



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Response to Mr. Rakhat Aliyev, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan**

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley  
to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 16, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Minister, for coming to the Permanent Council today and for sharing your Government's vision of the future of Kazakhstan both within this organization and as you mentioned an important player on the regional and international scene.

It's no secret -- and I said this during and after my visit to Kazakhstan last fall -- that the United States wants Kazakhstan to succeed in its transformation into a strong, prosperous and democratic state. That transformation would be good, in our opinion, not only for the Kazakhstani people and the future of the country, but would also have a positive ripple effect regionally, far beyond Kazakhstan's own citizens and borders.

President Nazarbayev, in his State of the Nation address on March 1st, laid out the government's strategy for becoming one of the world's 50 Most Competitive Countries: an ambitious and admirable goal, and one which you detailed for us today. But it is important to keep in mind that economic modernization, establishment of a social safety net, and a focus on national security and foreign relations, are only part of the picture. To be truly competitive, to be a real leader on the international scene, Kazakhstan must also have a demonstrated, sustainable commitment to democratic principles as the essential foundation for stability and prosperity. President Nazarbayev also outlined many of these goals in detail in his 2005 address to the nation; we continue to hope that the Kazakhstani government will take the path he outlined then as well.

An election that meets international standards is an important - but far from the only - test of that commitment. Our government followed with great interest the election period and post-election developments in Kazakhstan. We were hopeful that your government would seize the opportunity to strengthen civil freedoms. However, ODIHR highlighted areas of concern and serious shortcomings in its report on your 2005 elections. We have been watching closely your government's implementation of the recommendations contained in the report.

The United States continues to be concerned about the restrictions placed on the political opposition and the independent media in Kazakhstan. The registration of the True Ak Zhol party in March was a welcome step, which should open the way toward their full participation in the political process. The murder of Sarsenbaiuly in February deprived the party of a senior and respected leader, however. We commend the government for the steps it has taken to date in its investigation of this crime. We believe it is essential that everyone involved in this murder be pursued and brought to justice in an accountable and transparent manner.

In recent months, there have been a series of events which have cast a negative light on Kazakhstan's political development. The Government's refusal to register the opposition "Alga!" party, its prevention of opposition politicians Galymzhan Zhakiyanov and Bulat Abilov from leaving the country for meetings in Brussels in April, its added refusal to allow Zhakiyanov to travel from Almaty to Astana to meet Vice President Cheney only a few days ago, are moves in the wrong direction. These steps only reinforce lingering concerns about whether Kazakhstan has irrevocably set itself on the path to democracy. Challenging official orthodoxy should not lead to harassment, restrictions, or criminal processes.

We welcome Kazakhstan's interest in deepening its engagement in the organization and upholding our common OSCE commitments. Any successful bid for the Chairmanship should be based on a candidate's adherence to the democratic norms and principles the OSCE embodies. The country that sits in the chair of this organization must have demonstrated a consistent record of upholding OSCE principles.

Mr. Minister, we urge your government to take advantage of the good offices of the OSCE and the expertise it has to offer. In addition to the recommendations of ODIHR, the OSCE can help to facilitate the work of Kazakhstan's Democratization Commission. This organization, and particularly the Office of the Freedom of the Media Representative, can also assist your authorities in drafting a media law that meets OSCE and ICCPR standards. We hope Kazakhstan will embrace the opportunity before it to demonstrate its commitment to the ideals and principles of the OSCE, to further democratize and to strengthen economic and civil freedoms. We support the ongoing efforts of the government, NGOs, and principally the people of Kazakhstan to promote democratization, the rule of law and the development of civil society in Kazakhstan.

Thank you.