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School of International Affairs

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AZERBAIJAN AND BELARUS

An Interview with H.E. Mr. Nikolai Patskevich
Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus to the Republic of Azerbaijan

March 28, 2011
Baku, Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan in the World: In your opinion, what forms the basis of relations between Belarus and Azerbaijan?

Ambassador Patskevich: It is obvious that the capstone which lies at the foundation of Belorussian-Azerbaijani ties is the friendly, mutually respectful character of relations between the heads of Belarus and Azerbaijan, Aleksandr Lukashenko and Ilham Aliyev. I am convinced that to a large extent thanks to their positive efforts, the existing interaction between our countries has successfully developed into a truly fraternal and trusting relationship.

One also needs to take note of several other objective factors involved. This is the way in which the economies of our countries fit together, with each stimulating the continuing growth of the other and of bilateral trade and productive cooperation, as well as a commonality of approaches on key issues of the contemporary world, and the similarity of social policies which the leaderships of Belarus and Azerbaijan are conducting. No doubts, we are also unified by our Soviet past however we evaluate it today.

AIW: How have Azerbaijani-Belorussian relations developed in the post-Soviet period? How would you rate the level of these relations at present?

Amb. Patskevich: The collapse of the Soviet Union led to a breakdown in the economic and human ties among the former republics of the USSR. This was unfortunately also the case for Belarus and Azerbaijan. One must openly admit that the inertia of centrifugal forces in "the wild nineties" to a definite degree distanced our countries from one another. That trend was compounded by serious internal problems to the solution of which we focused our attention, as well as by geographic distance. Nor should one ignore geopolitical aspects. It is no secret that the newly independent states actively were drawn into the orbit of influence of the stronger players in the world arena. The "iron curtain" which existed in Soviet times played a role in this regard and its fall generated a natural desire of people to see and find out about another world.

Having passed through the far from simple historical stage of "growing up," our states received the chance to develop their relations on the basis of their own national priorities and mutually acceptable compromises.

The first practical steps of Minsk and Baku in developing a dialogue dates back to August 2001, when the first governmental delegation of the Republic of Belarus was dispatched to Azerbaijan. In 2004, there occurred an exchange of visits by governmental delegations. At that same time the inter-governmental Belarus-Azerbaijan commission for trade and economic cooperation was established which has made a significant contribution to the development of relations between our countries.

2006 became a signal year for Belorussian-Azerbaijani partnership. Diplomatic representations of the two countries were opened in the capitals of the other at the level of embassies, which underscored the interest of the sides in an effective and dynamic format of bilateral cooperation.

In October 2006, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev made his first official visit to the Republic of Belarus, an event which marked the beginning of intensive dialogue at the highest level and the establishment of special relations between the heads of our states. In May 2007, President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko paid an official visit to Baku. In 2009-2010, the second round of visits by the chiefs of state of our two countries took place.

These two rounds of visits led to the adoption of a number of principle decisions on the development of bilateral relations. The specific directions of work have been defined, ones that found expression in the agreements signed by the two chiefs of state concerning friendship and cooperation and long-term social-economic cooperation, as well as the joint declarations of the two presidents. Since that time,

there have been more than 60 international agreements signed by Belarus and Azerbaijan.

The number of visits at the ministerial level between the two countries has increased significantly. Annually, only via the Belorussian Embassy in Azerbaijan more than 100 various delegations arrive in Baku. Such visits have been reflected across the entire spectrum of bilateral relations.

Indicative as well is the growth of trade, which in 2002 stood at 6.7 million US dollars and had already crossed the psychological barrier of 100 million by 2008. During the two first months of the present year, the extent of bilateral trade exceeded 300 million US dollars. All this allows one to say that relations between Belarus and Azerbaijan are on the rise, and there is every reason to think that all the necessary conditions are in place for further growth.

AIW: What is the status of Azerbaijani-Belorussian cooperation in the energy sphere?

