Address of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to the People of Kazakhstan, September 30, 1998

**On the Situation in the Country and major Directions of Domestic and Foreign Policy: Democratization, Economic and Political Reform for the New Century**

**September 30, 1998**

**Dear Parliamentarians, Distinguished Guests, citizens of the Republic.**

I come to you at a fateful time.

The world has dramatically changed within the last year and will continue to change even more.

Russia has experienced great shocks within last few months.

To the East, serious market crises in Asia threaten to spread across the world.

To our South, India and Pakistan, new nuclear powers, stand at an impasse over Kashmir. We have an extremely complex situation at the southern borders of the CIS.

The instability of our region and the difficulties of our neighbors are affecting the situation in Kazakhstan.

Though one can say that we remain an island of stability and calm in global and regional crises, every Kazakhstani should understand the complexity of the situation.

For Kazakhstan, the choice is clear. We must, and we will, act with energy and determination to protect our economy and the well–being of our people, and we will do it.

**Men and Women of Kazakhstan:**

We are gathered today at a moment decisive for our future, a turning point, a crossroads.

We meet today at a time of hope, but also of fear; a time of danger, but also of great opportunity; a time of crisis that tests our will as a nation, as a people, as one of the leaders of Central Asia.

The decisions we make today will not only affect our lives, but will affect the lives of our children and grandchildren. Our decisions will affect not only us, but our neighbors in this region, and the economy of the world. The future and destiny of our great Nation rests with us.

**Countrymen and countrywomen of Kazakhstan:**

We must acknowledge with pride the enormous strides that have been taken in seven short years to create a free and independent Kazakhstan. From those first days, the strengthening of our national security has been our most pressing priority. In the post Cold–War era, power is not defined by the size of a country's army, but rather by the productivity and competitiveness of its economy, and by the creativity and success of its diplomacy. By these two criteria of might, Kazakhstan has become powerful indeed.

We have created a buffer of peace on all of our borders, a safety belt of friendly frontiers. No nation on earth – not one! – is our enemy. Our multi–vector diplomacy and foreign policy have successfully defined both our sovereignty and territorial integrity, and developed close relations with the global community.

What has been done this year and what will have to be done next year in foreign policy area is laid out in special report which has been distributed to you.

We know where we are going. Last year, we set forth a vision of the modern Kazakhstan to be inherited by our children and our children's children in the comprehensive Kazakhstan–2030 Report. The 2030 Plan sets forth a detailed road map for the future “prosperity, security and ever growing welfare” of all our people. It is the road we are following today and every day. You may read in a second special report distributed to you about the work which has been done for implementation of Strategy. We have to remember that there will be some brief disruptions and detours on our journey as we are forced to deal with these short–term economic crises and other national emergencies. But we will continue to follow this route, to meet our milestones and to ultimately create the kind of society of which we dream.

For those many nations that had democracy repressed for almost fifty years after World War II, pre–existing democratic political institutions could be rapidly rebuilt. But for Kazakhstan, which did not have democratic institutions in the modern sense, our process of building began from the ground up. That is why we progressed step–by–step bringing up the democratic culture of the population. That is why our road is much longer and much more difficult. On the other hand, our institutions and infrastructure, being new, are not tied to the mistakes and policies of the past. Thus we have the advantage of a fresh start.

Now, we must recommit to this vision of the future. And we must demonstrate that we have the strength, the vision, the courage to stay the course and build a new Kazakhstan, a new Kazakhstan built on political justice and economic freedom.

It has been said that wisdom requires the long view. Countrymen, Kazakhstan requires the wisdom of the long view. 2030 Kazakhstan has that long view.

The choice before us is clear: reform or regress, streamline or stagnate, democratize or decay. We must continue to build a modem Kazakhstan or slide into chaos.

I propose to you today a Kazakhstan for the 21st century based on sound and sensible values. I propose to you a Kazakhstan based on a new economy. I propose to you a Kazakhstan built upon democratic principles. I propose to you new structures and procedures for Kazakhstan based on effectiveness and fairness of the Government. I propose to you continuing to build a strong and secure Kazakhstan that plays a noticeable role in the world. This is the Kazakhstan that I propose for our children. A Kazakhstan that rejects religious extremism. A Kazakhstan that rejects national extremism. And, finally, a Kazakhstan which loudly and clearly rejects political extremism.

