

**Minutes of the Ninth Meeting
of the Parliamentary Cooperation Committee
'Republic of Kazakhstan – European Union'
(Astana, 25-26 May 2010).**

The Kazakh Co-Chairman V. Bobrov opened the meeting, and in his introductory speech stressed that one of the Committee's main tasks for the immediate future should be to draft a new framework cooperation agreement and to analyse cooperation on trade and economic issues, including those arising within the framework of the Energy Dialogue. Other key issues on the agenda included cooperation with a view to combating new threats and the prospects for relations between Kazakhstan and the EU after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.

The EP Co-Chairman, P. Bartolozzi, in turn highlighted the importance of the Committee's activities in the context of the development of civil society in Kazakhstan.

The two sides approved the minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (Brussels, 31 March – 1 April 2010) without amendment.

G. Kasimov, Member of the Kazakh Senate, then spoke for the Kazakh side on the subject of **'Implementing the state programme 'Path to Europe 2009-2011' and the EU Central Asia Strategy for 2007-2013 and Kazakhstan's Presidency of the OSCE'**.

In his speech, G. Kasimov noted that Kazakhstan should strengthen its economic and political cooperation not only with its neighbouring countries, but also with European countries. This was the impetus for the idea behind the 'Path to Europe' programme. The programme's aim was to achieve a strategic partnership with leading European countries. Cooperation in the fields of technology and the energy sector was a particular priority.

The 'Path to Europe' programme put in place the necessary conditions to promote the successful advancement of Kazakh initiatives in the country's capacity as holder of the OSCE Presidency. Kazakhstan was faced with the task not only of maintaining the experience already gained by the OSCE across all areas of activity, but of also lending fresh impetus to the organisation.

E. Jeggler spoke on this issue for the European side. The MEP noted that the Committee had achieved major successes over the past 10 years, and that a decision had been taken at the last meeting to hold a series of talks on the conclusion of a new agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan. In the second part of her speech, E. Jeggler discussed the following issues: human rights, the rule of law, environmental protection and education.

A. Tleuberdin, Member of the Kazakh Majilis, spoke for the Kazakh side on the agenda item **'Development of the Energy Dialogue'**. He briefly spoke about the energy sector in Kazakhstan and emphasised the fact that Kazakhstan was actively

participating in the negotiation process under the Energy Charter, and that it was willing to cooperate with the European Union on the drafting of two roadmaps on increasing energy security and industrial cooperation.

A. Tleuberdin referred to the fact that the Third Astana Economic Forum would be held on 1-2 July 2010, during which a joint energy business summit was planned with the World Economic Forum.

T. Madurell spoke on this issue for the European side. The MEP noted that a reliable supply of energy resources was of key importance for the EU, and Kazakhstan had proved its worth as a dependable partner in this regard.

B. Thomsen, Member of the Danish Parliament, also spoke on this issue, providing details of the use of renewable energy sources in her own country and asking about Kazakhstan's plans for use of wind, solar and other types of energy, and also the future prospects for energy saving.

In response, A. Tleuberdin, Member of the Kazakh Majilis, noted that in 2009 the Kazakh Parliament had adopted a special law on support for the use of renewable energy sources. A draft law 'On Energy Saving' was also being scrutinised by Parliament.

B. Thomsen asked another question regarding the legal status of the Caspian Sea. In response to her question, A. Tleuberdin emphasised that this problem was currently the subject of intergovernmental negotiations between all five countries surrounding the Caspian Sea.

The European side also raised the issue of the impact of the financial crisis on the development of the energy sector in Kazakhstan, and the possible consequences for the Energy Dialogue with the EU.

In this connection, A. Tleuberdin noted that problems existed in the energy sector, mainly due to outdated and worn-out equipment and the need for major investments in basic assets.

B. Thomsen also touched on the issue of current plans for economic development. Referring to Norway's experience, she noted that a prerequisite for economic diversification was promotion of the establishment of small and medium-sized enterprises, and asked whether Kazakhstan intended to invest in SMEs.

In response to this question, G. Karagusova, Member of the Kazakh Majilis, outlined the basic areas of focus of the anti-crisis programme, which included measures aimed at developing and supporting SMEs by means of money from the National Fund.

V. Bobrov, elaborating on the previous speaker's answer, stated by way of an example that more than USD 2 billion had been earmarked for the support of SMEs alone. A new Tax Code had been adopted in 2009, thanks to which the tax burden on SMEs had been reduced by another USD 2 billion. This had made it possible for businesses to survive the difficult crisis period.

I. Imankulov, Member of the Kazakh Senate, added that the Kazakh National Fund, established along similar lines to the Norwegian model, had 'saved' the economy in the face of the crisis. There were plans to adopt special programmes aimed at developing SMEs in Kazakhstan, thanks to which SMEs would account for 40% of GDP by 2020.

