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# BULLETIN

HIGHLIGHT OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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### **I. President Ilham Aliyev attends the International Forum “COP29 and Green Vision for Azerbaijan”**

On April 23, ADA University hosted the international forum themed “COP29 and Green Vision for Azerbaijan”. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev attended the forum and responded to questions from the event participants.

Commenting on the possibility of Azerbaijan's closer cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union, President Ilham Aliyev emphasized a pragmatic approach, indicating that any decision regarding membership in the Eurasian Union would be based on a thorough assessment of economic benefits. President Ilham Aliyev pointed out the country's already robust partnerships with the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union, excluding Armenia, and underscored Azerbaijan's self-sufficient economy, characterized by sustainable growth and minimal foreign debt. President Ilham Aliyev noted that “bilateral ties with members of the Eurasian Union actually, are enough for us,” adding that “if there are additional advantages and we see practical advantages of further integration, of course, we will evaluate that.”

Regarding German-Azerbaijani relations, President Aliyev expressed optimism, highlighting recent interactions and high-level meetings between the two countries' leadership. President Ilham Aliyev noted a surge in economic interest, evidenced by fruitful discussions with the German business community and plans for cooperation and investment. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the significance of stable political relations in fostering economic collaboration, signaling a positive trajectory in bilateral ties.

President Ilham Aliyev's insights underscore Azerbaijan's nuanced approach to regional integration and its commitment to fostering mutually beneficial relations with key partners like Germany. As Azerbaijan continues to navigate its geopolitical landscape, pragmatic diplomacy and

economic cooperation remain central to its strategic agenda.

President Ilham Aliyev underlined the importance of ensuring the success of COP29 in addressing climate change issues. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that hosting COP29 presents an invaluable opportunity for Azerbaijan to showcase its progress and aspirations to the world. Reflecting on recent positive developments, President Ilham Aliyev attributed Azerbaijan's success to a comprehensive and strategic approach based on thoughtful policies and diplomacy. The president underscored the role of the peace process in facilitating Azerbaijan's hosting of COP29, noting that it fostered greater confidence between Azerbaijan and Armenia. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the importance of building mutual confidence, highlighting the significance of not acting against each other on the international stage. President Ilham Aliyev described this as a notable success, demonstrating the potential for constructive engagement and neutrality in international affairs.

President Ilham Aliyev provided a comprehensive overview of Azerbaijan's efforts to initiate and advance the peace process following the 44-Day War, highlighting Azerbaijan's proactive approach in launching peace negotiations and publicly announcing its willingness to engage in dialogue. President Ilham Aliyev outlined the challenges encountered during negotiations. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized Azerbaijan's firm stance on maintaining its sovereignty over the Karabakh region and its refusal to accept any terms that jeopardize its territorial integrity.

Reflecting on recent developments, President Ilham Aliyev noted the resumption of substantive negotiations following Armenia's withdrawal of its insistence on including Karabakh in the agreement. President Ilham Aliyev expressed gratitude to Germany for facilitating diplomatic meetings and highlighted Kazakhstan's proposal to host future talks between Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers.

President Ilham Aliyev clarified that Azerbaijan does not seek mediation but rather a platform for direct negotiations between the two countries. President Ilham Aliyev underscored the importance of both sides demonstrating political will and expressed optimism about the prospect of reaching a historical agreement. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the significance of the ongoing negotiations and the need for meticulous attention to detail in drafting the peace agreement. The President reiterated Azerbaijan's commitment to achieving a lasting resolution to the conflict and highlighted the unprecedented progress made in recent discussions.

President Ilham Aliyev emphasized Azerbaijan's proactive approach to addressing environmental challenges and mitigating the impact of climate change. President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the shrinking of the Caspian Sea as a pressing concern, affecting both the environment and trade connectivity in the region. President Ilham Aliyev underscored Azerbaijan's efforts in environmental protection, citing initiatives such as the transformation of the Black City into the environmentally sustainable White City project and the restoration of Bibiheybat bay.

President Ilham Aliyev outlined Azerbaijan's plans to address water resource management in Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur, including the construction of water storages and canals to optimize water usage and prevent losses. The President discussed the challenges posed by climate change and emphasized the importance of multilateral cooperation in addressing transboundary water issues.

Highlighting Azerbaijan's role as the chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, President Ilham Aliyev underscored the country's commitment to fostering cooperation among nations, particularly in the context of climate action. President Ilham Aliyev stressed the need for a fair and shared responsibility among developed, developing, and underdeveloped countries in tackling climate change.

President Ilham Aliyev also outlined Azerbaijan's initiatives to engage oil and gas-producing countries in climate action, including the establishment of the Troika mechanism with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Brazil. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the importance of synergy, coordination, and predictability in global climate efforts, highlighting Azerbaijan's commitment to contributing to the practical resolution of urgent global issues during its chairmanship of COP29. President Ilham Aliyev reaffirmed Azerbaijan's commitment to leveraging its chairmanship of COP29 not only to showcase the country but also to actively contribute to the practical resolution of pressing global challenges.

President Ilham Aliyev provided a comprehensive overview of Azerbaijan's approach to environmental stewardship, emphasizing the adherence to international environmental standards in petroleum operations since 1994. The head of state praised the environmental consciousness of leading energy companies involved in Azerbaijan's energy sector, highlighting their commitment to environmental protection during operations and infrastructure development.

Addressing concerns about Azerbaijan's chairmanship of COP29 as an oil-producing nation, President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the country's responsible approach to energy development. President Ilham Aliyev also highlighted Azerbaijan's strategic partnership with the European Union (EU) in the energy sector and raised concerns about financing restrictions for fossil fuel projects amid increasing demand for Azerbaijani gas in Europe.

President Ilham Aliyev advocated for a balanced approach to energy transition, acknowledging the continued importance of fossil fuels while actively investing in renewable energy projects. The President outlined Azerbaijan's significant progress in renewable energy development, including the inauguration of solar power plants and plans for future wind and solar projects. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the potential for renewable energy to reduce reliance on natural gas for

electricity generation, allowing for increased gas exports to Europe.

President Ilham Aliyev also discussed the potential for regional energy cooperation, including plans for a green energy cable from the Caspian Sea to Europe and discussions on connecting Central Asian renewable energy projects to European markets through Azerbaijan. The head of state highlighted the role of energy projects in promoting regional cooperation and fostering peace, emphasizing Azerbaijan's commitment to separating energy projects from politics and promoting shared interests among neighboring countries.

