



CHANGES AFTER THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS FOR THE MAJILIS IN KAZAKHSTAN

Along with the Majilis, the lower chamber of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the elections of deputies of regional, city and district local representative bodies, known as Maslikhats, were held simultaneously. In his address to the nation on October 21, 2020, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced the decree scheduling the regular parliamentary elections for the Majilis for January 10, 2021. The previous parliamentary elections of the Majilis were held in 1995, 1999, 2004, 2007, 2012 and 2016, three of which were held early.

Since independence, numerous arrangements have been made in Kazakhstan to improve the legislative process, as prior to these elections certain changes were made in the work of the Majilis and Maslikhats. As was stated by the President of Kazakhstan on October 21, 2020, the work of the Majilis of the 7th Convocation would be committed to democracy and transparency. Since the announcement of the election up until the election day there had been noticeable activity among political parties, so that the political life in the country is catching up with the contemporary developments in the world. The multiparty system facilitates the participation of the population into the political life, and the recent modifications of the legal procedures enhanced the work of the governmental entities. The issue of the constitutional clause "On the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Status of its Deputies" along with the law "On Committees and Commissions of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan" facilitate further opportunities for the opposition parties, which strengthens public trust in political institutions. As a result, one of the chairs and two secretaries of the Majilis standing committees will be elected from among the deputies of the parliamentary opposition. In addition, the provisions of the constitution law "On Elections in the Republic of Kazakhstan" and the law "On Political Parties" created for the first time in Kazakhstan a mandatory 30% quota for youth and women, expanding the representation of women and young people in the parliament.

According to the Central Election Commission (CEC), 63.3% of the 11,915,903 eligible voters in Kazakhstan casted their ballots at 10,060 polling stations. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 66 polling stations were set in 53 countries for Kazakh citizens living abroad. CEC Chairman Berik Imashev noted the importance of elections for democracy and public life in the country. Imashev thanked local and international observers for their support in the organization of the elections, as well as for their contribution in holding transparent and fair elections. According to the CEC, a total of 398 observers from 10 international organizations took part in the elections, including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) - 179; CIS Interparliamentary Assembly - 48; OSCE Office for

Democratic Institutions and Human Rights - 42; Shanghai Cooperation Organization - 15; Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking countries - 9; OSCE Parliamentary Assembly - 9; Parliamentary Assembly of the Collective Security Treaty Organization - 7; Turkish Council - 7; Organization of Islamic Cooperation - 4; The EU Delegation to Kazakhstan - 2, or a total of 322 observers from 31 countries, as well as and 76 independent observers at individual level.

On January 12, 2021, the CEC of the Republic of Kazakhstan announced the results of the election. According to the latest official results, the 5 parties participating in the elections received the following votes: Nur Otan party - 5,148,074 votes (71.09%), Ak Zhol party - 792,828 votes (10.95%), People's Party of Kazakhstan - 659,019 votes (9.10%), the "Auyl" party - 383,023 votes (5.29%), and the "Adal" party - 258,618 votes (3.57%). According to Article 97/1 of the law "On Elections in the Republic of Kazakhstan," the following parties that passed the electoral threshold of 7% became entitled to representation to form the Majilis of the 7th Convocation: 76 deputies from the Nur Otan party, 12 deputies from Ak Zhol party and 10 deputies from the People's Party of Kazakhstan.

On January 11, 2021, elections of candidates for Majilis of the 7th Convocation were held by the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (APK). Accordingly, at the 28th session of the APK held in Nur-Sultan, 351 out of 504 members of the APK took part in the voting and elected 9 deputies.

There were many peculiarities of this election. First, it coincides with the 30th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence. Second, the election was held during the term of the second President in the history of the country, who was elected on June 10, 2019. Third, both the ruling political party and opposition parties were well prepared for the elections. Besides, the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, which was represented at the Majilis of the 6th convocation, changed its name to the People's Party of Kazakhstan shortly before the elections. In this election, the party received 7.19% of the votes and entered the Majilis with 7 deputies. This election did not go very smooth for the Ak Zhol party, which was part of the Majilis of the 5th and 6th convocations. Due to tough competition, the Ak Zhol party had to develop a strong election campaign in order not to lose the trust of the electorate. Nevertheless, the political organization, which has been in the Majilis for 10 years, gained 10.18% of the votes on January 10, 2021, the highest rate in the history of the party, thanks to its experience in previous elections. The role of the Nur Otan party under the leadership of the First President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, is crucial in the political life of Kazakhstan. Since its establishment, the economic, social, health and educational development of the people Kazakhstan has

been directly linked to this party's program. Since independence, despite changes in the vote ratio, the Nur Otan party, which has been the clear winner in all elections, has solid financial and human resources. Therefore, as in the past, the Nur Otan party had once more gained the trust and support of the people of Kazakhstan.

