

**THE FOREIGN POLICY OF  
AZERBAIJAN AND ITS  
CONTRIBUTIONS TO  
WORLD PEACE**

**-2016-**

PETER M. TASE

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## Acknowledgements

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HEYDAR ALIYEV, NATIONAL LEADER OF AZERBAIJAN  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN  
(1993 – 2003)

**"We want peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We want peace in the Caucasus region. We want peace in Southern Caucasus. And, therefore, we are putting up with this difficult situation. But patience has its limits.**

**You should know, the entire OSCE should know, the Minsk Group should know and the United Nations should know that an end must be put to this injustice against Azerbaijan."**

**President HEYDAR ALIYEV, National Leader of Azerbaijan**  
(excerpt of his welcoming address to the visiting OSCE delegation headed by Ms. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria and Vice President of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe -OSCE-, July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2000 in Baku).







H. E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev,  
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
(2003 – present)

“Multiculturalism is a state policy in Azerbaijan, and at the same time, it’s our lifestyle. Though the word multiculturalism is relatively new and sometimes very difficult to pronounce, but the ideas of multiculturalism always existed in our country. Regardless of the time of history, regardless of the political system in Azerbaijan, our people always were active defenders and promoters of multiculturalism inside Azerbaijan and beyond our borders.”

*- H. E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev at the opening keynote address of the  
“IV World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue”, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017.*

*“...Today, we observe new formats of information supply, including television, radio, print media and the Internet, which divide the audience in accordance with the favorable innovative ways of news consumption. Discussion related to the formation and prospects for the information society can bring results only if supported by the evolution in the field of new information technologies.*

*Apart from the 5<sup>th</sup> News Agencies World Congress and the 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of OANA, the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Council of CIS Heads of News Agencies will also be held. The agenda of the session includes a range of issues, including the organization's activities in 2016, implementation of joint projects and expansion of information exchange.*

*Our century is rightly called the age of information revolution. This revolution is driven by advanced technological innovations that have an unprecedented speed and scale. But we should not forget that this information and technological breakthrough has objective preconditions. One of the major trends in today's world is globalization, which has left its mark on information and communication sector. Information flows transcend national borders, integrating into the global information space. The development of information and communication technologies brings about significant changes in the political life of society. ...Under these circumstances, traditional journalism has been experiencing a dramatic transformation. Technology as well as new devices that are a driving force of this transformation...”*

- Mr. Aslan Aslanov, Director General of AZERTAC

## Introduction

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Over the last twenty five years, under the guidance and vision of national leader Heydar Aliyev and the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and its dynamic relations with other countries have generated many outstanding results that comprise infinite benefits for the people of Azerbaijan, a nation with a vibrant economy in the crossroads of Southeastern Europe and Western Asia.

In the context of strengthening the Foreign Relations of Azerbaijan, the admirable multiculturalism traditions and heritage of the Azerbaijani people and its Cultural Diplomacy; the Azerbaijan State News Agency has played a crucial role to further promote the marvelous multiculturalism, economic, commercial and political cooperation between Baku and other developed nations.

This volume is a compilation of interviews, press releases and prominent articles published by the Azerbaijan State News Agency to highlight the major events that have taken place in 2016, as well as to promote the pragmatic diplomatic initiatives of the Republic of Azerbaijan, under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev and Azerbaijan's First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva.

This book is focused on the historic accomplishments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan; it

includes over sixty articles and interviews that rise to the apex of worldwide attention, some of the major foreign policy successes of Azerbaijan during the period of January – December 2016.

In this volume the reader will become familiar with Azerbaijani multiculturalism values, the bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Italy, the cultural cooperation between Azerbaijan and France, bilateral ties of Japan with Azerbaijan, and will delve into the multifaceted support that Baku has received from many international public and elected officials.

Some of the highlights of this project are: the official statement that recognizes and honors the innocent victims of the Khojaly Massacre, signed by the Honorable John Nathan Deal, 82<sup>nd</sup> Governor of the U.S. State of Georgia; the commendation of Azerbaijan's exemplary model of interfaith dialogue, multiculturalism and religious tolerance by the Oregon State Legislature; and Idaho becomes the 21<sup>st</sup> State in the United States to recognize the Khojaly Massacre.

A special emphasis has been given to the remarkable bilateral economic and political cooperation between Azerbaijan and Hungary. During his official visit to Baku, Mr. Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary, awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of Hungary to the Honorable Mehriban Aliyeva, First Lady of Azerbaijan. Moreover, Azerbaijan State News Agency (AZERTAC) provides the entire world with a window of reliable and trusted information on the Republic of Azerbaijan, an independent nation

where twenty percent of its sovereign territory is occupied by the Republic of Armenia and its Armed Forces, for more than twenty five years. The Nagorno-Karabakh region and its surrounding seven districts: Kalbajar, Lachin, Qubadli, Jabrayil, Zangilan, Agdam, Fuzuli, are under the brutal military occupation of the Armenian Armed Forces and the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan continues to go through many development and socio-economic hardships due to the economic blockade imposed by Yerevan for almost three decades.

Furthermore, according to Prof. Dr. Mubariz Gurbanli, Chairman of Azerbaijani State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations; Armenian Armed Forces have destroyed about 900 cultural and religious monuments as a result of its occupation of Azerbaijani territories (until 2015).

In his remarks made at the major international event titled "Protection of cultural and religious heritage in the Caucasus," Prof. Dr. Gurbanli added that: "After occupying 20 percent of Azerbaijan's internationally-recognized territories, Armenia pursues a policy of vandalism against Azerbaijan's historical, material and cultural heritage on its own territory and on the occupied Azerbaijani lands. Armenians have destroyed 927 libraries in the occupied Azerbaijani territories as part of the purposeful policy to annihilate the history and culture of the Land of Fire. Moreover, nine mosques, 44 shrines, 464 historical monuments and museums, over 40,000 museum items were looted, destroyed and crushed on the occupied territories."

It must be emphasized that the monetary damage caused by Armenian Government and its Armed Forces, during all of these years of occupation and looting of Azerbaijani lands goes beyond US\$ \$818 Billion.

The Cultural and Spiritual heritage of the Azerbaijani Nation has always been exposed to the Armenian Aggression, over the last three decades.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the Khojaly tragedy is the most horrible and bloodiest episode of the Nagorno-Karabakh armed conflict where the Armenian Armed Forces have massacred more than 613 Azerbaijani civilians on the night of February 25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>, 1992. Armenian brutality, ethnic cleansing and continuous violation of International Humanitarian Laws have made more than one million Azerbaijani innocent citizens to become Internally Displaced People (IDP).

The world must know that Armenian Government continues to this day to manipulate and falsify the historical and religious treasures of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Alban Church located in Kalbajar, an Azerbaijani district occupied by the Armenian Armed Forces, is one of many examples where the Armenian authorities have purposely changed the name of this religious site.

In this context the name of Ganjasar Church was recently changed by the Armenian Foreign Affairs Minister into 'Gandzasar', at a time when International scholars and archaeologists have meticulously proven

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.azernews.az/nation/90486.html>  
<http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1080683>

that the very same religious monument belongs to Caucasian Albania and was built in 1216 upon the orders of Prince Hasan Jalal, one of the rulers of Ashagi Khachin. In 1240 this site became a sacred place and is the tomb of Hasan Jalal (after he was killed by the Mongolians in 1261) and of his relatives.

This cathedral and religious monument in Caucasia is a masterpiece of Albanian Architecture, it reflects the deeply rooted religious practice and tolerance of the ancient state of Caucasian Albania and its tribes including the Udis, Gargars, Caspis and Tsods.<sup>2</sup>

The repeated actions of misappropriating Azerbaijani cultural and religious treasures, by the Government of Armenia are a clear violation of International Humanitarian Law. While taking into account the ongoing destructions of Azerbaijani cultural heritage and disinformation campaigns led by the Government of Armenia, the role of Azerbaijan State News Agency becomes vital and promotes inconspicuously: ethics in journalism, Azerbaijan's foreign policy and cultural diplomacy, reliable sources of historiography in Southeast Europe and the Caucasus region, helps to safeguard the national interest and the national security policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.azernews.az/karabakh/116675.html>





## **28<sup>th</sup> volume of "Ilham Aliyev: Development is our goal" book is published**



Baku, June 22, 2016

The 28<sup>th</sup> volume of "Ilham Aliyev. Development is our goal" multi volume book has been published. The material included in this volume of the book covers the period from December 2007 to February 2008.

It begins with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's letter to the Emperor of Japan Akihito. The volume also includes the head of state's speeches which he made at the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers dedicated to the results of socioeconomic development of 2007 and objectives for 2008, as well as the conference on results of four-year

implementation of the "State Program for socio-economic development of regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan."

The volume highlights President Ilham Aliyev's visit to Switzerland, his participation in the World Economic Forum in Davos, as well as his meetings on the sidelines of this event. The book also includes material on President Ilham Aliyev's meeting with Hungarian President Laszlo Solyom as part of his state visit to the country, bilateral documents signed by the two leaders, the head of state's receiving Honorary Doctorate from Corvinus University of Hungary, as well as his speeches and statements. Azerbaijan State News Agency (AZERTAC) contributed to the publication of the 28th volume of the book.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/963764>

## **Azerbaijan and Italy: Effective Bilateral Cooperation**

*President Ilham Aliyev received a delegation led by Italian Minister of Education, University and Research*



Baku, July 21, 2016

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has received a delegation led by the Italian Minister of Education, University and Research Stefania Giannini.

The head of state expressed his hope that the Italian Education, University and Research Minister Stefania Giannini's visit to Azerbaijan would be interesting. Hailing the bilateral ties between Azerbaijan and Italy in a variety of fields, President Ilham Aliyev expressed his confidence that strong partnership would also be established in the area of education policy.

The head of state underlined the role of the Joint Declaration on strategic partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Italian Republic. While emphasizing the importance of education of Azerbaijani students in Italy, President Ilham Aliyev described this as a good example of friendship between the two countries.

Italian Minister Stefania Giannini underlined her country's interest in expanding cooperation with educational institutions in Azerbaijan. Pointing to Azerbaijani students' education in Italy, Stefania Giannini upheld the importance of the growing number of students in the country.

She noted with pleasure that she met with Azerbaijani first lady, president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation Mehriban Aliyeva at the presentation of the first European Games in Rome, adding that they discussed the expansion of cultural cooperation between the two countries. The Italian Minister also underlined the importance of the implementation of significant projects in Italy, and the Vatican with the support of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/974372>

*Baku and Rome:  
discussions about energy cooperation*

Baku, October 13, 2016

Azerbaijan's Energy Minister Natig Aliyev met with the CEO of Italy's Tenaris Global Services Paolo Rocca. Paolo Rocca said Italy's Tenaris Global Services was interested in the energy sector of Azerbaijan.

Natig Aliyev, in turn, said despite the decline in oil prices the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) project is being implemented without delays and gas would be delivered to Europe via the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) in 2020. He added that the Italian government supports the TAP project. TAP, which is a part of the Southern Gas Corridor, one of the priority energy projects for the EU, envisages transportation of gas from the Stage 2 of development of Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz gas and condensate field to the EU countries.

The 870-kilometer pipeline will be connected to the Trans Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) on the Turkish-Greek border, run through Greece, Albania and the Adriatic Sea, before coming ashore in Italy's south. Once built, TAP will offer a direct and cost-effective transportation route. TAP's initial capacity of 10 bcm of gas per year is equivalent to the energy consumption of approximately seven million households in Europe, the fact is considered to be an indication of the future increase in energy security of a whole Europe, including Italy.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1001236>

*First Deputy Speaker of Azerbaijan`s Parliament  
meets Italian parliamentary delegation*

Baku, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017

First Deputy Speaker of Azerbaijani Parliament Ziyafat Asgarov has met Italian Parliamentary delegation.

Mr. Asgarov said Azerbaijan attached great importance to relationship with Italy. The Deputy Speaker highlighted developing inter-parliamentary ties between the two countries.

On Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Deputy Chair of Azerbaijan-Italy Inter-parliamentary Friendship Group Mauro Marino said Azerbaijan`s territorial integrity and just position was supported in both Chambers of the Italian Parliament. Mr. Asgarov spoke about political, economic cultural ties between the two countries, and emphasized the projects carried out by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation in Italy. The Vice Speaker said there were good prospects for further development of cooperation.

Italian Ambassador to Azerbaijan Giampaolo Cutillo, the country`s Ambassador to Italy Mammad Ahmadzade were also present in the meeting.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/997681>

## *Italian Parliament Delegation visits Baku*



Baku, September 29, 2016

Azerbaijan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov met a delegation of Italian Parliament led by Mauro Marino, Deputy Chair of Azerbaijan-Italy Inter-parliamentary Friendship Group. The sides expressed satisfaction with current level of development of the cooperation between Azerbaijan and Italy. Minister Elmar Mammadyarov expressed his assurance that the TAP project expected to be completed in 2019 will contribute to the relations between the two countries and mentioned Azerbaijan's interest in further enhancement of cooperation with Italy in energy field. Expressing his gratitude for the invitation to the Baku Humanitarian Forum on behalf of the delegation, Mauro Marino appreciated the activity of this forum and noted that the acute issues challenging the contemporary world were subject of discussion at the event.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/997232>

*First lady Mehriban Aliyeva meets with head of  
Azerbaijan-Italy friendship group at the Italian  
Senate*

Baku, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Azerbaijani first lady, president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation Mehriban Aliyeva has today met with a delegation led by head of Azerbaijan-Italy friendship group at the Italian Senate Mauro Maria Marino, who visited the country to attend the 5th Baku International Humanitarian Forum. The first lady pointed to tolerance and multiculturalism in Azerbaijan. She said Pope Francis will visit the country in a few days.

Mehriban Aliyeva said representatives of all religions join holiday celebrations in Azerbaijan, and praised this as a message against some stereotypes. She hailed Azerbaijan-Italy relations, saying the Heydar Aliyev Foundation is closely involved in restoration and preservation of cultural monuments in Italy. Members of the Italian delegation hailed the Foundation's assistance, noting that such projects contribute to strengthening the bilateral relations. They put forward an initiative to establish a sister city relationship between Azerbaijan's Icherisheher and Italian Matera, which will be the European Capital of Culture in 2019. Mehriban Aliyeva hailed the initiative, saying such measures created good opportunities for establishing inter-regional ties.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/997177>



*Italian Ambassador: “Free industrial zones of Azerbaijan are of interest to investors”*

Baku, September 29, 2016

Ambassador of Italy to Azerbaijan Giampaolo Cutillo has received Caspian Energy’s delegation headed by its President and Editor-in-Chief Natalya Aliyeva. Speaking about bilateral relations between the states, the Ambassador noted that Italy and Azerbaijan have established a strategic partnership in a more than 3 year period.

“As you know, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has been to Italy twice, in 2014 and 2015. In the course of the visit he met with our President and Prime Minister. It shows that political and bilateral dialogues are on a high level. We called it a strategic partnership, which is a major moment in cooperation. On the other hand, a lot of Italian delegations visited Azerbaijan, including delegations representing business as well as governmental delegations headed by our ministers,” the Ambassador emphasized.

Giampaolo Cutillo noted that there is a quantitative growth in all areas and a qualitative growth in bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Italy. “It is indeed positive moments, covering also the energy sector due to the importance of Azerbaijan for Italy as a supplier of energy resources.” However, the positive dynamics is not limited only to the energy sector, as the countries have established quite a good cooperation, for instance, in the field of culture, trade, export-import operations, and there is still a lot to do in this direction together with Azerbaijan, he continued.

The Italian Ambassador stressed the interest of European investors towards the free industrial zones established in Azerbaijan. "They are attractive because no matter from which viewpoint one considers it, Azerbaijan is a transit or key central point. Therefore, it is important to watch the way Azerbaijan will use this advantage. I know this is a priority for the government. Our companies are certainly interested in making their contribution to this process. In its turn, it will depend on their capability to come to Azerbaijan and establish the contacts they need. But we, as a government, are certainly ready to assist in this process and attract interested Italian companies to the industrial zones, for instance, to the one that is in Sumgayit. We also show interest to the petrochemical sector. A number of big Italian companies are working in Azerbaijan within the framework of very important petrochemical projects," Giampaolo Cutillo emphasized.

Speaking about the trade turnover between the countries, the Ambassador noted that there was an intensive growth of goods turnover between Italy and Azerbaijan over the last 5 years.

"2016 was a special year due to the devaluation in Azerbaijan and economic crisis. The volume of imports fell in Azerbaijan and it is natural for any country facing the currency devaluation. Thus, a rapid decline of goods turnover was fixed in the first half of this year, it fell about by 50% compared to 2015. But we have grounds to assume that there will be a gradual recovery ahead. First of all, I forecast a considerable improvement by the end of the year. It is hard to tell about indicators for now. But we feel

optimistic about the bilateral trade for the next year as Azerbaijan is currently implementing a number of reforms and measures which we hope will manage to re-start the economy. The indicators for 2017 will certainly be better than those of 2016,” the Ambassador said.

At the end of the meeting, the Ambassador gave an exclusive interview to Caspian Energy. In the course of the interview he touched the possibilities of development of bilateral relations and increase of economic and investment cooperation, spoke about prospects of development of the energy cooperation, also touched the issues of development of cooperation in the field of tourism and energy.<sup>9</sup>

*Italian Undersecretary of State Bianchi: Baku Forum is definitely an important contribution to peace, culture and dialogue among people*

Baku, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016

“Baku Forum is definitely an important contribution to peace, culture and dialogue among people,” Undersecretary of State of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism Mrs. Dorina Bianchi has told AZERTAC. She hailed the fact that around 3000 delegates from 140 countries attended the event. Mrs. Bianchi hailed cultural relations between the two countries. “Already in 2014 when President Ilham Aliyev visited Italy a

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<sup>9</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/997059>

memorandum of understanding was signed between the Ministries of Culture and Tourism of Azerbaijan and Italy. Since then a lot of initiatives have been started.” She particularly emphasized the projects implemented by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation in Italy.



The Undersecretary highlighted the success of Azerbaijan`s pavilion in Italy: “The Azerbaijani pavilion at Milano Expo was a remarkable success. It played an important role in spreading better knowledge of Azerbaijan in Italy. Mrs. Bianchi also spoke of Italian-Azerbaijani relations in the field of tourism: “We are aware that Italy is a country, which is loved and admired by most of Azerbaijani population. So we are committed to do more initiatives also to strengthen the flow of tourists in both directions. Italy is one of the most popular and important tourist destinations in the world. We will, of course, be happy to see more and more of Azerbaijani tourists visiting our country,” she added.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/947076>

## *Italian Il Libero Newspaper Interviews Azerbaijani Ambassador*

Baku, October 21, 2017

Italy-based IL LIBERO Newspaper has published an interview with Azerbaijani ambassador in Rome Mammad Ahmadzade. The ambassador hailed the importance of Pope Francis' recent visit to Azerbaijan. He said Azerbaijan and the Vatican enjoy close ties. He commended the Heydar Aliyev Foundation's contribution to the restoration of the Catholic cultural heritage, saying this has played a vital role in strengthening relations between Azerbaijan and the Vatican. Ahmadzade spoke of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He said it is ridiculous to introduce it as a religious conflict. He said an Armenian church in the center of Baku, where 5,000 books in the Armenian language are kept, has been restored by the Azerbaijani government. The ambassador underlined the necessity of ensuring the return of Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons to their native lands. He expressed regret that "numerous international documents, including four UN Security Council resolutions which demand the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan have not yet been implemented". The ambassador highlighted a fresh wave of the Armenian military aggression which happened this April when "the Armenian armed units used chemical weapons against Azerbaijani civilians and even threatened to use nuclear weapons".

Ahmadzade hailed Moscow's recent increased mediation efforts, saying this could contribute to the resolution of the conflict. "Azerbaijan has always been

interested in peaceful settlement of the problem, but peace can be possible only if the Armenian armed forces withdraw from the occupied territories," he said.<sup>11</sup>

*Azerbaijan`s economic potential promoted in  
Venice*

Baku, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016

The Italian city of Venice has hosted an international conference aimed at promoting the economic opportunities of Azerbaijan. It was co-organized by Veneto Promozione Company, Veneto Regional Government and Union of Italian Chambers of Commerce.

Speaking at the event, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Italy Mammad Ahmadzade provided an insight into Azerbaijan's economic potential, economic reforms, opportunities for regional projects, as well as Azerbaijan-Italy economic cooperation. Other speakers included Diego Vecchiato, Director of the Department of International Relations of the Veneto Regional Government, Aldo Ferrari, director of the Caucasus-Central Asia program at the Milan Institute for International Political Studies, Luigi D'Aprèa, Head of the ICE - Italian Trade Promotion Agency Baku Office. In Venice, ambassador Ahmadzade also met with the mayor of Venice Luigi Brugnaro and prefect Domenico Cuttaia, and visited the office of the President of the Veneto region and Ca' Foscari University.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1003881>

<sup>12</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/995511>

*Italian magazine Formiche publishes article about Azerbaijan*

Baku, May 19, 2016

An article headlined “Integration with Muslim world starts from Azerbaijan” by former Italian MP, director general of the Novae Terrae Foundation Luca Volonte`s has been published in the Formiche magazine. According to Azerbaijan`s embassy to Italy, Volonte spoke of the 7th Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations held in Baku, as well as highlighted the history and missions of the Alliance. He noted that Baku Forum brought together representatives of influential organizations, officials and public figures, who discussed a number of issues, including coexistence in the world, education, integration of migrants and youth development in inclusive society.

He also cited President Ilham Aliyev`s opening remarks, in which the head of state spoke of tolerance and multiculturalism in Azerbaijan. Mr. Volonte stressed that despite 90% of Azerbaijan`s population are Muslims, the country has been a model of balanced relations between the state and various religious confessions since the early years when it restored its independence. “This is a good model in terms of coexistence and secularism,” Mr. Volonte added.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/952854>

## **Azerbaijan and Hungary: Strengthening the Bilateral Partnership**

*President Ilham Aliyev and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban held a one-on-one meeting*



Baku, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016

The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban, who is on an official visit in the country, have held a one-on-one meeting. Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban and his wife Anikó Lévai were welcomed by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and his wife Mehriban Aliyeva. The President of Azerbaijan, the Hungarian Prime Minister and their wives posed for photographs. Later on President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Viktor Orban had a private meeting.



The two heads of state emphasized the successful development of the bilateral relations in different areas, particularly in political and economic sectors. The importance of the visit in expanding Azerbaijani-Hungarian relations was stressed during the meeting.

Both parties pointed out the good potential for developing the bilateral relations in different fields. The heads of state discussed a number of issues of mutual concern.<sup>14</sup>



The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mr. Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva hosted a dinner reception in honor of Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban and his wife Anikó Lévai.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/933269>

<sup>15</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/933298>

*President Ilham Aliyev, Hungarian Prime Minister  
Viktor Orban made press statements*

Baku, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban have made statements for the press.

Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
H. E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev

Dear Prime Minister,  
Distinguished guests!

Let me welcome you to Azerbaijan once again. We attach great importance to your visit. Hungary is a very close and friendly country for us. I am glad that the visit has been very successful, and its results will play an important role in the development of Hungarian-Azerbaijani relations.

Our political relations are at a very high level. During my visit to Hungary at the end of 2014, we signed a Joint Declaration on strategic partnership with you. This in itself is an indicator that our relations are of strategic nature. Our meetings are also of regular nature. The high level of political relations has a positive impact on all other areas. We are successfully working in international organizations. Hungary has played a very positive and active role in Azerbaijan's relations with the European Union. The relations between the European Union and Azerbaijan are developing successfully, and I am confident that Hungary will continue to consistently support the development of these relations.

Today we exchanged views on many issues – political ties and cooperation in the field of economy. I want to emphasize the activities of the Intergovernmental Commission. Many issues are resolved at the level of this commission. Based on the excellent political relations, we must also establish a strong economic cooperation. I am glad that exports from Hungary to Azerbaijan increased last year. This is an excellent indicator. Today we exchanged views on many specific projects. There is an excellent cooperation in the field of energy. The cooperation between SOCAR and MOL already has a good history, and it should rise to a new level. We talked about that today. The energy policy of Azerbaijan is highly valued by the European Union today. At the end of last month Baku hosted the second meeting of the Advisory Council for the Southern Gas Corridor. The Declaration adopted at the end of the meeting notes the leading role of Azerbaijan in the energy security of Europe and the implementation of the Southern Gas Corridor. We have ample reserves of oil and gas. Today, the Southern Gas Corridor is a project of energy security and energy diversification. The 3,500 km. long pipeline will connect Europe with Azerbaijan even more closely in the future. Today, we talked in detail about other directions as well. Members of the commission also exchanged views yesterday. There are wonderful opportunities in the field of agriculture; specific instructions have been issued to further strengthen cooperation in this field. Hungarian experience is very interesting for us. Agriculture in Hungary is well developed. This industry is one of the top priorities for us today, and I think that there are great opportunities for cooperation.