President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the significant potential and ongoing development of the Middle Corridor project in Azerbaijan, emphasizing the need for expanded infrastructure to accommodate growing cargo volumes from China and Central Asia. The President outlined plans to increase the capacity of the sea port to 25 million tonnes and 500,000 to 1 million TEUs, alongside efforts to enhance institutional support and digitalization of transportation routes through the application of artificial intelligence in customs administration.

President Ilham Aliyev also underscored the strategic importance of the North-South Transport Corridor for Azerbaijan, noting its geographical advantage as a junction point for major transportation routes. The President discussed ongoing efforts to enhance railroad infrastructure connecting Azerbaijan with Russia and Iran, with plans to handle an expected increase in cargo traffic, particularly from Russia to the Persian Gulf. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the integrated nature of these transportation corridors, which will facilitate the movement of goods from south to west and north to west, ultimately increasing Azerbaijan's geopolitical importance and generating additional financial benefits.

President Ilham Aliyev addressed the issue of the Zangezur corridor, highlighting its importance as outlined in the trilateral statement signed on November 10th, 2020, which aimed to establish a

transportation connection between the eastern part of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. Despite Armenia's violations of this provision, President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the commitment to finding alternative solutions, including consultations with Iran to create a bypass through Iranian territory. Construction has already begun on automotive bridges for this route, with plans for additional bridges for railroads.

President Aliyev reaffirmed Azerbaijan's clear stance that the trilateral statement must be respected, emphasizing the necessity for land access from mainland Azerbaijan to Nakhchivan through Armenia. The President criticized Armenia's reluctance to engage in discussions with Azerbaijan on this matter, noting that without Azerbaijan's cooperation, Armenia's aspirations to become a transit country are unrealistic. "Yes, the word "Zangezur corridor" was not mentioned, but it was said that there must be a connection. A transportation connection between the eastern part of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, with Russian border security forces provide control, must be established. So, that was signed by President Putin, Prime Minister Pashinyan, and myself. So now, Armenia has been violating this provision for more than three years. And again, they signed it themselves, and now they want to get rid of that paragraph, but it is not possible. And what they do is just block the possibility of building this land connection with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. This behavior, of course, is very disappointing," President Ilham Aliyev noted.

Looking ahead, President Ilham Aliyev outlined Azerbaijan's plans to complete the construction of the railroad from Fuzuli to Zangilan, which was dismantled by Armenians during the occupation. This railroad will connect to Iran, facilitating transportation to the Persian Gulf and further strengthening Azerbaijan's position as a regional transportation center. Additionally, plans include building a railroad connection between Nakhchivan and Kars, contributing to the East-

West Transport Corridor. Despite Armenia's obstruction, Azerbaijan remains committed to advancing regional transportation infrastructure and solidifying its role in the region.

President Ilham Aliyev provided insights into the negotiations surrounding the presence of Russian peacekeepers in the Karabakh region. During the discussions leading to the trilateral statement signed on November 10th, 2020, Armenia insisted on no time limit for the presence of Russian peacekeepers, while Azerbaijan insisted on a time limit. This issue was crucial, and Azerbaijan made it clear that without agreement on a time limit, there would be no statement, and the war would continue. At that time, Azerbaijani troops were in a strategic position, controlling the outskirts of Khankendi and the fate of 15,000 Armenian troops.

Ultimately, a five-year term with the possibility of extension if neither side objected was agreed upon. President Ilham Aliyev highlighted that the decision to withdraw Russian troops earlier than planned was based on consultations between Azerbaijan and Russia, demonstrating Azerbaijan's commitment to its international obligations. This decision, made jointly with Russia, further strengthened the relationship between the two countries.

President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that reaching an agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia before COP29, at least on basic principles, is "absolutely realistic", which could then be further refined. President Ilham Aliyev stressed that delimitation and a peace agreement are separate issues and should not be dependent on each other. Delimitating the border between the two countries, especially in challenging terrain, is a complex and time-consuming process, as evidenced by similar challenges between Azerbaijan and Georgia and Armenia and Georgia, where border delimitation has taken over 30 years and is still ongoing.

President Ilham Aliyev clarified that Azerbaijan's stance is based on pragmatism, emphasizing that Azerbaijan and Armenia agreed in the October

2022 declaration to base their relations on the 1991 Almaty Declaration. Azerbaijan does not have territorial claims against Armenia as long as Armenia does not have territorial claims against Azerbaijan. This pragmatic approach aims to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations, particularly from those who may seek to misrepresent Azerbaijan's policies and intentions.

President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the importance of starting the delimitation process from the occupied villages of Gazakh, which were inhabited by Azerbaijanis and subsequently occupied. This move demonstrates a tangible step forward in resolving border disputes, especially in areas with historical significance and inhabited communities. Approximately 10 to 12 kilometers of the state border have already been delimited, signaling progress that has garnered support from both regional and international actors.

President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the need for a pragmatic approach to delimitation, taking into account practical considerations such as road infrastructure, security measures, and the well-being of communities living in close proximity to the border. While the majority of the border traverses uninhabited terrain, there are areas where people live in close proximity, requiring careful consideration and creative solutions.

Regarding exclaves, President Ilham Aliyev pointed out the complexity of addressing these issues, as they are situated within the territory surrounded by other countries. However, the President expressed readiness to address exclaves during the delimitation process, either concurrently or at a later stage, depending on the preferences of the Armenian side. The head of state emphasized the importance of continuity in the delimitation process, suggesting that both sides start with the easiest parts and progress towards more challenging areas collaboratively.

President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the ongoing consultations with Rosatom and the interest in evaluating the potential for nuclear energy in Azerbaijan. While acknowledging the abundance

of natural gas and renewable energy sources in the country, President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the importance of considering technological development, specialist training, and long-term energy policy planning.

Regarding financing, President Ilham Aliyev explained that renewable energy projects in Azerbaijan are primarily financed by foreign investors, with the Azerbaijani state focusing on investments in strengthening the energy grid to accommodate the integration of wind and solar power. However, the President expressed reservations about the economic feasibility of nuclear energy, citing the high costs typically borne by the host country and the current availability of alternative sources of financing for renewable energy projects.

From an environmental perspective, while Azerbaijan supports environmentalism, President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the need for cost-effectiveness and practicality in pursuing energy initiatives. The President indicated that Azerbaijan is not actively pursuing nuclear energy at present but remains open to evaluation and assessment of its potential benefits and challenges, particularly in relation to market dynamics and domestic energy consumption requirements.

President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the potential for cooperation and development in the Southern Caucasus region, particularly in the areas of energy and transportation, once a peace agreement is reached between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The President highlighted the mutual benefits of natural gas cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia, underscoring Georgia's reliance on Azerbaijani gas supply and the potential for Armenia to also benefit from Azerbaijani gas.