Amb. Patskevich: Energy both for Belarus and for Azerbaijan is a key, life-supporting system, a basic element which guarantees the integrity and effectiveness of work for all branches and subjects of the economy; and relations between our two countries in this sphere are conducted in a mutually profitable way. In April 2011, the processing of Azerbaijani oil is going to begin at the Mozyr Oil Processing Factory in Belarus. This has now become possible thanks to the fact that the Odessa-Brody pipeline began its operation in a reverse mode. As provided by the contract between the Belarus Oil Company and Azerbaijan's SOCAR, up to four million tons of Azerbaijani oil will be delivered to Belarus in 2011. This oil will first be delivered to the Yuzhny Port and then be taken via the Odessa-Brody pipeline to Mozyr. Supplies from Azerbaijan will be realized simultaneously with supplies of oil from Venezuela. This allows for swap agreements between Azerbaijan and Venezuela to the benefit of both given transport costs.

AIW: What are the main directions of cooperation between Belarus and Azerbaijan, in addition to energy?

Amb. Patskevich: The start of supplies of Azerbaijani oil to Belarus in 2011 undoubtedly is an important stage of Belorussian-Azerbaijani cooperation. At the same time, the tasks which the presidents of the two countries have put for the development of a strategic partnership in the two economies include a large number of other mutually profitable directions of cooperation, many of which are already being realized over the course of the last five years or more. And it is no accident that today this task involves increasing trade to more than one billion US dollars a year in the near term.

Sales by Azerbaijan to Belarus of machine tools, the products of the petroleum chemical complex, and agricultural goods (including fruits, vegetables, juices, grapes, pharmaceuticals and tobacco) are dynamically increasing. In 2010 alone, Azerbaijani exports to Belarus grew more than 1.5 times.

Also actively developing is the Belorussian component of this mutually profitable cooperation. More than 300 Belorussian enterprises, including more than 40 Belarusian producers representing practically all branches of the economy, are represented in Azerbaijan.

Work is continuing on the broadening of the list of mutually profitable projects of productive cooperation. One can now find in Azerbaijan Belarusian tractors, trucks, optical equipment and elevators. Today with pride we speak about such breakthrough projects of bilateral cooperation as the production of Belorussian tractors and cars at the Ganja automobile factory, something President Aliyev has spoken about.

Belarusians are ready to share with our Azerbaijani friends all out experience and technology which our economy now possess in such branches as automobile construction, agricultural machinery construction, petroleum chemical industry, electronic and electrical machinery, food, forest and wood processing industries and the agro-industrial complex. Cooperation is broadening in the services sphere as well. Agreements have been reached concerning the training of Azerbaijani students in Belorussian universities, regular flights between Baku and Minsk, the opening of a direct railway route between the two cities beginning in June this year, and the development of large-scale projects in information technology at the two national Academies of Science.

Thus, one can point to the active development of Belorussian-Azerbaijani cooperation in practically all branches of the economy.

AIW: What is the status of Azerbaijani-Belorussian cooperation in the social and cultural sphere?

Amb. Patskevich: The high-level visits which have taken place and received wide coverage in the Belorussian and Azerbaijani press have given a powerful impulse to the development of cultural and humanitarian ties. While becoming acquainted with the rich historical heritage of Belarus and Azerbaijan and contemporary achievements in the areas of culture, science and education, we are discovering each other anew and these discoveries are beautiful.

The last year was marked by an essential activation of bilateral cooperation in the humanitarian sphere. The signal event was the opening of the Center of Belorussian Language and Culture at the Baku Slavic University. This took place with the participation of President Lukashenko in the course of his visit to Azerbaijan and generated enormous interest in Belarus among Azerbaijani society. In its turn, at the end of 2010, an analogous Center of Azerbaijani Language was opened in the Belorussian Pedagogical University.

A significant contribution to the development of ties in the area of culture, education and science is made by the Azerbaijan-Belarus Society of Friendship and Cooperation headed by the respected academician Arif Mehdiyev. Since its creation in October 2009, the society has organized about 20 activities in various areas. For the second year in a row, there has been a successful exhibit of miniature books produced by Zarifa Salakhova and dedicated to the visit of the President of the Belorussian state to Azerbaijan.