Our Government will use its power and the law to vigorously fight extremism in any form. Only this way can we preserve and develop our democratic institutions.

Now is the time for foresight. Now is the time for action. Now is the time for a strong will. Now is the time for change.

Let us be specific.

With regard to the economy of Kazakhstan, our challenge is three–fold:

to guide the economy safely through this period of severe financial crises in the region;

to place the economy on a firm path of recovery and growth;

and finally, to continue the promising advances toward an independent, open and free market economy, and to ensure that the benefits of a robust economy directly impact the quality of life of our people.

A fundamental responsibility today is to mount a broad and forceful defense of our nation's economic system and our people's economic health. We must approach this just as we do an external attack: by mobilizing all resources of the State, developing a comprehensive plan, and ensuring that we have a strong and courageous leadership.

The program I am announcing today will achieve these goals.

I have directed the Prime Minister to convene an Economic Policy Council of the senior economic officials of the Government. The Council, including the Chairman of the National Bank, will be working on permanent basis, to ensure coherence of policy and rapid response to external and internal crises and defend against the damage to banks, businesses, consumers and the overall economy.

Second, it is necessary to ensure that the National Bank continues to have the flexibility to adopt new exchange rate and money supply control that will keep Kazakhstan's industry competitive in world trade markets. The Bank also has designed stand–by contingency programs to protect the tenge against sudden external shocks, including tightening control over capital flow.

Third, because the devaluation of the ruble and other changes in the Russian economy are having an adverse impact on many of our businesses, I have instructed the National Bank and the Ministry of Energy, Industry and Trade to closely monitor the health of our banks and enterprises during this turbulent period and to design a safety–net to protect our internal economy which would be consistent with the new industrial policy developed by the Ministry stimulating export and replacing import, revival of enterprises capable to produce goods which are in demand.

Fourth, also upon my instructions the Government has developed new approaches for differentiation of budget and sector of entrepreneurship, creation and presenting of a more transparent budget with respect to the programs, reforming mechanisms of social protection, new schemes of financing of higher education and medical care.

With this program, Kazakhstan will demonstrate to our own business community, to our trading partners and to the world's financial institutions and analysts that we have the will and the ability to act vigorously in times of economic crisis. We will set an example of farsighted and forceful Government action in times of economic turmoil all around us.

But protecting our economy and minimizing the damage from these external forces does not provide for economic growth. We have succeeded with a program of tight monetary and fiscal policy which has brought down inflation and stabilized our economy. At the same time, we now suffer from a depressed economy, which deepened because of the falling prices for our export production, large arrearages.

We need to put in place steps that will build on the market economy established over the past seven years by removing the structural barriers that are restricting recovery of existing enterprises and creation of new ones from small and medium businesses. That is essential for our economy to be able to grow again, and to continue growing.

**These steps will include:**

an expansion in bank credit available to economic entities;

an action program to eradicate all Government arrearages and to create an Action Task Force to solve the problem of arrearages between commercial entities; and, finally

redirection of Government expenditures to programs that stimulate economic growth, generate tax revenues and have high benefit for our citizens. These investments include transportation and water infrastructure, energy supply, education, medical care and job training.

As part of our efforts to continue the fundamental reform and strengthening of our economy I am proposing a series of major initiatives:

the development of a program of legitimizing private ownership of land, with the enforcement of private property rights;

an aggressive program to accelerate foreign investment;

a program to improve tax coverage and compliance that will ensure fairness between businesses and individual taxpayers, that will remove barriers to growth and investment and that will stabilize Government finances, which I will discuss in more detail shortly.

All of these economic measures will, together, protect us from excessive short–term damage, stimulate economic growth, and provide the foundation for long–term economic stability and prosperity. They are an essential comprehensive economic reform program that will move us forward toward achievement of the goals we have set forth for our nation and our people in Kazakhstan 2030.

As I travel across our great and beautiful land, and see the wondrous resources and talented people who will enrich our future, I notice in all cities and every town that still too many people are today facing economic hardship and frustration. They can not wait for these sound, long–term plans to bear fruit.

We will do what is necessary to ensure that citizens of our country feel the support of the Government during these difficult times. We do not propose to do for the people what they can best do for themselves. But government has a sacred obligation to help people during times of hardship.

