



CENTER OF ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
BEYNÖLXALQ MÜNASIBÖTLÖRİN TƏHLİLİ MƏRKƏZİ

NOVEMBER-2024

BULLETIN

HIGHLIGHT OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

Table of contents

- I. **Leading with purpose: Azerbaijan's advocacy for global unity and climate justice at COP29**
2
- II. **Azerbaijan's leadership drives global climate action at COP29**
4
- III. **Azerbaijan successfully hosts COP29 amid baseless accusations**
5
- IV. **Azerbaijan advances global climate goals at COP29**
7
- V. **Azerbaijan files statement of claim against Armenia over Energy Charter Treaty violations**
8
- VI. **Azerbaijan leads renewed international push on addressing missing persons issue**
9
- VII. **Azerbaijan celebrates Victory Day**
9

I. **Leading with purpose: Azerbaijan's advocacy for global unity and climate justice at COP29**

Azerbaijan's hosting of the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) marked a transformative moment for the South Caucasus, underscoring the region's growing importance on the global stage. From November 11 to 22, Baku welcomed an unprecedented assembly of 80 world leaders and 72,000 participants representing 196 countries, making it the largest international event ever held in the region. This gathering not only highlighted Azerbaijan's commitment to addressing pressing global challenges like climate change but also showcased its capacity to serve as a nexus for international dialogue and cooperation. Against the backdrop of evolving regional dynamics, COP29 provided a platform for fostering collaborative solutions to environmental issues while reinforcing the strategic role of the South Caucasus in global governance. The conference concluded with an agreement to provide at least \$300 billion annually by 2035 to assist developing nations in combating climate change. Additionally, COP29 saw the establishment of rules and a UN registry to facilitate and record international trading of carbon credits. This development will enhance transparency and accountability in carbon markets, providing a structured mechanism for countries to trade emission reductions and support global efforts to mitigate climate change.

President Ilham Aliyev delivered an address at the opening ceremonies of COP29 and the Leaders' Summit of the Small Islands Developing States on Climate Change. Highlighting Azerbaijan's commitment to multilateralism, sustainability, and bridging global divides, President Ilham Aliyev highlighted Azerbaijan's achievements in renewable energy and its leadership in fostering international cooperation on pressing climate issues. Azerbaijan's selection as host is a recognition of the nation's growing role in international diplomacy and environmental leadership. Reflecting on Azerbaijan's resilience, President Ilham Aliyev noted the country's journey

from conflict to prosperity. President Ilham Aliyev outlined the challenges posed by the 30-year occupation of Azerbaijani territories, ethnic cleansing, and the displacement of nearly one million citizens. Despite these adversities, Azerbaijan emerged with a strong, self-sufficient economy and independent policy. The President also highlighted Azerbaijan's pivotal role in fostering dialogue across diverse international platforms, including its successful chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement and active participation in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and partnerships with the European Union.

President Ilham Aliyev devoted significant attention to Azerbaijan's renewable energy potential. The President outlined ambitious goals, including 135 GW onshore and 157 GW offshore technical potential for renewable energy, ongoing projects like the 230 MW solar power plant inaugurated by Masdar (UAE) and the 240 MW wind farm by ACWA Power (Saudi Arabia), and future partnerships with bp to develop a 240 MW solar plant in the Jabrayil district, contributing to the decarbonization of key energy infrastructure. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized plans for 6 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030 and agreements for an additional 10 GW. The President underscored Azerbaijan's strategic initiatives, such as the Black Sea Caspian energy cable, aimed at exporting green energy to Europe, with a capacity of 4 GW. Special emphasis was placed on green energy zones in regions like Karabakh, East Zangazur, and Nakhchivan, reflecting Azerbaijan's commitment to sustainable development across its territories.

While championing green energy, President Ilham Aliyev also addressed the need for realistic solutions in energy security. President Ilham Aliyev also noted Azerbaijan's oil and gas production share in global markets, highlighting its modest contributions—0.7% of global oil and 0.9% of global gas production—against accusations of being a "petrostate." President Ilham Aliyev called for fair evaluations based on comprehensive

criteria, including economic stability, poverty reduction, and sustainable initiatives.

At the Leaders' Summit of the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) on Climate Change with the COP29, President Ilham Aliyev called for urgent global action to address the challenges of climate change, particularly for small island nations facing existential threats. The President's speech underscored Azerbaijan's growing role as a champion of international cooperation and its unwavering commitment to tackling global climate issues, while also shining a spotlight on the lingering effects of colonialism on climate-vulnerable regions. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized the critical need for developed countries, particularly those with colonial legacies, to provide substantial financial and technical support to small island states grappling with climate-induced challenges.

