

## Speech given by Greg Quinn, British Chargé d’Affaires to Kazakhstan on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2014.

Dear distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues.

I am delighted to speak at this round table today and I would like to thank the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs for providing the venue. Special thanks also to the Chairman of the Human Rights Commission under the President of Kazakhstan, Mr. Kuanysh Sultanov. Finally, I want to thank the United Nations in Kazakhstan, the European Union Delegation, the General Prosecutor’s Office, the Ministry of Justice, Penal Reform International in Central Asia and all other participants for taking part today.

We have a long standing history of cooperation with the Human Rights Commission. Indeed, along with our OSCE, UNDP and EU colleagues, the British Embassy has supported reports by the National Human Rights Commission from 2007. These reports included recommendations made on a range of issues, such as death penalty abolition, torture prevention, and freedom of expression and assembly. We have also supported UN Human Rights Days in 2012 and 2013.

It is worth reminding ourselves that Kazakhstan, as an independent country, is only 23 years old. In that time it has gone from the economic and political chaos of the collapse of the Soviet Union to today’s country, which is towards the top of the World Bank’s “middle income” bracket for global economies. So a great deal has happened in those short 23 years. Of course we recognise that it takes more than one generation to build the sort of society which both Kazakhstan and its friends want to see created.

That is why we welcome the fact that the Kazakhstani government continues to work closely with us. We want to support the journey that Kazakhstan itself has chosen. We see possible future areas of cooperation on issues such as freedom of religion, freedom of expression and assembly, and the vital role of NGOs.

Within my home department in London – the Foreign and Commonwealth Office – there is a Human Rights and Development Programme. This is a fund that supports human rights and democracy projects. The Programme aims to make a difference to people's lives, helping to build the capacity of governments and civil society to promote and protect human rights. We also have a Bilateral Programme Budget aimed at strengthening relations between the UK and Kazakhstan. During the period 2011- 2015 the British Embassy in Astana has committed some £1.2 million to such projects (roughly 360 million KZT).

So, on the behalf of the British Embassy in Astana, let me thank everyone for gathering here today to bring a positive change for Kazakhstan's future. I hope you find today's event interesting and stimulating.

Rakhmet.