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BULLETIN

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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I. Developing relations with the Russian Federation:

i) President Ilham Aliyev's speech at the 16th Annual Meeting of Valdai International Discussion Club; ii) The first Vice-president Mehriban Aliyeva's participation in the 10th Russia-Azerbaijan Interregional Forum iii) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statements during his visits to Yerevan and Baku

i) On October 3, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev paid an official visit to Russia to attend the 16th annual meeting of the **Valdai International Discussion Club**, in Sochi. President Ilham Aliyev's speech at the high-level event touched upon multiple topics, including Azerbaijan's partnership with Russia, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, and regional security in the South Caucasus region. The President of Azerbaijan made it clear that the relations between Russia and Azerbaijan had been developing dynamically in political, economic and security spheres. Then, during tet-a-tet meeting between Ilham Aliyev and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin held on the sidelines of the Valdai Forum, the two sides reviewed a broad agenda of bilateral relations and outlined the ways for further cooperation. Presidents Vladimir Putin and Ilham Aliyev reaffirmed the intentions of their countries not only to continue, but also strengthen military-technical cooperation. All in all, the issues discussed during the working visit by President Ilham Aliyev to Russia and at the meetings held with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi city demonstrated the closeness of interests of the two countries.

Notably, during his remarks at the Valdai Forum, President Ilham Aliyev spoke about the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict which had been going on for over a quarter of a century. The President of Azerbaijan then rebuffed the pro-Armenian propagandistic idea disseminated across the academic world that "the Nagorno-Karabakh region was handed over to Azerbaijan only during the Soviet times", pointing out that "the decision of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee in 1921 was, literally, "to leave" Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan, and not "to give" it, as the Armenian side often interprets." President Ilham Aliyev went on to stress that the Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's "Karabakh is Armenia, and period" statement was a lie. The President of Azerbaijan highlighted the fact that the Nagorno-Karabakh region was an internationally recognized part of Azerbaijan, and while Armenia continued to push for the region's independence, this illegal formation was not even recognized by Yerevan. President Ilham Aliyev's speech thereupon markedly culminated in "Nagorno-Karabakh is Azerbaijan—exclamation point!", which sparked heated discussions in both Azerbaijani and Armenian mass media and online.

ii) The First Vice-president of Azerbaijan Mehriban Aliyeva's participation at the **10th Russia- Azerbaijan Interregional Forum** held in Moscow on November 22-23, as well as her meetings with the high-level authorities of Russia further contributed to the

development of bilateral relations between Russia and Azerbaijan. The forum was co-organized by Russia's Ministry for Economic Development and Azerbaijan's Economy Ministry, and brought together leaders of 27 Russian and 9 Azerbaijani regions, as well as up to 1200 representatives of the business community, public organizations, and specialized agencies of both countries. Russia was represented at the level of regional leaders by the Astrakhan, Arkhangelsk, and Rostov Regions as well as the Republic of Dagestan and the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, while Azerbaijan was represented by the Qaradagh, Qabala, Qusar, Khachmaz, and Shamakhi Districts and the cities of Ganja and Sheki.

The Forum participants focused on ways to enhance cooperation in such areas as industry, agriculture, tourism, and humanitarian affairs. As a result, a memorandum of partnership was signed by the Opora Russia All-Russian Non-Governmental Organization of Small and Medium Business and the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers') Organisations of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Rostselmash and Azermash, Gazprombank and the AZPROMO Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Foundation. In addition, the two countries signed an Intergovernmental Agreement on Cooperation in Youth Policy. A total of 13 bilateral documents were signed. Altogether, there are more than 140 interstate and intergovernmental treaties and agreements in effect between the two countries, and a plan was signed last year to develop key areas of Russian-Azerbaijani cooperation for the period until 2024.

During her visit, Vice-president Aliyeva also met with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and the Chairperson of the Federation Council of the Russian Federal Assembly Valentina Matviyenko. During the meeting President Putin presented the Order of Friendship of the Russian Federation to madam Aliyeva for her contributions to the development and strengthening of Azerbaijan-Russia relations. In addition, Mehriban Aliyeva held working meetings in Moscow and participated at the opening of the "Azerbaijan" pavilion at the Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy.

iii) However, there were also the moments of concern in bilateral relations, the most notable one having been recorded during **Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's visit to Yerevan** on November 11th. While talking about the settlement principles of Armenia- Azerbaijan conflict, during the press-conference following the meeting with the Armenian Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, Minister Lavrov referred to the statement of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan asserting that "any solution for the conflict should be acceptable for the people of Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan". Lavrov added that Karabakh had a de facto veto over any peace agreement in any case. "It is clear to everyone that no negotiations can be completed without the consent of Karabakh and the people of Karabakh. Armenia will not sign them" unless that is the case, he said.