President Ilham Aliyev called on developed nations, particularly those with colonial histories, to take greater responsibility by offering tangible support to small island nations facing existential threats from rising sea levels, extreme weather, and biodiversity loss. The President also drew attention to the environmental challenges Azerbaijan faces due to climate change. President Ilham Aliyev described the increasing impacts on the Caspian Sea, dwindling water levels in rivers, reduced snowfall in mountains, and unprecedented floods and heavy rains. These changes, the President noted, illustrate that climate change spares no nation but disproportionately affects the most vulnerable.

President Ilham Aliyev highlighted Azerbaijan's efforts to aid SIDS, including disaster mitigation support for countries affected by hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods, as well as initiatives to address water supply, food security, and cultural heritage restoration. Through its educational grant program, Azerbaijan has supported students from more than 10 small island states, offering opportunities for higher education in Azerbaijani universities. The country's leadership during its four-year chairmanship of the Non-Aligned

Movement extended similar support to over 80 nations, including 20 small island states, reinforcing Azerbaijan's commitment to multilateralism and solidarity.

During COP29 preparations, Azerbaijan engaged directly with SIDS leaders to shape meaningful outcomes. President Ilham Aliyev noted visits from leaders of the Bahamas, Tonga, and Tuvalu earlier in the year, culminating in the adoption of the Baku Communique. This document underscored the urgent need for accessible climate finance and significant progress on operationalizing the Loss and Damage Fund, a critical mechanism for assisting nations most impacted by climate change. President Ilham Aliyev also announced Azerbaijan's \$10 million contribution to joint projects with Commonwealth small island states, further emphasizing its role as a reliable partner in the fight against climate change.

Azerbaijan's support extends to cutting-edge solutions, such as using satellite data from Azercosmos for environmental monitoring and evaluation in partnership with the Commonwealth. These initiatives reflect Azerbaijan's innovative approach to addressing climate challenges while strengthening international cooperation.

In his address, President Ilham Aliyev raised concerns about the intersection of climate change and neo-colonialism. President Ilham Aliyev criticized the ongoing struggles of overseas territories of France and the Netherlands, particularly in the Caribbean and Pacific, where communities face severe climate impacts. Aliyev condemned the suppression of these communities' voices by their metropolises and called attention to France's historical environmental and human rights violations. President Ilham Aliyev's remarks underscored the need for justice and accountability, particularly from nations that have contributed to global environmental degradation through colonial practices.

Confronting political hypocrisy, President Ilham Aliyev criticized international institutions like the

European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for their silence on these issues.

The President pointed out that the colonial powers of France and the Netherlands neglected these territories and suppressed their voices, while citing examples of environmental degradation, including nuclear testing and colonial exploitation. The devastating impact of 193 nuclear tests conducted by France in French Polynesia between 1966 and 1996, led to severe radiation and contamination. President Ilham Aliyev pointed out double standards in international diplomacy, calling out the European Parliament and other institutions for their silence on human rights violations and environmental harm in these regions.

As President of COP29, President Ilham Aliyev reaffirmed Azerbaijan's commitment to advancing the green transition while advocating for realistic approaches to energy security. President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the nation's renewable energy achievements, including major projects in solar, wind, and hydroelectric power, as well as initiatives to export green energy to Europe.

As President of COP29 and a long-standing advocate for small island states, President Ilham Aliyev also reaffirmed Azerbaijan's commitment to addressing global climate challenges and fostering solidarity among nations. "Azerbaijan supported small island states as the chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, supports them as President of COP29, and will continue to support our friends in the future," President Ilham Aliyev noted.

With 72,000 registered participants from 196 countries, including 80 heads of state and government, President Ilham Aliyev pointed out that the summit was an historic opportunity for the world to engage in meaningful dialogue in Baku. "Azerbaijan welcomes the world," President Ilham Aliyev said. "We are here to build bridges, foster understanding, and take bold steps toward a sustainable future."

II. Azerbaijan's leadership drives global climate action at COP29

Azerbaijan hosted the 29th Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP29) in Baku from November 11 to 22, positioning itself as a critical player in global climate discussions. While some questioned whether resource-rich nations like Azerbaijan should host such summits, it's important to note that several previous hosts, such as Canada and the UK, are even larger fossil-fuel producers. Hosting COP29 provided Azerbaijan an opportunity to challenge misconceptions and highlight its commitment to sustainable development and climate action.

