

## NEWS

### **Kazakhstan's Nazarbayev Welcomes US-Russia Upcoming Nuclear Pact, Says It Strengthens Hope for a Nuclear Weapons Free World**

Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev, standing next to visiting UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in Astana today, welcomed the planned signing of a new strategic arms reduction treaty between Russia and the United States in Prague on April 8.

"The world's two largest nuclear weapon states are showing [by this step] their firm political will to reduce their arsenals and strengthen the global nuclear security," President Nazarbayev said. "This instills hope that a nuclear weapons free future for the mankind is both possible and achievable. Kazakhstan, working with the United Nations and all other states in the world, will spare no effort to make this dream of billions of people, including 16 million people in Kazakhstan, come true."

The President and the UN Secretary General spoke at a joint press availability in the presidential office in Astana after their almost two hours of talks. Ban Ki-moon visited Kazakhstan as the last leg of his tour of the five Central Asian nations.

"We discussed the international security and a number of upcoming events with great significance for the nuclear disarmament process," President Nazarbayev said. "We pin high hopes on the Global nuclear security summit in Washington, where I plan to participate, as well as the NPT review conference in New York in May."

"On a regional scale, it is important to ensure the implementation of the treaty on Central Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, which entered into force one year ago," President Nazarbayev said. He also added that the UN General Assembly, at Kazakhstan's initiative proclaimed August 29, the day of the closing of the former Soviet nuclear test site at Semipalatinsk, as the International Day against Nuclear Testing. The test site was shut down by President Nursultan Nazarbayev in 1991.

On April 6, Ban Ki-moon visited the former test site, and standing in the Ground Zero, the epicenter of the first Soviet nuclear and thermonuclear explosions, called on the world to follow Kazakhstan's nuclear disarmament example.

He reiterated that call today in Astana, saying that "Kazakhstan has led by example."

As he addressed President Nazarbayev, the UN chief added: "No leader can speak about stopping nuclear testing and renouncing nuclear weapons with greater moral authority." He proposed coordinating with the President of Kazakhstan the statements they plan to make at the nuclear summit in the U.S. capital next week.

"We are deeply grateful to you, Mr Secretary General, for your high and just praise for Kazakhstan's contribution to disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction," President Nazarbayev said.

The Kazakh leader, speaking to reporters and officials at the joint press availability where he also presented Kazakhstan's highest award for foreigners, the order of Dostyk (Friendship) of the first degree, to Ban Ki-moon, explained the logic behind his statements today.

“Kazakhstan, which had been a party to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 1991 along with Ukraine and Belarus. Fulfilling its obligations under that treaty our country has voluntarily renounced the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal. By this, we have shown an example to the world. Kazakhstan's contribution to nuclear disarmament was commended in a joint statement by the United States and Russia on 4 December 2009,” President Nazarbayev said. “As a country which has done a lot to strengthen nuclear security, Kazakhstan has consistently called on other states to make further steps towards a nuclear weapons free world.”

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