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## **KAZAKHSTAN: EXPEDITION TO CLIMB SUMMIT OF ALTAY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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An international expedition consisting of representatives of UNDP in Kazakhstan, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Bank, the Kazakh Tourism national company and local environmental specialists on 23 June-1 July will climb Mount Belukha in Altay Mountains. A well-known Kazakh climber, Maksut Zhumayev, who has climbed Mount Everest twice, will also join the expedition. Akimat (administration) of the East Kazakhstan region also provides support for the project.

The goal of the expedition is to raise awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, adopted by the UN) with the focus on environmental issues, biodiversity preservation and the development of ecological tourism. This project is being coordinated by UNDP in Kazakhstan, which has been implementing a wide range of projects in preserving forests and wildlife in Kazakhstan.

Surrounded by pristine nature, Mount Belukha (altitude 4.509m) is the highest summit of Altay Mountains. It is located in the Katon-Karagay National Park in the East Kazakhstan Region. The Park plays an important role in fighting the negative consequences of climate change – its forests can absorb high amount of CO<sub>2</sub>. Although the distance from Ust-Kamenogorsk or any other settlement to Mount Belukha and other parts of Altay Mountains is relatively long, it is worth going there. Reserves and nature treasures are located in the clean mountainous landscape, which is the habitat for unique mammals, fish and plants. Altay Mountains which lie in Kazakhstan, Russia, Mongolia and China, are the main source of fresh water in Central Asia.

As part of the project, a documentary film about the unique expedition will be created, environmental research will be carried out in Altay Mountains and the SDGs flag will be mounted on the Belukha summit. Local organisations specialising in tourism will be involved in the project, Kazakhstans tourism development strategy will be updated, tourist routes will be increased and improved. The expedition will collect information to improve and expand the current tourist guides about the Katon-Karagay National Park and will document the unique ecological characteristics and biodiversity of Altay Mountains.

32 local and international enthusiasts divided into three groups will participate in the project. The first group will cross the Belukha glacier and will reach the mountain peak. The second and third groups led by UNDP experts and other organizations will prepare materials to promote eco-tourism in Kazakhstan, including new tourist itineraries of Katon-Karagay national park, and will document

unique biodiversity of Altay Mountains.

<https://www.timesca.com/index.php/news/19911-kazakhstan-expedition-to-climb-summit-of-altay-for-sustainable-development-goals>

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