President Ilham Aliyev mentioned the broader vision of the Zangezur corridor not only as a transportation route but also as a potential pathway for energy infrastructure, such as electric cables and gas pipelines. The President expressed a willingness to engage in trilateral consultations with Georgia and Armenia on practical matters of

importance, but noted Armenia's previous refusal to participate.

President Ilham Aliyev explained that the possibility of securing Turkmen natural gas for Europe through Azerbaijan depends on Turkmenistan's decision to initiate a Trans Caspian gas pipeline project. The President emphasized that Azerbaijan would not initiate such a project, as it is typically the country with ownership of the resources that implements such initiatives. President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the importance of evaluating various factors, including financing, market demand, and infrastructure capacity, before moving forward with such a project. The President also noted that Azerbaijan's current energy infrastructure, particularly the Southern Gas Corridor, is already fully utilized, necessitating careful consideration of expansion plans before accommodating additional gas from Turkmenistan.

President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the need for Armenia to amend its constitution, which currently includes references asserting parts of Azerbaijan as part of Armenia. The President underscored that such references pose a significant obstacle to signing a peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Regarding the Aghridagh Mountain, which is depicted on Armenia's national symbol, President Ilham Aliyev suggested that Armenia should consider changing it. President Ilham Aliyev noted the close coordination between Azerbaijan and Türkiye on various issues, including the need for parallel processes of Turkish-Armenian rapprochement and Azerbaijan-Armenian normalization. President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the importance of distinguishing between real history and mythological narratives, criticizing Armenia for creating historical myths that perpetuate hatred and distort reality. The President emphasized the strength of the Turkish-Azerbaijani alliance and urged Armenia to acknowledge its significance and act accordingly in their future dealings.

President Ilham Aliyev expressed skepticism about Azerbaijan's prospects for EU membership, citing Türkiye's experience as evidence that Muslim-



majority countries face obstacles in joining the EU. The President criticized the EU's recent engagement with Armenia, particularly a high-level meeting in Brussels, which had a military component to it. President Ilham Aliyev also voiced concerns about the EU's allocation of funds for the so-called European Peace Facility, which could escalate tensions in the region. The President criticized remarks by the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, who said that the EU is a garden and the rest of the world is a jungle, as derogatory toward non-European nations and expressed disappointment at the lack of accountability within the EU for such statements. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized Azerbaijan's willingness to cooperate with the EU but underscored the importance of mutual respect and addressing Azerbaijan's security concerns. The President also questioned the EU's response to the plight of Azerbaijani refugees displaced by the conflict, contrasting it with their assistance to Armenian refugees. President Ilham Aliyev stressed the need for open dialogue with the EU based on mutual interests and respect.

President Ilham Aliyev noted that Azerbaijan has chosen China as its primary partner for transitioning to electric vehicles, with negotiations having been productive with several Chinese companies. The President mentioned that a decision has likely been made in favor of BYD to manufacture electric buses for Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev noted that in addition to purchasing electric buses, Azerbaijan plans to establish local manufacturing for electric vehicles. The President highlighted the significance of this partnership, considering BYD's reputation for producing various types of electric vehicles, which will provide a significant advantage for the market.

President Ilham Aliyev expressed gratitude to the UK and other partners for their assistance in post-conflict reconstruction in Azerbaijan. The President highlighted the ongoing challenges posed by the lingering effects of the war, particularly the issue of demining. President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the loss of civilian lives due to landmines and

emphasized the crucial role of demining in enabling reconstruction efforts to progress. While Azerbaijan has increased resources for demining, the President noted that more assistance is needed, including support from the European Union. President Ilham Aliyev suggested the possibility of financial support or assistance from companies or NGOs specialized in demining. The President noted the significant financial commitment made by the EU for Armenia and expressed hope for similar support for Azerbaijan's demining efforts. Despite allocating substantial funds from the national budget for demining, President Ilham Aliyev underscored the need for additional trained personnel and resources to effectively address this challenge.

President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the importance of fairness and straightforwardness in navigating complex regional dynamics, even amidst ongoing conflicts. President Ilham Aliyev highlighted Azerbaijan's commitment to good relations with its neighbors, grounded in trust and predictability. President Ilham Aliyev underscored the significance of avoiding actions that could destabilize the region and emphasized Azerbaijan's track record of principled diplomacy. President Ilham Aliyev noted that Azerbaijan responds to unjust attacks but refrains from initiating conflicts. Regarding Azerbaijan's response to aggression from certain countries, President Ilham Aliyev indicated that Azerbaijan mirrors their actions within acceptable boundaries, without burning bridges.

## **II. Russia's peacekeeping contingent withdraws from Azerbaijan**

On April 16, Russia's peacekeeping units, deployed to the Karabakh region as part of the November 2020 trilateral agreement among Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, began their withdrawal. This early withdrawal underscored a watershed moment in the history of the region. Hikmet Hajiyev, Assistant to the President of Azerbaijan and Head of the

Foreign Policy Affairs Department of the Presidential Administration, noted that the decision was mutually agreed upon by the leaders of both countries. "The early withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers, temporarily stationed in the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, in accordance with the trilateral Statement signed on November 10, 2020, has been decided by the leaders of both countries. The process has already begun, with the ministries of defense of Azerbaijan and Russia implementing appropriate measures for the execution of that decision," Hikmet Hajiyev pointed out. Aleksey Zhuravlev, first deputy chairman of the Russian State Duma's Committee on Defense, echoed this sentiment, stating that the mission of the peacekeeping contingent could be considered "fully accomplished," citing the absence of warring parties in Karabakh as the ground for the withdrawal. Russian President Vladimir Putin indirectly hinted at the possibility of withdrawing the peacekeeping units shortly after the collapse of the separatist regime in Karabakh. In October 2023, Putin stated to reporters that it would soon be necessary to determine, in dialogue with partners, the fate of the Russian peacekeeping unit in Karabakh, given the changed situation following Armenia's recognition of this region as part of Azerbaijan.

Initially intended to comprise 1,960 motor rifle troops with light weapons and armored personnel carriers, the peacekeeping contingent exceeded both its troop numbers and military equipment limits over time. Despite their deployment, the parties involved never reached a consensus on the overall mandate of the peacekeeping force. Armenia asserts that a document proposed by Russia and approved by Armenia defines the legal framework of the peacekeeping, including its mandate. However, Azerbaijan never signed this document and questioned the mission's effectiveness, particularly in ensuring the withdrawal of Armenian troops from Karabakh as stipulated in the trilateral statement. The peacekeeping contingent departed from Azerbaijan through Dagestan, contrasting their entry into Karabakh via the Lachin road from

Armenia in November 2020. Notably, this withdrawal occurred 18 months before the mission's scheduled conclusion in November 2025, despite the possibility of a five-year extension outlined in the trilateral statement.