Engaging fossil-fuel-producing nations is essential for global climate progress, as their participation can drive meaningful climate change mitigation. Azerbaijan's invitation to Armenia to attend COP29 as part of ongoing normalization efforts between the two countries underscored the potential for using such platforms to foster regional dialogue. South Caucasus nations, including Armenia, can leverage events like COP29 to address shared environmental challenges collaboratively.

During COP29, Azerbaijan emphasized its role in addressing climate change while navigating the challenges of a fossil-fuel-dependent economy. The conference offered an opportunity to showcase the nation's initiatives to transition towards renewable energy, including ambitious targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 35% by 2030 and 40% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels.

During the occupation of Karabakh by Armenian forces, Azerbaijan suffered from extensive environmental damage, including deforestation, land degradation, and water pollution. Following the liberation of its territories, Azerbaijan launched legal actions against Armenia for alleged environmental destruction under the Bern Convention, a first-of-its-kind interstate arbitration. Additional lawsuits detail Armenia's alleged exploitation of Azerbaijan's energy resources during the occupation.

In the post-conflict era, Azerbaijan is focusing on rebuilding liberated territories sustainably, with plans to transform them into “green energy” zones powered by renewables.

Azerbaijan has entered into significant partnerships to accelerate its renewable energy transition. Agreements with companies like Masdar, ADNOC, ACWA Power, and Bp aim to expand solar and wind energy capacity. The inauguration of the Garadagh Solar Park, the largest in the region, and the construction of the Shafag Solar Power Plant are examples of these efforts. Azerbaijan aims to achieve a 35% share of renewables in its energy system by 2030.

Furthermore, the development of a 1,155-kilometer Black Sea submarine cable linking Azerbaijan’s grid with Europe’s is a critical step toward creating a “Green Energy Corridor” in the South Caucasus, aligning with the EU’s climate goals.

COP29 highlighted the importance of addressing environmental issues as challenges shared by all of humanity. Azerbaijan’s leadership in hosting the summit demonstrated its commitment to the global environmental agenda, despite criticisms. The conference provided a platform to mobilize civil society, enhance public awareness of climate change, and inspire other fossil-fuel-producing nations to prioritize sustainability.

The politicization of environmental issues undermines global efforts to combat climate change. Critics must recognize Azerbaijan’s efforts to diversify its economy and accelerate its green transition. COP29 served as a unique opportunity to attract investment in sustainable technologies and foster regional cooperation, essential for the South Caucasus’ long-term development.

Azerbaijan’s hosting of COP29 not only advanced the global climate agenda but also set an example of how resource-rich nations can lead in the fight against climate change while promoting regional stability and sustainable development.

III. Azerbaijan successfully hosts COP29 amid baseless accusations

Azerbaijan’s hosting of COP29 marked a pivotal moment for the South Caucasus, bringing together 80 world leaders and 72,000 participants from 196 countries. Held in Baku from November 11 to 22, it was the largest international event ever organized in the region. Despite its efforts to ensure a successful conference, Azerbaijan faced a barrage of criticism, with detractors questioning its suitability as host due to its status as an oil and gas exporting nation. In his opening speech at the conference, President Ilham Aliyev condemned the campaign of slander, calling it a coordinated effort to undermine Azerbaijan’s role in global climate discussions. “As the host country of COP29, we have become the target of a coordinated, well-orchestrated campaign of slander and blackmail,” President Ilham Aliyev underscored.

Critics argued that Azerbaijan’s role as a fossil fuel producer disqualified it from hosting a climate summit. However, Azerbaijan’s contributions to global oil production (0.7%), gas production (0.9%), and CO2 emissions from combustible fuels (0.1%) are relatively small. Hikmet Hajiyev, Assistant to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Head of the Foreign Policy Affairs Department of the Presidential Administration, pointed out that previous COPs were hosted by countries with substantial fossil fuel industries, such as Poland and the UK, making the criticism against Azerbaijan unfounded.

Azerbaijan has actively redirected its fossil fuel revenues to finance green energy projects, positioning itself as a leader in renewable energy development in the region. The country aims to generate 30% of its electricity from renewables by 2030, with an estimated renewable energy potential of 135 GW onshore and 157 GW offshore. Major projects include:

Caspian-Black Sea-Europe Green Energy Corridor: A partnership with the EU to transport up to 4 GW of Azerbaijani wind energy to Europe via a 1,195-kilometer submarine cable.

