

BULLETIN

HIGHLIGHT OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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I. Misguided attempts to resuscitate the Minsk Group is not going to pay off

Despite the fact that Azerbaijan has repeatedly stated that the Minsk Group is obsolete and irrelevant in the current situation, the delusional belief that this outstanding embodiment of diplomatic ineptitude may still somehow be salvageable weirdly persists in some international circles. Since its launch, the Minsk Group came out with a number of proposals for the resolution of the conflict but continuously failed to produce any tangible results. Explaining how exactly the Minsk Group “worked” in the past, U.S. Ambassador Richard E. Hoagland, former U.S. Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, noted: “We stayed in five-star hotels where we were usually assigned suites on the executive floor that gave us access to a private dining room and full bar at no additional expense. We always sought out the best restaurants in the cities where we found ourselves. We lived well while we showed the OSCE flag and reminded Baku and Yerevan that the Minsk Group exists. But to be blunt, very, very little ever got accomplished.”

The final blow to the Minsk Group before the 44-Day War was dealt by Armenia’s Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan who rejected all the settlement formulas proposed by the mediators and demanded the changing of the negotiation format in order to include the representatives of the separatist entity installed in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The remnants of the Minsk Group’s credibility got further destroyed during and after the 44-Day War when France ignoring the principle of neutrality as a mediator openly sided with Armenia. In a few weeks after the war, both chambers of the French parliament almost unanimously adopted resolutions recognizing the so-called “Nagorno-Karabakh

Republic” even though Armenia itself has not recognized it as an independent state actor. This came on the top of the fact that Paris had played a brazenly pro-Armenian role also in the 1993 negotiations at the United Nations Security Council when the organization held discussions over the aggression by Armenia against Azerbaijan. At the insistence of France, the perpetrators of the invasion were mentioned as “local Armenian forces” (i.e., not Armenia as a State) and the conflict was treated “not under the Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter as an “act of aggression,” but under the weaker Chapter VI as a “dispute that should be settled peacefully.”

Thus, the OSCE Minsk Group has long overstayed its welcome and attempts to revive its activities are futile and a waste of time. As Robert Cutler put it, “for 30 years, the Minsk Group failed to produce results; the recent victory by Azerbaijani military forces—ending Armenia’s occupation—leaves it with nothing left to do. It is now bankrupt and dead. The sooner it is buried, the sooner energies for real peace and reconciliation, not to mention physical reconstruction, can be turned to the future rather than the past,” adding that “for the Minsk Group to have any role at all, it would require not only new co-chairs but also new terms of reference. But events are moving and will continue to move too fast for cumbersome large-scale, multilateral OSCE diplomacy to keep up.”

The Minsk Group had the mandate to help to find a resolution to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan for 30 years. Their failure to achieve anything and the fact that there is no deal between the parties in the conflict on the Minsk Group’s future role in the transformed situation after the 2020 war leaves this process without any legitimacy, argued Vasif Huseynov, a senior advisor at the Center of Analysis of International Relations

(Air Center). "The calls of the French and American representatives to give a second chance to the Minsk Group are perceived in Baku as more of geopolitical nature rather than as an honest attempt to contribute to the peace efforts", he stressed.

Against this backdrop, on August 24, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken appointed Philip T. Reeker as the new senior adviser to the US State Department for the Caucasus negotiations. "I am appointing Ambassador Philip T. Reeker as Senior Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations. In this capacity, Ambassador Reeker will serve as U.S. OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair," the State Department quoted Blinken as saying, adding that "the United States is committed to helping Armenia and Azerbaijan negotiate a long-term political settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict." According to US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, "Ambassador Reeker will engage bilaterally, with like-minded partners such as the European Union, and through his role as an OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair, to facilitate direct dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan." Voicing its disapproval of the statement made by Secretary Blinken, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan stressed clearly that efforts to revive the inoperative Minsk Group could lead to the US isolating itself from the normalization process between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

"United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken's press statement on the appointment of Philip Reeker to the post of Senior Advisor for Caucasus Negotiations causes surprise, as it shows an approach far from the post-conflict reality in the region," said spokesperson for Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Leyla Abdullayeva as she responded to media's question regarding the press statement of the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "Azerbaijan's position regarding the Minsk

Group has been repeatedly and clearly expressed at the highest level. Attempts to "resuscitate" the de-facto non-functioning Minsk Group may result the USA to be estranged from the process of normalization of Azerbaijan-Armenia relations. The Karabakh conflict has been resolved and Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan. The international community, including our partners, should understand that connecting negotiations on the normalization of Azerbaijan-Armenia relations with the Karabakh issue does not serve normalization at all," the spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan added.

Moreover, the ambassadors of the US and France refused to participate in the conference dedicated to the restoration and reconstruction of the liberated Azerbaijani territories that was held in Shusha on August 24. The conference was attended by more than 100 diplomats and military representatives from more than 60 countries and 19 international organizations. Commenting on the notable absence of the ambassadors of the US and France, Hikmat Hajiyev, Assistant to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Head of the Department of Foreign Policy Affairs of the Presidential Administration, pointed out that "The ambassadors of France and the US to Azerbaijan are not taking part in the visit to Shusha today. They have openly ignored the invitation of the Azerbaijani government." Hikmat Hajiyev underscored that "we regard this as disrespect for our territorial integrity. France and the US have made no contribution to the resolution of the conflict as co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group over the past 30 years. They made Azerbaijan lose time during these 30 years. By refusing to join the visit, they have once again demonstrated negligence."

While Armenia is keen to bring this mission back, Azerbaijan vehemently rejects any discussions within this format on the pre-war agenda. By this, Azerbaijan primarily refers to the initiatives to discuss the status of Karabakh which for Baku is not a matter of international negotiations as the region is internationally-recognized as part of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Minsk Group, after the 44-Day War, failed to put forward any proposals that would address the post-war realities on the ground. Under these circumstances, the insistent calls by the French and American diplomats regarding the revitalization of this group are perceived in Baku as an attempt to forcefully impose something on Azerbaijan.