M. Itegulov, Member of the Kazakh Majilis, spoke on the subject of '**Environmental protection (including water resource management) and health care**' for the Kazakh side, noting that the most promising areas of cooperation with the EU included the use of renewable energy sources, the introduction of low-energy technologies with minimal environmental impacts, environmental education programmes, the health of the population and the demographic situation.

An environmental programme for the period 2010-2014 was being drafted in Kazakhstan, a large part of which was given over to issues relating to the introduction of renewable energy and energy saving. The establishment of a centre for the development of innovative projects involving renewable energy sources was also under consideration.

M. Itegulov also touched briefly upon the mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol and Kazakhstan's participation in the latter, and the UN's efforts to re-establish the Aral Sea.

In addition, he noted that cooperation with the EU in the area of health care included projects supporting mother and child health care, the development of partnerships with non-governmental organisations, and the provision of technical and consultation assistance totalling EUR 4.5 million.

E. Jeggler asked a number of questions relating to the subject under discussion: what steps had been taken with regard to water resources over the past few years, whether any measures were being taken to improve agriculture and what the impact of the Rogun hydroelectric power plant, and the ecosystem in Uzbekistan as a whole, was on the situation around the Aral Sea.

G. Kasimov responded to the questions, emphasising that water resources were one of the region's most pressing problems. It was important to create equal opportunities for the conservation and distribution of water resources between the Central Asian countries. The Aral Sea was a particularly important issue in this respect. He noted that cooperation between the EU and the Central Asian countries in the field of environmental protection and water resource management showed great promise, and was a strategic area of focus.

Continuing the debate, E. Jeggler observed that there was a definite potential for the development of solar energy technology in Kazakhstan. In addition, she referred to the possibility of using the experience gained by European NGOs in the area of environmental protection and sustainable development.

E. Jeggler also raised the issue of the situation in the Semipalatinsk Polygon and government measures to improve the ecological situation.

In response to Mrs Jeggle's questions, G. Kasimov agreed that it was necessary to develop a solar electricity industry in Kazakhstan. At the same time, it was necessary to develop small nuclear power stations of up to 1 million kW, and to tackle the problem of making it cheaper to generate alternative energy.

With regard to the situation in the Semipalatinsk Polygon, G. Kasimov informed the meeting that the town of Kurchatov, the former administrative centre of the Polygon, had been transformed into a scientific and technological centre. On the other hand, significant problems existed in respect of safeguarding the health of the local population, decontamination and the recultivation of land. With the help of the international community, medical centres had been opened in the region, and technological solutions for the provision of medical assistance were being developed.

V. Bobrov noted in turn that the Polygon presented virtually no threat to the environment today. Eighty per cent of land would be returned to economic use. The problems linked to the Polygon were gradually being resolved.

In this connection, E. Jeggle proposed organising a visit by the European Parliament delegation to the Semipalatinsk region during the following PCC meeting in Kazakhstan.

A. Rubiks enquired about the situation in the virgin lands in terms of current threats and the fight against soil erosion.

In response to the question, G. Kasimov briefly outlined the history of the exploitation of virgin lands and noted that at present, at the same time as the total area of land used for agricultural purposes was falling, yield was increasing due to the use of modern technologies and machinery. Kazakhstan was thus becoming a global supplier of grain, and the agricultural sector was becoming as profitable as the energy sector.

B. Thomsen raised the issue of the major gap in life expectancy between women and men in Kazakhstan, and enquired about the reasons for such an imbalance.

In response to the question, G. Karagusova outlined the characteristic features of the maternity and child health care system in Kazakhstan, and noted that the life expectancy of men in the country was increasing, in large part thanks to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, sport and giving up smoking and drinking.

D. Nuketayeva, Member of the Kazakh Majilis, elaborated on G. Karagusova's answer by noting that the country could report positive experiences regarding the activities of human reproduction centres.

K. Neved'alová continued the discussion on health care by asking questions regarding citizens' access to the health care system and water supplies, and also regarding cooperation with neighbouring countries on joint use of water resources.

In this connection, G. Karagusova emphasised the fact that, in line with the Constitution, the state guaranteed a certain level of free medical services for all citizens.

With regard to water supplies, it was noted that the country was dependent to a certain extent on neighbouring countries, in terms of both energy resources and water resources. A programme to secure clean drinking water for every citizen was being implemented in Kazakhstan on the instructions of the President. It was expected that equal access for all citizens to water supplies would be available by 2020.

D. Nuketayeva added that a 'Hospital of the Future' had been founded in Kazakhstan, incorporating seven medical clinics, a medical training establishment and a First Aid Centre. The national programme entitled '100 schools, 100 hospitals' was being implemented.

G. Karagusova then spoke on the agenda item '**Current status of and prospects for trade, economic and investment cooperation (including programmes for external EU aid to Kazakhstan, the consequences of the creation of the Customs Union between Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus, the accession of Kazakhstan to the WTO and EU investment projects in the Republic of Kazakhstan)**'.

