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Foreign Minister visits the United States

Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov paid a visit to Washington DC at the invitation of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice, from 20-23 March 2007. During the talks, the Foreign Minister and Secretary of State discussed Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution, regional security issues and promotion of democracy building and economic cooperation.

Azerbaijan and the United States also furthered their cooperation in the energy sector by signing an Energy Memorandum of Understanding that creates a new dialogue on Energy Security and Diversification followed by a policy makers' roundtable on a variety of emerging oil, gas and alternative energy issues co-chaired by Assistant Secretary Daniel Sullivan and Deputy Assistant Secretary Matthew Bryza, and by Foreign Minister Mammadyarov. The dialogue will aim to deepen and broaden already strong cooperation among governments and companies to expand oil and gas production in Azerbaijan for export to global markets. Of particular focus will be the realization of the Turkey-Greece-Italy gas pipeline, and potentially the Nabucco and other pipelines, with Azerbaijani gas, to help Europe bolster its energy security by diversifying its natural gas supplies. The two sides met today for an informal roundtable on these issues to lay the groundwork for a dialogue meeting later this year.

The Foreign Minister conducted a comprehensive and in-depth dialogue on democracy building with Assistant Secretary Lowenkron. They exchanged views on Azerbaijani developments in human rights, civil society building, rule of law, political processes, media freedom, and agreed to meet again in Baku later this year. The Foreign Minister also engaged in an open and productive exchange with democracy and human rights NGOs hosted by Assistant Secretary Lowenkron on March 23.

The Foreign Minister met Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Non-Proliferation John Rood, in advance of upcoming bilateral talks on security in April between Acting Assistant Secretary of the Political Military Bureau Stephen Mull and Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Asimov.

Within his visit to Washington DC, Minister Mammadyarov also held several meetings in Congress. He met with Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), Representative Nita Lowey (D-NY), and Co-chairs of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, Congressmen Solomon Ortiz (D-TX) and Bill Shuster (R-PA). During the meetings, peaceful resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the importance of total repeal of section 907 Freedom Support Act, the importance of the energy projects implemented in the region, economic and social reforms undertaken by the Government and other issues of mutual concern were touched upon.

Minister delivered a speech at the School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University titled, "Azerbaijan's regional and international role". During his speech, the Minister addressed: the development of Azerbaijan's energy resources, the significance of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) main oil pipeline and the fields which oil revenues are being invested, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline project to be inaugurated this summer, the importance of Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project, the development of Azerbaijan's non-oil sector, the government's strong interest in the promotion of Information Technologies, peaceful resolution and negotiation processes of Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, high economic growth observed in the country, and the regional economic leadership of Azerbaijan.