

Kazakhstan Promotes Sustainable Development Goals in Global Diplomacy and International Activities

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Photo: EXPO2017 World Exhibition grounds, the venue of 'Astana Economic Forum' transformed to 'The Global Challenges Summit' in May 2018 – one of Kazakhstan's eminent international activities

NEW YORK (IDN) – When Kazakhstan took over the presidency of the UN Security Council in January 2018, it set out with a seven-point agenda: a world free of nuclear weapons; preventing and ending military confrontations at regional and global levels; making Central Asia a model for a regional zone of peace, security, cooperation, and development; reaching peace and security in Africa; fighting international terrorism and violent extremism; advancing the nexus between security and development; and adapting the UN system to the needs of the 21st century.

This ambitious work programme reflected the letter and spirit of the United Nations' [Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) which is eminently summed up in [Goal 16](#) dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.

Kazakhstan continues to implement this key goal by positioning itself at the heart of global diplomacy not only as a non-permanent member of the Security Council since January 2017 and as a member of the United Nations, but also from Astana in a

chain of international events and through President Nursultan Nazarbayev's pre-eminent policy directives.

A case in point is the [Manifesto "The World. The 21st Century"](#) which the Kazakh leader spelt out first on March 31, 2016. Another example is the Sixth Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions to be held on October 10-11, 2018 in Kazakhstan's capital city Astana.

Also the transformation of the [Astana Economic Forum](#), Eurasia's leading conference on economic matters, into *The Global Challenges Summit* from May 17-19, 2018 has well demonstrated Kazakhstan's new status in the international discourse on the opportunities and risks presented by planetary development.

Astana's successful organization of the *'Energy of the Future' World EXPO 2017* – which found close interest of countries around the world and at the UN – served as the backdrop against which Kazakhstan announced its large-scale *'Third Modernization'*, geared towards pushing the country into the top 30 of the world's strongest economies as a result of breakthroughs in innovative development, the implementation of bold institutional reforms, and extensive international integration.

The latest – eleventh – Astana Economic Forum in the Kazakh capital since 2008 welcomed 5,000 participants from 111 countries and more than 500 speakers, including former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and former French President Francois Holland.

Inaugurating the event, President Nazarbayev pointed to five global trends and reiterated the need to establish the [G-Global platform](#) under the aegis of the UN.

The five global trends include digitisation of all aspects of human activity, energy revolution, rapid global population growth, change in the pace and nature of urbanisation, and transformation of the global labour market.

"Since last year's forum, we witnessed huge transformations worldwide. New confrontations have emerged, and it has become more difficult for states to find agreement. Distrust and unwillingness to understand the principles of an opponent are growing. This is a very difficult time for the world," the Kazakh leader told the Forum's opening plenary session.

The new economic model entails the digitisation not only of business, but also of people's lives. Estimates are that the artificial intellect would spur a US\$16 billion growth of world economy by 2030, noted Nazarbayev, highlighting the country's Digital Kazakhstan programme leading its efforts in this area.

Digitisation, however, can also facilitate cyber crime, he said, which last year became the "most serious threat to businesses." Besides, new mechanisms, including crypto currencies and blockchain technologies, promise to bring fundamental changes to financial markets.

The Kazakh President sees in the transition to clean energy another global trend, with energy generated by renewable energy sources growing 13 times in 30 years. Despite continuing demand for natural resources, their presence has ceased to be an advantage.

All big players in traditional energy markets have therefore turned to investments in green energy. *"Kazakhstan is not standing still. The share of alternative energy in our*

energy balance will reach 30 percent by 2030," said Nazarbayev, underlining the Central Asian republic's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals.

Highlighting another key issue of debates at the UN In New York, the Kazakh leader said, growing global population and longer life expectancy achieved with progress in science and technology is throwing up new challenges, including increasing demand for food. The current global population is estimated at 7.6 billion and is forecast to swell to 10 billion by 2050, according to the UN.

Another global trend encompasses the transformation of the labour market, where experts expect robots to replace 80 percent of labour. As a result, highly qualified workers would increasingly become more important for employers than even cheap labour. This is a challenge for national economies and social systems, said Nazarbayev, thus underlining the concern of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

With such trends becoming increasingly evident, additional ways to address global challenges beyond current international platforms have become necessary, he declared. The Group of 20 (G20), comprising industrialised and emerging economies, and the Group of 7 (G7) major industrialised nations do not suffice. *"G-Global that will take into account interests of all countries, including sustainable development, fighting poverty, famine, reducing economic inequality, and ensuring fair access to social goods," he noted.*

Former UN Secretary-General and current chair of the [Boao Forum for Asia \(BFA\)](#) Ban Ki-moon stressed the need to address sustainable development and expressed concern over the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement. He expressed "the hope that the U.S. will as soon as possible join this global agreement again."

In an effort to preserve peace for future generations, a growing number of countries worldwide are seeking to switch to a green economy, particularly as the cost of new energy solutions is becoming competitive to traditional, yet non-ecological energy sources, added Ban.

"Kazakhstan is one of the leading countries in this area," he said, adding: "I would like to note Kazakhstan's achievements that 50 percent of all energy will be generated by alternative sources by 2050." He expressed confidence that the International Green Technologies Centre showed to him by Kazakh Prime Minister Bakytzhan Sagintayev will be a "good instrument allowing Kazakhstan to lead these obligations around the world."

Former French President Francois Hollande also expressed anxiety about U.S. withdrawal from the climate agreement. He emphasised that this and several other decisions by the U.S. President "raise concerns that can pose a threat to our process of transformation."

There are other trends such as increasing protectionism, calling into question of international agreements and other forms of multilateralism. All these developments can have an adverse impact on the world economy, said Hollande. He supported the Kazakh leader's proposal of G-Global at the level of the UN.