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AZERBAIJAN SERVES AS BRIDGE AMONG RELIGIONS AND PEOPLES

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Azerbaijan's tradition of religious tolerance, when compared to the situation found in many countries in the region, and its location at the crossroads of various faiths, many of whom often lack either a venue or an opportunity for conversations with those of other denominations, were highlighted at an international conference in Baku November 6-7 on "Inter-Religious Dialogue: From Mutual Understanding to Joint Cooperation."

Timed to coincide with the 60th birthday and 30th year in office of Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, the head of the Muslim Spiritual Directorate (MSD) of the Caucasus and leader of the inter-religious council of the Commonwealth of

Independent States, the meeting attracted the leaders of various faiths not only from the CIS but from Iran and other countries as well.

Among the religious leaders attending were Kirill, Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia, Iliya II, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, Metropolitan Filaret of Belarus, Talgat Tajuddin, chairman of the Central MSD of the Russian Federation, Ravil Gainutdin, chairman of the Council of Muftis of Russia, Mufti Osmankhan Alimov of Uzbekistan, and Sheikh Mohammed Ali Tashiri, the chairman of the administration for inter-faith rapprochement of the Islamic Republic of Iran. And among the political ones were Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, Daghestan President Mukhu Aliyev, and Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov.

Some of these political leaders came from pairs of countries that have serious political problems with each other, but religious leaders from them praised the importance of inter-religious dialogue in its own terms and for the role that it can play in opening dialogue leading to the resolution of political problems as well. Thus, both Russia's Kirill and Georgia's Iliya used the Baku meeting for conversations that the political leaders of their countries are unable to take part in.

Perhaps the most interesting comment on these possibilities, however, came from Sheikh Mohammed Ali Tashiri of Iran. Speaking at the Iranian Cultural Center in Baku, Tashiri said that "Azerbaijan's contribution to the development of Islam is great" and consequently "it is important to have such conferences in Azerbaijan." Indeed, he continued, "if Azerbaijan's authority among Islamic countries increases, it will benefit the entire Islamic world" because "we must lead interfaith dialogue both within Islam and outside Islam" in order that Muslims "do not isolate themselves from world culture" (Jafarov 2009).

But both the direction and tone of the conference were set by President Aliyev. In his address to the participants, the Azerbaijani leader stressed that "Azerbaijan is part of the Islamic world, and the Azerbaijani people are attached to their religious and national traditions" but at the same time that Azerbaijan is a member of many European organizations as well. As a result, Azerbaijanis today are proud of the fact that unlike many countries, they have been able, while remaining true to their own traditions, to do "everything possible for the normal life and activity of representatives" of all nations and faiths. [1]

Part of the reason for the latter fact reflects its geographical location and longstanding tradition of "religious tolerance" within the country, but President Aliyev continued, it is also "the logical result of the policy of the independent Azerbaijani state," which has sought to create a situation in which "all nations [of the country] live as a single family, actively working on behalf of the development of Azerbaijan and, as worthy citizens of the country, contributing to the all-sided development of our country."

"After the restoration of state independence," he told the meeting, "all freedoms, including the freedom of conscience and religious freedoms have been guaranteed in Azerbaijan." More than 1,000 mosques have been built, "hundreds of historical-religious monuments" restored, and many Orthodox and Catholic churches and synagogues have been built or reconstructed. "This is a very large part of our policy."

At the conclusion of the conference, participants adopted a resolution recognizing the importance of Baku in such conversations among people of different faiths and re-committing themselves, in the words of Sheikh ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, to “quickly move from dialogue and mutual understanding to direct cooperation.” [2]

Notes

[1] See <http://www.day.az/news/society/180103.html> (accessed 12 November 2009).

[2] See <http://www.day.az/news/politics/180200.html> (accessed 12 November 2009).

References

Jafarov, T. (2009) “Azerbaijan becoming Islamic bridge: Iranian Inter-religious Rapprochement Committee,” *Trend News*, 6 November, available at: <http://en.trend.az/news/society/religion/1574688.html> (accessed 12 November 2009).