That is why a specific task is set forth for the Government to immediately start dealing with four crisis situations that affect every community. These four crises are:

First, we must address the shortages of heat and energy in winter. This situation can not be tolerated. We can not have among us families and whole communities denied basic needs of heat, light and gas, especially when people promptly pay for these services. This happens because of bureaucratic inefficiency, poor private management, Government red tape or disputes about responsibility. The Government must take responsibility to meet the basic needs of our people.

Second, salary and pension arrears from budget organizations rob our citizens of the money they have earned and deprive their families of the goods and services to which they are entitled. The Government must meet its obligations to our citizens. Thus I have adopted the Decree on Pension Indexation to be effective from October 1 this year to raise the minimum pension level. Furthermore, the Government and Akims have to eradicate arrearages on salaries by the end of the year.

Private enterprise arrears are not the Government's responsibility. But it is our duty to take every action, including rigorous legal measures, against those businesses and individuals who do not honor these commitments and who deprive their workers and pensioners of funds they have earned and need. We will take such actions.

Third, a lack of jobs deprives our willing and able citizens from providing for themselves and their families. In the long–term, a vibrant and growing economy will provide wide–range employment opportunities. But our citizens can not wait. We will mount a comprehensive program to provide thousands of jobs for our citizens who lack work, allowing them to help build desperately needed public projects like roads and schools, housing and health care facilities. Government must and will provide opportunity for those seeking work in times of national economic crisis and stagnation.

Fourth, there have been adverse weather conditions for the rural areas this year. But even the grain which was produced, may be sold at unfair low prices. To prevent this from happening, I assign the Government to purchase from farmers up to one million tons of grain at fair prices.

I have directed the Prime Minister to immediately appoint four high level Task Forces to implement each of the above mentioned four priority action programs. Each of these Task Forces will have a senior official as full–time Chairman, with a broad grant of authority to manage these programs with the full support of the Government. Each Task Force will submit a detailed Emergency Action Plan within 30 days. I am directing the Prime Minister to make this his priority and to take personal responsibility for these four programs. I have directed him to meet weekly with each of the Task Force Chairmen and to report to me on progress.

These programs will also require additional funding which is very difficult to allocate at the time when the situation at the world markets is getting worse.. But we are allocating an Emergency Fund of 25 billion tenge [300 million dollars] for the work of these four

Task Forces so that they will have the ability and resources to bring prompt relief to the most pressing situations across the country. We must respond to our citizens who are cold in the winter, who are denied the money they have earned and saved, who can not get work to feed their families and who cannot sell their grain at fair prices.

At the same time, we must also continue to act to bring about fundamental reform in the way our Government operates. No one in Kazakhstan, including the Prime Minister, the Ministers of the Government, the heads of the Houses of the Parliament, or myself is satisfied with the performance of our Government. It is not the fault or the failure of one official or one ministry. It is not a failure of vision or will. Regardless of our best intentions, our best plans, and even our best people, we find that every day the operation of Government is still too slow, too bureaucratic, too confused and lacks responsibility.

We can no longer accept this level of unsatisfactory performance. We must reform our Government to make it more effective and more efficient.

To achieve these objectives, I am announcing the following Government reform program:

First, we will mount a vigorous campaign against corruption at all levels of Government. Nothing hinders the operations of business, discourages investment and increases distrust among citizens more than the belief that corruption permeates Government decision–making.

The Parliament recently passed comprehensive anti–corruption legislation, for which I commend the members of the Majilis and the Senate. Now it is our responsibility to take these important words on paper and put them into practice in every Government agency and every community of this nation. I pledge to you that the law you have enacted will be fully and vigorously enforced. As a demonstration of my commitment to eradicating corruption wherever it is found, I have removed those officials who have stained their reputation. Believe me, I’m talking about people with whom from the human point of view it was very difficult for me to part. But there should be no exceptions. In addition, since the law was adopted, more than 300 people – among them akims of various levels, judges, and other officials – have been arrested, removed from their jobs and will be prosecuted. This investigation is ongoing. Let the word go forth, from this podium and from this day, that corruption will not be tolerated in Kazakhstan.

I will act promptly to create a new special Anti–Corruption Agency under the law and to appoint a well–known, national figure who can be trusted to head the agency and to lead a national campaign against corruption. It will require tough enforcement. It will require that citizens trust the anti–corruption agency. We will earn that trust.

Second, we will strengthen our national system of tax collection and enforcement. Just as the Government must pay its obligations to its people, the people must pay their obligations to their Government and to their community. Our weak tax system undermines the Government's fiscal health, the fairness of our markets, our attractiveness to foreign investment, and the confidence of our citizens in Government integrity. We have seen examples of poor tax systems leading to the collapse of economies around the world. We must take a different route, to build a modern tax system with integrity, fairness and consistency.

This can not be done quickly or simply. It will take several years. But we must and will act now to start the process and make it irreversible. During the next few days a special structure will be established with broad powers and resources to improve tax administration practices. It will have our complete and total support.

We must and will give the leaders of these efforts all the tools, the power, the resources and the support needed to succeed, just as we would give a general going into battle against our nation's enemies. We understand that there will be resistance. We are ready to fight it. And we want everyone to understand once and for all: those engaged in corruption or in the organized avoidance of tax obligations are criminals and they will be investigated and prosecuted vigorously and, if convicted, treated harshly. This conduct must be branded as totally unacceptable. No one will be immune from honoring these laws. Let me be absolutely clear: there will be no protection from the strict and evenhanded enforcement of laws against corruption and for the collection of taxes because of political power, economic wealth, or personal connections.

Third, we will streamline the Government to clarify lines of responsibility and increase accountability on a personal basis so that the goals we set and the programs we launch are managed effectively and with efficiency.

Collective responsibility equals no responsibility. Collective responsibility is the enemy of accountability. Collective resolutions of the cabinet of Ministers have been ineffective. We must have individual resolutions by either the Prime Minister or the decisions of the relevant Minister of the Government to enforce his accountability.

Therefore, in consultation with the Prime Minister, I will present to you shortly a detailed program to significantly improve the performance of the Government, including:

having the Prime Minister assume direct responsibility over the Ministers and expanding his role in the appointment and dismissal of Ministers so he can hold them accountable;

clarifying the responsibility of individual Ministers, insisting on a policy of Government unity in the implementation of our policies, enhancing the authority of Ministers to perform their functions and holding officials strictly accountable for failure of performance, inaction or non–compliance with Government policies;

the unity of the budget function with Strategic Planning shall be reached to allow the possibility to evaluate the specific work of the Government to achieve our annual program goals and the objectives of Kazakhstan–2030; and

clarifying the lines of responsibility and power between the three levels of Government, the Republic, the Oblasts and local administrations, to eliminate overlap and confusion, to pinpoint accountability of the members of the Government, akims and other officials, and to increase efficiency of service delivery.

The most educated and honest citizens who are true patriots of their country will be selected for government service.

This task will be assigned to the Agency of Government Service which has been recently created under my Decree. The Agency will create a system which will ensure fair promotion of government employees on the basis of objective criteria.

Responsibility, authority and accountability will be the hallmarks of this administration. Government officials who fail to perform their functions and implement our programs will be removed.

With these reforms in place, I have confidence that the Government, headed by the Prime Minister, can achieve our policy goals.

Unless the people have confidence and trust in their Government, they will not support their Government. We have seen that most clearly recently in certain Asian countries, where remote autocratic Governments lost public confidence. We may see it in other nations.

It is a sober reminder for us that we must not use this period of economic difficulty to postpone or delay democratization of Kazakhstan.

History has demonstrated time and time again that economic development and political development must go forward together, must be symbiotic, like a violin and a viola playing a string duet. Kazakhstan should not become just an economically developed country. It must become a supporter and a symbol of democracy and human rights.

This is my pledge to you. Not just for the future. But for now.

I propose to you on this historic day a program of democratization and political reform that will serve as a benchmark, a new starting point in our national history.

The political reform of Kazakhstan will center on seven fundamental elements of democratization and political liberalization.

First, the electoral process must be honest, representative and encourage the fullest participation of candidates and voters.

Free and fair elections are at the heart of any democracy, and must be at the heart of our democracy. There is a proverb in our wise folklore: “The people seldom speak but when they speak they never make mistakes.” Elections are the time when the people speak for themselves. Our goal should be clear: to make the upcoming national elections a model for free and fair elections.

Democracy is always a work in progress. Even the great democracies of the West have not yet fully integrated their minorities into the political process. We haven’t fully succeeded either. But we say with pride that under extremely difficult conditions we have achieved a stability among our national and religious groups that has not been achieved by many countries of the world over the past decade.

