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A momentous milestone

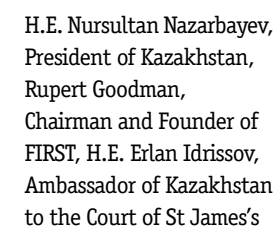
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN TO THE UNITED KINGDOM



The term ‘diplomatic relations’ does not perhaps do justice to the strength of ties between Kazakhstan and the UK. The strategic partnership between our countries is strong and enduring, and only looks set to grow further in the years to come. It is institutionalised in the form of the Strategic Dialogue – a platform for high-level political exchange. The latest meeting of the Strategic Dialogue happened this November when UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, sat down with Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, in the course of his visit to London.

Nothing has demonstrated the partnership between Kazakhstan and the UK better than the summer of this year, when, amongst the millions of visitors to EXPO-2017 in our capital city Astana, a number of high-profile British figures were proudly in attendance. This included Foreign Office minister Sir Alan Duncan and International Trade minister Greg Hands. At EXPO, we also hosted a major business delegation from the City of London, led by The Lord Mayor of the City of London. We were also honoured to welcome HRH the Duke of Gloucester who formally opened the stunning British Pavilion.

EXPO may have only lasted for a single summer, but I know that its impact will be felt for a long time to come. The modern venue is now becoming home to



The strong relations between our countries will be very much in evidence, as English will be the language of the AIFC, and it will have a special legal regime based on English Common Law. As well as being vital aspects of a modern financial centre, I know these things will make our British friends feel very much at home!

Much has been written recently about the growth of the resurgence of the Silk Road and the ongoing Belt and Road Initiative. This is of course the development of new land routes between Europe and China, speeding up travel time for goods between East and West. Kazakhstan is fortunate to be at the heart of this initiative. New rail and road infrastructure has been created across our country, making us a vital link at the heart of global trade. You may have noted recently that a freight train has travelled from China all the way to the UK and back. This was only made possible by major investment across several countries, not least Kazakhstan. As companies around the world are discovering, Kazakhstan is rapidly becoming the ideal gateway to the vast East Asian markets. Added to the fact that Kazakhstan comes 35th out of 185 economies in the World Bank's Doing Business Report 2017, it is clear to see why we are becoming the ideal place to invest.

As important as trade and investment may be, there is of course more to our relationship than just a close economic partnership. It is also a priority for me to promote and introduce more people to Kazakhstan's rich culture and heritage. It gave me enormous pleasure to host London's recent Kazakh Arts Festival to mark the 75th birthday of our distinguished writer and playwright, Dulat Issabekov. It was wonderful to see so many people enjoy his works.

Following on from the success of that festival, I very much look forward to bringing more cultural events to the UK. This will allow more people to experience some of our world-class talents for themselves.

While Kazakhstan and the UK have stood in support of one another over the past 25 years, it is vital that we make these connections even stronger. A top priority for Britain is rightly to maximise the benefits of its upcoming position outside the European Union. I know that as the UK steers a new path, Kazakhstan and its people will remain a strong and reliable partner. **F**