



Women's Role in Kazakhstan's Development Will Grow, Congress Showed

The First Congress of Kazakh Women gathers in Astana, addressed by Nazarbayev

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Women's Role in Kazakhstan's Development Will Grow, Congress Showed

The First Congress of Women of Kazakhstan, held in Astana on March 5, provided an opportunity to discuss women's role in socio-economic and political development of the country, identify the future of the state gender and family policies, as well as develop mechanisms to expand women's participation in Kazakhstan's development processes.



President Nursultan Nazarbayev addressed the first Congress of Women of Kazakhstan, also congratulated ladies on International Women's Day.
Photo by Sergey Bondarenko / Bolatbek Otarbayev

The National Commission for Women Affairs and Family and Demographic Policy under the President of Kazakhstan organised this Congress dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the country's independence and timed to coincide with the International Women's Day. President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Kazakhstan's prominent women from across the country, as well as from abroad, attended the Congress.

Kazakhstan's women played a prominent role in establishing and strengthening the country's independence, and their contribution to population growth is invaluable, Nazarbayev said at the Congress. Women are active participants of the economy, accounting for about 40 percent of the GDP, he added.

From the first days of independence, the issues of support for mothers and children, women's entrepreneurship, and gender equality occupied a central place in the government policy. The country has built an integrated system of social assistance to women and families with children. In the hardest times in the early 1990s, the state provided them with targeted support, Nazarbayev said.

In 2003, a lump sum allowance at birth was introduced. Its size increased 2.7 times in the last five years. Since 2006, all families receive child benefits until the age of one.

Kazakhstan is taking major steps to reduce maternal and infant mortality. New prenatal centers were built in Astana and some major cities. Over the last ten years, the birthrate has increased 1.5 times and the population growth three times. All of these developments have considerably changed the demographic situation in the country.

In 2010, the government launched the Balapan (Nestling) Programme, as a result of which, a total of 35 day care centers were built and 137 private preschools and more than a thousand children centres were opened. This provides a substantial support, above all, to young mothers, who want to return to work after childbirth, according to Nazarbayev.

The government is also implementing a policy to promote entrepreneurship among women. In the last eight years, women entrepreneurs received loans totaling nearly KZT two billion. As part of measures to overcome the effects of global crisis, the country is running a microcredit programme for women entrepreneurship for 2009-2015. Over the past two years, microcredits amounting to more than KZT 1 billion 350 million were granted under the programme.

Kazakhstan's state policy on gender equality and increasing women's participation in economy and politics is acknowledged

around the world. In 2010, the World Economic Forum ranked Kazakhstan 41st among 134 countries on gender equality.

In terms of gender policy, Kazakhstan adopted a Concept of Gender Policy in 2002 and is running a Gender Equality Strategy for 2006-2016. In 2009, two laws were adopted that strengthened the gender focus of the legislation. Kazakhstan was elected to the UN Executive Board on gender equality and empowerment of women, a sign of international recognition of the country's success in gender policy.

Despite these achievements, there are many goals ahead, Nazarbayev said. Above all, the government must work to reduce unemployment among women, which now equals to 6.3 percent while the average for both sexes is 5.5 percent.

"We need to clearly identify promising areas of women's entrepreneurship," Nazarbayev added.

Moreover, large-scale changes in education and healthcare systems will bear positive effects on women's lives and wellbeing. By 2015, about 3,400 new preschools for 300,000 children and 350 medical centres will be operating in Kazakhstan, which will halve maternal and infant mortality and reduce overall mortality by 30 percent, President said.

The Gender Equality Strategy for 2006-2016 aims to achieve a 30 percent representation of women among the heads of government bodies, among other things. In 2010, the figure was only 10 percent, Nazarbayev noted.

"Women are poorly appointed to senior positions both in central and local bodies. Today, there is no woman akim (mayor) of region or city, only three district akims, and five deputy akims of regions," Nazarbayev said, instructing the government to develop a concrete action plan until 2016 to promote women to decision-making level.

The Congress concluded with the adoption of a resolution, developed on the basis of suggestions from the regions received in the run-up to the forum.

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Major International Anti-Corruption Conference in Almaty Looks for Ways to Improve Cooperation



Kairat Kozhamzharov, Chairman of Financial Police Agency (L) and Marat Tazhin, Secretary of Security Council attending the conference.

