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I. Informal meeting of leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia, European Council, Germany and France in Chişinău

On June 1, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, President of the European Council Charles Michel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Olaf Scholz and President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron have held an informal meeting in Chişinău. The meeting took place at the sidelines of the 2nd European Political Community Summit. Azerbaijan has expressed some reservations regarding the format of the meeting due to the presence of President Macron, given the extreme pro-Armenia bias of the French president, who consistently and openly endorsed Yerevan's outrageous positions and narratives. In October 2022, President Emmanuel Macron made a statement following the Prague summit, accusing Azerbaijan of initiating a "terrible war" in 2020. While Macron stopped short of officially recognizing the self-proclaimed "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic," he labeled the area where it is situated as a "disputed territory." Moreover, in late 2020, French parliamentarians adopted legislative documents that advocated for the recognition of an illegal puppet entity known as the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic," established within the sovereign territories of Azerbaijan. This support continued even after the Armenian Prime Minister acknowledged Azerbaijan's territorial integrity during the Prague summit of the European Political Community on October 6, 2022, where President Macron was also present. In November of the same year, the French Senate passed a resolution urging for sanctions against Azerbaijan and for France to recognize

the illegal entity "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic". Following the Senate's resolution, the French National Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution calling on the government to consider imposing sanctions on unnamed individuals from Azerbaijan.

As a result of the Macron's irresponsible statements and legislative documents mentioned earlier, Azerbaijan declined to participate in the subsequent summit held in Brussels on December 7, 2022. This was due to the presence of the French President, who attempted to join the negotiations alongside President Michel. France's intervention nearly disrupted the Brussels format, leading to a halt in new summits taking place in the trilateral format. However, thanks to the efforts of the United States, a summit on May 14 of this year was made possible, marking a resumption of the trilateral meetings in Brussels.

Following the May 14 summit, where the Armenian side reaffirmed their recognition of the Karabakh region as part of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan demonstrated a gesture of goodwill in the peace process by agreeing to participate in the informal gathering with Macron. The main result of the meeting was the announcement of the upcoming summit between the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, mediated by Charles Michel, scheduled to take place in Brussels on July 21. After the meeting, the President of the European Council Charles Michel as an organizer of the Brussels format made a traditional press statement. "We had the opportunity to address all the topics that we discussed in Brussels in May – connectivity, security and rights, the border delimitation, the peace treaty. This meeting was a good preparation for the next meeting that will take place in Brussels on 21 July. It means that we

are working hard, and we intend to support all the positive efforts in the direction of normalisation of the relations. I also announced that I intend to invite again President Aliyev, Prime Minister Pashinyan, Chancellor Scholz, and President Macron in the margins of the next meeting of the European Political Community that will take place in Spain. It means that we will do everything on the EU side in order to help, to provide assistance, to make more progress in the direction of normalisation of the relations,” the statement read.

However, once again, the French President used this occasion to push for his own agenda at the expense of the peace process. Despite the customary practice of Charles Michel, the organizer of the Brussels format, issuing the press release on the meeting's outcomes, the French President went on to release his own unilateral statement, expressing a position that does not align with all parties involved. Commenting on the French president's irresponsible behavior, Aykhan Hajizada, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointed out that the French President's unilateral statement about the meeting inaccurately portrays and distorts the positions of the parties involved. “Unfortunately, this is not the first case of such behavior by France, and it does not make a positive contribution to the peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as to peace and stability in the region,” Aykhan Hajizada noted.

It is baffling why France chooses to disregard international law and principles and adopt such a hostile stance towards Azerbaijan. As a result, it is clear that Azerbaijan does not view the representative of France as a suitable mediator at the negotiation table. Whether

the engagement is informal, as in the case of the recent meeting during the EPC summit, or formal, the destructive intervention by the French side imposes significant obstacles to the already complex peace process led by the European Union. Instead of contributing to the resolution of the conflict, France's interference hinders progress and creates additional challenges. The peace process requires impartial mediation and a commitment to upholding international law and principles. The disruptive actions by the French side undermine these crucial elements, making it more difficult to achieve a sustainable and just solution. It is imperative that all parties involved in the peace process work together in a constructive manner to overcome these roadblocks and advance towards a lasting peace in the region.

II. Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia hold peace talks in the United States

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan held bilateral negotiations on June 27-29 at the George Schultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center in Arlington, Virginia. While in Washington they met with Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Assistant to the President and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. Speaking at a closing plenary session with Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia, U.S. Secretary of State Anthony J. Blinken noted “further progress” towards achieving a shared objective of the durable peace agreement as well as “a deepening understanding of the positions on other outstanding issues” and “a recognition that there is – there remains hard work to be done

to try to reach a final agreement.” The press release on the meeting issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan noted that “the Ministers and their teams continued progress on the draft bilateral Agreement on Peace and the Establishment of Interstate Relations. They reached an agreement on additional articles and achieved mutual understanding on the draft agreement, meanwhile acknowledging that the positions on some key issues require further work.”

The installation of a checkpoint on the Lachin road on April 23 gave a serious momentum to the peace process, leading to substantial progress between the parties involved. Following the conclusion of the 44-Day War, Azerbaijan consistently reported instances of the Armenian side, occasionally with the assistance of Russian peacekeepers, transferring military supplies, landmines, and troops to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan via the Lachin road. The presence of Iranian fighters entering the Karabakh region last year, alongside other actions to train local separatist forces, further alarmed Baku. These actions by the Armenian side were clear violations of the trilateral statement that mandated the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the region. The establishment of the checkpoint along the Lachin road provided Azerbaijan with essential tools to ensure lawful movement and prevent any misuse of the road by the Armenian Armed Forces for organized military operations, similar to what occurred following the occupation of the Lachin road during the First Karabakh War in May 1992.

Subsequently, we witnessed a month marked by intense peace negotiations between the two countries. On May 14, President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan convened in Brussels for the fifth

meeting on peace negotiations mediated by European Council President Charles Michel. This summit followed the earlier meetings between the foreign ministers of both countries facilitated by the United States in early May, followed by another ministerial meeting in Moscow on May 19, and two additional leader summits (May 25 in Moscow and June 1 in Chisinau, Moldova), followed by the 3-day talks between the Foreign Ministers of Azerbaijan and Armenia on June 27-29. These dynamics in the peace talks were accompanied by significant progress on several contentious issues.

Crucially, Prime Minister Pashinyan made noteworthy statements in May, acknowledging the Karabakh region as an integral part of Azerbaijan. This recognition further strengthens the legitimacy of the Lachin checkpoint and paves the way for more constructive discussions in subsequent negotiations. Notably, progress has been achieved in negotiations concerning the reopening of transportation routes within the region. This development presents a promising opportunity for Baku and Yerevan to potentially sign a peace treaty in the near future, provided they can surmount the remaining challenges on this path and maintain the positive atmosphere. However, it is important to address the persistent threat to this progress posed by the military provocation of the Armenian forces.

At the same time, Armenia continues to obstruct peacebuilding efforts. On June 15, the Armenian Armed Forces engaged in gunfire from their positions, utilizing firearms of different calibers, targeting the servicemen of Azerbaijan's State Border Service at the border checkpoint on the Lachin road. As a result of

the attack, a member of the State Border Service of Azerbaijan sustained injuries.

“This military provocation, in addition to constituting aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, aims at hindering the successful operation of the border checkpoint by Azerbaijan, the safe, free and unimpeded passage of Armenian residents, as well as the movement in the Lachin road. This military provocation by Armenia, which cannot digest the free movement of Armenian residents from the checkpoint without any difficulties, is a clear example of Armenia's lack of interest in building relations with Azerbaijan, as well as in the peace process. These military provocations by Armenia will be resolutely prevented, and its attempts to prevent the reintegration of the Armenian residents of Azerbaijan into our society will fail,” the statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan on the military provocation of Armenia against the Lachin state border checkpoint read.

