

Almaty, the Republic of Kazakhstan  
April 27-28, 2010

Roundtable: NATO's Partnership with Kazakhstan

April 27, 2010  
12.00-13.30  
InterContinental hotel, Abai meeting room

Organised by: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Since the end of the Cold War, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has transformed itself from an organization directed solely at the protection of its members from a Soviet threat, to a growing, more flexible Alliance designed to foster stability and security by reaching out and developing relations with countries and organizations that previously fell outside its purview. Given the history and old animosities, it is no surprise that the enlargement of NATO and its partnerships in post-Soviet space have been considered by many to be controversial.

Perhaps nowhere is this more true than in Central Asia. Since the early nineties, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Kyrgyz Republic have all taken part in NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP), a programme which is designed to assist participating nations in attaining NATO standards in a broad spectrum of security-related areas. While each partner nation determines its own level of participation in the PfP, given the obvious differences between the five countries and the diversity of outside interests, influences and perspectives on Central Asia, NATO activities and relations in the region are welcomed by some, and interpreted as intrusive by others.

Furthermore, given the ISAF operation in Afghanistan, NATO partnerships in Central Asia have garnered increased attention. All five countries in the region have offered the NATO mission various kinds of logistical support, as well as bilateral aid packages for Afghanistan. Additionally, NATO has sought the input and opinion of its Central Asian partners regarding the operation in Afghanistan, and has encouraged increased support, based on common interests, in achieving peace and stability for their neighbour in the South. As underscored in the Final Communiqué of the International Conference on Afghanistan, held in London at the end of January this year, Regional Organizations too can play an important role supporting enduring security in Afghanistan.

Kazakhstan has, for many years, been NATO's most active partner in Central Asia, engaging in the full spectrum of PfP activities and maintaining a high-level dialogue with NATO officials. In addition, with Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship in 2010, communication and coordination between NATO and Kazakhstan is further developing. Moreover, Kazakhstan has underlined its support for the ISAF mission, recently signing an agreement with the Alliance regarding ground transport of non-lethal items to Afghanistan, and opening discussions about more substantial contributions to the mission.

Given the ever-changing nature of NATO's partnerships with Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian nations, the ongoing operations in Afghanistan, and the diverse opinions about the Alliance's relationships in the region, this roundtable offers a unique opportunity to explore some of the most important topics currently facing Central Asia and the international community with high-level representatives from NATO and the Ministry of Defence of Kazakhstan.

Roundtable: Prospects for Kazakhstan's Chairmanship of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC)

April 27, 2010  
14.00-15.30  
InterContinental hotel, Abai meeting room

Organised by: The Institute of Global Economics and Politics  
at the Fund of the First President of Kazakhstan

The decision that Kazakhstan should chair the OIC in 2011 is evidence of the recognition of Kazakhstan's actual successes. It is important to highlight that the decision is largely the result of the high trust and authority that Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, commands in the region, and the result of his active international stand on maintaining international and regional security and promoting constructive East-West relations based on confidence and freedom from conflict.

The roundtable discussion will be an opportunity to express preliminary views and opinions on the prospects for Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the OIC. It is intended to be a serious and independent dialogue between the most influential politicians, representatives of Kazakh and international academia, and international organisations. The focus will be on the "dialogue of civilisations" between East and West as one of the priorities and goals of the CICA, OSCE and OIC in current international relations.

The following topics are planned for discussion at the roundtable:

- "New vision" of the OIC: transformations of the Arab world given changes in the world order;
- Results of the 40-year history of the OIC: mechanisms to revive relationships;
- Prospects of relationships between OIC and LAS (League of Arab States);
- The role of the OIC in resolving international security issues;
- The agenda of Kazakhstan as chair of the OIC;
- Prospects for the economic development of the OIC member states: the role of the Islamic Development Bank.

Roundtable: The Customs Union: Issues and Prospects

April 27, 2010

16.00-17.30

InterContinental hotel, Abai meeting room

Organised by: The Fund of the First President of Kazakhstan

In the present stage of the development of the global community, no nation can remain aloof from global or regional integration without sacrificing its own interests. International integration suggests increased industrial, scientific and technical cooperation, free trade zones, and customs, economic and monetary unions.

At the end of 2009 during the meeting of the EurAsEC Interstate Council held in Minsk, the presidents of three countries - Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia - signed a document, authorising a phased launch of the Customs Union starting 1st January 2010.

Almost four months have now passed since the launch of the Customs Union. The three states have introduced a common customs tariff, a common range of products to be imported/exported, as well as bans and restrictions on the movements of particular products.

On 1st July 2010 the Customs Code, a final step towards the Customs Union, will be enforced. It is expected that the Customs Union will start operating in fact on 1st July 2010. By that time all non-tariff regulation (sanitary, veterinary, phytosanitary) between the countries should be abolished, and clearance will be done on the outer borders. It is planned to finalise procedures for setting up a common customs zone by the summer of 2011, and a common economic zone will be set up by 2012.

However, the members of the Customs Union are facing organisational and economic challenges that are inevitable in the initial stage of any integration initiative when national interests are at stake. Analysts note the lack of certainty in understanding how the system will be operating, insufficient involvement of non-public organisations, as well as poor coverage in the media.

Efforts are being currently made in order to tackle such issues as unification of standards, mechanisms to distribute customs duties, procedure for agreeing on customs and tariff policies, the exchange of data to track movements of goods across borders and within the three countries, issues related to re-export and others.

At the same time, parties to integration are making efforts to set up a common economic zone, and implement numerous programmes as part of the EurAsEC.

The following topics are planned for discussion at the roundtable:

1. Processes and stages of harmonisation of documents underlying the Customs Union.
2. Accession of the Customs Union member states to the WTO.
3. The Customs Union as a new step towards better export potential and competitiveness of domestic commodity producers.
4. The Customs Union and foreign economic policy towards third countries.
5. Economic advantages and disadvantages of the Customs Union.