Photo by Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Fighting Economic and Corruption Crimes (Financial Police).

The event focused on countering international corruption issues, in particular regarding the practice of investigating corruption related crimes, providing mutual legal assistance, issues of extradition, as well as the identification, tracing, freezing and seizing of items, tools, proceeds and benefits obtained by illegal means.

The participants also discussed mechanisms of implementing international treaties in national legislation and exchanging experiences in prosecuting legal entities.

In terms of experience exchange, Kazakhstan does have something to share with its partners. Over the past twelve years, Kazakhstan has developed its own system of fighting corruption.. Sergey Zlotnikov, Executive Director of “Transparency Kazakhstan”, in an interview with the Caravan newspaper noted over the past four years the fight against corruption in Kazakhstan is being implemented purposefully.

“Well, this does not mean we observe the lowering of corruption, but people now are afraid of bribing and accepting it... The repressive nature of the struggle gives tangible results,” said Zlotnikov.

According to experts it is necessary to extend the field of fight against corruption. In particularly, mentioning civil compensation of harm, making officials to file not only the income but expenditure declaration as well.

The Almaty communiqué on uniting efforts in returning assets and countering international corruption was adopted at the end of the conference. It will form the basis for the development of cooperative mechanisms in denial of entry and providing asylum to corrupted officials, as well as the basis for signing bilateral and multilateral treaties on extradition, mutual legal assistance and returning assets.

The head of Kazakhstan’s State Agency for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption (Financial Police) Kairat Kozhamzharov believes a unified system of interaction must be built in order to fight against international corruption.

A three day international anti-corruption conference titled “Uniting Efforts in Returning Assets and Countering International Corruption” took place in Almaty on March 9 through 11.

More than 150 delegates from 60 countries, as well as representatives of major international organizations such as the OSCE, the UN, the Council of Europe, Transparency International and the

Council of Europe’s Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) participated in this important event.

The basic idea of the conference was to strengthen international cooperation in the fight against corruption.

“Sergey Zlotnikov, Executive Director of “Transparency Kazakhstan”, in an interview with the Caravan newspaper noted over the past four years the fight against corruption in Kazakhstan is being implemented purposefully.

“Today, many countries have their own effective models of countering corruption, and there is no common universal formula to combat this phenomenon. But at the same time the obvious way of our joint activity is through constructing the future of interaction on returning the assets, and generally in fighting against international corruption”, said Kozhamzharov, speaking at the conference in Almaty on Wednesday.

According to Kozhamzharov, the determining factor of the effectiveness of the interaction system is to have mechanisms of direct operational information exchange, decision making, and restrictive procedures, provision of legal aid.

“This conference underscores the importance of further joint efforts in returning assets and building an effective system of countering corruption in the international arena. This issue is particularly acute in view of the rapidly developing process of economic globalization. It is naturally following from a negative impact of corruption in one country to the development of other partner countries”, Kozhamzharov said.

“Corrupted cash flows are transferred outside the country, making it difficult to control by the national law enforcement authorities. Shadow sector has been growing. Principles of competition are being violated. Investment attractiveness is being reduced. Corruption bearing the risks of destabilization of social environment, sustainable economic and social development of countries, creating serious threats to the integrity of the state”, he added.

This is the third conference held in Kazakhstan at such a level. In September 2009, the Financial Police in conjunction with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) held an International Anti-Corruption conference on “Fighting corruption and good governance as conditions for economic and social development in Eastern Europe and Central Asia” with the participation of President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Following the results of that event, the Astana Statement on good governance and fighting corruption was adopted.

Later, in June 2010, the Agency, in cooperation with the OSCE Centre in Astana, the UNDP and the Transparency Kazakhstan Public Fund against Corruption organized another international anti-corruption conference titled “International mechanisms and instruments for combating corruption”.

According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), compiled by Transparency International, Kazakhstan’s rating has jumped 15 points, from 120th place out of 180 countries in 2009 (with the rating of 2.7) to 105th place out of 178 countries in 2010 (with the rating of 2.9). All in all, Kazakhstan has jumped by 40 points in Transparency International's CPI in two years.

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HIV Infections Spread to Well Off People, Changing Preventive Techniques



Red Ribbon has become a universally recognized symbol of the fight against AIDS and solidarity with those who has personally got affected by this epidemic.