She noted that trade and economic relations between Kazakhstan and the European countries had reached new heights, regardless of the crisis. Trade with the EU accounted for one third of the total volume of general trade. Investments by EU Member States also accounted for around one third of all direct investments.

Kazakhstan was a stable and important energy partner for the EU: energy resources totalling USD 23 billion had been exported to Europe.

The Customs Union had come into being on 1 January 2010. The basic normative and legal framework for the Customs Union had been agreed on, and the single Customs Code was in the process of being ratified by all three countries in the union. This was a very beneficial integration project for Kazakhstan, since it opened up access to an overall market of 177 million people and a total GDP of USD 1.6 trillion.

At the same time, the establishment of the Customs Union did not mean that Kazakhstan's accession to the WTO had become less important. In 2008, negotiations between the EU and Kazakhstan on access to the market for goods had been concluded. In addition, negotiations were continuing on access to the Kazakh services market and the issue of export subsidies for agriculture.

In this connection, G. Karagusova asked the MEPs to support the Kazakh position on subsidies for agricultural enterprises, and also on the recognition of Kazakhstan as a country with a market economy.

H. Dorfmann gave a brief account of cooperation between Kazakhstan and the EU in the context of Kazakhstan's accession to the WTO, and asked what contribution the European Parliament could make to preparations for the new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. He also discussed government measures to fight corruption and the impact of the Customs Union's activities on trade and economic relations with the EU.

V. Bobrov explained that there would be an opportunity to discuss the substantive aspects of the new agreement later, when considering the corresponding item on the agenda.

In response to the question, G. Karagusova emphasised that the creation of the Customs Union did not negate the goal of accession to the WTO; on the contrary, Kazakhstan intended to accelerate and conclude the negotiation process, including with the EU.

V. Bobrov added that the country's main task was to diversify its economy. The 16-million strong market made it impossible to establish high-performance engineering and manufacturing industries. Creating the Customs Union was therefore the only way to ensure access to other markets and to ensure that effective manufacturing plants were founded. There were no underlying political reasons behind this decision, merely economic aspects.

E. Jeggler noted that she was aware of the problems associated with agricultural development in Kazakhstan, and promised to raise these issues at European level.

N. Jousten (head of the European Commission delegation to Kazakhstan) informed those present about the progress of ongoing negotiations between the European Commission and Kazakhstan with regard to accession to the WTO and the recognition of Kazakhstan as a country with a market economy. The European side asked whether the aims of the Customs Union corresponded to the WTO principles. In the EU's opinion, a new trade barrier was being created. It was also important to establish how the countries participating in the Customs Union would accede to the WTO: jointly or in parallel.

N. Jousten also informed those present that negotiations on the recognition of Kazakhstan as a country with a market economy had entered the concluding stages.

G. Karagusova commented that the Customs Union was only at an early stage of its development, and that the WTO demands would be taken into consideration during the negotiation process.

G. Kasimov added that Russia had been behind the initiative to accede jointly to the WTO, but that it had subsequently decided to accede the organisation independently. Kazakhstan had found itself in a vulnerable position and had been forced to return to its starting point and make up lost time.

Conclusion of first day.

Second day, 26 May 2010

V. Bobrov opened the meeting and informed those present that they had been joined by the representative of the Presidential Human Rights Committee and Member of the Majilis S. Tursunov, and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative for the situation in Kyrgyzstan, the Member of the Senate A. Akhmetov.

V. Bobrov then spoke on the issue of the **new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU**.

Having thanked the European partners for the understanding they had shown when discussing the future prospects for the new agreement, the speaker expressed the opinion that the agreement should not be typical and should take into account the current state of mutual relations between Kazakhstan and the EU. Kazakhstan was the only country in the region which had concluded agreements on strategic cooperation with a number of European countries, in particular with France, Spain and Italy. At present similar negotiations regarding the conclusion of an agreement with Germany were in their final stages.

Supplies of energy resources were particularly important for the European Union: in particular, Kazakh oil accounted for 20% of oil supplied to Romania, and 25% of oil supplied to Austria. The section of the agreement on extending the Energy Dialogue with a view to strengthening energy security, including in the field of implementing oil and gas projects, increasing energy efficiency and energy saving, the use of renewable energy sources and the field of nuclear energy was regarded as being of fundamental importance.

The new agreement should contain a strong humanitarian aspect, including provisions on the development of a constructive partnership to ensure peace, democracy, security and stability in the Eurasian space. Kazakhstan's aim was to ensure a global strengthening and extension of cooperation in the field of the rule of law, appropriate state administration and observance of human rights.

Kazakhstan was interested in cooperation with the European Union in the field of civil defence and emergency prevention.

There was potential for strengthening links in the fields of trade, transport, education, science and research, environmental protection, culture and social policies. Kazakhstan was also interested in the development of cooperation in the area of industrial and innovative development.

V. Bobrov stressed the need for a speedy adoption of a directive which would authorise the European Commission to start negotiations with Kazakhstan on a new draft agreement.

