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## **AZERBAIJAN AND GERMANY:**

### **AN OVERVIEW OF BILATERAL RELATIONS**

On March 27, Mr. Nazim Ibrahimov, the Chairman of Azerbaijan's State Committee on Diaspora Relations, met in Baku with the leadership of Azerbaijan – Germany Forum. On the focus of discussions were the strengthening of bilateral relations between the two nations as well as the development of new events with the Azerbaijani community in Berlin and other major German cities.

According to Mr. Ibrahimov, the visit of Mr. Hanns Elbert Schleyer, Chairman of the Board of Directors, and other leaders of Azerbaijan – Germany Forum played an important role towards improving the bilateral relations between the two countries.

For Mr. Schleyer, there is a special importance to expand the relations between the two countries while admitting that the German Society has a very limited knowledge on Azerbaijan. During his visit, Schleyer was accompanied by a group of German journalists in order to increase awareness of Azerbaijan in Germany and other parts of Central Europe. An important element of Azerbaijani culture is

the religious tolerance; such details ought to be given more attention in the European media. [1]

On this meeting, Richard Kessler, a well-known German journalist added that a new documentary has been produced about Azerbaijan and serious steps have been taken to raise awareness about this nation in Germany. Both parties were committed to organize a forum of Youth in Berlin and increase the number of forum workers in both nations.

Germany recognized the independence of Azerbaijan on January 12, 1992, making it one of the first countries to recognize the independence of this Republic, and diplomatic relations were established on February 20. At the same time, Baku opened its embassy in Germany on September 2, 1992, and Germany opened its embassy in Azerbaijan on September 22, 1992.

On September 28, 2012, the Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov met in Baku with German Special Representative for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, Mr. Antje Leendertse.

Both authorities engaged in political consultations and discuss the mutual interests on many aspects, ranging from industrial development projects of Azerbaijan to the political, economic and cultural areas.

Ambassador Khalafov reiterated with satisfaction the excellent relations between Azerbaijan and Germany, he added that “Germany is a country of strategic importance for Azerbaijan and stressed the great potential in order to deepen the existing relationships. He also noted the importance of expanding relations between the respective legislative powers and certain ministries in the executive branch.”

Another item in the agenda was the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and Ambassador Khalafov spoke about the ongoing status of peace talks. The Azeri diplomat noted that Armenia, “under various pretexts, is delaying the settlement of the conflict by peaceful means.” Noting that the current status quo is unacceptable

for Azerbaijan; “delaying the conflict is the main obstacle to the region’s integration into the Euro-Atlantic area.” In order to resolve this conflict, Armenian armed forces first, must withdraw from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the refugees must return to their homeland.

Since the war of Nagorno-Karabakh in 1992-1994, the region is populated mainly by Armenians; it has been under the control of Yerevan along with seven neighboring regions which also belong to Azerbaijani territory. This war caused more than 30,000 casualties and civilians; around a million people emigrated and were internally displaced. The agreed ceasefire in 1994 is fragile, with armed clashes constantly flaring up in the border area. The Group of Minsk has been working since 1992 to find a peaceful solution to a conflict that is hindering the region’s potential for development. This Group brings to the round table the two parties of the conflict as well as the co-chairs – the United States, Russia and France – and several other members, including Germany.

Antje Leendertse expressed his satisfaction on the current relations between Azerbaijan and Germany. Mr. Leendertse noted that Azerbaijan is considered as a strategic partner for Germany and pointed out that these frequent discussions always contribute towards strengthening the bilateral partnership.

The German representative noted that Azerbaijan’s role in the energy supplies of European countries. He praised the achievements of Azerbaijan in the process “of integration in the Euro-Atlantic area and stated that Azerbaijan plays a constructive role in the UN and other international organizations.” Additionally the economic relations between the two countries will experience new heights due to the current establishment of the Azerbaijan and German Chamber of Commerce has been created. [2]

On March 14, 2012, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle arrived in Azerbaijani. The German Chief Diplomat held talks with his Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Mammadyarov and with President Ilham Aliyev, with both Azeri leaders he addressed a broad range of issues including: energy policy,

building democratic institutions, economic cooperation, the situation in Syria and the Iranian nuclear program.

In 2012, Germany and Azerbaijan both served as non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. In this role they worked together closely on many international issues, including the Iranian Nuclear Program which has been the main concern for the international community. Iran has historically been a difficult neighbor to Azerbaijan; there are between 15 and 25 million ethnic Azeri citizens who live in Iran.

