



A bi-weekly online publication of  
the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of  
the Republic of Kazakhstan

[www.mfa.kz](http://www.mfa.kz)

Issue # 176

Friday, 19 August 2011



## **Senate Elections Fill One Third of Seats in Parliament's Upper House**

Members of local councils voted to select their regions' representatives in Astana

## **Kazakh OIC Presidency Contributes to Establishing Relief Fund for Somalia**

OIC's emergency meeting in Istanbul appeals to gather at least US\$ 350 million

## **Restoration of Unique Ecosystems Requires Nontrivial Solutions**

International Fund for Aral Sea's Chair speaks on prospects of reservoir's revival

## **Huge New Central Mosque to Become Capital Landmark**

Prayer-house capable of hosting 5,000 believers, to be completed by Dec 2011

### **Also in the News**

### **Things to Watch**

## **Senate Elections Fill One Third of Seats in Parliament's Upper House**



Building of the Senate of Kazakh Parliament

*Photo from Kursiv Newspaper*

Kazakhstan's 2011 Senate elections were held today on August 19 with 16 of the 47 seats in the upper house of Parliament being contested. Preliminary figures indicate that the overall turnout of voters reached 96.6% (the Kazakh Senate is elected by deputies of maslikhats - local councils). In the election race 39 registered deputy nominees ran for a seat in Senate.

Following the elections Chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC) Kuandyk Turgankulov briefed on the first results of the electors' voting.

"According to current data of election commissions of the regions and cities of Almaty and Astana, of 3,283 Maslikhat Deputies, included in the list of voters, 96.6% parliamentary electors took part in the voting process", Turgankulov says. He also noted that the elections in all regions are declared valid.

Later this day "Nur Otan" Party's (the country's dominant party) press release announced: "All the 16 Deputies that won a seat in Parliament, are the members of "Nur Otan" Party".

In the same press release the first Deputy Chairman of "Nur Otan", Party Nurlan Nigmatullin added that the absolute majority of the candidates nominated by their party once again won a landslide victory.

The CEC member Tatyana Okhlopko reported at the briefing that no law violations occurred during the election process.

“The election commissions have not recorded any complaints or appeals from observers and other participants of the Senate elections”, she says.

The monitoring of the process of voting and counting carried out by 371 registered observers, 33 authorised representatives of the deputy candidates, 52 observers from foreign states and international organizations, 29 from political parties, 37 from NGOs, and 220 representatives were of local and foreign media.

The final elections outcome will be announced next week.

“The electoral commissions of regions and the cities of Almaty and Astana are due to introduce the Protocols on or prior to August 20. According to electoral legislation the CEC is obliged to reveal the final election results based on the Protocols on August 25 and release a statement in the mass media not later than August 28”, Turgankulov added.

In accordance with the Constitution of Kazakhstan senators are elected on an alternative basis (at least two candidates for a parliamentary mandate). The majority of candidates represented “Nur Otan” Party, the ruling party, with 25 candidates, two candidates from the parties “Ak Zhol” and “Aul” (Village) respectively, 8 independent candidates and other 4 ones did not indicate their party affiliation.

The upper house of Parliament has 47 seats, of these 15 are appointed by President and 32 are elected by parliamentary electors - members of maslikhats (local councils) from the 16 regions of the country (14 regional centres, and cities of Almaty and Astana).

Senators are elected for a period of six years. Every three years a part of senators are elected (16 Deputies). Each MP must be at least 30 years old and should be a citizen of Kazakhstan. The last senate elections were held in 2008.

**66**  
**The upper house of Parliament has 47 seats, of these 15 are appointed by President and 32 are elected by parliamentary electors – members of maslikhats (local councils).**

[Back to Contents](#)

## **Kazakh OIC Presidency Contributes to Establishing Relief Fund for Somalia**



Kazakh Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov shakes hands with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The third from the left – OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu.

Photo by Ilyas Omarov

A common relief fund of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member countries will be established on Kazakhstan’s initiative to help the Somali people on the edge of a food crisis. This was announced on August 17 by Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister and Chairman of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) Yerzhan Kazykhanov, following an OIC emergency meeting in Istanbul, during which member-countries discussed ways to resolve the humanitarian and political crisis in Somalia.

On August 17, Ministerial Executive Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held an emergency meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, to decide on the possible ways of rendering humanitarian and financial assistance by the OIC member

states to help overcome the crisis in one of the poorest countries of the Muslim world - Somalia.

