

*Human Rights Council – 28th session
Item 6 – Universal Periodic Review - Kazakhstan*

Speaker: Albert Hengelaar

Thursday 19 March 2015

Mr President,

The World Evangelical Alliance would like to thank the Government of Kazakhstan for its participation in the UPR process. A meaningful participation of all parts of civil society in the national consultation process however remains a challenge, due to a climate of fear that still affects religious minorities often labelled as “sects” and subjected to a close surveillance.

As stressed by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief following his recent visit to Kazakhstan, the practice of religious freedom, including its collective dimension, cannot depend upon an administrative decision to recognize or not to recognize a community. The mandatory registration system contained in the 2011 Religion Law not only sets standards difficult to reach for small communities; it is also contrary to international human rights law, by punishing those who participate in religious activities outside a registered community. As a matter of consequence, we do not consider that recommendation 124.21 from Ireland and recommendation 124.23 from the Netherlands are already implemented. We would also like to kindly ask Kazakhstan to reconsider its position on recommendations 126.21 from Italy, 126.28 from the Republic of Korea, 126.33 from Germany and 126.34 from Canada, that did not enjoy the support of Kazakhstan.

We welcome some positive developments following the visit of the Special Rapporteur as well as the fact that the Congress of World Religions seems to be opening up to religious minorities that were not invited in past editions. It is now our hope that Kazakhstan will go a step further by reviewing its mandatory registration procedure.

Thank you Mr. President.