

**Statement
Of a Deputy Chairman – Head of the Secretariat
Of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, Mr E.L. Tugzhanov
At the II United Nations Forum on Minority Issues on:
“Minorities and their participation in political life”**

Geneva (Switzerland)

12-13 November 2009

**Dear Mr Chairman!
Dear Participants of the Forum!**

Let me, first of all, thank Ms McDougall for the joint work in the current year and the opportunity to address the United Nations Forum in such a representative composition on the issues of such relevance to all of us.

Kazakhstani model of ethnic minorities' participation in political life is based on state national policy towards ethnic minorities, including its legislative provisions; institution of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan as a mechanism to implement this policy, connecting the consultative and advisory functions of civil society institutions and public authorities.

Altogether, they represent the Kazakhstani model of interethnic tolerance, ensuring the participation of all ethnic groups of Kazakhstan in the political life of the country.

The Constitution and legislation of Kazakhstan, in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic Minorities, ensures their [minorities'] equality, regardless of social, racial, ethnic, and religious belief. Ethnic groups of Kazakhstan are deeply integrated into society and are unified and constitute an integral part of society as a whole. Discrimination is prohibited and punishable by law.

None of the ethnic minorities are limited in exercising their civil rights to participate in political life and to decide on the issues relevant to them. In the presence of 140 ethnic groups, the establishment of political parties is carried out solely on a general civil basis, as an ethnic basis may cause conflict and discrimination.

Assembly of People of Kazakhstan is a constitutional body chaired by the President of the state, and ensures effective role of minorities in politics and decision-making process. The Assembly's main tasks in political participation are: interaction between the state and civil society in the field of interethnic relations, creating conditions for strengthening inter-ethnic consensus and tolerance in society; integration of ethno-cultural and other public associations' efforts in achieving the objectives and tasks of the Assembly; the development of cultures, languages and traditions of ethnic groups.

In addition to the national, assemblies are also present in every region. The APK consists of representatives of ethnic, cultural and non-governmental associations, central and local executive bodies, [and] most authoritative

persons. They are nominated based on the proposals of regional public associations and decisions of other republic ethno-cultural public associations and are subject to approval by the Head of State. In the regions, nomination occurs by the decision of the supreme bodies of ethnic and cultural associations.

APK brings together over 800 ethnic and cultural associations, which ensure preservation and development of cultural, linguistic autonomy and identity of ethnic groups of Kazakhstan.

Representation and realisation of political interests of the Kazakhstani ethnic groups is carried out at all levels of the political system of the country.

Decisions of the APK's supreme body – annual session – are subject to the approval by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan and shall be subject to mandatory review by the public authorities. On the eve of the annual session, the heads of central executive bodies meet with APK members to discuss practical issues of inter-ethnic relations. In between the sessions, the State Secretary Minister for Foreign Affairs chairs the work of a permanent working body – the Council of the APK; this gives the Council decisions a powerful state status.

Assembly's recommendations were taken into account on such fundamental issues as the adoption of a new Constitution in 1995; strategies: the formation and development of Kazakhstan as a sovereign state; the formation of the national consensus; development of the “Kazakhstan – 2030”; APK until 2011; the formation of civic identity; the constitutional reform of 2007; Law “On the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan”.

The guaranteed parliamentary representation is ensured by 9 Majilis deputies elected at the annual session of the Assembly, representing a set of interests of all the country's ethnic groups. The right for the legislative initiative causes representation in the Majilis, which is being realised right here. Representation on the basis of political parties: out of 106 Majilis deputies – 15 deputies are elected from party lists and belong to ethnic groups; out of 47 senators – 9 [senators belong to the representatives of ethnic groups]. When appointing fifteen deputies of the Senate, the President takes into account representation of ethnic and cultural interests. Deputies provide examination of bills concerning the rights of ethnic groups.

In places of compact residence, the appointment of representatives of ethnic groups in decision-making positions constitutes the mechanism for ensuring ethnic balance of interests. In the Uygur district of Almaty region, 52.0% of civil servants are Kazakhs, and 48.0% are Uighurs. The managing team of the regional government bodies consists of 48.3% Kazakhs and 51.7% Uighurs. (Out of 94 000 civil servants, 78 000 civil servants are Kazakhs, and the rest are ethnic groups).

A new institution has been implemented since 2008 – 2 Deputy Chairmen of the Assembly of the republic ethno-cultural associations, who are subject to

an annual rotation. Thus, direct contact of the supreme state power with the ethnic groups of the country was provided, ensuring the groups' representation at the highest level.

APK Secretariat is a working body of the Assembly and is included in the structure of the Administration of the President as an independent unit. The competence of the Secretariat is to coordinate the work of state bodies on the issues of ethnic groups, the protection of their rights and interests, review of complaints and statements by representatives of ethnic groups and ethnic and cultural associations, elaboration of proposals for improving the state national policies and ensuring the rights of minorities.

In the executive bodies of the Ministry of Culture and Information, in the Department of Social and Political Work, there is the Office on cooperation with the APK, which deals with issues concerning ensuring activities and support for ethnic and cultural associations.

In the framework of 2009 social services commissioning, 35 projects on support of the ethnic groups amounting to 146 million Tenge are being carried out.

The APK's social infrastructure includes the scientific advisory council, whose tasks include comprehensive expert assessment of the trends of ethno-political and confessional development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the forecast; promotion of the role of the APK as a political and civil institution, scientific and expert assistance of the APK activities. Similar scientific and expert groups were set up in all regions of the country.

Three public funds functioning as NGOs are dealing with issues pertaining to the support of ethnic minorities, financing of socially significant projects, [they] carry out cultural and educational, charity, [and] educational activities in accordance with the purpose and objectives of the APK.

Issues of political participation of ethnic groups are covered in 33 national press media in 15 languages. TV broadcasts feature 4 programmes in 11 languages. Funding in support of ethnic media and production of programmes about ethnic groups is allocated under the budget programme "Implementation of the State Information Policy" (72 million and 683 thousand Tenge).

Education system enables integration of minorities in the social and political life of the country and the preservation of their identity. In 88 schools training is conducted entirely in Uzbek, Tajik, Uighur and Ukrainian languages. In 108 schools, 22 ethnic languages are taught as a separate subject. There were opened 195 specialised linguistic centres for the study of 30 languages. Apart from the Kazakh and Russian theatres, there exist 4 national ones – Uzbek, Uighur, Korean and German. Three of them are the only ones in their kind in the CIS.

Ladies and gentlemen!

On 26 October of the current year, at the XV session of the APK, the President N.A. Nazarbayev put forward the draft Doctrine of National Unity of Kazakhstan, which clearly reflects the ways and mechanisms of ensuring and developing political participation of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. This document is going through the public consultation process at the moment.

I would also like to remind you that the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan – “small United Nations”. I am sure that the above mentioned system ensures and will continue to ensure the harmonious development of inter-ethnic relations, the rights and interests of ethnic minorities and their full participation in the political life of the country.