

Kazakhstan's cooperation with the EU.

Maintaining relations with the European Union countries and expanding mutually beneficial political and economic contacts is another of the main foreign policy priorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The Republic of Kazakhstan, like Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, is acquiring increasing importance for the EU (for example, in the energy security sphere). With regard to this, the European Union and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership, adopted in 2007, stresses that new prospects are opening up for cooperation between the EU and Central Asia.

The EU is also interested in other issues – security (border management, migration, the fight against organized crime, international terrorism, trafficking in human, drugs and weapons); regional cooperation; human rights; environmental protection; transport infrastructure; education and culture.

Developing cooperation with EU countries is a very current priority for Kazakhstan. The main sphere of cooperation is energy. Kazakhstan is one of the EU's main suppliers of hydrocarbons, accounting for about 20% of its total oil and gas consumption.

Trade between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the EU reached \$36.4bn in 2008, with the largest trading partners being Italy (12.6%), France (5.8%), the Netherlands (4.5%), Germany (2.9%), Britain (2.1%) and Spain (1%).

EU member states' investment capabilities are of significant interest to Kazakhstan. Since obtaining independence, Kazakhstan attracted about \$40bn in foreign direct investment from EU countries, or almost 50% of the total. The main investors are the Netherlands, Britain, France, Germany and Italy.

The bulk of this investment was placed in the energy sector. The Republic of Kazakhstan is now interested in bringing European investment to knowledge-intensive and innovative sectors of industry. The creation of liberal conditions for Kazakh investment in the EU is of similar importance.

Kazakhstan is cooperating with the EU in projects like the creation of the INOGATE (INterstate Oil and GAs Transportation to Europe) project to ship oil and gas to Europe and the TRACE-CA (Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia) transport corridor from Europe to Central Asia via Caucasus and the construction of the 8,445-km-long West Europe-West China road corridor is expected to be completed by the end of 2013.

The Republic of Kazakhstan, successfully pursuing its multi-vector foreign policy, is intended to occupy a well-deserved place in the system of international relations and claim a reputation as a reliable, principled and predictable partner.