Kazakh Foreign Minister Yerzhan Kazykhanov chaired the meeting which was attended by Somalia’s President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan, OIC

Secretary General Ekhmeleddin Ihsanoglu, as well ministers and top government officials from 36 participating countries of the Organisation.

Today the OIC, which plays an important role in responding to humanitarian crisis in its zone of responsibility, is the only international organisation capable of delivering food and medicine to the entire population of Somalia.

Addressing the meeting, Kazakh Foreign Minister noted the famine in Somalia has reached catastrophic scales. Two decades of instability and the recent drought have caused a serious humanitarian crisis in the country.

“The problem is not limited to Somalia. In East Africa, 12 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance – in other words they are on the verge of starvation. In Ethiopia alone, there are four and a half million people without sufficient food and water. Refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia are overflowing,” he said.

In his speech, Yerzhan Kazykhanov mentioned the particular urgency of the proposals of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev to create a food security system within the OIC, which was announced in June during the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the OIC CFM.

“As we discussed at the recent Ministerial in Astana, more attention needs to be devoted to food and water security throughout the Ummah. Let me stress the validity of proposal of President of Kazakhstan to devise an OIC system of food security. We believe that along with issues of immediate relief we must think of building long term drought resilience”, Kazykhanov underscored.

In addition, the head of the Kazakh Foreign Ministry said the decision by Astana Ministerial to establish the Trust Fund for Somalia offers a possibility to pursue four middle term goals identified by OIC – food security, health, access to drinking water and economic reconstruction.

Kazykhanov also highly commended the OIC Secretary General’s proposal to launch a wide public campaign during the Holy month of Ramadan aimed at raising donations to help the people of Somalia.

In his words, this will become a true manifestation of Islamic solidarity not only among governments of the OIC member states, but among ordinary Muslims.

“I applaud the initiative taken by the OIC Coalition for Relief. I echo the appeal to the Islamic Ummah made by Secretary-General Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu to join the OIC alliance to relieve Somalia”, Kazykhanov contended.

Regarding the issue of political solution in Somalia, the Minister said the OIC should promote and intensify international efforts to stabilise the political and improve the humanitarian situation in the country.

“At the same time, we need to consider how the OIC can play a more active role in addressing the underlining vulnerabilities that have caused this human tragedy”, Kazykhanov said.

Furthermore, Kazakh Foreign Minister called on the OIC to encourage greater international efforts to stabilize the situation in Somalia: for the sake of bringing peace to this long-troubled country; improving the humanitarian situation; fighting piracy; and promoting regional stability. The resolution on the situation in Somalia adopted at the 38<sup>th</sup> session of the CFM in Astana contains a number of concrete proposals in this regard.



**Today the OIC is the only international organisation capable of delivering food and medicine to the entire population of Somalia.**

“It is worth recalling that in the Astana Declaration, OIC Member States called for efforts to strengthen and enhance the role of the OIC in conflict prevention and resolution. Somalia would be a good place to start. This is a test of how the OIC can respond to a crisis, and how we can promote Peace, Cooperation and Development in one of the poorest

and most unstable Muslim countries in the world”, Kazykhanov stressed.

Following the results of the meeting, the Istanbul Declaration was adopted aimed at mobilising humanitarian and financial assistance to the countries of East Africa and implementing the OIC special assistance programme to the people of Somalia amounting to more than US\$ 350 million.

While in Istanbul, Yerzhan Kazykhanov also held a number of bilateral meetings, including with Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Somalia’s President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Zalmay Rassoul, Secretary General of the Turkic Council Halil Akıncı, and OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu.

[Back to Contents](#)

## Restoration of Unique Ecosystems Requires Nontrivial Solutions



Sagit Ibatullin

*Photo from Aef.kz*

Over the past few years, Kazakhstan, despite facing rather serious economic challenges, has become the principal country to plunge into vigorous activity to save the Aral Sea, formerly the world’s fourth largest lake with an area of 68,000 square kilometres. Executive Committee Chairman of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) Sagit Ibatullin shared his vision for the future of the Aral Sea and the next steps to be taken in this direction in an interview with the *Liter* national daily newspaper on August 18.

At the moment the former large and magnificent lake retained only 9 percent of its waters or nearly 17 percent of its surface. The Aral Sea today has split into several separate basins, of which the most notable are the so-called Small Sea in the north and the Large Sea in the south.

“Even if we hypothetically reject the idea of water withdrawals from the rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya, the original water level of the Aral Sea will restore no less than in a century. That is why the main task in the near future is to maintain the existing water level without relying on delusive predictions. Kazakhstan has demonstrated the way it may be done, which was widely acknowledged by the international community”, Ibatullin said.