Regarding the transportation sector; I informed the Prime Minister that at the present Azerbaijan is working to create the East-West transport corridor. The first test container train has already proceeded from China through Azerbaijan to Europe. Further operation of this corridor will connect our countries and ensure transport security.

There are great opportunities in tourism. We successfully cooperate in the field of education and are grateful to the Government of Hungary for the establishment of a special scholarship for our students. Cooperation in the field of education means that our citizens will also be in close contact with each other in the future.

Today we discussed many specific projects. The overall result is that Hungary and Azerbaijan today confirmed their strategic partnership again. The documents signed yesterday in respect of intergovernmental relations and the specific projects signed within the framework of the business forum today will bring us closer together. We want this. Hungary is a close and friendly country for us. Our personal relationship with Prime Minister is also friendly. The activities of Prime Minister are perceived with great respect and appreciation in Azerbaijan. Hungary is a country that pursues an independent policy. Its external and internal policies are based only on the interests of the Hungarian people. Therefore, there are similarities between us in this area. This is why Hungary has successfully overcome all of the ongoing crises in Europe and the world. This is exactly why the Hungarian people value the activities of Prime Minister. If the government protects the

interests of the people and is committed to developing the country, the people will always support this government.

Therefore, dear Prime Minister, a friend like you is very dear to us. I am very glad that thanks to the determination of political leaders, our relations are at the highest level today. I am sure that this visit will also give an impetus to the development of these relations. Dear Prime Minister, let me welcome you and your delegation to Azerbaijan again. "You are welcome!"<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/933295>

*Azerbaijani first lady Mehriban Aliyeva is  
awarded high order of Hungary*



Baku, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016

A ceremony has been held to award Azerbaijani first lady Mehriban Aliyeva Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of Hungary as part of the official visit of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to the country. The Hungarian Prime Minister addressed the ceremony.

Prime Minister Viktor Orbán presented the order to Azerbaijani first lady Mehriban Aliyeva. First lady Mehriban Aliyeva thanked Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Then a few official photos were taken.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/933294>

*President Ilham Aliyev and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban held an expanded meeting*

Baku, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Following their private meeting, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban had an expanded meeting with representatives of both governments.

President Ilham Aliyev stressed the importance of the official visit led by the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, to Azerbaijan, an opportunity to further develop the ongoing bilateral relations. The head of state noted that the two countries wanted to strengthen their relations in all areas even further. President Ilham Aliyev stated that the bilateral ties between Azerbaijan and Hungary were distinguished by dynamism and mutual understanding, adding that Prime Minister Viktor Orban's official visit would further strengthen the political relations. The head of state expressed his hopes that business circles of the two countries would work more actively.

The President said several concrete agreements were signed between Azerbaijan and Hungary during the visit. President Ilham Aliyev noted: "I think there will be more of such agreements in the future. For us Hungary is a close, friendly country and we wish that economic ties would be equal to the level of our political relations.



There are also good prospects in the areas of agriculture, energy, high technologies.” President Aliyev emphasized: “We are also interested in Hungary making investments in our country. We would like to have more Hungarian companies involved in the projects funded by Azerbaijan itself.” Saying there was an increase in the export of Hungarian products to Azerbaijan during the last year, President Ilham Aliyev stressed that Hungarian companies were participating in various infrastructure, construction and agriculture projects in Azerbaijan.

The head of state said he was confident that following the visit new tasks would be given to relevant organizations in order to increase economic and business potential. Hailing successful activity of the Intergovernmental Commission, which is coordinating all endeavors in economic area, President Ilham Aliyev noted that Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s official visit would bring the two countries even closer and give an impetus to very good results.



Prime Minister Viktor Orban thanked the Azerbaijani Head of State for the invitation to pay an official visit. "We personally meet every year. We thank you for your last visit to Hungary. I think that it will be better to hold high level meetings once a year as the number of our joint projects increases. I see that any of our meetings both in cultural and economic areas boosts our activities." Prime Minister Viktor Orban quoted "Man comprehends through words" Hungarian proverb, saying: "When we meet, everyone understands that it is an important meeting. We may note very intensive and significant progress. This is especially felt in the field of agriculture. I want to offer you, Mr. President, our experience in this area." Stating that they expect the visit of Azerbaijani experts and professionals with this objective, Prime Minister Viktor Orban once again stressed Hungary's readiness to share its experience with Azerbaijan. During the meeting the sides exchanged views on cooperation in transport, energy, agriculture, water supply, information-communication technologies, and urban management and infrastructure areas.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/933271>

*Hungarian Prime Minister pays respect to  
National Leader Heydar Aliyev  
And Azerbaijani Heroes*

Baku, March 6, 2016

Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban has visited the Alley of Honors to lay a wreath at the tomb of national leader, founder and architect of modern Azerbaijani state Heydar Aliyev. He also placed flowers at the grave of prominent ophthalmologist, academician Zarifa Aliyeva.



The Hungarian Prime Minister then visited the Alley of Martyrs to commemorate Azerbaijani heroes who gave their lives for the country's independence and territorial integrity. Viktor Orban laid a wreath at the Eternal Flame monument here.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/933272>

## *Hungarian Prime Minister ends his official visit to Azerbaijan*

Baku, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban has completed his official visit to Azerbaijan. A guard of honor was lined up for the Hungarian Prime Minister at the Heydar Aliyev International Airport. Viktor Orban was accompanied by Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Ismat Abasov and other distinguished officials.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/933305>

*Former Hungarian Premier hails contribution of  
Global Baku Forum to inter-civilization dialogue*

Baku, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016

"Global Baku Forum makes a significant contribution to the development of dialogue among civilizations," said Peter Medgyessy, former Hungarian Prime Minister, who is attending the forum.



Pointing to the fact that Global Baku Forum ranked among the prestigious international events, the former Prime Minister said it created opportunity for world leaders, prominent public and political figures and experts to share their views and make proposals on the issues of global importance.

"The Global Baku Forum serves to ensure peace and stability in the world," he said. Providing an insight into the Azerbaijan-Hungary relations, the former PM said that the two countries enjoyed developing ties.

He recalled the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's recent visit to Azerbaijan, saying the trip paved the way for further expansion of bilateral relations between the two countries.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/934885>

## Azerbaijan and Turkey, a Strategic Partnership On Many Sectors

*Mevlut Cavusoglu: Armenia must immediately  
withdraw its troops from occupied territories of  
Azerbaijan*

Baku, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016

“Armenia must immediately withdraw its troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan,” said Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu at a joint press conference with his Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Mammadyarov in Baku. He also called on the OSCE Minsk Group to speed up efforts towards the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.



Addressing the press conference, Elmar Mammadyarov noted that they discussed the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and regional issues. “We touched upon the economic issues. We believe that Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway will launch its operation very soon. This is an important project. This railway will connect Azerbaijan with

Georgia, Turkey, Central Asia and China. We believe that this project will create opportunities for economic growth. We talked about energy issues. The construction of TANAP is going at full swing. More than fifty percent of construction work has been completed. The natural gas via TANAP will be transported to the Turkish markets in time,” the Azerbaijani Foreign Affairs Minister said.<sup>22</sup>

### *Azerbaijan, Turkey discuss prospects of relations*

Ankara, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016

On October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Sabir Shahtakhti (Special Correspondent) reported for AZERTAC that Azerbaijani President`s Assistant for Public and Political Affairs Mr. Ali Hasanov has met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey Movlud Cavusoglu. They discussed a range of issues, including strengthening cooperation for the protection of the socio-political stability between both countries.

During their conversation, both parties exchanged views on prospects of relations, as well as improving Azerbaijani-Turkish strategic alliance to a new level. President`s Assistant Ali Hasanov has also met with the Director-General of the Directorate General of Press and Information Mehmet Akarca.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1016231>



They discussed increasing the role of Media in the further development of Azerbaijani-Turkish ties, boosting information exchange between the media entities of both countries. The parties stressed the importance of promoting the successful results of fruitful cooperation.

During the meeting with Deputy Secretary General of Justice and Development Party Mr. Yasin Aktay both sides spoke about deepening geopolitical and geostrategic aspects of relations between the two countries. Yasin Aktay said that the Government of Turkey appreciated the socio-economic reforms carried out in Azerbaijan.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1004638>



*President Ilham Aliyev received delegations led by  
Turkish defense, culture and tourism ministers*

Baku, September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has received today Turkish delegations led by Minister of Defense Fikri Isik and Minister of Culture and Tourism Nabi Avci. Minister of Defense Fikri Isik and Minister of Culture and Tourism Nabi Avci conveyed greetings of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the head of state.



They hailed the successful development of Azerbaijan-Turkey relations in the field of defense, military and military technical cooperation, and underlined the importance of the 2nd Azerbaijan International Defense Exhibition ADEX 2016. The sides also praised the successful development of bilateral ties in cultural and tourism spheres, saying there were ample opportunities for further enhancing cooperation between the two countries.

The contribution of recent measures in the field of tourism to increasing the number of tourists in Azerbaijan was hailed. The importance of Turkey's rich experience in this area was emphasized. The significance of Turkish Minister of Culture and Tourism Nabi Avci's visit to the country on World Tourism Day was also underlined during the meeting.

The sides expressed their confidence that friendly and fraternal relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey would be further strengthened in all areas. The head of state thanked for the greetings of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and asked the Turkish Ministers to extend his greetings to the Turkish President.<sup>24</sup>

*'Azerbaijan, Turkey enjoy historical unity and it will continue for centuries'*

Baku, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016

Azerbaijan and Turkey enjoy historical unity and it will continue for centuries, said Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of the State Committee for Refugee and IDP affairs, the Hon. Ali Hasanov, as he met with the Turkish Ambassador to Azerbaijan Ismail Alper Coskun who is completing his diplomatic tenure in the country.

Ali Hasanov praised Ismail Alper Coskun's "successful" diplomatic mission in Azerbaijan, and wished him success in his future endeavors.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/996323>



The Deputy Premier hailed “historical bilateral cooperation and friendly ties between the two fraternal countries”. He underlined the importance of the events which were held during the diplomatic tenure of Ismail Alper Coskun in terms of bringing the two nations closer to each other. On the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Ali Hasanov lauded Turkey's support on the dispute.

The Turkish Ambassador said that he was leaving Azerbaijan with “pleasant” impressions. He expressed his confidence that cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey would continue their development in all areas.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/994545>

## **Baku International Humanitarian Forum discusses the role of media in inter-civilization dialogue**

Baku, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016

“Transforming of Journalism for the Information Age and its Role in Ensuring Inter-Civilizational Dialogue” round table was held as part of the 5th Baku International Humanitarian Forum.

Organized by AZERTAC, the round table focused on the formation of alternative models of journalism in the information society, the role of modern journalism in ensuring intercultural, inter-faith and inter-civilization dialogue, and the significance of virtual journalism and the role of social networks in the context of the challenges of modern society.

In his opening remarks, AZERTAC Director General Aslan Aslanov said: “The capital of Azerbaijan has hosted this Forum since 2011, which aims to build an authoritative international platform for world scientists and culture figures as well as acclaimed experts to discuss pressing global humanitarian challenges.” “In these two days, the capital of Azerbaijan traditionally turns into an “Intellectual Davos” as it brings together many Nobel Prize winners, politicians and scientists,” he added.

Titled “The formation of alternative models of journalism in the information society”, the first panel session was moderated by First Deputy Director General of the Russian news agency TASS Mikhail

Gusman. He thanked President Ilham Aliyev, the government of Azerbaijan and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation for “the excellent” organization of the Forum. Mr. Gusman highlighted the use of technologies in modern journalism, as well as favorable opportunities for media development.

Speakers included Deputy Director General of UNESCO Engida Getachew, Chief of Office of the Rector of ADA University Shafag Mehraliyeva, Managing Director of IRNA News Agency Mohammad Khodadi, founder of Globalist international affairs magazine Yusof Hashim, Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Fana Broadcasting Corporate Woldu Baraki, and CEO of The Three B Limited Japan's World Investors TV Mr. Kazuyasu Ishida.

The second panel meeting was called “The role of modern journalism in ensuring intercultural, inter-faith and inter-civilizational dialogue”. It was moderated by International Programs Assistant at Marquette University, USA, international relations expert Peter Tase. Speakers at this panel included President of Argentina's Télam National News Agency Rodolfo Pousa, Director General of AZERTAC Aslan Aslanov, PR and Media Manager at Slovakian International Habitat for Humanity Ekaterina Bezgachina, former President of Croatia Ivo Josipovic, Associate Professor at International Journalism Department, Baku State University, Tarana Mahmudova, Head of Internet Studies Problems at the Institute of Information Technologies Rasim Mahmudov.

Mr. Aslan Aslanov said: “One of the major trends in today's world is globalization, which has left its mark

on information and communication sector. Information flows transcend national borders, integrating into the global information space. Rapid development of communication systems and improvement of methods of use of outer space for the transmission of information drives information revolution.”

“We can talk of prospects for the development of information society only based on progress in the field of new information technologies. But we all remember that these processes were developing at a very slow speed at the beginning, and they sometimes were even ignored. Recent advances in the field of information and communication technologies contribute to the formation of entirely new economic, social and cultural relations in the lives of people, which can be described as a single concept of "global information society".

“The development of information and communication technologies brings about significant changes in the political life of society. For example, draft laws under the development can be put online for review of millions of people. On the other hand, every person receives an opportunity to address an unlimited audience and express his or her opinion regarding various issues, which is the principal innovation.”

He said: “Under these circumstances, traditional journalism has been experiencing a dramatic transformation. Technologies as well as new devices are a driving force of this transformation. Although the benefits of the Internet are obvious, we face its negative aspects in our everyday life. Unfortunately, the Internet can serve as a tool for spreading

materials of criminal organizations, recipes of explosives and poisonous substances, weapons, narcotics and psychotropic substances, methods of cracking electronic and other ciphers, and as a platform for terrorist recruitment.”

“Information infrastructure and its resources is becoming the arena of struggle of countries for global leadership, and individual and mass consciousness is becoming increasingly dependent on the activity of the mass media and communication. We should admit that today the issues of information security have become a major problem impeding the development of global information society.”

Mr. Aslanov said: “All these developments are representing new challenges for journalism, which is transforming under the influence of technological progress. We have to co-exist and cooperate with social media on many occasions. However, we also compete with it. This is caused by the absence of perfect legal framework and an effective legal mechanism both at national and international levels. Given the global nature of the Internet, it is possible to cope with this problem only through international cooperation and concerted efforts.

The third panel meeting was called “The significance of virtual journalism and the role of social networks in the context of the challenges of modern society”. It was moderated by Special Correspondent of AZERTAC in Germany Vugar Seyidov. The panel meeting hosted speeches from IT Director of Turkish Anadolu Agency Yakup Sivka, Principal at Cultural Diplomacy Associates, LLC, USA, Diana Altman,

professor at Chile`s Andreas Bello National University  
Marcos Belmor Borcoski Paez, deputy head of  
Editorial Board at Darakchi Publishing House,  
Uzbekistan, Rustamjon Jabborov, journalist at  
Egyptian "Rose el-Youssef" newspaper Ahmed  
Tarabeik, chair of the Department of Television and  
Radio Journalism at Baku State University Aynur  
Karimova, division head at the Institute of Information  
Technologies of Azerbaijan National Academy of  
Sciences Irada Alakbarova, and chair of the  
Department of Journalism at Baku Slavic University  
Shalala Hasanova. The round table culminated with  
the discussion and adoption of the Declaration of the  
5th Baku International Humanitarian Forum.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/997325>



## **News Agencies World Congress: a unique platform for discussing topics of media problems**

Baku, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Heads and representatives of more than 100 news agencies, which shape the global information policy, international media experts, UN and UNESCO officials, and representatives of regional media organizations are gathering in Baku. Azerbaijan will host meeting of leading international media organizations on November 16-18 – the 5<sup>th</sup> News Agencies World Congress, the 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) and the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Council of CIS Heads of News Agencies.



### *Why Azerbaijan, why Baku?*

What country and news agency will host the News Agencies World Congress is not defined in accordance with anyone's wish or request.

Under the organization's statute, the host is elected through a ballot. Three years ago when the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh hosted the 4th Congress, AZERTAC decided to try its luck and launched a host agency bid. In a tough competition involving several news agencies, AZERTAC won the majority of votes of members of the News Agencies World Council (NACO) to be elected as the host of the 5<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Indeed there are certain factors that encouraged us to bring the world's number one media forum to Azerbaijan. Under President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan has built a reputation of a principled country that enjoys worldwide respect. Some may be unaware, but our foreign colleagues who shape global media policy have a sound understanding of Azerbaijan's accomplishments.

Modern Azerbaijan is today one of the world's rapidly developing countries, which set its own model of economic, political, social and humanitarian progress. Azerbaijan is one of a handful of members of space-faring nations. The country is already offering its intellectual products to the world. For example, "ASAN xidmət", a social innovation project.

Azerbaijan established a new format of cooperation, which is also known as "Humanitarian Davos of the

world". Phrases such as "Azerbaijani model of development", "Azerbaijani model of multiculturalism and tolerance", "Azerbaijani humanitarian platform", "East-West dialogue originated by the Baku process" have become part of the lexicon of politicians and political analysts. Azerbaijan is giving its messages to the world, which have won international approval.

They say "Men that are more knowledgeable; are those who travel a lot". Compared with people from other professions, journalists travel and see a lot. Heads of most of the world's news agencies have visited Azerbaijan and are aware of the country's development. They approve of our people's hospitality and the beauty of Baku. Azerbaijan's growing influence and accomplishments play a key role in developing foreign relations of AZERTAC; it is an active member of international news alliances, and has bilateral agreements with nearly 45 news agencies. I think this factor played an important role in AZERTAC's election as the host of the 5th Congress.

The Baku Congress of the World News Agencies will definitely be Azerbaijan's new message to the international community.

The Congress is unofficially called "the world news summit" as it is a high-profile international media organization, which plays a vital role in shaping the global information policy and which brings together more than 100 news agencies. The Congress also features all regional media organizations, including the European Alliance of News Agencies (EANA), Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA),

Federation of Arab News Agencies (FANA), and Latin American Union of News Agencies (ULAN). Media giants as the Associated Press (USA), Reuters (UK), TASS (Russia), Xinhua (China), ANSA (Italy), Agence France-Presse (France) and others are also represented in the Congress.

The Baku Congress will not merely be a discussion platform. It will feature the signing of several agreements and establishment of new relations and cooperation.

The event will see AZERTAC take over the presidency of this leading media organization for a three year term from 2016 to 2019.

### *New challenges for news agencies*

President Ilham Aliyev, who made Azerbaijan a global player, and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, which prioritized international humanitarian projects in its activities; rendered comprehensive support to the Congress that kicks off on November 16<sup>th</sup> and whose slogan is "New challenges for news agencies".

News is the breath of life to the modern world. I think this is the best phrase to describe the role and place of information in the life of society. In general, our age can be characterized as the age of new challenges for news agencies and rapid and dramatic transformation of the traditional media. So the agenda of the Baku Congress is set by requirements of the modern life.

The Congress will feature several sessions, including "The future of news consumption", "News agencies – challenges and opportunities of new technologies and social media", "News agency innovation", "Training journalists for a multi-media future", "Protecting the journalists' mission: freedom, access, safety and conflict zones". It also addresses problems facing journalism, which is now experiencing a rapid transformation, and forms of cooperation between news agencies and different social media platforms.

Each subject on the agenda is the reality of our time. Technology is developing at such a rapid pace that sometimes it is difficult to keep pace with it. Advanced technologies not just changed the way we work, but became an integral part of our lives. This impressive change encouraged rapid transformation of traditional journalism. Our lexicon became enriched with new concepts, such as social media, civil journalism, multimedia, artificial intelligence in the news industry. Technological progress is changing the face of society, the world order and, of course, is stimulating the development of the media. We should not fear innovations; on the contrary, we should keep the pace with them.

But are news agencies ready to face these challenges created by the wave of changes? Is it normal that one story is presented in the digital media in several versions? Should relations between news agencies and different social media platforms be based on competition or cooperation? These issues top the agenda of gatherings of leading international and regional media organizations.

In Baku, presidents of the News Agencies World Congress, OANA, EANA, FANA, managers of Associated Press, Reuters, Xinhua, Anadolu Agency, TASS, Agence France-Press, Press Association, EFE, Yonhap, Kyodo, TT, SPA, BTA, AAP, IRNA, DPA, Notimex, ATPE and other leading news agencies, Los Angeles Times newspaper, Al Arabiya television channel, and experts from Tripod Advisors, News Corp, PwC, Axel Springer, Stibo Accelerator media companies will highlight new development trends of news agencies in the age of digital technologies.

*Fifth Congress.*

*Five continents. Five sessions.*

News Agencies World Council (NACO) has held five preparatory meetings for the 5<sup>th</sup> News Agencies World Congress so far: two of them in London, and three in Baku. At the last meeting one of the speakers said: What a coincidence! The fifth Congress will feature five sessions, bringing together representatives of news agencies from five continents. In this regard, the Baku Congress was unique not only in terms of the number of sessions and topicality of the issues discussed, but also in terms of the number and geography of the participating agencies.

It is for the first time that all continents are represented with large delegations at the News Agencies World Congress. 77 representatives of 39 agencies from 31 Asian countries, 51 representatives of 30 agencies from 23 European countries, 25 representatives of 16 agencies from 16 African

countries, 17 employees of 9 agencies from 7 American countries, as well as 4 delegations representing 3 Australian agencies are coming to Baku.

Despite the differences in the level of development and spread of advanced technologies, professional journalists from all continents will jointly discuss the problems of news agencies in the two days of the plenary meeting and five sessions of the Congress.

If we classify the Congress sessions, we will see a rich palette. There is a need to emphasize a particular factor characterizing all of them: using advanced communication technologies in delivering objective news in accordance with the fundamental values and key criteria of professional journalism to consumers, and commitment to accurate, objective and unbiased news reporting is the prime objective of the Baku Congress. A deeper look at a brief summary of the sessions will provide an insight into the aims and objectives of the Congress.

### *The future of news consumption and the social media phenomenon*

The first session, which addresses the problems of news consumption, focuses on the proportionality of supply and demand in the information industry. The session highlights the exchange of experience and views about new means of communication technologies and information, ways of delivering news to specific targets and general audiences.

The second session mainly focuses on the opportunities created by new technologies and social media in the news industry, as well as the phenomenon of social media with its constantly expanding network. Today, social media is playing the role of a platform not only for distribution, but also for production of news.

I would also like to highlight the use of absolutely new professional tools by our colleagues for addressing new challenges, which is typical of the digital age. These tools allow us to view journalism from a new angle. Today the journalists cannot address the challenges just remaining committed to old habits and myths. The journalists must be ready to build the future at one's risk.

Among new tools and practices, networked journalism is worth to be singled out. Image of a lone journalist hiding in a newsroom or reporting from a terrorist attack site or any other hot spot has worn out and does not work. A present-day journalist is part of a network, which works to obtain process and spread information.

A new type of journalist – "networked journalist" – is emerging, which is a subject of networked journalism. What should also be emphasized is the growing role of micro blogging. Micro blogs allow exchanging small elements of content. Due to the increasing number of micro bloggers these platforms are becoming "civil news agencies", which post about topics ranging from the simple to the thematic.



Crowd sourcing can also be singled out as a tool increasingly used in professional journalism. Crowd sourcing expands the borders of civil journalism. Journalists crowd source information from the crowd, typically fact check the information and then use it in their articles as they see fit.

*Innovation of news agencies: how can traditional and modern media complement each other?*

The third session of the Congress focuses on issues related to innovations of news agencies and explores how traditional and modern media complement each other in the transmission of appropriate information.

Today, we observe new formats of information supply, including television, radio, print media and the Internet, which divide the audience in accordance with the favorable innovative ways of news consumption. Discussion related to the formation and prospects for the information society can bring results only if supported by the evolution in the field of new information technologies.

Now video news as a source of visual information is attracting more interest of people and is gradually dominating text news. These trends cannot be ignored; they must be treated as a new reality. The modern journalist must know the functions of social networks to track the dissemination of information and use new technologies. This raises the issue of professional training for journalists.

### *Multimedia: Fast and visual form of news reporting*

The fourth session will accentuate the role of the media in the production and dissemination of news; consider ways of bringing multimedia products to the consumers as quick and visual form of news reporting. This includes not only multimedia products, but also a live broadcast on social networks and other platforms on the Internet.

These innovations highlight the trainings for journalists for the effective use of media in production, consumption, commenting on the news and delivering it to the audience. A separate session will address this topic. We should also pay attention to potential opportunities such as obtaining and analyzing data, mapping, visual journalism. As a visual information source, video content is gradually outclassing text-based content. Journalists are more and more using video and audio content to tell their stories. Visual content appears to be more effective in comparison with text-based content. It is becoming increasingly important for journalists to skillfully use visual language, and master the advantages of visual communication.

