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### **President Bush reaffirms US support to territorial integrity of Azerbaijan**

On December 8, President George Bush reaffirmed his support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan while receiving credentials from newly appointed Ambassador Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary of Azerbaijan Yashar Aliyev at the White House.

Presenting credentials to President Bush, Ambassador Y. Aliyev said Azerbaijan has always felt U.S. support for its efforts to build and strengthen a sovereign state. He added that Azerbaijan will continue to follow the path of political, economic and social reforms. The Ambassador expressed confidence that as a super power and co-chair of the OSCE Minsk group, the United State will continue its efforts to achieve fair and long-lasting solution to the Armenia-Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

“... Today, Azerbaijan is a model for other natural resource-rich nations with its establishment of the National Oil Fund to ensure transparency and accounting of the proceedings accruing from the Baku Tbilisi Ceyhan pipeline. Your nation already plays a key role as an energy supplier and the transit country in the energy corridor to Europe that will grow in the next few years. The United State supports Azerbaijan's economic and political reforms which help to guarantee long-term security and stability...”, President Bush said. He also noted that, “the United States supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. As one of the three Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, along with Russia and France, we will continue to work with your leaders to try to resolve the conflict quickly and peacefully...”

### **President Ilham Aliyev Receives PACE Delegation**

On December 11, President I. Aliyev received a delegation comprised of the chairman of PACE Group of the European People's Party Luc Van Den Brande, Deputy Chairman of the European Democratic Group David Wilshire and the Political Affairs Committee member Steff Goris.

The President expressed his consent for conducting the Political Affairs Committee's meeting in Baku. He said that this meeting is of great importance because it creates a chance for close familiarization of the Committee with the country and helps get direct information.

The Head of Group of the European People's Party Luc Van Den Brande noted that holding of the meeting in Baku creates good opportunities to become familiar with the ongoing processes in Azerbaijan and its geo-strategic position.

During the meeting, political, economic, democratic reforms in the country and the current stage of the relations between Azerbaijan and PACE were touched upon.

### **US and International organizations disapprove Nagorno-Karabakh's referendum**

On December 10, a referendum was held in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan where a new constitution was approved. The United States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union and Council of Europe did not recognize the referendum's results.

US State Department: “The United States supports the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. We do not recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as an independent country. We regret that the authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh plan to conduct a referendum on a draft constitution that affirms the region's self-proclaimed independence...”

The European Union said it was “aware that a 'constitutional referendum' has taken place,” but reiterated that only a negotiated settlement between Azerbaijan and ethnic Armenians who control the region can bring a lasting solution. “The EU recalls that it does not recognize the independence of Nagorno-Karabakh. It recognizes neither the 'referendum' nor its outcome,” the EU said in a statement.

The position of Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis: “This Sunday's vote organized by 'de facto' authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh cannot have any legal validity. It will not be recognized by the international community and is therefore of no consequence. A lasting solution for Nagorno-Karabakh can only come out of the political process facilitated by the Minsk Group...”

Iran reacted to the referendum in Nagorno-Karabakh region, saying it respects Azerbaijan's territorial integrity while supporting a lasting and fair peace in the region.

Latvia also disapproved Nagorno-Karabakh's referendum.

### **President Ilham Aliyev receives EU Special Representative for South Caucasus**

On December 15, President I. Aliyev met with European Union Special Representative for South Caucasus Peter Semneby.

The President characterized the existing relations between Azerbaijan and the European Union as successfully developing both in terms of the organization's new neighborhood policy and energy cooperation. Recalling his recent visit to Brussels, President I. Aliyev said it played a special role in deepening of Azerbaijan-EU cooperation. He expressed confidence in further cementing of his country's relations with the organization.

P. Semneby said he was pleased with visiting Azerbaijan and expressed satisfaction with the current stage of the country's relations with the European Union. He also expressed confidence that Azerbaijan-EU cooperation will be further expanded.