I am very glad about the establishment of close ties between people of the theater of our two countries. In Azerbaijan, during the past year took place a premier of a musical show based on the Tales of Hoffman directed by Belarus' N. Basheva. And the Belorussian viewer in turn has seen the Azerbaijani comedy "Arshin mal alan." As directed by Hafiz Guliyev, this became an important event in the cultural life of the Belorussian capital. I hope that similarly fruitful will be the cooperation between

the Kupala National Theater of Belarus and the Azerbaijani Drama Theater. Corresponding agreements were reached in the last year.

Arts collectives, members of the creative intelligentsia, and sportsmen of both countries take the most active part in various cultural activities which are carried out in Belarus and in Azerbaijan. In 2010, representatives of Azerbaijan participated in the Slavic Bazaar in Vitebsk, and Belarusians in the Second Baku International Competition of Children's Drawings. Belorussian pupils successfully appeared in the 44th International Mendeleev Chemistry Olympiad which took place in Baku last year.

The growing interest of Belarusians in Azerbaijan generated a noticeable increase in the activity of representatives of the Belorussian mass media in the Azerbaijani direction. Traditional have become visits by creative groups of the Belorussian State Television and Radio Company which has visited Azerbaijan for the eighth time this year. In addition to numerous articles on social and political themes and interviews with leading Azerbaijanis, Belorussian journalists made documentary films about the history of Christianity in Azerbaijani and about historical-architectural monuments of the Lagich village in the Ismayilly district. I am convinced that the more we learn about one another, the broader the horizons of our cooperation will get.

AIW: In your opinion, what should be the next steps in the relationship between Azerbaijan and Belarus?

Amb.Patskevich: We have achieved a considerably high level in our bilateral relations, and now it is important to foster this development by supporting dialogue at all levels and broadening the spectrum of our mutual activity.

There are many directions of cooperation where mutual interest is obvious but a practical realization for various reasons has not been achieved, although real steps have been taken. There are good prospects in my view for cooperation in investment. The favorable conjunction of world prices for energy and the far-sighted policy of the leadership of Azerbaijan which has prevented the onset of the Dutch Disease have made possible the growth of the investment potential of the country. Belarus can be a space for Azerbaijani capital investments.

A favorable investment climate exists in Belarus. In the "Doing Business 2011" report, Belarus ranks 68th in terms of the simplification of the conditions for conducting business and has joined the top three countries which have most actively carried out reforms in the sphere of regulating entrepreneurial activity over the last five years. Already today, projects for the construction in Belarus by Azerbaijani businessmen of trade and logistical centers, restaurants, tea factories, and other plants are being worked out.

Belarus in its turn is ready for a breakout year in the creation of joint production enterprises. In particular, the Belorussian side has proposed the joint production of quality Belorussian combines for the Azerbaijani Agricultural Ministry. Some joint production is already taking place at the Ganja automobile factory.

I also think that there is significant potential for the development of cooperation between the youth organizations of our countries. An inter-governmental agreement between Belarus and Azerbaijan on youth policy has been signed. Using this document as a base, it is possible to establish mutually profitable ties between the

youth wings of the *Yeni Azerbaijan* Party and the Belorussian Republic Union of Youth, which today unites in its ranks about 480,000 young people and is the largest youth organization in Belarus.

Tourism is another area waiting to take off. Here, it seems to me, the greatest interest of the two sides involves the medical component. Belorussian sanatoria and pensions attract foreigners with their moderate prices for high quality service. Hospitable and highly qualified personnel, specialized programs of cure, picturesque nature, mineral sources, and the possibility to become acquainted with the unique monuments of Belorussian history is an incomplete list of the attractions which leads visitors to come back again and again. Belarusians in turn are interested in the Azerbaijani curative resort of Naftalan. And, of course, beautiful Baku, if given the necessary information support, could become a desired tourist destination for residents of Belarus. Direct air connections assist this process, and we must use them more effectively.

Cooperation in information technologies looks to be a much-promising area as well. The first Belorussian-Azerbaijani business forum in the area of information and communications technologies which took place last year demonstrated this. The first results are already in evidence: joint products of Belorussian and Azerbaijani IT companies are already being introduced into the banking sector of Azerbaijan.

