Statement by
Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations
at a plenary meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the International Day of
Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade
(25 March 2015, New York)

Mr. President,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank H.E. Mr. Sam Kutesa for convening this commemorative
plenary meeting to observe the International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Slavery and the
Transatlantic Slave Trade, as well as Ms. Sylviane Diouf for her keynote address and other speakers
for their very moving insights on the significance of the Day.

Every year, on the 25th of March, we pay tribute to those who were victimized, tortured and
killed because of the scourge of slavery. This year's Day of Remembrance pays particular tribute to
the many women who suffered and died during the slave trade. It is estimated that one third of the
approximately 15 million people who were deported from Africa through the Transatlantic Slave
Trade were women. The International Day is also a sober reminder that many modern forms of slavery
and long established stereotypes and biases continue to prevail – all calling for strong concerted
multilateral action.

Considering how little is still known about the four-hundred-year-long transatlantic slave trade
and its lasting consequences, felt throughout the world, the Government of Kazakhstan, as a gesture
of honouring the victims for their courage and will to survive, has made a contribution towards the
construction of a permanent memorial “The Ark of Return”, which has been unveiled today by the
Secretary-General at the Visitors Plaza. This memorial will be a testament to human bravery and the
triumph of the human spirit against all odds and indignities.

Since this is the year of Beijing +20, the commemoration of the 2015 Day is rightly dedicated
to the theme, Slavery and Women. As in all conditions of injustice and suffering, whether be it in
conflict, development, natural disasters or other tragic events, women bear the heaviest brunt of all
suffering. Enslaved women, therefore, carried a triple burden because, in addition to enduring the
harsh conditions of forced labour as a slave, they experienced extreme forms of discrimination and
exploitation as a result of their gender and the colour of their skin. When trapped in slavery, and
women treated like property or chattel, the human rights of women with their dignity and respect take
precedence.

Slavery did not end with its abolition in the 19th century. It continues to prevail in numerous
ways, in some form or another in every country in the world. This illegal practice takes the form
of women caught in prostitution, children and adults forced to work in agriculture, domestic work,
factories and sweatshops producing cheap goods for global supply chains. Unfortunately, the illegal practice of slavery still blights contemporary world.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), around 21 million men, women and children around the world are in a form of slavery. There are many different characteristics that distinguish slavery from other human rights violations. Contemporary slavery takes various forms and affects people of all ages, gender and races as in the case of bonded labour, child slavery, forced labour, descent-based slavery, and restriction of freedom. Hence, the right to the truth – which is both an individual and collective right – is essential for not only victims but also for society at large. Uncovering the truth of human rights violations of the past can help prevent human rights abuses in the future.

This is the day to say "No to slavery" and end all forms of abuse and indignity. This 70th Anniversary year of the United Nations, and ushering of the post-2015 phase, is an era of greater realization of the human potential and its full blossoming.

My country steadfastly commits itself to always uphold human security and dignity, with freedom and justice for all.

I thank you for your attention.