Promptly following the incident, Azerbaijan initiated investigations through the law enforcement agencies. Following the incident on June 15, Azerbaijan implemented temporary restrictions on movement along the Lachin road. The provocative act committed by Armenia on June 15 against the checkpoint and Azerbaijani servicemen was a deliberate attempt to hinder its successful operation and impede safe and unrestricted access. Such actions are unacceptable and undermine the efforts towards peaceful cooperation and regional stability. Azerbaijan's subsequent measures to investigate the reasons behind the provocation and ensure the security of the border checkpoint and passage are deliberately mischaracterized as a "blockade" by the Armenian side. However, these actions

were necessary to maintain order, protect personnel, and guarantee the safe functioning of the checkpoint. Armenia must abandon its provocations and approaches negotiations on the peace agreement and the opening of communications in the region responsibly and constructively. Armenia must fulfill its obligations as outlined in the Trilateral Statement, including the complete withdrawal of its forces from Azerbaijani territories.

As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan noted in its statement, “presenting the temporary restriction of the operation of the Lachin border checkpoint regarding the investigations and the security measures implemented by Azerbaijan as a "blockade and ethnic cleansing" after the provocation of Armenia is part of Armenia's false propaganda,” adding that “it seems that Armenia cannot digest the passage of hundreds of Armenian residents in both directions in the spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation with the border guards of Azerbaijan since the start of the operation of the border checkpoint, and is insisting on continuing such provocative steps. Similarly, there is no basis for the claims of "humanitarian threats" against the Armenian residents living in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. The vehement refusal of Azerbaijan's offers to help the Armenian residents if necessary by those who present themselves as representatives of these residents show that Armenia is using this issue for its own narrow political goals. Additionally, efforts to misuse the issue of the "rights and security" of Armenian residents are unacceptable. Azerbaijan is making efforts towards the reintegration of the Armenian residents, and it is necessary to put an end to Armenia's interference in the process under

various pretexts, as well as its destructive obstruction.”

It is crucial for Armenia to refrain from any steps that undermine the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan. Rather than making unfounded statements, Armenia should demonstrate its commitment to genuine peace and regional cooperation. The installation of the checkpoint at the border by Azerbaijan aligns with international practices, as well as international law and norms. It is a common practice for countries to have customs and border checks when providing access to ethnic minorities within their borders. Moreover, the trilateral statement of November 10, 2020, does not contain any provisions prohibiting the establishment of a checkpoint along this road. In fact, according to the statement, the Republic of Azerbaijan is expected to ensure the safety of citizens, vehicles, and goods traveling along the Lachin corridor in both directions. Azerbaijan, also in accordance with international practices and standards, offers secure access to Armenian individuals crossing the checkpoint along the Lachin road while presenting their passports. Since the installation of the checkpoint on April 23, hundreds of Armenians have traveled to and from the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, benefiting from the transparent, safe, and well-regulated conditions provided for their passage.

One of the key provisions of the Trilateral Statement, signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia, was the complete withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from the territories of Azerbaijan. However, Armenia has yet to fully comply with this agreement, maintaining a military presence in Azerbaijani territory. This flagrant violation of international law undermines the principles of sovereignty and

poses a significant threat to regional stability. The Armenian side's failure to fully withdraw its armed forces from territories remains the primary threat to the security of Azerbaijan in the post-conflict period. Despite undeniable facts that disprove the presence of Armenian forces in Azerbaijani territory, Armenia continues to distort the truth. These formations not only engage in provocations at the border region but also impede the reconstruction efforts in Azerbaijan and the safe return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their lands. It is imperative that all Armenian armed formations are immediately withdrawn from territories of Azerbaijan. Armenia should demonstrate practical respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan, which includes the Karabakh region.

Armenia's persistent disregard for its obligations and failure to respect Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and sovereignty raises serious concerns. The Armenian side's attempts to misinterpret agreements and evade its obligations are counterproductive. Such actions not only hinder the restoration of peace but also work against Armenia's own interests. By engaging in destructive activities and failing to adhere to agreements, Armenia undermines its credibility and risks further isolation in the international community. Instead of engaging in constructive dialogue, Armenia continues its attempts to interfere in Azerbaijan's internal affairs. The reintegration of Armenian residents, an essential component of stabilizing the region, is hindered by Armenia's actions, which demonstrate a lack of interest in pursuing genuine peace. Armenia's continued interference in the reintegration of Armenian residents and its recent announcement of arms buildup are detrimental to the peace

process in the region. The region has already suffered from years of conflict, and an escalation in arms buildup only serves to perpetuate tensions and hinder progress. To truly demonstrate respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, Armenia must halt its interventions and prioritize peaceful dialogue. Learning from history and embracing diplomatic solutions will pave the way for lasting stability and mutually beneficial outcomes. It is essential for Armenia to fulfill its obligations and work collaboratively with Azerbaijan to establish a peaceful environment that benefits all parties involved. It is crucial for Armenia to recognize that the path to a sustainable and prosperous future lies in fulfilling its commitments and engaging constructively in the peace process.