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WHY IS AZERBAIJAN BECOMING MORE COMPETITIVE?

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According to the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) 2009-2010 recently released by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Azerbaijan rose on that organization’s list of the most competitive countries from 69 to 51 in only one year, a remarkable achievement and one far greater than any other country over the last 12 months has accomplished. And it is especially impressive compared with the situation of other CIS countries: Azerbaijan outranked all of them [1] and achieved a rise in the rankings when some of them, including the Russian Federation, fell. How did that happen at a time of international financial and economic crises?

To understand why that has happened, it is first necessary to focus on how the World Economic Forum measures countries. That organization defines competitiveness as “the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country,” (Schwab 2009) and it measures them in terms of 12 pillars of competitiveness that it groups in three categories: First are the *basic requirements* – institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic stability and health and primary education. Then are what the Forum calls “efficiency enhancers” – higher education and training, good market efficiency, labor market efficiency, financial market sophistication, technological readiness, and market size. And finally what WEF defines as “innovation and sophistication factors” include business sophistication and innovation. For each, the Forum both surveys the business community in the

country and analyzes statistical data and reports by reliable institutions and rating agencies.

Below is a table showing Azerbaijan's scores and ranking in the GCR 2009-2010:

	Rank (out of 133)	Score (1-7)
<i>Basic requirements</i>	50	4.6
1. Institutions	55	4.1
2. Infrastructure	58	4.0
3. Macroeconomic stability	27	5.3
4. Health and primary education	96	5.0
<i>Efficiency enhancers</i>	71	4.0
5. Higher education and training	72	3.9
6. Goods markets efficiency	71	4.2
7. Labor market efficiency	13	5.1
8. Financial market sophistication	66	4.2
9. Technological readiness	75	3.4
10. Market size	78	3.4
<i>Innovation and sophistication factors</i>	56	3.7
11. Business sophistication	74	3.9
12. Innovation	42	3.5

Azerbaijan ended up in 2009/2010 with the average score of 4.3 (as opposed to 4.1 in 2008/09) and the ranking of 51 (as opposed to 69 in 2008/09). Three factors explain this rise. The first is methodological. Azerbaijan experienced a jump because some of the gains it had made earlier were only registered in international reports in the last year, thus giving it a special boost. The second is that Azerbaijan, unlike almost all other countries, has not suffered significantly from the global economic crisis. That means that even if it had shown no absolute improvement, it would have risen relative to the others. And third, Azerbaijan really has been making progress in many of the areas the World Economic Forum is concerned with.

Indeed, according to the World Bank's *Doing Business 2009* report, Azerbaijan led the world in 2007/08 as the top reformer, with significant improvement on seven of the 10 measures of regulatory reform (World Bank 2008). Among those are introducing efficient regulations, encouraging creation of new businesses and expansion of the formal sector; strengthening the public credit registry by eliminating the minimum loan reporting threshold, more than doubling coverage; changing the labor code thereby making it easier for businesses to create jobs; creating a second commercial court in Baku and increasing the number of specialized judges; adopting a new law giving greater protection to minority shareholders; introducing a new unified property registry; introducing a new one-stop shop arrangement for company registration; and reducing the tax burden by introducing an online filing and payment system.

But the World Economic Forum's ranking also shows that Azerbaijan faces more challenges ahead. Among factors most troublesome for doing business in Azerbaijan, as indicated by surveyed local business people, are corruption (19.6%), inadequately educated workforce (10.2), tax rates (9.8), tax regulations (9.5), inefficient government bureaucracy (8.5), inflation (8.3), access to financing (8.2), inadequate supply for infrastructure (8.1), poor work ethic in national labor force (7.8) and so on. Some of these are short-term and technical issues, but others are rather strategic and will require some time to solve. If Baku addresses all these issues head on, it will continue to be a leader in economic development and will see its ranking improve even more when the Forum releases its next study.