To achieve this goal, we must simplify our election laws and procedures, to make it easier for people to run for office, and to ensure that the choice of the majority of citizens who vote is elected. I therefore propose that all filing fees for candidates for the Majilis be reduced, so that every Kazakhstani of age required in accordance with the law can freely compete to be members of our Majilis regardless of their wealth or social status.

Additionally, fully understanding that voting is a sacred trust that legitimizes representative government, we must ensure that candidates who receive a majority of the vote are legally elected, irrespective of voter turnout. Just as people have the right to vote, they also have a right not to vote, if they so wish. Even in established democracies like the United States, voter turnout can fall below fifty percent. The will of those who chose to vote cannot be undone by those who chose not to. The same refers to presidential elections. The requirement that 50% of the eligible voters must vote in order to validate an election shall be eliminated.

And to ensure that our elections are truly free and fair, we will create all conditions and encourage the participation of both domestic and foreign election monitors in observing elections.

That is why I, as the President of the country, declare clearly and firmly – any election in our country will be fair and open.

Finally, we should develop a comprehensive step–by–step program of election of leaders at all levels. The revolutionary impatience which has lead some countries to mismanagement and chaos is inappropriate. But we can’t ignore this problem either. In the near future, we will commence development of such a program, clearly defining its stages and levels. Besides, one shouldn’t forget that the models of local self–management are far from perfect. It is necessary for us to begin reforms in this sphere.

The second major element of our political democratization package is the strengthening of the role of parties in our political system. Political parties are the basic building blocks of democracy, and we should do everything possible, by statute and by statement, to help them grow and develop.

The Election Decree of the President having the force of law should specify the role and function of parties in the political process. Before the election, the Central Election Commission will conduct workshops on organization and structure for all officially registered political parties in our Nation that wish to participate. For these needs the Central Election Commission shall allocate funds. We should encourage international groups, so called Non–governmental Organizations, that work with parties to come to Kazakhstan to educate and train our political parties.

Our goal must be to have multiple national political parties fully participate in the 1999 election for the Majilis. That will help to give voters better choices, give citizens new ways to participate in the political process, and bring political party structures and leadership into the next Majilis. To broaden participation of the widest range of views in the Parliament, I propose that ten members should be added to the Majilis to be chosen by proportional representation by party lists. It has taken us a long time to make this decision and we believe that it will be powerful breakthrough towards democracy. I hope that the political forces of the country will use the intiative for the benefit of the people and will be responsible in strengthening of the State system.

I call upon all parties, regardless their political orientation to respect and preserve political and interethnic stability in our country. The future of our State system and future of the democracy depends on this.

Third, we must also seek to strengthen and provide autonomy for our Majilis and Senate for stability and succession of power in Kazakhstan. Nomination of individual members of the Government and ambassadors should be approved by the Senate and Majilis Commissions. I propose that in the event the President of the Republic is dismissed or removed from office or dies before expiration of his term, the Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament will assume the duties of President for the remaining terms. In the event the Chairman of the Senate is unable to assume the President’s functions the Chairman of the Majilis of the Parliament will assume the duties of the President. In the event the Chairman of the Majilis of the Parliament is unable to assume the President’s function the Prime Minister of the Republic will assume the duties of the President. In the first seven years of our country's existence, we have established an important tradition of Parliamentary activity in the affairs of our Government, and I am proud to stand before you today in recognition of the role that Parliament plays. But I believe that Parliament should take even more responsibility for making Government responsive in the years ahead.

Allowing for representation by political parties according to proportional representation will make the Majilis better reflect the full spectrum of political views in Kazakhstan. I also propose that to ensure representation of a broader range of our ethnic and religious minorities in Parliament, some of the presidential appointees to the Senate shall be from candidates recommended by the Peoples’ Assembly. Parliament, by 80% of votes of each of the Houses, will be able to introduce amendments to the Constitution, which should be approved by the people at referendum by a majority vote, so long as at least 50% of the eligible voters participate .

I further propose that to give Parliament greater visibility and importance in the political system, Parliamentary sessions should be given greater television coverage on a regular basis. This will increase the political weight of the Parliament, make it a more noticeable part of life. It is necessary to allocate fixed time for broadcasting the parliamentary sessions by the State national channels.