Strategic Partnership with Central Asia: An agreement with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to develop and transmit green energy across the Caspian and Black Seas, connecting to European markets.

Karabakh Green Energy Projects: Solar and wind plants in liberated territories, including Masdar's 230 MW solar power plant and ACWA Power's 240 MW wind station.

Additionally, Azerbaijan has partnered with international firms such as BP, Masdar, and ACWA Power to advance solar, wind, and hydropower projects totaling 10 GW.

Azerbaijan acknowledges the global reliance on fossil fuels during the transition to green energy. The European Union itself has requested increased Azerbaijani gas exports to diversify its energy sources amid efforts to reduce dependence on Russia. This highlights the complex realities of the energy landscape, underscoring the need for constructive engagement with resource-rich nations rather than stigmatization.

Despite criticism, Azerbaijan demonstrated its commitment to the green transition at COP29, signing key agreements to bolster renewable energy exports and regional cooperation. Its efforts to develop sustainable energy infrastructure, such as the Caspian-Black Sea-Europe Green Energy Corridor, contribute not only to its national priorities but also to global climate goals.

The event underscored the importance of inclusivity in climate discussions, bringing fossil fuel producers into the fold to drive meaningful change. Azerbaijan's leadership at COP29 showcased its role as a proactive participant in the global green transition, countering unfounded criticism with concrete actions and ambitious plans for the future.

"Focusing on productive discussions and solutions, rather than mutual accusations, is key to advancing the green transition," Hikmet Hajiyev emphasized. Azerbaijan's hosting of COP29 served as a platform

to showcase its commitment to renewable energy and sustainable development.

Azerbaijan, as a member of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), had extended invitations to all participating countries, including Armenia and France. "We believed Armenia's participation in COP29 could have been a valuable opportunity to discuss regional cooperation and important climate change issues. However, Armenia's decision to abstain demonstrates a lack of seriousness regarding climate change and climate transformation," Hikmet Hajiyev noted. Hikmet Hajiyev noted that Armenia's absence was particularly disappointing, given the shared climate challenges in the South Caucasus. A UN Environment Programme report highlighted several pressing issues in the region, including melting glaciers, declining precipitation, and lowering Caspian Sea levels. "By participating in COP29, Armenia could have contributed to confidence-building and dialogue in the region. Their absence shows a withdrawal from these processes and an unwillingness to engage constructively," he added.

Commenting on France's absence, Hajiyev found it perplexing that a country which often advocates open dialogue and inclusivity would adopt what he described as a "resentful" stance. He noted the critical need for all voices to be heard in global climate discussions, particularly those from vulnerable regions like small island states. Referring to France's overseas territories, he said, "Small island states are facing existential threats from climate change, and representatives from these territories often lack the ability to raise their concerns due to administrative structures. If climate change is a global problem, it demands inclusivity and the opportunity for all voices to be heard."

Hikmet Hajiyev emphasized that France's decision to politicize the process contradicted its usual advocacy for inclusiveness. "This is a UN event, and every state has the right to decide whether to participate. Unfortunately, France chose to

withdraw and add a political dimension to the process.”

Azerbaijan’s efforts to include all parties demonstrated its commitment to fostering dialogue and addressing shared environmental challenges and underscored Azerbaijan’s focus on constructive engagement and inclusivity, even in the face of political and propagandistic challenges. The event not only reaffirmed Azerbaijan’s leadership on the global stage but also highlighted the need for unity and cooperation in tackling the climate crisis.

Azerbaijan’s hosting of COP29 was a milestone for the South Caucasus, proving that fossil-fuel-producing nations can and must play a significant role in global climate action. Through its ambitious renewable energy initiatives and strategic partnerships, Azerbaijan is not only advancing its green energy sector but also contributing to regional cooperation and Europe’s energy diversification. The criticism leveled against Azerbaijan lacked objectivity, as the country has made significant strides in aligning itself with the global shift toward sustainability while addressing its historical reliance on fossil fuels.

IV. Azerbaijan advances global climate goals at COP29

The COP29 climate summit, held in Baku, stands as a milestone in international efforts to address ecological challenges. This historic event not only facilitated critical agreements but also highlighted Azerbaijan’s growing stature as a capable and committed global partner. With its high level of organization, positive participant feedback, and substantial outcomes, COP29 is a significant achievement for Azerbaijan.

COP29 brought together representatives from nearly 200 nations, including over 76,000 participants and more than 80 heads of state and government. The successful hosting of such a large-scale event is a testament to Azerbaijan’s organizational professionalism. Baku’s modern

infrastructure, stringent security measures, and welcoming environment earned widespread acclaim.

