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HIGHLIGHT OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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I. **Azerbaijan awaits concrete steps from Armenia before signing peace agreement**

On 13 March 2025, Azerbaijan and Armenia reached a significant milestone: both countries completed negotiations on the text of the draft Agreement on Peace and the Establishment of Interstate Relations. This outcome reflects sustained diplomatic work since 2022, when Azerbaijan first proposed a five-point framework for normalizing relations. While this breakthrough is a necessary step toward durable peace, it is not a final one. The signing of the agreement remains contingent on two outstanding conditions: constitutional reform in Armenia and the formal dissolution of the obsolete OSCE Minsk Group.

For over two years, Azerbaijan has advanced the peace process through consistent diplomatic engagement, clear proposals, and firm insistence on respect for territorial integrity and state sovereignty. It was Azerbaijan that first submitted the peace draft, it was Azerbaijan that revised the text for mutual agreement, and it is Azerbaijan that has continually underscored the need for concrete changes—rather than rhetorical commitments—from the Armenian side. These include the amendment of the Armenian constitution, which currently contains legal references that affirm territorial claims against Azerbaijan. This is not a minor formality. It directly contradicts the foundational principles of mutual recognition and non-aggression necessary for lasting peace.

The second requirement—joint application for the dissolution of the OSCE Minsk Group and related entities—is equally central. The Minsk Group’s mandate was predicated on the existence of a territorial dispute over Karabakh. That conflict ended with Azerbaijan’s restoration of full sovereignty in 2020, followed by the anti-terrorism measures of September 2023. There is no longer any legal or practical justification for retaining a framework designed for a problem that has been resolved. Continuing to fund and reference this group only perpetuates diplomatic ambiguity and

invites outside interference into a regional process that is now squarely bilateral.

Despite Armenia’s public acceptance of the agreement’s 17 provisions, it continues to delay or condition the fulfillment of Azerbaijan’s final two demands. Armenian officials maintain that the EU Monitoring Mission will remain in place until after the peace agreement is signed, even though Azerbaijan explicitly called for its removal as part of the finalized text. Simultaneously, while Yerevan has signaled its willingness to support the dissolution of the Minsk Group, no joint initiative has yet been submitted to the OSCE. Azerbaijan is still waiting for action—not statements.

Moreover, structural and rhetorical signals from Armenia continue to undermine the normalization process. The Armenian military repeatedly violated the ceasefire between March 16 and 21, and defense spending has sharply increased, now constituting 30% of Armenia’s 2025 state budget. The rearmament is paired with a strategic orientation that includes military cooperation with countries such as France and India, as well as advisory support from U.S. personnel. In the context of repeated violations and a history of aggression, this escalation contradicts any claim to a peace-first foreign policy.

Inside Armenia, revisionist narratives continue to shape public discourse and political planning. The 35th Congress of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun), held in Yerevan in February, reaffirmed a platform of territorial claims, diaspora mobilization, and demands for compensation and international recognition of genocide claims. While the ARF is not the ruling party, its ideas are not marginal. The Pashinyan government has facilitated its activity, offering it political space and legitimacy.

Additionally, core obligations under the 2020 trilateral statement remain unfulfilled. Azerbaijan has completed the portion of the Zangezur Corridor within its territory, while Armenia refuses to implement its side. Instead, the Armenian government continues to promote the so-called

“Crossroads of Peace” initiative, which lacks support from both Azerbaijan and Türkiye and does not serve as a functional substitute. The pattern is consistent: avoidance of binding commitments in favor of vague alternative proposals.

Another unresolved issue is the return of West Azerbaijanis expelled from Armenia between 1987 and 1990. This displaced community of 300,000 people continues to seek recognition and return in a manner consistent with international norms. To date, Armenian authorities have refused to acknowledge these claims or facilitate the process, effectively disregarding a key component of historical justice and post-conflict reconciliation.

Azerbaijan has also taken necessary steps to ensure legal accountability. Trials are underway for several former leaders of the separatist administration, charged with serious violations including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and terrorism. Evidence presented in these proceedings confirms that Armenia was not a passive actor but an active participant in the political, military, and logistical support of the separatist regime. These trials are not only about individual responsibility—they are also a public affirmation of Azerbaijan’s sovereignty and a precedent for post-conflict justice.