Armenia's failure to restore transport connections between the western regions of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, as outlined in paragraph 9 of the trilateral statement, exemplifies yet another instance of Armenia's obstructionist approach. Despite the clear provisions in the trilateral statement, Armenia has neglected its responsibility to restore transport connections between Azerbaijan's western regions and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. This delay not only disrupts the process but also undermines the prospects for regional integration and economic development. Armenia's failure to prioritize the construction of new transport communications demonstrates a lack of commitment to fostering stability and connectivity in the region. Armenia's obstruction of the restoration of transport connections between Azerbaijan's western regions and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic represents a clear violation of the trilateral statement. The delays, excuses, and political polemics

employed by Armenia demonstrate a lack of commitment to regional stability and connectivity. It is crucial for Armenia to prioritize constructive action and fulfill its obligations, ensuring the timely construction of transport communications that will foster integration, economic growth, and lasting peace in the region.

III. Türkiye-Azerbaijan alliance is indispensable force for regional stability

On June 12, President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived in Azerbaijan as part of his first foreign tour after the May 28 reelection. The visit underscored the significance of the bilateral relationship between Türkiye and Azerbaijan and aimed to demonstrate the strength of the bilateral ties between the two nations. By prioritizing Azerbaijan, President Erdogan showcased the mutual significance of the Türkiye-Azerbaijan relationship and signaled the strong foundation upon which both nations will continue to build their alliance. The visit affirmed the shared values and interests that unite Türkiye and Azerbaijan. The leaders of Türkiye and Azerbaijan, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and İlham Aliyev, reaffirmed the unshakable bond of friendship and brotherhood between the two nations during their joint press statements in Baku. Following their face-to-face talks and discussions with their respective delegations, President Erdogan and President Aliyev emphasized the enduring cooperation and unity between Türkiye and Azerbaijan. President Erdogan highlighted that Türkiye and Azerbaijan will continue to foster close cooperation based on the guiding principle of "One nation, two states." The leaders emphasized that the friendship and

brotherhood between the two countries remain unbreakable, serving as a strong foundation for their collaborative efforts across various fields. President Erdogan also acknowledged the significance of energy as a crucial topic on the bilateral agenda. He noted that there is substantial interest in gas supplies through Türkiye, particularly from Europe. Highlighting the constant requests Türkiye receives from Europe, President Erdogan reaffirmed the commitment to meet the demands and continue efforts in this direction. The leaders recognized the importance of energy cooperation in strengthening regional ties and ensuring energy security.

During their joint press statements, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Türkiye and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan emphasized the significance of resolving the Zangezur Corridor issue promptly. They acknowledged that the establishment of the corridor would not only strengthen the bilateral ties between Türkiye and Azerbaijan but also create new opportunities for regional cooperation. Furthermore, both leaders underscored the growing importance of transportation and energy sectors in fostering collaboration between the two countries. President Erdogan highlighted the importance of resolving the Zangezur Corridor issue swiftly, emphasizing its potential to strengthen Türkiye-Azerbaijan relations. The opening of the corridor is seen as inevitable and will create new opportunities for multiple countries, positively impacting regional cooperation. The leaders expressed their commitment to working towards the realization of this vital transportation route.

President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the growing volume of cargo transported through the Caspian Sea and Azerbaijan, highlighting the need to expand transport and logistics

capabilities. President Ilham Aliyev outlined measures taken to enhance infrastructure, including the modernization of the Baku port, railways, shipyards, and other transportation facilities. These developments aim to meet increasing demand and provide efficient connectivity within the region.

President Ilham Aliyev mentioned the significance of exporting Azerbaijani gas to European countries through Türkiye, acknowledging the high demand in this regard. President Ilham Aliyev expanded on the energy cooperation between the two nations, emphasizing collaborative efforts in natural gas, oil, petroleum products, petrochemicals, and electricity sectors. The leaders recognized the broad scope of energy cooperation and expressed their commitment to further exploration of renewable energy opportunities.