This year Kazakhstan is set to improve HIV treatment standards, Director General of the National AIDS Prevention and Counteraction Centre Marat Tukeyev said last week in an interview with the Liter newspaper.

According to the most recent official figures, almost 44.7 percent of HIV positive in Kazakhstan constitute young people in the age of 20 and 29, followed by a group aged 30-39 (33 percent) and 40-49 (12 percent), respectively. Almost 89.7 percent are of the working age.

The major risk factor of HIV infection remains to be through injection, which accounts for 65.9 percent. The risk of sexual transmission of the disease averages to 26.2 percent.

Admittedly, over the last few years sexually transmitted HIV started to prevail over the lentivirus transmitted through injection. Human immunodeficiency virus, sadly enough, is no more a professional disease of certain groups of people, but is spreading among able-bodied and socially active population.

“We have reconsidered the direction of our activity. The Centre used to work with vulnerable groups of population, including prisoners, injecting drug users, commercial sex workers, and the like. Now we have shifted the focus. We keep on working in these directions, having placed greater emphasis on the youngsters,” Tukeyev said.

In his words, a growing number of people in Kazakhstan prefer to voluntarily undergo HIV testing, used to detect the presence of the immunodeficiency virus.

“The number of people who showed the initiative in voluntary HIV testing has increased from 10 percent to 17. We have realized it is long overdue to abandon the archaic approach to propagandizing HIV prophylaxis. Our specialists are preparing a large-scale “expansion” of the Kazakh segment of the Internet, aiming to distribute more information on HIV preventive measures on various social networks, forums, and blogs,” Tukeyev noted.

At present, the National AIDS Prevention and Counteraction Centre envisages cooperation with large Kazakh companies producing high-quality web sites, and is planning to launch its own web resource. The latter is meant for a wide audience, and aims to promote healthy lifestyle and increase vigilance against HIV/AIDS virus. Mobile communication is another way to remind people of voluntary HIV testing through mass mailing and thus raising awareness of the dangerous disease.

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“As for specific measures our country has taken to counteract HIV, Kazakhstan is the only post-Soviet country that took immediate steps to enshrine in legislation the entire process of HIV diagnosis, examination, and treatment, as well as the rights and

responsibilities of HIV positive patients and health workers. In addition, a relevant legislative base was brought in line with modern international standards, though adapted to realities of Central Asia,” Tukeyev noted.

As of February 1, 2011, there were 15,908 HIV-infected people officially registered in Kazakhstan. Starting from 2008, the situation with HIV/AIDS in the country gradually stabilized, registered cases of HIV infection having declined by eight percent annually.

“In recent years, we have increased the number of HIV research programmes by almost seven percent. As compared to the year 2006, the mortality rate today became a third fewer. Both HIV-infected adults and children now have access to the combined antiretroviral (ARV) therapy. A number of new protocols by the Health Ministry came into force this year,” Tukeyev contended.

Implementation of the World Health Organisation standards in Kazakhstan indicates the high level of the government’s responsibility for the lives and health of its citizens, he noted. In Kazakhstan, special treatment of HIV patients is provided free of charge. In addition, this year the government will cover all expenses on specialized antiretroviral therapy.

“We may achieve even better results, however, if we take some more steps. This includes the introduction of electronic monitoring of HIV focal points, which will let us ensure completeness and timeliness of data on HIV virus, including the information on ARV therapy and its efficiency. We should as well involve the entire range of vulnerable groups into various prophylactic programmes on HIV/AIDS. A lot of work is still to be done in this direction”, Tukeyev concluded.

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Gov’t, KazMunayGas Work to Introduce European Emission Standards

Kazakhstan’s authorities have been executing a complex programme of the modernisation of domestic refineries, which should lead to the introduction of Euro-5 emissions standards for the production of petroleum.

“Modernisation of Kazakhstan’s three main oil refineries in Atyrau, Pavlodar, and Shymkent, is a very difficult and responsible task and the approach needs to be very well-balanced,” Managing Director of Safety, Health and Environment of Exploration and Production KazMunaiGas (KMG) national petroleum company Serik Baymuhanbetov said in this regard in an interview with the *Novoe Pokoleniye* newspaper published on February 25.