From a diplomatic perspective, COP29 further cemented Azerbaijan’s role as a key international actor. It demonstrated the country’s ability to bridge divides and foster dialogue on pressing global issues, underscoring its growing influence since restoring independence in 1991.

Before COP29, doubts loomed over its potential success due to significant disagreements between developed and developing nations, particularly regarding financial and technological support. These divisions threatened to undermine the event’s objectives.

A key challenge was resolving debates over financial commitments, which required extended negotiations. Talks ran late into the night of November 23–24, culminating in a consensus that marked a triumph for international cooperation. Extending the conference by a day ensured these critical agreements were finalized.

Several landmark agreements emerged from COP29, including:

Activation of the Loss and Damage Fund: This fund will provide crucial support to developing nations grappling with the effects of climate change.

Implementation of Article 6 on Carbon Markets: A long-debated mechanism for global carbon markets was successfully established.

Approval of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG): A commitment to allocate \$300 billion annually to developing countries by 2035 was formalized.

These agreements, particularly beneficial for developing countries, enhance their ability to combat climate change. The outcomes were praised by prominent leaders, including U.S. President Joe Biden and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Azerbaijan's impartiality and effective climate diplomacy played a vital role in securing these outcomes. Acting as a bridge between developed and developing nations, Baku facilitated compromises that advanced the global climate agenda. By advocating for increased financial support for developing countries, Azerbaijan further underscored its commitment to equitable climate action.

The success of COP29 also demonstrated Azerbaijan's reliability as a host for future high-profile international events. Its role as a neutral mediator reaffirmed its reputation as a responsible and constructive international partner.

Despite unwarranted criticism and calls for politicization or boycott, Azerbaijan remained steadfast in its commitment to COP29's goals. Efforts to undermine the event only strengthened Azerbaijan's resolve, showcasing its determination to focus on constructive outcomes rather than succumbing to external pressures.

COP29 in Baku will be remembered as a defining moment in the global fight against climate change. The agreements and consensus achieved during the summit demonstrate the critical role Azerbaijan played in fostering international cooperation. Beyond the tangible outcomes, COP29 also highlighted Azerbaijan's organizational and diplomatic capabilities, further solidifying its place on the global stage.

As both host and neutral mediator, Azerbaijan demonstrated its readiness to address global environmental challenges, leaving a lasting legacy. The success of COP29 not only contributes to the fight against climate change today but also sets an enduring example for future international cooperation.

V. Azerbaijan files statement of claim against Armenia over Energy Charter Treaty violations

Azerbaijan has filed a Statement of Claim with the Permanent Court of Arbitration based on Armenia's violation of Azerbaijan's sovereign rights over energy resources during Armenia's nearly three-decade occupation of Azerbaijani territories. The claim details multiple breaches of the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) and international law, noting extensive exploitation and obstruction of Azerbaijan's energy assets.

This filing marks a significant step in ongoing legal proceedings that began on 27 February 2023, when Azerbaijan issued a Notice of Arbitration to Armenia. The arbitral tribunal was formally constituted on 8 September 2023, and the two nations held their first procedural meeting on 12 January 2024.

Azerbaijan's claim centers on Armenia's actions during the occupation, which denied Azerbaijan access to vital energy infrastructure and resources. Armenia exploited these resources for its own benefit, depriving Azerbaijan of their use and delaying the development of critical renewable energy projects. For example, Armenia operated and integrated the Tartar Hydropower Plant into its domestic electricity network, redirecting energy for its own consumption. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan was barred from accessing key sites like the Khudafarin and Giz Galasi hydropower project areas on the Azerbaijani-Iranian border. These delays hindered the Azerbaijan's renewable energy development for decades.

The Statement of Claim emphasizes the long-term impacts of these actions, which were a clear violation of international law and Azerbaijan's sovereign rights. Armenia's actions not only caused immediate economic losses but also undermined its ability to expand renewable energy infrastructure, critical to the country's sustainable development goals.

Azerbaijan has committed to pursuing accountability for these violations, seeking

compensation and other remedies through the arbitration process. This development underscores Azerbaijan's broader strategy to address grave consequences stemming from Armenia's occupation of its territories. The legal proceedings at The Hague are expected to play a pivotal role in defining the accountability for resource exploitation in post-conflict territories.