Notes

[1] Azerbaijan is followed in the report by Russia (ranked 63rd), Kazakhstan (67th), Ukraine (82nd), Georgia (90th), Armenia (97th), Tajikistan (122nd) and the Kyrgyz Republic (123rd).

References

Schwab, Klaus (2009) *The Global Competitiveness Report 2009-2010*, Geneva: World Economic Forum, available at: <http://www.weforum.org/pdf/GCR09/GCR20092010fullreport.pdf> (accessed 8 November 2009).

World Bank (2008) "Doing Business 2009: Azerbaijan is World's Top Regulatory Reformer; Europe and Central Asia Lead Reform Worldwide", September 10, available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/> (accessed 8 November 2009).

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ANKARA-YEREVAN ACCORDS POINT TOWARD ARMENIA'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

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The emotions, whipped up by commentaries which followed the signing on October 10 of the protocols between Turkey and Armenia, have prevented a logical analysis of the situation. In order to begin such an analysis, we need to recognize that at the roots of the signing of these accords lie a multi-sided game of significance far beyond the South Caucasus region.

If at the outset, the opening of the borders with Armenia was one of the conditions on Turkey's path toward joining the European Union, then at the present time, the rapprochement of the two countries depends on the geopolitical situation and Ankara's participation in these processes. Immediately after the signing of the Turkish-Armenian accords, as one should have expected, the EU put forward some new demands for Turkey, about which the latter could not have but known about in advance. This means that Turkey signed the agreements with Armenia not as part

of its effort to join the EU, something that provides one of the points of departure for understanding why Turkey decided to reach an agreement with Armenia.

At the same time, we must not ignore the pressures on Turkey both direct and behind the scenes. And those came from more places than just the capitals of the countries which were represented at the signing ceremony. (Here, we intentionally are not touching on the role of Israel in all these complicated political games, the situation around Iran, the transportation routes for Iraqi oil and the Kurdish element in Iraq, as each of these represent a distinctive subject for discussion).

Turkey, who bear the genetic code of the Ottoman Empire as far as great power games are concerned, will not agree to play the role of a defeated country even under the pressure of world powers. Ankara is not in such a weak geopolitical situation that it has to act in ways that harm its national interests. Not long ago, we should remember, Turkey felt itself strong enough to refuse the United States the right to use the military base at Incirlik for the supply of the anti-Saddam operations of the coalition forces in Iraq.

When pointing to the harm the protocols between Ankara and Yerevan create for Azerbaijan in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, one must not forget that the Armenian diaspora has terrorized Turkey with the issue of the so-called "Armenian genocide." In its turn, Turkish diplomacy, which connects this question with the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict until recently took a position absolutely the same as Azerbaijan both because of their common Turkishness and because of Turkey's own national interests. These two issues also served as a factor which united the Azerbaijani and Turkish diaspora, which resisted recognition of "the Armenian genocide" by pointing to the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani lands.

Viewed from that perspective, it would seem that Turkey, which has little to gain economically and politically by reaching an accord with Armenia, signed the protocols in a way that both undercut its own interests and angered its fraternal and strategic relationship with Azerbaijan.

Of course, in contrast to the 1990s, Azerbaijan today is not the weak "younger brother" who needs support but an equal state that is confident in its own forces and demands respect on that basis. This cannot entirely please the current Turkish powers that be, but it is not the occasion for a break with a reliable partner. Differences in the question of the transportation of Azerbaijani gas to Turkey also cannot be the subject for speculation on such a strategic question as the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border.

During the entire period of talks with Armenia, official representatives of Turkey at various levels repeated that the relationship Ankara sought would not harm the interests of Azerbaijan and that the Turkish-Armenian borders will not be opened until the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Among those who have constantly said this are Turkish President Abdulla Gul, Prime Minister Erdogan, Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu, members of the parliament, opposition figures and others both before and after the signing of the protocols.

