

**Opening Statement of the Chair of the Board of the Foreign Policy Research Institute Bolat Nurgaliyev at the International Scientific-Practical Conference “Kazakhstan-China: 30 years on the Road of Friendship, Good-Neighborness and Cooperation”, Nur-Sultan, Almaty, Shanghai, Beijing, December 27, 2021**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen! With profound pleasure I greet all the participants of the conference, organized in collaboration with the Shanghai Academy of International Studies, the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in China, the Consulate General of Kazakhstan in Shanghai and the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Kazakhstan. I am especially glad to see my good friends: President Chen Dunsyao, Ambassador Galym Koyshibayev and Consul General Rakhymjan Rakhimov. Today we are taking part in the event in online format, but hopefully, we will be able in a not so remote future to leave all restrictions behind and return to normal ways of direct contact. Meanwhile, let’s try to make best out of this arrangement and have a meaningful exchange of views on topics of plenary sessions.

I was offered 10 minutes for an opening statement and therefore would like to share my personal assessment of major achievements throughout these 30 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries. As you are well aware, interstate relations can develop in different ways and more often than seldom are influenced by objective and subjective circumstances harmful for healthy atmosphere without which building constructive relations is a challenging task. Fortunately, we did not have this kind of circumstances and the Kazakh-Chinese relations from the very beginning were developing in the spirit of good will and mutual trust. The main reason,

in my humble opinion, is that the Chinese leadership sincerely wanted our young Republic to succeed and be able to join the international community as a state capable of defending its territorial integrity, state sovereignty and political independence by conducting a multi-vector foreign policy free of confrontational approaches and directed at ensuring beneficial conditions for sustainable socio-economic development.

All three Chinese leaders who dealt with Kazakhstan in these 30 years – Chairman Tsyan Zemin, Chairman Hu Tsintao, Chairman Xi Tsingpin were personally committed to assist Kazakhstan in its efforts to become a successful state and convincingly realize its political and economic potential. On our side, President Nursultan Nazarbayev and President Kassym Jomart Tokayev proceeded from strong conviction about the strategic importance of developing friendly, constructive and comprehensive partnership with our great Southern neighbor, emerging global role of whom was well understood by the leadership of Kazakhstan from the early 90-ties. The intensity of the highest-level contacts between Nur-Sultan and Beijing is evident from the fact that throughout these 30 years heads of our two states each year were meeting several times. Since 2012 till 2021 the First President-Elbasy Nazarbayev met Chairman Xi Tsingpin 19 times, while President Tokayev had 2 personal meetings and 2 telephone conversations with the Chinese leader. These contacts serve official purposes, but at the same time they form personal rapport, which helps to create a rightful atmosphere in the interstate relations. Interestingly, President Tokayev in his memoirs “Meeting the Challenges” quotes the words of Chairman Tsyan Zemin addressed to Elbasy Nazarbayev: “We speak the same language”. Actually, at a state reception in Beijing the two leaders even sung together a popular Kazakh song ‘Dudarai’ which is known in China as a song “White Rose”,

musically arranged by a famous Chinese composer Wan Lobin.

I cannot find a better description of the nature of our bilateral relations. Speaking the same language was instrumental in finding a mutually acceptable solution to many pressing issues. Take, for example, a very complex problem of mutually agreeable and rational use of water resources of transborder rivers. Another example is discussion in early 2000s of a problem of unhindered migration of ethnic Kazakhs from China to Kazakhstan. Very delicate issue from political and social angles. The Chinese government took into consideration our concerns and the return to their Motherland of tens of thousands of oralmans from China is a vivid proof of positive attitude which shapes our relations.

I believe that the choice of Nur-Sultan in 2013 by Chairman Xi Tsingpin as the place to announce the Belt and Road Initiative was a well-thought out decision intended to underline before the international community the priority importance Beijing attaches to Kazakhstan as one of the key elements in the implementation of this truly global megaproject.

Nur-Sultan and Beijing share strategic interest in advancing the goals of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is playing invaluable role in strengthening mutual trust among the participating states. I had a cherished opportunity to witness that while serving as the Secretary General of the SCO in 2007-2009. My three years in Beijing in this capacity were the apogee of my diplomatic career and I value personal friendship with my Chinese colleagues who helped me to better understand the priorities of foreign policy of this great power and motivation for Beijing's position on actual issues in the global agenda.

Yet another example of close and trustworthy

partnership between Kazakhstan and China is the creation of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. It is not a secret that initially there was a high degree of skepticism towards this initiative of Kazakhstan, some believed it is not timely, some were concerned that the CICA would compete with the SCO. The progress in shaping the CICA and bringing it to the stage of turning into a fully-fledged regional organization would not be possible without the unwavering support of Beijing.

The interests of our two countries converge in the aim of promoting multi-faceted regional cooperation in Central Asia as a way to ensure international and regional security. Both capitals are united in their strong belief that the best way to meet global challenges is through collective efforts of the international community, not through one-sided dominance and unipolar arrangements. Our relations are addressed to the future. We walked together for a long time along a wide alley, having achieved milestone results, including the Chinese security guarantees of 1995, conclusion in 1999-2006 of several treaties and agreements on final resolution of border issue, Joint Declaration of 2019 on eternal comprehensive strategic partnership. Our economic ties are actively developing for mutual benefit. In these challenging times when some countries choose isolation and self-reliance, we as good neighbors, build trust, not fences and cooperate constructively as equal partners with shared values.

In conclusion, allow me to wish all the participants good health and positive energy, so we would be able to celebrate together the next, 40-th anniversary of strong relations between our countries. Thank you for your kind attention, have a very successful conference!