Moreover, the Minsk Group does not have a reputation for effectively contributing to the peace process between the two South Caucasian republics. The negotiations mediated by the co-chairs for up to three decades failed to make any breakthrough in the conflict and eventually led to the resumption of hostilities in late 2020. The group never countered Armenia's blatant efforts to abuse the peace process while reinforcing the outcomes of the First Karabakh War and creating a *fait accompli* for next stages of negotiations. They did not take any measures against Armenia in early 2020 when the country's leadership rejected all the settlement proposals of the Minsk Group and called for the restructuring the negotiations by including the representatives of the separatist Armenian regime in Karabakh. As one American diplomat rightfully said, the Minsk Group was set up to manage the conflict not to resolve it. The Minsk Group has, therefore, extremely negative reputation in the Azerbaijani society. That said, the calls of the French and American representatives to give a second chance to the Minsk Group are perceived in Baku as more of geopolitical

nature rather than as an honest attempt to contribute to the peace efforts. The post-war situation in the region and the dishonorable track record of the Minsk Group give a certain ground for these perceptions.

In June, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Karen Donfried, during her visit to the South Caucasus, called for the reactivation of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and declared readiness to cooperate with Moscow on this matter. "We continue to believe that it is a very important format, particularly on Nagorno-Karabakh", Donfried noted. "Azerbaijan has not been supportive of the Minsk Group co-chair process, the United States is," Donfried said in reference to the position of Baku which has consistently stated since the end of the 44-Day War that the Minsk Group is defunct, and its pre-war agenda is outdated. Surprisingly, Donfried didn't publicly discuss the Minsk Group in Baku that was her first stop in the South Caucasus. In Armenia, similar statements are often made by other representatives of the USA and France. For example, on July 20, France's ambassador to Armenia Anne Louyot, reiterating the readiness to relaunch the Minsk Group, lamented that Russia refuses to cooperate with them in this format. "We are sorry for the fact, but we remain ready to resume the dialogue in the Minsk Group format," Ambassador Louyot stated. A week later, the American ambassador in Yerevan also voiced this desire and reaffirmed Washington's readiness for renewed cooperation with Russia within the Minsk Group.

As Vasif Huseynov, pointed out, "this situation begs several questions, but most importantly: First, why do the USA and France insist on the relaunch of the Minsk Group and repeatedly call for cooperation with Russia in this format even though they are at loggerheads on almost

all other geopolitical issues related with Eurasia? And second, how do such calls of the Western states affect the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan?" It looks like the Minsk Group is seen by Washington and Paris as a way of securing a place in the negotiations concerning the future of the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Although the European Union (EU) has been playing a major role in the peace process since a few months ago, the agenda of the EU-mediated talks is focused on the interstate relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and, as such, does not cover the Karabakh question. According to the outcomes of the 44-Day War, Russia has deployed its peacekeeping mission to Karabakh and thus secured a hitherto indispensable role in designing the region's future, while Armenia is increasingly marginalized. There is, therefore, no other international format which the West can utilize to engage with this process – besides the Minsk Group."

Robert Cutler noted that "the only way to resolve the conflict once and for all is a formal peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In diplomatic practice, this is how wars end. State frontiers are authoritatively delimited and formally mutually recognized. Even Ter-Petrosyan, Armenia's president from 1991 to 1998, noted Armenia is the only country in the world that fails to recognize Azerbaijan's territorial integrity—and he sees circumstances that will compel his country to do so." The OSCE's peace effort in Nagorno-Karabakh is obsolete and useless. The international community should reconsider the role of the Minsk Group in the post-war peace process between Baku and Yerevan and dissolve it entirely. "Laying it to rest can pave the way for real reconciliation and reconstruction," as Robert Cutler succinctly put it.

II. Azerbaijan carries out Operation "Revenge" against Armenian sabotage groups

On August 3, Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan said that one serviceman was killed in Lachin as a result of a sabotage act organized by illegal Armenian armed formations in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporarily deployed. "Members of illegal Armenian armed formations in the territory of Azerbaijan, where the Russian peacekeeping contingent is temporarily deployed, grossly violated the provisions of the Statement of November 10, 2020, and committed a terrorist and sabotage act against the Azerbaijan Army Units on August 3. Serviceman Kazimov Anar Rustam became Shehid as a result of the terrorist and sabotage act. Moreover, members of illegal Armenian armed detachments attempted to seize the Girkhgiz high ground, located on a mountain range covering the territory of the Kalbajar and Lachin regions, and establish new combat positions there," the Ministry of Defense noted in its statement.

The Ministry of Defense also announced that it conducted the retaliatory operation against these sabotage and terrorist groups codenamed Operation "Revenge". As a result of the operation, the Girkhgiz high ground, including Saribaba and several advantageous high grounds along the Karabakh range of the Lesser Caucasus mountain system came under control of Azerbaijan Army Units. "During the operation, several combat positions of illegal Armenian armed detachments were destroyed, and an airstrike was inflicted on a military unit stationed in the Yukhari Oratagh settlement of the former Aghdara region. As a result, the manpower of illegal Armenian detachments was annihilated and wounded, as well as several D-30 howitzers, military

vehicles and a large amount of ammunition were destroyed,” the ministry added.

“The Republic of Azerbaijan has repeatedly stated that the presence of Armenian armed forces and illegal Armenian armed formations in the territories of Azerbaijan, where peacekeepers of the Russian Federation are temporarily stationed, remains a source of danger contrary to the Joint Statement. The demilitarization of those territories, the complete withdrawal of Armenian troops, and the disarmament of illegal Armenian armed detachments are absolutely necessary. The Ministry of Defense hereby declares that following the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, any terror and provocation committed in the sovereign territories of the country will be resolutely prevented and countermeasures will be even more crushing,” the Ministry of Defense warned.

“The Azerbaijani side has repeatedly stated that Armenia has not fulfilled the obligations assumed by it in accordance with the trilateral statement of November 10, 2020, and that the illegal Armenian armed detachments have not yet been withdrawn from the territory of Azerbaijan. The bloody incident that took place on August 3 once again demonstrates that Armenia grossly violated the trilateral agreement, and at the same time undermined efforts toward the normalization of relations between the two states. This is also an indicator of Armenia's disrespect for the efforts of international mediators. All responsibility for the incident that took place on the territory of Azerbaijan lies with the political and military leadership of Armenia, which has not yet withdrawn illegal armed detachments from the territories of the neighboring state. We will continue to take all appropriate measures to ensure the security of Azerbaijan's territories and the integrity of its

borders,” Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated.