Since 2005, natural gas resources have been extracted from the Caspian Sea, and immediately after, Azerbaijan has experienced an impressive development and according to Foreign Minister Westerwelle, Azerbaijan holds an “enormous potential, not only as an oil and gas producer, but also as a transit country”. According to the officials of Azerbaijan’s Foreign Ministry, “Since 2006 an oil pipeline has run from Baku to the Mediterranean port Ceyhan in Turkey. Azerbaijan also wants to participate in a Southern Corridor to supply gas to Europe from the Caspian region and the Near East.” [3]

The visit on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010, of the Honorary Chairman of the Free Democratic Party of Germany, Hans Dietrich Genscher, proved to be an important milestone in the relations between both countries. In this occasion, Former Foreign Minister Genscher expressed his keep interest towards the fast economic growth of Azerbaijan despite “being a young state and Azerbaijan’s large and rapid development are a guarantee for its future.” In his meeting with President Aliyev, Genscher added that “thanks to the right policy implemented by the Azerbaijani leadership, the country has earned a number of partners in Europe” while emphasizing Germany’s position in regards to the conflict between Armenia-Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, stating that “Germany wants the dispute to be settled on the basis of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan”, while calling upon the international community to gather efforts and embrace a peaceful resolution to this conflict. [4]

On March 11, 2010, the German Ambassador to Baku considered the relations between the two countries as stable and has a potential to flourish even further. In

an interview for [www.Trend.Az](http://www.Trend.Az) Ambassador Per Stanchina added that “From a political point of view we are very pleased that Azerbaijan is developing not only bilateral relations, but also considers Germany as a platform for integration into the European Community,” the ambassador added that his delegation had organized the Germany Days in Azerbaijan, in which 50 events were held in various cities of the country.”

For Germany, Azerbaijan is of strategic interest, as it is considered as an imperative factor for regional stability, it is a country like no other in the Caspian, in regards to its economic indicators and development performance in many socio-economic sectors as well as the country has emerged as a leading energy supplies provider in the world. Additionally Azerbaijan is the most tolerant Islamic state in the region. [5]

Since its independence in October 18, 1991 until 2004, Azerbaijan has received more than 303.3 million Euros in aid from Germany; 140 million Euros has been donated within the framework of the European Community; 130.33 million euros as bilateral financial cooperation; and 33 million as bilateral technical cooperation. Among the salient projects are the restoration projects of water supply in Baku city and Ganja, the second-largest city in the country.

On August 28, 2004, on his first official visit to Germany, President Aliyev participated on the signing ceremony for the Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement and another agreement was signed with Airbus on the delivery of Azerbaijan’s State owned airline AZAL for four Airbus A319 and a Corporate Jet. The first A319 was delivered to Baku by 2005. The agreement with Airbus reached the amount of 136.8 million Euros.

Another important event in Berlin was the visit of President Aliyev to leaders of Siemens Company who expressed their great interest to invest on building a power station with capacity of 500,000 MW in Sumgayit, 30 km north of Baku.

In his press statement, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, paid more attention towards the development of mutually beneficial businesses, focused in the area of

communication technology in Azerbaijan. He mentioned the organization of an economic forum and for investment opportunities in Berlin. The purpose of the forum was to study investment opportunities for German industrialists to invest in Azerbaijan. [6]

The meeting of January 17, 2004, between President Ilham Aliyev and German Ambassador to Azerbaijan Clause Grevlich, is one of the first meetings that the leader of Azerbaijan nation has conducted with his German partners. In this occasion, a few months after President Aliyev had won the presidential elections, both parties agreed that the further bilateral relations would be strengthened in the political, economic and cultural areas and reach even higher heights. Immediately after he took office, President Aliyev has fought hard to bring Azerbaijan closer to Germany and the European Union, a nation that is a key supplier of oil and gas to Germany and other European countries.

For Ambassador Grevlich, it is of high importance that President Aliyev had paid a special attention to the socio economic cooperation with Germany by signing a Presidential Decree on November 2003, in order to accelerate the Socio-economic development of Azerbaijan while cooperating with partner countries like Germany. The fruits of this undertaking are experienced today in Azerbaijan, when the level of poverty has dramatically dropped and the state of infrastructure has rapidly improved, over ten years later. [7]

#### **Sources:**

[1] <http://www.azernews.az/azerbaijan/65568.html>

[2] <http://www.azernews.az/azerbaijan/44172.html>

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[3] <http://elvtv.az/2012/03/14/german-minister-of-foreign-affairs-guido-westerwelle-will-visit-azerbaijan-on-march-14.html>

[4] <http://today.az/news/politics/77074.html>

[5] <http://en.trend.az/news/politics/1652284.html>

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[7] <http://www.neurope.eu/article/aliyev-azerbaijan-germany-boost-bilateral-relations>

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