

## **Bilateral relations with Russia as a part of Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy**

Developing bilateral economic, political, cultural and humanitarian relations with close neighbours plays a key role in ensuring stability and security in Central Asian region and creating conditions for mutually beneficial cooperation.

The Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation, as a result of various economic, political, ethnic, language, demographic, religious and geographical reasons (the world's longest land border, a significant share of Russian speakers in Kazakhstan and ethnic Kazakhs in Russia, interest in political and trade and economic cooperation and so on), are extremely intertwined countries.

This is proven by bilateral trade and economic cooperation. Kazakhstan's trade with the Russian Federation exceeds its trade with all the other Central Asian countries combined. In 2008, bilateral trade reached \$20bn in 2008 (against \$9.5bn in 2005), and it grows by 30% a year on average. There are over 1,600 enterprises that have the involvement of Russian capital in Kazakhstan [2].

Russian-Kazakh cooperation has been developed both in bilateral and multilateral formats – within the CIS, the EAC, the CSTO, the SCO and the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO).

It should also be noted that relations between Kazakhstan and Russia are a foundation for the creation of Eurasian financial, energy, transport and customs infrastructure.

The significance the Kremlin attaches to relations with Kazakhstan was evidenced by the fact that his first foreign trip as president of Russia Dmitry Medvedev was to Kazakhstan (in May 2008).

The special importance given to Kazakh-Russian relations is also proven by three other visits made to Kazakhstan by President Medvedev in 2008 – in July, September and December. In 2009, bilateral talks at the highest level were held in Moscow on 4 February as part of the summits of the CSTO and the EAEC.

The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev believes Kazakh-Russian relations enjoy a high level of trust and strategic partnership. He thinks that there are no political or economic problems between the two countries that cannot be solved “through a constructive dialogue and account of mutual interests”.

This point of view is also shared by the President of the Russian Federation Medvedev who stressed at a meeting with President Nazarbayev on 4 February 2009 that Kazakhstan and Russia were developing a friendly and allied dialogue.