In his interview with local television channels on August 12, President Ilham Aliyev noted that “the Armenian side resorted to yet another armed provocation. As a result of this military provocation, one of our soldiers became a martyr. May Allah rest his soul in peace. May Allah rest the souls of all our martyrs in peace. However, everyone saw and should see that the blood of our martyr did not remain unavenged. We immediately carried out Operation Revenge, avenged the death of our martyr and severely punished the enemy. Operation Revenge lasted several hours and was a punitive measure. The blood of the Azerbaijani martyr cost the enemy dearly, and they should not forget that. If a similar provocation is perpetrated again, the response will be the same. No-one can stop us, no-one can be in our way. We can conduct any operation on our lands at any time. Simply, the fact that Operation Revenge was very effective but short shows that our strength is in place. At the same time, it showed that we do not want a new war. Because the second Karabakh war showed our strength and we achieved what we wanted through military and then by military-political means. We will achieve our other dreams too. We will achieve them when the time is right. It is a reality that there are both tactical and strategic steps on our agenda. I am sure that Armenia is also aware that we know what to do and when to do it, and we always do what we say. We have repeatedly warned Armenia not to play with fire, to behave, to accept the new reality and not resort to military provocations. Unfortunately, we have had to teach them another lesson. I do hope that this lesson will be remembered this time.”

Commenting on the unfounded accusations made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of

Armenia, Azerbaijan`s Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that “accusations shared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia against Azerbaijan in violation of the trilateral statement are nothing but mere hypocrisy. We remind that Azerbaijan has repeatedly reported Armenia’s failure to fulfill the provisions of the statement dated November 10, 2020, signed by the leaders of the three countries, in particular, that the Armenian armed units have not yet been withdrawn from the sovereign territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Pursuant to Article 4 of the trilateral statement reads: “the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation shall be deployed in parallel with the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces.” In addition to numerous evidence on the Azerbaijani side about the presence of illegal Armenian armed forces on the territory of Azerbaijan, this fact was also acknowledged by Armenian officials. Thus, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armenian Armed Forces Sahak Sahakyan on June 29, 2022 at a meeting with the parents of the recruits from Armenia stated that: “Armenian conscripts in the Karabakh region will be replaced by servicemen of active military service”, as well as the Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia Armen Grigoryan in an interview dated July 19, 2022 reminded that “the withdrawal of the units of the Armed Forces of Armenia from Karabakh will be completed by September of this year”. Both statements contradict the obligations assumed by Armenia, and it clearly demonstrates that Armenia still illegally deploys its armed military formations on the territory of a neighboring state.”

“We emphasize that the reason for the recent tension is the presence of illegal Armenian armed troops in the territories of Azerbaijan and provocations instigated by them. The bloody incident and killing of an Azerbaijani

soldier on August 3 is precisely the result of Armenia's failure to fulfill its obligations. Referring to Article 6 of the trilateral statement, we bring to the attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, which accuses Azerbaijan of violating the relevant provision, that the construction of a new road along the Lachin corridor has been going on for many months along the agreed route, and the Armenian side was and is duly informed about the developments. If the Armenian side aims to delay the implementation of this obligation, as well as other provisions of the trilateral statement using forged excuses, this will once again demonstrate Armenia's non-constructive and disruptive activity vis-a-vis its obligations stipulated in the trilateral statements and other agreements,” the ministry noted.

“The full implementation of trilateral statements is essential for ensuring peace and stability in the region, as well as for the post-conflict normalization of relations. Azerbaijan remains committed and fully fulfills its obligations and strongly demands that Armenia also adhere to these commitments. We remind the Armenian Foreign Ministry, which accuses Azerbaijan of “aggressive activity”, that it is clearly Armenia with its military units held the territories of a neighboring state under the occupation for about 30 years, and, after the end of the occupation policy, has not yet withdrawn its illegal armed units from the Azerbaijani territories. The Republic of Azerbaijan ensures the security and integrity of its territory on legal grounds,” the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded.

President Ilham Aliyev also noted that “Operation Revenge was not only aimed at avenging the blood of our martyr. As supreme Commander-in-Chief, I also set other goals and objectives, and all of them were fulfilled. The

result is obvious, so I wouldn't want to talk too much about it. I simply want to say that we did what we wanted, and the other side has been forced to accept this again. In principle, Armenia must come to terms with this situation, with the new reality in the future, because there is no other option. Operation Revenge showed Armenia again that no-one and nothing can stop us – not someone's statement, not someone's announcement, not some phone call. Nothing and nobody! The people of Azerbaijan know this perfectly well. The second Karabakh war showed this. I am sure that the other party also knows this. They simply forget this sometimes. This is why these tragic events happen. We won the war. We have regained our territorial integrity. Why should our children die after the war is over? Why should they get killed by the Armenians? We cannot allow that. I want to say again that if a provocation like this is repeated, the response will be even harsher, they will be even more sorry and implore for help even louder. But let me say again that our intention is not to start a new war. Enough is enough. We have achieved what we wanted. We want the Armenian armed forces to leave Karabakh once and for all. This is Armenia's commitment. This was stipulated in the act of capitulation Armenia signed on 10 November 2020. We are achieving it and will continue to achieve it.”

President Ilham Aliyev pointed out that hundreds of Armenian soldiers were withdrawn from the Karabakh region after Operation Revenge. “This shows, unfortunately, that such operations have an effect. The reason I say “unfortunately” is that it was not necessary to do this. If Armenia had correctly analyzed our warnings and drawn the right conclusions, there would have simply been no need for this. Anyway, we weren't the ones who started it. We have secured what we

want, we have established ourselves in our own lands and this will continue to be the case,” the president concluded.