This decision was swiftly followed by an announcement from the Turkish Defense Ministry regarding the closure of the joint Russian-Turkish monitoring center established in the region by a January 2021 trilateral agreement. The center, aimed at monitoring the ceasefire regime in Karabakh, had minimal impact on the ground and failed to prevent violations, ultimately leading to Azerbaijan's unilateral action to remove the separatist entity in September 2023.

The departure of Russian peacekeepers from Azerbaijan signifies a major turning point in the South Caucasus. It marks one of the first instances of Russian armed units voluntarily and prematurely leaving the territory of a post-Soviet state. The realities on the ground have changed radically since the peacekeeping contingent's deployment in November 2020. The conditions that necessitated the peacekeepers' mission collapsed following the removal of the Armenian separatist entity in Karabakh and the exodus of the local Armenian population in September 2023.

The removal of foreign forces from Azerbaijani soil has significantly strengthened Azerbaijan's geopolitical standing, opening the door for regional peace and positioning Azerbaijan as a major influential player in the region. The withdrawal of Russia's peacekeeping contingent from the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan has sent shockwaves through the geopolitics of the South Caucasus. Just a few weeks ago, such a move seemed improbable, with many skeptics even doubting the possibility of withdrawal by the previously agreed date of November 2025. However, Azerbaijan managed to secure this historic withdrawal without confrontation, marking a significant turning point in the region's dynamics. The historical context, dating back to the 19th century, underscores the strategic importance of Karabakh as a Russian stronghold.



From the transfer of Armenians to the region by Tsarist Russia to the creation of the “Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast” under Soviet rule, Karabakh has long been viewed as a key asset for Moscow's geopolitical objectives. Therefore, the unexpected withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers signifies a remarkable shift in the regional balance of power. For Azerbaijan, this development represents a historic achievement in reclaiming sovereignty over all its territories. President Ilham Aliyev's leadership in restoring Azerbaijan's territorial integrity amidst regional uncertainties has been widely recognized. The removal of foreign forces from Azerbaijani soil strengthens Baku's geopolitical standing and provides a platform for more confident and assertive foreign policy pursuits.

The withdrawal of Russia's peacekeeping mission from the Karabakh region ushers in a new geopolitical era for the South Caucasus. This significant development not only marks Azerbaijan's full sovereignty over its territories but also signals the definitive conclusion of the conflict. President Ilham Aliyev's skillful diplomacy has safeguarded Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and established Baku as a major geopolitical player in the region. As Azerbaijan navigates its future, it remains committed to regional integration, particularly strengthening ties within the Turkic world. The peacekeepers' departure signifies the full resolution of the Karabakh conflict, a fact recognized by all international community members, including Armenia. On April 23, President Ilham Aliyev clarified that the peace treaty being negotiated with Armenia does not contain any provisions about Karabakh. President Ilham Aliyev further stated that Armenia has relinquished territorial claims against Azerbaijan, and Baku reciprocates this stance. President Ilham Aliyev expressed optimism about reaching a peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia before COP29, scheduled for November in Baku.

### **III. Azerbaijan and Armenia move forward on border delimitation**

Commenting on the progress on border delimitation talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia in a joint press conference with Chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz in Berlin on April 26, President Ilham Aliyev announced that “the delimitation and even demarcation of borders have begun,” adding that “four Azerbaijani villages occupied in 1990 and 1992 have been returned to us.” Highlighting the fact that the Russia-Türkiye Joint Monitoring Center, located in Azerbaijan, has ceased its activities on April 26, President Ilham Aliyev noted: “There are very good opportunities to achieve peace. We are ready to collaborate with countries willing to assist us in this matter.”

On April 19, the 8th meeting of the State Commission on the Delimitation of the State Border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia and the Commission on the Matters of Delimitation of the State Border and Border Security between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan took place under the chairmanship of Shahin Mustafayev, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and Mher Grigoryan, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, on the border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia.

During the meetings, the commissions hereby agreed as follows:

At the initial stage of the delimitation process, the Parties preliminarily agreed on the passage of separate segments of the border line directly between the residential areas of Baganis (RA) - Baganys Ayrim (AR), Voskepar (RA) - Ashagy Askipara (AR), Kirants (RA) – Kheyrimli (AR), and Berkaber (RA) - Gyzylhajily (AR), with an aim of aligning them in accordance with the legally justified inter-republican border that existed within the framework of the Soviet Union at the time of its dissolution.

Decided that the description of these segments of the border line will be prepared, taking into

account the clarification of coordinates based on geodetic measurements on the ground, which will be formalized by the corresponding protocol-description, to be agreed upon and signed by the Parties by May 15, 2024.

Agreed that the Parties will appeal to their respective Governments to take measures for the simultaneous and parallel deployment of their border services on the agreed segments of the border line.

Additionally, the Parties agreed that until the full completion of the delimitation process, the said segments of the border line specified in the protocol-description will be considered delimited.

Simultaneously agreed to complete work on finalizing the draft Regulation on the Joint Activity of the State Commission on the Delimitation of the State Border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia and the Commission on the Matters of Delimitation of the State Border and Border Security between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan by July 1, 2024, and to start the process of internal procedures and approval of the Regulation accordingly and in compliance with the requirements of the legislations of the Parties.

The Parties agreed that within the delimitation process they will be guided by the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1991. They also agreed to enshrine this basic principle in the draft Regulation (if the Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and Interstate Relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia stipulates otherwise in the future, the relevant provision of the Regulation will be brought into line with the principles established by this Agreement).

Agreed that after the Parties approve the Regulation, they will agree on the sequence and continue the process of delimitation of all other border sections, including on issues related to enclaves and exclaves.

As the result of the meeting, the protocol was signed. The Parties decided to negotiate the date and location of the next meeting in working order.

In accordance with the agreements reached on the outcomes of the 8th meeting of the State Commission on the Delimitation of the State Border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, and the Commission on the Matters of Delimitation of the State Border and Border Security between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, the expert groups of the countries started the clarification of coordinates based on geodetic measurements on the ground on the border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia. As part of the process of clarification of coordinates based on geodetic measurements on the ground on the border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, 20 border markers have been installed as of April 25, 2024.