President Aliyev emphasized the importance of unity between Azerbaijan and Türkiye for the South Caucasus region and the wider Turkic world. President Ilham Aliyev highlighted their shared commitment to a common foreign policy approach, aligning their positions on regional and global issues. The leaders emphasized the significance of their united stance in shaping regional dynamics and promoting stability.

On June 13, President Ilham Aliyev and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attended the inauguration of the new Air Force Central Command Post. Moreover, on June 20, Chairman of the Defense Industry Directorate under the President of Türkiye Haluk Gorgun announced that Türkiye and Azerbaijan are going to implement the HAKİM Air Command Control System project. This joint endeavor, considered one of the most critical projects undertaken by both countries' Air Forces, aims

to establish a robust air command and control system. By integrating advanced sensor technologies, the HAKİM system will enable the evaluation of diverse data sets, resulting in a comprehensive aerial picture. The HAKİM Air Command Control System project has been executed in close collaboration between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, reflecting the mutual commitment to enhancing defense capabilities. The project's slogan, "Two states, one nation, one air space," which echoes the sentiments of the Great Leader of Azerbaijan, Heydar Aliyev, underlines the shared objectives and strong bonds between the two nations. Upon completion, the HAKİM Air Command Control System will establish a joint airspace control zone spanning from the Aegean Sea to the Caspian Basin. This comprehensive coverage will facilitate efficient coordination and control of aerial activities, ensuring enhanced security and defense readiness. The HAKİM Air Command Control System functions by consolidating data received from a variety of sensors with distinct types and capabilities. Through an intricate evaluation process, the system generates a well-defined and accurate aerial picture, empowering decision-makers with valuable insights. This robust technological framework allows for real-time monitoring, analysis, and effective management of air operations, thereby strengthening the overall defense capabilities of both Türkiye and Azerbaijan. The successful implementation of the HAKİM Air Command Control System project demonstrates the unwavering commitment of Türkiye and Azerbaijan to advancing their defense capabilities. Through this collaboration, both nations aim to establish an integrated air command and control system, bolstering their security and promoting regional stability. The HAKİM system's ability

to merge data from various sensors will provide a comprehensive aerial picture, enabling swift and informed decision-making. As Türkiye and Azerbaijan continue their joint efforts, they set a remarkable example of effective partnership and cooperation in the realm of defense technology.

During the joint press statements, President Ilham Aliyev expressed concern over the diminishing importance and effectiveness of international law in contemporary geopolitical processes. President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the failure of negotiations in resolving the 30-year-long Armenian occupation of territories of Azerbaijan and emphasized the role of strength in achieving results. President Ilham Aliyev also announced the continued development of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan based on the Turkish model, as well as plans for 16 joint military exercises. Additionally, both leaders discussed cooperation in the field of education, with President Erdogan announcing the opening of the Turkish-Azerbaijani University.

The joint press statements by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Türkiye and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan highlighted the importance of the Zangezur Corridor's resolution and its potential to strengthen bilateral ties. The leaders underscored the growth of transportation and logistics capabilities, emphasizing the development of modern infrastructure to accommodate increasing cargo volume and enhance connectivity. Energy cooperation, particularly in the export of Azerbaijani gas and the exploration of renewable energy, was emphasized as a significant aspect of collaboration. Additionally, the unity between Azerbaijan and Türkiye was recognized as crucial for the South Caucasus region and the

broader Turkic world, reinforcing their commitment to a common foreign policy approach. These statements solidify the shared goals and strategic partnership between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, fostering regional cooperation and stability. President Ilham Aliyev's statements shed light on the challenges posed by geopolitical processes that have diminished the effectiveness of international law. He emphasized the role of strength in achieving results, citing the 30-year-long Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani lands as an example. The Army's development based on the Turkish model was highlighted, indicating the commitment to enhance defense capabilities and align strategies with Türkiye. President Ilham Aliyev further announced plans for 16 joint military exercises, emphasizing the importance of collaborative training and preparedness. The leaders also discussed cooperation in the field of education, with the announcement of the upcoming Turkish-Azerbaijani University, reflecting the commitment to fostering educational partnerships. These developments demonstrate the ongoing efforts to strengthen ties between Azerbaijan and Türkiye in various domains.