In the digital age, multiple versions of the same incident or event must be admitted ordinarily. People usually use different platforms as news sources as they believe that present-day journalists can hardly be objective and neutral in their interpretation of events.

However, no matter how hard it is, news agencies must constantly work and remain committed to the principles of objectivity and impartiality.

The fifth session addressed traditional problems faced by journalists, such as the protection of their mission, search for access to information and working in conflict zones, accentuates such issues as freedom of the press, personal safety of journalists, news reporting from areas of armed conflicts and political instability. You will probably agree that at the time of escalation of ethnic and religious conflicts and the spread of terrorism, this issue is extremely crucial.

### *A brief look at history*

A brief look at the history of international media organizations can help have a better understanding of what is happening in the global information society.

The first News Agencies World Congress was held in Moscow in September, 2004, at the initiative of Russian News Agency TASS. Long before this, regional news organizations were founded. In 1956, the European Alliance of News Agencies (EANA) was established at an international conference on media technologies in Strasbourg. Five years later, UNESCO initiated the founding of the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies.

In 1964, the Federation of Arab News Agencies (FANA) was established. Although these regional organizations were doing their utmost to strengthen cooperation and information exchange among member agencies, find ways of tackling common

challenges, there was a need for single platform that would group all news agencies of the world. To this end the News Agencies World Congress was established.

The second, third and fourth Congresses were held in Spain, Argentina and Saudi Arabia respectively.

To digress for a moment, I would like to mention one very important point relating to AZERTAC's presence in international media organizations. I well remember how in 2002 national leader Heydar Aliyev instructed me to improve AZERTAC's international reputation. And he told me how to achieve this. He said that we must become members of international news organizations and build close cooperation with foreign national news agencies. This is how the history of our international cooperation, our road to EANA, OANA and the News Agencies World Congress began. Thanks to the national leader's far-sighted advice AZERTAC today chairs the organizations that it once strived to join, and hosts their high-level gatherings. The main body of the News Agencies World Congress is the Council (NACO). It includes the incumbent, two previous and next presidents of the Congress, secretary general and chairman of the Organizing Committee of the next Congress, as well as heads of regional news agencies, and Associated Press and Reuters News Agencies.

*OANA member countries account for two-thirds of  
the world news flow*

The Organization of Asia Pacific News Agencies (OANA) is the largest regional media organization. Established in 1961 at the initiative of UNESCO, it now unites 44 agencies in 35 countries. These member countries account for the two-thirds of the world's total news flow. OANA aims to promote the flow of news in regional countries, to eliminate the information gap between the developed and developing countries, and improve the editing, training, communication and technical capabilities of the news agencies.

The supreme body of the organization is the General Assembly which is held every three years. The Assembly discusses the problems and challenges the information agencies face, as well as exchanges views on media innovations. The first OANA General Assembly was held in Thailand, the next ones in Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, China, Iran, Russia, Turkey, and other countries. Heads and representatives of 40 agencies will attend the organization's 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly to be held on November 18<sup>th</sup> in Marriott Absheron Hotel, Baku.

The General Assembly will feature two plenary sessions and the 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Executive Board meetings. The events will hear reports from former and new presidents and secretaries general of OANA, reports of financial, technical and ethics committees. OANA members will also review organizational issues, and define the date and host of the next

General Assembly and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Executive Board meeting.

The event will see AZERTAC assume presidency of OANA for the next three years, during which the agency will be responsible for managing the website of the organization and other organizational issues.

AZERTAC became a member of OANA in September, 2004. The agency was elected as a member of the OANA Executive Board at the organization's 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

AZERTAC is one of the active members of OANA as the agency's contribution to the organization's website includes around 4,000 news, more than 700 video and over 1,600 photo items on a yearly basis. At the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly held in Moscow in 2013, AZERTAC was elected – by secret ballot – as president of the organization for 2016-2019.

Apart from the 5<sup>th</sup> News Agencies World Congress and the 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of OANA, the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Council of CIS Heads of News Agencies will also be held. The agenda of the session includes a range of issues, including the organization's activities in 2016, implementation of joint projects and expansion of information exchange.

*Information revolution: what is the future of the global media?*

Our century is rightly called the age of information revolution. This revolution is driven by advanced technological innovations that have an unprecedented speed and scale. But we should not forget that this information and technological breakthrough has objective preconditions. One of the major trends in today's world is globalization, which has left its mark on information and communication sector. Information flows transcend national borders, integrating into the global information space. The development of information and communication technologies brings about significant changes in the political life of society. For example, draft laws under the development can be put online for review of millions of people. On the other hand, every person receives an opportunity to address an unlimited audience and express his or her opinion regarding various issues, which is the principal innovation.

Under these circumstances, traditional journalism has been experiencing a dramatic transformation. Technology as well as new devices that are a driving force of this transformation. Although the benefits of the Internet are obvious, we face its negative aspects in our everyday life. Unfortunately, the Internet can serve as a tool for spreading materials of criminal organizations, recipes of explosives and poisonous substances, weapons, narcotics and psychotropic substances, methods of cracking electronic and other ciphers, and as a platform for terrorist recruitment.

Information infrastructure and its resources is becoming the arena of struggle of countries for global leadership, and individual and mass consciousness is becoming increasingly dependent on the activity of the mass media and communication. We should admit that today the issues of information security have become a major problem impeding the development of global information society. All these developments are representing new challenges for journalism, which is transforming under the influence of technological progress. We have to co-exist and cooperate with social media on many occasions. However, we also compete with it. This is caused by the absence of perfect legal framework and an effective legal mechanism both at national and international levels. Given the global nature of the Internet, it is possible to cope with this problem only through international cooperation and concerted efforts. In the next three days this Congress will discuss the present and future of the global information policy, and search for ways of dealing with challenges facing the industry. Azerbaijan's rich experience of hosting high-profile international events and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation's support guarantees that the News Agencies World Congress will be excellently organized. We do believe that the media executives from all corners of the world will have three fruitful working days and enjoy their stay in Azerbaijan.

**The Hon. Aslan Aslanov**  
(Director General of AZERTAC)



**OANA's 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly wraps up;  
AZERTAC takes on OANA presidency  
For the 2016-2019 term in office**

Baku, November 18, 2016

Co-organized by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and AZERTAC, plenary sessions of the 16th General Assembly of the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) have been held in Baku.

The General Assembly was preceded by the 40th meeting of the OANA Executive Board.

Addressing the event, OANA president, Director General of TASS news agency Sergey Mikhaylov on behalf of the participants thanked President Ilham Aliyev, president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation Mehriban Aliyeva and AZERTAC Director General Aslan Aslanov for the excellent organization of the events hosted in Baku for three days.

Sergey Mikhaylov highlighted the history of the establishment of OANA which includes 44 news agencies from 35 countries. The participants then approved the agenda of the 16th General Assembly and heard a financial report of the organization.

The 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly then continued with plenary sessions. The event moderator, OANA Secretary General, First Deputy Director General of Russia's Tass news agency Mikhail Gusman noted that more than 80 heads and representatives of 40

news agencies attended the meeting of the supreme body of the organization.

The OANA 16th Assembly's agenda then was put to a vote and approved. Addressing the event, OANA president, Director General of TASS news agency Sergey Mikhaylov hailed the development of information technologies in recent years. He also pointed to the establishment of the committee of ethics of OANA, saying this was important amid growing cases of journalists facing violence in some countries.

Hailing OANA's active cooperation with a number of regional and international organizations, Sergey Mikhaylov noted that a special award was instituted to recognize the efforts of those who contribute to the development of journalism.

The event then featured a ceremony to award winners of "OANA Excellence Award" - employees of Korean Yonhap agency Tae Sung Chung and a representative of Russia's TASS Agency Andrey Lebedev. The events heard and approved reports of financial, technical and ethics committees of OANA.

AZERTAC's Director General Aslan Aslanov was elected as a new president of OANA. Heads of Russia's TASS, China's Xinhua, Korea's Yonhap and Turkey's Anadolu agencies were elected as OANA vice-presidents.

Heads of Iran's IRNA, Bahrain's BNA, Vietnam's VNA, Lebanon's NNA, Australia's AAP, Japan's Kyodo,

India's PTI, Malaysia's Bernama agencies were elected as members of OANA Executive Board.

Speaking at the event, newly elected OANA president Aslan Aslanov thanked for support and confidence put in him and the agency. He hailed fruitful discussions featured at five sessions of the News Agencies World Congress which ended in Baku yesterday.

The General Assembly featured the 41<sup>st</sup> Executive Board meeting following the new president's speech. AZERTAC Special Correspondent in Germany Vugar Seyidov was elected as OANA Secretary General.

Azerbaijan's AZERTAC, Russia's TASS, Iran's Mehr, Mongolia's Montsame, Indonesia's Antara, Kazakhstan's Kazinform, Kuwaiti KUNA were elected as members of the organization's technical committee. As a result of voting AZERTAC, Vietnamese WAM, Japan's Kyodo, Australian AAP agencies were elected as OANA ethics committee members.

Yonhap Agency of the Republic of Korea put forward its bid to host the 17th OANA General Assembly, which was approved by a regular voting session. Yonhap Agency will chair OANA in 2019-2022. Bahrain was elected as host of the 42nd Executive Board meeting that will take place in March, 2017.

In his remarks, president of Yonhap agency Park No-Hwang hailed TASS's successful presidency of the organization. He expressed his confidence that AZERTAC will excellently chair the organization in 2016-2019.

In his closing remarks, Mikhail Gusman, on behalf of the participants, expressed his gratitude to President Ilham Aliyev and to the Heydar Aliyev Foundation for the excellent organization of both the 5th News Agencies Word Congress and the 16th General Assembly of OANA. Mr. Gusman expressed his support and wished to AZERTAC a successful completion of its activities both in News Agencies World Congress and the OANA presidency.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1011824>

## **Azerbaijan and Japan: dynamic cooperation in agriculture, economic and cultural affairs**

*Japan`s Nikkei newspaper publishes article about State Independence Day of Azerbaijan*

Tokyo, November 8, 2016

Japan`s Nikkei newspaper has published an article about the 25th anniversary of restoration of state interdependence of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The article highlights Azerbaijan`s statehood history across the last 25 years.

According to Vugar Agayev, AZERTAC Special Correspondent: "Azerbaijan`s strategic oil-gas projects play an important role in energy security of Europe. Due to successful domestic and foreign policy the country turned out one of the leading states of the region," the article says. The article provided information about Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, North-South transport corridor projects. It also highlighted Azerbaijan`s achievements gained under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, as well as international events, sport races held in the country.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1008914>

*Azerbaijani delegation attend World Forum on  
Sport and Culture in Japan*

Tokyo, October 21, 2016

World Forum on Sport and Culture has been launched in Japanese city of Kyoto.

A delegation led by the Minister of Youth and Sports of Azerbaijan Republic Azad Rahimov represents Azerbaijan at the Forum organized by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology joined by 300 representatives from 60 world countries.

The leaders of International Olympic and Paralympics committees, the International Rugby Federation also participate in the event. On the first day of the event, the participants were informed about organizing cultural programs in sports competitions and the experience gained by Japan in this field.

The official opening ceremony of the forum was held in "Hyatt Grand" hotel in "Roppongi" entertainment center on the second day of the event.

Chairman of the Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympics Games Yoshiro Mori delivered a speech at the opening ceremony. Yoshiro Mori noted that the international sporting events in recent years had an important influence not only in sports, but the development of the cooperation in the fields of culture and economy.

"The World Forum on Sport and Culture is an international event to be held in advance of the 2019 Rugby World Cup, Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympics Games, and Kansai World Masters Games 2021," said Y. Mori.

President of International Olympic Committee Tomas Bax, President of International Paralympics Committee Philip Kreven and others addressed the opening ceremony, noting that the forum which had three pillars at its center had an important influence not only in sports, but the development of the cooperation in the fields of culture and economy.<sup>29</sup>

### *Azerbaijan`s parliamentary delegation visits Japan*

Tokyo, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Member of the Parliament, Head of Azerbaijani-Japanese Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group Mukhtar Babayev, MP Kamran Nabizade have paid a visit to Japan to discuss prospects of cooperation between the two countries.

According to Mr. Vugar Agayev, AZERTAC Special Correspondent, "The Azerbaijani delegation has held meetings with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Motome Takisawa, head of the Azerbaijan-

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<sup>29</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1003619>

Japan Inter-parliamentary Friendship Group on Japanese side Akira Amari, President of Japan Association of Travel Agents Tadashi Shimura and Vice President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Hidetoshi Irigaki. The Azerbaijani MPs highlighted the achievements gained under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev in the country.

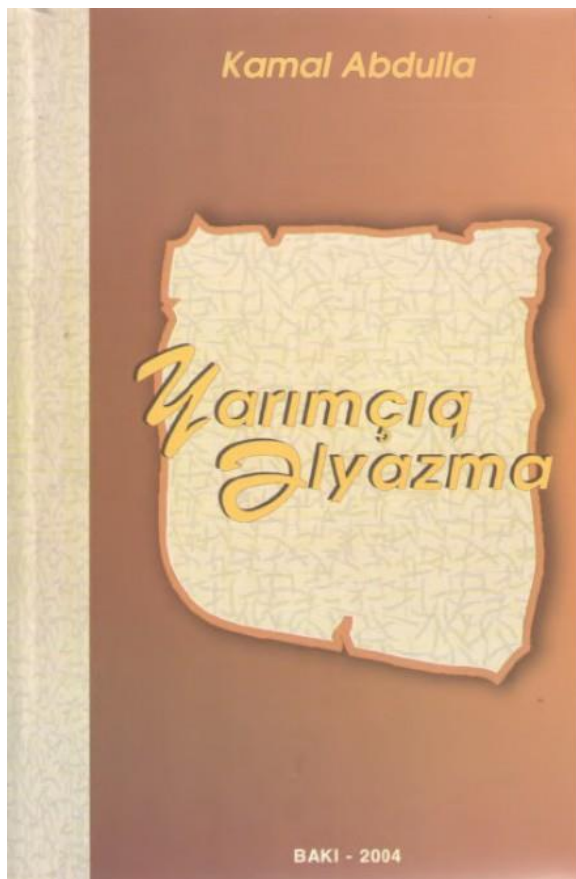
They discussed Azerbaijani-Japanese bilateral ties, and stressed the importance of boosting cooperation in the fields of energy, economy, tourism, agriculture, communications, information technologies, education and culture. The Azerbaijani delegation also provided an insight into the current state of conflict over the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh armed conflict.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1003043>



*"The Incomplete Manuscript"*  
by Kamal Abdulla to be published in Japan



Baku, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016

"The incomplete Manuscript," a novel by celebrated Azerbaijani writer Kamal Abdulla, will be published in Japan as he received a proposal from a well known Suisei-sha publishing house.

Professor Ichiro Ito translated the novel from Russian into Japanese. This is Abdulla's second novel to be published by Suisei-sha, which previously published his volume "The Valley of Wizards".

*Azerbaijani Deputy Premier receives Spring Imperial Decoration of the Japanese Government*



Baku, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016

A ceremony of presentation of 2016 Spring Imperial Decoration of the Government of Japan to Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan Abid Sharifov has been held. On 29 April 2016, the Government of Japan announced 91 foreign recipients of the 2016 Spring Imperial Decorations. Abid Sharifov is one of the foreign recipients and he received the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun in recognition of his outstanding contributions

and support to the strengthening of friendly and partnership relations between Japan and Azerbaijan, particularly in the sphere of economy as well as promoting mutual understanding between the two countries.

Addressing the event, Japanese Ambassador to Azerbaijan Tsuguo Takahashi hailed Abid Sharifov's contribution to the development of friendly relations as co-chair of the Azerbaijan-Japan Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation between the two countries.

He described the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun as the highest among Japan's awards presented to foreign citizens. The award was signed by Japan's Emperor Akihito and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.



Mr. Abid Sharifov thanked the Government of Japan for this high state award. Saying he has been many times to Japan, Mr. Sharifov highlighted the hospitality

and diligence of the Japanese people. "The greatest wealth of Japan is its people," he added.

Hailing Azerbaijani national leader Heydar Aliyev's official visit to Japan in 1998, the Deputy Premier noted that this visit contributed to the development of relations between the two countries. "As the continuation of this policy President Ilham Aliyev's official visit to Japan in 2006 strengthened the bilateral ties even further and gave a powerful impetus to the overall development of cooperation between Japan and Azerbaijan," he said. The Hon. Abid Sharifov also hailed the importance of the projects implemented in Azerbaijan through Japanese loans.<sup>31</sup>

### *The Japan Times publishes articles on Azerbaijan*

Tokyo, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016

The Japan Times newspaper has dedicated a page to Azerbaijan at the initiative of the country's Embassy in Tokyo. The page features articles by State Counselor on Multiculturalism, Interethnic and Religious Affairs, full member of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences Kamal Abdullayev and Azerbaijani Ambassador Gursel Ismayilzade.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/971178>

In his article headlined “Multiculturalism occupies key national role”, Abdullayev says: “The Heydar Aliyev foundation, led by UNESCO and ISESCO Goodwill Ambassador and Milli Majlis (Parliament) member Mehriban Aliyeva, provides undeniable services in moving the president’s political values of multiculturalism and tolerance to the Academic, cultural and social planes on an international scale.” “Today, the Heydar Aliyev foundation carries out major, important projects concerning the preservation, protection and promotion of Azerbaijan’s multicultural traditions. These projects are not developing Azerbaijani multiculturalism in a closed fashion within just one country, but working with religious and cultural diversity worldwide. The Baku International Multiculturalism Centre was created on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014 by the decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and year 2016 was declared as the year of multiculturalism in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan will continue to make important contributions to the traditions of tolerance, intercultural and inter-civilization dialogue,” he says.

According to Vugar Agayev, Special Correspondent of AZERTAC: “in his article headlined “A country renowned for tolerance”, Ambassador Ismayilzade says: “The country celebrates this year the 25th anniversary of the restoration of Azerbaijan’s independence. Azerbaijan first gained its independence in 1918, but regrettably it was short-lived until 1920. On August 30, 1991 Azerbaijan’s Supreme Council adopted the declaration on the restoration of the State Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and on October 18, 1991, the

# Constitutional act on the State Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan was approved."

THE JAPAN TIMES, SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1995

## Azerbaijan National Day

### Multiculturalism occupies key national role

Karim Adilbayev  
JERUSALEM, May 27 — In the spirit of optimism and optimism, the Republic of Azerbaijan has approved a constitutional act on the state independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Multiculturalism is an integral of the values that have been shaped in Azerbaijan over the course of its history. Since the time of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, chose this exact ideological path for the state of Azerbaijan's successful future development. Through the state policy to develop the Azerbaijan Republic of multiculturalism, the President has formed a strong the consensus and moved it to a solid national role place — the national place.

The national leader rightly considered multiculturalism as the basis of the country's democratic development. He showed that protecting the rights and interests of the national minorities living in Azerbaijan, including ethnic and cultural values, were the important national strategic principle of protecting human rights and freedom. As an alternative to ethnic nationalism, he put forward a new paradigm, identifying the principle of Azerbaijan, which was an integral part of the

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, chosen by the people, has signed the Constitutional Act on the State Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, has signed the Constitutional Act on the State Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

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### A country renowned for tolerance

Garrett International  
JERUSALEM, May 27 — In the spirit of optimism and optimism, the Republic of Azerbaijan has approved a constitutional act on the state independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

It is my great honor to be the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, chosen by the people, has signed the Constitutional Act on the State Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

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Views of Azerbaijan: tolerance in coexistence

The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, has signed the Constitutional Act on the State Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, has signed the Constitutional Act on the State Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

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"Since then, Azerbaijan has developed into a thriving country with rapid growth and become an important player in the global energy market owing to the leadership of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. The path to independence for the people of Azerbaijan has not come without difficulties and sacrifice. Today Azerbaijan suffers from the aggression of neighboring Armenia that has occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijani territories, resulting in the loss of life of more than 30,000 people and creating over 1 million refugees and internally displaced people." The Ambassador says: "The international community has consistently deplored and condemned the use of military force against Azerbaijan and the resulting occupation of its territories. In 1993, the U.N. Security Council adopted resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), condemning the use of force against Azerbaijan and the occupation of its territories,

reaffirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the inviolability of its internationally recognized borders.” “In those resolutions, the Security Council reaffirmed that the Nagorno-Karabakh region is part of Azerbaijan and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan,” Ambassador Ismayilzade says.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/956694>

**Elmar Mammadyarov: Azerbaijan is a strong  
and prestigious country in the system of  
international relations**



Baku, December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016

In an interview with AZERTAC, Azerbaijani Foreign Affairs Minister Elmar Mammadyarov highlighted the results of 2016.

*The following is the full text of the interview.*

**The year 2016 was marked by April events, Presidents' meetings in Vienna and Saint Petersburg. How would you characterize the negotiations process on the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict?**



**Minister Elmar Mammadyarov:** Instead of carrying out goodwill negotiations, Armenia clearly disrupts all attempts aimed at the peaceful settlement of the conflict. Ignoring the demands of the resolutions of the U.N. Security Council and flagrantly violating the international law, Armenia refuses to withdraw its troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, impedes the return of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis who became refugees and IDPs as a result of bloody ethnic cleansing to their native lands, and by changing the physical, demographic and cultural character of the occupied territories attempts to further strengthen the current status-quo.

To prevent from achieving any progresses in the settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Armenian side has always committed provocative-sabotage acts. Right after the Paris meeting of the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia in late 2014, Armenia launched large-scale military exercises in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, with the involvement of more than 40,000 personnel and by escalating the situation instigated the well-known helicopter incident. Although the concrete plans on the settlement of the conflict were discussed during 2015 and early 2016, the Armenian side adopted a new offensive military doctrine and subjecting to attacks by heavy weapons the densely populated areas along the line of contact, as well as schools, hospitals and places of worship on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, caused the well-known April events. As a result of irresponsible attacks of Armenia, 6 persons including children were killed and 33 persons were severely wounded.

The armed forces of Azerbaijan were obliged to take counter-measures and as a result of which succeeded to liberate some of strategically important positions from the occupation. During the April events Azerbaijan showcased its military-diplomatic superiority. The results of consistent activities to withstand the information war of Armenia were also obvious. Since the start of escalation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs periodically issuing statements has informed the international community about the provocative actions of Armenia. The world's leading news agencies quoted Foreign Ministry's statements, the visits of foreign media representatives and diplomatic corps to the contact line of troops were also organized. In conjunction with state bodies Azerbaijan was able to deliver the truth to the world; the diplomatic missions and consulates of our country were also closely involved into this process and informed the officials and the public of the countries they were accredited to. It was a positive sign that numerous articles reflecting our country's fair position in the world's prestigious media outlets were published, photos and video interviews were aired.

The international community once again witnessed that maintaining the current status-quo and the presence of the armed forces of Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan is the main cause of escalation in the conflict zone and remains the major impediment to the political settlement of the conflict. The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group at the level of heads of state have repeatedly issued statements on the unacceptability and un-sustainability of the current status-quo. Azerbaijan is the most interested party in moving beyond the current status-quo.

In this context, we assess the high-level substantive discussions in Vienna and St. Petersburg as positive steps in the right direction. We must sustain the momentum and transform the understandings reached in those meetings into concrete actions without further delay.

The substantial concrete results in the political arena will fundamentally change the situation. A step-by-step elimination of the consequences of the conflict, starting with the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, restoration of regional transportation and communication links and safe and dignified return of displaced persons to their places of origin, while addressing security concerns appropriately, will transform the conflict dynamics and significantly improve the overall security environment in the whole region. This approach is based on the relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions and affirmed in the decisions of the OSCE, notably in the Budapest Summit decision of 1994.

The aggressive policy of Armenia can never succeed. The sooner Armenia understands this reality and withdraws its troops from the occupied Azerbaijani territories, the sooner the conflict will be settled, also Armenia and its population would be able to benefit from the perspectives of cooperation, as well as the economic development.

As it was noted in the last statement of foreign ministers of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries, the Azerbaijani side together with the co-chairs will continue its efforts on the settlement of the

conflict through substantive negotiations. At the same time, all available opportunities existing within the international platforms will be utilized for this purpose.

**During the year as a result of diplomatic efforts of Azerbaijan the issue of Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been put on the agenda of many international organizations. Which are the main points you would mention in this regard?**

**Minister Elmar Mammadyarov:** Azerbaijan, by using the platforms of all relevant international organizations of which it is a member, brings the realities of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to the attention of the international community. The issues such as the situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the protracted conflicts in the GUAM area are being kept on the agenda of the 71st session of U.N. General Assembly. On this basis, using the tribune of U.N. General Assembly, Azerbaijan brings up various aspects of the conflict on the agenda of GA and makes it open for discussion. Along the U.N. system, we are carrying out active work with other international organizations as well.

