

**Выступление с приветственным словом на сессии: «Prospects of Cooperation of the CICA Member States in the Field of Digitalization of Business Processes in Small and Medium Enterprises»**

Esteemed guests, dear participants, ladies and gentlemen

It is a great honor for me to open this session — one of the first sessions of the Astana Finance Days. I am thrilled that Astana Finance Days unite policymakers and market participants from different industries and sectors.

It is also symbolic that this year AFD partners with CICA to discuss the critical topic of digitalization. I want to highlight that AIFC and CICA share the same principles of cooperation, enhanced interaction, and confidence-building, which can only be achieved through constant dialogue and a solid institutional foundation.

AIFC's purpose was to provide an institutional framework that would allow development and international integration, while the Astana Finance Days conference is the right platform for international and interdisciplinary dialogue.

From a certain point of view, AIFC can serve as an exciting example. We started in 2015–2016 as a small government initiative—we used to call ourselves a startup. In the following years, with the support of our government and National Bank, we have managed to seal strategic partnerships and created our independent regulator, international court, and arbitration center. Our goals include developing the capital market, asset management, private banking, Islamic finance, and sustainable finance, tech and fintech, and facilitating investment attraction.

In partnership with Nasdaq, Goldman Sachs, Shanghai, and Silk Road Fund, we started a brand new stock exchange, empowered by Nasdaq technology and running its operations in Amazon Web Services cloud. We tried to embrace and adopt technology from the beginning, testing new waters and expanding our frontiers.

We were fortunate, or maybe farsighted, to adopt digital onboarding processes and an online legal case filing system just before the outburst of the Covid pandemic, allowing us to continue operations even during the lockdown.

We have achieved significant milestones: 1400 companies in our jurisdiction contributing to the attraction of about 6.6 billion USD. So, innovation and digitalization have always driven our development.

Today, we would like to explore the prospects for our cooperation. In particular, in this session, we discuss modernizing business processes for SMEs in our countries. This would require a broad policy landscape on both macro and microlevel. We must put our utmost effort into updating how we think about business processes, perhaps inventing new ones, and automizing and digitizing those we have. There are excellent global examples like Uber or SpaceX and local success stories like crowdfunding and venture financing platforms at the AIFC or our fintech participants.

I am delighted that AIFC has an opportunity to contribute to this intergovernmental dialogue. We can bring our experience from the financing side for SMEs and offer all CICA members to use the capacity of our TechHub and, in particular, our Affiliate Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which we launched with the World Economic Forum. You can learn more about our activities and benefits during the Astana Finance Days.

Let me wish you a fruitful discussion!