At the same time, every step of Armenian-Turkish negotiations was discussed with Baku, and talks about the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue continued in the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group.

And in this context, the declaration of Turkish President Gul concerning the impact in “a short time” of the Armenian-Turkish accords on “the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict” merits attention and should calm many of the concerns in Azerbaijan.

At the present time, when Azerbaijan has acquired major geopolitical importance, ignoring its interests on such an important issue is impossible. Consequently, the interests of Baku were taken into consideration. Note that immediately after the signing in Switzerland of the Armenian-Turkish agreement Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev arrived in Zurich where the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was discussed. Further, a short time after the signing of the agreement with the very same mission, Tina Kaidanow, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia arrived in Baku, and in the framework of the meetings of the foreign ministers of the Black Sea countries, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu met with President Ilham Aliyev and his foreign minister, Elmar Mammadyarov. And the visit to Baku of General Ishyk Koshaner, commander of Turkish ground forces, to meet with Azerbaijani Defense Minister Col. Gen. Safar Abiyev is yet another confirmation of this.

Taken together, it is clear that this cycle of visits was not a matter of chance.

And if there were any doubt about this, the reaction both within Armenian society and also in the diaspora to the accord which should allow Armenia to escape from the blockade has been negative. Evidently, Armenian society and politicians recognize that they will have to free the occupied territories, because otherwise no one intends to save Armenia. It is not accidental that after the signing of the Zurich agreement, all sides represented at the ceremony except for Armenian Foreign Minister Edvard Nalbandyan did not hide their satisfaction with what had taken place.

In other words, everything shows that the Zurich agreement will have a positive consequence on the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Judging by the presence at the signing ceremony of the representatives of the OSCE Minsk Group, it is possible to assert that all interested sides are informed about this process and about its impact on the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

If under the pressure of the diaspora Armenia will not ratify the agreement, Azerbaijan and Turkey will return to where they were before. If the Turkish and Armenian parliaments all the same give legal force to the agreement, then Armenia will have to free Azerbaijani territories in order to secure the opening of the Turkish borders. Otherwise, Ankara, responding to public pressure in Azerbaijan and in Turkey will not be able to open the borders with Armenia. In that case, Azerbaijani and Turkish public opinion will be in a position to increase international pressure on Yerevan and the Armenian diaspora regarding the liberation of the occupied territories.

If Armenia does not follow through, then Turkey will always be in a position to find reasons to close the borders. In such a case, Azerbaijan will be left with only one choice – the liberation of the occupied territories by military means; and the countries involved in the division of spheres of influence in the region will have to agree with this. Otherwise Azerbaijan, using its status as “the most reliable country for the transportation of gas,” will have every reason for refusing to allow the Nabucco project to pass through its territory.

Every country has its own interests and priorities, and in this case, that means that there is no chance that Turkey will sacrifice its relations with Azerbaijan for new ties with Armenia.

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev tells an international conference in Baku on "Inter-religious Dialogue: From Mutual Understanding to Joint Cooperation" that "in Azerbaijan, all peoples and the representatives of all religions live as one family" (<http://www.day.az/news/society/180103.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Vagif Sadykhov says that the system of Azerbaijan's representations abroad will be expanded and improved in 2010. He says that at present, Azerbaijan has 50 embassies, five missions at international organizations, eight consulates, three honorary consulates, and two representations of consulates, and that Baku will soon open embassies in five additional countries. As a result, he says, the ministry is seeking an increase in its staff and its budget from the Milli Majlis (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179894.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, the deputy chairman of the ruling *Yeni Azerbaijan* Party, says that until the OSCE Minsk Group recognizes that Armenia is the aggressor in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, "we will not be able to achieve a just resolution of the conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179371.html>).

Aynur Jamalgyzy, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Armenia in the near future may return five districts" to Azerbaijani control. She says that the situation regarding Lachin and Kalbajar is "more problematic" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179058.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammadov says that "relations between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan have acquired a qualitatively new content" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179691.html>).

