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STATEMENT

by

Mr. Yermek Kosherbayev,
the First Deputy Governor of Eastern Kazakhstan (Semipalatinsk region)
at the informal meeting of the United Nations General Assembly to mark
the Observance of the International Day against Nuclear Test

10 September 2014
New York
Dear Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen!

I take this opportunity to thank most sincerely the President of the General Assembly, Mr. John Ashe, for convening and organizing this meeting so excellently, as well as, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his roadmap for a world free of nuclear weapons.

This is the fifth observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests, designated by the UN General Assembly in accordance with resolution A 64/35 initiated by Kazakhstan. We thank those who co-sponsored the resolution and all UN Member States for their unanimous support.

We were honoured to have the Secretary-General visit the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in April 2010, which we see as a clear recognition of Kazakhstan's effort and that of our President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s contribution to reduce the global nuclear threat. The President’s bold action of closing the second largest nuclear test site and renouncing the fourth largest test site in the world is widely acknowledged. Following Semipalatinsk, the nuclear test sites in Nevada, Lob-Nora and the New Land became silent, too.

I have the honour to represent at this august meeting the East Kazakhstan region where the former nuclear test site was located. In that capacity, I would like to say that we, the people of Kazakhstan, are proud to be the first to make this important contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament and ensuring peace in the world. We continue to this day, upholding consistently our viewpoint at the UN and other international fora, and also at personal bilateral meetings with the leaders of nuclear powers. Semey acts as host to the Anti-nuclear International Forum, and the annual Ecology, Radiation and Health conferences, as well as meetings of “Mayors for Peace”. We are constantly in touch with the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and actively engaged in the social movement called, Hiroshima – Kazakhstan”.

The year 2014 is significant for Kazakhstan for two important milestones in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation: the 20th anniversary of Kazakhstan signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear state; and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the international anti-nuclear movement "Nevada-Semey" with its numerous appeals for peace in the past and now.
Over a period of 40 years, 490 nuclear explosions devastated a million and a half people and an immense territory, comparable in size to entire European countries. The radiation impacted and damaged all forms of life - human, plant and animal, and can be measured in decades to come.

From the earliest days of independence, the Government of Kazakhstan has striven to rehabilitate the victims of nuclear tests and to provide economic and social support through a number of targeted programmes. According to the United Nations data, the aid provided by the Government of Kazakhstan to the Semipalatinsk region, for the period of 1999-2010, amounted to US $ 600 million. However, this socio-economic development and environmental rehabilitation require serious and permanent international assistance. Kazakhstan is most grateful to the international community for its aid, especially to the main donors – Japan, Norway, Russia, Switzerland, the UK, United States, Switzerland, the European Union and OSCE; the aid agencies like, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Korean International Cooperation Agency, Red Crescent Society, and US AID. UN entities such as UNICEF, UNDP and IAEA have also made a significant contribution. We acknowledge also the profound and often dangerous commitments made by individuals, many of whose names are not known to us, but deserve recognition.

Currently, an intensive programme of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the destroyed region is being implemented jointly by the Government of Kazakhstan at the national, regional and local Semey levels, together with the United Nations system, particularly UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA. It is aimed at enhancing the productivity and empowerment of the severely affected areas through comprehensive regional planning and provision of social services. The total budget for this large scale effort, executed from 2011 to 2015 exceeds $11 million, of which 80% is provided by the Government of Kazakhstan and 20% by the UN. The focus is on empowering the local rural populations, including the most vulnerable, to enhance their own well-being and developing local self-government capabilities through training thousands of experts and the grassroots. In addition, a UNDP Centre has been set up for the social integration of repatriated Kazakhs.

In Semey, my Government has set up a specialized radiological and medical institute. Furthermore, atomic energy is being developed for peaceful purposes at the newly-created National Nuclear Centre and a Nuclear Technologies Park. It is obvious that the production of fuel for nuclear power and nuclear research will become a competitive specialization of the region, using traditional and alternative lines of low-enriched uranium and thorium. A territory near the town of Kurchatov has been selected as one of the sites for
building a nuclear power plant. Kazakhstan will soon host the International
Bank of Low-Enriched Uranium of the IAEA under its surveillance.

The question of nuclear test ban, the abolition of nuclear weapons, global
security and global warming and climate change are all too critical and should
not be overshadowed by political developments and crises are raging in various
parts of the world. Nuclear security and the threat of nuclear terrorism should
remain high on the global agenda. President Nazarbayev, together with other
global leaders, is showing the way at the recent three Nuclear Security Summits.
In 2010 in Washington D.C., he called on the international community to adopt
a Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World,
as the first step towards a convention against nuclear weapons.

Another initiative of Kazakhstan is the international online signature
campaign - the ATOM Project, petitioning world leaders and governments to
abandon nuclear tests for all times. The Honorary Ambassador of the Project is
Karipbek Kuyukov, the world renowned artist who is himself a victim of
nuclear radiation. I hope each one of you will be part of this global activism.

The problems of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are among
the key issues of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy: Kazakhstan will actively promote
these causes if elected a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for
2017-2018.

The “August 29” is not only a date to remember. It is a Day for Action.
We call on the international community to abandon once and for all nuclear
tests and explosions. It is within our power and together we can make our world
safer and better.

Thank you.