Thus, the field of activity is enormous, and it inspires us in our daily work.

AIW: Considering your own diplomatic experience, what advice could you give to young Azerbaijani diplomats who are only beginning their own diplomatic career?

Amb. Patskevich: One recalls Talleyrand's observation that a young diplomat should begin his career by "dressing all in gray, keeping in the shadow, and not showing initiative." To be sure, this is a universal formula for the careerist, but for an individual who sincerely wants to push forward the national interests of his country abroad, and that is how I see a real diplomat, I would advise taking exactly the opposite track. Of course, I am not calling for such people to dress in carnival-colored outfits and overwhelm those around them. In that regard, generally accepted standards exist and these should not be forgotten. But to show oneself as anything but indifferent and to attract others to oneself—this is how an individual should make a career as a diplomat.

When interacting with representatives of other countries, remember that it is possible you will be the only representative of your country with whom your interlocutor will encounter in his lifetime, and precisely this conversation will shape his view of your country.

BAKU MUSLIM LEADER'S INFLUENCE EXTENDS FAR BEYOND AZERBAIJAN

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Allahshukur Pashazade, the sheikh ul-Islam and head of the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus, exerts an influence far beyond the borders of Azerbaijan. Some of that reflects the leadership he inherited from Soviet times of the Shia communities across the former Soviet space. Some of it is the product of the role he continues to play in the guidance of many Muslim communities in the North Caucasus. And some of that is the result of the respect he enjoys among religious leaders of all faiths in the post-Soviet states, the political leadership of Azerbaijan, and the special relationship he has with Shia leaders in Iran and Iraq. For all these reasons, Sheikh Allahshukur Pashazade plays an important role in the foreign policy activities of Azerbaijan.

In the years since the USSR disintegrated, most but not all faiths have sought to bring their administrative responsibilities in line with the newly established international borders. Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church is an obvious and well-known exception as he has insisted on maintaining spiritual oversight of Russian Orthodox Churches loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate in the post-Soviet countries. But Baku's sheikh ul-Islam is another, although his role is far less well-known.

Until 1991, the sheikh was explicitly in charge of all the Shia Muslim communities of the USSR and through his deputy all the Sunni parishes in Azerbaijan as well. Since that time, he has retained much of the former role—although it is not unchallenged as some Sunni leaders in the Russian Federation such as Ravil Gainutdin of the Union of Muftis of Russia has claimed supervision of the Shia there—and given the problems of the North Caucasus, the Baku sheikh has played a significant role in Dagestan and elsewhere in the North Caucasus as well.

While Kirill earlier this month limited the role of the Orthodox bishop of Baku to Azerbaijan alone—that cleric had supervised Orthodox parishes in Dagestan as well—Sheikh Allahshukur Pashazade has regularly exerted himself in the selection of individual leaders and in making other kinds of decisions among the often-deeply split Muslim spiritual directorates (MSDs) and even individual parishes across the North Caucasus. Earlier this month, for example, he took part in various ceremonies and meetings in Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachayevo-Cherkessia, and North Ossetia-Alania. [1]

The sheikh's unusual role appears to reflect the willingness of Kirill and other Russian religious and political leaders to accept Pashazade as a partner in their efforts to regulate Russian religious life, a willingness that is the product of the sheikh's more than 30 years in office, thus making him a known commodity to many of the others who share his roots in the Soviet past and explaining why the other Russian religious leaders of the CIS have been more than prepared to accept him in leadership roles in inter-religious bodies of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

As important as these ties are, it is entirely possible that the sheikh's Shia links with Iran, something that make him an important channel with the religious-political leadership of that country, are even more significant or will become so. Because he is a Shia and because there are so many Azerbaijani Shia in Iran—probably three times as many as all citizens of the Republic of Azerbaijan put together—the sheikh can speak with the leaders in Tehran and Qum in ways few other non-Iranians can.