The 13<sup>th</sup> session of the Islamic Summit Conference held in Istanbul with the participation of the head of our state on April 10-15, 2016 saw the adoption of a number of decisions in line with the interests of our country.

The principal stance of OIC member states on the condemnation of the aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan is reiterated in the relevant 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>

paragraphs of the communiqué unilaterally adopted by the heads of state and government of the member countries that participated in the Istanbul Summit. The adherence of Armenia to the resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993) of U.N. Security Council and immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of its armed forces from the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and other adjacent regions of Azerbaijan was also demanded. Besides, in the final communiqué the continuous attacks of Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, escalating the situation in the frontline in April of this year (2016) and consequently inflicting damages to the civilians, social and economic infrastructure and other objects are firmly condemned.

Establishment of the OIC Contact Group on the aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan is one of the important decisions as a result of the summit. The above mentioned Contact Group consists of Turkey, Kingdom of Morocco, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Malaysia, Islamic Republic of Gambia and Republic of Djibouti. Taken with the principle of geographical representation, all regions within the OIC are represented in this Group. The first meeting of the Contact Group was held with the chairmanship of OIC General Secretary on the sidelines of 71st session of U.N. General Assembly held in New York in September of this year.

In the 24<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the Final Communiqué adopted by member states at the level of heads of state and government in NATO summit held in Warsaw on July 8-9, they reiterated their devotion to

the support of territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Azerbaijan. They expressed their support for the settlement of the conflicts existing in the South Caucasus based on only these principles and norms of international law, U.N. Charter and Helsinki Final Act. In the previous summit meetings of NATO the similar position by NATO Member States have also been expressed.

In the final document of the 17<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Non-Alignment Movement held in Margarita Island of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on September 13-18, the heads of state and government expressed their regret that despite the resolutions (822, 853, 874, 884) adopted by U.N. Security Council, the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has not been settled yet and it remains the main threat for the regional peace and security and they urged the resolution of this conflict on the basis of territorial integrity, sovereignty and internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

**Also, the resolutions on the aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as destruction and desecration of Islamic historical and cultural relics and shrines in the occupied Azerbaijani territories resulting from the aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan were adopted at the 43rd Foreign Ministerial Council of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation that took place in Tashkent on 18-19 October, 2016.**

**Minister Elmar Mammadyarov:** The report named "Illegal economic and other activities in the occupied

territories of Azerbaijan” prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan was circulated as a document of the U.N. General Assembly and Security Council under the agenda item “The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan” and other relevant agenda items within the 70th session of the U.N. General Assembly.

The report entitled “Illegal economic and other activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan” presented in March of this year was prepared on the basis of information gathered from Armenian open sources. In the report, sufficient and convincing evidence testifying to the continued illegal activities by Armenia in the occupied territories, in total disregard of international law, such as implantation of settlers, depredatory exploitation and pillage of and illicit trade in private and state-owned facilities, assets, natural resources and other forms of wealth was reflected.

The decisions and resolutions adopted on Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within international organizations during the year further strengthens the just position of Azerbaijan and the political and legal basis of the resolution of the conflict. The known resolutions of the UN Security Council and numerous decisions, resolutions and statements of other international organizations are the reflection of the firm stance of international community on the settlement of the conflict.

No institution can claim for the role of monopoly in the settlement process of the conflict. The policy to bring the issue of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict on agenda within all relevant

international organizations will be continued until the results of Armenia's aggression and occupation against our country are eliminated and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders are ensured.

**How would you assess 2016 in terms of development of Azerbaijan's bilateral relations, intensity of mutual visits?**

**Minister Elmar Mammadyarov:** At the present, Azerbaijan is a strong and a prestigious country in the system of international relations and as a leading country of the region Azerbaijan's interests on any issue emerging in this geography is taken into account. Azerbaijan is not only the participant of regional projects, but also their initiator and driving force. These successes have been achieved thanks to the far-sighted and pragmatic foreign policy strategy founded by nationwide leader Heydar Aliyev and being effectively continued by President Ilham Aliyev.

The 2016 year has been fruitful and efficient in terms of development of Azerbaijan's bilateral relations. In the development of bilateral relationship, the expansion of our mutually beneficial and comprehensive cooperation with the neighboring countries - Turkey, Russia, Islamic Republic of Iran and Georgia should be particularly noted.

Numerous visits of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, Prime Minister Artur Rasizade, Chairman of Milli Majlis, also my visits as Foreign Minister and those of other government



officials to foreign countries, as well as lots of visits of heads of state and government, foreign ministers and other officials at various levels to our country further strengthened our bilateral relationship.

Last year the Emir of the State of Qatar, the presidents of Ukraine, Venezuela, Croatia and Belarus made official visits and the presidents of Turkey, Iran and Russia made working visits to Azerbaijan. Also, Chairman of Russian Government, prime ministers of Hungary, Turkey and Pakistan were on official visits and Prime minister of Israel was on a working visit in Azerbaijan.

Heads of state of Montenegro, Bulgaria, Georgia, Albania, Malta and other countries paid visits to Azerbaijan to participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> Global Baku Forum and the 7th Global Forum of United Nations Alliance of Civilizations hosted by Azerbaijan. Our head of state made official visits to the United Arab Emirates and Iran and working visits to Austria, Germany and Russia.

In that period, visits of President Ilham Aliyev to Switzerland (Davos) to participate in the World Economic Forum, to United Kingdom (London) to participate in the Supporting Syria and the Region conference, to Germany (Munich) to participate in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Munich Security Conference, to Turkey (Ankara) to participate in the 5th session of Azerbaijan-Turkey High Level Strategic Cooperation Council, to USA (Washington) to participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> Nuclear Security Summit, to Turkey (Istanbul) to participate in the 13<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to Turkey (Istanbul) to participate in the World

Humanitarian Summit, to Poland (Warsaw) to participate in the NATO Summit, to the Kyrgyz Republic (Bishkek) to participate in the CIS Council of Heads of State, to Turkey (Istanbul) to participate in the 23<sup>rd</sup> World Energy Congress were particularly important in terms of development of our relations on the bilateral and multilateral basis, bringing the position of our country on the global political, economic, security and humanitarian issues to the attention of international community.

As the foreign affairs minister of Azerbaijan, I paid official visits to Georgia, Switzerland, Lichtenstein, Egypt and Portugal and led working visits to Russia (two times), China, Germany and France (two times).

Participating in more than twenty international events, I delivered the stance of our country. During the year, the foreign ministers of Greece, Georgia, Malta, Germany, Italy, South Africa, and Bosnia and Herzegovina were on official visits and the foreign ministers of Sweden, Russia (two times), Turkey (two times), as well as the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy were on working visits in Azerbaijan. Also using the existing opportunities during international events, I had numerous meetings with the counterparts from other countries. In order to expand the bilateral legal-treaty base with other countries, more than ten agreements were signed.

The active participation of Azerbaijan in international events and mutual bilateral visits show the importance of our country in the region and also in the world, as well as present new opportunities for us.

Our bilateral relationship is further enhanced through regional cooperation mechanism in trilateral format. In 2016, the meetings of presidents of Azerbaijan-Russia-Iran, foreign ministers of Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey, Azerbaijan-Iran-Turkey, Azerbaijan-Russia-Iran were held in trilateral format. Holding these trilateral meetings has utmost importance for strengthening security in the region, expanding and deepening bilateral relationship. The trilateral meeting of the heads of state of Azerbaijan, Russia and Iran held in Baku with the initiative of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H. E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev and the joint statement adopted at the end of the meeting have provided; important grounds for the development of cooperation in political, economic, trade, transport and other fields.

The cooperation in this format also has strategic importance promoting trans-regional cooperation along the line stretching from South and South-East Asia to Northern Europe.

In general, the cooperation mechanism in trilateral format completing the successful bilateral cooperation of our country with regional countries creates important grounds for its comprehensive development on trilateral basis, provides favorable opportunities for raising the political dialogue on regional issues and economic-trade ties to a higher level. The cooperation in existing trilateral formats will be further continued and the opportunities on establishing the new trilateral mechanisms will be considered.

**What can you say about the last summit of heads of states of Caspian littoral countries on the preparation of the Convention on defining the legal status of the Caspian Sea? In general, what is the level of cooperation on defining the status?**

**Minister Elmar Mammadyarov:** As you may know, the negotiations for determining the legal status of the Caspian Sea are taking place on a five-party format, at the level of heads of states and foreign ministers of Caspian littoral countries, as well as at the level of deputy foreign ministers within the framework of the Ad-Hoc Working Group.

47 meetings have been held so far on determining the legal status of the Caspian Sea. Moreover, 4 Summits of heads of states of Caspian littoral countries have been organized in Ashkhabad, Tehran, Baku and Astrakhan since 2002. In Astrakhan it was decided to hold the next Summit of heads of states in Astana, Kazakhstan in 2017.

Important agreements on several principal issues of Caspian Sea were reached in the Joint Statement of heads of states adopted at the Astrakhan Summit and these agreements are approved by all representatives and are reflected in the draft convention. Current phase of negotiations on the legal status of the Caspian Sea can be regarded as the beginning of the final stage. Most articles, almost 80 percent of the convention on the status were agreed.

A number of important issues on the legal status of the Caspian Sea were solved following the Baku and Astrakhan summits.

These issues, including the distribution of water surface, agreement on legal regimes, security, shipping, conservation and use of biological resources, emergencies and hydrometeorology provide and regulate the cooperation and activities of Caspian littoral states through the draft convention and many signed agreements. If the full agreement on the status is reached, Astana summit will create comprehensive legal basis for the further development of mutual cooperation of the Caspian littoral states in the future.

All issues related to the legal status of the Caspian Sea are being resolved in the spirit of respect for the sovereign rights of Caspian littoral states and mutually beneficial partnership, as well as through the strengthening of faith and trust between the sides, especially in issues related to regional stability, security and economic and scientific-research activities in the Caspian basin.

**The President has set strategic directions for the development of Azerbaijan's economy. How does our economic diplomacy support these goals?**

**Minister Elmar Mammadyarov:** Crisis and decline in the world economy in recent years are affecting Azerbaijan as the other countries. Economic reforms carried out in the country, decrees and orders signed by our President to decrease effects of the crisis, as well as the dependence on energy, provide diversification of the economy, develop the non-oil sector and promote export potential are already yielding positive results. In this regard, Strategic Road Map for the National Economy of the Republic of

Azerbaijan approved by the decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016, plays a fundamental role for conducting our economic diplomacy and puts great tasks before us.

Development of Azerbaijan's foreign economic relations, promotion of economic potential of our country abroad, diversification of non-oil sector, promotion and enhancement of export, attracting foreign investments to our country, promotion of Azerbaijan's investments to partner countries, attracting foreign tourists to our country, organizing visits of representatives of state and business circles of Azerbaijan and foreign countries, holding meetings of joint intergovernmental commissions and working groups of Azerbaijan with foreign countries on economic cooperation, establishment of a legal framework for trade and economic cooperation, delivering the goods and services produced in our country to new markets, as well as application of modern technologies used in foreign countries to our economy are among the main directions of our economic diplomacy. Meetings of intergovernmental commissions on economic cooperation were held with 16 countries in 2016. At the meetings directions of future economic cooperation of Azerbaijan with these countries were defined and agreements on concrete cooperation were included to the protocols signed as a result of the meetings.

On the threshold of the meetings of the commissions, Azerbaijan also worked on bilateral basis with these countries on the cooperation to prevent illegal economic activities in the occupied territories and reached agreements in this regard.

Business forums with 11 countries (Croatia, United Arab Emirates, Russia, Monaco, Japan, Bulgaria, Iran, Italy, Georgia, Spain, Pakistan and Hungary) were held in 2016. Brand of “Made in Azerbaijan” is also promoted by our diplomatic missions and consulates in the world. “ASAN Visa” system, which will be an important step in attracting foreign tourists to our country, will be applied soon.

Taking advantage of the favorable geographical position of our country, we achieved significant progress in the launch of regional transport corridors together with our partners. The construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway, which will increase the multi-modal transport volume and create competitive environment for passenger and freight transport in Eurasia, will be completed soon. This project will be one of the most important components of the concept of Silk Road Economic Belt initiated by China. Baku meeting of the presidents of Azerbaijan, Russia and Iran this August gave an impetus along with other issues to the development of the North-South transport corridor.

We are sure that the completion of Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan) railway project, which is an integral part of the North-South transport corridor, will give a new impetus to economic growth and will expand the transport capacity for the countries involved in the project and for the entire region. At my meetings with the representatives of China, India and other South, Southeast Asian countries, they showed a great interest in this project, which is advantageous both economically and in

terms of time and are looking forward to the launch of this route.

Moreover, Azerbaijan is the initiator of a major energy project called the Southern Gas Corridor. This is an energy cooperation and energy security project. Azerbaijan is continuing its sustainable policy together with its partners in the implementation of Shah Deniz-2, TANAP and TAP projects, which are important components of the Southern Gas Corridor. Members of the Southern Gas Corridor project are Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania and Italy. We are sure that the Balkan countries will join the project in the following stage.

During the reporting year we also focused on the prevention of illegal economic activities in the occupied territories of our country, especially on the prevention of goods produced by available resources in those territories to enter the foreign markets, as well as on the blocking of the transfer of foreign products and services to our occupied territories. In this regard, we investigated the facts discovered from open and other sources and took appropriate measures to prevent it.

**How memorable was the last year in terms of the cooperation of Azerbaijan with international organizations and the development of our multilateral diplomacy?**

**Minister Elmar Mammadyarov:** Developing multilateral diplomacy and forming positive agenda within the international organizations is one of the main priorities of the foreign policy of Azerbaijan.



Azerbaijan attaches particular importance to cooperation with the UN and its specialized institutions as a universal international organization and to reforming and increasing the efficiency of UN main bodies such as the Security Council and the General Assembly.

In June this year (2016), Azerbaijan gained the votes of 176 out of 184 countries that participated in voting at the UN General Assembly and was elected a member of the UN Economic and Social Council for 2017-2019. Along with being the central platform for professional discussions about sustainable development, ECOSOC will give us additional opportunities to contribute to international development.

After the UN General Assembly, the Non-Alignment Movement is the largest international platform joined by 120 states. In the final document of the 17th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Alignment Movement held on the Margarita Island of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on 13-18 September, a decision was made to hold the 18<sup>th</sup> summit in 2019 in Azerbaijan. The 18<sup>th</sup> Summit to be held in Baku in 2019 will have a symbolic nature as well. Thus, the European continent will get an opportunity to host a meeting of the heads of state and government of member states of the Non-Alignment Movement again 30 years after the 1989 Belgrade Summit. In 2019-2022, Azerbaijan will chair the Non-Alignment Movement.

Azerbaijan, for the first time, was elected as a member of the Executive Council of the Organization

for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which currently has 192 member states for 2017-2019 during the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties (CSP-21) of the OPCW held in the Netherlands, on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016. The candidacy of our country got unanimous support of participating States at the Conference.

During the reporting period, Azerbaijan was also elected as a chairman of the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization.

Azerbaijan hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, which is an important platform for the development of dialogue between cultures and civilizations.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process held in Amritsar, India on 4 December 2016 in final Amritsar Declaration welcomed the willingness of the Republic of Azerbaijan to host the next Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process as a Co-chair in 2017.

The Istanbul Process was founded by the initiative of Turkey at the Ministerial Conference held in Istanbul on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011. This Process is an important regional platform for the countries of the Heart of Asia region for discussing the development of cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbors in security, political and economic fields and is aimed at promoting stability, peace and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Azerbaijan successfully chaired the GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development in 2016. During the chairmanship our country contributed to development of cooperation in economic-trade and transportation fields, as well as implementation of projects in various fields and promotion of inter-parliamentary relations within the GUAM.

“Flatbread making and sharing culture: Lavash, Katyrma, Jupka, Yufka”, which was appealed to the UNESCO by Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyz Republic with the initiative of Azerbaijan has been officially added to the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Inter-governmental Committee on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016. This was a serious response to provocative activities of Armenia within the UNESCO on misappropriation of Lavash making traditions.

Azerbaijan also demonstrated activity in other international organizations of which it is a member and made proposals to identify new formats of cooperation. In this regard, we can note the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and CIS, the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and others.

**How do you assess the current status of cooperation and future prospects between Azerbaijan and European Union?**

**Minister Elmar Mammadyarov:** The Legal Basis of the relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the European Union constitutes in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1996 and entered into force on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999. Within this agreement large-scale cooperation in the fields of political dialogue, human rights, trade, investment, economy, legislation, cultural and other spheres are envisaged. During the last 20 years since the signing of the agreement Azerbaijan has established close and fruitful cooperation with the EU in many areas of mutual interest. Energy dialogue is one of the main directions of cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the European Union. On November 7, 2006 in the framework of the visit of H. E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Brussels a “Memorandum of Understanding on the strategic partnership in energy field between the European Union and the Republic of Azerbaijan” was signed. This document provided the favorable opportunities for further expansion of cooperation in energy field between Azerbaijan and the EU and made substantial contributions to strengthening of the strategic partnership between parties. There are ample prospects for the development of cooperation in energy security area as in all other fields between Azerbaijan and the EU.

On 13 January, 2011, Joint Declaration on Southern Gas Corridor between Azerbaijan and the EU was signed as a result of implementation of Memorandum of Understanding. Azerbaijan will be able to provide Europe with 10 billion cubic meters of gas after 2018, 25-30 billion cubic meters gas per year from 2030 by starting this important project which will transport

natural gas to European markets. It means that Azerbaijan will contribute to the diversification of Europe's energy supply sources and energy security of Europe for the long term period. Therefore the result oriented actions for the development of the strategic partnership in energy field, which constitute the fundamental basis of Azerbaijan – EU sectorial cooperation was continued. The second meeting of Advisory Board on implementation of Southern Gas Corridor was held on February 29, in Baku. President Ilham Aliyev, Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Maros Sefsovic, Vice-President for Energy Union, as well as ministers of energy of the countries participating in the project and other high-level officials attended this event. As an outcome of the meeting Joint Declaration reflecting support to the implementation of Southern Gas Corridor and expansion of the project in the Balkan region (Greece-Bulgaria inter-connector pipeline) was signed.

Azerbaijan is a part of Eastern Partnership initiative of the EU since 2009. Azerbaijan enjoys close economic and trade relations with the EU. Azerbaijan also remains a main trade partner of the EU in the South Caucasus region and the EU member states are major trade partners of us.

They are also among the major investors in Azerbaijan. The strategic partnership ties were established between Azerbaijan and the nine EU member states. Azerbaijan remains interested in the further development of equal and mutually beneficial cooperation with the EU. For that reason submitted to

the EU a draft Agreement on strategic partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and European Union in the margins of Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga, May 21-22, 2015. Council of European Union has already given a mandate to the EU Commission to launch negotiations with the Republic of Azerbaijan on strategic partnership agreement. We consider that this new document will provide a legal framework to raise the level of bilateral relations to the strategic partnership and ensure comprehensive development of cooperation with the EU. Currently, the delegations for the negotiations process are under the formation. From the beginning of 2017 the intensive negotiation will be launched.

In 2015 during his visit to Azerbaijan, Donald Tusk, the President of European Union reiterated EU's position on supporting the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Azerbaijan. We highly appreciate public statement of Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the support of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan in the joint press conference during her visit to our country in January. In a newly adopted Global Strategy, European Union has also identified that the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of states, the inviolability of borders are key elements of the European Security Order. These principles apply to all states, both within and beyond the EU's borders.

**Multiculturalism is one of the most discussed topics. How do you assess Azerbaijan's role in promotion of multiculturalism at the international level?**

**Minister Elmar Mammadyarov:** Azerbaijan is located on the border of Europe and Asia and has been a place where religions, cultures and civilizations come together for centuries. Azerbaijan is a multi-religious and multinational country. We are not only a geographical bridge between East and West, but also a cultural bridge. The representatives of different religions and cultures have lived in Azerbaijan like one family, in peace and dignity throughout the history. This is our policy and life style. Religious tolerance and multiculturalism has always been present in Azerbaijan. There was no word "multiculturalism", but ideas were always present in our land. We make our contributions to the development of multiculturalism by organizing various international events in our country to this end and play an active role in strengthening of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue. At the same time this year was declared a "Year of multiculturalism" by the President of Azerbaijan in our country. Special Action Plan was prepared for maintaining and spreading of universal ideals of multiculturalism at national and international levels. An international centre of multiculturalism was established in Baku and there is a monument dedicated to multiculturalism. The representatives of different nations and officials of international organizations highly appreciate the policy of multiculturalism carried out in our country.

Multiculturalism is the most effective tool to establish political stability in multi-national states. As a multicultural and tolerant country, Azerbaijan has always been commended at the level of heads of state and government. Pope Francis highly appreciated religious tolerance and multicultural values in our country during his visit to Azerbaijan in October this year.

Biennially Baku hosts World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue. In April we hosted the 7th Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

The Baku Declaration was adopted as a result of the forum. In 2008 we initiated the "Baku process" which became a broader platform for the intercultural dialogue. We hosted a meeting of the Ministers of Culture of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Council of Europe as well as World Religious Leaders Summit. In April 2017 Azerbaijan will host the 4th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue within "Baku process" being held biannually since 2011. All this events serve to the formation and recognition of a positive image of Azerbaijan in international arena and at the same time contribute to the fight against discrimination, hostility and violence in the world. By these means we provide the positive image of Azerbaijan to the world and give our support to fostering the understanding and dialogue at the international level.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1022905>



## **Azerbaijan-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation convenes in Baku**

Baku, December 16, 2016

The 16th meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation between Azerbaijan and Russia has been held in Baku.

Addressing the event, Azerbaijan's First Deputy Prime Minister, co-chair of the Intergovernmental Commission Yaqub Eyyubov hailed close relations between Azerbaijan and Russia. "Relations between the two countries have reached the level of strategic partnership." Yaqub Eyyubov praised the role of Russia in developing economic relations and ensuring security in the region.

He highlighted great potential for increasing trade between the two countries. "We have many joint projects and we must increase their number in the future," he said, adding that mutual investments can be made in the spheres of machinery, shipbuilding, aircraft construction, energy, medicine and humanitarian sector. Yaqub Eyyubov said Azerbaijan has invested 1 (one) billion US dollars in the Russian economy, while Russia has invested 3 (three) billion US dollars in the Azerbaijani economy.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin hailed strategic partnership with Azerbaijan. He noted that Russia remains one of the most important strategic partners of Azerbaijan after Turkey and Italy,

accounting for 10.5 per cent in the country's overall trade. He invited his Azerbaijani counterpart to attend the 21st St. Petersburg International Economic Forum to be held next June and Sochi International Investment Forum 2017. Yaqub Eyyubov accepted the invitation.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Huffington Post publishes article by Azerbaijani Ambassador**

Washington, October 19, 2016

The US-based The Huffington Post Newspaper has published the Azerbaijani ambassador Elin Suleymanov's article headlined "Azerbaijan: a Quarter of a Century of Independence".

In the article, the ambassador hails Azerbaijan's accomplishments made over the past 25 years. "Over the two and a half decades since restoring its independence from the Soviet Union, the Republic of Azerbaijan has emerged as a significant regional player aptly described by some as the "keystone" of the Caucasus-Caspian region. However, on October 18, 1991, when Azerbaijan declared its independence, the nation's future looked far from certain and getting to where it stands today was not an easy path for the Azerbaijani people. At the time, the emerging nation was already locked in a bitter and violent conflict with Armenia, while the Soviet troops

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<sup>34</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1020134>

had been enforcing a strict and repressive military curfew over the civilian population since 1988. In a sense, Azerbaijan's starting position as it restored national independence was less advantageous than that of other former republics.”

The ambassador says: “Still, as much as the last 25 years in Eurasia have been shaped by the challenges common to all post-Soviet states, they have been equally influenced by specific, decisions (or lack of thereof) made by respective leaders in every capital.

A combination of Azerbaijan's unique history, including the establishment of the First Republic with a predominantly Muslim population in the world in 1918 and granting equal voting right to minorities and women ahead of the United States, with the vision of the late president Heydar Aliyev offers, perhaps, the best explanation for the nation's successful progress.

Key pillars of the development strategy have remained broadly constant for the last quarter of a century. They include a profound understanding that the development of the region benefits Azerbaijan, hence Azerbaijan can succeed if the region as a whole is succeeding. In this context, the Caspian energy resources, which produced the first oil boom of the 20th century, provide a strong basis for Azerbaijan's economic growth as well as for regional cooperation and integration into the international community. Further, the leadership strongly reinforced Azerbaijan's commitment to building an inclusive, tolerant and a secular modern nation and also has engaged in its trademark pragmatic foreign policy.”

