



CENTER OF ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
BEYNÖLXALQ MÜNASİBÖTLƏRİN TƏHLİLİ MƏRKƏZİ

BULLETIN

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

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I. Extraordinary Meeting of Turkic Council Members

On 6 February 2020, an extraordinary meeting of the foreign ministers of the Turkic Council member countries was held in Baku. Participants discussed the relationship between the Turkic Council member countries as well as the cooperation with non-member countries. They also focused on ways of empowering the Turkic Council, strengthening the administrative basis of its Secretariat, alongside discussing long-term strategies of the Council that entails the initiation of Turkic Investment Fund (TIF), Turkic Trade Houses (TTH), and etc. The Ministers also committed to a strategic program on long-term goals of the Organization based on Turkic Vision 2025.

On the margins of the event Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, held number of bilateral meetings. On 5 March he met with Baghdad Amreyev, the Secretary General of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States. During the meeting, Mr. Mammadyarov and Mr. Amreyev discussed the agenda for the meeting of the foreign ministers of the Turkic Council member countries.

During the meeting with Chingiz Aydarbekov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, the sides discussed bilateral relations and ways to strengthen these relations. Together with another member of the Turkic

Council – Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan is planning to be the part of huge railway project with China. This railway project could potentially be the key piece in the central route connecting China with Iran-Turkey-Europe. As Azerbaijan is implementing significant transport and railway projects and gaining the interest of China, the foreign ministers also discussed the possibility of creating more opportunities for Kyrgyzstan to become involved in regional transport corridors by developing railway projects.

Further, Mr. Mammadyarov met with his counterpart from Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov. They focused on the partnerships in economy, trade, transportation, and culture. Two countries already have close relationships which have developed into the level of strategic partnerships in recent years. Especially, Uzbekistan's stance on Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict was obvious from the first of day of conflict. Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov thanked Mr. Kamilov for Uzbekistan's principled position in the international arena on Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

Additionally, there was a meeting between Mr. Mammadyarov and his Turkish counterpart, Mevlut Cavusoglu. The parties emphasized the close relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey and the importance of these two countries' participation in the regional projects. Mr. Mammadyarov also updated Mr. Cavusoglu about the meeting with the Armenian foreign

minister in Geneva.

Before the meeting of the foreign ministers, Mr. Cavusoglu was received by President Aliyev and awarded with the “Dostlug” Order for his special services rendered by the strengthening of friendship and cooperation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey.

Only a few days before this meeting, along with the Turkish citizens Azerbaijani citizens were also safely evacuated to Turkey from China due to the coronavirus outbreak.

II. Azerbaijan Parliamentary Elections

On 9 February 2020, snap elections took place to the Milli Mejlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

9 February became important date in Azerbaijan as the country chose its new parliament. The voting was conducted in 5,573 polling stations and 50 per cent of the candidates were under 40 years old. The elections were also widely covered and 132 foreign media outlets from 47 countries observed and covered the elections. 900 international observers from 59 international organizations and 78000 local observers representing political parties and civil society were accredited to monitor the parliamentary elections. 1314 candidates (independents and representatives of 19

parties) were registered in the race for 125 seats in the Azerbaijani Milli Mejlis. The opinions of international observers, such as BSEC PA, CIS Observation Mission, TURKPA, Observation Mission of the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly, OIC Election Observation Mission, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the European Union spoke positively about the entire election process, including the OSCE ODIHR, which compared to previous years demonstrated a more balanced and objective view. Azerbaijan is evolving and the mood of its population is positive and elated.

Concerning the elections, the government of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement containing the following:

The highest number of registered candidates in the elections so far - 1314 candidates - have been running for the parliament and this indicates the comprehensiveness and fairness of the candidate registration process, as well as the competitive electoral environment. The elections were also marked by such moments as a significant increase in the number of registered women candidates compared to the previous elections, ensuring broad pluralism with the representation of candidates from 19 political parties (mfa.gov.az, 02/2020).

It should be recognized that the IEOM report also recognized that “The election administration was well resourced and

met legal deadlines, and the Central Election Commission made concerted efforts to act transparently and was welcoming towards international observers.” Additionally, the government of Azerbaijan noted that the vast majority of reviews from observers were positive. In a meeting between Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev and the head of the CIS observation mission, “It was emphasized that all conditions had been created in Azerbaijan for conducting these elections in a fair and democratic environment (president.az, 02/2020).”