“Due to the construction of the Kokaral dam we have managed to retain the Kazakh part of the Small Sea. This several kilometres long barrage supports the basin, preventing the waters of Syr Darya from flowing nowhere. The salinity of the Small Sea has dropped to acceptable levels, allowing the local fishermen to start fishing again, thus raising their standard of living”, he noted.

“The first phase of the project “Regulation of the Syr Darya riverbed and the Northern Aral Sea” is almost complete. This is an important, however, not the last stage. We are facing a number of other different, but not less difficult tasks, including working out further steps and engineering solutions, keeping in mind that Kazakhstan’s level of water supply is going to deteriorate in the future. The challenges also involve finding the most efficient way to invest into the project the money that will be allocated by the World Bank and the government of Kazakhstan to finally stabilise the Northern Aral Sea”.

All these issues have become the centre of attention at various roundtable meetings and workshops at many different levels, involving the work of state bodies, scientific-research centres and water management institutions, as well as international, regional and non-governmental organisations and experts.

As stated by the Head of the IFAS Executive Committee, out of the suggested alternatives on restoration of the economically important Northern Aral Sea only two deserve due attention. The first includes the creation of a 48 meter single-level sea (in line with the Baltic system of heights). The second was initiated by the IFAS and implies the creation of a two-level sea with preservation of the Small Sea at the level of 42 meters and filling a 50-meter pool of the Saryshyganak bay through the separate channel from Syr Darya.

“The future of the Northern Aral Sea was in the spotlight of the working group meeting, which took place in Almaty last month and was initiated by the IFAS Executive Committee and the Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture’s Committee for Water Resources. Following the appropriate analysis and calculations were made, the second option of creating the two-level sea was recommended to the government of Kazakhstan as the most efficient and stable project in all aspects”, Ibatullin said.

“We believe the stabilisation of water level near the town of Aralsk and other residential areas, with regard to the high variability in the river’s water flow, might be ensured only through separation of the Small Sea. This implies separation of the Saryshyganak bay from the Kokaral by building a blocking dam and a water route regulating the water supply to the future reservoir of Syr Darya. The new dam will raise the water level of Saryshyganak up to 50 meters, following which the water will completely cover the dried bottom of the bay and extrude the saline waters through submerged intake. According to our estimates, this may take up to a decade and will let breeding valuable species of fish. The same method has been successfully used to demineralise the Lake Van in Turkey”.

In case the project is successfully implemented, there will appear the Saryshagan Sea, which will be more than 40 kilometres long with the maximum depth of nearly 11 meters. It will have a great impact both on the revival of fishing industry and improvement of socio-economic living conditions in the region. In addition, the project will open up new opportunities for the international ecotourism and take the infrastructure of the city to the new level, meeting the requirements of the new road transit corridor Western Europe-Western China.

“All of us are looking forward to see the former Aral Sea with its huge, deep waves rolling away to the horizon. The Aral Sea we all cherish the memory of, will never recover in the nearest future unless we attract the part of the river Ob, which was suggested by President Nazarbayev during his meeting with the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. This is, however, a long-term perspective.

Our proposal is based on the analysis of the current situation and is designed for the next 25 years. The suggested cascade control excludes any loss of Syr Darya waters and allows its complete control for the benefit of the local residents”, Sagit Ibatullin concluded.

“

**Sagit Ibatullin: The main task in the near future is to maintain the existing water level without relying on delusive predictions.**

[Back to Contents](#)

## Huge New Central Mosque to Become Capital Landmark



The largest mosque in Kazakhstan to accommodate more than 5,000 worshipers is being erected at an accelerated pace.

*Photo from the Astana Times Daily*

Although Kazakhstan is a secular state, the majority of its population follows Islam. Lately, the country has witnessed an increase in the number of the faithful and, consequently, of mosques. Kazakhstan has more than 2,200 mosques. This number will soon increase by one because Astana is building another mosque – and a spectacular one at that.

The first stones of the new Central Mosque were laid by President Nursultan Nazarbayev on June 29, 2009. It will be the largest in the country, with a capacity of 5,000 people. The design of the new building was chosen in an architectural competition that attracted 26 other entries. The Central Mosque will be in the north-eastern part of Astana near

other high-profile buildings such as the Palace of Independence, the Kazakh Yeli (Kazakh Nation) Monument and the Palace of Peace and Harmony.

The existing three mosques in Astana can no longer accommodate all the believers in the city, especially during Muslim holidays. Thus, the construction of the new mosque was a timely decision.