Much of his activities in these areas normally attract little attention. Indeed, the sheikh usually attracts media interest only under two conditions: when he makes a statement about politics and religion in Azerbaijan or more often abroad or when he meets with religious leaders elsewhere and discusses bilateral or multi-lateral relations, such as his possible meeting with Armenian Catholicos Garegin II later this year. [2]

Sheikh Allahshukur Pashazade is thus an important foreign policy actor for Azerbaijan, one whose statements and travels call for the most thoughtful scrutiny.

Notes

[1] See (<http://news.day.az/politics/258251.html>).

[2] See (<http://news.day.az/politics/258125.html>).

A CHRONOLOGY OF AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

I. Key Government Statements on Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

President Ilham Aliyev says that Nagorno-Karabakh will never be offered independence" (<http://news.day.az/politics/258482.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that "Azerbaijan supports the appeal of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group who have called for the avoidance of any actions which could lead to a change in the demographic, social and also cultural character in the territories occupied by Armenia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/259142.html>).

Ali Ahmadov, the deputy chairman of the ruling *Yeni Azerbaijan* Party, says that visits by the OSCE Minsk Group are "necessary" but that "there are so many such visits that in Azerbaijani society they are viewed as 'the visits of tourists'" (<http://news.day.az/politics/258169.html>).

II. Key Statements by Others about Azerbaijan

Audronius Azubalis, Lithuanian foreign minister and OSCE chairman-in-office, says that the Minsk Group "does not solve the problem of the sides. It can propose any plans, but if there is no political will on all sides, no one can move the situation toward resolution" (<http://news.day.az/politics/259535.html>).

José Manuel Barroso, the president of the European Commission, says that "the preservation of the status quo is not an acceptable variant of the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which must be resolved by peaceful means on the basis of the principles of the non-use of force, territorial integrity, and the right of peoples to self-determination" (<http://news.day.az/politics/257837.html>).

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad tells visiting Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Elchin Efendiyev that "the ties between Iran and Azerbaijan are fraternal" and that "not a single factor can violate them" (<http://news.day.az/politics/259246.html>).

III. A Chronology of Azerbaijan's Foreign Policy

31 March

Azerbaijan commemorates the Day of the Genocide of Azerbaijanis (<http://news.day.az/society/259442.html>).

Emil Karimov, Azerbaijani ambassador to Sofia, says that "Bulgaria has the potential to attract Azerbaijani investors" (<http://news.day.az/politics/259709.html>).

Leyla Aliyeva, the vice president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and president of the Azerbaijan Youth Organization of Russia, says that "the contribution of Azerbaijan to the treasurehouse of world culture is considerable and we are proud of this" (<http://news.day.az/politics/259897.html>).

Mikhail Zeynalov, the president of the *Bridge to the Future* Organization is chosen as an expert of the European Youth Forum for Eastern Europe and the Caucasus Countries for the period of 2011-2012 (<http://news.day.az/politics/259830.html>).

The Japanese government formally thanks President Ilham Aliyev for the 1 million USD assistance Azerbaijan provided to Japan to help overcome the consequences of the earthquake and tsunami (<http://news.day.az/politics/259880.html>).

Ahmet Aydin, a deputy of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, says that "a just resolution of the Karabakh conflict will be profitable to Armenia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/259694.html>).

Shenon Bal, a deputy of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, says that Turkey supports Azerbaijan in its efforts throughout the world to secure the recognition for the genocide of Azerbaijanis in 1918 (<http://news.day.az/politics/259843.html>).

30 March

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov meets with various senior Mexican officials during his visit to Mexico City (<http://news.day.az/politics/259561.html>).

Polad Bulbuloglu, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Moscow, meets with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin (<http://news.day.az/politics/259702.html>).

Elkhan Gahramanov, Azerbaijani ambassador to the UAE, meets with that country's deputy prime minister and interior minister Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan (<http://news.day.az/politics/259626.html>).

Mubariz Gurbanly, the deputy executive secretary of the ruling *Yeni Azerbaijan* Party, says that the assessment of the situation in the occupied territories must

not be limited to a description but must contain a prescription for action (<http://news.day.az/politics/259684.html>).