IV. Azerbaijan and Pakistan strengthen bilateral ties

On June 15, Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif paid an official visit to Azerbaijan. The visit of Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Azerbaijan marks a significant milestone that is expected to greatly enhance bilateral relations in various areas, underscoring its profound importance. The bond between Azerbaijan and Pakistan is characterized by robust political, economic, and cultural connections. The two nations

share a warm and amicable association founded on shared values, mutual interests, and respectful engagement. During the joint press statements with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that the relationship between the two countries is deeply rooted in a common history, culture, traditions, religion, solidarity, and mutual support. "We are very grateful to Pakistan for its support to Azerbaijan during the times of occupation and the 44 days of the Patriotic War of 2020. Pakistan is the country that did not establish diplomatic relations with Armenia because of occupation. And this is a natural position of brothers. We are very grateful for that" President Ilham Aliyev underscored, adding that "People of Azerbaijan know very well who was with us during the times of 44-day War - it was Türkiye and Pakistan who expressed strong political support to us."

President Ilham Aliyev also noted that "we discussed a broad range of issues of our bilateral agenda, regional development, and regional security issues. We have a full mutual understanding of how to move forward. We agreed that soon several delegations from Azerbaijan will visit Pakistan. One will focus on trade and investment missions, another on issues related to energy cooperation, and the third will address cooperation issues in the defense industry. We also agreed that we would work hard to enhance our mutual trade. The step towards that will be the signing of an MoU to start working on that and work on the list of items that will be included in the list of preferential trade between our countries. Great opportunities in the area of energy, whether it's fossil fuel projects or projects related to renewable energy sources. We also agreed today that we would increase the number of flights between our cities and the

capitals. So, that was a very good result of today's meeting.”

Energy cooperation plays a crucial role in the economic partnership between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. Azerbaijan, being a country abundant in energy resources, holds the potential to export oil and gas to Pakistan. Both nations have explored various avenues to collaborate on energy, including the exploration of pipeline projects and the import of LNG. The framework agreement for LNG importation from Azerbaijan has received approval from the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Pakistani Cabinet. This agreement will be implemented through government-to-government trading, with Pakistan LNG Ltd (PLL), a state-owned company, facilitating the process. Initially, the agreement will be valid for a period of one year, with the possibility of extending it for an additional year. Under this agreement, Azerbaijan's state oil company, SOCAR, will provide one shipment of liquefied natural gas (LNG) per month. The offer for each shipment will be presented 45 days before the scheduled delivery window, and PLL will have a specific timeframe to accept or reject the offer. The pricing of LNG will be in US dollars and determined by SOCAR, who will provide the pricing details to PLL.

“Azerbaijan is rich in natural resources, including major oil and gas resources. We, of course, have shortages in this area. We are a country dependent on very expensive imports. This is very expensive for us. Last year, we spent 27 billion US dollars in this area. In other words, my dear brother, we cannot overcome this because we are faced with a number of various challenges. Our country is under great pressure due to inflation, rising imported oil prices and the Ukraine conflict. Just imagine –

because of that, we spent 27 billion US dollars on energy. Praise be to Allah, Azerbaijan has this wealth, and we want to cooperate with Azerbaijan in petrochemicals. We are currently negotiating with Saudi Arabia's “Aramco,” we would be very happy if Azerbaijan could join this issue and take over a part of the money we are spending on this field as an investment. We have potential in the field of solar energy. Let me assure you, my dear brother, that if we realize our dreams through hard work, we can exchange this very expensive cost for solar energy, i.e., the cost of importing oil. We can even export this energy. It is possible. Because our potential in this field is equal to 10,000 megawatts. I am inviting you too. You have also expressed a positive opinion about this issue, as Azerbaijan can participate and invest in this field. We are ready to provide all support for Azerbaijan to enter this area,” Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif noted.