“Already in the 1990s, this resulted in building a strategic relationship with the United States, integrated partnership ties with Georgia and Turkey, as well as successful implementation of major energy projects with international partners and construction of key oil and natural gas pipelines. Importantly, Azerbaijan's regional initiatives received a strong and valuable support from both Clinton and George W. Bush administrations. Today, Azerbaijan is leading Europe's most ambitious energy project – the Southern Gas Corridor, designed to deliver gas from Azerbaijan's Caspian mega field Shah Deniz to Italy, Greece and Albania across 6 nations. Simply put, this is not because Azerbaijan owns energy resources but rather because of the choices how to use them.”

Mr. Suleymanov says: “Azerbaijan's history with energy is longer than, possibly, any other place in the world – first oil well was drilled here in 1846 launching the rise of Baku with its amazing architecture as the regional center and attracting Rockefellers and Nobels, who made enough money in Baku to fund the Nobel Prize. Later, it was Azerbaijani oil that fueled Soviet tanks as they battled Nazi forces and, most recently, Caspian oil gave the much-needed impetus for opening and changing once all but forgotten region.

Perhaps, because of their long history with energy, the Azerbaijanis know better than others that it is a finite resource and cannot last forever. Therefore, over the last decade, much of Azerbaijan's oil revenue has been invested in infrastructure and development projects. As a result, Azerbaijan stands as a crucial juncture along the Modern Silk Road project linking

Asia with Europe and Baku has emerged in the last several years as one of the region's most popular tourist destinations. Of course, with oil prices as low as they currently are and new approaches to energy globally, much more needs to be done to fully adapt to new realities."

"For centuries, history and destiny of the Caucasus, has been determined by its complicated geography. As an independent nation, Azerbaijan has embraced its strategic and intricate neighborhood and has worked hard to turn geography into an advantage.

As President Ilham Aliyev stated during the recent visit by Pope Francis to Baku, "Azerbaijan serves as a bridge between East and West. This is both a geographic and a spiritual bridge." Indeed, nothing makes people of Azerbaijan more proud than their society's long tradition of diversity and rejecting both extremism and stereotypes.

Azerbaijan is where the simplistic and defeatist notion of the "clash of civilizations" is rejected, and where cultures, religions and confessions come together for a dialogue and building a common home. Proud of its Muslim heritage, with its thriving Jewish and Christian communities, famous medieval women poets and women in key leadership positions today, exemplified by the First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva, Azerbaijan sets an illustration of how to reject radical and extremist views and to aspire to treat all citizens equally. The strong relationship with Israel reflects the same approach in foreign policy. Another example is that Azerbaijan hosted Pope John Paul in 2002 and Pope Francis in 2016, both times facilitating a fruitful

dialogue with Orthodox Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities. In our world too often dominated by the news of division and violence, the importance of such ongoing dialogue is hard to overlook.”

“A quarter of a century may seem as an instant in human history, yet, for a million Azerbaijanis displaced from their homes as a result of Armenia's occupation of the internationally-recognized Azerbaijani territories, the two decades of exile feel like a century. The protracted and unresolved Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict remains the main challenge to the future of both Armenia and Azerbaijan and a long-hanging Damocles sword over the entire region. For some 25 years, Azerbaijan, despite its rapidly growing capabilities and the body of international law, including four UN Security Council resolutions, firmly on its side, has chosen to engage in peace talks with Armenia. A lasting, international law-based settlement would allow the Caucasus prosper even more, enable Azerbaijan to address its major humanitarian issue of generations of displaced citizens and help Armenia to finally become a truly independent nation. As the Republic of Azerbaijan turns 25, the world remains uncertain and turbulent – after all, neither the battlefields of the Middle East, nor of Ukraine are far from the Caucasus. Nevertheless, proud of their history and staunchly independent, the people of Azerbaijan look to their future with confidence and eagerness to realize a unique historic opportunity to build an independent nation,” he concludes.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1003153>

## **Baku International Multiculturalism Centre enters EU`s Transparency Register**

Baku, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Baku International Multiculturalism Centre has been registered with the Transparency Register, which was set up and is operated by the European Parliament and the European Commission.

The aims of the Centre are to study and promote interaction among the cultures of different regions in a multicultural life; realize projects for the systematic elimination of shortcomings in education, culture, science and other social spheres that hinder the harmonious development of the moral integrity of the individual; to analyze and disseminate the personal experience of world experts on multiculturalism, as well as of past and contemporary scholars, political, social, cultural and art experts; to prepare and implement a mechanism for the appreciation and development of prominent local and foreign citizens who have a special role in personal wellbeing and in the establishment of relations of mutual respect and trust among nations and religions.



Baku International Multiculturalism Centre is organizing Summer Schools each year in order to promote living together in multicultural societies.

The Centre has organized dozens of events on the protection of minorities, and one of the recent events was in Stockholm to discuss the experiences of multiculturalism tolerance with The Institute for Security and Development Policy and also in Berlin Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities. The Centre has offices in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Israel and Moldova.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/949364>



## **President Ilham Aliyev attended official opening of the 7th UNAOC Global Forum**



Baku, April 26, 2016

The 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) on the theme “Living Together in Inclusive Societies: A Challenge and A Goal” has kicked off in Baku.

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and his wife Mehriban Aliyeva attended the opening ceremony.

The head of state addressed the event.



## **Speech of President Ilham Aliyev**

Excellences,

Presidents,

Dear friends, dear guests.

First of all, I'd like to welcome you all to our country. I am very glad to see you all in Azerbaijan. It is a big honor for us to host the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. We consider this as a sign of appreciation of our activity and promotion of the values of intercultural dialogue, multiculturalism.

First of all, I'd like to express my gratitude to the founding fathers of the Alliance – Turkey and Spain, President Erdogan and Prime Minister Zapatero for this extremely important initiative, which now lives for more than 10 years. The idea of creation of the Alliance was a sign of wisdom of the politicians, my brother President Erdogan and Prime Minister Zapatero, and was supported by the international community.

I'd also like to express gratitude to the UN High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations Mr. Al-Nasser for his leadership and contribution to promotion of the values of peace, solidarity and friendship.

We are very proud that today representatives of more than 140 countries gathered in Baku to address important issues of the Alliance of Civilizations.

Azerbaijan for centuries was a place where religions, cultures, civilizations met. We are not only a geographic bridge between East and West, but also a cultural bridge. For centuries representatives of religions, cultures lived in peace and dignity in Azerbaijan.

Religious tolerance, multiculturalism always was present here. There was no word “multiculturalism,” but ideas were always present.

And the result of that is that today Azerbaijan is a multiethnic, multi-confessional country where representatives of all religions and ethnic groups live in dignity and peace. This is one of our biggest assets. And we are proud of our history. We are proud of our historical monuments which reflect the creation of representatives of different cultures.

One of the oldest mosques in the world, which was built in 743, is situated in the ancient Azerbaijani city of Shamakhi. Also one of the oldest churches in the Caucasus, the ancient church of ancient state of Caucasian Albania is also situated in Azerbaijan close to another ancient city of Shaki. Our government invests resources in construction and renovation of Mosques, Orthodox and Catholic churches, Synagogues. This is our policy and this is our lifestyle. For centuries Azerbaijan is preserving these assets regardless of political or social situation in our country. Our country is relatively young as an independent country - only 25 years old. But it is an ancient country with deep historical and cultural roots.

Multiculturalism for us is a state policy. We organized different events, addressing these important issues. Every second year the intercultural dialogue forum is taking place in Azerbaijan. We regularly host Baku International Humanitarian Forum. And the main idea is how to bring representatives of different religions together and how to establish more understanding between us.

Azerbaijan hosted the World Summit of Religious Leaders addressing important issues of interreligious dialogue. I think that today this is one of the most important topics on the global agenda. And the role of Alliance of Civilizations is growing. Unfortunately, we see also very concerning trends in our region, in Europe, in Middle East, in the area of former Soviet Union, where we see clashes, confrontations based on ethnic or religious grounds. This is a very dangerous tendency. And I think that the gathering in Baku, the 7th Global Forum, will address these issues and will contribute to the cause of solidarity, peace, mutual understanding and partnership.

In 2008, we initiated Baku Process, which already became a broad platform for intercultural dialogue. Azerbaijan is one of the few countries which are members of Islamic Cooperation Organization and of the Council of Europe. So, at the meeting of ministers of culture of Council of Europe, which took place in Baku in 2008, we invited ministers of culture of the countries of Islamic Cooperation Organization. For the first time ministers of culture of more than a hundred countries of these two organizations gathered in Baku.

Next year, in 2009, we hosted a ministerial meeting of the ministers of culture of Islamic Cooperation Organization in Baku and invited ministers of culture of European countries.

So, this process was named Baku Process, and we are very proud that the name of our ancient city is now also associated with this positive initiative. And this process is growing. It is getting more and more supporters; it is becoming a global initiative, which contributes to the cause of solidarity, mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue. At the same time our initiatives are aimed at strengthening positions of our country as a bridge between cultures, between civilizations, as a country, which can and should contribute more to the cause of mutual understanding.

Last year we were very proud to host the first, inaugural European Games in Baku. Next year we will be hosting the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games in Baku. So in one city, in 2 years` time, European and Islamic athletes will perform.

And this is not only sports, achievements and medals. This is friendship, this is mutual understanding, this is solidarity, partnership, and there is nothing to divide between us. We are all living on the same planet. All the people want to live in dignity, in peace, in security, to raise children, to protect their families. All religions advocate for the same values of humanity, mercy, solidarity, peace. Uniting our efforts is what the world needs today. Today`s gathering, today`s Forum is a clear indicator that the ideas of multiculturalism are

strongly supported by international community. As I said more than 140 countries are present here.

Multiculturalism has no alternative. Of course, we all know that there are different ideas. Some say that multiculturalism failed or didn't work. But there are positive examples. For us multiculturalism is a state policy and is our lifestyle.

What are the alternatives of multiculturalism? They are very dangerous alternatives – Xenophobia, Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism, Racism, Discrimination, and Hatred. Therefore, the strengthening of the values of multiculturalism will, I think, be a very positive trend in the current politics. And all the responsible politicians should contribute to these positive dynamics.

As I said, Azerbaijan is a relatively young country as an independent state. This year we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of restoration of our independence. These were the years of transformation of our political, economic system; these were the years of creation of the state. And, I think that we have met all our major targets.

Azerbaijan became a respected member of the international community, is a member of United Nations, OSCE, Islamic Cooperation Organization, Council of Europe, Non-Alignment Movement and many other international bodies.

We have strong international support, which was reflected in 2011, when Azerbaijan, with the support of 155 countries, was elected for the first time as a

non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. That was a big victory of our country and a sign of great respect for Azerbaijan.

Within this short period of 25 years we managed to present ourselves as a reliable international partner, as a country with independent foreign policy, a country which contributes to regional development, regional security, stability and multiculturalism. The years of independence were the years of transformation of our political system, creation of democratic institutions, and we succeeded in that. All the freedoms are provided in Azerbaijan, including freedom of media, free internet - more than 70% of our population are internet users - freedom of assembly, religious freedom. All freedoms are provided, and this is a good foundation for rapid economic development. And economic reforms implemented in Azerbaijan were implemented in parallel with political reforms.

Unfortunately, the creation of our statehood was dominated by military aggression of a neighboring Armenia against Azerbaijan, the aggression that ended in occupation of the internationally recognized territory of our country. Nagorno-Karabakh is a historic part of Azerbaijan, a legal part of Azerbaijan. When Azerbaijan became a member of United Nations, Nagorno-Karabakh was adopted as an integral part of our country. But as a result of this aggression Nagorno-Karabakh is totally occupied by Armenia. And not only Nagorno-Karabakh, but seven other districts of Azerbaijan beyond the administrative borders of Nagorno-Karabakh are under occupation.



As a result of that occupation we have more than one million refugees and IDPs. So we were the subject of ethnic cleansing by Armenia. Almost 20% of our territory is under occupation for more than 20 years.

Everything on the occupied territories is destroyed, and OSCE sent two fact-finding missions to observe the situation and their report is terrifying. Everything is destroyed – all our buildings, historic monuments, mosques, graves.

Here in Baku, in the center of the city, you can see how we preserve the religious heritage of Armenian people. The Armenian Church was restored and is situated where it was built. But all our mosques on the occupied territories lie in ruins.

The International Community adopted resolutions and decisions in order to put an end to this occupation. United Nations Security Council – the highest international body – adopted four resolutions demanding immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops from the occupied territories. Unfortunately, Armenia simply ignores these resolutions, and doesn't implement them. And here we come to a very important point of the mechanism of implementation of decisions and resolutions of International Organizations. In some cases, resolutions of Security Council are being implemented within days, if not hours. But in our case it is more than 20 years and it is still not resolved.

OSCE, Islamic Cooperation Organization, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Non-Alignment Movement – all of them adopted

similar resolutions demanding the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territory. But Armenia simply ignores them, and there is no international pressure to force the aggressor to comply with international norms.

Our people were subject of genocide. Khojaly genocide is recognized by 10 countries. As a result of that genocide hundreds of Azerbaijanis were killed, all of them civilians, and almost 200 of them were women and children. This is a crime against humanity, and this once again shows the level of danger that we are facing now.

The resolution of the conflict between Armenia-Azerbaijan must be based on the norms of international law, United Nations` Charter, Security Council`s resolutions, Helsinki Final Act. Our territories must be liberated; our people must have a chance to go back to their homes.

In the beginning of the 1990s we faced a major humanitarian catastrophe. Because we had 250,000 Azerbaijani refugees from Armenia, and more than 700,000 internally displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh region, and other areas. At that time population of Azerbaijan was less than 8 million. So we had probably one of the highest per capita numbers of refugees and IDPs.

And we know how difficult it is to accommodate them, to provide decent conditions for them. Especially, at that time, we were completely without any resources. We were at that time one of the poorest countries in the world with a living standard below any level of

poverty. Of course, we got some international support, but we mainly coped with this issue ourselves.

Despite of the fact that we built 90 settlements and every year we resettle more than 20,000 refugees and IDPs, still some of them live in difficult conditions, in dormitories, in schools, in kindergartens. And we are trying to do all our best to improve their living standard, but it takes a lot of time. So we clearly understand the situation, which countries now face with respect to refugees. This is a real humanitarian catastrophe, and all international community should take part in the resolution of these issues. And the countries, which receive most of the refugees, now need to be supported, not only in words but with very serious financial contributions. As a country which suffered and continues to suffer from occupation, we know how difficult it is from all point of views, from political, moral, economic and social points of view.

Despite occupation our country develops. We had one of the fastest economic growth rates in the world in the decade from 2004 to 2014. We dramatically reduced poverty from almost 50% to 5%. Unemployment also is around 5%. We invest in education. Level of literacy in Azerbaijan is close to 100%. More than 3000 schools were built and renovated in the recent years. More than 500 hospitals were constructed all over the country.

It allowed us to reduce significantly the child mortality. Gender equality is fully protected in Azerbaijan. Women have a right to vote in Azerbaijan for almost 100 years since the creation of the first Democratic

Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918. By the way, that was a first Democratic Republic in the Muslim world.

We invest in environmental protection, especially in Absheron Peninsula, which had a lot of polluted areas due to the oil exploration and development. We had to clean all that polluted areas and create parks and public areas there. In other words, we are making a very important progress with respect to United Nations Millennium Development goals, and we are on the right track. Even the economic crisis, which all of the oil producing countries are facing now especially taking into account the reduction of oil price, did not seriously affect our economy. And I am sure that we will be able to achieve all our major goals in 2016.

Azerbaijan is known as a country rich with energy resources. But our main objective is to transform “black gold”, as we call oil, into human capital.

Therefore, investment in education, social protection, and reforms brought to the result that our economy is now diversified, and dependence on oil and gas is going down. Though, of course, we initiated large-scale energy projects. The project of Southern Gas Corridor is a project of energy cooperation and energy security. Also we are an active member of the team of countries in promotion of the transportation corridor taking into account our geographical location.

And if you look at the number of countries, I will name them, if you don't mind, just to demonstrate what kind of regional cooperation we have. It will be clear that these energy and transportation corridors are not only

corridors for energy and cargos. These are the corridors of partnership. Southern Gas Corridor members are Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Italy and also Balkan countries, I am sure will join at a later stage.

East-West corridor, Silk Route project was initiated by three countries – Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. And now it expands to Central Asia, China, and from Turkey to Europe. This will be a new Silk Route. And then North-South corridor, where Azerbaijan is also an active participant. Here we have countries of Northern Europe, Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and India.

These are projects of partnership because all these countries have become interrelated. And if you are interrelated, if you are interdependent on each other then you have more predictability, stability, security and cooperation. Creation of this format of international cooperation is based on economic interests, like energy security and transportation, is based on sharing the same values of how to overcome the difficulties, how to create better conditions for our people. And as a foundation of all that our common values of religious tolerance, mutual understanding, and multiculturalism will make the life of the people of our region better.

Once again I would like to express my gratitude to all our guests, who are together with us today. Thank you for being with us at this important event. I would like to wish the Forum success. Thank you very much.

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Then the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser made a speech. The Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon addressed the forum via a video conference.

Then the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs José Manuel García-Margallo and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan delivered speeches. The forum brings together more than 3000 delegates, including heads of state and government, high-level officials, politicians, public figures, representatives of leading international organizations and think tanks, and scientists. The organizers of the forum include UNAOC, UNESCO, UNWTO, ISESCO and Council of Europe.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/945982>

## **Foreign Affairs Minister Mammadyarov: The Persistent presence of Armenian armed forces in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh is a source of instability**

Baku, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016

“We have always made clear that the persistent presence of Armenian armed forces in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh and 7 adjacent regions is a source of instability and frequent outbreaks of deadly military confrontations along the line of contact,” said Azerbaijani Minister of Foreign Affairs at the meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of V4 and Eastern Partnership in Prague, the Czech Republic.

“The success of cooperation with V4 Group stems from an outstanding track record of our bilateral relations with those countries. We continue to develop a regular high-level political dialogue on issues of common interest. Azerbaijan has established strategic partnership with Hungary and recently with the Czech Republic. The official visits of the President of the Czech Republic in September 2015 and the Prime Minister of Hungary to Azerbaijan in March 2016 gave further impetus to enhancing our bilateral agenda,” the Foreign Affairs Minister noted.

“The growing number of strategic partners among the EU member states inspires us to advance our dialogue with the EU on the same premises. Azerbaijan has introduced a draft EU-Azerbaijan Strategic Partnership Agreement in Riga Eastern Partnership Summit. We are confident that this

agreement will upgrade our bilateral relationship to qualitatively new level of strategic partnership and provide a better platform for the future of EU-Azerbaijan cooperation. We have recently finalized joint consultations on this agreement and now look forward to embarking on negotiations soon. V4 countries are our important partners also in the EU context and we are convinced that our Visegrad partners will promote the adoption of negotiating mandate by the EU Foreign Affairs Council,” Mammadyarov added.

“New geopolitical developments and challenges in the EU neighborhood will also shape EU’s future relations with Azerbaijan. We hope that the revised ENP will fit into differentiated aspirations of partner countries in their relations with the EU. Azerbaijan is ready to hold bilateral consultations with the EU with a view of exploring its engagement in potential areas of cooperation and joint thematic frameworks foreseen by revised ENP,” said the Azerbaijani top diplomat.

“Azerbaijan has been the staunch advocate of pragmatism in its relations with the EU. This approach is mirrored in most recent steps taken by Azerbaijan, notably the resumption of existing political dialogue mechanism aimed at re-energizing our bilateral cooperation,” the Foreign Affairs Minister noted.

“Nowadays, there are growing doubts that the Eastern Partnership is exhausted and has consumed its entire potential. And as we weigh the progress of our bilateral relations with the EU, the ability of the Eastern Partnership to deliver in multilateral track assumes an ever greater importance in determining



the overall efficiency of the program. In this regard, huge trans-regional projects initiated and realized by Azerbaijan pledge promising effect on the revitalization of Eastern Partnership multilateral track.

Southern Gas Corridor is a unique project in this regard involving diverse stakeholders from Eastern Partnership region as well as EU member states and candidate countries. The 2nd Ministerial Meeting of Advisory Council recently held in Baku and attended by Federica Mogherini and Maros Sefcovic delivered a message of unity and solidarity on unimpeded implementation of this project. The groundbreaking ceremony of TAP which will be held in 17 May in Thessaloniki, Greece will mark another milestone in this regard. Obviously, Azerbaijan is and will remain a committed partner to meet joint strategic interests in the field of energy security.”

“Azerbaijan’s contribution to the multilateral cooperation is not confined to trans-regional oil and gas infrastructure projects. Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project which is expected to be operational by the end of this year is widely acknowledged as an inherent component of revived ancient Silk Road. This railroad will join the ranks of the region’s most critical infrastructures once China’s Silk Road Economic Belt concept comes to the full reality. This already provides a greater room for enhancing transport cooperation with the EU. Azerbaijan is also working on resumption of negotiations on Common Aviation Agreement with the EU,” Mammadyarov noted.

“Growing threats such as radicalization, extremism and terrorism challenge stability and security of

Europe and its partners. These threats do not only target the lives of people but also core universal values that ensure peaceful coexistence. Multiculturalism and diversity should be promoted widely in order to overcome modern common challenges.

Azerbaijan with its vibrant multicultural society is ready to share its experience in this regard. Meanwhile, we regard EU Strategy of Culture in its external action instrumental in identifying the modalities of our practical engagement in this field,” the Foreign Affairs Minister underlined.

“The 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) held in Baku on April 25-27 2016, adopted the Baku Declaration which would serve as a guideline for states and international organizations in promotion of intercultural dialogue and multiculturalism as a way to counter violence and extremism and sustain peace, security and prosperity for all and everybody. The Forum’s themes and sub-themes reflected the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which incorporates the promotion of inclusive societies as a pivotal component for sustainable development, and the creation of justice, peace, and security. The Forum was attended by more than 4000 participants, including heads of states and governments, officials, academicians, experts and representatives of civil society and media,” the Minister said.

“Debating on security challenges in the EU neighborhood, I guess it would be very remiss of us

not to mention ongoing military aggression of Armenia against Azerbaijan.

The recent provocative acts by Armenian armed forces in this April along the frontline have caused unprecedented escalation in the history of conflict. Armenia has continuously disregarded international calls on moving beyond the “status-quo” in the resolution of the conflict.

Azerbaijan is interested in a negotiated settlement of the conflict. Its roadmap to peace and stability is clear and based on international law. Azerbaijan will not compromise its territorial integrity as it is done by V4 and other five Eastern Partnership countries. Armenian armed forces must unconditionally withdraw from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan and ensure safe return of internally displaced persons with dignity to their places of origin, as it's required by relevant UN Security Council resolutions,” Azerbaijani Foreign Affairs Minister Elmar Mammadyarov added.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/948784>

## **President Ilham Aliyev chaired meeting of Cabinet of Ministers dedicated to results of socio-economic development in nine months of 2016 and future objectives**

Baku, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has chaired a meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers dedicated to the results of socio-economic development in nine months of 2016 and objectives for the future. The head of state made an opening speech at the event.

### **Opening speech of President Ilham Aliyev**

- Today, we will traditionally discuss the results of nine months and talk about the work to be done before the end of this year and next year.

2016 has been a very difficult year for the global economy. Perhaps it has been one of the most difficult years in history. Crisis in the global economy continues. The crisis is affecting both countries rich in natural resources and consumer states. Of course, the sharp drop in oil prices has had a negative impact on oil-rich economies. At the same time, other countries performing their oil contracts in oil countries are also affected because the companies of these countries fulfill their contracts to a lesser extent. Therefore, this crisis is having a negative impact on these countries.

In 2016, the world is experiencing a political and military crisis. Bloody clashes and wars flare up in various regions of the world. There are growing risks and threats. I can say that the situation in the Middle East has reached a critical point.

The confrontation observed in the Middle East can lead to a major catastrophe. We can all see the situation gradually escalating.

Look at the migration crisis in Europe. We can say that it is observed all over the world. I have repeatedly expressed my opinion about the migration crisis. I want to say again that these people are trying to save their lives and are not to be blamed. Their countries have been destroyed by outside interference. Their cities have been razed to the ground. Their close relatives, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed. They head for Europe to save their lives, but in Europe they are sometimes met with barbed wire and bars. This, of course, if I may say so, is a sign of the current year, and it deals with a huge blow to the relations between civilizations. We have been trying for many years to strengthen the intercultural dialogue. Our work has won great praise in the world. Unfortunately, this trend is moving in the opposite direction in different countries of the world.

The migration crisis, in turn, plays into the hands of radical parties in Western countries. They get more votes. First of all, this indicates that society is already providing them with more support. At the same time, if this trend continues into the future, these parties will come to power. It is no secret what their policies will be like after this. This will further deepen the

confrontation between civilizations. Our society should be aware of all these realities. The regions we live in and the world have changed. And we must pursue our policy in accordance with that.

