



**Introduction by
Rt Hon Lord Hurd
of Westwell CH CBE PC
Chairman of the FIRST
Advisory Council**

I have great pleasure in introducing this official FIRST report on Kazakhstan to mark the visit of HE Karim Massimov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, to the United Kingdom. We are particularly grateful to HE Erzhan Kazykhanov, Kazakhstan's Ambassador to London for all his assistance as well as the support of the Kazakh and United Kingdom authorities.

Since declaring independence in 1991, the last Soviet Republic to do so, Kazakhstan has steered a careful course from a command economy to an open market-led economic structure. President Nursultan Nazarbayev has wisely placed much emphasis on establishing stable relationships with Kazakhstan's neighbours.

Kazakhstan now plays an increasingly prominent international role as a member of the United Nations, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the NATO Partnership for Peace Programme, as well as being a member, and held the chairmanship of the OSCE. Kazakhstan is also an active member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Economic Cooperation Organisation and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). In cooperation with Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Kazakhstan has also become an integral partner of the Eurasian Economic Community in working to create a free trade zone under a Customs Union. Kazakhstan is also making good progress on its ambition to accede to WTO membership.

Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010 helped enhance its international profile. The summit gathered world leaders from the OSCE membership and provided an opportunity for Kazakhstan to demonstrate

its international role and the range of trade and investment opportunities available.

Kazakhstan's international role has also been bolstered by strong economic growth rates in recent years – a result of its booming energy sector as well as economic reforms, good agricultural harvests and increasing foreign investment. Kazakhstan's energy export capacity has been significantly increased with the opening of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium in 2001.

The UK and Kazakhstan enjoy a strong trade and investment relationship based on free market access and very significant two way trade and investment flows. Regular high level dialogue is conducted between the two countries in order to maintain the momentum of this investment.

The years of independence have witnessed significant changes in Kazakhstan and President Nursultan Nazarbayev has overseen dramatic improvements in the living standards of the people of Kazakhstan – per capita GDP has increased more than twelve times since 1994 and there has been a major programme of investment in schools and universities as well as hospitals.

HE Karim Massimov's Visit to the United Kingdom, while providing an opportunity for private discussions, will give us all the opportunity to study the significant developments in Kazakhstan and to weigh carefully the many opportunities to work together even more closely.

We at FIRST are delighted to have been asked to produce this official publication to mark the Prime Minister's visit and hope that it contributes, in a small way, to its success and the further development of the bilateral relationship, especially in the areas of trade and investment. **E**