Rather than cooperating with the judicial process, Armenia has launched a propaganda campaign to undermine these trials. This, too, reveals a refusal to reckon with the past. Genuine peace cannot coexist with denial of responsibility. Transitional justice must be part of the normalization framework, and Armenia’s cooperation is essential in this regard.

The current dynamic underscores a broader problem: external actors, particularly in the West, have distorted the mediation process by offering support to Armenia while minimizing Azerbaijan’s legitimate claims. The EU Monitoring Mission, the European Peace Facility, and bilateral military assistance from Western countries to Armenia all contribute to undermining balance. These actions

have real consequences. They embolden revanchist sentiment in Armenia and complicate the task of securing a peace that is not only signed but sustained.

The peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia is not an abstract diplomatic goal. It is a critical necessity after three decades of war, occupation, displacement, and destruction. But it must be based on equal recognition, accountability, and finality. Azerbaijan has acted with consistency, transparency, and respect for international law. It will not be pressured into signing a peace agreement that leaves the door open to future claims or maintains institutions rooted in the past.

II. Azerbaijan and Türkiye reinforce their alliance amid a recalibration of the global order

As the world experiences another significant reshaping of global alliances and strategic calculations, the recent visit of President İlham Aliyev to Türkiye on March 5–6, 2025, stood out as a meaningful and carefully timed diplomatic engagement. While relations between Baku and Ankara have long been characterized by mutual trust and shared cultural foundations, this latest meeting came at a moment when broader geopolitical shifts are prompting both countries to reassess their roles and reinforce their alliance in the face of an increasingly unpredictable global environment.

The backdrop to this visit includes several important developments. The inauguration of Donald Trump for a second presidential term in the United States has brought with it a shift in Washington’s foreign policy posture. Among the early indications of this shift has been the U.S. decision to curtail military, intelligence, and financial aid to Ukraine. At the same time, divergence between U.S. and EU approaches to the Russia-Ukraine conflict has become more visible. Some analysts suggest that this evolving posture is part of a broader strategic maneuver—seeking to

reduce U.S.-China tensions by drawing Russia closer to the West. If this is indeed the case, the effects are unlikely to be limited to Eastern Europe or the Asia-Pacific; they will resonate across regions that have historically been affected by great power politics, such as the South Caucasus.

For Azerbaijan and Türkiye, this presents both risks and opportunities. On one hand, there is the risk that global power competition could once again marginalize the interests of smaller regional actors. On the other hand, there is a growing recognition that Ankara and Baku are well-positioned to provide a stabilizing and autonomous framework for cooperation in the South Caucasus and across the Turkic world. President İlham Aliyev's visit to Türkiye was framed precisely within this context—a deliberate reaffirmation of the strategic partnership between the two countries, with an eye toward deepening their role in shaping regional outcomes rather than merely responding to them.

Türkiye has become a more prominent interlocutor not just in regional affairs but in broader global conversations. That both U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov are now engaging with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on the future of the South Caucasus is not incidental. It suggests a shared recognition of Türkiye's growing role as a security actor and political coordinator in the region. At the same time, Azerbaijan continues to provide critical support to European energy diversification, serving as a stable and secure partner in efforts to reduce dependency on Russian gas. The network of strategic cooperation agreements that President İlham Aliyev's government has developed with ten European countries, along with the strategic alliance agreement with Türkiye, reflects this positioning.

President İlham Aliyev has also consistently emphasized the importance of broader Turkic cooperation. His references to the Turkic world as Azerbaijan's "only family" underscore a deepening political and cultural strategy. This strategy seeks not only symbolic unity but functional cooperation

in the realms of security, military affairs, and economic development. In his view, and in line with Türkiye's own strategic posture, unity among Turkic states is both a goal and a necessity in light of new global uncertainties.

It is within this framework that the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) gains added relevance. Rather than being a loose cultural grouping, the OTS is increasingly being seen as a platform for coordination in a time when traditional alliances are either being questioned or redefined. President İlham Aliyev's remarks praising President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership in unifying the Turkic world speak directly to this objective. His words function not just as political sentiment but as a warning that the current moment requires unity and foresight.

President Erdoğan's own statement—that Türkiye and Azerbaijan stand for peace, stability, and prosperity—is another expression of this shared regional vision. It signals that while the two countries are prepared to deepen their internal cooperation, they also wish to maintain a region free from proxy contests or strategic confrontation. The message being sent to both global and regional powers is that the South Caucasus should not be treated as a testing ground for geopolitical influence but as a space for collaboration led by those with the most at stake in its future.