On January 15, the President of Kazakhstan Tokayev took part in the first session of the Majilis of the 7th convocation. Expressing gratitude to the deputies of the 6th convocation for the adoption of 410 laws over the past 5 years, the President wished success to the deputies of the 7th convocation. Referring to the fact that the current Majilis was summoned on the eve of the 30th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence and the 25th anniversary of the parliamentary system, the President emphasized the importance for the state to conduct researches in all areas, determine priorities, develop the rule of law and increase the trust of the people in the government on the eve of the endeavors to come. He stressed the need for gradual reforms, expanding the competence of local authorities, modernization of the management system and the semi-public sector, expanding the scope of digitalization, thereby further improving transparency. He noted the urge to prioritize the educational sector, and to eliminate the educational and social gap between regions. On the other hand, Tokayev emphasized the gradual introduction of elections in the neighborhoods as a precondition for political reforms, and stated that the election threshold could be reduced from 7% to 5% to ensure active participation of political parties in the elections.

Nurlan Nigmatullin, who served as the Chair of the Majilis of the 5th and 6th convocations, was elected as the Chair of the Majilis of the 7th Convocation by unanimous support of the deputies. After the new members had sworn in, the members and chairs of the Standing Commissions in the Majilis were also determined. During that process, chairs of two commissions were elected from the members of the Ak Jol Party and the Kazakhstan People's Party.

Ultimately, the "Covid-19 pandemic" had affected Kazakhstan any other country in the world. In order to quickly overcome an economic crisis that could emerge due to the pandemic, a number of legislative reforms would be necessary. On the other hand, the outcome of this election might have satisfied the expectations of the population. It can be said that the renewed Majilis strengthened the expectations for economic and social development of Kazakhstan, and further increasing political participation. Meanwhile, the recent elections of the Majilis on the eve of the 30th anniversary of the Independence of Kazakhstan, formed by the ruling party and other parties that gained public trust, will form a basis for the welfare of the country, equal opportunities and the development of democracy in Kazakhstan.

Politics, Foreign Affairs, and Security

- On January 10th, 2021, Kyrgyzstan held presidential elections. According to the country's Central Election Commission, 79.28% of voters supported Sadyr Japarov. As a result, the Executive Office of the President has begun active preparations for the inauguration, which will take place from January 21st to January 28th. It is expected that the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the first President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, will attend the inauguration (24.kg, 13.01.2021).
- The President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, and Armenian Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan, had a meeting in Moscow on Nagorno-Karabakh issues, which lasted almost four hours. President Putin also had bilateral talks with his colleagues. Russian leader mentioned strategic partnership with both countries and noted that the agreements on ceasefire reached in November were implemented consistently, which created preconditions for long-term regulation of the conflict taking into consideration the interests of both nations (TASS, 11.01.2021).
- Ukraine's Minister of Foreign affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, had an online meeting with his Moldovan and Georgian counterparts, Aureliu Ciocoi and David Zalkaliani. The ministers of foreign affairs of the three EU's Eastern Partnership member-states reiterated their commitment to develop an in-depth dialogue initiative within the EU+ Associated Partners format based on the principle of differentiation. The sides also agreed that the integration into the European Market and the prospect of spreading the "four European freedoms" should be strategic goals for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia (Ukrinform.net, 15.01.2021).
- The President of Moldova, Maia Sandu, paid her first visit to Kiev and met with the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky. The two leaders signed a number of documents on bilateral cooperation in energy, infrastructure, trade and transportation. The presidents also reaffirmed their mutual support for a peaceful resolution of conflicts based on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the two countries within the internationally recognized borders and expressed their intentions to resume the bilateral dialogue at the highest level (Ukrinform.net, 12.01.2021).
- The Special Representative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Afghanistan, Ismatulla Irgashev, received the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Pakistan, Sayyid Ali Asad Gilani. The sides exchanged views on the current situation in Afghanistan and the efforts of the international community to maintain peace and stability in this country. The Ambassador of Pakistan emphasized and praised the role of Uzbekistan in establishing long-term and sustainable peace in Afghanistan (Uzdaily.uz, 15.01.2021).
- The President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, held a phone conversation with the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The leaders pointed out the development of friendly and fraternal relations between the two nations in all areas. The Presidents also discussed the restoration and reconstruction works in the recently liberated territories, as well as the involvement of Turkish companies in them. The President of Turkey stressed that Turkey would continue to support Azerbaijan (News.az, 16.01.2021).

