

A natural and committed partner

By RT HON DAVID LIDINGTON MP

MINISTER OF STATE AT THE FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE



DAVID LIDINGTON was appointed Minister of State at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office on 14 May 2010. He was elected to Parliament in 1992 and is the Member of Parliament for Aylesbury. He worked for BP and RTZ before spending three years as Special Advisor to Douglas Hurd in the Home Office and Foreign Office.

This year the Republic of Kazakhstan celebrates twenty years of independence. I am delighted to be able to congratulate President Nursultan Nazarbayev and the people of Kazakhstan on this landmark occasion. Over the past two decades, the country has transformed itself almost beyond recognition, with major advances in economic and social development. This owes much to Kazakhstan’s willingness to look outwards for international partners, positive development models, foreign direct investment, and examples of best practice. President Nazarbayev’s Bolashak scholarship programme has also produced a generation of knowledgeable Kazakhs exposed to a range of cultures and well attuned to the realities of the globalised world.

This “multivector” policy, combined with prudent macroeconomic management of its abundant resources, including through the creation of a stabilisation fund, enabled Kazakhstan to record impressive growth over the last decade and weather the global financial crisis.

I also warmly welcome Kazakhstan’s emphasis on interfaith and interethnic tolerance – a message that cannot be stressed too much in today’s complex world. Kazakhstan is well placed to act as a bridge between Europe and Asia, and within the Islamic world, and to play a leadership role beyond the Central Asian region. Its chairmanships of the OSCE, Shanghai Co-operation Organisation and Organisation of Islamic Co-operation are just the beginning. It is important now for Kazakhstan to continue to exercise international leadership by actively working within the OSCE to protect core values and preserve the “Spirit of Astana”, its legacy to the OSCE and its participating States. As outgoing OSCE Chair, it is also important that Kazakhstan upholds all of the international standards to which it has committed. The National Human Rights Action Plan provides an excellent framework for progress in this regard, and the United Kingdom continues to provide active support to Kazakhstan as it takes forward work on the recommendations in the Plan.

Britain is a natural partner for Kazakhstan as it pursues its economic and social ambitions and raises its profile on the international stage. From the very start, we have been active commercial partners: 14% of all foreign direct investment into Kazakhstan since independence has come from the UK. Over 120 British or joint venture companies are involved in Kazakhstan.

Shell and BG have invested billions into Kashagan and Karachaganak, and our medium sized supply chain companies are also extremely active. There is close and enthusiastic co-operation in the education, financial services and infrastructure sectors. Thousands of Kazakhs have studied or are studying in Britain, and prominent institutions such as University College London and Haileybury School are present and flourishing in Kazakhstan.

Relations are growing at all levels. There is a regular flow of British and Kazakh Ministers to each others’ country. I myself visited Kazakhstan twice last year for OSCE meetings. The second time was for the Astana Summit, accompanying Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, whose discussions with President Nazarbayev built on the President’s meeting with Prime Minister David Cameron in the margins of the Lisbon NATO Summit. We want these political contacts to continue to deepen.

Kazakhstan has much to be proud of looking back at its first twenty years. But it is equally important to keep moving forward. I was struck by the emphasis in President Nazarbayev’s recent inauguration speech on the changing nature of today’s world and the emergence of new and more complex challenges and tasks. It is right not to be complacent in such an environment. I agree that Kazakhstan should retain its boldness and strongly encourage its continued efforts to shape its own destiny. The President’s speech spoke of an open economy to attract new FDI and portfolio investment, and of further democratisation of society. I am sure it is right to focus on changes which will meet the growing political, economic and social aspirations of the people of Kazakhstan. The next Parliamentary elections provide an occasion to take this agenda forward in line with international norms.

Kazakhstan is well placed to benefit from the next twenty years, and Britain remains a committed partner. E

UK-Kazakhstan partnership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14% of FDI from UK • Regular ministerial visits • Educational cooperation