This perspective is supported by recent diplomatic developments involving other regional actors. Georgian Foreign Minister Maka Bochorishvili's endorsement of Türkiye's leadership during her February 26 visit to Ankara, and Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's earlier visit to Azerbaijan, are both signs of growing regional alignment. These are not isolated gestures; they reflect an understanding that the Türkiye-Azerbaijan alliance is emerging as a center of gravity in regional politics.

President İlham Aliyev's visit was not simply about reviewing bilateral ties. It was about anticipating a changing world order and asserting that regional

resilience must come from within. It was a recognition that in the absence of predictable global leadership, countries like Azerbaijan and Türkiye must rely on each other—and their regional allies—to shape a more stable and cooperative future.

III. The strategic logic behind the İğdir-Nakhchivan pipeline

The inauguration of the İğdir–Nakhchivan gas pipeline on March 5, 2025, represents more than the completion of another energy corridor. It is a reflection of how regional integration, strategic autonomy, and historical continuity have coalesced in Azerbaijan’s foreign and domestic policy. In his address at the opening ceremony, President İlham Aliyev framed this project not just as a technical achievement but as a milestone in the broader realignment of the South Caucasus and a reaffirmation of Turkish-Azerbaijani brotherhood.

The significance of the pipeline lies first in its ability to correct a long-standing geographic and political dislocation. For over a century, Nakhchivan has been physically separated from the rest of Azerbaijan. This separation, as President İlham Aliyev noted, is the result of a Soviet-era decision in 1920 that cut West Zangezur from Azerbaijan and annexed it to Armenia, effectively breaking the overland connection between Azerbaijan and its exclave. The consequences of this decision have been lasting. Nakhchivan’s vulnerability was sharply felt during the First Karabakh War, when it came under blockade and narrowly avoided occupation due to the leadership of Heydar Aliyev and the local population’s resistance.

The new gas pipeline, now operational, does more than deliver energy. It delivers a sense of permanence and resilience to a region long marked by uncertainty. President İlham Aliyev’s speech made clear that this is not an isolated act. It is part of a broader trajectory of Azerbaijan–Türkiye strategic alignment that spans energy, transportation, and geopolitics. From the Baku–

Tbilisi–Ceyhan and Baku–Tbilisi–Erzurum pipelines to TANAP and the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway, the two countries have laid down the physical foundations of a regional architecture that serves not only their national interests but also enhances the position of the wider Turkic world. President İlham Aliyev emphasized how these initiatives have transformed the energy map of Eurasia and consolidated Azerbaijan’s role as a stable and essential energy supplier to Europe. In 2024, Azerbaijan exported 25 billion cubic meters of gas, half of which went to Türkiye. Ten European countries now receive Azerbaijani gas, illustrating the country’s emergence as a reliable actor in continental energy security.

In this context, the İğdir–Nakhchivan pipeline stands as a smaller but symbolically powerful addition to a pattern of purposeful infrastructure diplomacy. The decision to prioritize Nakhchivan’s energy independence speaks to a long-term vision that goes beyond commercial logic. It reinforces national unity, supports regional development, and sends a message about the direction of Azerbaijan’s strategic thinking: away from inherited constraints and toward self-determined outcomes.

President İlham Aliyev also framed the project within the broader vision of Turkic unity. He praised President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s leadership in advancing the cause of Turkic cooperation and highlighted the role of such infrastructure in creating tangible links between Turkic nations. These are not abstract declarations of cultural affinity; they are grounded in material projects that bind the region together economically, politically, and symbolically. Azerbaijan has consistently supported this process, not as an afterthought but as a central pillar of its foreign policy.

The choice of timing—during the holy month of Ramadan—underscored the emotional and social dimension of the occasion. For Nakhchivan, this was not merely the activation of a pipeline. It was a national celebration, a moment of affirmation that decades of hardship, blockade, and

vulnerability were not the final chapter. It was also a reminder that the Azerbaijani state sees its responsibilities to all its citizens as enduring and indivisible.

The pipeline's inauguration reflects Azerbaijan's broader efforts to assert control over its own geopolitical fate, reduce dependency on unreliable transit routes, and reinforce unity with Türkiye in ways that are pragmatic and forward-looking. President Ilham Aliyev's speech was not just about gas—it was about the redefinition of geography, the maturation of sovereignty, and the consolidation of a regional order rooted in shared interests, historical memory, and future-oriented cooperation.