Economy, Finance, and Energy

- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) continues to support small and medium enterprises in Kazakhstan, jointly with its local partners. Recently, the bank agreed to share up to 50% of risk on a \$1.1 million loan provided by the Bank CenterCredit to the local packaging producer Intelpack. The EBRD has a long term partnership with the Intelpack as it previously supported the company through funding and technical assistance. To date, the bank's investments in Kazakhstan reached almost \$8 billion (Kazinform, 13.01.2021).
- According to Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Agriculture, Tilek Toktogaziev, the country intends to become a regional agricultural hub. The ministry plans to process and export meat products to the Persian Gulf countries using both internal reserves and import of cheap cattle from its neighboring countries, including Kazakhstan, Russia and Mongolia. The ministry's estimates show that the country can export 40 thousand tons per week of meat products to the United Arab Emirates and 60 tons per day to China (24.kg, 12.01.2021).
- The Eurasian Economic Commission published strategic directions of development of the Eurasian Economic Union until 2025, which were approved by the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council on December 11th, 2020. The document, consisting of 330 measures and mechanisms, aims to stipulate comprehensive regional cooperation. Implementation of the strategy will require signing 13 additional international agreements, passing over 60 statutory and regulatory enactments, and introducing about 25 amendments and addenda to the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty and the national legislations (BelTA, 14.01.2021).
- Belarus's new automobile market experienced lower sales in 2020. According to the Director General of the Belarusian Automobile Association, Aleksandr Sidorevich, sales dropped by 18% and amounted to 53.5 thousand. In 2019, the sales equaled 65 thousand vehicles. Sidorevich mentions that the capacity of Belarus's market is at least twice as large. In 2020, Russian brands accounted for 70.2% in total sales. A share of carmakers of Belarus increased from 10% to 17%, while sales of imported vehicles amounted to 13% (BelTA, 14.01.2021).
- In 2020, Uzbekistan's exports amounted to \$15.1 billion. According to the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade, Uzbekistan plans to increase its exports to \$17 billion in 2021 and will involve more than 2,000 new enterprises in this process. In 2020, foreign investments in the country's fixed assets equaled \$6.6 billion and more than 169 thousand new jobs were created as part of the investment programs. In 2021, the country plans to attract foreign investments worth \$10.5 billion (UzReport, 14.01.2021).
- Recently, Iranian Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Seyid Abbas Mousavi, had a meeting with the President of the National Confederation of Organizations of Entrepreneurs of Azerbaijan, Mammad Musayev. The parties discussed measures to expand economic ties between the two countries. In particular, they agreed that establishment of the Iranian Trade House in Azerbaijan would deepen economic cooperation. During 11 months of 2020, Iran exported products worth \$266.1 million to Azerbaijan, while its imports amounted to \$36.7 million (AzerNews, 13.01.2021).

Society and Culture

- TURKSOY organized an exhibition in the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv, presenting its album "Reading Abai". The prestige album features paintings by painters of the Turkic World inspired by the works of Abai. The event was held at the Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey and was attended by diplomats and members of the local municipality only due to the health and safety measures taken to halt the COVID-19 pandemic (Turksoy.org, 14.01.2020).
- The "Corner of Abai", introducing the life and work of the famous Kazakh poet, was opened at the Trakya University in Turkey. The event was organized within the framework of the 175th anniversary of the great Kazakh poet and philosopher with the participation of TURKSOY. Diplomats of Kazakhstan and Turkey, as well as University management members were present at the event (Turksoy.org, 13.01.2021).
- The International Turkic Academy presented books about Azerbaijan in the Nur-Sultan city. The event was organized as part of the 30th anniversary of independence of the Turkic states that will be celebrated over the course of 2021. The presented book included "Karabakh the Pearl of Azerbaijan: history, culture, nature", "Lost Happiness: True stories of Karabakh" and "Azerbaijan People's Republic". The event was attended by diplomats and high-ranking government officials from different Turkic states (Twesco.org, 14.01.2021).
- A Russian Educational Center was opened in the Tajik city of Tursunzade. The initiative was implemented by the public organization "Russian Community", the Russian embassy in Tajikistan, the city administration and Tajikistan Dioceses of the Holy Russian Orthodox Church. The Center is designed to improve the knowledge of the Russian language among schoolchildren, as well as to help them with admission to universities in the Russian Federation (Centralasia.news, 12.01.2021).
- Turkmenistan is planning to nominate the desert ecosystem of Central Asia to the UNESCO World Heritage List. The decision was made based on the results of field research, conducted by scientists during their expeditions to the Eastern, Central and Northern Karakum Desert. As a result of the research, reports and updated lists of flora and fauna of deserts were prepared. The necessary information was also collected for the development of management plans for natural reserves (Centralasia.media, 11.01.2021).
- The Program Coordinator of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), Osman Usta, visited the National Library of Kyrgyzstan. He also held negotiations with its director, Zhyldyz Bakashova, and discussed the prospects for further improvement and modernization of the Kyrgyz-Turkish Center for Culture and Literature named after Chingiz Aitmatov. The sides also discussed the joint projects and outlined plans for holding joint events in 2021 (En.kabar.kg, 14.01.2021).