
SPAIN'S ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER ARRIVES IN KAZAKHSTAN

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Spain's acting foreign minister arrived early Sunday in Kazakhstan on a visit aimed at bolstering ties with the Central Asian nation, which is preparing to defend its bid for a non-permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council and to host Expo 2017.

The Spanish air force Airbus 310 carrying Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo and a sizable business delegation landed at Astana's airport at 1:00 a.m. Sunday local time (1900 GMT Saturday).

The minister's official schedule will kick off on Sunday with a visit to Spanish train manufacturer Talgo's industrial facilities in Astana and will continue with a ceremony at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, where Spain established the "Ruy Gonzalez Clavijo" Spanish learning center.

On Monday, Garcia-Margallo will inaugurate a Spain-Kazakhstan business forum before meeting with Kazakh counterpart Erlan Idrissov, who will later join him at a press conference.

In December 2015, the European Union and Kazakhstan signed the EU-Kazakhstan Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, a pact that will set the tone for future economic and political ties between the European bloc and the Central Asian nation.

That new agreement, signed on Dec. 21, 2015, replaced the EU-Kazakhstan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that had been in force since 1999.

The European Union's support was crucial to the Central Asian country finally acceding to the World Trade Organization in July 2015 after two decades of negotiations.

Kazakhstan also received the European bloc's backing for its successful bid to host Expo 2017, an event organized under the theme "Future Energy" that the country expects will consolidate its position as a regional power in Central Asia.

Kazakhstan also is prepared to defend its bid to become a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council for 2017-2018.

If elected in June, the Central Asian nation would become the first independent republic of the former Soviet Union to secure one of those seats. EFE

Kaynak/Source: