

**Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission
for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization**

Mr. Tibor Tóth

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Your Excellency President Nazarbayev,
President De Klerk,
Minister Kazykhanov,
Deputy Secretary Poneman,
Congressman Faleomavaega,
Mayor Taue,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful for the opportunity to address this important Forum for a Nuclear Free World. The Republic of Kazakhstan ought to be congratulated and thanked for having taken this initiative and for garnering the overwhelming support of the international community.

This day, however, is not a day to celebrate. It is a day to remind us of the nuclear threat that still exists. It is a day for us to gather our strength to tackle the challenges we still face; it is a day to draw inspiration from the example that Kazakhstan has set. For such examples are rare.

Over twenty thousand nuclear weapons remain in the world's arsenals -- the task of their removal is an imperative that must be met urgently. The risk of these weapons falling into the hands of terrorists is almost too unspeakable to contemplate.

In September 2009, the Security Council Summit made a commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. The Council builds on a groundswell of opposition to nuclear weapons from all corners of the globe.

This may look like a Quixotic venture or an illusion that cannot be fulfilled. It is not. It is an imperative and, as proven by Kazakhstan, it is doable if political will and wise decision making converge.

Kazakhstan opened a chapter that led to the dismantlement of the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal and the rejection by its host of its nuclear defenses.

Forty-two years after Soviet Union detonated its first nuclear device, "First Lightning" at the Semipalatinsk test range, President Nursultan Nazarbayev authorized the shutdown of the test site.

These 42 years saw 456 nuclear test explosions in Kazakhstan driven by the nuclear arms race of the Cold War. Hidden behind these figures, however, is a legacy of human suffering of innocent civilians exposed to radiation, environmental degradation, and economic loss.

A decade and a half later Kazakhstan's nuclear inheritance from the breakup of the Soviet Union had become part of history.

Fourteen-hundred nuclear warheads, intercontinental ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and heavy bombers were returned to Russia for disposal under the START 1 Treaty. Weapons grade uranium was downblended into commercial reactor fuel and weaponisable plutonium was also safely disposed of. Reactors that had provided weapons material were decommissioned. The Semipalatinsk test site was spiked.

From being one of the world's most potent nuclear armed nations Kazakhstan acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1994 as a non-nuclear weapon state. In 1996, four days after the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) opened for signature, it was signed by Kazakhstan, as one of the first states to do so.

Kazakhstan's nuclear disarmament also established that states can abdicate their nuclear crowns without it impinging on their security. An inspiration for all who – like me – are convinced that nuclear disarmament is necessary and achievable. The global desire to pursue a nuclear weapons free world is not in short measure. It is time to act and not to wait.

We need to act and not wait in closing the door, once and for all, on the development of nuclear weapons. This will be a critical step towards their elimination.

We need to act and not wait in bringing the CTBT into full legal effect. Now is the time for the nine states whose ratification will bring the CTBT into force to show the political will and fully endorse it.

Ending nuclear explosions is a goal on the road to nuclear disarmament that must be reached.

We need to act and not wait in moving from self-imposed moratoria to legally binding global norms.

Kazakhstan offers a clear example for the rest of the world of how nuclear disarmament can be undertaken.

I congratulate President Nazarbayev and Kazakhstan on their achievements. The echo of Semipalatinsk is very important for us all to hear.

Close the door once and for all on nuclear testing.