In addition, G. Karagusova noted that it was important for the new agreement to reflect questions relating to active assistance with negotiations on WTO accession, including the areas of agriculture and the services market, and on the recognition of Kazakhstan as a country with a market economy.

I. Vaidere agreed that it was necessary to reach a consensus more rapidly regarding a mandate for the European Commission to draft a new agreement, and supported the Kazakh side's proposals regarding the content of the document.

P. Bartolozzi announced that the European Parliament was to discuss the new EU strategy on Central Asia in the near future, and that the MEPs would use this opportunity to discuss the issues raised today. In his opinion, the most important aspects of the new agreement should be issues relating to energy cooperation, water supplies in Central Asia and the stability and security of the region. The document also needed to reflect the importance of ensuring food self-sufficiency.

In addition, Mr Bartolozzi drew the attention of those present to the EU's plans to invest around EUR 1 billion in the Asian region in the near future, as a result of which Kazakhstan had an opportunity to make specific proposals for investments in projects in the country.

A. Cortez (Spanish Ambassador to Kazakhstan) noted that the new agreement should be more ambitious than the previous one, since cooperation had expanded significantly over the past ten years, and new areas of cooperation had appeared, which should be reflected in the nature of the strategic partnership. The Spanish Presidency of the EU supported the conclusion of a new agreement and anticipated that negotiations on a draft document would commence soon.

E. Utembayev (Kazakh Ambassador to Belgium) stressed that the new agreement could establish new forms of interparliamentary cooperation. He also stated that during the meeting with President Nazarbayev on 10 May 2010, the EU President Mr Van Rompuy had supported the idea of an agreement on an advanced partnership and the accession of Kazakhstan to the WTO in the near future.

In order to ensure that the EU's negotiating mandate was drafted more rapidly, E. Utembayev proposed that I. Vaidere should direct a corresponding request to the leadership of the European Parliament and to the other European Commission institutes. It was important that the two sides should be able to start a substantive discussion of the content of the new agreement by the end of the Spanish Presidency of the EU. A further area of cooperation with the European Parliament was the process of selecting projects for funding by the European Central Bank within the framework of the investment package for Central Asian countries.

The floor was then given to S. Ibragimov, Member of the Majilis, to speak on the subject of **cooperation between Kazakhstan and the EU**.

S. Ibragimov noted that significant progress had been made in terms of dialogue with the EU, and called on the MEPs not only to focus on issues relating to economic cooperation, but also to pay attention to the special features of the Kazakh cultural and religious world view and their perception of democratic values, and also to take into account the country's increased importance on the international stage.

With regard to Kazakhstan's accession to the WTO, he noted that Kazakhstan needed the European Parliament's support on this issue. S. Ibragimov also stressed the need for a more thorough examination of the problem of the fight against terrorism.

B. Thomsen asked the previous speaker questions regarding investments in innovation and the development of tourism.

In response, S. Ibragimov noted that money for subsidising SMEs had been granted by the National Fund to second-level banks.

He also noted that a major tourism development programme had been adopted in Kazakhstan, and proposed including issues relating to tourism and culture in the new cooperation agreement.

G. Karagusova in turn added that the aim of the recently adopted industry and innovation programme was post-crisis recovery and the diversification of Kazakhstan's economy.

V. Bobrov also reminded those present that an increase in GDP had been recorded in Kazakhstan in the first quarter of 2010, and it was thus apparent that measures to stabilise the economy were starting to take effect.

E. Utembayev stated that issues relating to bilateral cooperation in the field of tourism and culture were regulated by the Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe, to which Kazakhstan had recently acceded. The Convention could accordingly become one of the framework documents for the drafting of provisions on cooperation in the fields of education, culture and sport.

I. Vaidere asked for an explanation of the principles governing the setting of tariffs in connection with the establishment of the Customs Union, as this was an issue which affected the interests of countries importing goods to Kazakhstan.

G. Karagusova reminded those present that the issue of tariffs had already been raised during yesterday's meeting, and explained the situation regarding tariffs for cars and other goods: the Customs Union's Joint Tariff Committee was currently working on the issue, and an agreement would shortly be reached. In addition, the issue of the Customs Union would also be touched upon within the framework of the negotiating process with members of the WTO. This meant that a consensus would ultimately be found.

Nevertheless, I. Vaidere noted that the establishment of the Customs Union could complicate trade relations between Kazakhstan and the EU, and expressed the hope that balanced and open trade would develop.

G. Karagusova in turn informed those present that in accordance with the Customs Code, each of the three countries could make amendments to trade relations within the framework of bilateral cooperation.

P. Bartolozzi stated that the members of his delegation were fully in support of Kazakhstan's accession to the WTO. However, there were certain procedures which needed to be observed, including the requirement for the Customs Union's rules to correspond to WTO principles.

V. Bobrov noted that the Members of Parliament were very clear in their understanding of the fact that imposing protective duties would cost voters money. On the other hand, temporary protective measures were necessary to develop certain branches of industry. The Kazakh side would approach the issue of tariffs very attentively and comprehensively.

