



Message of the Director General on the occasion of the anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk test range

29 August 2006

Fifteen years ago today, President Nursultan Nazarbayev officially closed the Semipalatinsk test range, where over 450 underground and atmospheric nuclear tests had been conducted.

Today, the scientific and technical facilities at Semipalatinsk are being converted to peaceful uses under the jurisdiction of the National Nuclear Centre of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The IAEA is pleased to have assisted in this work.

Shutting down the nuclear test range at Semipalatinsk sends a strong signal of support for the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Like the closure by France of the nuclear test site in the South Pacific, it contributes both directly and symbolically to the goals of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and underscores the principles of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). By constraining the further development of nuclear weapons, these measures to bring nuclear tests to a halt and to bring the test sites to closure are important steps towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Kazakhstan's support for the NPT regime was signalled soon after its emergence as one of the Newly Independent States, by its voluntary renunciation of the nuclear weapons that were deployed on its territory. Not long afterwards, it joined the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State.

Kazakhstan has played a significant role in the effort to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We support these efforts by the five Central Asian States — including Kazakhstan — to sign and bring into force a treaty establishing this nuclear-weapon-free zone.

These actions on the part of Kazakhstan — and its broad support for IAEA safeguards — contribute to regional and global security. On a global scale, it continues to be my hope that such efforts, taken collectively, will lead to a system of collective security that no longer relies on nuclear weapons.

I am pleased to join others in congratulating Kazakhstan in celebrating the 15th anniversary of the closing of the Semipalatinsk test site, and I commend Kazakhstan for its efforts to convert this site to peaceful uses.