

## **Africa: From Kazakhstan to Africa**



**By Erlan Idrissov\***

**ASTANA, Kazakhstan, January 24, 2016 (KMOF)** -- The year 2015 was a turbulent, challenging year across the world. It was also 12 months when the links between our futures have never been clearer. Time and time again we have seen conflicts spill over borders.

Extremism in one country, as we have witnessed in Africa, quickly becomes a threat to life and stability of their neighbours. The continuing chaos in Afghanistan puts at risk all of us in Central Asia. Conflict in Syria and Iraq has caused immense individual suffering but has also fuelled the worst migration crisis in Europe for over half a century.

At the same time, the global economy has been rocked by a series of shocks which have damaged growth and further fuelled instability. Such global forces require a global response.

This is why it was so disappointing that instead of increased co-operation, 2015 was characterised by suspicion, tension and division. Our world desperately needs to see improved, not deteriorating relations, between countries and continents. It is why the role of multi-lateral organisations like the African Union and the United Nations - and the links between them - are more important than ever.

We all gain the more we talk and trade with each other. That is why we are delighted that the Special Representative of the President of Kazakhstan, Deputy Foreign Minister Yerzhan Ashykbayev, is going to attend the African Union Summit. To an outsider, our participation may

come as a surprise.

There are huge differences in terms of geography, climate and history between Kazakhstan and African states. But our links have been growing at both national and continental levels.

These led to Kazakhstan in 2013 being granted observer status in the African Union. It was a significant moment that deepened the already strong friendship between us - a relationship based on a shared view of global challenges and a determination to improve the prosperity of our citizens.

Africa and Kazakhstan have, of course, been among the economic success stories of the last 15 years. This continent's growth rate has left more developed regions far behind. In the same period, Kazakhstan has joined the ranks of the leading 50 economies and set its sights on reaching the top 30 by 2050.

The increased opportunities for mutual trade and investment are, of course, one reason to strengthen links. Last year, Kazakhstan held a special panel session at the high-profile Astana Economic Forum on Africa as the next driver of the global economy. Attended by many African representatives, it sparked an optimistic discussion about the continent's role in spreading prosperity.

But all of us are determined to look beyond pure economic benefits to see how we can together shape wider responses to global challenges. Only a world-wide effort, for example, will defeat the ideology and terrorist groups putting the lives of all our citizens at risk.

The same concerted effort is needed to protect our environment from degradation now and for future generations.

Regional bodies like the African Union are vitally important in helping meet these challenges. It is another reason why I am so pleased to be attending the summit this week. But in the end, it is the United Nations which has the responsibility for overseeing the global response.

What is clear is that the more countries involved and the greater experience the UN can draw on, the better the chances of arriving at the right solutions and delivering them on the ground.

This is why it is strange that no country from Central Asia - a region of increasing global importance - has sat on the UN Security Council in its 70-year history. It is to help provide this wider perspective that Kazakhstan has put itself forward for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2017-2018.

If we get the opportunity, we are confident that we will make a positive contribution. We have a long record of support for the UN - including recent participation in peace-keeping missions in Africa - and for promoting peace and dialogue. We have, almost uniquely, warm relations with all the major powers as well a wide range of emerging countries including, of course, on this continent.

As our economy has grown, we have accepted our responsibility to increase our role in tackling poverty by funding international aid initiatives. By putting food, water, energy and nuclear security at the top of our agenda, we are showing we will be a powerful voice for increased global partnership [in meeting] the needs of developing countries and will help in building a peaceful, stable and prosperous world for all.

Such a goal can only be achieved through the widest co-operation. As we look at the many challenges our world faces, it is clear that we fail or succeed together. By strengthening the links between the countries of Africa and Kazakhstan, we give a lead for other regions and continents to follow.

**(Erlan Idrissov is the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan)**