

Event Report

**A Global Kazakhstan  
for an Interconnected World**

EIAS Briefing Seminar

*4 December 2018*

With Kazakhstan about to conclude its two years stint as non-permanent member of UNSC, its efforts in strengthening global security and furthering conflict resolution have confirmed its status as a key regional leader and internationally recognized global partner.

Within the framework of the UNSC, the country determined seven priorities that identify the country's main concerns in the realms of regional and global security.

In the context of the UNSC, Kazakhstan's non-proliferation credentials in combination with its active involvement in peacekeeping operations have accelerated the country's transformation into a leading actor in the field of global security cooperation.

## **Welcome speech by**

### **Mr Axel Goethals, CEO, European Institute for Asian Studies (EIAS)**

Mr Axel Goethals opened the meeting by reflecting on the legacy of the Republic of Kazakhstan's two years as a non-permanent member at the UN Security Council.

As Kazakhstan is the most active country in Central Asia when it comes to designing multilateral security strategies that seek to face regional and global insecurities, Kazakhstan has emerged as a well-versed dialogue partner for several international actors. Kazakhstan's establishment of a national humanitarian agency (i.e., KAZaid) operating in high-risk areas such as Afghanistan, Lebanon and Eritrea, as well as Kazakhstan's involvement in the Syria talks between the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey provide prime examples of the country's renewed global engagement in the security domain.

Mr Goethals concluded his remarks by appraising the role played by Kazakhstan's geography as a landlocked country in Kazakhstan's formulation of a strategy on multilateral security and economic cooperation. It was suggested that the deepening of regional connectivity is deeply tied to the difficulties associated with Kazakhstan's geographic location.

## **Panel discussion**

### **H.E. Mr Yerzhan ASHIKBAYEV, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Government of Kazakhstan**

His Excellency Mr Yerzhan Ashikbayev opened his remarks by detailing the efforts Kazakhstan devotes to addressing the challenges that accompany its status as a landlocked country. His Excellency noted that Kazakhstan's border with the Russian Federation is the longest international border in the world, covering 6,846 kilometres. Thus, Kazakhstan spared no effort when deepening cooperation with its principal neighbouring states – i.e., the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China.

With regards to Kazakhstan's non-permanent membership to the UN Security Council, His Excellency quoted the policy address delivered by President Nursultan Nazarbayev to

the UN Security Council entitled "Kazakhstan's Concept Vision on Sustaining Global Partnership for Secure, Just and Prosperous World".

In this address, President Nazarbayev formulated the guidelines Kazakhstan applied during its membership in the UN Security Council to promote a rule-based global order consistent with the UN Charter. These guidelines are rooted in the four principles of multilateralism, transparency, impartiality, cooperation and confidence-building.

Furthermore, His Excellency presented the seven priorities identified by Kazakhstan as the key objectives of its non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council:

1. Achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons;
2. Creation of a common framework to combat regional and global conflicts;
3. Establishment of a model zone for regional peace, security and cooperation in Central Asia and Afghanistan;
4. Increase of global engagement to counter international terrorism and extremism;
5. Promotion of peace and security in Africa;
6. Consolidation of the security-development nexus;
7. Adaptation and advancement of the system of the UN Security Council.

Due to the alphabetical-order rule governing the UN Security Council, Kazakhstan was selected to act as chairman only one time. Still, His Excellency argued that under the chairmanship of Kazakhstan two signature meetings were held.

The first meeting dealt with the issues of non-proliferation, weapons of mass-destruction (WMDs) and confidence-building measures. As His Excellency explained in detail, this meeting highlighted that Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and preventive diplomacy tools are viable methods to ensure the resolution of long-lasting conflicts. The Statement issued by the President of the UN Security Council at the end of the meeting outlined comprehensive conflict prevention strategies, such as preventive deployment, mediation, peacekeeping, post-conflict peace building and accountability measures. His Excellency emphasised that, during this meeting, the issue of the non-proliferation of WMDs was included in a document of the UN Security Council for the first time in the history of the organization.

The second meeting dealt with the issue of building regional partnerships in Afghanistan and Central Asia in order to encourage security and development. His Excellency noted that, at the meeting, the attendance of representatives from Central Asian countries was extremely high.

At the end of the meeting, the President of the UN Security Council issued a Statement which placed under the spotlight the advancement of regional and interregional cooperation to achieve stability in Afghanistan and Central Asia. His Excellency added

that this document is consistent with the positive pattern of development that Central Asian nations had been following. Despite being one of the least integrated regions in the world, Central Asia is currently enjoying a renaissance of regional cooperation, thanks to the interconnectedness and linkages amongst Central Asian nations.

Moreover, His Excellency pointed to the adoption of a shared Code of Conduct against terrorism that Kazakhstan supported during its membership in the UN Security Council. His Excellency reminded the audience that three years prior to Kazakhstan's membership in the UN Security Council, President Nazarbayev stressed the need for the establishment of an international coalition of partner countries against terrorism and extremism, acting under the banner of the United Nations. Indeed, counterterrorism remains the domain of several country-blocks. To counter this inefficient division of labour, His Excellency purported that Kazakhstan provided the idea of creating a basis for cooperation in the realm of counterterrorism that has been welcomed by more than seventy-four countries so far.