VI. Azerbaijan leads renewed international push on addressing missing persons issue

The United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee adopted by consensus Resolution A/C.3/79/L.35 on "Missing Persons," reaffirming the international community's commitment to addressing this critical issue. Co-sponsored by 56 UN Member States, including Azerbaijan as a principal co-sponsor, the resolution has been reintroduced on a biannual basis since 2002.

The resolution underscores the profound suffering experienced by families of missing persons and the detrimental impact on conflict resolution efforts. It emphasizes the necessity of holding perpetrators accountable for violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws related to missing persons. The text also calls on parties to armed conflicts to prevent disappearances, investigate cases, and determine the fate of missing individuals.

For the first time, this year's resolution acknowledges the challenges posed by landmines, which hinder efforts to locate missing persons and recover human remains. It calls on states to cooperate in ensuring the safe search and identification of those who have gone missing.

The issue of missing persons remains a pressing priority for Azerbaijan. Following Armenia's aggression in the early 1990s, approximately 4,000 Azerbaijanis, including civilians, women, and children, remain unaccounted for. Additionally, six Azerbaijani citizens went missing during the 2020 Patriotic War.

Azerbaijan has taken proactive steps to elevate this issue on the international agenda. Since 2023, the country has organized international conferences to raise awareness, culminating in the Declaration of the international conference on "Addressing the Problem of Missing Persons: Upholding the Right to Know for the Families." Co-hosted by Azerbaijan's State Commission on Prisoners of War, Hostages, and Missing Persons and the International Committee of the Red Cross, the conference was held in Baku on 2–3 October 2024. Its declaration has been formally issued as a document of both the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council.

Despite advances in technology that have improved the ability to locate and identify missing persons, the scale of the problem continues to grow. Recent statistics indicate a dramatic increase in missing persons worldwide, with numbers now exceeding 212,000. The resolution highlights the ongoing relevance of this issue on the global agenda and the need for sustained international efforts.

Azerbaijan has reaffirmed its commitment to consolidating global action to address the issue of missing persons. By working through international frameworks like the UN and fostering cooperation among states, Azerbaijan seeks to ensure that families of missing persons worldwide gain the closure they deserve and that the right to know remains a priority.

VII. Azerbaijan celebrates Victory Day

November 8, 2024, marks the fourth anniversary of Azerbaijan's victory in Shusha, a pivotal event that determined the outcome of the 44-day Patriotic War. This decisive victory ended nearly 30 years of military occupation and aggression, ushering in new opportunities for peace and development in the region. Commemorated annually as Victory Day by the Order of President Ilham Aliyev, this date symbolizes the beginning of a transformative era for Azerbaijan and the South Caucasus.

Despite enduring significant economic, social, and humanitarian consequences from Armenia's military aggression and prolonged occupation, Azerbaijan consistently sought peaceful solutions to the conflict. However, Armenia's continued military occupation, illegal activities in Azerbaijani territories, and provocative rhetoric such as "new wars for new territories" and "Karabagh is Armenia" obstructed any chance for a peaceful resolution.

On September 27, 2020, following political provocations and a large-scale offensive by Armenia, Azerbaijan exercised its right to self-defense under the UN Charter. This marked the start of the 44-day Patriotic War, a campaign to restore Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. Despite Armenia's targeting of civilians in densely populated areas like Ganja, Barda, and Tartar—actions widely condemned as war crimes—the resolve and bravery of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces, under the leadership of President and Commander-in-Chief Ilham Aliyev, prevailed.

The liberation of cities such as Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Zangilan, Gubadli, and the culturally significant city of Shusha, alongside over 300 settlements, culminated in the Shusha victory on November 8. This success ensured the return of Kalbajar, Aghdam, and Lachin regions through the trilateral statement signed on November 10, 2020.

Following the war, Azerbaijan immediately proposed initiatives for sustainable peacebuilding in the region. However, ongoing challenges persisted, including Armenia's failure to fully comply with the trilateral agreement, military provocations, illegal resource exploitation, and the

continued threat of landmines. These actions necessitated further counter-terrorism measures to dismantle remnants of occupation and restore sovereignty in the Karabagh region.

Today, Azerbaijan is actively engaged in bilateral negotiations with Armenia to finalize a peace agreement, driven by its vision of sustainable peace. While significant progress has been made, obstacles remain, including territorial claims enshrined in Armenia's constitution and military provocations fueled by external influences. Azerbaijan maintains that such claims are futile and that peace can only be achieved through mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. This anniversary serves as a reminder of the resilience of the Azerbaijani people and their unwavering determination to build a future of stability and progress.