Subsequently, the abovementioned assertion triggered adverse reaction from the Azerbaijani side as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan and the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno- Karabakh both issued statements in connection with the abovementioned remarks by Minister Lavrov. Those statements, in turn, highlighted the attestations that: 1) Referring to the basic documents on the settlement of the conflict, in particular to the decision of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (now OSCE) on March 24, 1992 in Helsinki, there are only two parties to the conflict, namely Azerbaijan and Armenia; 2) There is no such thing within the framework of the adopted international legal documents as “the people of Nagorno-Karabakh”, and in the light of the legally binding four UN Security Council resolutions of 1993, Nagorno-Karabakh is an integral part of Azerbaijan. Noticeably, on the Chiragov vs The Government of Armenia case in 2015, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that it was Armenia that exercised control over the territory of Nagorno- Karabakh and the surrounding areas; 3) The other representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh such as the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of the region may get involved in the negotiation process following after a certain level of progress, which unfortunately, is not being currently observed; 4) As repeatedly noted by President Aliyev, the settlement of the conflict, including the exercise of the right to self-determination, should be implemented within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. In fact, voicing of ideas by Minister Lavrov that are consonant with the failed attempt by the Armenian side, namely the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan in March 2019 to change the format of the negotiations, did not correspond to the spirit of the mediation mission and the previously voiced statements of the Minsk Group Co-Chairmen, including Russia.

Nonetheless, Minister Lavrov’s recent statements made **during his visit to Azerbaijan on December 2-3** were characterized with slight amendments in favor of the arguments provided by the Azerbaijani side. During his meeting with President Ilham Aliyev, Minister Lavrov supported the latter’s thesis that “the rhetoric that contradicts the fundamental principles approved by both parties, the principles that are enshrined in the UN Charter and in the Helsinki Final Act, must be avoided.” Then, at a joint press conference with the Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister Lavrov went on to present an updated version of his thesis expressed in Yerevan, this time also taking into account the position of Azerbaijan. Commenting **on the recent exchange of visits of Azerbaijani and Armenian journalists**, Minister Lavrov mentioned that Russia was one of the authors of this initiative and he supported “contacts between the communities of Nagorno-Karabakh”. This change of rhetoric, in turn, can be considered as another positive sign for the relations between Russia and Azerbaijan.

II. The Garegin Nzdeh Dispute at the CIS Summit in Ashgabat

On October 10-11, 2019, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev was on a working visit to

Turkmenistan to participate in the meeting of the Council of CIS Heads of State. One of the documents adopted at the summit related to the celebration of the 75th anniversary of victory in the Second World War. It was an appeal to the CIS and the international community to recognize the decisive role of the USSR in defeating fascism and the inadmissibility of a revision of history and glorification of Nazism. On this occasion, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev criticized the establishment of a monument to Garegin Nzhdeh, a wartime Nazi collaborator from Armenia, in the centre of the capital city, Yerevan.

In response, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan did not shy away from defending Nzhdeh, who had also founded a supremacist ideology called Tseghakronism (the combination of two Armenian words for "race" and "religion") in the early 1930s. Pashinyan praised Nzhdeh's role in the fight against Turkey and Azerbaijan in the context of Armenian nationalist history, disregarding his involvement as the commander of the Armenian Legion of the SS in the extermination of more than 20 thousand people, mostly civilians, and in the massacres against the Azerbaijanis in the Caucasus.

This verbal battle between the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Ashgabat has reignited the aforementioned issue and brought it to the forefront of regional media over the past few weeks. It is worth mentioning at this point that the problem of the glorification of both Nazi criminals and famous terrorists remains extremely topical in Armenia, and President Aliyev is not the first person to have criticized Armenia's glorification of Nazi collaborators. The most recent examples cover the ASALA memorial unveiled in the Armenian city of Vanadzor in 2014, and a monument erected this year in the Armenian-dominated region of Samtskhe-Javakheti in Georgia to Mikhail Avagyan, an Armenian military officer who took part in the extermination of hundreds of people in Khojaly village in Azerbaijan in 1992, the largest massacre committed during the conflict according to the Human Rights Watch. Taking into account ongoing conflicts, the erection of statues of "national heroes" which, by international standards, fall into the category of 'war criminals', undermines the efforts promoted by the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs "to prepare the populations for peace", an initiative which deals with the resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and, in general, the international efforts for promoting reconciliation in the region. On the other hand, and more dangerously, these types of monuments justify and legitimize terrorist tactics in pursuit of alleged national causes and encourage the next generation to follow suit.