Our advantage is that we always go our own way, pursue our own policy and do not act on someone else's orders. This is why Azerbaijan is on the path of development and stability today. Some people keep saying today that we have to integrate somewhere. They probably do not understand themselves what this means. We have already integrated where necessary. Today Azerbaijan plays an important role and has won a lot of sympathy in various international organizations. Where are we supposed to integrate? Some people say that in order to please someone or justify a monetary donor, we have to integrate into Europe. The question is which Europe are we supposed to integrate into? Today's Europe is in front of our eyes. The top leaders of the European Union acknowledge that Europe is experiencing a deep crisis today. Are we supposed to integrate into a crisis?! Are we supposed to integrate into where they say "stop Muslims"?! Are we supposed to integrate into the society of those who apply double standards to Muslim refugees?! Are we supposed to integrate into the society of those who keep Muslims in cages?! This is the question, and we are talking about this. Therefore, in some cases we come under pressure, are subjected to campaigns and various calumnies. We should be aware of these realities.

We are going our own way and have established very close ties with Europe. We have signed various documents with the European Union. At the same

time, we are working on another document now. On our initiative, a proposal we sent to the European Commission is being discussed. We are talking about a partnership format. We have documents on strategic partnership with nine EU member-states.

For 15 years we have been part of the Council of Europe, and our positions there are getting stronger every day. We have even managed to create a watershed in this organization. Most deputies of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe already see that we were treated unfairly, were subjected to double standards, and the situation is quite normal today. Therefore, we have no problems with cooperation. We are open to cooperation. But cooperation is one thing, while integration is another. Those who do not know the difference between the two words should hear this again today and put an end to inappropriate speculation they have been engaged in for their own propaganda in order to please somebody.

Against the backdrop of such an international panorama, Azerbaijan is developing successfully. We host prestigious international events. The Fifth Baku International Humanitarian Forum has recently been completed. More than 400 well-known figures from nearly 80 countries participated in the forum. The forum praised the work we have been doing again, in particular relation to multiculturalism. This year, our country also hosted other international events. Among them, I want to highlight the Seventh Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations. The fact that this forum was held in Azerbaijan was a great assessment

of the international community for the work we have carried out in this area.

We have held major sporting events in Azerbaijan, organized the Formula-1 competition with an audience of 500 million people. The leaders of Formula-1 indicated that the best Formula-1 event was held in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan held its first World Chess Olympiad, which was organized at the best level.

This Olympiad brought together representatives from around the world – nearly 200 countries.

Among the major international events, I want to emphasize the official visit of Pope Francis to Azerbaijan. It was a historic visit, as the Pope sent very open messages to the world from Baku. His valuable thoughts related to the state of multiculturalism in Azerbaijan reflect the truth and, at the same time, are wonderful manifestations of the assessment of this work by the head of world Catholics.

This is what we are doing! Everything around us is on fire and ablaze. The risks are growing. We must and we do protect our happy life and happy future. Azerbaijan lives in peace, calm and security. People live in peace. Creative work is under way. Our cities are becoming ever more beautiful and landscaped. Everything is going very well.

This year we conducted a referendum, which is of great importance for our country. First of all, I must say that the referendum was conducted in a



democratic, fair and completely transparent atmosphere. Over a hundred foreign observers monitored the referendum. Several international opinion agencies conducted an exit poll. Its results coincide with the official results. This is natural, because the referendum was held in a completely transparent and fair fashion. According to the latest data I have, the Central Electoral Commission has received a total of 20 or so complaints. We have more than 5,000 polling stations and there were only 20 complaints, maybe a little more. What does this mean? It means that the people of Azerbaijan support the results of the referendum. Their will is reflected in the results of the referendum.

The international organizations that conducted monitoring, in particular, representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, gave a very high assessment to the referendum. This is very important, because European organizations usually criticize us. They have often criticized us groundlessly. However, even the organization that is accustomed to criticizing us could not find any faults. This is one of the results of the referendum. It shows that no matter what people may say or invent, Azerbaijan is on the path of democracy. We conduct free elections and a transparent referendum. We can serve as an example for many countries, in particular those that regard themselves the cradle of democracy. Let them come and study our experience.

The second main result of the referendum is that the absolute majority of the Azerbaijani people supported the proposed changes. In fact, it means great popular support for our policies. I personally perceive it that

way, because the proposed changes were initiated by us and the people of Azerbaijan, the overwhelming majority said "yes" in the referendum. Of course, this gives us additional strength. It was another test for us, a test in a year of crisis.

Of course, I already know the atmosphere in our country, what issues people are concerned about and what is their attitude to our common cause. I know it perfectly well. The referendum results once again demonstrated this throughout the country, to all of our people and the world. The people of Azerbaijan support our current policy, are committed to it and see that there is no alternative to this policy. An alternative policy could be a disaster. It may lead Azerbaijan to an abyss again; turn it into an arena of bloodshed.

The Azerbaijani people have supported our policy and said "yes" in the referendum. I would like to express my gratitude to the Azerbaijani people again for the great confidence and support. I want to assure my dear people again that I will continue to follow this path, ensure the development of Azerbaijan, so that no outside force can divert us from this path.

We have strengthened our international standing this year. Many international organizations have supported Azerbaijan again. Among them, I want to emphasize two organizations. One is the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which, at its summit this year, established a contact group on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The contact group is already working. The summit expressed its support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan again. A recent Summit of Non-Aligned Movement, the second

biggest organization only to the UN, adopted another decision on the settlement of Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. This is our great diplomatic and political success.

We see these great trends in other organizations too. The European Parliament; the official statement recently voiced by the European Parliament demonstrates a fair position on the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The Azerbaijani public is well aware that Azerbaijan broke all ties with the European Parliament for one year and withdrew from Euronest. There are reasons for that and our people are aware. I simply want to say that it was not our fault. We are not to blame. We were subjected to an injustice. We were insulted. Words unacceptable in diplomacy were used in relation to us.

We, of course, also had our say. The Azerbaijani Parliament issued a very sound and reasoned response, i.e. in line with the resolution of the European Parliament, at the same level. Our relations were frozen for one year, but the Azerbaijani people did not even feel that. I said at the time that it is good to have relations, but if they are not there, it will not affect our work in any way. What happened as a result? They came here to resume the relationship themselves. They were convinced that insults and pressure lead nowhere, even though they should have known long ago that this would not work. They came here to restore these relations. We also had some suggestions. These were received positively, and a joint statement was made in the end.

The statement said that the European Parliament regrets that such actions were committed. It also pointed out that efforts would be made to avoid the recurrence of such actions. We also demonstrated a constructive position, decided that this was acceptable and renewed the relations.

What do I mean? I do not want to praise ourselves. I never have done that although there are grounds for that. We are a country with dignity which has lived independently for 25 years. We will not allow anyone to insult us. We respond to every inappropriate action, we say your word, we are not ashamed of anyone, we demonstrate a principled position not only on issues that concern us but also in all matters. We have our own position on all events happening in the world and, not afraid of anything, we express this position.

This year, more than 20 heads of state and government have paid official and working visits to Azerbaijan. I have paid 14 foreign visits. Before the end of this year, more visits by heads of state and government are expected in Azerbaijan. I will also pay several visits. So we have conducted a very active foreign policy, which asserts Azerbaijan as a model country in the world.

In April of this year, Azerbaijan won a great military victory. The April battles are a glorious page in our history. The Azerbaijani army has liberated parts of Agdara, Fizuli and Jabrail districts from occupation and raised the Azerbaijani flag on these lands. An area of more than 2,000 hectares has been cleared from occupiers, while a territory several times bigger has come under our control. We have gained full

advantage of the line of contact and can destroy any enemy target today.

After the April fighting the mediators became slightly more active. You know that meetings were held in May and June, but it is already October. Armenia has employed its dirty tactics again and, relying on the support of the Armenian lobby, wants this issue to be removed from the world agenda. We must not allow that. This issue should be resolved quickly. But both you and the Azerbaijani people are well aware that the issue is not being solved not only because of Armenia. Armenia has great patrons. Some give it money, others provide weapons, others create a lobby, others advocate for it. This is why the issue remains unresolved. It is therefore necessary to clarify this issue. We are well aware that we are faced with double standards, and the unresolved status of this issue does not do any credit to the UN Security Council, as it has adopted four resolutions. These resolutions have not been executed for more than 20 years. Let them respect at least their own decisions. We can clearly see how Armenia violates international law.

We should become even stronger economically, politically and militarily, and we have this power. We simply want a peaceful solution to the issue and carry out a consistent policy in this direction.

You must have heard or read the latest statement from America. The people of Azerbaijan are aware of it. This statement is surprising, to say the least. To blame Azerbaijan for failing to resolve the conflict is at least unfair. On the other hand, how is this statement

consistent with others?! After all, there is a thesis which has been repeatedly proclaimed by the Presidents of America, Russia and France: "The status quo is unacceptable." We welcome that. Nothing specific was done after these words, but the appearance of these words is a great success for us. With such a strong statement, to say that "both sides are to blame", that "parties are not ready" and that "this issue is more complicated than the Palestinian-Israeli conflict" simply means support for the aggressive policy of Armenia. There can be no other explanation. Various statements are made now that these expressions were taken out of context and misunderstood. We understand everything – we live in an age of the Internet. Words said somewhere in the world immediately reverberate. We do not accept such statements. We believe that such expressions should be amended at the highest level and in the near future. Otherwise, the mediation mission may be in doubt. It was only a thesis expressed in an official manner. But there is so much talk behind closed doors! So much pressure is exerted on us for Azerbaijan to agree to the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh! We are not saying this because diplomacy has its own rules. However, the main reason of the campaign of slander and insult being waged against us by Western media and nongovernmental organizations, as well as the use of the "fifth column" which receives orders, is to force us to agree to the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh.

This will never happen! As long as we are in power, and the referendum has shown that we will stay in power for a long time, Insha'Allah, Azerbaijan will never agree to this. Nagorno-Karabakh is an integral

part of Azerbaijan, and we must restore our territorial integrity.

This year, our athletes delighted us a lot. Our team won 18 medals in the Summer Olympics in Rio. For the number of medals, we are in 14th place globally, in 7th place in Europe, second among post-Soviet republics after Russia and first in the Muslim world. There is no need for commenting on these figures.

Let's look at the economy. As I have already noted, the oil prices have dropped, causing a reduction of public investment. Fewer funds were invested in the construction sector, which to some extent led an economic downturn. But it is encouraging that our industry is growing. Our industrial capacity is growing, albeit only slightly – by 0.2 per cent. The non-oil sector of our economy is growing. Industrial growth is 3.6 per cent, which is good. Agriculture has increased by 2.4 per cent, and I am sure that it will continue to grow because the work we are doing in the field of agriculture will produce even better results in the near future.

Social projects have been implemented. We have built 29 schools, 485 schools have undergone renovation, while 33 health facilities have been built and refurbished. We have implemented major road projects, projects of rural roads. In some of our cities, we have implemented drinking water projects.

We are implementing infrastructure projects and have created 154,000 jobs, including 121,000 permanent ones. In the first nine months, 36,000 jobs were closed. Of course, we constantly analyze the reasons

for the jobs being closed. We have created 121,000 permanent jobs and closed 36,000. This is an excellent indicator. I think it is quite a special indicator for a year of crisis.

Work in other directions is going according to plan. The Southern Gas Corridor project is being successfully implemented. Azerbaijan is becoming a very important transportation center. The cargo containers sent from afar are already passing through the territory of Azerbaijan. In other words, by creating a powerful transport infrastructure, we will secure a long-term political and economic interests of our country.

We will now talk about the work to be done before the end of this year. I think that results of 2016 are generally good. We have done a good job. 2016 has been the most difficult and challenging year for the country's economy in recent years. But, as I said, we will stay on the path of development.

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Other speakers participated actively at the meeting including Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of the State Committee for Work with Refugees and IDPs Ali Hasanov, Minister of Healthcare Ogtay Shiraliyev and Minister of Education Mikayil Jabbarov.



President Ilham Aliyev delivered a closing speech.

### **Closing speech of President Ilham Aliyev**

- Before the end of this year, we have to meet all of the remaining objectives. In particular, we should carry out work related to investment projects. The state investment program must be implemented. In some areas there are delays, some infrastructure projects have not been implemented in full. Therefore, although there is little time left for the end of the year, we need to pay serious attention to these issues.

I have pointed out that we have conducted profound economic reforms this year, and they are already producing results. We have adopted and signed many important decisions and orders in the field of governance and other areas in order to boost exports and reduce our dependence on imports. Therefore, I am sure that there will be very good results in the reduction of imports and increase of exports next year.

Our reforms are valued quite highly by leading economic centers of the world. The world's top economic forum, the Davos World Economic Forum, ranks the economy of Azerbaijan in 37<sup>th</sup> place in the world in terms of competitiveness. Last year we were in the 40<sup>th</sup> place, which was also an excellent indicator. Although the world is experiencing a crisis this year, which has not bypassed us either, the Azerbaijani economy has received an even higher assessment. To be in 37<sup>th</sup> place in the world is a very high level and, I think, is a historic indicator. In the

CIS, as always, we are in first place and are maintaining this leadership.

We are discussing the state budget for next year. Our state budget should reflect all social programs. In general, despite the decline in our revenues, we fully provide funds for the social sphere. Not a single social initiative and project has been reduced. In 2017, our budget must also be socially oriented and, of course, sufficient funds must be provided for investment. In previous years, we gave preference to state investment.

This was natural, because we had to implement numerous projects, particularly infrastructure ones. If we had not implemented them, there could be no talk of development whatsoever today. We would not be able to develop agriculture, tourism or other spheres today. Therefore, public investment has been of particular importance, and we have already implemented many of these projects in recent years. Of course, the state investment program for 2017 is being prepared now and will soon be submitted to me. But we need to attract even more private sector investment.

We have taken very serious steps to improve the business landscape in Azerbaijan. I can say that entrepreneurs are enthusiastically involved in this work. There is great enthusiasm in our country, especially in the agriculture, processing and industrial sectors. There is extensive activity in Baku, in our cities, in all our cities and districts. This, of course, is a manifestation of our policy, as we have taken serious steps to develop the private sector and

entrepreneurship. At the same time, it is evidence of the sense of responsibility of our entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs should invest the money earned in the economy. In 2017, we will take serious steps in this direction.

As for public investment projects, they are also envisaged, and I think that we should provide sufficient funds for that. Once again, I should note that key infrastructure projects related to electricity and gasification has been completed. We have realized and are still realizing many projects of rural roads, drinking water and sanitation. Of course, we should, as usual, pay great attention to social infrastructure projects. In 2017, we should pay serious attention to macroeconomic stability. Inflation should be in single digits. I believe we will achieve that.

We can't allow artificial price increases. We need a very strict control. It is necessary to strengthen both public oversight and control on the part of state bodies, because we can't allow some unscrupulous people and speculators to artificially inflate prices, causing our people to suffer from this. Of course, prices of imported goods are formed on world markets. If a product that is not produced in Azerbaijan becomes more expensive on the world market, it will naturally grow in price here. This is why we should try to reduce our dependence on imports as much as possible, i.e. reduce it to the minimum. Besides, there are foreign components in food items produced in Azerbaijan. We should reduce this component. Work in this direction is under way.

It is necessary to continue the policy of reforms and consolidation in the banking sector. The banking sector should undergo very serious reforms. The banking sector should be transparent and meet the highest international standards.

This year, as always, we have paid great attention to the development of the industrial potential of our country.

We are working to establish several industrial estates. Among them, I want to highlight the Sumgayit Chemical Industry Park. Detailed information on the activity of this estate was provided at a recent meeting I chaired in Sumgayit. I do not want to repeat anything and want to say only one thing: as a result of the full commissioning of this estate, thousands and perhaps even tens of thousands of jobs will be created and our non-oil sector will acquire huge export potential.

The process of creation of the Balakhani and Pirallahi industrial estates is under way in Baku. There are specific projects for both areas. In Pirallahi, we plan to start the production of medicines. I do hope that we will lay the foundation of the first factory for the production of medicines in the coming months. We are dependent on foreign medicines by practically 100 per cent. This is a matter of concern in terms of security. At the same time, major funds in foreign currency are spent to buy medicines abroad. Therefore, the decision was made and investors are also involved in this. We have created good conditions. At the initial stage, medicines of more than 100 denominations should be produced in Azerbaijan.

The process of creation of industrial zones in the regions is under way. In Neftchala, we have already started the construction of an automobile plant together with the Iranian side. Work is under way to establish an industrial estate in Masalli. Work in this direction should also be carried out in other districts.

We have managed to attract major investment to the sector of building materials. There was no public investment in this sector, but both local and foreign businesses have invested heavily in this area.

Thanks to these investments, we can provide ourselves with building materials to a fairly large degree, but not completely. Therefore, our respective offices, state agencies, the Ministry of Economy and others should see what building materials are being imported to Azerbaijan. We need to create such manufacturing sites in Azerbaijan and provide preferential loans. Entrepreneurs should pay more attention to this area.

To protect the domestic market, we have recently increased state duties on some imported goods. This is a very correct move. We have to protect domestic producers, but domestic producers should not abuse of this because people will have a choice – to buy local or foreign product. People may like foreign products better, but the price may be higher. Local products should be much cheaper than foreign ones. Therefore, we need to closely monitor the consumer market, so that unscrupulous business people do not take advantage of this. If the prices of imported food or other goods rise, they may try to raise prices on their products too. This should not be allowed.

Both local and central executive bodies should exercise very strict control over this matter.

We need to take additional measures to protect the domestic market, and it is necessary to conduct a very flexible policy here. We should not waste any time. These issues should be dealt with very quickly. If we see that we provide ourselves with a particular product by 100 per cent, the duty on these products should be immediately increased. Not only in this but also in all other areas we should conduct a very swift and flexible policy. In some cases, problems are posed by bureaucratic obstacles. Certain issues take months to be approved.

Opinions are collected and we are wasting time. In the current economic conditions, time wasting means a loss of money. It is necessary to work fast, and if the decisions are correct, they should be adopted immediately.

The newly-established State Agency of Housing Construction has started to operate. A major construction project is being implemented in Yasamal District, and the process of building social housing is already beginning. We have talked about this at a Cabinet meeting. We are already starting this work. This is a great social significance and will have a great impact on the construction sector, in particular the sector of building materials. Our entrepreneurs should also be prepared for that. In these projects, we should try to use construction materials made in Azerbaijan.

In the near future, there are plans to construct a large metallurgical complex in our country. To do that, we have a resource base such as the Dashkesen mines. Today, these fields are used very inefficiently and the mined ore is sold abroad simply as a raw material. In the earlier months, we managed to ensure the operation of this sector. Unfortunately, nothing was done there for months. People were out of work and large debts emerged. Currently, there is a revitalization process there, and we have to use these great natural resources very efficiently. Therefore, there are plans to build a large metallurgical complex, which would consist of several plants. Major funds will be invested, and we should try to make sure that everything from raw materials to the final product of the highest quality is manufactured in Azerbaijan. I am sure it will be the case.

I would like to touch upon another issue today. Currently, we are implementing numerous large-scale industrial projects in industrial parks, other areas, in the metallurgical industry, and we can say that all the products to be manufactured will be exportable. Therefore, we should also consider our transportation capacity and plan how we will transport exportable products. Do we have the capacity to transport them? Is there sufficient infrastructure? Are there carriages, tanks and dry cargo infrastructure? We already need to examine this. We have invested heavily in the transport sector – the railway, air and sea transport. Currently, a major shipyard in Baku is already building large ships. But this should be comprehensively examined again. The volume of exportable products, including agricultural produce whose exports will

dramatically increase now, should be predicted accurately.

This year, the production of cotton alone will increase threefold. Next year it will increase 10 times compared to this year, and then 20 times. How are we going to transport it? Do we have sufficient infrastructure to transport it? We will have finished products, but won't be able to transport it. Therefore, all of this needs to be planned on and envisaged in the state investment program, so that we are not faced with an unexpected situation in the future.

Thus, the ongoing and future projects in the industrial sector will bring us great benefits. We will create thousands, tens of thousands of jobs and increase non-oil exports. This is the key issue. Today, the price of oil is 50 dollars. Last month, it was 40 dollars. At the beginning of the year, it dropped to 30 dollars. So we can't plan our future on this basis.

Therefore, we must compensate for the reduction in oil exports by non-oil exports. The key directions in this area are industry and agriculture.

A turnaround has already occurred in agriculture. We have implemented specific programs and projects in different spheres, allocated major funds and provided equipment. Changes are being made to subsidies. Subsidies will stimulate the farmers now. This year has been some kind of a test year in this area. I am sure that there will be good results. I would like to raise certain questions regarding agricultural sectors. Work related to cotton growing is progressing well. A meeting has been held in Sabirabad District.



Currently, cotton growing is successfully developing in 24 districts. This year, we should harvest 100,000 tons of cotton, next year a further 250,000-300,000 tons and even more in the coming years. We should try to gradually approach the level of production in the best years of the Soviet period. This means jobs. This year alone, about 70,000 people work in the cotton industry. If we increase our acreage by two or 2.5 times next year, more than 100,000, perhaps even 150,000 people will be provided with jobs in this area. Taking into account our future plans, we already need to take action here. I am told that the capacity of our ginneries is 300,000-350,000 tons. We will achieve this figure most likely in 2018, perhaps even earlier. Therefore, we need to build new ginneries. The Ministry of Economy has already received instructions. Of course, the private sector should also be involved in this work. It is necessary to determine places where they will be built, so that we waste no time in the future.

We have taken serious steps in the provision of subsidies. Additional funds have recently been allocated. Prior to that, the purchase price of cotton was increased from 40 to 50 gapiks. We are doing this for people working in this difficult industry to earn more. The 10-gapik increases will double peoples' incomes. At the same time, we have now developed a mechanism that will encourage the peasants and farmers, so they will show more interest themselves.

At the same time, our weakness in agriculture is the production of grain. We provide ourselves with grain by about 65 per cent. In recent years, large farms have been established, where yields are about twice

the average. Despite this, we still depend on imports. Every year, Azerbaijan imports more than a million tons of grain, wheat. Therefore, the realization of new projects is beginning now, and we should try to provide ourselves with grain by 100 per cent. It is possible. By increasing the yields, proper organization of irrigation and inclusion of new lands into the circulation, we can achieve this and significantly reduce our dependence on imports.

This year, sericulture has developed in 24 districts and there are good results. 70 tons of mulberry cocoons have been harvested. Subsidies have been provided for sericulture. The Sheki silk factory is already in operation. It employs hundreds of people. It is necessary to carry out reconstruction there. This factory can process more cocoons. I do hope that in the next two to three years we will be able to harvest thousands of tons of cocoons. So far, this work is carried out in 24 districts. It will be done in other districts in the future, and people will be able to earn good money in 40-45 days.

There are people earning thousands of manats, and this improves their well-being. We should try to export finished products here, and I am sure we will achieve that. For effective organization of this work, assistance was provided in the amount of 3.5 million manats.

One of our traditional sectors is viticulture. Most of the plantations set up in Soviet times on the initiative of great leader Heydar Aliyev were unfortunately cut down. This happened as a result of Gorbachev's campaign at that time. And for some reason it

happened only in Azerbaijan. Vineyards in other republics were saved. Our leaders then went out of their way to please Gorbachev. As a result, our vineyards were destroyed. At the same time, it should be noted that even after that viticulture was unfortunately neglected. I am told that about 150,000-160,000 tons of grapes will be picked this year. In the Soviet period, we collected 1.7-2 million tons of grapes in the best of times. We must definitely link viticulture to winemaking. Unfortunately, we were unable to access the wine markets in the world. Although several wineries have been constructed, they seem either not to show any interest or lack the capacity. But we have to access world markets with our wine, just as we did with the Russian market once. As far as I know, we are not exporting significant amounts of wine even to the Russian market now. However, this is a very profitable sphere, especially for farmers.

New vineyards are being set up as well, and the dynamics is positive. Government support here should be even greater. It is necessary to identify places. This would mean jobs and a sector fetching the currency. Speaking about winemaking, first of all I mean exports, of course.

The development of winemaking should not lead to alcohol consumption in the country, as our people must lead a healthy lifestyle. The same applies to tobacco growing. The less our citizens smoke the better. This will only benefit their health and the family budget. But the development of tobacco growing will create huge opportunities for us. This year we will produce twice as much tobacco as last year. But, of

course, we can't be content with this figure of 2,500 tons. We should increase the production of dried tobacco to 10,000 tons in a short period of time. Tobacco is cultivated in 14 districts. I know that the recent subsidies have inspired the rural population. The government should also provide support. There are no serious problems with the export of dry tobacco. There are countries waiting to buy it. We need to export more to these countries and increase the production of cigarettes in Azerbaijan – not for our citizens to smoke more, but to import less from abroad. Most of all the currency is spent on grain, cigarettes, raw sugar and butter. Therefore, we must improve local production and exports.