Grigory Karasin, Russia's deputy foreign minister, says that "Russia is prepared to support the process of the normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations" so long as this does not harm any third party (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179637.html>).

Alaaddin Buukkaya, the head of the Turkish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that "Armenia unofficially has agreed to leave the occupied Azerbaijani territories." He adds that Armenia would not oppose Turkey becoming a co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180097.html>).

Suleyman Jafarzade, the chairman of the commission on social questions of the Majlis of the Islamic Council of Iran, tells Azerbaijani parliamentarians that "Iran supports the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180404.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

14 November

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, says that "Turkish-Armenian rapprochement is a process which can have a positive influence on conflicts that exist in the region" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181238.html>). In other comments, he says that the OSCE Minsk Group is the only process which will be able to resolve the Karabakh problem (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181205.html>).

Egemen Bakys, the Turkish state minister who is conducting negotiations with the European Union, says that "the Azerbaijani people can trust the prime minister of Turkey" when the latter says that Ankara will not do anything to harm the interests of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181232.html>).

13 November

President Ilham Aliyev visits Bulgaria and meets with that country's president Georgy Pырvanov (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180999.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev at the conclusion of his two-day visit to Minsk says that "relations between Azerbaijan and Belarus are developing in an intense, dynamic and very effective manner" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180787.html>).

US Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon says in Ankara that Washington "doubts" that the Turkish parliament will ratify the Turkish-Armenian protocols unless there is progress on the Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181147.html>).

John Holmes, UN Deputy Secretary General, says that the OSCE must keep its leading role in the South Caucasus (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/181006.html>).

12 November

During his visit to Minsk, President Ilham Aliyev signs a series of agreements with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180787.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov says that "the process of negotiations on the resolution of the Karabakh conflict has again intensified" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180793.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov tells Faisal al-Migdad, Syria's deputy foreign minister, that "Azerbaijan is united with the Islamic world" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180811.html>).

Milli Majlis Speaker Ogtay Asadov receives Hussein Anwari, the head of the *Imdad*, the International Humanitarian Committee of Iran (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180903.html>).

Agshin Mekhdiyev, Azerbaijan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, tells an open discussion of the UN Security Council that "Armenia continues to crudely violate the norms of international humanitarian law" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180886.html>).

The Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry says that negotiations are proceeding with Turkey about the lifting of the visa regime between the two countries but that no agreement has been reached yet (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180835.html>).

Ismetulla Irgashev, Uzbekistani ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that for Tashkent, Baku is "a key partner in the South Caucasus region" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180949.html>).

Zeyper Dagi, a member of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, says that voting on the protocols with Ankara has not yet been scheduled (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180882.html>).

James Jeffrey, US ambassador to Turkey, says "the United States well understands the sensitivity of Azerbaijan and Turkey regarding the solution of the Karabakh problem" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180871.html>).

Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, the secretary general of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, says that "the OIC does not accept the actions of Armenia on the occupied territories" but expects that the conflict "will be resolved in a peaceful way" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180795.html>).

11 November

President Ilham Aliyev receives Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, the secretary general of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180735.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Turkish State Minister Hayati Yazydji (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180728.html>).

In advance of President Ilham Aliyev's arrival in Minsk, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenka says that bilateral ties and economic cooperation are developing well but adds that "no one now or in the future can compete in Azerbaijan with the goods which we produce in Belarus" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180624.html>).

Iran's council of ministers approves a unilateral lifting of the visa requirement on Azerbaijanis travelling to Iran (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180647.html>).

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, meets with the permanent representatives of the GUAM countries to the Council (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180749.html>).

10 November

President Ilham Aliyev receives outgoing Georgian Ambassador Nikoloz Natbiladze on the completion of the latter's appointment in Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180580.html>).