The Chairman then gave the floor to Yu. Kubaichuk, Member of the Senate, to speak on the subject of **simplifying the visa regime between Kazakhstan and the EU Member States**.

In his speech, he briefly outlined Kazakhstan's visa regime, and stated that agreements had been signed with 44 countries for holders of diplomatic passports to travel without visas, with 31 countries for holders of service passports, and with 14 countries for citizens holding Kazakh passports.

There was a simplified procedure for EU citizens to obtain Kazakh visas. In addition, they did not need to register with bodies of the Migration Police after entering the country, providing they arrived at international airports.

At the same time, the procedure for issuing Schengen visas to Kazakh citizens had become much more complicated. It took between 15 and 30 days for visas for European Member States to be issued to holders of diplomatic, service and Kazakh passports.

European Union Member States could issue multiple visas for high-ranking state officials on the basis of information from the Foreign Affairs Ministry, along the lines of those granted to OSCE, NATO, WTO and EU officials, for periods of two to three years. Simplifying reciprocal visits would not result in Kazakh citizens travelling to the EU as illegal immigrants. Astana was also ready to step up its dialogue with the EU on related areas, such as the fight against illegal immigration and organised crime, refugees and strengthening the security features of passports.

Kazakhstan started to issue electronic national passports in 2009, and there were plans to start issuing new-generation diplomatic and service passports with electronic data carriers in 2010. These measures were aimed at avoiding any doubts on the part of foreign countries regarding the migration risk of holders of diplomatic and service passports, and also at ensuring that a bilateral agreement on the exemption of holders of diplomatic and service passports from visa requirements would be signed soon.

Definite hopes were pinned on the EU's new visa code. In accordance with the new rules, provisions had been made for maximum transparency and a number of visa relaxations.

To conclude his speech, Yu. Kubaichuk asked the MEPs to support Kazakhstan's initiative to conclude an agreement on the liberalisation of the mutual visa regime for trips made by Kazakh citizens to the EU.

A. Akhmetov also spoke on this issue, noting that Kazakhstan had proven on the international stage that it was a peaceful and developed country. Yet it was still the victim of rigid stereotypes as far as a number of European Union Member States were

concerned when it came to visa issues. A. Akhmetov alerted the MEPs to the need to resolve such issues sensitively.

In response to the issues raised, J. Aguilar stated that a single visa regime would be applied with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. Kazakhstan played a leading role in global terms, and had an important status in international affairs. In this connection, it was important to establish a standardised approach and a corresponding mandate for the European Commission to conduct negotiations on liberalising the visa regime with Kazakhstan.

It was evident that Kazakhstan did not present any threat with regard to terrorism; on the contrary, it was a very reliable partner country in terms of preventing the terrorist threat and its global spread. Equally, Kazakhstan did not represent any threat in terms of illegal immigration.

J. Aguilar assured the Kazakh participants that the MEPs would help to resolve the visa issue in line with the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, taking into account Kazakhstan's status in terms of its trade, economic and legal cooperation with the EU.

I. Imankulov, Member of the Senate, in turn shared his negative experience of applying for a visa at the German embassy, and said that the principle of reciprocity should be observed when EU citizens were granted Kazakh visas.

J. Aguilar said that I. Imankulov was right, and called for practical joint measures to be taken to liberalise the visa regime.

S. Tursunov, Member of the Majilis, then presented **Kazakhstan's National Human Rights Action Plan for 2009-2012**.

He noted that the National Human Rights Action Plan was the first document in Kazakhstan's history to set out guidelines for the country's domestic and foreign human rights policies.

Kazakhstan had ratified seven basic international instruments regulating various aspects of human rights. In line with the above-mentioned pacts and conventions, a number of laws regulating human rights and civil liberties had been adopted in Kazakhstan.

A digital library had been launched with the assistance of the UN and UNESCO, providing free legal information relating to the defence of human rights.

The National Plan had been positively assessed during the conference on the human dimension held by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw on 30 September 2009. The document had also been presented to the UN in Geneva, and to the US Congress and Department of State.

The US had announced its willingness to assist with implementation of the National Plan. The document reflected the European Parliament's position in respect of democratisation, observance of human rights and the freedom of the mass media.

A. Akhmetov added to what the previous speaker had said by stating that Kazakhstan was home to representatives of 130 ethnic groups and 46 denominations. The Constitution prohibited national and religious discrimination. The Helsinki

Commission of the US Congress had noted that Kazakhstan was a country which could serve as a model of tolerance and non-discrimination.

J. Aguilar then asked whether any tensions were caused in Kazakhstan by the co-existence of the various denominations.

A. Akhmetov answered that all the traditional religions co-existed in peace, security and harmony, and that Kazakhstan's religious buildings were often adjacent to each other. Sometimes the Kazakh authorities were even criticised for being too generous towards non-traditional religious movements.