Amongst additional achievements, His Excellency pointed to the endeavours of Kazakhstan in terms of lifting the sanctions on Eritrea in order to facilitate the peace process in the Horn of Africa.

As a newly elected member to the UN Security Council, Kazakhstan started a symbolic tradition that His Excellency hopes the Kingdom of Belgium will keep alive. Indeed, Kazakhstan held a formal flag-change ceremony that was attended by representatives of all members of the UN Security Council.

In sum, His Excellency repeated that, during its membership in the UN Security Council, Kazakhstan mainly considered three topics: the security-development nexus, the regional approach, and the principle of "Delivering as One".

His Excellency concluded his remarks by stressing that Kazakhstan seeks to share its experience with the Kingdom of Belgium in order to ensure continuity in the work of the UN Security Council.

## **Mr Andrejs MAMIKINS, Member of the European Parliament**

Mr Andrejs Mamikins opened his remarks by stressing the role played by Kazakhstan as a political, economic and cultural actor in global politics. The European Parliament, the diplomatic mission of Kazakhstan, and the national media have enjoyed closer cooperation over the past five years.

As Mr Mamikins argued, Kazakhstan had become a visible actor for the European Parliament. Kazakhstan's election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, its modernization as well as its role as a key regional player inspired this renewed attention towards the country.

As Kazakhstan's strategy for modernization does not focus on energy resources but relies on development, Kazakhstan has become economically stronger, thus attracting the interest of several international partners, including the European Parliament. Mr Mamikins explained how Kazakhstan's modernization plan prioritises technological development, business, economic stability, and institutional reform.

Mr Mamikins paid special attention to the issue of human capital and social reform. Since modernization and globalization stimulate both opportunities and challenges, Mr Mamikins expressed his hopes for Kazakhstan to be prepared to face these as they arise. For instance, from Mr Mamikins viewpoint, the job market should develop into a state where it produces stable and rewarding jobs, thus avoiding the growth of precarious and low-paid jobs.

Mr Mamikins continued by highlighting the risk Kazakhstan faces in terms of the widening gap between rural and urban development. Modernization should be beneficial to all, and the country's workforce should be empowered, Mr Mamikins contended.

Moreover, Mr Mamikins provided a wider definition of human capital. Human capital does not only refer to education, employment and assistance, but also to human rights. International actors, including the European Parliament, are mainly interested in Kazakhstan's growth with regards to the country's democratic and human rights standards.

To conclude, Mr Mamikins pointed to Kazakhstan's cultural diplomacy. Kazakhstan and the European Union have impressive cultural heritages. Mr Mamikins hopes the two actors will be more responsive to calls for cultural diplomacy, as culture is, from the speaker's viewpoint, the common denominator of interconnectivity.

**Dr Rory KEANE, Head of the UN Liaison Office for Peace and Security (UNLOPS)**

Dr Rory Keane opened his remarks by stressing the close relation that the UN and Kazakhstan developed during the country's non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council.

Dr Keane continued his remarks by noting that Kazakhstan's experience exemplifies the key role played by multilateral cooperation in countering global security challenges. Dr Keane contended that Kazakhstan's agenda is valuable to the UN Security Council as it comprised of a series of broad objectives and of a narrower approach on two targets.

The first target aims to promote a regional approach that connects Central Asia and Afghanistan. Dr Keane gave as testimony the visit of representatives from the UN Security Council to Kabul in January 2018. Dr Keane further thanked Kazakhstan for the country's support to the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNCCRA). The regional centre supports the Five Countries to achieve different endeavours, such as strengthening diplomacy and managing natural resources.

The second target comprises Kazakhstan's activities in terms of trust and peace building in the region. Dr Keane brought the audiences attention to Kazakhstan's work on the UN Security Council in the fields of non-proliferation and disarmament in the sphere of WMDs. Moreover, Kazakhstan's mediation had led to the adoption of an international commemoration day against nuclear tests, Dr Keane continued.

In conclusion, Dr Keane touched upon Kazakhstan's efforts in the fields of both trans-boundary water management, and tolerance and religious freedom. These efforts are manifested in the founding of the Congress of the Leaders of the World and Traditional Religions and the support to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the 2017 EXPO on energy held in Astana.

In addition, Dr Keane reported on the work Kazakhstan did on counterterrorism. The UN Strategy on Counterterrorism relies on four pillars: structural causes, triggers, strategies to counter and prevent violent extremism. As shown by the Dushanbe Declaration, the support of Kazakhstan to the UN Strategy is vital.

**Mr Bert VERSMESSEN, Coordinator for UN Security Council Membership,  
Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Mr Bert Versmessen opened his remarks by underlining that Belgium has been studying the chairmanship of Kazakhstan in January 2018. The insights offered by Kazakhstan on conflict prevention have been relevant for Belgium's preparatory work.