Esmira Jafarova, Board Member of the AIR Center, noted that “Article 4 of the Trilateral Declaration calls for the complete withdrawal of all remaining armed forces of Armenia from the liberated Azerbaijani territories. More specifically, Article 4 states: “the peacekeeping contingent of the Russian Federation shall be deployed in parallel with the withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces.” Unfortunately, obstacles still remain vis-à-vis this clause of the November Trilateral Declaration, and the onus in this regard lies with Armenia proper and the Russian peacekeepers, whose responsibility it is to ensure that no armed Armenian forces remain in Azerbaijani territories. President Ilham Aliyev, in one of his statements in mid-July, mentioned that the Russian side promised to make remaining Armenian militias leave Azerbaijani territories by June 2022, however, the issue remains unresolved.” Dr. Jafarova added that “Violations of Article 4 of the Trilateral Declaration are still causing deaths and spreading insecurity. Periodic attacks by the remnants of Armenia's armed forces and militias from the areas of temporary deployment of the Russian peacekeepers against Azerbaijani positions in the liberated areas cause justifiable frustration in Azerbaijan and beget harsh responses. As a result of the latest terrorist sabotage operation carried out by Armenian militias on August 3, 2022, Azerbaijani military serviceman Anar Kazimov was killed. In response, on August 4, Azerbaijan launched a short military operation called Qisas (vengeance) and regained control over the strategic Qirghqiz and Saribaba heights along the Karabakh chain of the Lesser Caucasus mountain range and once again showed that its military response to Armenia's

provocations was necessary, but proportional.”

III. Azerbaijan regains full control over Lachin

On August 26, President Ilham Aliyev announced that Azerbaijan had regained full control over the city of Lachin. “Today, on August 26, we - the Azerbaijanis, returned to the city of Lachin. The Azerbaijani army is stationed in the city of Lachin. The villages of Zabukh and Sus are taken under control. I congratulate all the people of Lachin and the people of Azerbaijan on this occasion. Long live Lachin! Long live Azerbaijan!” President Ilham Aliyev tweeted. “Under the instruction of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Ilham Aliyev, the Azerbaijan Army units took complete control of the city of Lachin, as well as Zabukh and Sus settlements,” the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan announced. “Currently, measures to deploy the Azerbaijan Army units to new deployment points, as well as carry out the necessary engineering work are underway in these territories,” the ministry added.

Lachin, one of the largest districts in Azerbaijan was occupied by Armenia's armed forces on May 18, 1992. As a result of the 44-Day War, the Lachin District was liberated from Armenian occupation. At the same time, under the tripartite statement signed between Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia on November 10, 2020, 5km-wide Lachin corridor, including the city of Lachin and two surrounding villages remained under the temporary control of the Russian peacekeepers. The Article 6 of the tripartite declaration stated that an alternative route to the Lachin road was to be built and Russian peacekeepers were to relocate from the Lachin corridor to that new road within

three years. These territories were due to return to Azerbaijan’s control after a new highway came into operation. Azerbaijan completed the construction of the new road on August 15. The illegal Armenian settlers in these territories were required to leave the areas until August 25. As always, the Armenian side tried to sabotage the process and avoid implementing its obligations under the tripartite statement. On August 3, the chairman of Armenia’s Security Council, Armen Grigoryan, argued that Azerbaijan’s demands to replace the Lachin Corridor with an alternative route “was not legitimate” because supposedly not all parties agreed to a new alternative route, barring the fact that the Armenian side signed that tripartite statement. Given the fact that Article 6 of the tripartite statement clearly states that an alternative route to the Lachin Corridor should be decided by 2023, the awkward attempt to disrupt the process by the Armenian side failed miserably.

In his interview with the local media on August 12, President Ilham Aliyev pointed out that “the Statement of 10 November 2020 explicitly states that a new road will be built and that the planning and approval of this road must be completed within three years. Let me also state that I was the one who included this clause into the trilateral statement. Because when the final negotiations were held on 9 November 2020 – the negotiations were conducted through Russian President Vladimir Putin, and the Armenian leadership and Russia itself were actively involved in these negotiations – I strongly insisted that this clause had to be included. Because the road connecting Armenia with Khankendi passes through the city of Lachin. If I hadn’t had this item included, then the city of Lachin would have fallen under this five-kilometer wide zone, and it wouldn’t have been possible to

return the former IDPs there any time soon. This is why I insisted and succeeded in having it included. This is why this item was included in the document.”

“We built this road in just one year. It is 32 kilometers long. Prior to that, immediately after the second Karabakh war, we started talks with the Russian side regarding the route of this road. In other words, this road did not fall out of the sky. We reached agreement on this road. There were several routes on the table and this route was eventually chosen. The Russian Ministry of Defense agreed and approved this route together with us at the highest level. If this had been otherwise, how could we have built a road in the territory under the temporary control of Russia? So this is natural. If anyone attempts to accuse us of having done something illegal or taking a unilateral step, it is absolutely not the case. We can prove it at any level. An inquiry can be sent to the official authorities of Russia as to how this road was built - all the documents and agreements are there. This route was agreed. Of course, we didn't have to agree this route with Armenia because Armenia has nothing to do with it. Armenia was simply informed about the point the access to the Armenian border, so that they bring their own new road to that point. Unfortunately, they did not do that. Why? To mark time – there is no other reason,” President Ilham Aliyev added.

Commenting on the attempts by the Armenian side to distort the facts and undermine the process, President Ilham Aliyev noted that “when we started to build this new Lachin road, we appealed to Armenia through the Russian side and said that – because I had foreseen that they would resort to such escapades. We suggested that we could also build a road in their territory. It is only 8-9 kilometers long. They refused. They said no, they would do it themselves. And when did

they start it? It is actually hardly possible to describe it as a start, because they are only working on the feasibility study now. At that time, we sent an official letter to the Russian side. We sent a notice saying that we would finish the construction of this road on 5 August and asking them to transfer the posts of the peacekeeping contingent from the old road to the new road. And this is also natural. When we sent out this letter, the Armenian side probably got acquainted with it as well. A day later, Armenia declared that it wanted to start the feasibility study of this road and would build it by the end of 2023. In other words, it is actually an act of manipulation. It is a completely hollow and inappropriate step. We said that if this was the case, then on 5 August we would enter the Lachin corridor, set up our posts there and see how you would act. Then the hullabaloo started. The Armenians living in Karabakh appealed to us, they asked us many times to give them time until the end of August. We agreed to that. After all, it doesn't matter whether it is 5 August, 25 August or 1 September. The Armenians living in Karabakh also asked us to build a 4-kilometer ground road to the point where it will be connected to the Armenian border. We agreed to that but, of course, those who had illegally settled in the city of Lachin, the villages of Zabukh and Sus should leave. This is natural. Their stay there is actually a war crime. It runs counter to the Geneva conventions. The occupying country cannot carry out illegal settlement in the occupied lands. This is a war crime. The Armenians from Syria and Lebanon who had settled may not know this, but the Armenian leadership knows it perfectly well. So news is coming in from there now, as someone says that they won't leave, others says they won't leave. It is up to them. They are war criminals. Let them not test our patience again. Let them leave of their own free will. We don't care where they go.”