Sembol Construction, the Turkish company that built the tent-shaped Khan Shatyr entertainment centre, which quickly became one of Astana's favourite structures, began constructing the mosque in the summer of 2010. The project client is a corporate fund that is part of the Samruk Kazyna sovereign wealth fund.

Sembol's Chairman Aytekin Gultekin Tuffa said the cost of the mosque will come in at 10 billion tenge, or US\$ 70 million.

The winner of the international competition to design the mosque was the Sanar Company, he said. The general designer of the building is the local architect Sagyndyk Zhambolov.

A key feature of the design is that the main prayer hall will have the largest dome. As a whole, the mosque will be in Islamic style, although there will be some national touches to it, too. Thus, the building will blend a classical Islamic style with traditional Kazakh ornaments and other decorative elements.

The Central Mosque will consist of two sections. One will include the main building of the mosque itself and the other an adjacent vestibule area on a stylobate. The main section will have three floors, while the vestibule area will have two.

The building will cover 17,700 square metres while the entire complex covers 20,600 square metres.

The complex will include the mosque, a Quran reading hall, a teaching area, a restaurant and a cafe. There will also an imam's cabinet, a wedding room and other special areas.

**As a whole, the mosque will be in Islamic style, although there will be some national touches to it, too.**

The mosque will be symmetric.

The outer walls of its facade will be covered with natural stones, fibrous concrete, and light-coloured decorative plates, while its concrete domes will be covered with metal.

The top of the main dome will be 51 metres high and its diameter 28.1 metres. It will be surrounded by eight smaller domes with diameters of 10.5 metres. The diameter of the dome over the vestibule area will be 15.2 metres.

Four minarets will stand at the corners of the mosque, all of them at the same distance from the centre and 77 metres tall.

The area surrounding the mosque will be decorated with five fountains and several statues and equipped with modern conveniences. Planting of greenery, flowers and decorative lights to show the walls at night are also in plans. Roads and pavements will be covered with granite tile.

The Central Mosque will have entrances for worshippers on every side plus entrances for vehicles. There will be a special entrance for important guests on the southern side. The mosque area will have a parking lot with a capacity of 745 cars. Funds for the construction have come from donations. About 30 percent of the financing has been raised so far.

Construction of the Central Mosque is being done at an accelerated pace so its opening coincides with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence in December of this year. This unique new building will undoubtedly find a place in the hearts of Astana believers.

*This article by Venera Tugelbay was first published in The Astana Times newspaper on 29 June 2011.*

[Back to Contents](#)

## Also in the News:

- In his August 13 message dedicated to the forthcoming International Day against Nuclear Tests (August 29), UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said that this year's observance will mark the twentieth anniversary of the closure of the nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk. Having visited the place, Ban Ki-moon wanted to emphasise his support for the Government and people of Kazakhstan "as they continue to cope with the aftermath." In his message he also called upon all States to sign and ratify Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty as it would "reinforce the growing movement for a nuclear-weapon-free world."
- A closing ceremony of special tactical exercises Steppe Eagle - 2011 took place on August 18, the Ministry of Defence reported. According to First Deputy Minister - Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defence, Colonel-General Saken Zhasuzakov, during the two weeks the joint exercises, held by the Kazakh military along with colleagues from the USA, UK, Lithuania and Kyrgyzstan, have achieved the set objectives, including successful interaction in peacekeeping operations, improving practical skills of commanders, as well as overall improving the work and communication between them.
- At a military parade in Astana that will be held on the Constitution Day, August 30, 16 pieces of new military equipment will take part for the first time. These will include three heavy flamethrower systems, three tank support combat vehicles, and ten BTR-82 armoured personnel carriers. The equipment was purchased this year and just put into service in the Kazakhstan Army, Deputy Chief of the Kazakhstan Army Amanzhol Ospanov said on August 15. According to him, this year "139 pieces of equipment, including missile weapons, armours, and special equipment" will be used in the parade. In addition, the Air Defence forces of Kazakhstan will also take part in the event.
- Kazakhstan's Minister of Emergency Situations Vladimir Bozhko met with Director of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Rashid Halikov on August 17. During the meeting, the sides discussed issues of risk assessment and preparation for humanitarian response in Central Asia, the potential role of the Central Asian Coordination Centre for Emergency Response, further consolidation of the humanitarian community of Almaty city as a regional multilateral hub, as well as Kazakhstan's participation in such international organisations as the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC), and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG).
- The air fleet of Kazakhstan's Ministry for Emergency Situations will add 16 new helicopters by 2014, half of which will be of Eurocopter series to work on-route points and the rest will be Russian-made medical helicopters, Vice-Minister of Emergency Situations Valery Petrov announced on August 17. According to him, this year the country will open six on-route health centres to assist victims of road accidents. About 40 of such centres will be created in Kazakhstan by 2014.
- In the first half of 2011, Kazakhstan's foreign trade turnover made US\$ 61.5 billion, the Committee for Customs Control of the Ministry of Finance reported this week. Compared to the same period last year, the trade indicators rose by 44.7 percent. The exports amounted to US\$ 44.9 billion, making a 51.8 percent increase, and imports were US\$ 16.6 billion or a 28.4 percent increase. Foreign trade surplus grew to US\$28.3 billion from US\$16.6 billion in the same period of last year. Exports, predominantly oil and metals, rose by 51.8 percent year-on-year to US\$ 44.9 billion in January-June 2011, while imports rose by 28.4 percent and made US\$16.6 billion in the same comparison. Italy was Kazakhstan's largest export market in the period, contributing a 16.1 percent share of export revenues. China was second, with 15.5 percent, and Russia third with 9.1 percent. In addition, Russia also accounted for 42.9 percent of all imports, followed by China with 12.1 percent, and Ukraine with 5.1 percent.
- A meeting on preparation for the launch of the railway from Ozen station in Mangystau Oblast to the Kazakh-Turkmen border was held in the Ministry of Transport and Communications in Astana on August 17. The project is part of the railway Ozen (Kazakhstan) - Kyzylgaya -