Mr Versmessen debated that multilateralism is nowadays under pressure. For instance, the meeting held by China's Presidency at the UN Security Council in November 2018 pointed to the role of multilateralism in non-proliferation, trade, climate change, accountability and human rights. Mr Versmessen continued by stating that Belgium has the opportunity to demonstrate that multilateralism works.

Another key point addressed by Mr Versmessen deals with the security environment of the European Union. Rising tensions in the immediate neighbourhood of the European Union are raising concerns within the EU.

Belgium is aware that its membership in the UN Security Council is a mandate. Thus, Belgium has the duty to ensure peace and security, as those are the key objectives of the UN Security Council. Moreover, as the UN Security Council is an instance of multilateral cooperation, Belgium seeks to make the Council as effective as possible.

In terms of substance, Mr Versmessen summarized Belgium's agenda by means of three keywords: prevention, protection and performance. Whilst prevention refers to conflict prevention activities, protection relates to Belgium's human rights standards and counterterrorism policies. Conversely, performance refers to various forms of peacekeeping operations.

Mr Versmessen also noted that Belgium plans to foster dialogue between the UN Security Council and other UN agencies, such as the UN Human Rights Council.

In terms of tasks, Belgium has been given the duty to work on the connection between children and conflict, facilitate relations with Iran, and enable a functioning humanitarian assistance programme in Syria. This last task, Mr Versmessen specified, is shared by Belgium, Germany and Kuwait.

Mr Versmessen concluded his remarks by anticipating that Belgium is particularly keen to work on the connection between security, climate and hydric resources.

**Mr Boris IAROCHEVITCH, Head of Central Asia Division, European External Action Service**

Mr Boris Iarochevitch opened his remarks by highlighting Kazakhstan's efforts to advance conflict resolution techniques, especially in relation to the Astana Peace Process.

Mr Iarochevitch praised the request of President Nazarbayev to the United States, the EU, the People's Republic of China, and the Russian Federation not to close the dialogue on regional and global security after Kazakhstan's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council ends. An open dialogue can be maintained by using Astana as a forum for the entire region. Mr Iarochevitch then revealed that the European External Action Service (EEAS) plans to hold expert-level meetings to devise a strategy along these lines.

Mr Iarochevitch pointed to March 2018 as a milestone date for cooperation in the region, when the first Central Asia Summit was held. Topics such as regional challenges, prevention of violent extremism, water management, and climate change were debated extensively in an effort to boost intra-regional trade and promote sustainable connectivity. Moreover, Mr Iarochevitch identified in the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea and the environmental-oriented summit in Turkmenistan two additional events that underline Kazakhstan's primary role in the region.

Mr Iarochevitch also acknowledged Kazakhstan's efforts in Afghanistan. Indeed, the Tashkent Conference, attended by High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Ms Federica Mogherini, enjoyed the full support of EEAS.

Kazakhstan's approach coincides with the EU global strategy, Mr Iarochevitch noted. The European Union is currently drafting its new strategy for Central Asia, which represents an opportunity for the EU to deepen multilateral cooperation in the region. The EU Strategy takes into account national development plans and the interests of Central Asian nations, Mr Iarochevitch explained. In this regard, the speaker pointed to an EU-Central Asia Meeting held on 30 November in Brussels between representatives from the EU and ministers from the five Central Asian nations. This meeting presented new insights for the EU Strategy that will be adopted in May 2019.

Mr Iarochevitch added that the EU Strategy on Central Asia can draw from the framework of disarmament and non-proliferation to promote greater levels of interregional cooperation. Still, Mr Iarochevitch continued, connectivity remains one of the pillars on which the Strategy rests as stressed by the "Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of

the Regions and the European Investment Bank on Connecting Europe and Asia: Building blocks for an EU Strategy” and “the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)”. In terms of bilateral relations between the EU and Kazakhstan, Mr Iarochevitch pointed to the partnership and cooperation agreement signed between the two actors. Kazakhstan’s example is currently being followed by other Central Asian nations – i.e., Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

## **Q&A**

During the Q&A a critical question was raised regarding the detention of Uygur and Kazakh minorities in the People’s Republic of China. His Excellency Mr Yerzhan Ashikbayev answered this question by stating that throughout Kazakhstan’s membership of the UN Security Council, only one case of human rights issues were raised– this being North Korea. The UN Human Rights Council is the main agency in charge of these issues within the UN constellation, His Excellency continued. Further, His Excellency quoted an extract from the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on China, which read that Kazakhstan has been employing “a diplomatic toolbox to address the issue in a constructive way”. His Excellency argued that the issue is highly debated in the country, as Kazakhstan estimates that 1,6 billion Kazakh nationals live on the territory of the People’s Republic of China. His Excellency stressed that these issues are generally addressed by complying with national legislation. Citizens of Kazakhstan are under the legislation of Kazakhstan, whilst citizens of the People’s Republic of China, despite belonging to the Kazakh ethnic minority, are subjected to the People’s Republic of China’s national legislation. To conclude, His Excellency repeated that Kazakhstan will continue to work of these issues along with the People’s Republic of China in an extremely constructive way.

*Report prepared by Giulia Sciorati, Visiting Fellow from the School of International Studies, University of Trento.*