

## **Kazakhstan's cooperation with the states of Muslim World**

Along with cooperation with Central Asian states, Russia, the USA and the EU, another important aspect of the foreign policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan is to develop a dialogue between civilizations and religions held by the Kazakh leadership over the past few years. Astana hosted three congresses of world and traditional religions in 2003, 2006 and 2009 and gathered spiritual leaders of the world's major religions.

Kazakhstan initiated a forum of the foreign ministers of Muslim and Western countries titled "Common World: Progress via Diversity" in Astana in October 2008.

The Republic of Kazakhstan also pays particular attention to developing relations with Muslim countries. Moreover, our country builds relations with them not on an ideological or religious basis, but proceeding from its national interests and common norms of international law.

Kazakhstan has already established economic and cultural cooperation with all leading Muslim countries. It is a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference - OIC (since 1995), which is now the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and it is cooperating with the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Muslim countries, in particular Arab ones, are active in placing investment in the Kazakh economy. However, the Republic of Kazakhstan does not just receive Arab investment, but it is also involved in cultural exchange with the Arab world. For example, our country is funding work to restore the Sultan Beirbars mosque in Cairo – Sultan. As we know Beibars was a prominent ruler of Egypt in the 13th century. The Republic of Kazakhstan is also building the Abu Nasr al-Farabi historical and cultural site in Damascus, where he is buried.

In its cooperation with the countries of Muslim world, an important task for Kazakhstan is to position itself as a secular country, in which religion is separated from state and any attempts to manipulate religious issues in achieving political aims will be resolutely stopped. As for the revival of Islam in the country, it should happen as part of the general development of culture and spirituality in Kazakhstan.

The Republic of Kazakhstan, successfully pursuing its multi-vector foreign policy, is intended to occupy a well-deserved place in the system of international relations and claim a reputation as a reliable, principled and predictable partner.