Whereas Kazakhstan's achievements in maintaining interethnic and interdenominational harmony were disregarded in the West, E. Zhovtis' sentencing for a criminal offence had become a priority, even in international forums, whereby in practice the affair amounted to interference in Kazakhstan's domestic procedures. Each country should respect the legislation and judicial systems of other countries.

A. Rubiks asked for more precise details of how the functions of the Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Commissioner were demarcated.

S. Tursunov answered that the Human Rights Commission reported to the Head of State, while the Human Rights Commissioner was an official who was not accountable to the President. The Human Rights Commissioner worked with people on relevant issues, took part in court hearings and monitored the treatment of those sentenced for crimes.

S. Tursunov also stated that an Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan had been established in the country, uniting representatives of all the nationalities.

V. Bobrov added in turn that a Doctrine of National Unity had been adopted in Kazakhstan, with the aim of promoting interethnic peace and stability.

The Chairman then gave the floor to A. Akhmetov, Member of the Senate, to talk about **the current situation in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia**.

A. Akhmetov stated that during two visits to Kyrgyzstan as a Special Representative of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, he had held a number of meetings with the head and members of the interim government and the heads of the Russian, US and German diplomatic missions, representatives of the UN, OSCE and EU, representative of civil society, members of parliament and other public figures.

Issues relating to the political situation and security were discussed during the meetings, as well as the legitimacy of the actions taken by the interim government and international assistance to restore stability.

In the opinion of A. Akhmetov, the 104 political parties existing in Kyrgyzstan were too many for a population of five million, and this was making it much more difficult to work out political decisions. Another obstacle to dialogue was the position taken by a number of political figures in Kyrgyzstan, who believed that the former presidents K. Bakiyev and A. Akayev were Kazakh protégés, and who did not agree with the Kazakh view whereby social and economic problems were the main reason for the political crisis in Kyrgyzstan.

A. Akhmetov had drawn the attention of the members of Kyrgyzstan's interim government to the fact that, from his point of view, the egotistical behaviour of the Kyrgyz elite harmed their struggle for independence and sovereignty of the country, and he had also alerted them to the need for urgent measures to bring about political stabilisation.

For its part, Kazakhstan had secured supplies of seed to Kyrgyzstan for the sowing season, as well as supplies of oil products, and had provided financial and humanitarian assistance.

The second critically important issue in Central Asia was the situation in Afghanistan. Of 56 OSCE Member States, 53 were involved in the situation in Afghanistan in one sense or another.

Regardless of the defeat of the Taliban and the presence of a multinational military contingent, drug production in Afghanistan had expanded. The crux of the problem was that the situation in the country would never be stabilised by the use of military force. Thought needed to be given to changing the approach of the OSCE and the EU to the Afghan problem.

A. Akhmetov also expressed his disagreement with the position of the US Minister of Defence regarding the possibility of integrating the Taliban into the Afghan political system.

As far as Iran's nuclear programme was concerned, he noted that the right of all countries to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes had been acknowledged during the Washington Nuclear Security Summit, and he also stressed the peace-loving nature of the citizens of Iran.

B. Thomsen commented on A. Akhmetov's speech by noting that the fact that the Taliban treated women and children inhumanely was sufficient reason for the armed fight against the Taliban regime.

E. Jegg stated that she had participated in observation missions during the elections in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. During talks with ordinary voters in Kazakhstan, she had noticed that President Nazarbayev enjoyed the people's support. The situation was different in Kyrgyzstan: during the election campaign for K. Bakiyev, a north/south divide was apparent in the country. At the same time, in her opinion the reason for the crisis in Kyrgyzstan, in her opinion, was the widespread corruption in K. Bakiyev's entourage.

V. Bobrov, summing up the discussion on Kyrgyzstan, reminded those present that Kazakhstan's main task as holder of the OSCE Presidency was to prevent an escalation of violence and civil war. The Kazakh President, in cooperation with the US and Russian presidents, was successfully fulfilling this task, *inter alia* by means of measures to evacuate K. Bakiyev.

S. Ibragimov called into question the claim that Afghan laws were inhumane, and referred to statistics which showed that 17 times more people were executed per 10 000 population in the US than in Afghanistan.

He also noted that it was impossible to conquer Afghanistan using military means. As the current holder of the OSCE Presidency, Kazakhstan therefore aimed to find a peaceful solution to problems such as the conflicts in the Transnistria and Nagorno-Karabakh regions.

A. Akhmetov emphasised the fact that democracy in Kyrgyzstan should not be confused with vandalism and anarchy. Both democracy and anarchy could be observed at the same time in Kyrgyzstan.

The Chairman then gave the floor to D. Nuketayeva, Member of the Majilis, to talk on the subject of **‘The development of political processes in Kazakhstan and the European Union’: democracy, human rights and constitutional development, including political pluralism, the role of the legislator, freedom of the mass media and the situation of women in society’**.

At the start of her speech, and in line with the MEPs’ request, D. Nuketayeva discussed issues relating to the development of tourism in Kazakhstan.