Defense Minister Col. Gen. Safar Abiyev attends the conference of CIS defense ministers in Dushanbe (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180296.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov takes part in the ceremonial opening of the Azerbaijani embassy in Mexico City (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180464.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov presents Azerbaijan's report on the 43rd Session of the UN Commission Against Torture (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180686.html>).

Zahid Oruj, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "official Baku has already reached the limit of its concessions to Yerevan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179744.html>).

Peter Semneby, EU special representative for the South Caucasus, says that "Armenian-Turkish relations have reached the point at which there could be a breakthrough" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180457.html>).

9 November

President Ilham Aliyev tells visiting Slovenian President Danilo Turk that Azerbaijan is "playing an important role in the diversification of energy supplies" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180308.html>).

Suleyman Jafarzade, the chairman of the commission on social questions of the Majlis of the Islamic Council of Islam, tells Azerbaijani parliamentarians that "Iran supports the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180404.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan says that he will press President Barak Obama to push for a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict when the Turkish leader travels to Washington later this year (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180364.html>).

Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov confirms the agreement between Tashkent and Baku on military cooperation (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180319.html>).

7 November

The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group say that the presidents of both Azerbaijan and Armenia are "prepared to continue to discuss" the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180188.html>).

6 November

President Ilham Aliyev receives the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group along with the special representative of the OSCE chairman-in-office Andrzej Kasprzyk (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180108.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180121.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180088.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Daghestani President Mukhu Aliyev (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180051.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that Armenian Foreign Minister Edvard Nalbandyan's statement in the Armenian parliament that the only thing being discussed in talks about Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is the status of that region is intended for domestic Armenian consumption and does not correspond to the facts (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179993.html>).

Nikoloz Natbiladze, Georgian ambassador to Azerbaijan, completes his diplomatic tour in Baku (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180076.html>).

Birgen Kelesh, a member of the Turkish parliamentary delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, says that "Yerevan is doing nothing for the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/180007.html>).

Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov gives an award to Mikhail Zabelin, the president of the Russian Community in Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179988.html>).

Iranian Vice President Hamid Baghai visits Nakhchivan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179989.html>).

Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijani consul general in Los Angeles, speaks to a seminar on Azerbaijan at the University of Southern California (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179961.html>).

5 November

President Ilham Aliyev receives the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group along with the special representative of the OSCE president in office Andzej Kaspsika (www.day.az/news/politics/179920.html).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Metropolitan Filaret, the Patriarchal Exarches of All Belarus (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179938.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the Azerbaijani participants in the bilateral commission on cooperation with Syria
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179778.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the Azerbaijani participants in the bilateral commission on cooperation with Lithuania
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179777.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations Agshin Mekhdiyev, and Azerbaijan Ambassador to the US Yashar Aliyev participate in a conference on Azerbaijan at Columbia University's Harriman Institute (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179954.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov says that "the partnership between Azerbaijan and the United States is very deep." His comments come at the conclusion of bilateral consultations with Andrew Shapiro, US Assistant Secretary of State for Military-Political Relations
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179851.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov says that "Baku is ready to answer Armenia at the United Nations" and that the foreign ministry is preparing a report to do just that (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179837.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov says that "if Russia and the US would like to jointly use the Gabala radar station, they will not be able to do so without the participation of Azerbaijan" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179815.html>).

Agshin Mekhtiyev, the permanent representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations, takes part in a discussion at the UN of the history and legal aspects of the Karabakh conflict (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179820.html>).

Turkish President Abdulla Gul says that "the fact that the occupied territories of Azerbaijan belong to Azerbaijan is not being subjected to doubt"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179779.html>).

Slovenian President Danilo Turk says that "Azerbaijan occupies a special place in the European Union's Eastern Partnership Program"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179784.html>).

Slovenian Foreign Minister Samuel Žbogar says that "Azerbaijan is located in what is for the European Union a strategically important territory"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179925.html>). He adds that "the normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey will contribute to security in the region"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179913.html>).

Fazil Agamaly, a Milli Majlis deputy and head of the *Ana Vatan* Party, says that he has invited members of the Turkish opposition parties to visit Baku
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179910.html>).