#### **IV. Azerbaijan and Germany forge deeper ties amid global uncertainty**

In an era marked by escalating global political uncertainties, Azerbaijan and Germany have emerged as proactive partners, diligently strengthening their collaboration to tackle emerging challenges. A significant testament to this burgeoning alliance can be gleaned from President Ilham Aliyev's recent visit to Germany, which underscored a shared commitment to bolster cooperation across various fronts.

President Ilham Aliyev's participation in the 15th Petersberg Climate Dialogue in Berlin from April 25-26, 2024, served as a focal point for deliberations on key issues facing both nations. This annual forum, renowned for fostering informal yet substantive discussions at the highest echelons of political leadership, centers on advancing global climate negotiations and fostering tangible action to combat climate change.

The agenda of President Ilham Aliyev's visit encapsulated multifaceted discussions, prominently featuring climate policy alongside the persistent conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Notably, the dialogue between President Ilham Aliyev and Federal Chancellor Scholz gravitated towards two pivotal spheres: climate diplomacy and the quest for peace in the Caucasus region.

Federal Chancellor Scholz articulated a pragmatic approach towards addressing the complex dynamics of the regional issues, affirming Germany's unwavering commitment to facilitating a peaceful resolution to all outstanding issues. He emphasized the intrinsic value of dialogue and underscored Germany's readiness to lend its support towards crafting a durable and sustainable solution. Against the backdrop of regional uncertainty, Scholz's reassurance of Germany's mediation efforts signals a pivotal step towards de-escalating hostilities and fostering stability in the region.

Moreover, the discussions pivoted towards climate policy, an area ripe with opportunities for collaboration between Azerbaijan and Germany. Chancellor Scholz highlighted the untapped potential for cooperation in renewable energy, particularly in green and hydrogen energy sectors. Acknowledging Azerbaijan's strides in diversifying its energy portfolio, President Ilham Aliyev underscored the nation's commitment to exporting green energy to Europe, augmenting its traditional natural gas exports. This alignment of interests underscores a shared vision for sustainable development and underscores the potential for mutual benefit through strategic collaboration.

In essence, President Ilham Aliyev's visit to Germany epitomizes a strategic convergence of interests aimed at navigating the complex geopolitical landscape. By fostering dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding, Azerbaijan and Germany are poised to chart a course towards shared prosperity while addressing pressing global challenges. As the world grapples

with uncertainty, the burgeoning partnership between these two nations serves as a beacon of hope, advocating for diplomacy, dialogue, and collective action in pursuit of a more resilient and sustainable future.

Amidst the bustling corridors of the Petersberg Climate Dialogue 2024, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock illuminated a path towards a brighter future in the Southern Caucasus, casting the upcoming COP29 in Baku as a pivotal opportunity for fostering progress. Baerbock's emphasis on the imperative of a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan resonated deeply, underscoring the critical role of diplomacy in steering the region towards stability and prosperity.

President Ilham Aliyev echoed these sentiments, underscoring the profound significance of the burgeoning relationship between Germany and Azerbaijan in shaping the trajectory of the South Caucasus. Beyond the confines of bilateral ties, President Ilham Aliyev aptly recognized the ripple effects of strengthened cooperation, heralding a far-reaching impact of development and stability across the region.

Germany's proactive engagement in facilitating the normalization process between Azerbaijan and Armenia merits special recognition. The recent ministerial meeting orchestrated by German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock stands as a testament to Berlin's commitment to fostering dialogue and reconciliation amidst longstanding tensions.

Furthermore, Germany's strategic maneuvers within the European political arena, exemplified by Chancellor Olaf Scholz's participation in the summit of the European Political Community in Chişinău, underscore its concerted efforts to wield influence and shape regional dynamics. As a key player within the European Union, Germany's nuanced approach aims to counterbalance the pro-Armenian stance of France. The divergent perspectives of France and Germany towards the South Caucasus illuminate the evolving nature of

Azerbaijan-Germany relations and their broader geopolitical implications.

Against the backdrop of a 32-year-old diplomatic relationship, Azerbaijan and Germany have cultivated a robust partnership anchored in pragmatism and mutual respect. However, the shifting geopolitical landscape, catalyzed by Azerbaijan's ascendancy following the 44-Day War, has infused newfound significance into this enduring partnership. The trajectory of Azerbaijani-German relations bears testimony to the efficacy of pragmatic cooperation as a linchpin for advancing shared interests and fostering regional stability.

As the world navigates through a landscape fraught with uncertainties, the burgeoning partnership between Azerbaijan and Germany emerges as a beacon of hope, advocating for dialogue, reconciliation, and collective action. In harnessing the potential of bilateral cooperation, these nations stand poised to chart a course towards a more prosperous, stable, and interconnected future for the South Caucasus and beyond.

Economic cooperation stands as a cornerstone of the robust bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Germany, anchoring their partnership in shared prosperity and mutual benefit. Over the years, Azerbaijan has emerged as a pivotal economic partner for Germany in the South Caucasus region, epitomized by the establishment of Germany's only Chamber of Commerce Abroad in Baku, a testament to the burgeoning economic ties between the two nations.

The Chamber, inaugurated on November 12, 2012, serves as a vital platform for fostering collaboration between approximately 150 companies from both sides, facilitating trade and investment opportunities across diverse sectors. Germany's stature as Azerbaijan's second-largest trading partner within the EU, following Italy, underscores the depth of economic interdependence, with Azerbaijan ranking among the top ten most important trading partners worldwide in the first quarter of the year.

Against this backdrop, German companies are increasingly eyeing opportunities to expand their footprint in Azerbaijan, particularly in the realm of green energy. Azerbaijan's ambitious targets for renewable energy development present a compelling incentive for collaboration, with German firms expressing keen interest in leveraging their expertise to bolster Azerbaijan's transition towards sustainable energy sources.

Beyond traditional economic sectors, avenues for collaboration extend to the burgeoning fields of green hydrogen production, transport, logistics, and agriculture, fueled by Azerbaijan's strategic vision for economic diversification and sustainable development. The reconstruction efforts in Karabakh following its liberation have further catalyzed opportunities for German companies to contribute to the region's economic revitalization.

At the heart of Azerbaijan-Germany relations lies a robust framework of mutual respect and partnership, underscored by President Ilham Aliyev's recurrent visits to Germany, emblematic of the multifaceted bilateral agenda. Beyond economic realms, both nations have emerged as key allies on global issues such as climate change and international terrorism, testament to their shared commitment to addressing pressing global challenges through collective action.

While economics and trade serve as linchpins of bilateral ties, the evolving focus on climate policy signals a paradigm shift towards broader cooperation across diverse spheres. As Azerbaijan and Germany continue to navigate the complex geopolitical landscape, deepening pragmatic cooperation emerges as a shared imperative, underpinned by Germany's economic prowess and Azerbaijan's strategic significance in the South Caucasus region.

