

A new stage of bilateral relations

By **H.E. ERZHAN KAZYKHANOV**

AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN TO THE UNITED KINGDOM



ERZHAN KAZYKHANOV holds a degree in Oriental Studies from Saint Petersburg State University and a PhD from Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. He has served as Deputy Chief of State, Protocol service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and First Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan to the United Nations in New York. He served as Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Austria from 2009-2011. He was Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2007 - 2008 and in 2011, and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2011-2012. In 2014 he was appointed Ambassador to the UK.

I began my mission as Ambassador to the United Kingdom in September at a time when relations between our two countries are stronger than ever. It is our priority to continue to develop cooperation between Kazakhstan and UK, as was agreed during Prime Minister David Cameron's landmark visit to Astana back in 2013 when the Joint Statement on Strategic Partnership was signed. This document is an illustration of our aspirations to build closer ties in all spheres of mutual interest. President Nazarbayev and Prime Minister Cameron confirmed their commitment to reaching these objectives when they met again in October 2014 in Milan.

Over the last few years we have continued to strengthen contacts between our respective ministerial departments and parliaments and develop bilateral legal and institutional framework. Developing economic relations remains one of our main priorities. Kazakhstan's growing economy offers many opportunities to develop trade and economic cooperation. This will be our main focus in the coming years.

Our economy is no longer reliant on just extraction of raw materials. We are making a lot of progress in diversifying our economy through industrialisation and modernisation drawing on the experience of other countries as a guide. I strongly believe that there are many opportunities for British companies to take advantage of our expanding economy. The UK has already become a prominent investor in our country with over US\$10 billion invested into our economy. Additionally, more than 600 British companies and joint ventures currently operate in Kazakhstan.

Despite this progress, more opportunities lie ahead. Kazakhstan listed the UK as a top target for boosting cooperation in the sphere of investments and technology cooperation. Last year Kazakhstan lifted visa requirements for the UK nationals to encourage more business and investment. We also launched effective investment reforms to provide more incentives for British companies in Kazakhstan.

We hope that UK investors and businesses will benefit from these opportunities. I personally, and on the behalf of the Government of Kazakhstan, would like to extend a warm welcome to our prospective partners.

In addition to our business ties, we have also been developing closer cooperation in the spheres of education and science. Our relations in this area are implemented on the basis of the intergovernmental Agreement on the cooperation in education, science and culture signed in 1994 in London. Today the UK is the top choice for holders of the 'Bolashak' International Scholarship. Currently, over 750 Kazakh students are studying in 84 British universities.

At the same time, British education institutions have played a significant part in developing the Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan through opening their branches and schools. The opportunity to study at the best British universities and colleges, coupled with the initiatives of British tutors and the British Council in Kazakhstan, has enabled our specialists to learn new skills in different areas, which in turn has helped to drive our economy.

We hope that Prime Minister Massimov's visit to London will further deepen the strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom and pave the way for the visit of President Nazarbayev to the UK in the near future.



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with HE Erzhan Kazykhanov