

THE AZERBAIJANI PERSPECTIVE:

News from the Heart of the Silk Road

June 22, 2009 – Los Angeles, California

Baku Hosts Annual Oil and Gas Show

On June 2, the 16th International Caspian Oil and Gas Exhibition and Conference Incorporating Refining and Petrochemicals opened in Baku. Speaking at the conference President Ilham Aliyev noted that as the result of the strategic decisions made by the national leadership in the 1990's, Azerbaijan has provided for its national energy security by developing multiple export routes and stands as the key for Europe's "South Energy Corridor."

President Aliyev further stressed that growth of the energy sector is an instrument to promote diversification of the economy and development of human capital. In the first quarter of 2009, in spite of the global economic downturn, the economy grew by 4.9%, while the non-energy sector grew by 13.7%. Mr. Aliyev also emphasized the internationally-recognized exemplary role of Azerbaijan's State Oil Fund in promoting transparency.

The U.S. Special Envoy on Caspian Energy Richard Morningstar presented a letter from U.S. President Barack Obama. The letter described Azerbaijan as "an important and reliable supplier of energy to world markets" and an example of energy development resulting in "rapid progress and access to the best technology." President Obama further stated his support for Mr. Aliyev's efforts to "diversify regional supplies, which will benefit your country and your neighbors alike" and "increase regional prosperity and cooperation as well as global energy security, while also offering an invaluable opportunity to address the needs and aspirations of all Azerbaijani citizens."

In other news:

*Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov visited Japan, where he held a series of high-level meetings to discuss Azerbaijan role along the East-West corridor.

*FM Mammadyarov expressed his surprise at the statements by some Iranian officials in connection with the upcoming visit of Israel's President Shimon Peres to Azerbaijan. Mr. Mammadyarov said that Azerbaijani-Iranian relations should be based on non-interference as Azerbaijan does not comment on Tehran's close ties with Armenia, which continues to occupy Azerbaijani territories.

*MP Ganira Pashayeva presented a donation of EURO 40,000 to the Catholic Cathedral in Strasbourg, France, for renovation of the church on behalf of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. As part of its efforts to promote inter-cultural dialogue, the Foundation (under the leadership of the First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva) also participates in the renovation of the Versailles Palace in Paris.

*Ilgar Mukhtarov and Farid Shafiyev were appointed Azerbaijan's ambassadors to Mexico and Canada, respectively.

*The US-Azeris Network announced signing of the first strategic cooperation agreement with an Asian American group, the Japanese Americans Citizens League.

*Consul General Elin Suleymanov spoke at the Monterey Institute for International Studies on June 2, while Vice Consul Elshan Baloghlanov addressed the 4th Silk Road Conference in Chicago on June 8.