III. The 7th Summit of the Cooperation Council of the Turkic-Speaking States

This year's summit, dedicated to the 10th Anniversary of the establishment of the Turkic Council, and held on October 15th, in Baku, was accompanied by significant outcomes

for the organization. First and foremost, Uzbekistan joined this body as a full member, paving the way for a deeper cooperation between the member states. Given Uzbekistan's weight among the Turkic-speaking countries in terms of its GDP and population, this development will inevitably boost the organization's ambitions and magnitude within the international arena. Secondly, Turkic Council opened a representation office in Budapest

in an attempt to further ties with the EU. The organization's relations with Hungary played a special role in this regard, as Budapest was represented at the summit as an official observer for the second time, with Prime Minister Viktor Orban in attendance. These developments, in turn, indicate the growing importance of this structure within the wider region of Eurasia.

The discussions throughout the summit revealed the readiness of Turkic Council to step up its status from an organization which merely deals with securing friendly rhetoric between the member states, to the one which can provide a solid framework for a deeper integration. Ideas such as developing a "Turkic Vision 2040" strategy, expanding ties in the fields of transport, trade and tourism, as well as promoting people-to-people contacts were thoroughly discussed during the event. Common language, culture and historical roots of Turkic-speaking states are seen to help expanding the framework of this cooperation, making the Turkic Council an important powerhouse in the region, with its total GDP amounting to around \$1.7 trillion and its total population to 161 million.

The next step for the organization is seen to manage Turkmenistan's full membership, finally achieving to gather all independent Turkic-speaking states under a unified structure. As of now, Turkmenistan holds an observer status within the institution, yet its officials actively participate at the Council's summits. Ashgabat's representation at the level of Prime Minister at the 7th Council Summit in Baku is a clear example of Turkmenistan's support for the activity of this organization.

Indeed, deepening ties within the Turkic Council is one of the priority directions of the foreign policy of Azerbaijan. In turn, Baku's hosting of the 10th anniversary of the organization demonstrates the extent of Azerbaijan's positive reputation among the Turkic-speaking states. Having achieved expanding ties in the political, economic, energy, trade, transport and humanitarian spheres with the members of the Council, Azerbaijan has managed to reassert itself as a reliable partner in the region.

IV. The 18th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement

The holding of the 2019 NAM summit on October 25th-26th, where some 159 delegations were represented by heads of state and government, speakers of the parliaments, foreign

ministers and other high-ranking officials, is seen to be one of the great diplomatic successes of Azerbaijan. The event was remarkable for Azerbaijan mainly due to two major conclusions presented in the final documents: Firstly, the chairmanship in the summit was handed over to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev upon the unanimous decision of the NAM member-states for a 3-year period until 2022. This, in turn, was an indication of Azerbaijan's positive reputation that has been gained through strict observance of the norms and principles of international law since joining the NAM in 2011.

Azerbaijan's NAM chairmanship is set to open a new stage in the organization's work, as president Aliyev in his acceptance speech stressed that he will make every effort to increase NAM's role and prestige in the system of international relations, strengthen peace and security and ensure sustainable development and justice.

Secondly, the Final Baku Document stated that "no country can recognize the legitimacy of the situation created as a result of the occupation of Azerbaijan's territory." The document clearly emphasizes that Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict poses a threat to the international peace and stability and that the conflict must be resolved on the basis of the principles of international law, within the internationally recognized territorial borders of Azerbaijan. This particular passage, in turn, caused an outrage in Armenia. But its foreign minister, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, was soon challenged on essentially this very point by the BBC's by Stephen Sackur: "When the Prime Minister (Nikol Pashinyan) declares, 'Karabakh is Armenia - period,' when he knows that flies in the face of international law, the position of the UN and all of the independent international agencies, I'm struggling to see how that is a move or gesture toward peace".

The NAM summit in Baku was also of a particular importance from the point of view of developing Azerbaijan's bilateral cooperation with other countries, as president Aliyev held more than 20 meetings with leaders of the countries and international organizations.

Baku sees chairing and hosting of the NAM, - the second-largest multilateral organization after the UN and an institution of 120 members and around 27 countries and international organizations with observer status, - as another opportunity for promoting the country internationally and reinforcing its neutrality. Taking the leading position in an organization of 120 countries is highly important for Azerbaijan as this organization provides an appropriate platform for Baku to promote its foreign policy vision and recruit international support for its policies.