“We must return to Lachin, Zabukh and Susa. I have ordered the state refugee committee to contact the natives of Lachin city, Sus and Zabukh villages, so that we could return them to their native places in the near future,” the president underscored.

President Ilham Aliyev also emphasized that “Azerbaijan is committed to all its obligations. We have taken this path and our other steps have been based on these commitments. We have acted on the basis of that. But Armenia is still engaged in provocations. They have to understand that marking time will not do them any good. If they think that something may change in their favor in a year or a year and a half, they are wrong. Things may change, but in our favor. Because the geopolitical situation in the world and in the region is obvious. You don't have to be a great politician to see that. Azerbaijan's power is growing, both military, economic and political, while Armenia's isolation, if it is possible to say so, is because they are wrong. They are doing the wrong thing. They have not yet given up their territorial claims against Azerbaijan. However, I told them directly and officially. Abandon your territorial claims. If you don't, then we can raise a territorial claim against Armenia too. Therefore, delaying things will not give them anything. At the same time, they have to understand that one result is that Azerbaijan is achieving what it wants. No matter who says what, we succeed. We are working towards our goals and achieving the result.”

President Ilham Aliyev noted that the Armenian government are losing their influence over the Armenians living in Karabakh and the Azerbaijani government is increasing its influence. “I believe the reason for this is the fact that the Armenians living in Karabakh clearly see that the Armenian leadership is incapable of solving their problems – security, economic, finance or

anything else. It is not able to solve any problem. On the contrary, they saw that the Azerbaijani government is treating them as its own citizens. I have said this before, this is not the first time I am saying it. The Armenians living in Karabakh are our citizens. The sooner they realize this and the process begins, the better for all of us,” the president firmly stated.

“Today, there is no Karabakh issue on the agenda of the normalization process between Armenia and Azerbaijan. There were such attempts, but I never agreed to that. What does Armenia have to do with it? This is our own affair. There is no talk of a status at the negotiating table now. What is being discussed? The rights and security of the Armenians living in Karabakh. I have said yes, their rights and security will be ensured by the state of Azerbaijan, and I always do what I say. We saw this during the construction of new Lachin road. I can say that when we started building this road, the Russian peacekeepers were somewhat protecting our construction workers from the local population, or them from us, from our construction workers. I don't know who they were protecting, but they were there. After a while, they left, and for the last six to seven months, there was not a single Russian peacekeeper along the road at all. There was no need for them. Our construction workers were in contact with Armenians living in the villages there, some of them even came out to help and expressed their gratitude to us for building such a high-quality road. There has never been such a quality road in the history of Armenia, let alone Karabakh. The roads they have built are already falling apart less than a year later. So these contacts are already taking place. And this is very important – I welcome them. People-to-people contacts will contribute to lasting peace,” President Ilham Aliyev noted.

President Ilham Aliyev also stressed that “the Armenians living in Karabakh should take the right step and understand that their future lies only in integration into the Azerbaijani society. It is not possible otherwise. We are living real life. From the point of view of economy, geography and transport, Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan. From the point of view of history, from the point of view of international law, it is an integral part of Azerbaijan. If someone in Karabakh still talks about some status or independence, be it for the sake of some kind of populism or, as they say, because they are afraid of someone, one should know that they are the first enemy of the Armenian people. Because the Armenians living in Karabakh will have no status, no independence and no special privilege. They are the same as the citizens of Azerbaijan. Just as the rights of Azerbaijani citizens are protected, so are theirs. Just as the rights of the peoples living in Azerbaijan are protected, so are theirs. This is the only way.”

IV. Fourth Trilateral Meeting between the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia was held in Brussels

On August 31 President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev held a meeting with President of the European Council Charles Michel and Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan in Brussels. This was the fourth meeting in this trilateral format since the end of the 44-Day War. Following the trilateral meeting, President of the European Council Charles Michel put forward a press statement on the outcomes of the meeting. The press statement noted that “as agreed during our last meeting in May, I hosted President Aliyev of Azerbaijan and Prime Minister Pashinyan of Armenia today. This was our fourth discussion in this format. Our discussions focused on

recent developments in the South Caucasus and the relations between the EU and both countries. Our exchanges were open and productive - and I would like to thank both leaders for that. We reviewed the entire set of issues on our agenda. It is positive to see that quite a few steps have been taken to take forward the agreements reached during our last meeting.” On peace agreement, the press statement noted that “we agree to step up substantive work to advance on the peace treaty governing inter-state relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and tasked the Foreign Ministers to meet within one month to work on draft texts.” In his press statement Charles Michel also stated that “we also had a detailed discussion on humanitarian issues, including demining, detainees and the fate of missing persons. The EU will continue to be engaged in these questions.” On border issues, Charles Michel noted that “we reviewed progress on all questions related to the delimitation of the border and how best to ensure a stable situation. We agreed that the next meeting of the Border Commissions will take place in Brussels in November.” On connectivity, the press statement stated that “We reviewed progress of discussions on the modalities for unblocking the transport links.” In his press statement, Charles Michel also noted that “with all these discussions, I would like to underline that it is important to take the population along on both sides and prepare them for a long-term sustainable peace. Public messaging is critical in this regard – in a sensitive situation like this every word spoken in public is obviously listened to by the other side and weighed.” “The EU is ready to further step up its support towards a long-term sustainable peace. The EU will also continue to push for the advancement of economic development for the benefit of both countries and their populations. We have agreed to

meet again in this format by the end of November,” the press statement concluded.

