



Press Availability With Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Presidential Building
Astana, Kazakhstan
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PRESIDENT NAZARBAYEV: *(Via Interpreter)* Good morning, dear ladies and gentlemen, Madame Secretary of State and (inaudible). I once again, welcome you to Kazakhstan. Yesterday and today, we had very fruitful and interesting discussions and they are built on the very good and friendly relations between Kazakhstan and the United States, which have been established years ago.

And we apply great significance to our relations with the United States because this is a great country, which has supported Kazakhstan's independence from the very first day.

We appreciate the support of the United States and in our economic reforms we appreciate the support of the United States' investors because one-third of our foreign investments are originally from the United States. And we also appreciate the support of the United States in our efforts to democratize our society and our political system.

And we have carried out our development on the model of democratization through economic development and prosperity of our population. And so far, as you see, we have achieved success on that.

We (inaudible) satisfaction the gradual bilateral relations, which I established between the two countries, and we welcome the open dialogue, the good, friendly contacts between the two countries in the field of security, political reforms, economic reforms and we also would like to strengthen the regional cooperation. And therefore, we welcome the assistance of the United States in Kazakhstan playing its part in the regional development and becoming a true leader in the region, both in economic and political reforms. Also, we have discussed the issues of (inaudible) resources and oil and transportation, and of course, we are interested on international relations and strengthening our bilateral relations for better international relations in the world.

And we had a very detailed discussion on cooperation and (inaudible) terrorism and this cooperation continues. The world is getting really fragile and it takes real teamwork to struggle against terrorism, religious extremism, (inaudible) such phenomenon as AIDS and we're very satisfied with this cooperation.

And yesterday we had a detailed discussion on the democratization of Kazakhstan and of the upcoming Presidential elections in Kazakhstan. I think that on these issues, we'll also have total understanding.

A few days ago, our Central Election Committee announced that this election will be free and fair and I voiced that idea in my speech on the 1st of September. We will do our best to make these elections free and fair.

And I support the statement of Central Election Committee, which calls all the political parties, all the political forces to carry out Presidential elections according to the law, do not violate the law and do not destabilize the situation in Kazakhstan.

And it goes both ways -- opposition and the other side and if the law will be violated, everyone will be punished. So if somebody violates the law and he will be punished does not mean that he's taking his freedom.

And also within the framework of the statute on democratization, we've spoken about freedom of speech and Kazakhstan's society -- the transitional society -- they have wholly truly supported freedom of speech, but in no way freedom of speech means of freedom of blackmail and freedom of disinformation.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you for a warm welcome here. We've, indeed, had a wide-ranging discussion. We talked about economic development. I mentioned to the President that I had been to Astana now almost five years ago and -- more than five years ago -- and it has grown into a very impressive city in that time.

We talked also about the role that Kazakhstan can play in this region in cooperation with its neighbors and with Afghanistan.

In that regard, the United States has made available \$1.4 million to increase investment among Central Asian states by streamlining customs procedures and developing feasibility studies on how the region can work together in energy, transport and communications.

And of course, we discussed Kazakhstan's desire to enter the World Trade Organization and America's support for that as Kazakhstan meets the requirements for WTO membership.

We talked about Kazakhstan's deployment of troops in Iraq, to the (inaudible) troops that are contributing to security there and to, in general, to our excellent relationship in the war on terrorism.

And finally, we did have an extensive discussion of the course of democratization in Kazakhstan, that Kazakhstan now has an opportunity to lead this region in the democratic process.

As the President affirmed, the statement of the Central Election Commission, which we see as a positive step in bolstering the democratic process, promises that there will be free and fair elections.

And of course, free and fair elections do not begin on the day of the election. Prior to that, there must be the ability of the opposition to organize; there must be opposition access to the press so that voters can, indeed, have a free choice.

And we want Kazakhstan to succeed in these elections and I believe that the role of international observation in this election will also be important and the President and I have discussed that.

And so, we have much work to do together. Kazakhstan is making important strides. It's in a region that has many difficulties but Kazakhstan, along with its neighbors, could be a pillar for tremendous progress Central Asia and surrounding regions in the years to come.

QUESTION: (Inaudible)

QUESTION: Can you repeat your (inaudible) about the access to the media?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, actually, there was one other question also for President Nazarbayev. (Inaudible) -- the Kazakh questions probably go first.

QUESTION: You know that the United States the major foreign investors into Kazakhstan (inaudible). What can you tell us about the perspectives of economic bilateral cooperation?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, you are right that Kazakhstan has a good deal of investment from the United States. A lot of American companies are involved here. And I think that that will continue. But the deepening in cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United States -- the economic cooperation between the United States and Kazakhstan requires further economic reform. It requires that Kazakhstan will be able to enter the international economy through the World Trade Organization. And that's why we're working with Kazakhstan on some of the fundamentals so that investment can flow here because, of course, the United States does not direct investment to different countries; investment is a factor of how the investment conditions appear in any one country.

QUESTION: Andrea Koppel with CNN. I have a question for both of you. Mr. President, one of your daughters controls the media. The other controls the main bank here. The opposition, the political opposition, is routinely harassed, arrested. What evidence is there that you are anything more than a dictator?

And Madame Secretary, if I may ask you, some of the opposition have said today, after your speech, that the primary concern for the United States in Kazakhstan is oil, the next is the war on terrorism, and only after that is democracy and human rights a concern. And as a result, they say, that your soft words have no impact. Could you please respond? Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Sure. Do you want to translate or do you want to --

PRESIDENT NAZARBAYEV: (*Via interpreter.*) What I said about the freedom of speech, I said I underlined that it should not be a freedom of misinformation. So I think that our opposition has provided you with some -- that kind of information, which is not actually good.

Well, the TV station, Khabar, which was established by my daughter, which was founded -- it's owned by the state and it's not her property. My second daughter does not do any business. She works in the educational foundation of Kazakhstan.

Well, speaking about the harassment of the opposition, I'll say that our opposition is struggling today against corruption, meanwhile, they are protecting the rights of some people who've been actually accused and sentenced by court on the case of being corrupted.

Well, we are the only former Soviet Republic, which has approved a law on fighting corruption and according to that law, our law enforcement agencies have already sentenced two ministers and one governor.

So when you look at the opposition, they have a big gap between what they say and what they do. And I would like to underline that those persons accused and sentenced by open court with the participation of lawyers and prosecutors and according to all necessary procedures.

In Kazakhstan, we have 3,200 sources of mass media, which broadcast on 13 different languages. And only five percent of that mass media sources are state-owned. And when we speak about campaign, everyone will be provided free and equal access to that free mass media source.

And speaking about state-owned companies, they will provide access to any candidate but I cannot speak about the private-owned because they work like CNN, they do what they want.

So it's up to you what you mean by definition of "dictator" -- but it's up to you. As you see, we have political parties, free political parties in Kazakhstan. We have opposition that criticizes the authorities. You can get opposition newspapers anywhere you want. We have 5,000 NGOs in Kazakhstan. And members of the parliament and the President in Kazakhstan are elected according to the (inaudible) free elections. And so far today, we have 15 candidates registered for the presidency.

SECRETARY RICE: Andrea, I think if we were interested only in oil and the war on terrorism we would not be speaking in the way that we are about democracy here or in Saudi Arabia or throughout the Middle East. And so quite clearly, while we do have interests in terms of resources and in terms of the struggle for terrorism, we have in no way allowed those interests to get in the way of our open and clear defense of freedom. We have talked about that in any number of circumstances. I think that, for instance, in Uzbekistan it's been very clear that we do not see a conflict between our strategic interests and in our interests in democracy. In fact, we've spoken up clearly in that case. I'm here talking, on camera, with the President about the need for Kazakhstan to have free and fair elections; to have international observation of those elections; to have access to media for the opposition. I met, after the speech, with two people who will be a part of the campaign. And I will take their concerns with me to Washington and we will press for free and fair elections here, just as we pressed for free and fair elections everywhere else in the world.

(Inaudible) and so our position is consistent around the world. The need for democratic change and the need for opposition to be able to express themselves freely and we expect the same of Kazakhstan.

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