IV. Azerbaijan hosts Global Forum amid shifting international priorities

The 12th Global Baku Forum opened on March 13, 2025, in Baku under the theme “Rethinking World Order: Turning Challenges into Opportunities.” Organized by the Nizami Ganjavi International Center and held under the patronage of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, the forum brought together current and former heads of state, senior officials of international organizations, and policymakers to discuss global security, climate, energy, and governance challenges.

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev delivered the opening address, focusing on Azerbaijan's international engagements, recent developments in the South Caucasus, and the country's energy and climate policies. President Ilham Aliyev opened his remarks by acknowledging the activities of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center and its role during COP29, held in Baku in November 2024. President Ilham Aliyev noted that members of the Center served on the COP29 Advisory Committee and organized a series of panel discussions during the summit.

President Ilham Aliyev stated that Azerbaijan had been selected to host COP29 by the unanimous

decision of nearly 200 countries. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that this decision reflected recognition of Azerbaijan's policy on renewable energy, noting that although the country is rich in fossil fuels, its strategic direction prioritizes green transition. According to President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan's current installed power generation capacity is 8 gigawatts, and by 2030, an additional 6.5 gigawatts from renewable sources—solar, wind, and hydro—will be added, much of it from the territories that were recently returned to Azerbaijani control.

President Ilham Aliyev further noted that Azerbaijan is already exporting energy to more than ten countries, with twelve countries receiving Azerbaijani gas—ten of them in Europe. President Ilham Aliyev referenced the European Commission's designation of Azerbaijan as a reliable energy partner and a pan-European supplier. In this context, President Ilham Aliyev mentioned ongoing infrastructure projects, including a planned electricity cable across the Black Sea linking Azerbaijan to Europe, noting that this energy cooperation requires both physical capacity and strong relations with neighboring countries and transit corridors.

On connectivity, President Ilham Aliyev highlighted an increase in cargo transit volume through Azerbaijan, attributing it to recent geopolitical changes. President Ilham Aliyev noted that the country had prepared for such shifts by investing in seaports and railway infrastructure. President Ilham Aliyev stated that the growing transit role has increased the geopolitical relevance of the South Caucasus.

Turning to COP29, President Ilham Aliyev stated that the summit was organized under compressed timelines—within one year instead of the typical two—and that Azerbaijan's foreign policy experience, particularly during its chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement, helped deliver consensus on key issues. Among these, he noted the agreement reached on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and the increase of financial commitments to renewable energy from \$100

billion to \$300 billion. President Ilham Aliyev stated that this outcome was now referred to as the “Baku Breakthrough.”

In his speech, President Ilham Aliyev also addressed the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev stated that Azerbaijan was the initiator of the peace talks and had submitted the draft peace agreement that is currently under negotiation. President Ilham Aliyev noted that most of the text has been agreed upon. President Ilham Aliyev referred to the occupation of Azerbaijani territories in the 1990s and described the destruction in the liberated territories. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that despite the progress in talks, Azerbaijan considers trust in the Armenian government to be low. President Ilham Aliyev reiterated the demand for Armenia to revise its constitution to remove territorial claims against Azerbaijan. He also called for the formal dissolution of the OSCE Minsk Group, arguing that its mandate is obsolete since Armenia has recognized Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev stated that Armenia’s avoidance to support such a dissolution reflects a reluctance to fully renounce past positions.

Regarding security, President Ilham Aliyev expressed concern about military cooperation between Armenia and France, as well as the European Union’s support to Armenia through the European Peace Facility. President Ilham Aliyev raised questions about the transparency of weapons transfers to Armenia. President Ilham Aliyev also commented on Azerbaijan’s bilateral relations with the United States. President Ilham Aliyev stated that past cooperation had been substantial, including participation in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. President Ilham Aliyev said relations deteriorated under the Biden administration. President Ilham Aliyev expressed hope that under a new U.S. administration, relations could be restored and strengthened.

Throughout the forum, speakers addressed a range of global concerns. President of Albania Bajram Begaj emphasized the importance of dialogue and

multilateralism in managing crises. Chairwoman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Željka Cvijanović spoke about the internal challenges in Bosnia and Herzegovina and called for domestic solutions without foreign imposition. President of North Macedonia Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova reflected on the erosion of global norms and the weakening of multilateral institutions.