European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell welcomed the fourth meeting between President Ilham Aliyev, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and President of European Council Charles Michel. “Important to keep working to advance on a peace treaty and continue with efforts on humanitarian and connectivity areas. The EU continues to be fully engaged in support of peaceful, secure, and prosperous South Caucasus,” Borrell underscored on his Twitter page. Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, also hailed the trilateral meeting. “Welcome continued strong engagement by President of European Council Charles Michel and the 4th meeting between leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Important for EU to be part of the process for peace and stability in the South Caucasus,” Ann Linde noted.

Commenting on the outcomes of the meeting, Vasif Huseynov noted that “as opposed to the first two meetings (January 11 and November 26 in 2021) which were mediated by Russia, the last four meetings, including the August 31 summit, have been mediated by the European Union (EU) and held in Brussels. The latest summit built upon the achievements of the previous two EU-mediated summits (April 6 and May 22) which called for starting the preparations for a peace treaty, set up an international commission on delimitation and demarcation of the Armenia-Azerbaijan state border, and settling outstanding issues on transport and communication links. Most importantly, on August 31, the sides agreed to step up work on the peace treaty, and tasked the Foreign Ministers to meet within one month to work on draft texts.”

Vasif Huseynov added that “the growing role of the EU as a mediator in this process annoys the Russian side that insists on reading it through the lens of geopolitical rivalry in the region. Hence, following the April 6 and May 22 summits and prior to the August 31 summit, Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticized the EU, and accused it of trying to hijack the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process. This, once again, demonstrated that the Russia-West confrontation can threaten the peace negotiations between the two South Caucasian republics.” A long list of major developments took place between the May 22 and the August 31 summits – through the mediation of both Russia and the European Union. The border commission, which Baku and Yerevan agreed in Brussels to establish, met twice – first at the Armenia-Azerbaijan border on May 24 and then in Moscow on August 30 – and agreed to meet again in November – this time in Brussels. The working group on the re-opening of regional transportation channels which was established in January 2021 and headed by the deputy prime ministers of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia, met in Moscow on June 4. This was followed by the first bilateral meeting of the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in July which preceded the announcement of the Armenian government about the withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from the Karabakh region in line with the fourth article of the trilateral statement of November 10, 2020. The armed escalation in early August between the Armenian and Azerbaijani troops accelerated the withdrawal of the Armenian forces from the region as declared by President Aliyev in his interview with local television channels on August 12. This process marked another milestone in late August when the Lachin town and two Azerbaijani villages returned to the control of Azerbaijan as the new highway connecting Armenia and the

Karabakh region replaced the previous one. According to Vasif Huseynov, “the peaceful transition was of remarkable significance, as it demonstrated the potential of the sides to implement the agreements that they have reached including the remaining provisions of the 2020 trilateral statement.”

The peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan have not been negatively affected by current tensions between Russia and the West yet. Although Moscow criticized the EU’s mediation initiatives, it has not challenged the implementation of the agreements between the sides, including those reached in the EU-mediated platform. Vasif Huseynov noted that “this raises hope that the recent positive developments between Baku and Yerevan will advance in the upcoming months and the sides can make progress on the peace treaty negotiations, recognizing each other’s territorial integrity and internationally-recognized borders.”

V. Azerbaijan continues to boost its ties with Central Asia

On August 24, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev arrived in Azerbaijan for an official visit. Following the official welcome ceremony, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev held a one-on-one meeting. During the visit, President Tokayev presented the highest order of Kazakhstan “Altyn Kyran” – “Golden Eagle” to President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. “In Kazakhstan, you are known, respected and held in high esteem as an outstanding statesman, a person who led Azerbaijan to a historic victory and restoration of territorial integrity in full accordance with resolutions of the Security Council,” said President of

Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev as he presented the highest order of Kazakhstan “Altyn Kyran” – “Golden Eagle” to President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. “You are making an important contribution to the development of multifaceted and diverse cooperation between our states. As a sign of respect, I would like to present you with the “Altyn Kyran” order on behalf of the entire Kazakh people today,” President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev added. President Ilham Aliyev and President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev also viewed a project of the Center for the Development of Creativity named after Kurmangazy, which will be built for children in the city of Fuzuli by the “BI Group” Holding of Kazakhstan.

During the expanded meeting with President Tokayev, President Ilham Aliyev noted that “We are about to sign more than 20 documents. Some of them will be signed with our participation and will significantly help to strengthen mutual activity. With regard to the foreign policy agenda, we cooperate extensively on a wide range of issues in leading international organizations we are members of. We always support each other, and I am sure that this will continue to be the case in the future. The number of international organizations with which we cooperate is quite large, and representatives of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan closely interact in all of them. Of course, there are great plans for the development of transport and logistical infrastructure. Timely measures have been taken both in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan to create this infrastructure. Now there is talk about linking the cargo flow between our countries and increasing its volume, thereby increasing the transit potential of our countries. Relevant bodies have been actively cooperating in this direction for some time now. In my opinion, the Middle Corridor has great prospects and, of course, Kazakhstan and

Azerbaijan have a very important role in the implementation of this project. I am sure that we will promote the development of economic and commercial relations. There are still great reserves for increasing the turnover of goods. We have also exchanged views on some directions of future economic and commercial cooperation, and we can specify it in terms of increasing mutual supplies. There are also great prospects in the field of investment. Both Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have a very positive investment environment and a large volume of foreign investments. I think that the time has come for us to join our efforts in this direction and participate in joint investment projects in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and possibly in other countries as well.” President Tokayev also noted that “I have come to Baku with a special mission – the mission to raise our cooperation to a new level. It is gratifying that the volume of trade has practically tripled in recent years. But I would like to note that this is no cause for complacency because, in my opinion, there are still untapped opportunities for increasing trade. I believe that the governments of our countries should work in this direction so that we can increase the volume of trade between our countries to one billion dollars in the near future.”

Following the expanded meeting, the signing of Azerbaijan-Kazakhstan documents took place with the participation of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

The “Comprehensive Program on the Development of Cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2022-2026” was signed by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

The “Declaration on strengthening strategic relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Kazakhstan and deepening the allied mutual activities” was signed by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.

The “Program on cooperation in the field of culture between the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2022-2025” was signed by Minister of Culture of Azerbaijan Anar Karimov and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tleuberdi.

The “Cooperation Plan between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2023-2024” was signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tleuberdi.