Sabir Rustamkhanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, criticizes the OSCE Minsk Group for making the same demands on Azerbaijan and Armenia when the actions of the two are fundamentally different (<http://news.day.az/politics/259665.html>).

Siyavysh Novruzov, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that Azerbaijan will not be moving to an all-volunteer military force (<http://news.day.az/politics/259629.html>).

Khanhuseyn Kazimly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Yerevan simply does not have the forces to fight with us" (<http://news.day.az/politics/259341.html>).

Hulusi Kilic, Turkey's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that "one nation should not have two diasporas" and consequently Azerbaijanis and Turks living abroad must work closely together (<http://news.day.az/politics/259634.html>).

Hulusi Kilic, Turkey's ambassador to Azerbaijan, says that Ankara supports Baku concerning flights to airports in the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/259586.html>).

Russian dissident Vladimir Bukovsky calls for the arrest of former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev for crimes including his organization of the attack on Azerbaijan in January 1990 (<http://news.day.az/politics/259719.html>).

29 March

Ali Hasanov, head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, says that he "doubts" the objectivity of the OSCE report on the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/259489.html>).

Elmira Suleymanova, Azerbaijan's ombudsman, calls on the international community to give an objective assessment of the genocide of Azerbaijanis (<http://news.day.az/politics/259422.html>).

Turkish President Abdulla Gul ratifies with his signature the strategic partnership treaty with Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/259323.html>).

Matthew Bryza, the US ambassador to Baku, says that the OSCE Minsk Group report on the occupied territories "speaks for itself" and that he "prefers not to characterize it" otherwise (<http://news.day.az/politics/259480.html>).

Matthew Bryza, the US ambassador to Baku, says that Azerbaijan and Armenia must resolve issues of security of flights before the opening of an airport in Khankendi. He notes that the US and Azerbaijan are now discussing opening direct flights between their two countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/259455.html>).

Andrey Kelin, the head of the Russian foreign ministry's department for work with CIS countries, says that Moscow is "a generator of ideas" for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/259460.html>).

Haldun Solmazturk, a retired Turkish lieutenant general, says that "the wave of revolutions in the Near East will have an impact on Armenia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/259358.html>).

28 March

The Foreign Ministry says that "Azerbaijan supports the appeal of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group who have called for the avoidance of any actions which could lead to a change in the demographic, social and also cultural character in the territories occupied by Armenia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/259142.html>).

Bahar Muradova, the head of the Azerbaijani delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, says that the Minsk Group report on the occupied territories must become the occasion for the international community to bring pressure to bear on Yerevan to change its policies (<http://news.day.az/politics/259288.html>).

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad tells visiting Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Elchin Efendiyev that "the ties between Iran and Azerbaijan are fraternal" and that "not a single factor can violate them" (<http://news.day.az/politics/259246.html>).

Robert Bradke, the US co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, says that the peoples of the South Caucasus deserve "a better, more stable and more well-off situation" than they currently enjoy (<http://news.day.az/politics/259347.html>).

Aydin Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the Armenians living today in Nagorno-Karabakh are in fact prisoners" of Armenian policies (<http://news.day.az/politics/259188.html>).

Sabir Rustamkhanly, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "Armenians are afraid of disappearing as a nation" (<http://news.day.az/politics/258397.html>).

26 March

Azerbaijani parliamentarians Asim Mollazade, Rasim Musabayov and Jeyhun Osmanly take part in a seminar organized by the Azerbaijani diaspora in the US Congress on the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/258987.html>).

The Russian foreign ministry says that a planned meeting of the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia has been postponed because of scheduling difficulties (<http://news.day.az/politics/258923.html>).

25 March

Aydyn Mirzazade, a Milli Majlis deputy, says that "the OSCE Minsk Group report shows that the idea of forcibly uniting Azerbaijani territories to Armenia has suffered a complete defeat" (<http://news.day.az/politics/258896.html>).

Latif Huseynov is confirmed for a second term as a member of the Consultative Commission of the UN Human Rights Committee (<http://news.day.az/politics/258914.html>).

The OSCE Minsk Group report on the occupied territories is released (<http://news.day.az/politics/258817.html>).

