

A wealth of opportunities

By PROFESSOR CHARLES HENDRY MP

PRIME MINISTER'S TRADE ENVOY TO KAZAKHSTAN



CHARLES HENDRY holds a degree in Business Studies from the University of Edinburgh. Prior to entering Parliament he worked at Ogilvy & Mather PR and Burson-Marsteller. He was Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Social Services in 1988, and to the Secretary of State for Social Security (1988-90). His previous posts included Shadow Energy Minister, Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party and Shadow Minister for Young People. He served as Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change from 2010-2012, and in 2012 was appointed the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. He has been Member of Parliament for Wealden since 2001.

Rt Hon David Cameron MP,
Prime Minister, and HE
Nursultan Nazarbayev,
President of Kazakhstan

The historic visit by Prime Minister Karim Massimov to the United Kingdom is a further demonstration of the excellent relations between our two countries.

These relations, which have always been good since Kazakhstan gained its independence, were transformed by the visit by David Cameron to Atyrau and Astana eighteen months ago. With the large Ministerial group accompanying Prime Minister Massimov this week, it is evidence that the commercial and political relations are the best they have ever been. Whilst the focus of Mr Massimov's visit is the Global Law Summit, there is also a strong emphasis on business relations as well.

I first visited Kazakhstan as Energy Minister in 2012 and I have since visited six times as the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy, often with business delegations. The Prime Minister established the Trade Envoy programme to work alongside our excellent teams in our Embassies, the Foreign Office and UKTI, to build closer political and commercial ties with fast-growing emerging nations, where we recognise the UK should have more trade and investment links.

The starting point for much of this is in oil and gas, but as Mr Massimov's visit makes clear, the intention is that the relationship should be spread to a much wider

range of commercial and business sectors.

Companies like Shell and BG already have a strong presence as partners in developing some of Kazakhstan's immense hydrocarbon resources. That has brought opportunities for companies in the oil and gas supply chain, where the UK has such expertise, to work alongside them. With Shell's support we have run a series of events to help create joint ventures between smaller and medium sized companies in both countries to work together as these opportunities develop.

Recognising those opportunities, Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector was designated as a High Value Opportunity by UK Trade & Investment – and it is now the best performing HVO country for the UK in the world. We look forward to taking forward these opportunities with Energy Minister, Vladimir Shkolnik, and with Sauat Mynbayev, the wise Chairman of KMG. The Prime Minister's visit will also demonstrate the many other areas where we are seeing increasing cooperation. In mining, we have British companies actively working to help Kazakhstan recover its extraordinary mineral resources. And our specialist lawyers have been working to identify and remove barriers to investment in the sector.

We are seeing close cooperation with the Central



Bank, under Governor Kelimbetov, whereby the City of London will help make Almaty a regional financial centre. CityUK, which leads in supporting the export of London's unique expertise and range of skills in financial services, is already engaged in this partnership and Governor Kelimbetov's participation in the visit will help to consolidate that relationship.

The presence, too, of Dr Shukeyev and his team from Samruk Kazyna will open up a new level of cooperation on specific projects across the whole breadth of Samruk Kazyna's portfolio. This will be spearheaded by a new Business-to-Business Forum which will be tasked with identifying specific investment opportunities in each country and bringing together the companies to make sure they are taken forward.

We will also be taking the opportunity during the Prime Minister's visit to launch the new British Chamber of Commerce in Kazakhstan. This body, with some initial support from UK Trade & Investments, will provide a forum for British businesses operating in Kazakhstan to raise any issues which would help to improve the business opportunities yet further and also, in time, provide support and knowledge for new companies looking to enter the market. It shows our commitment to building up the number of British companies working in the country and also spreading their influence to more and more areas of commercial activity. Its membership will be open to all those who share these objectives.

In developing these opportunities, we are well supported by the restructured UK Export Finance, which has been transformed to give more support, more quickly, to ventures which need export finance.

I also celebrate the partnership we see in education, and it was a great honour and pleasure for me, in January, to have the chance to give a lecture to the outstanding students at the Kazakh-British Technical University. The Bolashak scholarship programme, set up by President Nazarbayev over twenty years ago, has been one of the most visionary scholarship programmes in the world, and thousands of bright, young Kazakhs have come to study at Universities in the UK with its support – indeed more students have come to the UK than to any other country.


Today, we fully understand that the Government of Kazakhstan wants more of its students to study for their undergraduate degrees in Universities in Kazakhstan and then to go overseas for their Masters and Doctorates, so we will work with our Kazakh colleagues to encourage the UK's top Universities to partner with those in Kazakhstan. With the UK having four of the world's top six Universities, we are well placed to do so!

We will also explore the opportunities for British companies to support Astana as it prepares for Expo

2017. We know from the 2012 Olympics how to host a global event, to maximum national benefit, and we will offer those skills to Astana for this moment. It will put Kazakhstan on a larger international stage, with a unique opportunity to showcase to the world the country that it is today and the country that it aspires to be – a dynamic country with immense ambition for its people, with a track record of international statesmanship.

In a few weeks, at the end of this Parliament in the UK, I shall be moving on from the role of the PM's Trade Envoy, as it is a parliamentary appointment and I leave Parliament at the General Election in May.

I do so, greatly encouraged by the state of the relations between our two countries, with more companies than ever looking to trade and invest. In Kazakhstan, I have found senior Ministers and businesspeople who have a real warmth towards the UK and a sincere personal commitment to ensuring that the ties between our countries growing stronger and closer all the time. That commitment is fully matched by the dedication and commitment of our Embassy in Astana, so ably led by Ambassador Carolyn Browne, and by the excellent teams at the FCO and UKTI in London.

It has been a great privilege to have the chance to get to know this remarkable and rapidly evolving country. I look forward to continuing to work towards these shared goals in my life outside Parliament and I welcome Prime Minister Massimov to the UK as a true friend to Britain and as someone who is dedicated to making more and more people and businesses in the United Kingdom know the opportunities, promise and warmth that modern Kazakhstan can offer. 

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Prof. Charles Hendry MP,
UK Prime Minister's
Trade Envoy, and
Akhmetzhan Yessimov,
Mayor of Almaty

