

**Azərbaycan Respublikasının
Amerika Birləşmiş
Ştatlarındakı Səfirliyi**



**Embassy of the Republic
of Azerbaijan
to the United States of America**

2741 34th Street, NW, Washington DC, 20008 - tel.: (202) 3373500 Fax: (202) 3375911

Washington DC, April 6, 2007

Contact: Ramil Huseynli

U.S delegation visits Azerbaijan

On April 3, President I. Aliyev received a delegation from the U.S. led by Congressman Pete Hoekstra. The President noted the successful development of bilateral relations in all fields, stressing the necessity of expansion of inter-parliamentary ties. He noted further that the current visit of the U.S. delegation is of great importance from the standpoint of further expansion of Azerbaijan-US relations.

Congressman P. Hoekstra said that the visit would certainly serve to strengthen the U.S.-Azerbaijan inter-parliamentary ties.

The same day, the Congressman also met with the Speaker of the Parliament (Milli Maclis) Ogtay Asadov. The Speaker said the U.S. delegation's visit to Azerbaijan will contribute to the development of mutual relations between the Azerbaijani Parliament and the U.S. Congress. Mr. O. Asadov informed the guests of Azerbaijan's close cooperation with the U.S. government on the global fight against terrorism.

“Today U.S companies are closely participating in the exploitation of Caspian hydrocarbon resources. We consider that our strategic cooperation; implementation of huge projects serve to ensure security in the region”, Mr. Asadov underlined.

Speaking of Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Speaker hoped that as the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair, the U.S. will do its best for the peaceful settlement of this issue.

Congressman Hoekstra stressed the efficiency of the development of an inter-parliamentary exchange, and said that exchange of experience, information and mutual visits of delegations between legislative bodies are of great importance.

President Aliyev meets UN delegation

On April 2, President I. Aliyev received a delegation of the United Nations (UN) led by the Secretary General's Special Representative for Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Walter Kalin. The President stressed that as a result of Armenia's aggression and policy of ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijan, over one million people have been ousted from their homes and have been living in terrible conditions for years. Millions of dollars had been spent on improvement of living conditions of refugees and internally displaced persons, including construction of housing and infrastructure he said, adding that this year will mark the elimination of the last tent camp in the country. However, the President stressed the temporary character of those measures and expressed confidence that refugees and internally displaced persons would return to their homes soon.

Informing the President on his activity as the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, the UN envoy said that a report on the results of his mission will be made to the UN Human Rights Council. Mr. Kalin praised the Azerbaijan government's work towards improvement of living conditions of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Baku hosts international conference on religious policy in Azerbaijan

On April 3-4, the international conference “Heydar Aliyev and Religious Policy in Azerbaijan: Realities and Prospects” organized by the State Committee of Azerbaijan Republic for the Work with Religious Associations (SCWRA) was held in Baku. Addressing the conference, SCWRA Chairman Hidayat Orujov said that conducting such a conference with the participation of the representatives from 20 countries will play an important role in development of the inter-religious relations and dialogues both in Azerbaijan and in the region as a whole.

Ali Hasanov, Head of the Socio-Political Department of the Presidential Administration read out the letter of congratulation from President Ilham Aliyev to the conference participants. Allahshukur Pashazade, Chairman of the Clerical Office of Caucasus Moslems said that conference is aimed to study the realities of Azerbaijan and promote them. He stated: “Azerbaijan is the place of unification of religions and civilizations. The tolerance formed in Azerbaijan over the ages has turned into the moral value of the nation...”

The resolution adopted during the second day of the conference says that religious tolerance and free activity of persons representing different sects in Azerbaijan is ensured irrespective of their religious believes. The resolution stressed that the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan territories as negative factor for religious tolerance in Azerbaijan. It also condemned the activity of Armenian occupants to establish a mono-ethnic entity, destroying historical-religious monuments and falsifying history.

Azerbaijan Society of America appeals US Congress Subcommittee

On April 4, Ms. Tomris Azeri, President of the Azerbaijani Society of America submitted a written testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations. The appeal touches upon U.S. Administration's assistance for Azerbaijan, cooperation in the field of energy and security issues, Azerbaijan's regional cooperation and multi-national openness, and occupation of Azerbaijan's territories by Armenia.

Supporting the Administration's past assistance as well as the current FY 2008 request for assistance for Azerbaijan the appeal indicates that “current U.S. assistance levels do not accurately reflect the level of relationship and opportunity offered by Azerbaijan to the United States...” Regarding cooperation on energy and security sphere Ms. Tomris Azeri mentioned that Azerbaijan has been a pioneer in opening the Caspian Sea to international cooperation and oil gas exploration. She also pointed out a Memorandum of Understanding signed between Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov to engage in high level dialogue on energy security in the Caspian Region. “...Azerbaijan's support, its concrete actions, its close cooperation with American law-enforcement, as well as its long-standing pro-western policies and principled position on preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, has won well-deserved recognition and appreciation from the U.S. Government,” Ms. Tomris Azeri says in her testimony.

Touching upon Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijan, she mentioned the double standard the U.S Administration maintain towards Azerbaijan, saying that the clearest example of such double standards since 1992 has been Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act which prohibits direct assistance to Azerbaijan. Each year Section 907 is waived by the President of the United States, but as Ms. Tomris Azeri points out, there is no substitute to repeal by the U.S. Congress.