The alignment of interests between Azerbaijan and Germany, coupled with the imperative of balancing regional dynamics, underscores the mutual benefits of bolstering cooperation. Against the backdrop of COP29, both nations stand poised to harness their collective strengths to advance

shared goals on the global stage, epitomizing the potential for synergy and collaboration in shaping a more prosperous and sustainable future for generations to come.

The historical trajectory of German-Azerbaijani relations is steeped in a legacy of mutual respect, cooperation, and diplomatic solidarity, dating back to Azerbaijan's emergence as an independent nation following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Since the early 1990s, the establishment of diplomatic channels and the subsequent opening of embassies in both nations have served as pivotal milestones, fostering a robust framework for bilateral engagement and cooperation.

At the heart of this enduring partnership lies Germany's steadfast support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, a cornerstone of their diplomatic discourse. Germany's stance on the issue was reaffirmed during Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock's visit to Azerbaijan in November 2023, where she unequivocally endorsed Azerbaijan's sovereignty over Karabakh, emphasizing the imperative of Azerbaijanis returning to their ancestral lands.

The strength of German-Azerbaijani relations is further underscored by the extensive network of approximately 80 bilateral agreements spanning diverse areas of cooperation, ranging from trade and commerce to cultural exchanges and scientific collaboration. Inter-parliamentary engagement serves as another vital conduit for fostering dialogue and understanding, with dedicated working groups operating within both the Azerbaijani Milli Majlis and the German Bundestag, facilitating constructive exchanges and cooperation.

Moreover, the presence of Azerbaijani entities such as SOCAR, AZAL, and IBA in Germany, alongside the operations of the German International Cooperation Society in Azerbaijan, symbolizes the depth and breadth of bilateral ties, transcending geographical boundaries to foster meaningful engagement and collaboration.

In essence, the historical interactions between Germany and Azerbaijan serve as a testament to the enduring bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two nations. As they navigate the complexities of the contemporary geopolitical landscape, the shared commitment to mutual respect, partnership, and diplomatic solidarity continues to underpin their bilateral relations, paving the way for a future marked by shared prosperity, stability, and shared achievements.

The economic relationship between Azerbaijan and Germany forms a robust cornerstone of their bilateral ties, characterized by a symbiotic exchange of goods and investment cooperation. Azerbaijan predominantly exports oil and agricultural products to Germany, while importing machinery, motor vehicles, iron and steel goods, and industrial equipment. Notably, investment flows between the two nations have been substantial, with Germany directing over \$626.6 million into Azerbaijan's non-oil sector from 1995 to 2019, reciprocated by Azerbaijan's investment of approximately \$3.1 billion in Germany.

Germany's support for Azerbaijan's non-oil sector underscores a shared commitment to sustainable economic development, with initiatives spearheaded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, the German Cooperation Society (GIZ), and the Azerbaijan-German Chamber of Commerce. Furthermore, discussions on collaborative ventures in renewable energy signify a forward-looking approach towards addressing contemporary challenges.

Azerbaijan occupies a pivotal position in Germany's Caucasus policy, serving as an alternative energy provider and a crucial energy corridor, bolstering the continent's energy security. The completion of the Southern Gas Corridor in December 2020 exemplifies Azerbaijan's pivotal role in Europe's energy landscape, with commitments to enhancing cooperation in renewable and hydrogen energy fields further underscoring the alignment of interests.



Germany's proactive engagement in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process reflects its commitment to regional stability and dialogue. By assuming an impartial mediator role, Germany not only fosters a positive perception of the European Union in the South Caucasus but also addresses the need for constructive dialogue amidst external disruptions.

President Ilham Aliyev's recent visit to Germany reaffirms the mutual desire for deeper cooperation, particularly in sustainable development and climate action, ahead of COP29 in Baku. Additionally, Germany's active involvement in the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process underscores its broader commitment to fostering stability in the region.

As both nations continue to strengthen economic ties, facilitate cultural exchanges, and collaborate on strategic initiatives, the foundation for a mutually beneficial partnership grows stronger. With shared goals and mutual respect as guiding principles, Azerbaijan and Germany are poised to navigate the complexities of the contemporary geopolitical landscape, fostering enduring ties that contribute to regional prosperity and global stability.

#### **V. Assessing the impact of Armenia's strategic pivot towards France on regional security**

The burgeoning military-political alliance between Armenia and France has emerged as a focal point in the dynamic security landscape of the South Caucasus, signaling a notable shift in regional alignments and strategic partnerships. Traditionally reliant on Russia for security and military support, Armenia's recalibration towards Western powers, spearheaded by France, marks a significant departure from historical norms, amplifying its strategic resilience amidst regional uncertainties.

The deepening of military ties between Armenia and France, particularly in the aftermath of 44-Day War, underscores Armenia's strategic imperative

to diversify its military alliances and bolster its defense capabilities. Beyond immediate security concerns, the Armenia-France partnership symbolizes a broader convergence of geopolitical interests, with France seeking to extend its influence beyond traditional spheres and position Armenia as a pivotal ally in a strategically volatile region.

While military cooperation forms a cornerstone of the Armenia-France alliance, the relationship transcends mere defense dealings, encompassing deep political dialogues and economic engagements. Armenia's geopolitical position, flanked by Türkiye, Iran, and Azerbaijan, underscores its significance for France, particularly in light of historical conflicts and regional tensions. However, despite its pivot towards Western powers, Armenia maintains robust ties with Russia, underpinned by mutual security agreements and the presence of Russian military bases within Armenian territory. The complexity of Armenia's foreign policy is further accentuated by its increasing trade turnover with Russia, which some international observers attribute to the re-export of sanctioned goods.

This intricate balancing act underscores Armenia's strategic calculus, navigating between deepening ties with France and its European partners while preserving its longstanding relationship with Russia. As Armenia seeks to fortify its position amidst geopolitical flux, the Armenia-France alliance stands as a testament to the evolving dynamics of regional security and the imperative of strategic diversification in a rapidly changing world.

The provision of arms by France to Armenia in the context of ongoing regional tensions in the South Caucasus raises significant concerns regarding its impact on the security dynamics of the region. While intended to bolster Armenia's defensive capabilities, such actions risk exacerbating military-political tensions and undermining the prospects for reconciliation between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The prolonged occupation of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia, coupled with its assertive territorial claims, has created a volatile security environment in the region. Equipping Armenia with advanced military technology may potentially reinforce revanchist tendencies within the Armenian political elite and exacerbate tensions with Azerbaijan, potentially fueling an arms race and further destabilizing the region.