Raw sugar is imported to the country in large quantities. In order to reduce that, we should certainly expand the acreage of sugar beet. Instructions have already been given, i.e. the acreage has been determined. We need about 40,000-50,000 hectares of land to grow sugar beet and eliminate the dependence on imports of raw sugar and cane sugar. Serious work needs to be done in this area too. Our sugar factory should work on the local sugar beet. The imports of cane sugar and raw sugar from abroad cost more than 100 million. However, without this plant the entire volume of raw sugar would be imported from abroad. The plant has created jobs for hundreds of people. At the same time, we are exporting ready sugar.

In other words, the operation of the plant, of course, is a positive factor, but it would be very nice if it worked on local raw materials. Therefore, the cultivation of sugar beet is of particular importance. We do not

grow it and 100 million dollars go abroad. If we grow it, 100 million dollars will stay in Azerbaijan. It is a very simple task.

Let's move on to the development of tea growing. Serious work is being done in connection with this sphere. There are new technologies that dramatically increase productivity. We need to create good conditions for the farmers. They also need to be interested in tea growing in the southern region. We export tea, but we also import it. In other words, there is great domestic demand. Therefore, the development of tea growing will reduce imports in the first place.

The Azerbaijani tea is of high quality, and we need to export more of it.

Work carried out in connection with animal husbandry in recent years is commendable. I have recently attended the opening of the Yalama Agricultural Estate. This is the first such estate. There are plans to raise 3,000 heads of cattle there, and we need to expand this sector. The Ministry of Agriculture is seriously dealing with these issues now. Purebred cattle have been bought, but the main task today is to fully introduce the system of artificial insemination. Work in this direction is already under way. I am told that in three to four years we will change the breed and obtain animals of high quality. This, in turn, will give us an additional acreage, as we are using the pastures very irrationally. Some of them are empty, while others are used by significantly fewer animals than required by the standard. Therefore, our animal husbandry should develop in closed conditions.

According to the available data, we need about 500,000-600,000 heads of cattle to develop the production of milk and meat and meet the latest standards in this area. At the moment, we have more than two million heads of cattle, but their breed is not as good. The difference between them and the pedigree cattle imported from abroad is like between heaven and earth. Therefore, serious steps are being taken in this sector. Sowing should be systematically carried out on unused pastures. The Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Presidential Administration are already dealing with these issues. Thus, we will provide ourselves with dairy products and butter.

According to the latest information given to me, complete self-sufficiency with butter requires additional 50,000-60,000 heads of pedigree cattle and, of course, new companies for the production of butter. We provide ourselves with milk and dairy products at the level of 80 per cent. This figure should reach 100 per cent in the near future. The operating plants should build new production lines, new enterprises should be built and Azerbaijan should produce all kinds of dairy products. This is the goal. So you should analyze the issue again and submit a specific proposal to me spelling out how much money, acreage, investments, loans and public investment are required for a speedy solution of this problem.

I mentioned this at the previous meeting and I want to say it again: we need to develop the agricultural sectors that bring foreign currency.

Among them, the cultivation of hazelnuts has a lot of potential. Hazelnuts are among the crops that bring us the greatest amount of currency. New proposals are being prepared. New hazelnut orchards should be established on an area of 40,000 hectares. The current area of hazelnut orchards is smaller. Therefore, we will work in order to more than double the area of hazelnut orchards. We have selected 12 districts for the cultivation of hazelnuts. These 12 districts have favorable climate and fertile soil conditions for the cultivation of hazelnuts to develop seriously. This, of course, takes time. We are starting this work this year. Seedlings are purchased by the state.

The private sector should also be involved. It will be of great benefit to the private sector as well. We need to carry out this work systematically.

Unfortunately, the number of traditional almond orchards in Baku and the Absheron peninsula is decreasing. But this sphere brings a lot of currency. I am told that we have only 500-600 hectares of almond orchards. This is too little. We should set up thousands of hectares of almond orchards. There is a lot of vacant land on this territory. We need to make rational use of these lands and create large almond plantations, especially around Baku, Sumgayit and in Absheron.

We import olives from abroad. We have so many olive trees and so many possibilities now. We have great opportunities in Baku, Absheron and elsewhere. But unfortunately we can't provide ourselves, and the production of olives is at a very low level. Therefore,

we need to set up new olive orchards. Currently, we are determining places – both in the Absheron Peninsula and in the northern zone, in Khizi District.

I am aware that work is under way to enable the exports of olives to world markets. This sector also brings a decent income to both farmers and the state.

Every branch of agriculture is important for us now. But I want to say it again: the domestic demand should be met by 100 per cent and exports should be maximized. It is also necessary to determine the export markets. We have a traditional export market, which is Russia. Russia is implementing large-scale agricultural projects now. They are also getting rid of their dependence on imports. Therefore, we need to consider new markets. These are the Middle East, the Persian Gulf states, other countries, Asia, China. We need to reach out to them. Therefore, we are working on the brand “Made in Azerbaijan”. Specific work is under way. Funds have been allocated. Our delegations should visit different countries, travel a lot and make presentations. We are sitting here and waiting for someone to come and buy something from us.

All companies and countries are competing for markets today. Therefore, there should be a new approach. The government should provide organization, while entrepreneurs should also be interested. We should definitely pay more attention to cash flow, because 50 or even 100 per cent of the money spent for exported products never comes back. Therefore, there should be a very strict control here. A new system associated with the promotion of



exports is being put in place now, and this is envisaged there. Everything should be fully transparent. No violations should be tolerated here.

All of this calls for more attention to be paid to irrigation and land reclamation. In recent years, we have allocated major funds for this.

We have constructed two large water reservoirs – Takhtakorpu and Shamkirchay. We have implemented other projects. But we still have a lot of non-irrigated land. Therefore, I have issued the instruction, and the Presidential Administration is working in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Open Joint Stock Company "Irrigation and Water Management". I expect to be provided with a specific report on the measures for next year. According to the Presidential Administration, we will be able to provide water to 80,000-90,000 hectares of land next year with relatively minor expenses. This work is being analyzed in all of our districts now. Executive authorities have joined the work, and it is the right approach. People on the ground know best. Of course, the central executive authorities and the Open Joint Stock Company "Irrigation and Water Management" should prepare a plan on how many tens of thousands of hectares of land need to be irrigated annually, where these lands are and what will be grown on them. What kind of support should the government provide for the cultivation of these lands? It is necessary to calculate manpower. Therefore, we can significantly increase the area of irrigated lands. There is a lot of land.

I have said this earlier too. There are seized territories, but a significant portion of them has already been returned. As I was informed, more than 200,000 hectares of captured and unused lands have already been returned. Illegal lease agreements were signed. If someone cultivates these lands, we will be only happy about that. But if someone has seized them, is engaged in speculation, keeps them as a deposit and waits for prices to go up to sell or share them afterwards or build a house, then this should not be allowed.

Therefore, instructions have been given and this work should be continued. The illegally seized lands should be returned to the state. Those using them should receive state support. All of this work, of course, should be supported by the state, including the financial support.

Financial support is provided for the development of entrepreneurship. This year, we have issued preferential loans worth 120 million manats. But before the end of the year, we should provide loans in full for the envisaged projects, and allocate enough funds for next year.

This year, we are creating the “ASAN dəstək” system to support family businesses. This was presented to me at the Masalli center of “ASAN xidmət”. The initiative is commendable. In other words, it will greatly support the development of small businesses. Therefore, the government and relevant agencies should take up the issue. The Ministries of Economy, of Agriculture, of Labor and Social Protection of the Population, local executive bodies should divide,

along with “ASAN xidmət”, the spheres in those small containers, so that family businesses could develop in our country. In developed countries, especially countries with developed agriculture, the bulk of agriculture is created in small farms where family businesses extensively develop. This should be the case here too.

The number of “ASAN xidmət” centers has reached 11. This brings a huge benefit. The centers have received 12 million applications. In the coming year or two, we expect to establish four new “ASAN xidmət” centers.

It is necessary to envision this in the public investment program for next year and for 2018. In the next two years, we should establish at least four centers. We can see that the measures taken and the reforms carried out have given a strong impetus to the influx of tourists this year. In particular, the number of visitors from Arab countries has increased 20-30 times.

In the summer months, there were no empty rooms in most of our hotels. So this brings our country a large amount in currency. This may be an innovation for us. Some people are not used to this. But there are a large number of tourists in all developed countries. The flow of tourists is evidence of development, security and hospitality of people in these countries. We have all of this here. Our people are hospitable and there is security. We have historical and scenic sites and modern infrastructure. There was a time when some people said: so many hotels are built in Azerbaijan and in Baku. Who needs them? We can

see that they are necessary, and whatever we have done is right. But in the current circumstances, we must calculate the potential influx of tourists, as we are switching to the "ASAN visa" system now. Electronic visas will be issued in a matter of three days. Therefore, the flow of tourists will be even greater. We all see the benefits of the "Formula-1" competition. Therefore, our hotel infrastructure must keep pace with this development. Let this be heard by entrepreneurs, local executive authorities, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. They should create conditions for the number of hotels in Baku and the regions to increase.

Next year we will implement social infrastructure projects. There are plans to build schools, hospitals and Olympic centers. We should build modular schools, because we still have a lot of schools that are in disrepair. I think we will completely demolish them in 2017-2018 and new schools will be built in their place. Thus, there should be no schools without renovation or in an emergency state.

The problems of IDPs are always in the spotlight. It has been stated here how much funds have been allocated for this work, that about 100 IDP settlements and houses have been built in the regions and in Baku. I think that in order to find a more rapid solution of the issue in 2017, we have two options. Of course, we should build and are building new settlements. At the same time, we need to construct new buildings. The unsold apartments must be purchased by the state and passed on to refugees. Thus, we will be able to quickly resolve the problems of our compatriots who are in a difficult situation, because

the construction of buildings takes time. In addition, there are many empty apartments in Baku and other cities, and the state can acquire them. This, in turn, can revive the construction sector and increase taxes.

In short, 2016 is coming to an end. As I said, this year has been a difficult one for the global economy, for the world. However, I am confident that thanks to the work to be done in the last three months of the year, Azerbaijan will successfully finish 2016. Year 2017 will also be successful. I am sure that we have enough power and determination to meet all our objectives. The people support our policy. The results of the referendum confirm this again.

The road ahead of us is open. We will continue to follow the path of development and progress. Thank you.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/999344>

## **Fifth Baku International Humanitarian Forum Continues with plenary session**

Baku, September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016

The 5th Baku International Humanitarian Forum has continued today with a plenary session following the opening ceremony.

The first part of the session, attended by head of the Azerbaijan's Presidential Administration, academician of National Academy of Sciences Ramiz Mehdiyev, was chaired by Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov. Speeches were delivered by political and religious leaders.

Vice-president of the Republic of Bulgaria Margarita Popova hailed the importance of the Forum, saying it features discussions on pressing issues. She thanked the Azerbaijani government for "excellent" organization of the event.

Ms. Popova highlighted Azerbaijan's contribution to the preservation and promotion of multiculturalism and multicultural values.



Chairman of the Clerical Office of Caucasus Muslims Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade drew the audience's attention to ways of preventing and combating religious extremism.

Former President of the Republic of Croatia Stjepan Mesic pointed to increasing xenophobic tendencies in Europe. He called on media organizations and politicians to be more responsible. Mr Mesic noted the role of the intercultural and interreligious dialogue addressing global challenges, and hailed the importance of the 5th Baku International Humanitarian Forum in this regard.

Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk said all people must have equal opportunities and rights so that intercultural and interreligious dialogue is ensured.

Chairman of the Assembly of Representatives of the Supreme Assembly of the Republic of Tajikistan Shukurjon Zuhurov highlighted the growing prestige of the Baku International Humanitarian Forum; "The Baku forum pushes brand new ideas every year which contribute to the expansion of relations among nations and cultures."



Spiritual leader of India Sri Sri Ravishankar Swami Jyothirmayah thanked the Azerbaijani government for organizing the forum.

Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay Gerardo Amarilla, Associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center Rabbi Abraham Cooper (USA), Vice-speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the National Congress of Argentine Republic Patricia



Gimenez, President of the Buddhist Association of China Xue Cheng, Secretary of State of the Republic of Kazakhstan Gulshara Abdykalikova, President of the Conference of the Imams of France Hassen Chalghoumi, Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union Commission Aisha Abdullahi, Assistant Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Hesham Youssef, Chairperson of the Executive Board of UNESCO Michael Worbs also delivered statements at the session.

The second part of the plenary session was attended by Vice-President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation Leyla Aliyeva. It was chaired by President of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, academician Akif Alizade. Speeches were made by Nobel Prize laureates.

Mr Alizade opened the session, saying 13 Nobel laureates will highlight current global challenges and ways of addressing them. Wole Soyinka, Nobel Prize Winner in Literature, underlined the necessity of stepping up efforts to help refugees and the displaced.

Rudolph Arthur Marcus, Nobel Prize Winner in Chemistry, spoke of the ongoing global changes.

Richard John Roberts, Nobel Prize Winner in Physiology or Medicine, Rudolf Martin Zinkernagel, Nobel Prize Winner in Physiology or Medicine, Robert Betts Laughlin, Nobel Prize Winner in Physics, Edward Prescott, Nobel Prize Winner in Economics, Aaron Ciechanover, Nobel Prize Winner in Chemistry, Avraham Hershko, Nobel Prize Winner in Chemistry,

Finn Kydland, Nobel Prize Winner in Economics, George Fitzgerald Smoot III, Nobel Prize Winner in Physics, Ada Yonath, Nobel Prize Winner in Chemistry, Dan Shechtman, Nobel Prize Winner in Chemistry, Arieh Warshel, Nobel Prize Winner in Chemistry, also addressed the session.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/997267>

**Official Resolutions Issued in the United States  
in Support of Azerbaijan; Conference at the  
Biola University**

*October 18 proclaimed as 'Azerbaijan  
Independence Day' in U.S. State of Montana*



Los Angeles, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016

In celebration of the 25th anniversary of the restoration of Azerbaijan's independence, Governor Steve Bullock of the U.S. State of Montana has proclaimed October 18, 2016 as "Azerbaijan Independence Day" in Montana.

The Governor sent a special letter on this occasion to Azerbaijan's Consul General in Los Angeles Nasimi Aghayev. The letter says: "I applaud the efforts of the Azerbaijani people to restore and maintain the freedom and independence in the region. For the last

twenty-five years, the Republic of Azerbaijan has been regarded internationally as a successful model of peaceful coexistence with people from different religious and cultural backgrounds.

I am honored to acknowledge October 18, 2016 as “Azerbaijan Independence Day” and I encourage all Montanans to join in this celebration.”

The Governor of the U.S. State of Nevada Brian Sandoval also congratulated Azerbaijan on its Independence Day. Via a special certificate of recognition sent to Azerbaijan’s Consulate General in Los Angeles, Governor Sandoval conveyed his best wishes on this momentous occasion.<sup>41</sup>

Yusif Babanli  
Special Correspondent

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<sup>41</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1002420>

*US Congressman issues statement on National  
Independence Day in Azerbaijan*

Washington, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016

US Congressman Steve Cohen (TN-09), co-chair of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, released the following statement marking the 25th National Independence Day in Azerbaijan:

“Today, Azerbaijan celebrates the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitutional Act “On the State Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan,” said Congressman Cohen. “Since declaring its independence on October 18, 1991, Azerbaijan has become an important ally on global energy security, the fight against terrorism and preventing nuclear proliferation. It has also become a model for ethnic and religious tolerance in a secular and predominately Muslim nation. Azerbaijan should also be commended for having excellent relations with the State of Israel.

I extend warm wishes to the people of Azerbaijan as they celebrate National Independence Day.”<sup>42</sup>

Yusif Babanli  
Special Correspondent

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<sup>42</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1002817>

*The Biola University of Los Angeles hosts event on Azerbaijan*



Los Angeles, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016

On October 11, the Biola University – one of the oldest universities of Los Angeles – hosted an event dedicated to Azerbaijan’s model of interfaith harmony and peace. At the invitation of the University’s Cook School of Intercultural Studies, Azerbaijan’s Consul General in Los Angeles Nasimi Aghayev delivered remarks at the event.

Speaking in the beginning, the Dean of the School of Intercultural Studies Dr Bulus Galadima, the Associate Dean Dr. Richard Starcher and the Assistant Professor of Intercultural Studies Dr. Moussa Bongoyok noted the importance of inter-religious tolerance in these troubled times for the world peace and expressed their gratitude for the bright example Azerbaijan is providing in this regard.



In his remarks, Consul General Aghayev spoke about the historical and cultural roots of Azerbaijan's strong traditions of multi faith tolerance and multiculturalism, as well as elaborated on the current atmosphere of brotherhood reigning between various religions and ethnicities in the country. Aghayev mentioned that despite all the challenges Azerbaijan has faced and continues to face, being located in a complicated geography, the country has been able to build a successful model of tolerance and positive multiculturalism, which allows for Muslims, Christians, Jews and representatives of other faiths to live in peace, harmony and dignity. The Consul General noted that thanks to the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, this environment of multi faith and multicultural harmony and tolerance is becoming stronger and stronger every day. He stressed in this regard that the year 2016 had been proclaimed by the President to be the "Year of Multiculturalism" in Azerbaijan.

Highlighting the brutal military occupation and ethnic cleansing of around 20 percent of Azerbaijan's

territory by Armenia, the Consul General said that despite all the crimes and injustices committed against the Azerbaijani people by the invader, Azerbaijan has not allowed the conflict to hamper its exemplary model of multi faith harmony, tolerance and acceptance, and divert the country from its path of positive multiculturalism. He noted in this regard the meticulous preservation of an Armenian cathedral with it's over 5,000 books, in Baku, Azerbaijan's capital. Against this backdrop, Aghayev said, almost all Azerbaijani mosques in the occupied areas have been destroyed by Armenia.

During the lively Q&A session that followed, one of the Armenian students participating at the event blamed the 'corrupt regime of the Armenian President Sargsyan' for the prolongation of the conflict and continuation of suffering for both peoples.

At the event, Kristina Conrad, a junior education major, beautifully performed "Sari Gelin", a traditional Azerbaijani song, on clarinet to a great acclaim.<sup>43</sup> Following the event, the Biola University's newspaper Chimes published a story:

<http://chimes.biola.edu/story/2016/oct/12/world-politician-visits-biola/>

Yusif Babanli  
Special Correspondent

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<sup>43</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1001473>



*Milwaukee County recognizes February 25-26,  
2016, as the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Khojaly Massacre*



## *Executive Proclamation*

*WHEREAS*, on the night of February 25-26, 1992, foreign forces attacked the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly; and

*WHEREAS*, these attacks resulted in many tortured and missing civilians, including women, children, and the elderly; and

*WHEREAS*, many civilians suffered from negative health effects due to these attacks, were taken hostage, and lost their families; and

*WHEREAS*, the international community's condemnation of this atrocity was swift and strong, although no country has formally taken responsibility for the tragedy; and

*WHEREAS*, given the impact of the 1992 Khojaly Massacre to the people of Azerbaijani people, it is only appropriate that the victims be properly recognized and remembered; and

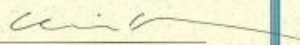
*WHEREAS*, on the anniversary of this tragedy, it is important to reflect upon the importance of democracy and the tenants upon which freedom is built; now, therefore

*I, CHRIS ABELE*, County Executive of Milwaukee County, recognize February 25-26, 2016 to be the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of

### *The Khojaly Massacre*

and encourage the people of Milwaukee County and Azerbaijan join in honoring the lives and memories of the victims and supporting peace around the world.



  
Chris Abele  
Milwaukee County Executive

Washington, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016

County Executive of Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, USA, Chris Abele has issued a proclamation recognizing February 25-26 as the 24th anniversary of the Khojaly Massacre.

"On the night of February 25-26, 1992, the Armenian armed forces attacked the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly." The proclamation said the attacks resulted in many tortured and missing civilians, including women, children and the elderly.

"The international community's condemnation of this atrocity was swift and strong, although no country has formally taken responsibility for the tragedy. Given the impact of the 1992 Khojaly Massacre to the Azerbaijani people, it is only appropriate that the victims be properly recognized and remembered," the proclamation said.<sup>44</sup>

Yusif Babanli  
Special Correspondent

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<sup>44</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/931871>

*Idaho becomes the 21<sup>st</sup> State in U.S. to recognize  
Khojaly Massacre*

Baku, February 26, 2016

U.S. State of Idaho became the 21st State in the United States to recognize the Khojaly massacre and honor its innocent victims as the Governor of the Idaho C.L. "Butch" Otter proclaimed February 26, 2016 to be the "Khojaly Remembrance Day" in the state.

Khojaly was a town in Azerbaijan's Karabakh region. In February 1992, Armenia's armed forces attacked the town, killing 613 Azerbaijani civilians, including some 300 children, women and elderly. The Human Rights Watch called the massacre "the largest massacre in the (Karabakh) conflict."

The proclamation, which has been received by the Consulate General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles, notes that "on February 25-26, 1992, the population of Khojaly was subjected to a massacre, resulting in the deaths of more than 600 innocent civilians, including many women, children and elderly".

The document states that "the events in Khojaly are a sobering reminder of the terrible damage that can be inflicted in wartime and the enduring need for greater understanding, communication, and tolerance among people around the world". Stating that "Azerbaijanis living in Idaho and around the globe observe February 26 every year as a day of remembrance, honoring the victims of the Khojaly massacre", Governor Otter

proclaims February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016 to be the "Khojaly Remembrance Day" in Idaho.



The proclamation was co-signed by Lawrence Denney, the Secretary of the State of Idaho. This is the first official document on the Khojaly massacre issued in Idaho.<sup>45</sup>

Yusif Babanli  
Special Correspondent

<sup>45</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/930655>

*Kentucky Senate adopts resolution on 25<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary of Azerbaijan's Independence*



Washington, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016

The Senate of the State of Kentucky, USA, has passed a resolution recognizing the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of Azerbaijan's Independence.

The resolution says that on January 19-20, 1990, Soviet special troops stormed Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, brutally killing and wounding innocent people.

“This uprising became known as Black January. Following the massacre, an investigation conducted by Human Rights Watch found evidence that Soviet troops acted without justification against the citizens of Azerbaijan, firing on ambulances, using armored

vehicles and weapons meant for high-tech warfare, and using expanding bullets prohibited by the 1899 Hague Convention to kill women, children, and the elderly. In response to Black January, the people of Azerbaijan became dedicated to restoring their independence, which it accomplished in October 1991.”

In the resolution, the members of the Senate “acknowledge the sacrifices of those who died during Black January in 1990”. “The Senate recognizes the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of Azerbaijan,” the resolution says.<sup>46</sup>

Yusif Babanli  
Special Correspondent

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<sup>46</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/930328>

*U.S. State of Georgia issues another statement  
recognizing Khojaly Massacre*



STATE OF GEORGIA  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
ATLANTA 30334-0900

Nathan Deal  
GOVERNOR

February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016

To: The Participants of Khojaly Remembrance Day

GREETINGS:

As you gather to commemorate the Khojaly tragedy, I wish to express my own sympathies for the senseless loss of life that transpired 24 years ago. On behalf of the State of Georgia, I join you in mourning their loss.

On February 25, 1992, Azerbaijan experienced a brutal massacre resulting in the death of over 600 civilians. Events like this are important to remember, and the lives lost in this tragedy should be honored as we strive to ensure that similar act of horrendous violence do not happen again. I hope that the Azerbaijani community continues to educate Georgians and others about this day in our past that can teach us much in the present.

I commend all those who had a hand in organizing this event. May we never allow such a tragedy to stain the pages of our history again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Nathan Deal".

Nathan Deal

ND:mco

Washington, February 29, 2016

The Governor of the U.S. State of Georgia Nathan Deal signed a statement recognizing the Khojaly Massacre and honoring its innocent victims. This is the second statement by the Governor of Georgia on the Khojaly Massacre. The first document was issued in 2015.

Khojaly massacre was committed by Armenia's armed forces against Azerbaijani civilians in 1992.

The massacre resulted in the killing of 613 civilians, including some 300 children, women and elderly. The Human Rights Watch called it the "largest massacre in the (Karabakh) conflict."



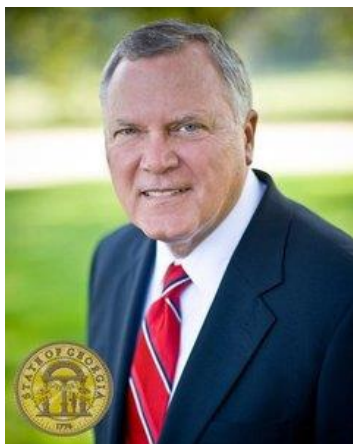
The statement, which has been received by the Consulate General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles, says: "I wish to express my own sympathies for the senseless loss of life that transpired 24 years ago. On behalf of the State of Georgia, I join you in mourning their loss."

"On February 25, 1992, Azerbaijan experienced a brutal massacre resulting in the death of over 600 civilians. Events like this are important to remember, and the lives lost in this tragedy should be honored as we strive to ensure that similar act of horrendous violence do not happen again.