Representatives from the United Nations and its agencies, including the World Health Organization and the UN Office at Geneva, acknowledged Azerbaijan’s hosting of COP29 and its contributions to climate discussions. The Executive Director of the International Energy Agency, Fatih Birol, described Azerbaijan as a reliable partner in Europe’s energy security.

The 12th Global Baku Forum continued its pattern of convening a wide range of viewpoints. At this year’s meeting, alongside the general theme of global uncertainty, there was also a focus on the role of medium-sized states in shaping regional order, managing energy transitions, and participating in global governance processes on more equal terms.

V. Israel, Azerbaijan, and the U.S. explore trilateral strategic partnership

On March 6, the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office announced that discussions were underway with the United States to explore a trilateral cooperation format involving Israel, Azerbaijan, and the United States. The same day, the Israeli Knesset debated a proposal to upgrade its strategic alliance with Azerbaijan, reflecting the growing weight of Baku in the region’s diplomatic and security calculations. While the full implications of this initiative remain to be seen, the fact that such a trilateral format is being formally discussed at the highest levels of government suggests a reconfiguration of alliances that positions Azerbaijan not only as a reliable partner but as a pivotal link across multiple regions.

This initiative comes at a moment of renewed activity in Azerbaijani-Israeli relations. Over the past several months, Hikmet Hajiyev, Assistant of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Head of Foreign Policy Affairs Department of the Presidential Administration, has visited Israel twice. His most recent visit in February included meetings with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, during which regional security and cooperation were discussed.

The suggested new trilateral format positions Azerbaijan as a bridge between the Middle East, the South Caucasus, and the transatlantic world. This role is neither incidental nor newly assumed. Over the last three decades, Azerbaijan has quietly built a reputation as a dependable partner in energy, trade, and security. Its long-standing energy relationship with Israel is one of the most visible aspects of this alignment. During times of heightened regional conflict, including the Second Intifada and more recent operations in Gaza and Lebanon, Azerbaijan has increased its oil exports to Israel. At present, it supplies more than 60 percent of Israel's gasoline needs. On March 17, Azerbaijan and Israel signed a new agreement for joint gas exploration in Israel's northern Mediterranean exclusive economic zone, marking a deepening of their already robust energy partnership.

The strategic rationale for this alignment is grounded not only in shared interests but also in shared concerns, particularly regarding Iran. Azerbaijan's secular governance, openness to Western engagement, and deepening ties with Israel have long provoked unease in Tehran, which sees the Baku-Tel Aviv axis as a challenge to its regional posture. For Israel and the United States, however, Azerbaijan represents a stable, secular, and strategically located partner at the crossroads of key energy and trade corridors. With the Middle Corridor gaining relevance as a land route linking Europe and Central Asia, Azerbaijan is increasingly integrated into global infrastructure planning—another reason why trilateral cooperation is now under serious consideration.

Relations between Baku and Washington have been complicated in recent years, particularly under the Biden administration. The reactivation of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act in 2024—the amendment that restricts U.S. aid to Azerbaijan—was perceived in Baku as a politically inconsistent gesture. President Ilham Aliyev himself expressed this sentiment during the Global Baku Forum in March, noting the contradiction in U.S. behavior: waiving the restriction when Azerbaijan was needed for military logistics, but reimposing it once those needs dissipated. Yet President Ilham Aliyev also voiced hope that with the return of Donald Trump to the White House, a new chapter in U.S.-Azerbaijan relations might be opened. The trilateral talks with Israel and the U.S. can be seen as a reflection of that optimism.

Another potential consequence of this evolving partnership could be Azerbaijan's inclusion in the Abraham Accords or the Negev Forum. Baku has not officially signaled such intentions, but advocates for this inclusion argue that Azerbaijan's participation would be consistent with the goals of the Accords—to normalize relations and deepen cooperation between Israel and the wider Islamic world. It would also underscore Azerbaijan's unique capacity to operate across cultural and political lines, a role few other Muslim-majority countries can play with such credibility and strategic relevance.