24 March

Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations in New York, sends a letter on the killing of a nine-year-old Azerbaijani by an Armenian sniper to the member states of the UN (<http://news.day.az/politics/258735.html>).

The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs present their report on the occupied territories to the OSCE Secretary General in Vienna (<http://news.day.az/politics/258798.html>).

Aleksandr Lukashovich, a Russian foreign ministry official, says that "Russia sees the striving of the sides of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict toward dialogue" and hopes that "in the future incidents [on the ceasefire line] will not happen" (<http://news.day.az/politics/258786.html>).

23 March

Ziyafat Askarov, the head of the Azerbaijan delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, says that relations between Azerbaijan and NATO are "developing dynamically" (<http://news.day.az/politics/258673.html>).

22 March

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov tells his UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan that "Azerbaijan devotes particular attention to its relations with Arab countries" (<http://news.day.az/politics/258591.html>), and the two agree to expand cooperation in the struggle against human trafficking (<http://news.day.az/politics/258579.html>).

Azerbaijani officials and experts participate in a meeting at the Polish Senate on the construction of the Brody-Plotsk oil pipeline (<http://news.day.az/economy/258609.html>).

21 March

Agasalim Shukurov, Azerbaijani ambassador to Libya, says that his staff may leave Tripoli at the first opportunity (<http://news.day.az/politics/258549.html>).

Elin Suleymanov, Azerbaijani consul general in Los Angeles, speaks on the history of tolerance in Azerbaijan at the University Synagogue in that US city (<http://news.day.az/politics/258535.html>).

Fazil Mustafa, a member of the Milli Majlis human rights committee, says that the international community recognizes that an Armenian sniper was responsible for the death of an Azerbaijani child (<http://news.day.az/politics/258319.html>).

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, speaking in Azerbaijani, greets the Azerbaijani community of his country on the occasion of the Novruz holiday (<http://news.day.az/politics/258550.html>).

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sends a message of greetings to Azerbaijanis and all other peoples who mark the Novruz holiday (<http://news.day.az/politics/258524.html>).

Azerbaijani Days are marked at the World Bank (<http://news.day.az/economy/258528.html>).

19 March

President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva lead the nation in the celebration of the Novruz holiday (<http://news.day.az/politics/258443.html>).

President Ilham Aliyev says that Nagorno-Karabakh will never be offered independence (<http://news.day.az/politics/258482.html>).

Yagub Eyyubov, the first vice prime minister of Azerbaijan, says that Baku "values the role of Russia in the peace process concerning Nagorno-Karabakh" (<http://news.day.az/politics/258393.html>).

18 March

The Foreign Ministry warns Azerbaijanis against visiting Japan in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami there (<http://news.day.az/politics/258241.html>).

Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev, Azerbaijan's permanent representative to the United Nations, visits Suriname where he is received by Surinamese Foreign Minister Winston Lackin (<http://news.day.az/politics/258363.html>).

Ramiz Rzayev, the chairman of the Azerbaijani Supreme Court, receives Moroccan Justice Minister Mohammed Nasiri (<http://news.day.az/politics/258322.html>).

Kamil Khasiyev, Azerbaijan's incoming ambassador to Croatia, presents his credentials to the president of that country Ivo Josipović (<http://news.day.az/politics/258237.html>).

Allahshukur Pashazade, the sheikh ul-Islam and head of the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus, visits the North Caucasus to discuss religious conditions there (<http://news.day.az/politics/258251.html>).

Audronius Azubalis, the Lithuanian foreign minister and OSCE chairman-in-office, proposes that the Armenians "unilaterally withdraw snipers" from the ceasefire line (<http://news.day.az/politics/258267.html>).

Audronius Azubalis, the Lithuanian foreign minister and OSCE chairman-in-office, says he is against "the preservation of the status quo of the Karabakh conflict" (<http://news.day.az/politics/258244.html>).

Hulusi Kilic, Turkey's ambassador to Baku, says that Ankara "supports the anti-corruption reforms in Azerbaijan" (<http://news.day.az/politics/258242.html>).

