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## 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

# Showcasing bilateral co-operation

By RT HON CHARLES HENDRY

UK COMMISSIONER ASTANA EXPO 2017



THE RT HON CHARLES HENDRY was Commissioner of the UK Pavilion at EXPO 2017. In November 2012 Hendry became the Prime Ministerial Trade Envoy to Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. He was Shadow Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change from 2008 until 2010 when he was appointed Minister of State for the Department of Energy and Climate Change, serving until 2012. He was also the Conservative MP for Wealden.

The UK was delighted to participate in Astana EXPO 2017 in the year that we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between the UK and Kazakhstan. We welcomed the focus of this years EXPO on the important issue of future energy.

The decision for Astana to bid to host EXPO 2017 was an ambitious one, but for all of us who took part, either as participants or visitors, it was a remarkable success and a very positive experience. The EXPO site itself was an extraordinary, visionary piece of architecture, which is a worthy addition to the global structures that have been created for EXPOs since the first Great Exhibition in London in 1851. It was completed on time and functioned superbly with 5 million visitors during the three months of EXPO.

The United Kingdom was one of the first countries to commit to participating in EXPO 2017, confirmed by Trade Minister Lord Maude when he visited Astana in 2015 and signed off during the visit of His Excellency President Nursultan Nazarbayev to London in November 2015. With one of the largest pavilions, we were able to demonstrate our commitment and we were delighted to be awarded the Silver Medal for Exhibition Design by the International Judging Panel of the Bureau International des Expositions.

In part, our participation was about the focus on Future Energy. As the world population and urbanisation continues to grow, so does the demand on the earth's finite natural energy sources. Meeting this demand requires a global effort. The UK take seriously its role in addressing the environmental, economic and social challenges which

sustainable energy production raises.

However, it was equally about the importance of our relationship with Kazakhstan, which was consolidated during the visit of Prime Minister David Cameron in 2013, when he became the first serving British Prime Minister to visit since Independence.

Today, that relationship is as good as it has ever been. With the UK as one of the largest investors in Kazakhstan and with thousands of British ex-pats working there, it is a country of immense commercial importance and opportunity for the UK, and one where the government is committed to further developing that relationship.

The UK's expertise across a range of technologies and services makes us a business partner of choice. And, via the recent discovery of wonder material graphene, the UK is leading a new wave of scientific breakthroughs. Its potential, is certain to play a crucial role in the storage and conductivity of energy – creating new possibilities for the way future generations live their lives.

One of the strengths of the UK pavilion was the number of young Kazakh guides and support personnel that we employed, and regularly commented upon as some of the best and most helpful guides in any pavilion! This focus on the outstanding capabilities of the young people of Kazakhstan builds on the success of the excellent Bolashak scholarship programme, which has brought so many of the brightest young Kazakhs to study in the UK.

We were delighted that HRH the Duke of Gloucester led the UK delegation EXPO 2017 and the formal ceremonies on UK National Day; followed by a financial services delegation led by the Rt Hon the Lord Mayor of the City of London, focussing on how the City of London can help make a success of the new Astana International Financial Centre, which now takes over the EXPO site. Our commitment was further evidenced by the visits of Trade Minister Greg Hands and Foreign Office Minister, Sir Alan Duncan.

For all of us who were there from the UK, EXPO 2017 will long remain in our memories as a wonderful showcase for Kazakhstan, and Astana in particular, and the tremendous welcome and warmth of the people of Kazakhstan.

I join my colleagues in the DIT and the British Embassy in Astana, in welcoming this FIRST publication to mark the 25th Anniversary of UK-Kazakhstan diplomatic relations, and look forward to ever strengthening cooperation between our two countries.



Rt Hon Greg Hands MP and Rt Hon Charles Hendry at the UK Pavilion, Astana Expo 2017