The timing of this initiative also suggests a recalibrated U.S. approach to the South Caucasus. If the previous administration deprioritized the region, the new configuration appears to take seriously the idea that regional stability must be anchored in partnerships with actors who are capable, reliable, and already networked into multiple spheres of influence. For Washington, this means looking beyond traditional allies to emerging ones like Azerbaijan, whose role in energy security, logistics, and diplomatic mediation offers a degree of leverage and regional insight that is increasingly valued.

The Israel-Azerbaijan-U.S. trilateral format is still in its early stages, but it reflects a broader trend

toward flexible, issue-based alignments that respond to new realities rather than older alliance frameworks. President Ilham Aliyev's government has consistently sought to pursue a foreign policy rooted in balance and diversification. The new trilateral initiative fits well within that approach, offering Azerbaijan the opportunity to deepen its ties with Washington while continuing to strengthen its longstanding relationship with Israel.

VI. Azerbaijan's peace approach rests on clear and established principles, not new conditions

On March 25, 2025, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan stood beside his Iranian counterpart and claimed that Azerbaijan had presented new conditions to the peace process, allegedly after agreement had already been reached on the draft treaty. This claim misrepresents the facts and distorts the nature of the ongoing negotiations. The two core issues raised—amendments to Armenia's constitution and the formal dissolution of the OSCE Minsk Group—have been on the table for over two and a half years. They are not new, improvised, or hidden demands. They are well-documented and have been clearly communicated to all parties involved, including international mediators and observers.

The question of constitutional change in Armenia is not about semantics or abstract symbolism. It concerns legal language that directly challenges Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. This legal framework undermines the very foundation of peace. A treaty between two states is rendered incoherent if one side maintains internal legal texts that deny the other's sovereignty. No meaningful or lasting agreement can be built on such a contradiction. This matter was not raised belatedly. It was thoroughly addressed in the Washington meetings in May 2023, where Azerbaijani representatives presented detailed documentation of Armenia's constitutional

language, judicial interpretations, and public statements that assert territorial claims.

Similarly, the demand to formally dissolve the OSCE Minsk Group is not a maneuver to complicate the process but an effort to bring coherence and closure to a negotiation landscape that has changed fundamentally since 2020. The Minsk Group has not been active or relevant since the end of the Second Karabakh War. Its continued mention serves no diplomatic purpose and creates an impression of parallel processes or unresolved mandates. Bringing this institution to a formal close is not about erasing history but about recognizing political and legal realities and allowing the peace process to proceed without unnecessary distractions.

Mirzoyan's public statements, both in the region and abroad, follow a familiar pattern: mischaracterize Azerbaijan's positions, obscure Armenia's obligations, and project an image of unjustified Azerbaijani intransigence. This approach has now extended to international forums beyond the peace talks. During his official visit to Brazil in March, Mirzoyan criticized previous climate summits for neglecting the needs of the Global South and made politically loaded statements about regional tensions. These remarks were clearly aimed at undermining Azerbaijan's leadership of COP29, which took place in Baku and was widely recognized as a turning point in global climate diplomacy.

COP29 did not marginalize developing countries. On the contrary, it delivered outcomes long sought by Global South states, including the tripling of annual public climate finance commitments and the adoption of a new \$1.3 trillion mobilization goal. Moreover, the operationalization of the carbon markets mechanism and the formal activation of the Loss and Damage Fund offered concrete tools for mitigation, adaptation, and financial equity. These developments speak directly to the priorities Mirzoyan claims to champion, and to misrepresent them in a high-level diplomatic setting is both inaccurate and diplomatically irresponsible.

Mirzoyan's broader messaging strategy reflects an unwillingness to engage with the substance of ongoing negotiations. His portrayal of the peace treaty draft as fully agreed, with new Azerbaijani demands inserted at the last minute, is not supported by any credible record. The process has been delayed repeatedly by Armenia's hesitations, backtracking, and insistence on keeping alive symbolic gestures such as references to the Minsk Group and the maintenance of unresolved territorial claims. Even proposals that could serve as confidence-building measures—such as arms control mechanisms and communication corridor agreements—have been hampered by Armenia's reluctance to act on prior commitments.

Equally problematic are the accusations concerning detained individuals in Azerbaijan. These are not political prisoners or arbitrarily held civilians. The individuals in question have been charged with serious crimes, including participation in acts that amount to war crimes and ethnic cleansing. Azerbaijan is acting in accordance with both international humanitarian law and its domestic legal responsibilities. Calls for their release, when made without reference to the legal proceedings or the underlying charges, lack credibility.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian issues that Azerbaijan has consistently raised—such as the right of return for displaced Azerbaijanis, the provision of minefield maps, and accountability for missing persons—receive far less attention from Armenian officials. These concerns are neither marginal nor secondary. They go to the heart of regional justice and reconciliation. A sincere peace process cannot proceed while one side demands gestures of goodwill while failing to address its own responsibilities.