Matthew Bryza, US ambassador to Baku, says that the United States has already done "a great deal" for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (<http://news.day.az/politics/258336.html>).

The OSCE Minsk Group calls on the sides of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to use "the positive impulse" of the meeting of the presidents of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia in Sochi (<http://news.day.az/politics/258199.html>).

James Appathurai, NATO special representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, says he "believes in a lively dialogue with Azerbaijan and plans to discuss in Baku issues of mutual interest" (<http://news.day.az/politics/258300.html>).

17 March

Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov receives Zoran Toner of the European Parliament (<http://news.day.az/politics/258186.html>).

The Foreign Ministry says that it has informed the International Civil Aviation Organization that Azerbaijan cannot guarantee at the present time the security of flights over the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/258130.html>).

The Azerbaijan government confirms the rules for agreements concerning branches of international NGOs operating in Azerbaijan (<http://news.day.az/politics/258064.html>).

Defense Industry Minister Yaver Jamalov receives Ukrainian Defense Minister Mikhail Yezhel to discuss cooperation (<http://news.day.az/politics/258177.html>).

Justice Minister Fikrat Mammadov receives Aleksandr Reymer, the director of Russia's Federal Penal System (<http://news.day.az/society/258188.html>).

Ali Hasanov, the head of the social-political department of the Presidential Administration, calls "amoral" Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan's statement about the OSCE Minsk Group report on the occupied territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/258144.html>).

Elmira Suleymanova, Azerbaijan's ombudsman, receives Natalie Nozadze of Amnesty International (<http://news.day.az/politics/258187.html>).

Shahin Sailov, the secretary of the State Committee on Prisoners, Hostages and MIAs, says that three soldiers of the Armenian army who at their own desire crossed over to the Azerbaijani side have been sent to third countries rather than returned to Armenia (<http://news.day.az/politics/258059.html>).

Azerbaijan and Armenia exchange prisoners and civilians (<http://news.day.az/politics/258107.html>).

The International Relations Committee of the European Parliament again fails to reach agreement concerning the possibility of future European Union membership for Eastern Partnership countries (<http://news.day.az/politics/258032.html>).

The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group discuss incidents on the ceasefire line during visits to Yerevan, Khankandi and Baku (<http://news.day.az/politics/258014.html>).

16 March

President Ilham Aliyev receives Ukrainian Defense Minister Mikhail Yezhel (<http://news.day.az/politics/257958.html>).

Defense Minister Safar Abiyev criticizes the OSCE Minsk Group for failing to make progress to end the occupation of Azerbaijani territories (<http://news.day.az/politics/257979.html>).

Ilgar Mukhtarov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Mexico, discusses energy issues with Mexican Energy Minister Jose Antonio Meade (<http://news.day.az/economy/257868.html>).

Fuad Alaskarov, the head of the law enforcement organs department of the Presidential Administration, says that Baku is working to develop new legislation of migration (<http://news.day.az/politics/257948.html>).

Azerbaijan has agreed to hand over to Armenia one civilian, the Baku office of the International Committee of the Red Cross says (<http://news.day.az/politics/257855.html>).

The Azerbaijani diaspora in France stages a protest at the Council of Europe over the killing of an Azerbaijani child by an Armenian sniper (<http://news.day.az/politics/257986.html>).

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says that resolution of the Karabakh conflict "will have an impact on the normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations" (<http://news.day.az/politics/257892.html>).

José Manuel Barroso, the president of the European Commission, says that "the preservation of the status quo is not an acceptable variant of the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which must be resolved by peaceful means on the basis of the principles of the non-use of force, territorial integrity, and the right of peoples to self-determination" (<http://news.day.az/politics/257837.html>).

The US Congress says that American assistance to Azerbaijan is intended to promote regional security, democratic institutions and economic growth (<http://news.day.az/politics/257848.html>).

Murat Ozkan, a deputy of Turkey's Grand National Assembly, says that "the International Court should judge the president of Armenia" (<http://news.day.az/politics/257739.html>).

The municipality of Tarsus in Turkey's Mersin province opens a new bridge named in honor of former Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev (<http://news.day.az/politics/257924.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.