She noted that Kazakhstan had a rich and diverse potential in terms of tourism. The Great Silk Road had passed through the country’s territory in ancient times. The organisation of trips to the Baikonur Cosmodrome was a very promising area of growth for tourism. There was substantial capacity for a growth in the number of business trips.

The adoption in 2006 of a state programme for the development of tourism in 2007-2011 had been a major step forwards. The tourist sector currently included around 1200 small and medium-sized enterprises. The Asian Winter Games, to be held in 2011 in Astana and Almaty, would act as a major stimulus for the development of tourism.

Continuing her speech on the main agenda item, D. Nuketayeva noted that the policies relating to women were one of the main components of nation building. This was connected to the fact that women played an important role in all areas of public life and accounted for over half of the entire population of the country, whereby a greater proportion of women than men had a higher education. Women accounted for around 40% of entrepreneurs employed in small businesses. Positive trends could be observed in respect of women’s political status: they were represented within state bodies, with 21 members of parliament being women and the country having two female government ministers. There was a National Commission on Women, Family and Demographic Policies, which worked under the President.

Much attention was paid to the implementation of the National Action Plan to Improve the Situation of Women and the Gender Equality Strategy for 2006-2016, both of which provided for measures to combat violence against women and children. Attention was also paid to ensuring that more criminals were held liable for their crimes, and to creating crisis centres. Economic growth had made it possible to increase levels of pensions, benefits and welfare payments, regardless of family income.

On 8 December 2009, the President had signed the act ‘On state guarantees for equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women’, drafted on Parliament’s initiative.

B. Thomsen commented favourably on the information they had been given regarding democratisation and the defence of human rights, and also the expansion of women’s rights and powers.

She stressed that the EU was founded on common values – democracy, the rule of law, human rights, the freedom of the mass media and the fight against corruption. The scandal surrounding the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad had provoked a negative reaction from many Europeans, but nevertheless the state bodies could not exert any influence over the mass media outlets which had published the caricatures, since the principle of freedom of the mass media was a priority.

The EU’s partnerships with other countries were similarly based on the observance of common values. Turkey had been trying to join the EU for many years, but the majority of EU Member States did not believe that this country met the criteria relating to human rights.

The principle of freedom of the mass media applied equally to the Internet, although there were both positive and negatives sides to the Internet. Economic growth, innovation and scientific development in Europe were directly linked to freedom of thought and freedom of speech, including in the Internet. Europeans expected their partners to have a similar attitude to freedom of speech on the Internet.

K. Neved’alová touched on the issue of the role of young people in society. 2011 had been declared the Year of Youth in the European Union, and this subject could thus be reflected in the new agreement. It was also necessary to develop cooperation in the field of sport.

In response to the comments by K. Neved’alová, E. Utembayev noted that the accession of Kazakhstan to the Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe meant that a single space with common values – democratic, cultural, and others – would be created. In addition, the fact that Kazakhstan had joined the Bologna Process fitted in with the country’s progress towards a smart economy. Every year, Kazakhstan sent 3000 students to the best foreign universities, which contributed to the development of a new economy. Kazakhstan led the field in Central Asia in this respect.

The European Union had adopted a development strategy for the period up until 2020, which coincided with the aims of the Kazakh strategy for the period up until 2030, and also with the industry and innovation development programme. The National Human Rights Action Plan, which had been presented earlier in the day, was further confirmation of Kazakhstan’s goal of making progress both in terms of democratic development and in other areas.

In response to B. Thomsen’s comments, V. Bobrov stressed that each country had its own legislative framework, and accordingly there was a system in Kazakhstan for regulating the mass media. The law ‘On the mass media’ sets out the measures to be

taken in response to the appearance in the mass media, including on the Internet, of publications intended to undermine national security or to foment national and religious discord.

E. Utembayev then proposed examining the possibility of setting up a group to study the development of the mass media, Internet security and corresponding model laws from the EU.

V. Bobrov supported the idea of studying model laws from the EU, and stated his willingness to exchange information with European partners.

The Chairman then gave the floor to S. Tokpakhbayev, Member of the Majilis, to speak on the issue **‘The fight against new threats, terrorism, organised crime and human trafficking’**.

In his speech, S. Tokpakhbayev noted that Kazakhstan was virtually surrounded by hotbeds of terrorist, social and ethno-religious tension, namely Afghanistan, the Northern Caucasus, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China, and, since recently, Kyrgyzstan. Individual foreign terrorist organisations under the patronage of Al Qaeda still had designs on the region, including Kazakhstan. The measures taken had meant that terrorist capacities had not been permitted to infiltrate the territory of Kazakhstan. Over the past two years, the activities of the Al Qaeda-controlled terrorist cells of the organisations ‘Islamic Jihad Union’ and ‘Islamic Party of Turkestan’ had been neutralised. In view of the particular importance of ensuring that the necessary legal conditions were in place to counteract terrorism, Kazakhstan had acceded to all 13 of the UN’s Universal Anti-Terrorism Conventions.