It is worth mentioning that Azerbaijan is the only country in the South Caucasus that has opted for non-participation in military blocs, while Georgia has been passionately, albeit unsuccessfully, striving for NATO membership. Additionally, Armenia is a full member of Russia's NATO-like regional military bloc named Collective Security Treaty Organization. As opposed to its neighbors, Azerbaijan has sought to develop its partnership with both Russia and NATO, and was able to get its strategic choice accepted by the two rival powers. The sheer fact that Baku has been constantly selected as the neutral ground on

which the US and NATO military officials conducted 6 meetings with their Russian counterparts since 2017, - including the last one held on **November 24 this year between the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee Sir Stuart Peach and Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation General Valery Gerasimov**, - demonstrates the success of Azerbaijan's multi-vectoral foreign policy.

V. The 2nd Summit of World Religious Leaders

On November 14, Azerbaijan hosted the Summit of World Religious Leaders for the second time since 2010. The religious leaders and influential political figures from 70 countries, including the religious leaders of several CIS countries, representatives of Orthodox churches, the Vatican, the clergy of Turkey, Iran, the Arab world, the European countries and the US gathered in Baku. The purpose of the summit was the development of interreligious dialogue on a global scale, the promotion of such values as mutual understanding and solidarity, the expansion of ties between different cultures and religions.

The Baku Declaration was adopted at the completion of the Summit, which emphasized Azerbaijan's role in facilitating multicultural dialogues at the global scale. It was noted that Azerbaijan attached great importance to the development of international cooperation, formation of religion-state relations, the strengthening of inter-civilization and interreligious relations, the protection of various national and spiritual values and traditions of multiculturalism.

The document also remarked the contribution of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to inter-civilizational and interreligious cooperation, as well as his important role in maintaining peace and prosperity in the region and on a global scale. The contribution of religious leaders of the Caucasus and neighboring regions, Central Asian countries to the development of interreligious cooperation and the protection of spiritual values was also mentioned. The exceptional merits of His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II were emphasized in protecting the traditionally tolerant environment of the Caucasus region, in achieving peace and prosperity in the region, as well as in deepening interreligious understanding in the name of these goals.

VI. The Inauguration of the Europe Link of the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline

On November 30, the presidents of Turkey and Azerbaijan inaugurated Europe Link

(Phase 1) of the strategic Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) in Ipsala, Edirne. The event marked the completion of the transfer infrastructure to Greece, which, in turn, means that the construction of TANAP is fully concluded for the Azerbaijani gas to finally reach Europe. The completion of this giant project symbolically coincides with the 25th anniversary of the “Contract of the Century”, which paved the way for further developing energy links between Azerbaijan and the West.

With the initial capacity of 16 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas, TANAP is the most important link of the Southern Gas Corridor, designed to transport natural gas produced from Azerbaijan’s Shah Deniz-2 field initially to Turkey and onwards to Europe. Europe is allocated 10 bcm, with 6 bcm earmarked for the Turkish market. The capacity can be increased to 31 bcm with additional investment in the future. The section of pipeline from the Turkish border with Georgia to Eskisehir of Turkey was launched in an international opening ceremony on June 12, 2018 with the flow of commercial gas to Turkey from June 30, 2018.

The volume of gas transportation to Turkey via TANAP has reached 3.08 bcm since the start of commercial gas supplies on June 30, 2018, as of late October 2019. The final mechanical work in the pipeline between Eskisehir and the Turkish-Greek border was completed at the end of 2018 with the first test pumping held in April 2019. In this area, near the Greek border, TANAP is connected to the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline, through which natural gas from Azerbaijan will be delivered to European countries. The construction of TAP, in turn, is nearing completion, and next year Europe is expected to receive another important alternative source of gas. Another pipeline project, the Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria (IGB) gas pipeline, which is expected to connect to TAP, will allow Bulgaria to receive Azerbaijani gas. IGB is also expected to deliver Azerbaijani gas to the European markets beginning from 2020, as Bulgarian side expects early completion of the project in 2020.

Underlining the importance of project in ensuring the energy security of Europe, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan thanked President Ilham Aliyev for his leadership and supporting the implementation of TANAP which links Asia with Europe. Indeed, the launch of TANAP marks a milestone in a major project to help reduce Europe’s dependence on Russian gas and will serve the further development of economic and political cooperation between Azerbaijan and the EU.