The “Agreement on trade and economic cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan” was signed by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov and Acting Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan Serik Zhumangarin.

In addition, the “Memorandum of Understanding between the Media Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Information and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan”, the “Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of transport between the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Industry and

Infrastructure Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan”, the “Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan on cooperation in the field of transit cargo transportation”, the “Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in information and communication technologies between the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Digital Development, Innovations and Aerospace Industry of the Republic of Kazakhstan”, the “Memorandum between ADA University and the Academy of Public Administration under the President of Kazakhstan”, the “Memorandum of Understanding between the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) and ‘QazaqGaz’ Joint Stock Company”, the “Memorandum on Cooperation between the ‘Kazakhstan Railways’ Joint Stock Company and the ‘Baku International Sea Trade Port’ Closed Joint Stock Company”, the “Protocol on the establishment of a sister city relationship between the city of Shusha of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the city of Turkestan of the Republic of Kazakhstan”, the “Memorandum on cooperation between the city of Mingachevir of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the city of Uralsk of the Republic of Kazakhstan”, the “Memorandum on the establishment of the Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan Business Council”, the “Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation between the Export and Investment Promotion Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AZPROMO) and the Foreign Trade Chamber of Kazakhstan”, the “Agreement on cooperation between the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan

and the Foreign Trade Chamber of Kazakhstan”, the “Memorandum of Understanding between the Small and Medium Business Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Trade Policy Development Center ‘QazTrade’ Joint Stock Company”, the “Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation between the Trade Policy Development Center ‘QazTrade’ Joint Stock Company, Valiyev Nahid Abbas oglu ‘Tayga Trade’ and ‘Maslo-Del’ Limited Liability Company”, the “Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation between the Trade Policy Development Center ‘QazTrade’ Joint Stock Company, ‘Cool Infinity’ Limited Liability Company and ‘Foodcity Alliance’ Limited Liability Company”, and the “Agreement on partnership between ‘KTZ Express Hong Kong Limited’ and ‘ADY Container’ Limited Liability Company” were also signed as part of the visit.

“In my opinion, the Middle Corridor has great prospects and, of course, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have a very important role in the implementation of this project,” said President Ilham Aliyev during an expanded meeting with President Tokayev. “Of course, there are great plans for the development of transport and logistical infrastructure. Timely measures have been taken both in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan to create this infrastructure. Now there is talk about linking the cargo flow between our countries and increasing its volume, thereby increasing the transit potential of our countries. Relevant bodies have been actively cooperating in this direction for some time now,” the president added.

Following the ceremony of signing documents, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev made press statements. “Many documents have been signed. Some of them were signed with

our participation, and more than 20 documents were signed between relevant agencies today. This creates a broader legal framework for our relationship. Of course, of these documents, I would like to specifically mention the Declaration on the strengthening of strategic relations and the deepening of allied relations between Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, which we have just signed. The name of this Declaration itself testifies to the importance of the document. We are not only strategic partners, but also allies. Of course, this puts a special responsibility on us, and we are ready for this responsibility. The Declaration covers many aspects of our cooperation and will certainly serve as a very solid basis for our future interaction. We have identified ways to develop our cooperation in the international arena. We actively interact within the framework of leading international organizations and this, of course, creates new preconditions for multilateral cooperation. In June, the ministers of foreign affairs and transport of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkey met in Baku. This is a new format of multilateral cooperation, and this cooperation has great prospects. The Joint Declaration also reflects the possible future development of multilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan and the five countries of Central Asia. In my opinion, this is also natural, because the history, traditions and culture of our peoples require closer interaction in all areas," President Ilham Aliyev noted.

"We have talked in detail about the transport and logistical sectors today and given relevant instructions to members of the government to intensify these relations. Because the Middle Corridor connecting our countries has great prospects. Both Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have already put in place a modern infrastructure that enables the transportation of large volumes of cargo. However, we have

also identified future directions of cooperation in order to further increase the capacity of the Middle Corridor. The importance of connecting the Eastern Zangazur region of Azerbaijan with the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan was also mentioned in the Joint Declaration. This will be a part of the Middle Corridor. I have informed Kassym-Jomart Kemelevich about the work we are doing in liberated territories," the president added.

In June, President Ilham Aliyev also paid an important diplomatic visit to Uzbekistan, which the president described as a "breakthrough," with nearly two dozen documents signed, notably in the fields of "trade, transport and logistics."

On August 2, the first trilateral meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs, trade, economy and transport of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Türkiye and the Republic of Uzbekistan was held in Tashkent. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov, Minister of Economy Mikayil Jabbarov, Minister of Digital Development and Transport Rashad Nabiyeu participated in the meeting. At the meeting, views were exchanged on issues related to possibilities for regional cooperation and the work implemented so far to realize the full potential of the cooperation of the three countries in the fields of economy, trade, investment and transport. The opportunities of cooperation in the field of energy, especially in the field of renewable energy sources, were also discussed. In order to efficiently utilize the transit potential of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan, the possibilities of further enhancing of cooperation on the development of international transport corridors were considered. In this vein, the significance of the Trans-Caspian International East-West-Middle Corridor and the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway as a

part of this corridor was emphasized. It was underscored that the launching of all communications in the region, including the Zangazur corridor, will help the expansion of international transport links. As a result of the meeting, the Tashkent Declaration was signed by the ministers responsible for the relevant fields of the three countries.

“It is a pleasure to participate in the first trilateral meeting of the Azerbaijani, Uzbek and Turkish Foreign, Economy and Transport Ministers. Today’s meeting facilitated fruitful discussions on strengthening the cooperation between our friendly and brotherly countries promoting the joint investment projects and utilizing the transport-logistics opportunities,” Azerbaijan’s Economy Minister Mikayil Jabbarov said on Twitter. “The Tashkent Declaration, signed within the first trilateral meeting between the Foreign, Economy and Transport Ministers of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan is a significant contribution to the further deepening and enhancement of the partnership and friendly ties between our countries,” the minister added.

“Identifying further ways to reinforce Azerbaijan-Türkiye-Uzbekistan brotherhood and partnership”, Azerbaijan’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeyhun Bayramov wrote on his official Twitter account, as he attended the first Trilateral Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Trade/Economy and Transport of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan in Tashkent. “In times of growing challenges to global security, stability and economic development, this new trilateral Azerbaijan-Türkiye-Uzbekistan platform fits into existing efforts to develop regional cooperation and to address our countries’ shared interests in peace, security and prosperity”, the minister tweeted.

