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25TH ANNIVERSARY OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS



Introduction by
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Chairman and
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Chairman of the
British-Kazakh Society

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this Official Publication on the 25th Anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Kazakhstan. We are grateful to H.E. Erlan Idrissov, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to the Court of St James's, and his staff at the Embassy for all their help and guidance in the preparation of this report. We are also extremely grateful to the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Theresa May MP, and the President, H.E. Nursultan Nazarbayev, for contributing such important and personal messages.

This year represents an important milestone in Kazakhstan's international relations, with the success of Astana EXPO 2017, the 25th Anniversary of diplomatic relations and Kazakhstan's election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2017-18.

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. Between 1993 and 2013, Kazakhstan attracted over US\$170 billion of foreign direct investment.

Major investment opportunities exist in the non oil/gas sector, stimulated by the government's desire for greater economic diversification. 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 – as a gateway to the markets of the Eurasian Economic Union and the opportunities associated with the diversification of the

economy – underpinned by the country's economic stability, strong regulatory environment, preferential tax regime and an increasingly transparent and effective business culture.

The United Kingdom played a significant role at the Astana EXPO 2017 under the theme 'Future Energy' – highlighting such issues as reducing CO2 emissions, energy efficiency, and energy for all. The UK Pavilion, designed by Asif Khan and with an original soundscape by Brian Eno, encapsulated the UK's position as a business partner of choice and a hub of academic excellence.

I first visited Kazakhstan 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 country's Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010 was considered a great success and the launch of the Strategic Partnership between the UK and Kazakhstan provides further important opportunities, especially in bilateral trade and investment.

The British-Kazakh Society, celebrating its 15th Anniversary, plays 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 the bilateral relationship in cooperation with our patrons – His Excellency President Nazarbayev and HRH The Duke of York.

We at FIRST are delighted to have been asked to produce this official publication to mark the 25th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations and hope that it contributes, in a small way, to the further strengthening of relations between the United Kingdom and Kazakhstan.

FIRST