France's strategic objectives in the South Caucasus, including reducing Russian influence and projecting power in a geopolitically significant region, must be considered within the broader context of regional security dynamics. However, it is imperative to recognize the legitimate concerns of Azerbaijan, whose territory has suffered from occupation, destruction, and ethnic cleansing, necessitating a nuanced approach to addressing security challenges in the region.

The Armenia-France military cooperation underscores the complexities of regional security dynamics and highlights the need for concerted diplomatic efforts to promote reconciliation, stability, and conflict resolution. As regional players navigate shifting alliances and strategic interests, it is essential to prioritize dialogue, confidence-building measures, and adherence to international norms to mitigate the risk of further escalation and foster a climate conducive to lasting peace and prosperity in the South Caucasus.

The evolving military alliance between France and Armenia introduces complexities into the already volatile South Caucasus region, with potential ramifications for regional security dynamics.

Armenia's strategic pivot towards Western nations, epitomized by its alliance with France, represents a calculated maneuver aimed at bolstering its military capabilities and diversifying its international partnerships. This shift, coupled with deteriorating relations between Russia and the West, has the potential to transform the South Caucasus into a zone of geopolitical contention, as major powers vie for influence in the region.

Armenia's strategic recalibration, particularly its gradual distancing from its traditional ally Russia in favor of forging closer ties with Western nations, may destabilize the delicate balance of power in the South Caucasus. This shift could exacerbate tensions with Azerbaijan and fuel revanchist sentiments within Armenia, potentially escalating the risk of renewed hostilities.

Furthermore, France's provision of armaments to Armenia exacerbates these tensions by bolstering Armenia's military capabilities and signaling its support for Armenia in the context of its ongoing conflict with Azerbaijan. This military collaboration not only heightens the risk of conflict escalation but also repositions the South Caucasus as a battleground for geopolitical rivalry between major powers, amplifying regional instability and complicating efforts towards conflict resolution.

In essence, the France-Armenia alliance underscores the intricate interplay of geopolitical interests in the South Caucasus, with potential implications for regional security and stability. As the region navigates through these complex dynamics, concerted diplomatic efforts and dialogue are essential to mitigate the risk of conflict escalation and foster a climate conducive to lasting peace and prosperity.

## **VI. Armenia's "Crossroads for Peace" initiative struggles to find traction**

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's "Crossroads for Peace" initiative, aimed at fostering regional connectivity and transforming Armenia into a transit hub, faces significant challenges in gaining traction. The lack of direct consultations with Baku and Ankara has hindered the project's progress, while Azerbaijan and Türkiye are advancing alternative corridor projects, leaving Pashinyan's vision in limbo.

Azerbaijan and Türkiye are actively pursuing the opening of the Zangezur Corridor and trans-Iranian Aras Corridor, sidelining Pashinyan's initiative. This strategic focus on alternative corridors suggests

that Pashinyan's project is unlikely to materialize anytime soon, as key regional players prioritize alternative routes.

Despite expressions of support from European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Pashinyan's initiative remains largely symbolic, lacking concrete backing from Baku and Ankara. The project, unveiled during Pashinyan's address at the Fourth Silk Road Forum in Tbilisi in 2023, aims to establish transportation links across Armenia. However, without direct engagement with Azerbaijan and Türkiye, the initiative remains confined to paper, with little prospect of implementation.

Baku and Ankara perceive Pashinyan's initiative as a counterproposal to the Zangezur Corridor, a plan discussed and partly agreed upon in the aftermath of the 44-Day War. President Ilham Aliyev previously announced an agreement between Baku and Yerevan to open the Zangezur Corridor, signaling a shift in regional dynamics. Following the Brussels summit on May 22, 2022, President Ilham Aliyev disclosed to his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, that Baku and Yerevan had reached an agreement to open the Zangezur Corridor and construct new railways and highways. With two competing projects now in contention, the prospects for cooperation and reconciliation between Armenia and its neighbors remain uncertain. Several key disparities between the Zangezur Corridor and the “Crossroads for Peace” project underscore their differences, hindering progress towards regional connectivity.

The Zangezur Corridor aims to revive Soviet-era railway and highway connections between western Azerbaijan and its Nakhchivan exclave via Armenia. While “Crossroads for Peace” incorporates a railway link along this route, it diverges on the motorway connection, favoring alternative routes. Azerbaijan, nearing completion of the highway along its section of the corridor, rejects Yerevan's proposal to open highway links elsewhere, insisting on prioritizing the Zangezur route.

Baku and Yerevan diverge on regulations governing transportation through the corridor, particularly concerning passage to Nakhchivan. Azerbaijan expects Armenia to facilitate unimpeded passage, exempting cargo and passengers from customs duties and border checks. However, “Crossroads for Peace” lacks provisions for such measures, posing a challenge to seamless transit.

Amidst ongoing complexities and disagreements surrounding transportation corridors between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Moscow has advocated for customs and border checks along the route, with operations conducted by Russian personnel. The Kremlin emphasizes adherence to trilateral statements from 2020 and 2021 as the foundation for regional negotiations on transportation corridors. However, progress has stalled, with the trilateral working group convened to carry out these negotiations not meeting since June 2, 2023, despite intermittent invitations from Moscow to resume discussions.

Fundamental disagreements between the two sides have impeded the implementation of transportation projects between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the near term. Dr. Farid Shafiyev, chairman of the Baku-based Center of Analysis of International Relations, characterized “Crossroads for Peace” as an “empty declaration,” emphasizing that meaningful connectivity across Armenian territories hinges on Azerbaijan's participation. The Azerbaijani government contends that Armenia's pursuit of “Crossroads for Peace” is inefficient and risks isolating Armenia if Yerevan refuses to open the Zangezur Corridor.

Azerbaijan and Türkiye aim to complete all construction along the Zangezur route by 2028, while progress on the trans-Iranian Aras Corridor, initiated in October 2023, is underway. Furthermore, significant enhancements to the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway's capacity are underway, reducing Azerbaijan's dependence on a trans-Armenian route.

Given these alternative projects and advancements, “Crossroads for Peace” is not

currently prioritized on Azerbaijan's or Türkiye's agenda and is unlikely to be feasible in the near future. As such, resolving fundamental disagreements and fostering cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan remain critical for advancing regional connectivity and stability in the South Caucasus. The disparities between the Zangezur Corridor and "Crossroads for Peace" highlight the complexities of regional cooperation and underline the obstacles to achieving comprehensive connectivity in the South Caucasus. Resolving these differences will require diplomatic dialogue and engagement to advance shared goals of economic integration and stability in the region.

