



Introduction by Rupert Goodman DL Chairman and Founder FIRST Chairman of The British Kazakh Society

President Nursulstan Nazarbayev of
Kazakhstan and Rupert Goodman,
Chairman of FIRST and the BKS

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this Special Report on the UK's participation at the Astana Expo 2017. We are especially grateful to Rt Hon Charles Hendry and the staff at the Department for International Trade for all their help and guidance in the preparation of this report. We are also very grateful to Rt Hon Greg Hands MP, for contributing such an important and personal message.

The Astana Expo 2017 is particularly timely and will help focus the attention of business leaders and policy makers on the many opportunities that exist in Kazakhstan. The Expo is of special significance given that it takes place in the 25th anniversary year of bilateral relations between the United Kingdom and Kazakhstan.

With its strategic geographic location and dominant position in Central Asia, Kazakhstan has developed an important international role and offers the international investment community many significant opportunities. Over the past fifteen years, the Kazakh economy has grown at around 7 per cent per annum. GDP has increased 16 fold in the past twenty years and GDP per capita is more than US\$10,000. In 1993 it was just US\$1000. Kazakhstan's economic transition has been underpinned by its natural resource wealth but there is now a focus on economic diversification.

Major investment opportunities exist in the non oil/gas sector – priority sectors include construction, engineering, infrastructure development, the chemical industry, pharmaceuticals/medical equipment, mining/the extractive sector and knowledge based industries. Kazakhstan represents an important market for UK business, underpinned by the country's economic stability, strong regulatory environment, preferential tax regime and an increasingly transparent and effective business culture.

The United Kingdom is playing a significant role at the Astana Expo 2017 under the theme *Future Energy*, promoting the UK's international priorities and highlighting British

innovation, creativity and global leadership. The UK Pavilion, designed by Asif Khan and with an original soundscape by Brian Eno, encapsulates the UK's position as a business partner of choice and a hub of academic excellence. The Pavilion demonstrates the UK's commitment to Kazakhstan and its adjoining markets.

I first visited Kazakhstan in the early 1990's, shortly after independence, and have had a chance to witness the country's many significant changes and achievements over the past twenty three years. Kazakhstan's transformation has been extraordinary. The British-Kazakh Society, celebrating its 15th anniversary, continues to play an important role in promoting the best of relations between the UK and Kazakhstan. This includes highlighting trade and investment opportunities as well as promoting cooperation and understanding between government and industry, at all levels. We also place a strong emphasis on promoting cultural and educational exchange. The British-Kazakh Society will play its part in this 25th anniversary year of bilateral relations in cooperation with our patrons – HE President Nazarbayev and HRH The Duke of York.

FIRST is delighted to have been asked to produce this official publication to mark the UK Pavilion at the Astana Expo 2017 and hope that it contributes, in a small way, to the success of the UK's participation, especially in the area of trade and investment. E