Moreover, Azerbaijan and Pakistan have prioritized improving connectivity and transportation links. As stated by President Ilham Aliyev in a joint press statement with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, both countries have agreed to increase the number of flights between their cities, including the capital cities of Baku and Islamabad. The strategic relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan are characterized by shared values, mutual respect, and a desire for cooperation. The deep-rooted historical, cultural, and political ties have formed the foundation of the strong bilateral relationship. Through political, economic, defense, and cultural cooperation, Pakistan and Azerbaijan have forged a lasting partnership that contributes to regional stability and prosperity.

V. Azerbaijan continues its unwavering humanitarian support of Ukraine

On June 1, President Ilham Aliyev held a meeting with President Volodymyr Zelensky at the sidelines of the 2nd European Political Community Summit in Chişinău, Moldova. The leaders discussed various aspects of the bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Ukraine, including President Ilham Aliyev's visit to Ukraine in January 2022 and the fruitful discussions held during that visit. Both leaders expressed their contentment with the progress made in the Azerbaijan-Ukraine bilateral relationship. President Ilham Aliyev mentioned that a new ambassador to Ukraine had been appointed and would soon commence his duties. President Zelensky expressed his gratitude and appreciation for Azerbaijan's humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, as well as their care for Ukrainian children and the arrangement of their visit to Azerbaijan. During their conversation, both leaders emphasized their satisfaction with the mutual support for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty within international organizations, underscoring the strong bond between Azerbaijan and Ukraine. President Ilham Aliyev stood out as the only leader from the South Caucasus who had a meeting with President Zelensky in the framework of the European Political Community Summit, carrying substantial political significance amidst Ukraine's continuous battle against Russian aggression. Notably, one symbolic detail of the meeting was the fact that both leaders used English as the mode of communication despite both leaders being fluent in Russian.

Azerbaijan and Ukraine have officially recognized each other as "strategic partners"

and consistently upheld the principle of respecting one another's territorial integrity and internationally recognized borders. In January 2022, just before the large-scale invasion and during heightened hostilities, President Ilham Aliyev stood out as the sole leader from the post-Soviet region (excluding the Baltic States) to visit Kyiv. During the visit, President Ilham Aliyev signed several agreements to enhance bilateral cooperation and expressed unequivocal support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

This recent meeting between the two leaders demonstrates Azerbaijan's unwavering support for Ukraine, even in the face of pressure from Russia. The government of Azerbaijan has reported providing approximately €20 million in humanitarian aid to Ukraine since the onset of the full-scale war. Additionally, Azerbaijan's state energy company, SOCAR, has been offering free fuel at its gas stations in Ukraine, specifically for ambulances and vehicles operated by the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (DSNS). Given that there are over 50 SOCAR stations in Ukraine, this assistance could have been crucial for the operations of the DSNS. Moreover, Azerbaijan has expanded its humanitarian aid to Ukraine by sending various types of assistance, such as medical supplies and clothing. Responding to power shortages and heating deficiencies in certain regions of Ukraine, Azerbaijan dispatched 45 power transformers and 50 generators. Notably, the Russian Foreign Ministry expressed confusion regarding Azerbaijan's provision of transformers and generators, suggesting that they were military aid to Ukraine.

The representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry conveyed their puzzlement to local

media in December 2022, stating that “Baku's actions are perplexing. The Russian Armed Forces are targeting Ukraine's critical infrastructure, which the Kyiv regime utilizes for military purposes. The supplies from Azerbaijan, though unlikely to significantly alter the situation, do not qualify as humanitarian aid.” Despite this reaction, Azerbaijan has continued its assistance. In a recent demonstration of solidarity, Azerbaijan furnished humanitarian aid, including pumps, boats, protective suits, and uniforms, to alleviate the consequences of the Kakhovka hydroelectric plant dam collapse on June 6th.

During a meeting on June 1, President Zelensky expressed gratitude to President Ilham Aliyev for Baku's assistance in the reconstruction of Ukraine's infrastructure. “We highly appreciate Azerbaijan's participation in the restoration of infrastructure facilities in Kyiv Oblast. We hope for assistance in the further reconstruction of Ukraine. In the post-war period, we look forward to Azerbaijan's active participation in investment projects in Ukraine,” Zelensky underscored.

