

NORWAY 12.02.2010

UPR – The Republic of Kazakhstan

Norway thanks the delegation of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the presentation of the national report.

We appreciate the high level of cooperation with the UN Human Rights system, including the OHCHR, the Treaty Bodies and the HRC Special Procedures. We welcome the adoption of a Human Rights Action Plan 2009 – 2012 as well as the adoption of legislation in the important area of gender.

Norway believes that active participation of civil society is essential to a meaningful UPR process. We recommend that Kazakhstan establish an effective and inclusive process with independent, non-Governmental funded NGOs to follow-up on UPR recommendations.

We strongly believe that human rights defenders play an important role in fostering a culture of human rights. We remain concerned about the vulnerable situation of human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers working in defence of a free media, civil liberties and human rights. We recommend that violations against human rights defenders and journalists are effectively investigated and prosecuted. We recommend that the Government ensures that all trials, including of terrorism suspects, observe international standards for fair trial. Norway will continue to remind the Government of the necessity to respond to concerns by defence lawyers and NGOs regarding trials against Human Rights Defenders such as against Yevgeny Zhovtis. We recommend the Government to impose concrete measures to ensure that courts work in accordance with the international treaties ratified by Kazakhstan.

On the basis of credible reports, including from Freedom House and Human Rights Watch, we are concerned about the restrictions on the media, and recommend the Government to counter the trend of repressing free speech, including restrictions on web based media. We recommend that the Government take concrete steps to meet its obligations on creating an environment that fosters freedom of expression.

We also recommend that the Government reconsiders the rules for registration of religious groups and takes steps to promote inter-faith harmony also for those faiths considered to be non-traditional in the country, to adhere to the Constitution as well as to international norms.