Parliament had ratified over 40 multilateral and bilateral treaties and agreements on counteracting terrorism. In 2009 the act ‘On Counteracting the Legalisation (Laundering) of Ill-Gotten Proceeds and Terrorist Financing’ had been adopted, in accordance with which a special body had been established, namely the Committee on Financial Monitoring within the Ministry of Finance. The main remit of this committee was the fight against money laundering and the identification of funding channels for terrorist activities.

All the necessary conditions were in place to train anti-terrorist specialists, including arrangements for them to receive training abroad in EU Member States. Joint training courses and workshops had been held with partners from Germany, France and the United Kingdom. Contacts had been established and successfully developed with the counter-terrorist committee and other specialist committees of the UN Security Council, the OSCE anti-terrorist units and the bodies competent in such matters in the former Soviet republics and in other countries. The work carried out under the NATO Individual Partnership Plan had now entered a concrete and practical phase. In addition, cooperation in the fight against terrorism was an issue dealt with on an ongoing basis by the Sub-Committee on Justice and the Rule of Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the European Union.

During recent years, the drug trade in Kazakhstan had mainly consisted in the entry of drugs of Afghan origin, whereby the fact that Russia, with one of the largest drugs markets in the world, was a neighbouring country meant that major flows of drugs passed through Kazakhstan as a transit country.

According to UN statistics, over the past five years Kazakhstan had succeeded in keeping the number of drug addicts down to 55 000. Under the auspices of the European Commission, a Central Asia Drug Action Programme was being implemented. In 2009, law enforcement agencies had seized 26.3 tonnes of marijuana and 556 kilograms of hashish.

Monitoring of the drug trafficking situation in the Central Asian countries made it possible to conclude that the fight against drug crime needed to be conducted in close coordination with the prevention of corruption at border checkpoints. In this context, Kazakhstan proposed examining the question of closer cooperation between Central Asia and the European Union within the framework of regional programmes on issues relating to the fight against corruption.

The stepping up of border checks was of key importance in terms of securing regional stability, and Kazakhstan expressed willingness to step up cooperation with the European Union in this respect, including an increase in the level of EU funding for the BOMCA programme.

Elaborating on the information provided by the previous speaker, V. Bobrov noted that the reason for the closure of the border with Kyrgyzstan during the political crisis in the neighbouring country had been the need to prevent drug trafficking, and to prevent the country being infiltrated by persons linked to criminal and terrorist groups. The border was poorly equipped in technical terms on the Kyrgyz side, and the European Union had been asked to earmark additional funding to equip the border points.

In response to the question regarding measures taken in the fight against human trafficking, S. Tokpakbayev stated that Kazakhstan was attracting increasing numbers of people in search of better living conditions and work, due to the country's higher level of economic development. Migrant workers frequently fell victim to human trafficking.

Since the start of 2010, 108 criminal cases had been opened in Kazakhstan concerning human trafficking and exploitation. The government had adopted a plan regarding measures to prevent and protect against crimes associated with human trafficking.

B. Thomsen noted that, in Europe's opinion, 108 criminal cases concerning human trafficking was a major achievement. The European judicial system was not yet able to respond effectively to every case of this kind.

A member of the EP delegation discussed the main points that had been made during the debates on the fight against terrorism and support for stability in Central Asia, emphasising that NATO members were present in Afghanistan in the interests of

the fight against international terrorism. European countries were ready to withdraw their military contingents immediately, as and when there was a reduction in the terrorist threat.

With regard to the stability of the region, the European Parliament supported measures to ensure speedy legitimisation of the Kyrgyz authorities by means of a constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections.

Stability and security in Central Asia were important to the European Union, and so the European Union funded programmes in the field of border security, the fight against drug trafficking and human trafficking, terrorism and organised crime.

In response to a question regarding Kazakhstan's migration policy, G. Karagusova noted that two of the country's authorities dealt with migration issues, namely the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. Rules had been laid down governing the import of foreign labour into Kazakhstan, and bilateral agreements on migration had been concluded with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. A similar agreement had been signed within the framework of the EurAsEC. There had been a campaign in 2008 to legalise illegal immigrants.

In response to a question regarding the scale of migration from China, G. Karagusova noted that labour was imported temporarily from the People's Republic of China within the framework of investment projects, whereby investors undertook annually to teach and train a specified number of Kazakh specialists to replace the foreign employees.

To conclude the meeting, V. Bobrov proposed that the conclusions of the meeting should be finalised and approved, and that the date for the following meeting should be set according to normal procedures.

P. Bartolozzi agreed with these proposals.

In conclusion, V. Bobrov thanked the EP delegation for its productive work and for helping to organise the meeting and take decisions.

P. Bartolozzi thanked the Kazakh members of parliament, and also his colleagues, for the in-depth debates that had been held, aimed at developing relations between Kazakhstan and the European Union.

Conclusion of the meeting.