**Madam Vice-President,**

**Working Group Members,**

**Distinguished Delegates and Friends!**

1. I am pleased to report to you today on Kazakhstan’s success in implementing the recommendations of the Second Universal Periodic Review, and to highlight initiatives our government will continue to pursue in the upcoming review cycle. We are proud of the progress we have made since the last time we met, we recognize that there is still work to be done, and we will continue to implement this group’s recommendations.
2. As a young nation, with less than 30 years of independence, Kazakhstan is still building its own institutions and traditions.
3. In 2017, Kazakhstan adopted major constitutional reforms, which strengthened the power of our legislative and judicial branches, and made our government more accountable to the public. Our President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev – in his address to the nation – described his vision for the government of Kazakhstan as a “Hearing State” that would listen and respond to public input and criticism of government actions.
4. Kazakhstan has ratified many key human rights treaties, and works closely with the international community to meet its treaty obligations. After the Second UPR Review period, Kazakhstan ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015), and the Convention on Discrimination in Education (2016).

Prevention of Torture and Violence

1. Kazakhstan is committed to zero tolerance of torture and violence, placing particular emphasis on protection of women and children.
2. Consistent with the Paris Principles and the Second Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT), Kazakhstan has instituted a National Preventive Mechanism, by expanding the authority of the Commissioner for Human Rights. Among other actions, the Commissioner will have completed over 3,000 facility inspections by the end of 2019, an increase of over 800%   
   over 2014.
3. On September 2, the Senate elected Ms. Elvira Azimova as Kazakhstan’s Commissioner for Human Rights. Ms. Azimova is the former Deputy Minister of Justice and the leader of Kazakhstan’s 2014 delegation to this Working Group. She now oversees an Expert Council made up of civil society representatives and government officials. The Council investigates alleged human rights violations – including allegations of torture – and monitors the government’s compliance with existing laws.
4. Through our reforms of our criminal justice system, we have greatly reduced our prison population from 63 thousand to 29 thousand since 2010, and we have implemented new methods of addressing non-violent criminal offenders. And, since 2003, Kazakhstan has observed a moratorium on imposition of the death penalty.

Civil Society and Government Participation

1. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has established a National Council of Public Trust, with representatives from human rights advocacy groups, economists and other experts, the Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Commissioner for Children’s Rights. During the recently held first session that was televised, more than 40 representatives engaged in an open dialogue discussing, among other things, liberalization of laws governing media and political parties, improving election laws and strengthening regional governance.

Education

1. Kazakhstan guarantees free pre-school, primary, and secondary education. 93 % of Kazakhstan’s children between ages 3 and 6 attend preschool. 7,4 thousand schools – 95 percent of them state-owned – provide secondary education to over 3 million students.

Social Security

1. More than 700,000 citizens have taken advantage of our Program for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship for 2017-2021, obtaining job skills and other valuable resources for entering the workforce. The vast majority have obtained employment as a result.
2. In 2018, the government expanded eligibility for Targeted Social Assistance and other benefits. Through the adopted changes, average basic pension amounts have increased by over 70%.

Judiciary

1. Since 2015, Kazakhstan has adopted numerous fundamental reforms to its justice and legal systems aimed at guaranteeing independent and qualified judges; ensuring the rule of law; increasing accessibility of the courts for citizens; ensuring impartiality and fairness of the court system bringing Kazakhstan’s courts into line with international standards.
2. We have reduced our court process from five steps to three: trial, appeal, and cassation. 90% of civil court claims are now filed online. All of our courts are now equipped with audio and video recording systems, which makes proceedings more transparent and accessible to citizens.
3. We have established 46 out-of-court mediation centers and over 1,000 mediation offices. Additionally, 84 mediation judges work within the court system to promote pre-trial resolution of disputes where possible. Over half of cases submitted to mediation settle before trial.
4. In 2018, new law was adopted which expands access to legal services, especially to socially vulnerable groups, raises standards for law practice and education, and removes barriers to enter the legal profession.

Protection of Children

1. Our President created the office of Commissioner for Children’s Rights in 2016 to oversee implementation of the UN Convention on Rights of the Child. Parliament also updated legislation guaranteeing children’s rights, and increasing punishments for child neglect and sexual and financial exploitation of children.
2. Working with UNICEF and others, we have established juvenile courts to hear criminal cases for violation of children’s rights and offenses committed by children. Since 2016, we have seen growing public confidence in these reforms.

Women’s Rights

1. The World Economic Forum has recognized Kazakhstan’s progress in achieving equality for women. Our success is evident in the large and increasing numbers of women who participate actively in government, business, and civil society in our country. Kazakhstan has over 500 NGOs that focus on gender equality and family issues.
2. Prevention of domestic violence is a national priority. In the last five years we continue to see year-on-year declines of domestic violence cases in the range of 7 to 10 percent. This is evidence that our laws are working.

Minority Rights

1. Kazakhstan is a diverse society. 190 schools across the country provide opportunities to study the traditions, cultures, and languages of 26 ethnic groups. Kazakhstan is following the Ljubljana recommendations by introducing trilingual education, encouraging multilingualism, and enabling children to learn in their native languages.
2. Kazakhstan values religious freedom. As a nation with large Christian and Muslim populations, our state policy emphasizes preservation and strengthening of inter-confessional harmony and respect. President Nursultan Nazarbayev established the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which meets every three years in Kazakhstan’s capital.

Human Trafficking

1. An Interdepartmental Commission of the government is functioning to combat the illegal export, import and trafficking of persons with the participation of representatives of government agencies, international organizations and five NGOs. Social services, free legal support, and compensation are available to victims.

**Dear Madam Vice-President!**

1. Let me thank the member states that have submitted their advance questions. Now I would like to briefly highlight some of the steps taken.
2. On the national mechanism, the Government took necessary measures including adoption of comprehensive action plans, improving legislation and creating institutional framework in order to effectively implement the recommendations of the Review, the UN special rapporteurs and other UN human rights mechanisms.
3. Regarding torture, sanctions have been toughened, including for the aiding and abetting torture or complicity in torture. No exemption from criminal liability, amnesty, and statute of limitation may apply to the crimes of torture. Based on the Istanbul Protocol, Kazakh law enforcement authorities developed a methodology for conducting investigations on torture crimes.

**Dear Working Group members!**

1. As we enter the next five-year review period, we look forward to working with you in our efforts to guarantee human rights to our citizens.
2. The reforms I mentioned earlier – to our constitution, judicial system, and legal system – all will contribute to progress in human rights. Our President has committed to make the government more transparent and more responsive to the concerns of the public.
3. Kazakhstan will continue to expand access to its court system through alternative dispute resolution, expansion of electronic systems and the Family Court pilot project.
4. Thank you for your attention to our report today. Again, we are proud of our country’s progress in addressing human rights, we recognize there remains much to do to achieve our goals and we remain committed and determined to do so. We welcome the continued recommendations of this Group. There is a political will to meet all the challenges and create opportunities for positive and lasting change for our Country and its citizens.