In addition to providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine, Azerbaijan has stood out among post-Soviet countries by refusing to assist Russia in circumventing Western sanctions. This stance taken by Azerbaijan, aligning with their overall support for Ukraine, sharply contrasts with the actions of Armenia. For instance, a recent international report reveals a significant increase of 187% in Armenia's exports to Russia in 2022 compared to the previous year. What raises further speculation is that over half of these exports originated from third countries, suggesting Armenia's potential involvement in redirecting Western imports to Russia to evade sanctions. This circumstance has led the United States to identify Armenia

as one of five countries posing challenges in terms of sanctions evasion. This situation contradicts the statement made by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, who attempts to convince the Western public that Armenia is not an ally of Russia in its conflict with Ukraine. Some analysts attribute Azerbaijan's more independent position in this current geopolitical context to the country's resources and strategic geographical location as a crucial link on both the Middle Corridor and the international North-South Transportation Corridor.

Unlike Armenia, which became part of Russia's military and economic alliances decades ago and received Russian support to sustain a three-decade-long occupation of 20% of Azerbaijani territory, Baku has consistently refrained from aligning its foreign policy with that of Russia. Despite Moscow's insistence and pressure, Azerbaijan has avoided integration projects led by the Kremlin. In light of this context, Azerbaijan's support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders reflects the country's broader principles in foreign policy. Having personally endured invasion and ethnic cleansing by neighboring Armenia, Azerbaijan has a deep understanding of the challenges that Ukraine currently faces.

Speaking at the Ukraine Recovery Conference, organized in London on 21-22 June, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov announced that so far the volume of Azerbaijan's humanitarian aid to Ukraine exceeds one thousand tons and 20 million US dollars. On June 10, a shipment of aid, consisting of essential items such as water pipes, water pumps, life jackets, inflatable boats, and wading overalls, was delivered to Ukraine. Minister of Foreign Affairs of

Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov also announced that Azerbaijan plans to contribute significantly through the supply of electric equipment and the implementation of reconstruction projects in the city of Irpin, with a total aid package amounting to no less than 10 million US dollars.

Azerbaijan understands the urgency of addressing the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and has taken swift action. On February 27, 2022, Azerbaijan sent its first humanitarian cargo, consisting of medicines and medical supplies, to Ukraine. This initial delivery was followed by subsequent shipments, mainly comprising medicaments and food, to provide essential support to those in need. Recognizing the vulnerability of children during times of conflict, Azerbaijan has prioritized their well-being, offering fully covered medical and social-psychological rehabilitation services to one hundred Ukrainian children. Furthermore, Azerbaijan has plans to double this number by the end of the year, emphasizing its commitment to the most vulnerable members of society. As a responsible member of the international community, Azerbaijan remains dedicated to providing ongoing humanitarian assistance to the people of Ukraine. Azerbaijan has pledged to provide Ukraine with a demining machine for humanitarian demining purposes despite the fact that Azerbaijan itself has major difficulties in this area. Given massive contamination of liberated territories of Azerbaijan with landmines by Armenia, which refuses to provide accurate maps of minefields and continues to plant mines in the sovereign territories of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan

understands the importance of demining efforts to ensure safety and security in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine. This commitment underscores Azerbaijan's determination to alleviate civilian suffering and contribute to post-conflict recovery.

Azerbaijan has identified the city of Irpin as a focal point for its reconstruction efforts in Ukraine. With the aim of accelerating recovery, Azerbaijan plans to supply electric equipment necessary for infrastructure restoration and development projects in Irpin. This contribution will provide critical support to rebuild vital services and contribute to the city's overall revitalization. Azerbaijan's contribution to Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction is a testament to the solidarity between the two nations. Recognizing the importance of standing together during times of crisis, Azerbaijan is determined to offer meaningful support to help Ukraine rebuild and thrive. By actively engaging in reconstruction projects and providing financial assistance, Azerbaijan seeks to foster long-term stability and contribute to Ukraine's overall recovery. Azerbaijan's commitment to supporting Ukraine's recovery is rooted in the spirit of collaboration and mutual benefit. The aid provided will not only assist Ukraine in rebuilding its infrastructure but also strengthen the bonds between the two countries. Azerbaijan's experience in post-conflict reconstruction and its willingness to share expertise will contribute to the success of these initiatives and support Ukraine's journey towards sustainable development.