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## **KAZAKH PRESIDENT SAYS HIS CHOICE OF RUSSIA FOR FIRST FOREIGN VISIT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF**

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Kazakh President Kasym-Zhomart Tokayev, who will pay an official visit to Moscow on April 3, said the choice of Russia as the country of his first foreign visit speaks for itself.

"The strategic vision of the current geopolitical situation, and his [Kazakhstan's first president Nursultan Nazarbayev's] trust-based relations with many foreign leaders allowed our country to take the rightful place in the global system of international relations," Tokayev said in an interview with Russia's Kommersant daily, published on Tuesday.

"However, there are special goals inside the system of priorities, I mean the development of friendly relations with Russia, which, naturally, does not prevent the development of cooperation with other nations. The very fact that my first foreign trip as the head of state is the visit to Russia has speaks for itself," he added.

"For us, Russia is a reliable strategic partner and good neighbor," the Kazakh leader continued. "Our countries have established an intense political dialogue and deep economic ties, we efficiently develop cooperation in all spheres. There are practically no issues remaining unsolved through a continuous constructive dialogue. As the leaders of our states have repeatedly stressed, the cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan could serve as an example of interstate relations."

The head of Kazakhstan also said that his country so far managed to avoid "conflicts or confrontation with anyone" and to build a "belt of friendship" with all of its neighbors promoting "restrained and equal discussions on most difficult issues."

He also commented on the successful development of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

"We have laid an institutional basis for forming a single market of goods, services, capital and established efficient formats of cooperation between the member states," the Kazakh leader said. "I believe that all short-term and midterm integration plans in our zone are concrete, economically feasible and quite realistic."

He also urged to "step up work in wider formats for long-term perspective, including measures for integration of integrations, cooperation within the Greater Eurasia format."

According to Tokayev, Kazakhstan will also press for expanding EAEU cooperation with the European Union, cooperation within the "One Belt - One Road" format involving China, and enhanced economic ties with Central Asian countries and states members of the Association of

Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

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