Vladimir Dorokhin, Russian ambassador in Baku, says that "Russian-Azerbaijani relations can serve as an example for many countries"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179854.html>).

4 November

President Ilham Aliyev receives Iliya II, Patriarch-Catholicos of Georgia
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179768.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Hamadoun Touré, the Secretary General of the International Telecommunications Union
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179743.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Roland Kobia, the new head of the representation of the European Union in Azerbaijan
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179745.html>).

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov says at a meeting in Ashgabat on the delimitation of the Caspian Sea that "the Caspian region remains an important region of energy security" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179714.html>).

Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammadov says that "relations between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan have acquired a qualitatively new content" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179691.html>).

Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the secretary general of NATO, says that "Azerbaijan is a very close and active partner of the North Atlantic Alliance"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179633.html>).

Caroline Brown, the British ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that London is devoted to the task of "a peaceful and firm resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict"
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179730.html>).

3 November

President Ilham Aliyev receives Korean Ambassador Kwang-chul LEW on the completion of his diplomatic appointment in Baku
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179566.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev confirms the protocol on cooperation with GUAM
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179554.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev confirms Azerbaijani accords with Georgia, the UN, Moldova, Poland, Latvia and Ukraine
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179518.html>).

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Austrian Ambassador Marius Calligaris on the completion of his diplomatic assignment in Baku
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179591.html>).

Interior Minister Ramil Usubov receives Turkish General Ishyk Koshaner, who tells him that Turkey will do whatever it can for the development of the armed forces of Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179525.html>).

Bahram Khalilov, head of the Azerbaijani Presidential Commission on Questions of State Service, visits Seoul to discuss cooperation with Korea in this sphere
(<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179547.html>).

Alain Guidetti, Swiss ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that Switzerland "has always supported the view that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict must be resolved by peaceful means" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179488.html>).

The US Embassy in Baku explains that the closure of the International Republic Institute office in Baku in no way represents a lessening of American support for democratic reforms and development in Azerbaijan (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179569.html>).

Ali Huseynov, chairman of the Milli Majlis legal policy and state construction committee, takes part in a Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe session in Paris on procedural rules, immunity and other legal issues (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179461.html>).

2 November

President Ilham Aliyev speaks by telephone with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179335.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives Sergey Brayko, the mayor of Yalta (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179405.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev receives General Ishyk Koshaner, commander of Turkish ground forces (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179402.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev appoints Javanshir Akhundov as Azerbaijani ambassador to Iran (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179408.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev signs an order on the establishment of Azerbaijani embassies in Estonia, Lebanon and Libya (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179399.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, the deputy chairman of the ruling *Yeni Azerbaijan* Party, says that until the OSCE Minsk Group recognizes that Armenia is the aggressor in the Karabakh war, "we will not be able to achieve a just resolution of the conflict" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179371.html>).

Aynur Jamalgyzy, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Armenia in the near future may return five districts" to Azerbaijani control. She says that the situation regarding Lachin and Kalbajar is "more problematic" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179058.html>).

Peter Semneby, EU special representative for the South Caucasus, says that he expects the Turkish-Armenian protocols to be ratified by both countries (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179298.html>). In other comments, he says that he is "certain that the Armenian leadership recognizes that the status quo on Karabakh cannot continue forever" (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179285.html>).

A delegation of Azerbaijani naval forces begins a four-day visit to Turkey (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179267.html>).

1 November

President Ilham Aliyev signs a directive providing for the operation of an Azerbaijani embassy in Thailand (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179228.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan says that Turks “consider the problems of our Azerbaijani brothers as our own” (<http://www.day.az/news/politics/179232.html>).

Note to Readers

The editors of “Azerbaijan in the World” hope that you find it useful and encourage you to submit your comments and articles via email (adabiweekly@ada.edu.az). The materials it contains reflect the personal views of their authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.