On August 3, President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev received Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov, Minister of Economy Mikayil Jabbarov and Minister of Digital Development and Transport Rashad Nabiyeu, who are visiting Tashkent to participate in the first trilateral meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs, economy and transport of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Uzbekistan. During the meeting, the President of Uzbekistan conveyed his warmest greetings to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Emphasizing the importance of President Ilham Aliyev's historic state visit to Uzbekistan in June of this year, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev highly appreciated the work done in a short period of time in accordance with the agreements reached during the visit. In this regard, the establishment of relations among companies in a number of fields, reaching agreements between companies in the oil and gas sector, and the meeting of the bilateral Azerbaijan-Uzbekistan Economic Commission of yesterday and its results were emphasized. The significance for the countries of the historical trilateral meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs, economy and transport of Azerbaijan, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, which took place for the first time, was also brought to the attention. At the same time, issues of high-level cooperation between the countries within the framework of both bilateral and international organizations, work done within the framework of the Organization of Turkic States, as well as preparatory work for holding the Summit in Samarkand in November of the current year, were discussed at the meeting. In general, the high potential of cooperation opportunities between the two countries was emphasized. Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, in turn, conveyed the best wishes of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev to President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

In accordance with the instructions of the presidents, the need was noted for implementing practical measures to fulfill the obligations arising both from the results of the bilateral intergovernmental commission and from the Tashkent Declaration adopted in the trilateral format. Gratitude was expressed to the President of Uzbekistan for the high-level organization of the trilateral meeting.

A total of three memorandums were signed on the sidelines of the 11th session of the Azerbaijan-Uzbekistan Intergovernmental Commission. "Within the framework of the 11th session of the Azerbaijan-Uzbekistan Intergovernmental Commission, memorandums were signed between the Small and Medium Business Development Agency under the Ministry of Economy and the Commissioner for the Protection of Rights and Legitimate Interests of Entrepreneurs under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Agency for Development of Economic Zones and "Uzbekipaksanoat" Association, and as well as between the Agency for Development of Economic Zones and "Uztekstilprom" Association", Azerbaijan's Minister of Economy Mikayil Jabbarov said on his official Twitter account. Azerbaijan's Minister of Economy Mikayil Jabbarov met with Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade Jamshid Khojajev. "During the meeting, we discussed the development of economic ties, increase of investments and trade turnover, as well as expansion of cooperation in the field of industry," Minister Jabbarov said on Twitter. "We have familiarized ourselves with the activity of the modern textile clusters in Tashkent and met with the chairman of the "Uztekstilprom" Association, Ilhom Haydarov and chairman of the "Uzbekipaksanoat" Association Bahrom Sharipov," Azerbaijan's Economy Minister Mikayil Jabbarov said on

Twitter. "We have also held fruitful discussions on the benefits of the expansion of cooperation between business entities for the economic development of our countries," the minister tweeted.

On August 23, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev made a phone call to President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev. During the phone conversation, the sides discussed the further development of mutually beneficial cooperation and the strengthening of strategic partnership between the two countries. They hailed notable progress in the implementation of the agreements reached based on the results of the high level meetings this June. They noted the fruitful meeting of the Intergovernmental Joint Commission and the first gathering of the ministers of foreign affairs, trade and transport of Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey at the beginning of August.

The presidents said that the mutual trade turnover increased by 70 percent, and the implementation of joint cooperation projects in agriculture, silk and textile industry, machine building, chemistry and other areas started this year. The sides noted that work is underway to launch the Uzbekistan-Azerbaijan investment fund soon, and cultural-humanitarian exchange is expanding. The heads of state expressed their support for the further expansion of practical interaction. In this regard, they stressed the importance of holding a Forum of Regions and an exhibition of industrial potential of the two countries in the fall of the current year. During the phone conversation, the sides exchanged views on the regional agenda. They reviewed the schedule and agenda of the upcoming multilateral meetings, including the summits of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Organization of Turkic States to be held in Samarkand.

In August, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan also signed a roadmap for energy cooperation. In order to accelerate the processes related to the development of the Azerbaijan-Uzbekistan energy cooperation, a meeting was held between Parviz Shahbazov, the Minister of Energy of Azerbaijan and Azim Akhmedkhadzhaev, the First Deputy Minister of Energy of Uzbekistan, Acting Minister.

During the meeting, discussions were held on ensuring the implementation of agreements on cooperation in the field of energy and the instructions during the visit of the head of state to Uzbekistan in June this year.

Minister of Energy Parviz Shahbazov stressed the importance of mutual assessment of wide opportunities for energy cooperation and the establishment of joint partnerships in the period of new realities, where the basis for the comprehensive development of relations between the two countries with common historical and cultural values is laid. The minister noted that the historic state visit of the President of Azerbaijan to Uzbekistan actualized the deepening of the strategic partnership in the energy sector. The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the relevant ministries of the two countries in Tashkent, today's discussions and the road map of the joint activities on energy will contribute to the implementation of results-oriented measures and the development of multi-spectrum energy cooperation.

Azim Akhmedkhadzhaev, who said that there are important tasks ahead in the new stage of bilateral cooperation in the energy sector, noted that Uzbek and Azerbaijani experts' experiences in the renewable energy and hydrocarbon sector, the traditional friendly relations of the two countries and joint efforts will serve the development of the energy sector and the economy in general in both countries.

During the meeting, a roadmap on expanding of the energy cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Uzbekistan was signed. The roadmap covers 30 areas, including the creation of a joint working group, cooperation in the liberated territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the participation of Uzbek companies in renewable energy projects, as well as joint activities in the hydrocarbon sector. According to the document, along with the energy transition and decarbonization, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan will cooperate on export and import of oil and gas and chemical products, oil refining, as well as geological exploration and hydrocarbon production. It is also planned to share best experiences in the fields of construction of new thermal power plants, heat supply, liberalization of energy markets, efficient use of energy resources, organize joint trainings, promote mutual investments, and cooperation between Energy Regulatory Agencies at the expense of private investment.