

Secretary of State John Kerry welcomed Erlan Abdyldaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, and the accompanying Kyrgyz delegation to Washington for the third round of Kyrgyz Republic - United States Annual Bilateral Consultations on April 8-10, 2015. The Secretary and Foreign Minister acknowledged that the consultations were an important opportunity to renew the bilateral relationship and review the impressive democratic, social, economic, security, and human rights gains made since the independence of the Kyrgyz Republic 24 years ago. Secretary Kerry confirmed that the Kyrgyz Republic is an important partner of the United States and emphasized the long-standing and continuing U.S. support for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the Kyrgyz Republic. The Secretary and Foreign Minister recognized the efforts of the Kyrgyz Republic to encourage full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all sides.

Foreign Minister Abdyldaev also met with Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman, Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Sarah Sewall, and Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia and Central Asia at the National Security Council Celeste Wallander for discussions on regional security, countering violent extremism, and human rights.

United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Nisha Biswal and Foreign Minister Abdyldaev co-chaired the consultations, which serve to enhance the excellent bilateral cooperation and strategic partnership between the Kyrgyz Republic and the United States. The co-chairs, in the spirit of friendship, mutual respect, and desire to promote closer ties, reviewed the current partnerships between the two countries and considered new areas to expand cooperation in bilateral relations.

The United States reiterated its commitment to support the Kyrgyz Republic's efforts to ensure its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, strengthen its stability, and foster its national economic development. The United States also recognized the Kyrgyz Republic's contribution to strengthening security, stability, and cooperation in Central Asia. The Kyrgyz Republic noted that it highly values U.S. support in strengthening its democracy and its social and economic

development. Both heads of delegations expressed mutual interest in widening cooperation in democracy and effective public governance.

The co-chairs were pleased to announce an increase to the validity of business and tourist U.S. nonimmigrant visas for Kyrgyz nationals from one year to five years and a reciprocal extension of validity for U.S. citizens traveling to the Kyrgyz Republic. Both our countries should benefit from increased travel, investment, and business development opportunities resulting from this new arrangement. This arrangement should also help support the Kyrgyz Republic's democracy through greater person-to-person interactions and further solidify the important partnership between the Kyrgyz Republic and the United States.

The co-chairs highlighted the importance of expanding and deepening bilateral trade and economic ties. In recognition of the need for greater regional connectivity in Central Asia and for improved economic opportunities for U.S. companies in the Kyrgyz Republic and the region, Foreign Minister Abdyldaev announced the Kyrgyz Republic's intent to host the next U.S.-Central Asia Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council Meeting in 2015. The United States welcomes this announcement as an opportunity for the Kyrgyz Republic to demonstrate its leadership in building better regional economic linkages. The United States also acknowledged the Kyrgyz government's strong support of the CASA-1000 regional energy project.

The United States commended Kyrgyzstan's leadership in promoting democracy. In welcoming the Kyrgyz Republic's commitment to hold free and fair parliamentary elections in 2015 and presidential elections in 2017, the United States outlined its continuing assistance to the Kyrgyz electoral processes. The United States has provided more than \$17 million in elections assistance over the past five years, supports the Kyrgyz Republic's efforts to ensure successful parliamentary elections in fall 2015, and intends to continue its support for the Kyrgyz Republic's electoral processes for the 2017 presidential election. Assistant Secretary

Biswal noted that a democratic and peaceful transition of presidential power through free and fair elections in 2017 would signify that the people of the Kyrgyz Republic have made immense progress since the revolutionary events of April 2010. Both sides recognized that the Kyrgyz Republic still has considerable work remaining in order to maintain an open society that welcomes the contributions of all of its citizens.

The co-chairs reaffirmed their shared commitment to cooperate closely in fostering regional security and combatting violent extremism. Both sides acknowledged that maintaining an operating space for civil society and religious groups is crucial for resisting violent extremism. The sides emphasized ongoing partnership in the security sphere, including U.S. assistance on peacekeeping and through the Foreign Military Financing and International Military Education and Training programs, and the mutual desire to enhance the security relationship further. The co-chairs noted the need to continue close cooperation to combat narcotics trafficking and the parties highlighted the importance of further strengthening cooperation in fighting corruption, improving the criminal code, investigating financial crimes, and implementing law enforcement reform. The sides also reviewed the progress made in increasing the capabilities of Kyrgyz customs and border officials, preventing human trafficking, and protecting snow leopards.

The sides recognized the positive influence of exchange and educational programs and expressed their intent to explore further opportunities to expand these initiatives. Both sides praised the American University of Central Asia and noted its contributions to development in the Kyrgyz Republic and the region. Finally, the co-chairs highlighted the work of the United States Agency for International Development and the Peace Corps in strengthening the education and health system of the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as building lasting personal relationships between Kyrgyz and U.S. citizens.