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Baku hosts OIC conference on the Role of Media in the Development of Tolerance and Mutual Understanding

On April 26-28, an international conference on the Role of Media in the Development of Tolerance and Mutual Understanding organized by Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) was held in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Ali Hasanov, head of the socio-political department of the President's Office read President Ilham Aliyev's letter to the conference participants. In his letter, the President welcomed such a conference in Azerbaijan as the most important event, stressing that Azerbaijan is recognized as a splendid example of tolerance in the world. He also stressed the occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenian Armed Forces and its negative impact on the development of the country.

Addressing the conference, Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov called Azerbaijan the most suitable place for holding the conference. Terrorism and Islam should not be synonyms in Europe, and Muslim countries should destroy such ideas. The Minister stated that Azerbaijan's policy on national minorities is successful. He stressed that over 250.000 Azerbaijanis in Armenia were subject to ethnic cleansing while many Armenians enjoy equal rights in Azerbaijan.

“We support respect of any religion and any values. Azerbaijan has historically been a source of tolerance in the region and the country's leadership pursues a policy of tolerance with respect to other religions and national minorities,” the Minister stated. Minister Mammadyarov stressed the importance of tolerance and dialogue among civilizations. “Otherwise, peace is impossible in the region. If Islamic countries succeed in establishing dialogue with Europe, we will be able to overcome prejudice,” he noted.

Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, OIC Secretary General, in his presentation, said that there are many religious groups in Azerbaijan, and called tolerance and understanding the important factor for living together peacefully. The Secretary General said that Islam is deliberately interpreted as a religion of extremism in the West with the purpose of arousing fury against it. Mr. Ihsanoglu noted that the media can play a major role in removing such a misconception. He also said that a special human rights organization will be set up in the framework of the OIC. “We should maintain the real essence of Islam,” he added.

Co-chair of the conference, former President of Romania Ion Iliescu addressing the conference said that tolerance and understanding will play a great role in the society. The other co-chair of the conference, ISESCO Director General Dr. Abdulaziz Othamn Altwaijri called tolerance the best path against extremism.

Subsequently, the participants watched a video taped speech by Secretary General of Council of Europe Terry Davis. Mr. Davis spoke about the diversity of cultures and the importance of dialogue for which the media is responsible. The Secretary General committed that the freedom of expression is one of the main principles of the democracy and noted that journalists' role is great in achieving this.

The topic of education was also an important part of the conference, with a separate panel dedicated to the issues of proper training both for the journalists and general public.

During the last day of the conference, participants visited Guba and Lankaran districts of Azerbaijan.

President Ilham Aliyev meets OIC Secretary-General

On April 26, President Aliyev received Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Noting that he attended the OIC conference on the Role of Media in the Development of Tolerance and Mutual Understanding in Baku, E.Ihsanoglu underlined the importance of holding this event in Azerbaijan. He also mentioned that the relations between the OIC and Azerbaijan are successfully developing. President Ilham Aliyev expressed confidence in future expansion of the relations between Azerbaijan and the OIC.

President Aliyev meets UN Special Rapportur

On April 26, President Ilham Aliyev received Ambeyi Ligabo, Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression. According to President's press service Ambeyi Ligabo expressed his gratitude for the invitation to the OIC conference on the Role of Media in the Development of Tolerance and Mutual Understanding in Baku and stressed the importance of the event. Azerbaijan's current activities for ensuring freedom of opinion and expression and cooperation with the UN in the field were discussed.

Ion Iliescu - Karabakh conflict should be resolved in the framework of international law

On April 26, Former President of Romania Ion Iliescu, who is participating in the International Conference on the Role of Mass Media in Development of Tolerance and Mutual Understanding in Baku gave a press conference at the international press center.

Mr. Iliescu, who is now honorary Chairman of Romanian Social Democrat Party, said independent and democratic Azerbaijan today is enjoying its deserving position in the international arena. The Former Romanian leader praised the Azerbaijani government's policy towards integration into the world community.

Ion Iliescu noted the fact that this conference is being held in Baku, is evidence of Azerbaijan's growing international prestige. Speaking on energy cooperation between Romania and Azerbaijan, Mr. Iliescu said his country is interested in participating in energy projects in this country. "Today, we have ideas concerning the NABUCCO project, to prolong the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline to Romania, Hungary and Austria".

On the longstanding conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh, the former Romanian President said his country has always supported peaceful settlement of the conflict. He said the international community should help to involve other countries in resolving such conflicts. "The only way of solving these issues in Europe is democratic methods. Such difficult issues should be solved in the framework of international legislation," he underscored.

Loans spent on Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan project to be repaid by 2015

The loans used for construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline project will be repaid between 2013-15. The BTC Co Commercial Director David Wolfe said the project was 60% financed through the loans from international financial organizations, APA reports. "The pipeline will become Azerbaijan property in 2026," he added.