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President Bush Expresses Wishes for Continued Cooperation between the U.S. and Azerbaijan

President Bush offered his congratulations to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on Azerbaijan's Independence Day. In a letter, President Bush expressed continued support from the U.S. to strengthen ties between the two countries as Azerbaijan continues to make strides in developing its young democracy and diversifying its economy. An excerpt from the letter:

"Please accept my congratulations and those of the American people as Azerbaijan celebrates its Independence Day on October 18. The United States continues to support your country's efforts to build a democratic, prosperous and peaceful future for the Azerbaijani people. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with Azerbaijan and to strengthening the friendship between our nations. Best wishes to you and the people of Azerbaijan in the coming year."

U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal Awarded to Azerbaijani Peacekeeper

The Commander of the Multinational Force in Iraq awarded the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal to Captain Nasimi Javadov, Commander of the Azerbaijani peacekeeping company. Javadov becomes the second Azerbaijani military officer after Javid Abbasov to receive the award. The number of Azerbaijani peacekeepers in Iraq is now 150 but the number is expected to double. Azerbaijani peacekeepers are also serving in Afghanistan and Kosovo.

EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council Holds 8th Meeting

On October 16, the eighth meeting of the European Union-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council was held in Luxembourg. The meeting was co-chaired by Deputy Foreign Minister Mahmud Mammadgulyev on behalf of Azerbaijan and Minister Manuel Lobo Antunes, Portugal's Minister of Europe, representing the European Union. The EU delegation also included the European Commission's Acting Director for Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia, Gunnar Wiegand, and EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus, Peter Semneby.

This gathering is the first high level meeting since the EU signed the Action Plan for Azerbaijan within the Neighborhood policy. It is also the first meeting of this kind since Azerbaijan and the EU signed a memorandum of understanding initiating a strategic partnership in the energy sector.

At the meeting many important topics were discussed. Some examples include Azerbaijan's progress in implementing the Action Plan, the country's political and economic reforms, as well as recent developments in the South Caucasus. Furthermore, issues of mutual interest, including energy, transportation, democratization and human rights were discussed. The parties stressed the necessity to further intensify political cooperation. The Azerbaijani delegation noted the importance of an urgent resolution to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

President Ilham Aliyev Receives Presidents of FIFA and UEFA

On October 17, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev hosted Joseph Blatter, president of FIFA (International Federation of Association Football) and Michel Platini, president of UEFA (Union of European Football Associations). Expressing satisfaction with his visits, Mr. Blatter stated that sports like soccer are rapidly developing in Azerbaijan. He expressed his gratitude to the Azerbaijan government for making sports a priority.

Azerbaijan continues to strengthen its presence in the international sports arena. President Aliyev attributed this to the economic progress of the country and noted that this visit is of great importance for promotion of sport in the country. For their contribution to the development of football in the world, President Aliyev presented to Mr. Blatter an honorary diploma and to Mr. Platini the “Shohret” (Glory) Order. In turn, Mr. Blatter presented to President Aliyev FIFA's memorial emblem.

Third Forum of Young Leaders from CIS and Baltic Nations Held in Baku

On October 12, the third forum of Young Leaders from the CIS and Baltic nations was held at the Park Inn Hotel in Baku. The aim of the forum organized by the Azerbaijan's Ministry of Youth and Sport was to establish dialogue between young leaders from CIS and Baltic countries, in addition to providing a forum for discussing new approaches to problems.

The forum gathered 54 delegates from CIS and Baltic nations. In the Forum's opening the, assistant to the chief of the Presidential Administration, Elnur Aslanov, stressed the need for a dialogue of young people from post-Soviet countries. The Minister of Sport and Youth, Azad Rahimov, stressed the important symbolism of the event being held in Azerbaijan in the Year of Youth.

Next Year Germany will Host the Year of Azerbaijan

On October 15, Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev received a delegation of the Germany-South Caucasus Parliamentary Group at the Bundestag.

Head of the Germany-South Caucasus Parliamentary Group Steffen Reiche said members of his delegation have already been to Baku several times. Reiche expressed satisfaction with the level of Germany-Azerbaijan cooperation. He emphasized the Year of Azerbaijan in Germany will give a huge boost to the development of the two countries' relationships.

President Aliyev characterized political and economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Germany as very successful. “I hope your visit will contribute to boosting cooperation between our countries in various fields and to enhance the Azerbaijan-European Union partnership”, the President noted.

President Aliyev Attends Second Summit of Caspian Sea Littoral States Held in Tehran

On October 16, the second summit of the Caspian Sea littoral states began in Tehran, The summit was attended by Presidents Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation, Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov of Turkmenistan.

The opening address was made by host Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who said quite a number of issues have been agreed upon since the first summit, noting, however, that talks on some important points related to the Caspian legal status are continuing. He also suggested conducting regular meetings among the heads of state and foreign ministries.

After the opening ceremony, the presidents had closed-door talks resulting in signing a 25-point joint Declaration. Afterwards, the presidents of the Caspian littoral states held a joint press conference.

At the suggestion of the Azerbaijani President Aliyev, it was announced that the third summit of the Caspian littoral states will be held in Baku.

President Ilham Aliyev noted the talks had been held in the atmosphere of mutual understanding. He said that all the issues discussed had found their reflection in the Declaration, and expressed Azerbaijan's great interest in the North-South corridor. Other leaders also pointed out the importance of this document stressing the necessity of using the Caspian Sea for security and economic cooperation purposes.

Azeri Parliament Members Side with Turkey, Raise Concerns Over U.S. House Resolution on “Armenian Genocide”

On October 19, Members of the Milli Majlis (Azerbaijani Parliament) raised objections over the resolution from the U. S. House of Representative's Foreign Affairs Committee on the “Armenian genocide”.

Speaker Ogtay Asadov said various measures are undertaken not only at a parliamentary level, but also at a local government level to show solidarity with Turkey. He also said Azerbaijani parliamentarians have met with senators and members of the House of Representative to discuss this issue. Some congressmen, who voted for the resolution under Armenian lobby's influence, have withdrawn their signatures.