Bereket - Etrek (Turkmenistan) - Gorgan (Iran) and is being implemented in accordance with the agreement between the three governments, which will provide Kazakhstan with faster access to the Persian Gulf. According to the Ministry, due to the active pace of construction and maintenance the railway is expected to become operational by October 2011. The total length of the railway line makes 938 kilometres, including 146 kilometres on the territory of Kazakhstan, 722 in Turkmenistan, and 70 in Iran.

- Cycling Pro Team Astana has appointed an annual stipend of EUR 7,000 to the widow and son of Kazakhstan's famous cyclist Andrei Kivilev, who tragically died at the stage of Paris-Nice cycling race in 2003, the press service of *Kazakhstan's Cycling Federation* stated on August 15. By establishing this annual allowance, those in the federation "want to pay tribute to the success of Andrei Kivilev in the international arena," the statement said. In the world ranking of cyclists Kivilev was among the first 50.
- The list of cyclists of Kazakhstan's team Astana for the upcoming three-week Vuelta a España includes Andrey Kashechkin, Kessyakoff Fredrik, Robert Kizerlovski, Alexander Dyachenko, Enrico Gasparotto, Josep Hufre, Tanel Kangert, Andrei Mizurov, and Eugene Petrov. The race starts in Spain on August 20 and will last until September 11.

### Things to watch:

- President of South Korea Lee Myung-bak is to pay an official visit to Astana on August 24-25. Apart from talks with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Korean leader is set to attend a large Kazakh-Korean business forum in Astana.
- An exhibition "Islamic culture and art in the works of Iranian artists" opens in the Central State Museum in the city of Almaty on August 25. The aim of the exhibition is to promote the knowledge of the Quran during the holy month of Ramadan. The exhibition will include master-classes, rare scripts and editions of the Holy Quran, translations of Quran into foreign languages, as well as the total of 60 works of two prominent Iranian masters Parviz Nazari and Akhmad Mokhammadpur. The exhibition will last until September 5, 2011.
- The opening of the fifth session of the Kazakh Parliament of the fourth convocation will be held on September 1. President of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev is expected to take part in the ceremony.
- A Norwegian organisation *Bike for Peace* arranged a Semey - Almaty – Astana bicycle ride from August 6 till 29. The event is dedicated to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence. The group, which consists of ten Norwegians and six Kazakhstanis, both men and women, will reach the capital city Astana on August 29, the UN-recognised International Day against Nuclear Tests. To follow the group's progress, visit [www.astana-oslo.com](http://www.astana-oslo.com); [www.bikeforpeace.no](http://www.bikeforpeace.no); and <http://www.facebook.com/pages/BikeForPeace/195630593782513>

*Note to readers: Given the summer months, until August 30, the Astana Calling will be coming out once a week, on Fridays.*

ASTANA CALLING is a bi-weekly online publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
Please send your requests and questions to [pressa@mfa.kz](mailto:pressa@mfa.kz)