Border incidents are another area where Armenia's rhetoric diverges from its behavior. The statement issued by the Armenian Prime Minister's Office on March 18 misrepresented recent developments along the frontier and ignored visual evidence of provocations initiated by Armenian forces. The militarization of the border, including

the presence of offensive weaponry, is a direct contradiction of Armenia's stated intent to de-escalate. These actions revive the very dynamics that derailed peace efforts in earlier decades.

If Armenia wishes to demonstrate a genuine commitment to peace, it must move beyond public messaging strategies and symbolic diplomacy. This includes revising its constitutional text to remove territorial claims against Azerbaijan, ending the invocation of obsolete institutions such as the Minsk Group, fulfilling obligations concerning regional connectivity, and providing transparent information on issues such as minefields and missing persons.

Azerbaijan has made clear that it remains committed to peace. It was Azerbaijan that first proposed a peace treaty in early 2022. It is Azerbaijan that continues to engage on the basis of sovereignty, mutual recognition, and non-aggression. But peace cannot be built unilaterally. It requires clarity, not confusion; commitment, not performance.

The international community, including mediators and partner states, should be attentive to the record—not just of what is said publicly, but of what has been documented in negotiations over the past several years. Misinformation, no matter how polished or well-delivered, does not advance the cause of peace. Only a shared recognition of post-war realities and consistent, good-faith implementation of agreed-upon principles can do that. It is time for the process to move forward on the basis of what has already been agreed, not stalled by selective narratives and political theater.

VII. Remembering the March Genocide

March 31st marks the 107th anniversary of the March Genocide of 1918, a devastating chapter in Azerbaijan's history when thousands of innocent Azerbaijanis were systematically killed based on their ethnic and religious identity. The massacres that began in March 1918 represented a coordinated policy of ethnic cleansing against the

Azerbaijani population. Historical records indicate that approximately 6,000 armed soldiers from the Baku Soviet and 4,000 from the Dashnaksutyun Party participated in these atrocities. Stephan Shaumyan, the Extraordinary Commissioner of the Caucasus and an ethnic Armenian, acknowledged these forces operated under the pretext of "fighting counter-revolutionaries."

The violence spread across multiple regions including Baku, Shamakhi, Guba, Garabagh, Zangazur, Nakhchivan, Shirvan, and Irevan. The brutality was particularly severe in Guba, where 167 villages were destroyed and thousands perished. In total, more than 16,000 Azerbaijanis lost their lives during these events. Beyond the human toll, cultural and religious sites faced deliberate destruction. Mosques, cemeteries, and other monuments significant to Azerbaijani heritage were targeted, providing clear evidence of crimes motivated by ethnic hatred and religious intolerance.

Following these events, the newly established Azerbaijan Democratic Republic created special institutions to investigate the atrocities and bring international attention to them. March 31st was designated as a day of national mourning. However, these efforts toward accountability were cut short with the fall of the Republic.

It wasn't until after Azerbaijan regained its independence that these events received proper political and legal assessment. On March 26, 1998, National Leader Heydar Aliyev issued the Decree "On the Genocide of Azerbaijanis," formally recognizing the historic injustice.

The ideology of ethnic hatred that fueled the 1918 massacres continued throughout the 20th century, manifesting in the forced deportation of Azerbaijanis from present-day Armenia, the Khojaly genocide, and other atrocities during periods of conflict and occupation. Even during the 44-day Patriotic War in 2020, civilians faced war crimes rooted in the same prejudice.

While the current post-conflict period presents historical opportunities for reconciliation and

establishing lasting peace in the region, significant challenges remain. Territorial claims against Azerbaijan, which have motivated past violence, continue to be enshrined in Armenia's Constitution and various legislative acts. These ongoing claims represent a substantial obstacle to regional stability and a peaceful future. Azerbaijan continues its efforts nationally and internationally to ensure accountability for these crimes. The country remains resolute in its demand for Armenia to end territorial claims, seeing this as essential for achieving lasting peace in the region.