana on September 20. There are around 50 projects, worth more than US\$ 26 billion, which were used as examples of the investment potential of Kazakhstan. "Countries of Central Asia and China are the perspective markets for our mutual enterprises. Kazakhstan is ready to provide necessary business environment for the UAE investors," President's Aide on Economic Affairs Bakhyt Sultanov told the forum. "We have a friendly relationship between our countries as well as several mutual projects. We think Kazakhstan is a beneficial region for investment," President of the Commerce and Industry Chamber of the Abu-Dhabi emirate Sani Murshid al-Ramysi said
- In November 2010, the Kazakh and Kyrgyz working groups will exchange the initial data for the development of feasibility report on the construction of a high-voltage transmission line Kemin-Almaty, Kazakhstan's Vice Minister of Industry and New Technologies Duysenbay Turganov said during the meeting with Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Energy Osmonbek Artykbaev. The capacity of the transmission line will be 500 kilovolts, where by the end of 2010 the total amount of delivered electric energy to Kazakhstan will reach 1.8 billion kilowatts-per-hour, with 2.8 cents per kilowatt as the prospective cost. The final decision concerning the delivery of electricity will be put under discussion in December 2010
- Kazakhstan has collected 12.5 million tons of grain from 95 percent of country's crop areas, Executive Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture Eugeny Aman stated during the online-conference held on September 21. "The amount, which will approximately be 13.5-14 million tons, what we collect, I believe, allows us to fulfill all the necessary tasks, and keep the balance of grain," he said
- A festival of apples 'Apple Feast 2010' took place within the framework of celebrating the Almaty City Day. The event aimed at rehabilitating the local fruit's former glory. The event included a testing competition of apples grown in the region, with the biggest apple weighing at 570 grams; a chance to try a variety of apple treats including a 300 kilograms apple pie; and the organisation of a special information centre on the history of the apple culture of the city. Almaty's name is translated from Kazakh as a "place of many apples" and the city has been famous for the rich apple orchards in the mountains surrounding it.
- On September 21, three thousand people simultaneously performed an ancient dance 'Karazhorga' on Femida square in Astana. "The aim of the patriotic action – is to highlight the importance of respect of national traditions, culture, language and patriotism. We would like the dance to help people to be liberated, be proud for their culture and native language," chairman of the organisation committee of the action WHO told Interfax-Kazakhstan agency. "We have submitted a request to the Guinness Book of World Records for the nomination 'the most mass ethnic dance'," he added
- Alberto Contador, the world's strongest cyclist and outgoing leader of Team Astana, last weekend visited Almaty along with Alexander Vinokourov and other teammates to participate in a show race in honour of the City Day for Kazakhstan's largest city. The Spaniard has truthfully fulfilled his contract, President of the Kazakhstan's Cycling Federation and Head of the 'Samruk-Kazyna' National Welfare Fund Kairat Kalimbetov said at the joint press conference on Saturday. "We are thankful to Alberto – he twice won Tour De France, Giro d'Italia and Vuelta de Espana for Team Astana. He has made a great effort to make Team Astana one the best known international brands for our country," he added. In addition, Vinokourov noted that now

the main task for the team is to rear up “Kazakh Contadors” who would be able to compete with Alberto or the Schleck brothers

- The Sixth Women’s World Boxing Championship in Barbados ended on September 19. Marina Volnova of Kazakhstan reached the final but unfortunately lost to her Brazilian rival Rosel Feitosa in Under 81 kg. As a result, Kazakhstan team has completed the tournament with Volnova’s silver and Nazgul Boranbaeva’s bronze medals

Things to Watch:

- Kazakhstan’s Secretary of State and Foreign Minister, OSCE Chairman-in-Office Kanat Saudabayev continues his participation in the 65th session of UN General Assembly is expected to speak at the General Debate, UN Summit on Millennium Development Goals, High-Level Meeting on Disarmament, Ministerial Conference of CTBTO, as well as to hold a number of bilateral meetings
- The 6th International “Eurasia” Film Festival will be held on September 21-25 in Almaty. The festival will present nearly 40 films produced by moviemakers from different countries of the world, focusing more on the Central Asian region and the Turkic world.
- A joint school on high-energy and accelerator physics will open its doors in Astana on September 27. The school’s trainees involve nearly 50 young scientists from seven CIS states of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), Joint Institute of Nuclear Research and International Scientific and Technical Centre
- Alliance of Analytical Organizations of Kazakhstan, uniting leading think-tanks and research institutes in political science, with the backing of the country’s Ministry of Culture, will be holding first Eurasian Congress of Political Scientists in Astana on October 12-13.

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