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U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State opens first “American Corner” in Azerbaijan

On February 5, the opening ceremony for the “American Corner” took place at the central library of Khachmaz, a city in northern Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani Minister of Culture and Tourism Abulfaz Qarayev, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Colleen Graffy and US Ambassador to Azerbaijan Anna Derse participated in the opening ceremony.

Ambassador Derse noted that following this event, “American Corner” will also be opened in other city and districts of the country - Ganca, Lankaran, Salyan and Kurdamir.

U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Coleen Graffy said that the opening of an “American Corner” in different parts of the country is a clear example of cooperation between the two countries in the cultural field. According to C. Graffy, the implementation of relevant projects brings Azerbaijani and US people closer.

Ms. Graffy traveled to the “Red Sloboda” settlement in Guba district to meet members of the Jewish community. She also visited the local synagogue.

Deputy Assistant of US Secretary of State: "Azerbaijan is a splendid example of tolerance"

"I am deeply impressed by the level of tolerance between ethnic and religious groups in Azerbaijan. It is a splendid example of tolerance", Colleen Graffy, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs U.S. Department of State said at the meeting in State Management Academy at Azerbaijani President's Office.

“Changes in a country depend on the way of benefiting from oil revenues. Much depends on whether these revenues are used by a group of people to enrich themselves, or used for development of education, health sector, society, infrastructure, construction of parks, and entertainment centers,” she underlined.

Ms. Graffy also touched upon the problems regarding Iran. "The problem is related to confidence. The international community calls on Iran to give up nuclear research. We have invited Iranian authorities to cooperate with the international community on this issue," she said.

Commenting on the alleged Armenian genocide, the Deputy Assistant Secretary stated that genocide problems are discussed all over the world, not only in Armenia. "These problems should be investigated by historians, not by politicians. These are very painful issues. The truth should be revealed, only then the society will develop, the injuries will recover," Ms. Graffy noted.

Commenting on the U.S. stance on financing of the Baku-Tbilisi-Akhalkalaki-Kars project, the Deputy Assistant Secretary noted that official Washington does not finance every project. "The Baku-Tbilisi-Akhalkalaki-Kars is one of these projects. But, it should not be understood that the US is not going to finance other projects in Azerbaijan," she said. (APA)

President Ilham Aliyev meets U.S. Assistant Secretary of State

On February 6, President Aliyev received a U.S. delegation led by Daniel Sullivan, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Business Affairs, and co-Chair of the U.S.-Azerbaijan Economic Partnership Commission.

The main goal of the visit is to sign an intergovernmental agreement to transform the working group on the U.S.-Azerbaijan economic partnership into the Economic Partnership Commission Mr. Sullivan said. He pointed out the

importance of launching such a commission while economic cooperation between the two countries has been considerably enhanced, especially since President Aliyev's visit to the United States.

President Aliyev stressed the importance of this visit for further development of the U.S.-Azerbaijan bilateral relations. He pointed out the necessity to develop economic cooperation not only in oil but also in non-oil sectors.

Mr. Sullivan noted his country is interested in active cooperation with Azerbaijan in non-oil sectors as well, adding the majority of his delegation members represent non-energy sectors of the United States. He described the fact that his delegation includes high-level representatives of the U.S. government as an indication of the importance his country attaches to further enhancement of economic cooperation with Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey sign an agreement on railway link

On February 7 in Tbilisi, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed an agreement to build a railroad link that will connect these three countries and open up new opportunities for interregional trade.

The railway project, which will link Baku, Tbilisi and the Turkish city of Kars, is estimated to cost 420 million U.S. dollars and expected to be completed by 2010.