I hope that the Azerbaijani community continues to educate Georgians and others about this day in our past that can teach us much in the present," the document further notes.

The Governor concludes his statement by stressing "May we never allow such a tragedy to stain the pages of our history again."



To date, 21 U.S. states have issued gubernatorial proclamations/statements or passed resolutions recognizing the Khojaly Massacre.<sup>47</sup>

Yusif Babanli  
Special Correspondent

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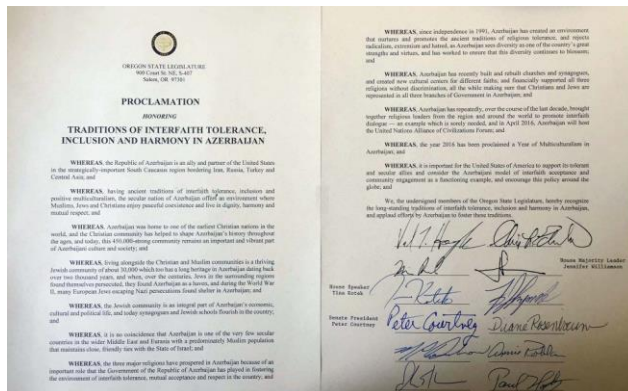
<sup>47</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/931300>

# *Oregon State Legislature commends Azerbaijan's exemplary model of interfaith tolerance and harmony*

Washington, February 25, 2016

The members of the Legislature of the U.S. State of Oregon have issued a proclamation commending the "long-standing traditions of interfaith tolerance, inclusion and harmony in Azerbaijan," and applauding the efforts by Azerbaijan's Government to foster these traditions.

Signed by the Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney and House Speaker Tina Kotek, as well as by majority leaders of both chambers and many other legislators, the proclamation was presented to the Consul General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles Nasimi Aghayev, who was introduced on the Senate and House floor while visiting Oregon.



The proclamation commends Azerbaijan's exemplary model of interreligious tolerance and harmony.

Stressing the important role of Azerbaijan's Government, the proclamation notes: "since independence in 1991, Azerbaijan has created an environment that nurtures and promotes the ancient traditions of religious tolerance, and rejects radicalism, extremism and hatred, as Azerbaijan sees diversity as one of the country's great strengths and virtues, and has worked to ensure that this diversity continues to blossom... The three major religions have prospered because of the age-old respect and tolerance of the Azerbaijani people, but also because of an important role the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan has played in constantly fostering the environment of interfaith tolerance, mutual acceptance and respect in the country". The proclamation further notes: "Azerbaijan has repeatedly, over the course of the last decade, brought together religious leaders from the region and around the world to promote interfaith dialogue — an example which is sorely needed, and in April 2016, Azerbaijan will host the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Forum... The year 2016 has been proclaimed a Year of Multiculturalism in Azerbaijan."

The document ends by stressing that "it is important for the United States of America to support its tolerant and secular allies and consider the Azerbaijani model of interfaith acceptance and community engagement as a functioning example, and encourage this policy around the globe".<sup>48</sup>

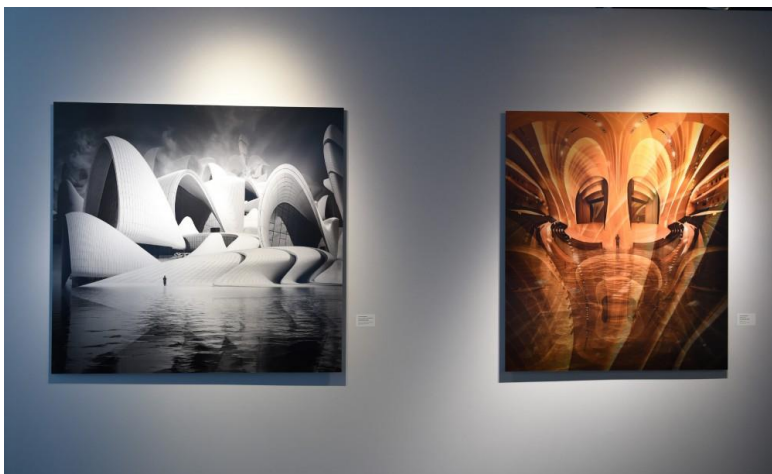
Yusif Babanli  
Special Correspondent

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<sup>48</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/930291>

## France supports Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and multiculturalism

*Heydar Aliyev Foundation launches promotional exhibitions in Cannes, France*



Cannes, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016

The Heydar Aliyev Foundation has organized a series of exhibitions in Cannes promoting Azerbaijan's history and culture as well as the country's relations with France.

One of the exhibitions titled "In the footsteps of a partisan" was dedicated to Ahmadiyya Jabrayilov, a participant of the Second World War, a prominent representative of the French Resistance Movement. It features exhibits as well as photos from Ahmadiyya Jabrayilov's personal archive reflecting his life and military merits. Addressing the event, his son Javanshir Jabrayilov highlighted his father's "heroic" life during the war.

Another exhibition on Azerbaijan opened as part of "Under one sun" project. The promotional exhibition and a film on the traditions of multiculturalism and tolerance in Azerbaijan caused great interest of the local audience. The photos and films featured in the exhibition were shot in different parts of Azerbaijan.

These photos and footages, which reflect the history and traditions of 20 ethnic minorities, raised awareness of visitors about the tolerance environment in the country. "Talking heads" section of the exhibition featured the narration of representatives of various minorities and ethnic groups' interesting stories in their own languages. The exhibition also presents "Under one sun" film which highlights the traditions of different nations living in Azerbaijan.

The other exhibition "Ganja and Gabala: two cities seen through the eyes of French photographers" presented the beauty of Azerbaijan's nature, as well as its unique culture and traditions.

According to Shahla Aghalarova, AZERTAC Special Correspondent: "In order to organize this exhibition French photographers Samuel Gratacap and Jean-François Rauzier visited Azerbaijan's Ganja and Gabala cities this April and shot the landscapes, monuments and daily life of both cities, which have an ancient history and enjoy a key role in modern tourism."

French photographer Jean-François Rauzier said: "I have been a photographer for 45 years. I was invited to Ganja and Gabala cities. I was struck by the conditions and natural richness I saw in these places - mountains, beautiful landscape. The people are also very friendly here. I have eye witnessed the multiculturalism and co-existence of people of different religions and cultures in Azerbaijan and its regions. This tradition of multiculturalism was more obviously reflected in the photos taken in Ganja."

The event participants praised the organization of the exhibitions in terms of promoting the country abroad. All three exhibitions will be open for local residents and tourists of Cannes until July 31.<sup>49</sup>

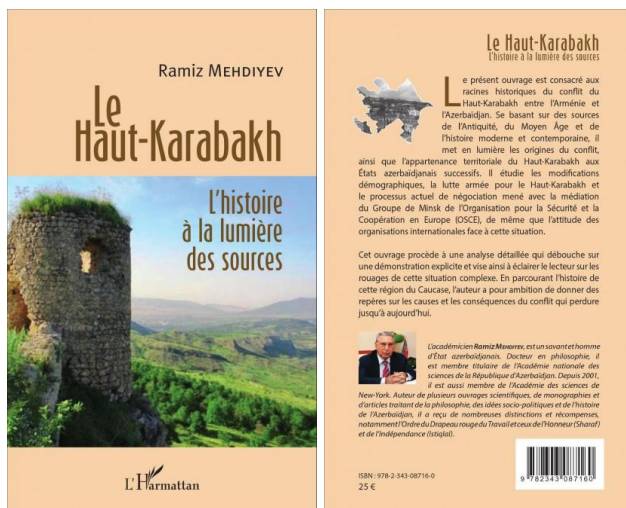
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<sup>49</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/978040>

*Academician Ramiz Mehdiyev`s  
book is published in France*

Baku, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016

A book by Head of the Azerbaijani Presidential Administration, Academician of National Academy of Sciences Ramiz Mehdiyev titled "Nagorno Karabakh: History read through sources" has been published in France.



The book has been devoted to the historical background of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and deals with the causes of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the region's belonging to the Azerbaijani states throughout the history. The book highlights causes of occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounded regions by the Armenian Armed Forces, as well as the current state of the negotiations

mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group, position of the international organizations in settlement of the problem.



The book especially highlights four resolutions of the UN Security Council on unconditional, immediate withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijan`s occupied territories. The book stresses the importance of settlement of the conflict within the territorial integrity, internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan in accordance with the norms and principles of international law.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/956424>



*Azerbaijani Foreign Affairs Minister meets with  
French State Minister for European Affairs*

Baku, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Azerbaijani Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov has met with French Minister of State for European Affairs Harlem Desir. They exchanged views on the results of the recent high-level meeting on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict which was held in Vienna.

The two ministers noted the importance of restoration of the negotiation process in order to achieve a political solution to the dispute. They also exchanged views over Azerbaijan-European Union relations, and Mr. Desir expressed France`s readiness to support Azerbaijan on this issue.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/953052>

*Azerbaijan, France discuss cooperation in the  
agricultural sector*

Baku, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Azerbaijan's Deputy Minister of Agriculture Ilham Guliyev met the delegation led by economic councilor of the Embassy of France, Mr. Herve Sarnelli, on May 12<sup>th</sup>.

According to the press service of the Ministry of Agriculture, the meeting participants discussed cooperation in agricultural sector, as well as the issues on the participation of French companies in economic reforms carried out in Azerbaijan.

Ilham Guliyev informed the guests about reforms carried out in the agrarian sector in recent years, the attention and care of the President of Azerbaijan to this sphere, relevant decisions and orders, as well as subsidies for agricultural producers, emphasizing favorable investment climate in Azerbaijan in the field of agriculture.

Highlighting that Azerbaijani agriculture is equipped with Europe's most modern technology, Deputy Minister Ilham Guliyev stressed that, the president of the country attaches special importance to the development of cotton, silk, tobacco and tea growing.



Mr. Herve Sarnelli said he would spare no effort for further development of relations in the agricultural sector, as in other sectors of the economy.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/951144>

## **Spain strengthens cooperation areas with Azerbaijan**

*Minister Pedro Morenes Eulate: "Spain and Azerbaijan have identical friends and enemies"*

Madrid, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Defense Minister of Azerbaijan, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov who is on a visit in Spain, has met the Minister of Defense of this country Pedro Morenes Eulate. The ministers have discussed prospects of cooperation between the two countries.



Then, both ministers gave interview to the AZERTAC correspondent.

The Minister of Defense of Spain Pedro Morenes Eulate has noted that "this meeting was very desirable. Prospects of relations between Azerbaijan and Spain are broad. The relations between the two countries rely on friendship and mutual understanding. We have joint projects", he stressed.

The Spanish Minister has emphasized that in the center of attention there is fight against all elements that threaten peace. "Our countries have common position in this fight.

I want to highlight the expression stated by me at a meeting: "Spain and Azerbaijan have identical friends and enemies". Pedro Morenes Eulate stated that, "our friendship with the Azerbaijani Defense Minister has begun with my visit to Baku. Therefore, this visit was important for me. I consider that the Azerbaijani colleague shares my thoughts. We have passed through certain dangerous moments. We have reached an agreement on bilateral cooperation", he underlined.

According to Aygun Aliyeva, AZERTAC Special correspondent: "Defense Minister of Azerbaijan Zakir Hasanov has expressed gratitude to his Spanish colleague for the organization of this visit at the high level. The Minister has noted that "possibilities of cooperation between the two countries are very wide". "We had comprehensive discussion of these opportunities. Cooperation develops both between the two countries, and within NATO. The Spanish colleague makes new interesting proposals, and we agree with them", the Minister said. He has noted that the friendship between Spain and Azerbaijan is

eternal. Having highlighted the statement of the Spanish Minister "Spain and Azerbaijan have identical friends and enemies", Zakir Hasanov has expressed appreciation to the colleague for this position.

Questions of cooperation in the military sphere between Azerbaijan and Spain have also been discussed at a meeting of the Minister of Defense Zakir Hasanov with the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain Ignacio Ibanez Rubio. Ambassador of Azerbaijan in Spain Anar Maharramov was present at the meetings.<sup>53</sup>

*Ambassador Anar Maharramov: Azerbaijan protects its territorial integrity and national interests based on international law*

Madrid, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Azerbaijani Ambassador to Spain Anar Maharramov has said that his country is protecting its territorial integrity and national interests in compliance with norms and principles of international law. He spoke at a ceremony to mark the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the Victory over Fascism, which was organized by the Russian Embassy at the Fuencarral Cemetery in Madrid. The ceremony was attended by diplomatic representatives and military attaches of Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Armenia.

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<sup>53</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/954999>



Maharramov responded to groundless accusations of the Armenian Ambassador, and said that “the people of Azerbaijan are a peace loving nation”. “Azerbaijan pursues an independent policy, and has never laid any territorial claims against any country.”

“We do not want war. We are protecting our sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interests based on the norms and principles of international law. We want peace to be established in our region as soon as possible,” the Ambassador said.

According to Aygun Aliyeva, AZERTAC Special Correspondent: “Ambassador Maharramov also highlighted Azerbaijan’s “tremendous” role in the victory over Fascism and Azerbaijanis’ valor in the war. He said Azerbaijan accounted for 70% of the Soviet Union’s total oil output during the years of war. Aygun Aliyeva notes that; “More than 600,000 Azerbaijanis fought in the war, with 121 of them awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union”.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/949791>



*President Ilham Aliyev met with Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister*

Baku, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has met with Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo. Minister Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo recalled his previous visits to Azerbaijan.



President Ilham Aliyev stressed the successful activity of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which was established on the joint initiative of Turkey and Spain, and hailed Spain's support for the Alliance. The head of state described the participation in the Baku Forum of Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister as an example of this support. They noted the importance of the Forum in discussing outstanding tasks in a complicated international situation and against the background of international relations.

The sides expressed confidence that this important event would give a strong positive message to the international community. During the conversation, the parties exchanged views over Azerbaijan-European Union cooperation, and the ways of settling the Armenian-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.<sup>55</sup>

*FM Garcia-Margallo: Spain supports territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan*

Baku, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016

“Spain supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan,” said Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo as he met Azerbaijan’s counterpart Elmar Mammadyarov on the sidelines of the 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) in Baku.

The sides hailed the current state of cooperation, particularly the level of political relations between the two countries. The parties noted that a number of drafted documents are ready for signing to strengthen the legal-treaty base between the two countries. Minister Elmar Mammadyarov highlighted the latest escalation along the line of contact of the armed forces of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the provocations perpetrated by Armenian troops targeting Azerbaijani civilians with heavy artillery and large-caliber weapons as well as the latest phone calls with ministers of foreign affairs of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs’ countries.

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<sup>55</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/946229>

Mr. Mammadyarov added that Armenian Armed Forces must be withdrawn from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the military occupation must be ceased and comprehensive political process should start in order to achieve the conflict settlement.



Praising the just position of Spain in regards to the conflict settlement, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mammadyarov also noted the official contribution of Madrid to the development of relations between Azerbaijan and the European Union. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo hailed the organization and the work of the 7th UNAOC Global Forum held in Baku.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/946047>

## **Azerbaijan and Djibouti: strategic partnership in multilateral diplomacy**

### *Azerbaijan`s FM meets Minister of Defense of Djibouti*

Baku, September 28, 2016

Azerbaijan`s Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmar Mammadyarov met with the Minister of Defense of Djibouti, Mr. Ali Hassan Bahdon. The sides had a comprehensive overview on the development prospects of bilateral ties.



Elmar Mammadyarov stressed that Djibouti's role as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council back in 1993 in adoption of relevant UNSC resolutions on Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and it's fair and unequivocal position in regards with the resolution of conflict is highly appreciated.

Ali Hassan Bahdon noting well organization of "ADEX2016," added that he had fruitful discussions with his counterparts from Azerbaijan on the further enhancement of practical cooperation.

The two sides also mentioned the ample opportunities for development of cooperation between the two countries in the economic-trade, transport and other spheres.<sup>57</sup>

*President Ilham Aliyev accepted credentials of  
incoming Djiboutian Ambassador*

Baku, October 26, 2016

The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has received the credentials of newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Djibouti Mohamed Ali Kamil. Ambassador Mohamed Ali Kamil reviewed a guard of honor. Mohamed Ali Kamil presented his credentials to President Ilham Aliyev.

President Ilham Aliyev then had a conversation with the Ambassador. The head of state hailed bilateral relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Djibouti. Noting that Azerbaijan attaches great importance to cooperation with Islamic countries, President Ilham Aliyev said Azerbaijan and Djibouti are friendly countries.

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<sup>57</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/996866>

The head of state stressed the importance of the fact that the two countries successfully cooperate, especially within international organizations by demonstrating solidarity, adding both countries have always supported each other. Praising the level of political ties between the two countries, the head of state underlined the necessity of expanding these relations in other areas.

Noting the role of Ambassador Ali Kamil in developing these bilateral ties; President Ilham Aliyev expressed hope that Ambassador Mohamed Ali Kamil will hold discussions with Azerbaijan`s relevant authorities to explore opportunities for economic cooperation.

Ambassador Mohamed Ali Kamil conveyed greetings and best wishes of President of the Republic of Djibouti Ismail Omar Guelleh to the head of state. Mohamed Ali Kamil noted that he met with the President of his country before coming to Baku. "Mr. President, I met with Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh before coming to Baku. He personally told me that Azerbaijan is an important country for us."





The head of state thanked for the greetings of President Ismail Omar Guelleh, and asked the Ambassador to extend his greetings to the Djiboutian President.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1005097>



*Baku Port, Djibouti Ports  
& Free Zones Authority sign MoU*

Baku, October 29, 2016

Baku International Sea Trade Port (Port of Baku) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Djibouti Ports & Free Zones Authority. The document was signed by Director-General of the Port of Baku Taleh Ziyadov and chairman of Djibouti Ports & Free Zones Authority Aboubaker Omar Hadi. The MoU aims to expand relations between the ports of Azerbaijan and Djibouti. Under the document, the two ports will exchange experience, and conduct joint training programs on port staff capacity development and port management.

In September, the Port of Baku signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bulgarian Ports Infrastructure Company.

The Joint Committee of Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor among the Port of Baku, the Port of Aktau and the Sea Port Poti was established and the trilateral MoU was signed with the aim of attracting extra cargo carried via Trans-Caspian Corridor. The Port of Baku has signed MoUs with Antwerp, Panama, Aktau and Poti ports in the last years, while maintaining closer cooperation with Qatar and Singapore ports.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1006132>

## *Azerbaijani Ambassador Presents credentials to the President of Djibouti*

Baku, June 6, 2016

Azerbaijani Ambassador to Ethiopia Elman Abdullayev has presented his credentials to President of Djibouti Ismail Omar Guelleh.

Elman Abdullayev conveyed greetings and best wishes of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev to President Ismail Omar Guelleh. Ambassador Abdullayev hailed “great” potential for the development of bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Djibouti, which he described as “one of the significant countries of the African continent”.



Pointing to the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Ambassador noted that the decisions and resolutions of the UN Security Council, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the European Parliament and other organizations condemning the Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan had not been implemented so far. He said that Armenia still continued the occupation of Azerbaijani lands and as a result of the aggression more than one million Azerbaijanis became refugees and internally displaced persons.

President of Djibouti Ismail Omar Guelleh asked the Ambassador to extend his greetings to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. He said his country attached great importance to developing relations with Azerbaijan.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/957833>

## **Natig Aliyev to represent Azerbaijan in OPEC and Non-OPEC countries' summit**



Baku, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Azerbaijani Energy Minister Natig Aliyev will attend the summit of energy ministers of OPEC and non-OPEC countries that will be held on October 29 in Vienna.

As is reported, Russia, Kazakhstan, Bahrain, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei, Canada, Egypt, Colombia, Norway, Malaysia, Oman, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago along with Azerbaijan have been invited to the summit. The agenda of the meeting consists of presentations and discussions on the development of the world oil market in short term, the discussions with representatives of OPEC member and non-cartel states on non-member countries to join the implementation of OPEC's decision.

Energy Minister Natig Aliyev said that Azerbaijan would support any decision aimed at the regulation,

stabilization of world's oil market and increasing the oil price.

"I don't think that non-cartel states will protest the final decision on limiting oil production. The elimination of contradictions among OPEC member countries, especially Iran, Libya, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia, to reach a general agreement are the most important issues," Natig Aliyev stressed.

On September 28, OPEC member states agreed on cutting their oil production to 32.5-33 million barrels per day for the whole cartel, however, no exact limits for each country have been placed. The OPEC countries are set to finalize the agreement on oil output freeze at the OPEC summit in Vienna on November 30.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1005760>

## **Azerbaijani photo correspondent presents his works in Norway**

Baku, November 3, 2016

A photo exhibition by Azerbaijani artist Rustam Ismayilov has been demonstrated at the volunteers' center in Oslo, Norway.



Being one of the eminent fine photo masters in Azerbaijan, Rustam is in constant search for synthesis of East and West traditions, of national originality. Preserving philosophical worldview basis and poetry of Eastern classical art along with outlook of contemporary man distinguishes his photos.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/1007586>



## **Delegation of Portugal's Lusofona University visits Azerbaijan University of Languages (AUL)**



Baku, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Delegation of Portugal's Lusofona University, visited Baku to attend the International Multiculturalism Winter School, they met with the teachers and students of the Azerbaijan University of Languages (AUL). The visit's aim was to raise the interest among the teachers and students in Portuguese language.

Dean of the Faculty of Regional studies and International Relations faculty, assistant professor Anar Nagiyev welcomed the guests and stressed the importance of the meeting. Director of the International Relations Department of Lusofona University, Professor Teresa Damasio informed about her country's history, geography, the Portuguese



language and expressed confidence in successful activity of the Winter School.

Speaking about the education system in Portugal, Teresa Damasio informed that there were 14 universities, 20 polytechnic, 6 military and police institutions, while 33 private universities and 54 polytechnic universities. Stressing the rich library system in Portugal; the guest speaker stated that the Joanina Library of the University of Coimbra is one of the world's most famous libraries.<sup>63</sup> The meeting was followed by discussions.

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<sup>63</sup> <http://azertag.az/en/xeber/926618>

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## **SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR**

Peter M. Tase is the author of "Ancient Monuments and Treasures of Nakhchivan - Azerbaijan". Mr. Tase is a journalist and editor of European and Latin American Affairs at the Eurasia Review Journal. As a scholar of Azerbaijani and Paraguayan Studies he has authored three books on the Foreign Affairs Policy of Paraguay and Azerbaijan. His 400 articles in English and Spanish Languages are published at: the Washington Report on the Hemisphere (Washington, D.C.), Eurasia Review Journal (USA), Foreign Policy News Journal, Modern Diplomacy Journal (Greece), Siglo XXI Newspaper (Spain), Revista Logistica del Paraguay (Paraguay), Newsroom Panama, El 19 Digital Newspaper of Nicaragua, [www.eje21.com.co](http://www.eje21.com.co) of Colombia, Geopolitical Monitor Journal of Canada, Trend News Agency, AzadInform News Agency (Azerbaijan) and many other journals and newspapers.

Mr. Tase is the founder of Global Alliance of Azerbaijan and of the Paraguay Economic Forum in Milwaukee, United States. He has promoted the National Interests and territorial sovereignty of Azerbaijan in the United States, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Educated at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, Marquette University Les Aspin School of Government, Tase's research is focused on Azerbaijan history and current affairs, the Caucasus Region, Latin American studies and European affairs. He is the author of "Simultaneous Dictionary in Five Languages: Guarani, English, Italian, Albanian and Spanish"

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Mr. Tase has written many articles and essays on Paraguay's current Foreign Policy, Latin American Affairs and MERCOSUR regional trade issues.

Peter Tase has appeared on many TV programs in Paraguay and European News Agencies including: SNT Cerro Cora - TV Channel, Asuncion; "Tribuna Pública" program of HD - TV Publica (Paraguay), as well as given interviews for Azerbaijan Television and Radio Broadcasting, Nakhchivan TV Channel, Diario 5 Dias in Paraguay, ABC Color, Ultima Hora, IP Paraguay, Region PLUS Magazine (Azerbaijan), Revista PLUS+, Radio Ñandutí, Radio Nacional del Paraguay, AzadInform News Agency (AZADİFORM İnformasiya Agentliyi), AZERTAC, Trend News Agency, [www.datamyne.com](http://www.datamyne.com) and Spero News.

Tase has completed a Congressional Internship in the Office of U. S. Congressman Richard Pombo (CA-11), U.S. House of Representatives, and studied U.S. Government and International Affairs and Security Studies at the Institute of World Politics in Washington, D.C.. In 2012 he was an adviser of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Issues to the President of Paraguay and to the Chairman of the Committee on Trade, Tourism and Industry in the National Congress of Paraguay. Mr. Tase is fluent in Guarani, Italian, Spanish, Albanian and mainly writes in English, Spanish and Albanian.









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