

Welcoming remarks by

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Chairperson of the Executive Board

Celebration of Dombra Day

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Dear Ambassadors,
Dear friends,

I would like to begin by thanking His Excellency Mr Askar Abdrakhmanov, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Kazakhstan to UNESCO, for his kind invitation to attend this cultural event and to say a few words on this occasion.

Today we come together to celebrate Dombra Day, a tribute to one of the most iconic symbols of Kazakh culture and heritage, on the anniversary of the inscription of the tradition of ***dombra kuy*** on the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The dombra, a two-stringed instrument, has been the very backbone of Kazakh identity for centuries. In 1986, several stones that contain images of ancient people living in the area were uncovered in the Almaty Region. Depicted on the stones is a picture of an instrument, with two ears, that is, two strings, a long neck, similar to a dombra, and this is placed in front of five dancing people. It is believed these stones are from the Bronze age.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev defined dombra as the "*talisman and amulet*" of the Kazakh nation. This is not just a musical instrument. For centuries, it has been the heartbeat of the Kazakh nation, used to celebrate and to mark solemn moments, preserving the country's rich traditions.

Its sophisticated and gentle tonality produces enchanted sounds that paint images of the Kazakh steppe in the air. Sometimes it relaxes by its delicate tunes, sometimes it excites by resembling a herd of wild horses galloping across the wide prairie.

Even Pope Francis, when visiting Kazakhstan in 2022 recognized that dombra is a hallmark of the Kazakh culture and said that "*the two parallel strings of the instrument symbolize Kazakhstan's capacity to create harmony and balance between "frigid winter and torrid summer," tradition and progress, Asia and Europe, it is a symbol of being "a junction between East and West."*

Perhaps the most effective words that describes the importance of this instrument for the people and nation of Kazakhstan are those of a famous saying by Kazakh poet and writer Kadyr Myrza Ali: "*A real Kazakh is not a Kazakh, a real Kazakh is a dombra*".

Once again, I thank and congratulate the Permanent Delegation of Kazakhstan for organizing this melodious event.

Thank you.