To strengthen accountability of the Government and to increase the role of Parliament as a separate and distinct branch of Government, the Prime Minister and his cabinet should be accountable to the Parliament and appear regularly before the Parliament and its commissions.

Fourth, a key element of democratization is strengthening the role of non–Governmental organizations in building a civil society. Countrymen, a democratic structure does not in itself guarantee a democratic society. Democracy also depends on a complex mechanism of private voluntary institutions which allow citizens to be politically involved, to volunteer their services on behalf of their neighbors and country, and to express their grievances and advocate their interests.

To ensure that civic groups can operate freely, the Ministry of Justice should simplify registration and supervision procedures for domestic and international non governmental organizations that wish to work in Kazakhstan, and should encourage their formation and their operation.

Fifth, an independent judiciary is a pillar of a democratic society. We need to ensure a professionally functioning and autonomous judicial system that decides issues on their merits and is free from corruption. We must work to improve the training of judges. We must vigorously enforce the recently enacted Anti–Corruption law.

The Higher Judiciary Council should not be headed by the President.

Sixth, we must build on our already established record of a free, uncensored and independent press. The Government should consider the free access of journalists to information not as a favor of the Government but as its duty to public opinion. We must act to remove any remaining impediments to a free press from our Nation. We will start the process of privatization of many State publishing houses. The availability and increase in the number of independent mass media means the growth of openness in society.

Seventh, and finally, the civilization of the society can be measured by its attitude to women. It is necessary for us to make changes. Understanding the importance of this issue, I intend to strongly increase the role of the Council on Problems of Family, Women and Demographic Policy or reorganize it into a special commission on women’s issues. It must become a chief advisor both to the President and the Government in solving important problems in this area. We can't solve everything at once, but several specific issues can be addressed in the coming year.

First, it is necessary to increase women’s representation in all branches of authority. This, if you wish, is a question of social equality. Second, it is necessary to vigorously combat domestic violence against women. I have instructed the Ministry of Justice to review the punishment for crimes of violence against women. These punishments will become more severe. Third, understanding that political independence cannot be separated from economic independence, the Government must encourage the creation of a bank to provide loans to women interested in starting their own businesses.

Fellow countrymen and women of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the program that I set forth today didn’t appear in one day or by chance. It is transformation to more open, a more competitive, and more honest society. This is the result of my continuous thoughts and observations of what is going on in the country and in the entire world. This view is shared by others. I must admit that there were forces pushing me to become stricker and to become more authoritarian including those who are skillfully hiding behind the mask of pseudo–democrats at the public arena.

I will tell you honestly and personally as for a man being at the at the pinnacle of power, and I can assure you, that this power is rather strong, there are no external reasons to start such democratization limiting my own power. The question lies in my sincere belief that authoritarism of any kind in Kazakhstan is the road to nowhere. Only a free democratic society will be a guarantor of our stable and happy life in the near future. Only this reason makes me move forward to democracy and human rights. My nation deserves freedom in this terrible and bloody century. I’m part of the flesh and blood of this nation and I must be worthy of the choice that has come to me at the end of this dramatic century.

I know the path before us will not be easy. Political change is never easy. Political change is especially difficult for those who manage this process. It is always resisted. It is resisted by the forces of the status quo. It is resisted by those comfortable and lazy and tired and afraid of change. Forces of the past are not willing for this to happen.

There is an old saying in the East: “Only the man who moves forward will come to the end the road.” We have to move forward to the great dream that appears in the most difficult times, to the dream which inspired our ancestors without which there is no future.

**Fellow citizens.**

From our sacred soil man was first launched into the heavens heralding the birth of the modern era.

That journey has not yet ended. That journey into the future has just begun.

In just 457 days, the world will cross into a new decade, a new century, a new millennium.

On that day, not too far away, from Almaty to Astana, from Kustanay to Taraz, from Caspi to Balhash, from the banks of the Irtysh to the banks of the Ural, the people of Kazakhstan will embrace the future.

It is up to all of us to shape and define Kazakhstan and our place in the world.

The dangers are great. But the opportunities are still greater.

As an old Kazakh proverb says “The affair can’t be completed. Without difficulties nothing gets done, without striving the goal cannot be reached.”

Let history be our judge. Our children and grandchildren are watching us.

For their sake, and ours, we have no right to lose this battle for the future.

Thank you.