### **VII. Azerbaijan's landmark arbitration case against Armenia**

On April 12, 2024, the Peace Palace at The Hague witnessed a historic moment as it hosted the inaugural formal proceedings in Azerbaijan's interstate arbitration claim under the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.

This unprecedented arbitration was initiated by Azerbaijan on January 18, 2023, following extensive documentation of the environmental devastation inflicted by Armenia during its unlawful occupation of Azerbaijani territories spanning three decades.

Upon reclaiming its territories in 2020, Azerbaijan uncovered disturbing evidence of Armenia's wanton destruction and neglect of the environment. Armenia's actions inflicted severe harm on the region's natural habitats, depleted precious resources, and obliterated biodiversity.

The widespread deforestation, unsustainable logging, and environmental degradation resulting from illicit construction and mining activities in forested areas – including protected nature reserves prior to Armenia's occupation in 1991 – endangered over 500 wildlife species in Azerbaijan.

To this day, Armenia persists in jeopardizing biodiversity and ecosystems in Azerbaijani territories by contaminating transboundary rivers that flow from Armenian territory into Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's legal action outlines specific grievances against Armenia, including its failure to uphold obligations to preserve populations of wild flora and fauna, ensure the conservation and restoration of habitats, and protect species listed under the Convention, particularly migratory species.

In the arbitration proceedings, Azerbaijan implores the distinguished tribunal to compel Armenia to halt all ongoing violations of the Bern Convention and provide full restitution for its environmental transgressions.

This arbitration case represents a significant milestone in environmental jurisprudence, paving the way for effective enforcement of international legal obligations concerning biodiversity. It also underscores a sincere commitment to seeking justice for environmental damages inflicted by unlawful actions.

### **VIII. Azerbaijan's ongoing struggle against Armenia's landmine threat**

April 4th marks the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, a solemn occasion observed worldwide to address the persistent threat of landmines. For the Republic of Azerbaijan, this day holds profound significance, as the nation continues to grapple with the devastating impact of landmines, both during decades of military occupation by Armenia and in the post-conflict era.

Throughout its 30-year-long occupation of Azerbaijani territories, Armenia laid landmines indiscriminately, resulting in numerous casualties and posing a grave danger to civilian lives. Even after the conclusion of the 44-day Patriotic War and the conflict, Armenia persistently ignored its obligations, exacerbating the landmine threat by

misusing vital routes like the Lachin road for illegal purposes.

In 2022, alarming discoveries were made, revealing over 2,700 anti-personnel landmines produced in Armenia in the Lachin and Kalbajar regions. Subsequent counter-terrorism measures in September 2023 unveiled the staggering extent of the landmine threat, with more than 500,000 landmines planted in Azerbaijani territories. This evidence shattered Armenia's claims of non-production and non-export of landmines, exposing the truth to the international community.

Tragically, the consequences of this relentless landmine threat are dire, with 350 Azerbaijanis falling victim to explosions, occurring almost daily. Among them, 65 individuals lost their lives, including civilians and military personnel. The geographical spread of these incidents, often targeting civilian areas such as residential neighborhoods and cemeteries, underscores Armenia's deliberate intent to cause maximum harm.

Despite Azerbaijan's repeated calls for Armenia to provide landmine maps to mitigate this threat, Armenia has consistently denied their existence. Even when compelled by international pressure to disclose limited information, the reliability of this data proved to be alarmingly low, covering only a fraction of the affected areas.

Armenia's refusal to address the landmine threat not only undermines peace and confidence-building efforts but also perpetuates ethnic hostility and intolerance. On this International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, Azerbaijan renews its call upon the international community to condemn Armenia's landmine threat unequivocally. Urgent action is needed to compel Armenia to provide comprehensive landmine maps and support efforts to eliminate this deadly menace from Azerbaijani territory.

## **IX. Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan strengthen bilateral ties**

In recent years, Azerbaijan has emerged as a major player in shaping the agenda of Central Asia, leveraging its unique geographical position, robust economic growth, and extensive geopolitical potential. The strengthening of relations between Azerbaijan and the nations of Central Asia is evidenced by numerous high-level bilateral visits, highlighting the political commitment to enhancing cooperation. Notably, the visit of President of the Kyrgyz Republic Sadyr Japarov to Azerbaijan on April 24-25, marked a significant milestone in the deepening of ties between Baku and Bishkek.

During a joint press conference with his Kyrgyz counterpart, President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the centuries-old ties of cooperation, friendship, and interaction binding Azerbaijan and Central Asia. President Ilham Aliyev underscored the vital role of the Caspian Sea and the South Caucasus regions, stressing their significance in terms of energy resources, transportation routes, and trade.

While political relations between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan have been robust, economic cooperation has had a significant room to grow. Recent developments indicate a noticeable surge in bilateral trade and economic engagement. Trade between the two countries soared more than sixfold in 2023, reaching \$65 million. In the first quarter of 2024 alone, trade surpassed \$23 million, with Kyrgyzstan ranking among Azerbaijan's top three trading partners within the CIS countries. To further enhance economic collaboration, the Azerbaijan-Kyrgyz Development Fund was established in 2022. This fund aims to modernize industries, facilitate mutual investments, and strengthen bilateral economic ties. Following President Japarov's visit to Azerbaijan and the agreements signed, both countries agreed to increase the fund's capital from \$25 million to \$100 million. Additionally, they committed to eliminating double taxation on income.



President Aliyev expressed optimism about the potential of the development fund, citing a significant number of investment project applications received. He emphasized the need for swift implementation of projects within the framework of the joint investment fund, underscoring a shared commitment to maximizing economic cooperation between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan.

The recent visit of the Kyrgyz President to Azerbaijan marked a significant step forward in the bilateral relationship between the two countries. During this visit, both nations successfully concluded the 2nd session of the Joint Intergovernmental Council and signed a series of agreements covering various sectors such as energy, education, healthcare, and migration. President Zhaparov stressed the importance of a joint declaration aimed at establishing a deep strategic partnership between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan. He emphasized that this declaration formalizes the strong bilateral strategic ties between the two nations.

The strategic importance of Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan to each other is undeniable. Azerbaijan serves as a crucial gateway to Europe for Central Asia. President Japarov's visit to Azerbaijan's liberated territories highlights the strong support and mutual understanding between the two nations. As a sign of solidarity, Kyrgyzstan is assisting in the construction of a school in the liberated Aghdam. Azerbaijan has strengthened its connections with Central Asia and is collaborating closely with its partners to drive regional development. Joint initiatives between Azerbaijan and Kyrgyzstan, including transportation projects, energy initiatives, and infrastructure development, are poised to transform the Turkic world.