



### Press release

#### **"The Pole of Independence" expedition participants have met the New 2017 year at the South Pole**

"The Pole of Independence" ski expedition participants have congratulated Kazakhstan citizens with the New 2017 year from the South Pole of the Earth. As were planned, they had reached 90 degrees South – the point where all meridians of The Earth merge, just in 10 days. They were making daily the forced marches up to 20 km, the team members had covered total of 217 km across Antarctic desert.

*"All team of "The Pole of Independence" expedition sends heartfelt congratulations with the New Year to all Kazakhstan citizens! We wish you all happiness, health, peace, good luck, a lot of affection and love in 2017! This is the first time that we celebrate the New Year in the vast expanses of Antarctica. Despite the inclement weather, everything is going fine and everyone is in excellent mood! I and all team members – Yury Yushin, Ilyas Galimbekov and Daulet Sharipov, wish you all the best! Once again: Happy New Year, till next communication! Balashaутыз – birlikte! (Болашағымыз – бірлікте!) Alga Kazakhstan! (Алга Қазақстан!)", said Magzhan Sagimbaev, the expedition team leader and the head of QazaqGeography regional office in Almaty*

The ski march to the South Pole has become the second stage of the scientific-research expedition "The Pole of Independence". It started on December 21 after successful ascend of mountaineers Magzhan Sagimbaev and Ilyas Galimbekov to the Winson peak, where they had installed the State flag on the Independence Day. The first Kazakhstan ski expedition to the South Pole was not without incidents. During ten days polar explorers had to repair equipment on the run, to warm up froze bitten parts of the body, to extinguish a fire in the tent and even to celebrate the birthday of the youngest team member Ilyas Galimbekov who became 21.

According to the Arctic and Antarctic programs Head and Vice-President of the Subject Committee "Tourism, traveling and regional ethnography" of QazaqGeography Nurlan Abduov, setting up of such large scale expedition as "The Pole of Independence" and other projects became possible thanks to support of Kazakhstan National Geographic Society QazaqGeography which includes KazGeo.

*"Between 2011 and 2017, 15 team members of KazGeo had visited Arctics and Antarctica as part of three polar expeditions. Participants of the first Antarctic expedition had become the Guinness book record holders for the fastest pass of the rout. Thanks to joint efforts with State bodies in 2014, the Presidential Decree was signed on Kazakhstan joining The Antarctic Treaty of 1959. We hope that after accomplishing "The Pole of Independence" project there will be a possibility for Kazakhstan to initiate an appearance of scientific station in Antarctica", says Abduov .*

Installation of automated scientific station in Antarctica will strengthen the Kazakhstan position among countries participants of The Antarctic Treaty, and also will allow to create a foundation for future polar studies.

*"We are only penetrating the scientific society that is studying extreme polar conditions. Many countries have been doing it for many years. There are certain scientific and strategic targets. That's why participation of Kazakhstan, being a serious player on the world resources market, also has a pragmatic intent. QazaqGeography cooperates with the American Association of Geographers and Russian Geographical Society, and also with countries having their resource bases in Antarctica and Arctic. Our intent is to continue interaction with foreign partners and, to the best of our possibilities, to strengthen our positions on the South Pole", says Kanat Baigarin, the Chairman of Managing Committee of Republic Public Association "Kazakhstan National Geographical Society" (QazaqGeography), Vice-President of Nazarbaev University of innovations and sciences.*

Meanwhile, two scientific researchers of the expedition, Aliya Ernazarova and Arman Baimukhamedov, have already finished studies at the base Union Gletcher and started to work in the area of biotechnology and studies of Antarctic influence onto the human physiology.

*"I am overwhelmed by positive emotions, certainly there is fatigue, but in general everything went extremely well. Thanks to Kazakhstan National Geographical Society for unique possibility to visit Antarctica and to make studies there. We have got acquainted with scientists from different countries, it was a pleasure to work productively together and to fill part of international scientific community", says Arman Baimukhamedov, the expedition participant.*

The "Pole of Independence" expedition is being conducted under the sponsorship of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan and with the support of the Republican Public Association's "Kazakhstan National Geographic Society" (QazaqGeography). "Baiterik" National Management Holding is the general partner of the project, with support from other project partners, including Nazarbayev University, Al-Farabi Kazakhstan National University, and D.S. Asfendiyarov Kazakhstan National Medical University. The Kazakhstan Geographic Society is organizing the scientific and research expedition.

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