

Roundtable Devoted to Prospects for Investment Cooperation between Kazakhstan, Belgium, and Luxembourg Held in Brussels

On 26 November, Diplomatic World representatives attended the roundtable “Kazakhstan-Belgium-Luxembourg: prospects for investment cooperation” held on the side-lines of the visit of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to Belgium, where among other dignitaries he met with EU leaders Charles Michel and Ursula von der Leyen, as well as with Belgian Prime Minister Alexander de Croo. President Tokayev’s visit corroborates the healthy state of relations between Kazakhstan, on the one hand, and the European Union, Belgium, and Luxembourg on the other.

The roundtable counted with the participation of H.E. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan; Mr Meirzhan Yussupov, Chairman of the Board of Kazakh Invest; in addition to representatives from major companies from Belgium and Luxembourg which are active in a broad range of fields in the Kazakh market and are planning to expand their foothold in the Central Asian nation. To this end, following the roundtable, a number of commercial agreements were signed.

H.E. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, in his opening remarks highlighted the much-improved investment climate in Kazakhstan in recent years (as one can also deduce from Kazakhstan’s rise in the World Bank Doing Business Index); pointing to the improved institutional and infrastructure framework in Kazakhstan and the opening of the Astana International Financial Center (AIFC), among other factors. A number of promising sectors were highlighted where Belgian and Luxembourgish companies could strengthen their presence:

- Agribusiness;
- Renewable energy resources (here it is convenient to remind the reader that Kazakhstan aims to increase the share of renewables in its energy mix to 15 percent by 2030 and has announced its intention to become carbon neutral by 2060);
- Construction
- Innovative development (including IT, digitalization, cybersecurity and FinTech).

“Kazakhstan today has a huge investment potential, providing new and great opportunities for mutually beneficial business in all industries. The business circles of our countries are already actively cooperating and implementing joint projects. This is a sign of high confidence in Kazakhstan on the part of foreign business”, concluded Foreign Minister Mr Tileuberdi.

Chairman of the Board of Kazakh Invest Mr Meirzhan Yussupov expanded upon the specifics of the investment climate in Kazakhstan. Despite the difficult global situation as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Kazakh economy faces a stable and robust outlook of the Kazakh economy as confirmed by the major credit rating agencies. Furthermore, the Kazakh economy a healthy financial buffer with international reserves exceeding USD 90 billion.

Among the many reasons to invest in Kazakhstan, Mr Yussupov mentioned the following:

- Strategic location at the heart of Eurasia;
- Affordable and qualified and efficient labour force: 100 percent literacy rate, multilingual and highly educated population as a result of the 128 universities present in the country in addition to the prestigious Bolashak programme;
- Generous state support measures for investors;
- The existence of numerous platforms for dialogue between public authorities and investors
- Cost-efficient manufacturing hub.

Furthermore, Kazakhstan possesses 220 million hectares of agricultural land (making it the 6th largest in the world, which is why Kazakhstan is referred to as the breadbasket of Eurasia) as well as being the largest uranium producer and exporter in the world.

The roundtable provided the opportunity for the representatives of numerous Belgian and Luxembourg companies to take the floor and to discuss ongoing projects and plans to expand operations in Kazakhstan. Among others, we can highlight Belgian company Soudal, the largest European manufacturer of building materials which plans to open a number of representative offices in Western Kazakhstan; or the Luxembourgish satellite and terrestrial telecommunications network provider “SES” which is helping to implement a number of projects in the field of digital transformation through cloud-enabled satellite communications in Kazakhstan.

It is worth noting that, also during the month of November, a delegation of 15 Belgian companies visited Almaty and Nursultan as part of a business prospecting trip organised by Wallonia Export & Investment Agency (AWEX) & Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT).

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