“Speaking of the reconstruction of refineries, it has to be understood the initial “adjustment” of the plant, the selected technologies will determine the quality of products which the plant will produce for many years. Hence, the first thing necessary to do is a deep mid-term analysis of the market. It is necessary to make calculations and predictions of the market, so that all three refineries continue to work faultlessly, with the maximum load, supplying fuel of the best quality to both the domestic and external markets. In addition, it is also technologically important that the plants do not depend on such factors as, for example, changing standards of oil quality,” Baymuhanbetov commented.

According to Baymuhanbetov, the most modernised systems of oil refining, ensuring the consistency of high quality of oil products, are needed, as well as these technologies should make it possible for plants to be quickly and flexibly tuned from production of one type of fuel to another, depending on the changing demand of the market.

“First of all, we have made a comparative analysis of the technologies used in the world taking into account the specifics of Kazakhstan’s oil industry. As the basis, data prepared by a reputable international company “Global Data” has been taken. The company’s clients include some of the world’s leading corporations, such as British Gas, British Petrol, World Bank, BASF Chemical Corporation, as well as national governments, such as the United Kingdom,” Managing Director Baymuhanbetov said.

“In addition, we have analysed the issue of the final production cost of fuel, considering the fact that the Euro-5 standard is much harder to achieve than any other types. For instance, the allowed concentration of sulfur in fuels of Euro-4 standard make 50 parts per million (ppm), while the Euro-5 standard - only 10 ppm. In order to achieve such results, very substantial additional costs are required, which will ultimately significantly increase the cost of the product.

Furthermore, Baymuhanbetov noted that oil-importing countries mainly develop hydrocracking at their plants, a catalytic cracking process assisted by the presence of an elevated partial pressure of hydrogen gas. According to the “Global Data”, China’s hydrocracking power plants have increased almost fourfold from 2000 to 2010, and the similar developments have been taking place in the U.S.

One of the reasons of such a high popularity of hydrocracking is the significant increase of production of diesel fuel, jet fuel, base oils or gasoline for every tonne of crude oil at a low cost, as well as the products are of the highest quality corresponding to Euro-5 standard without further purification required.

“Having analysed the oil-



Serik Baimukhambetov, Managing Director of Safety, Health and Environment of KMG EP.

Photo by Yaroslav Radlovskiy

“Considering that the parameters of crude oil in Kazakhstan vary, depending on the field, depth and other factors, it is also very important for us that hydrocracking plants can be quickly re-tuned in accordance with market needs.”

export potential of Kazakhstan, it is more advantageous for us to export high-quality petroleum products because their added value is several times higher than that of crude oil,” Baymuhanbetov highlighted. “Considering that the parameters of crude oil in Kazakhstan vary, depending on the field, depth and other factors, it is also very important for us that hydrocracking plants can be quickly re-tuned in accordance with market needs.”

Diesel fuel, jet fuel and base oils are the most promising export-oriented products of a strategic importance for the country, he commented further, adding that according to Wood Mackenzie Company, there is a shortage of diesel fuel in Europe, and by 2015 the deficit will amount to 20 percent.

“Furthermore, we must not forget that one of the main advantages of hydrocracking is its environmental friendliness, where emissions are several times less compared to other technologies, which is one of the solutions to problems in regards to achieving the Euro-5 standard and fulfilling other commitments on reduction of emissions of harmful substances into the atmosphere, in particular, the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol accepted by Kazakhstan”, he said.

In addition, the KMG’s representative also noted the process of transition of auto transport to use of compressed natural gas instead of petrol.

“The cost of compressed gas is twice cheaper compared to petrol, and for this reason that market is rapidly growing in the European Union, China and Asian countries. At President Nazarbayev’s initiative, a sectoral programme “Kaztransgas Onimderi”, one of the subsidiaries of the KazTransGas (KMG’s daughter company), has been developed in the country. Nowadays, 60-75 percent of the vehicles are operated on gas in Mangistau region. KazTransGas plans to supply about 400 million cubic metres of liquefied natural gas for vehicles annually, with subsequent expansion of production to one billion cubic metres, which is equivalent to almost one million tonnes of AI-92 petrol. Therefore, the production of gas as the fuel for cars potentially is creating serious competition for suppliers of petroleum,” Baymuhanbetov said.

