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Members of Congress congratulate Azerbaijan as it prepares to celebrate its 15th anniversary of independence on October 18.

On September 27, 28 and 29 members of Congress Eddie Bernice Johnson, Robert Wexler and Solomon P. Ortiz issued separate statements for the Congressional Record recognizing the 15th anniversary of Azerbaijan's independence on October 18. "Azerbaijan is one of the United States' leading allies on the war against terrorism, with the distinction of being among the first to offer our nation unconditional support; providing airspace and airport use for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. And, Azerbaijan was also the first Muslim nation to send troops to Iraq..." Solomon P. Ortiz's statement indicates.

President receives delegation of EU Troika

On October 3, President Ilham Aliyev received a delegation of the European Union Troika. The President described the visit as very important, adding it marks a new phase in the development of bilateral cooperation. President I. Aliyev stressed the high level of relations between Azerbaijan and the EU, stating "we intend to develop our cooperation in different directions." The President stated further, "the neighborhood policy will bring peace and prosperity to the whole region. I believe the discussions will help the development of ties between the European Union and South Caucasus."

Finland's Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja said the main purpose of their visit was to discuss the Action Plan within the European Neighborhood Policy. Minister Tuomioja described the Baku visit as fruitful, saying he believes the neighborhood policy will contribute to the settlement of conflicts in the region.

Foreign Minister meets delegation of EU Troika

On October 3, Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov met with a delegation of the European Union Troika. At the press conference following the meeting, Minister Mammadyarov said Azerbaijan and the EU have already ended talks on the Action Plan within the European Neighborhood Policy.

The Minister noted the document would be adopted at the EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council's meeting in the Belgian capital, Brussels, on November 14.

The Minister said his meeting with the EU Troika delegation included the discussions issues of concern regarding the Action Plan, adding this document will deepen the Azerbaijan-EU ties.

Finland's Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja, in his turn, said the Action Plan will enhance the cooperation between the European Union and Azerbaijan.

European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy, Mrs. Benita Ferrero-Waldner, stressed the importance of the document to Azerbaijan in terms of integration into the European Union.

The same day, the EU Troika delegation gave a press conference in the Park Inn Azerbaijan hotel to sum up their visit. Finland's Foreign Minister said the main goal of the visit to the South Caucasus was to end the Action Plan talks with the region's countries.

On the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict Minister Tuomioja said it is the OSCE Minsk Group which is responsible for settlement of this dispute, adding "we support their activity."

President meets delegation of US-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce

On October 3, President Ilham Aliyev met with a delegation led by the United States Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce (USACC) Co-chair, James A. Baker.

The President expressed consent with the high organizational level of XII International Telecommunications and Information Technologies Exhibition-Conference in Baku. Noting that Azerbaijan pays great attention to the development of information technologies field, the President said it is a new stage for the country. He expressed confidence that Azerbaijan would achieve further successes in development of telecommunications and information technologies.

Expressing gratitude to the President for assistance rendered to the Organization he represents, James Baker underlined the importance of the conference in Baku. He, in particular, noted the involvement of many American companies to the conference.

President receives Director of the UN Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination

On October 2, President Ilham Aliyev received the Director of the Office for Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Support and Coordination, Sarbuland Khan.

Expressing gratitude to the President for receiving him, the guest conveyed greetings from the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan: "The Secretary General appraises the development of Azerbaijan in the information and telecommunication field."

"One of the goals of the structure is to conduct dialogue among the countries in the field I am engaged in," Director Khan said. "Mr. President, Azerbaijan, under your active and farsighted policy, has achieved development in the preparation of national information and communications technologies strategy," he stressed.

President Aliyev thanked the Director for greetings from the UN Secretary General and requested to convey his greetings in return to Mr. Kofi Annan.

President Aliyev emphasized that information and communications technologies have a special role in the development of not only Azerbaijan, but also the world's future. "Azerbaijan attaches great importance to this field and concrete projects with information and communications technologies exist," stated President Aliyev who further stressed that, "we wish Azerbaijan to be one of the leading countries in this field."

President I. Aliyev meets Turkish delegation

On October 2, President I. Aliyev received a Turkish delegation led by the Minister of Communications and Transport, Binali Yildirim.

President I. Aliyev said Azerbaijan-Turkish relations are successfully developing in various fields including communications and information technologies; pointing out the importance of the 12th Azerbaijan International Telecommunications and Information Technologies Exhibition and Conference which were to start in Baku on October 3.

The President also noted the realization of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project would play an important role in enhancement of both bilateral and regional cooperation, and expressed his country's readiness to fund the construction of such a significant transport line.

The Turkish Minister said he was pleased to witness the all-round and steady development of cooperation between the two countries. He pointed out the importance of the International Telecommunications and Information Technologies Exhibition and Conference to be held in Baku.

The Minister also noted that the particular attention Azerbaijan pays to the implementation of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project is highly appreciated in Turkey.