

KAZAKHSTAN: PUTTING THE SPARKLE BACK INTO THE OSCE



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The OSCE has emerged in the new world order as the world's largest security organisation, positioned uniquely in the contemporary global security environment.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, the country currently holding the rotating Chairmanship of the OSCE, noted wisely in his article "Destiny and Prospects of OSCE" that the Organization has lost some of its sparkle in recent years. President Nazarbayev regards Kazakhstan's year in office as an opportunity to restore that sparkle and rekindle the dynamism of which the OSCE is capable.

Unquestionably, President Nazarbayev is the person ideally suited to this task. He is a builder. In under two decades he has built Kazakhstan into the most dynamic and buoyant nation in Central Asia. He has built a new, exciting capital city in Astana. And he has built an international reputation for his country as a multi-national and multi-religious state committed to inter-cultural and inter-ethnic harmony.

In this light, I fully agree that the Chairmanship of the OSCE by Kazakhstan offers an exceptional opportunity to tackle the global problems of economic recession, the fight against extremism and terrorism, the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and the issues of freedom, democracy and human rights.

As the first Central Asian state to hold the OSCE Chairmanship, Kazakhstan is strategically placed and opens the window to engagement in new developments in Central Asia. In particular, Kazakhstan's decision, despite the global economic meltdown, to allocate \$50 million to educating

Afghan students in leading Kazakh colleges and universities, is a classic example of President Nazarbayev's core belief that the pen is mightier than the sword and that military intervention alone cannot resolve the smouldering conflict in Afghanistan.

As President Nazarbayev said in his article, the environment and ecology is a field where the impact of mismanaged natural resources may quickly spill over and exacerbate inter and even intra-state tensions. Nowhere is this more evident than Central Asia. From land degradation to water management infrastructure, the ecological problems involving Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan are manifold.

We have seen the dramatic degradation of the Aral and Caspian Seas. But water use, trans-border supply issues and their impact on agriculture, industry and human consumption, are key issues which I will study in my role as Personal Representative on Ecology and Environment to the OSCE Chairman

in Office. I will also look at soil contamination and waste from uranium mining and the catastrophic legacy of the Soviet nuclear tests in the Polygon around Semipalatinsk in Eastern Kazakhstan.

As President Nazarbayev pointed out in his article, it is ten years since the last OSCE summit and the time is now ripe for another major summit meeting, bringing together the 56 member states of the OSCE to sum up the progress and discuss current global issues in Astana. President Nazarbayev has seized the torch of OSCE leadership with enthusiasm. Now is our chance to build on those solid foundations.

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