“Certainly, we must make use of modern technology, in order not to make modifications to the plants again in five-seven years. It is also important to take into account a number of strategic factors. Firstly, we need to assure that the final cost of the product is not too high. Second is the high quality of products, where the Ministry of Oil and Gas has taken the Euro-5 standard as the basis, therefore, after modernisation the plants should be focused on products of this particular standard. Thirdly, as it has been said previously, the industry must not only fully cover the domestic demand for strategically important oil products, but also focus on exports”.

“Having a high quality fuel is very important for population’s health, especially in large cities, as well as for the development of the automobile market. In a sense, we must take into account the long term strategic interests of the state and the economy,” Managing Director of Safety, Health and Environment of Exploration and Production KMG Serik Baymuhanbetov concluded.

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Also in the News:

- Domestic and foreign observers at the early presidential election in Kazakhstan will be allowed to make audio and video recording during the election, a member of Kazakhstan’s Central Election Commission Marat Sarsembayev said, speaking at a conference on “Political technologies in the electoral process” on March 10. Moreover, observers will be able to observe not only the voting at polling stations, but also the process of transferring the protocols from polling stations to a higher commission. Such rights were not granted previously.
- Kazakhstan is sending rice to Afghanistan as humanitarian aid, according to the press service of the Emergency Department in Almaty. The shipment of rice will be sent from the warehouse of the Almaty branch of the republican state enterprise “Reserve.” Afghanistan will receive 213 tonnes of rice by trains.
- The National Bank of Kazakhstan may revise inflation forecast upwards at the end of the first quarter of 2011, the Head of the National Bank Grigory Marchenko said at a press conference on March 9 in Almaty. Marchenko also did not rule out that the Bank may review the refinancing rate at the end of March: “As for the refinancing rate, we will leave it at 7.5 percent per annum or move further, it will also be discussed,” he said. The National Bank raised the refinancing rate from 7 percent to 7.5 percent per annum on March 9 in light of the financial market trends and

the growth of the annual rate of inflation. Forecast for inflation in 2011 is 6-8 percent. Inflation in February this year on an annualised basis was 8.8 percent.

- In February, Kazakhstan's gold and currency reserves (GCR), including the National Bank reserves and the funds of the National Fund, amounted to US\$ 66.4 billion, the National Bank informed on March 9. In the past month, Kazakhstan's GCR grew by 6 percent and since the beginning of the year by 12.7 percent. The assets of the National Fund totalled US\$ 32.9 billion at the end of February, according to preliminary data. Net international reserves of the National Bank grew by 7.5 percent and reached US\$ 32.9 billion (growth by 18.7 percent since the beginning of the year).
- In the current marketing year, Kazakhstan has exported about five million tonnes of grain grown in 2010, Minister of Agriculture Akhymbek Kurishbayev said. "Already at the beginning of March, we exported about five million tonnes of grain. I think exports will continue to grow," he told journalists on March 10 in Astana.

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Things to Watch:

- The first two-day Eurasian Congress of Political Scientists, entitled "Post-Soviet Transition: Trends, Myths, and Prospects," will be held on March 15-16 in Almaty. One of the main tasks of the forum is to attract political scientists' attention to the topic of post-Soviet transition.
- The Kazakhstan Islamic Finance Conference (KIFC) 2011 will be held in Astana on March 14-15. The programme of the conference will include analysis of the current legislation, specific legal aspects in the development of Islamic assets and their management, issues of regulation and supervision of Islamic financial instruments and others.
- Prime Ministers of the Customs Union member states will meet in Minsk, Belarus, on March 15. According to the meeting's agenda approved at the session of the Customs Union Commission in Moscow on March 2, the parties will discuss issues related to the formation of the Single Economic Space, the redeployment of vehicle control from the Belarusian-Russian border to the external border of the Customs Union, the redeployment of control from the Russian-Kazakh border to the external border of the Customs Union, the improvement of activities of the supranational bodies including the Customs Union Commission. Furthermore, the sides will also discuss issues relating to the formation of the Court of the EurAsEC, and a unified approach to migration and visa policy towards third countries.
- A Regional Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration in Central Asia will be held in Almaty on March 15-16.

ASTANA CALLING is a bi-weekly online publication of
the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan
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