Azerbaijan is experiencing a very transformational phase in its history and the election of a new parliament is just the logical continuation of the evolutionary reform process of the country.

III. Ilham Aliyev and Nikol Pashinyan held a public debate in Munich Security Conference

On 15 February 2020, Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of Armenia, held a public debate during the Munich Security Conference. It was the first public discussion between the two countries’ leaders on Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict in 30 years.

Firstly, President Aliyev mentioned that several years ago there was an opportunity to hold a first public debate

at the Davos Forum, but the Armenian leader decided not to attend the discussion at the last moment. In this type of conflicts, it is important to bring the sides together and create platforms for them to discuss the issues before the international community. However, this fact demonstrates that Armenian side tried to keep the status-quo by avoiding discussions and not joining these kinds of events, while the Azerbaijani side seeks a peaceful solution to the conflict and believes discussions facilitate the conflict resolution.

During the debate over the historical status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, President Aliyev gave a solid historical background of the region’s history and its relationship to Azerbaijan. Mr. Aliyev encouraged the audience to check the facts, to affirm the validity of his statements. President Aliyev also spoke of Armenian aggression towards Azerbaijanis living in Armenia, who were forcefully deported in 1987-88. He also stressed that Armenian troops perpetrated ethnic cleansings against the Azerbaijani people in the occupied Azerbaijani lands, such as in the case of the Khojaly genocide of 26 February 1992.

There was a debate over the UN Security resolutions as well, while the Prime Minister Pashinyan tried to misinterpret these resolutions (822, 853, 875, 884). However, Mr. Aliyev stressed that the UN Security Council as the highest international body demanded “withdraw

their troops immediately and unconditionally from the occupied territories”. President Aliyev mentioned that Azerbaijan expects the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs and other international actors to put pressure on Armenia to respect Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity and act accordingly.

President Aliyev concluded the debate: “Armenian people self-determined themselves, they have Armenian state. My advice: to find another place on Earth to self-determine themselves for the second time, not in Azerbaijan”.

Since this was the first public debate between the parties, international experts differed in their assessments about the outcome of the discussion. Some emphasized that as it was the first public debate, leaders of two countries mainly discussed many historical issues. It is hoped that in the future debates, there will be more focus on the negotiation process.

VI. The International Conference “IDP Women’s Call for Justice: Addressing Their Needs in Peace and Security Agenda”, organized by the AIR Center

The international conference was held in the run up to the commemoration of the 28th anniversary of the Khojaly genocide as well as the 20th anniversary of the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. This

conference was another step towards highlighting the necessity to protect more women from violence and sufferings during the conflicts, alongside achieving greater involvement for women in dealing with the consequences of the conflicts and conflict resolution.

The UN Resident Coordinator in Azerbaijan Ghulam Isaczai stressed “UN Security Council Resolution 1325 reflected the role of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Women’s activities in this area will be a guarantee of lasting peace. We also call on Azerbaijan to adopt the Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325”. Hikmet Hajiyev, Assistant to the President of Azerbaijan, Head of the Foreign Policy Department of the Presidential Administration, speaking on the UN Security Council Resolution noted that the “National Action Plan has been developed in order to implement the resolution and is currently underway with government agencies to bring it to the final stage”. It is believed that the National Action Plan will lead to the women’s active participation in the peace process, as they will feel more empowered after the implementation.

Farid Shafiyev, Chairman of the Board of AIR Center, emphasized the importance of such events in Azerbaijan. According to him, as a result of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, Azerbaijan always acts from the position of defense: “But the victim of this conflict is Azerbaijan. We need to

redefine our position by discussing such issues and making our voice heard by the international community”.

During the statements of the speakers, it was highlighted that in order to increase the engagement of women in the peace processes, it is important to create a relationship between the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh. Before the occupation, Armenian and Azerbaijani communities lived together peacefully and these communities should have better interaction with each-other in order to understand the common issues properly. There is also an expectation that after the liberation of Azerbaijani lands, women will contribute to the peacebuilding efforts and the restoration of intercommunal relations. As women are the significant part of society that faced violence during the conflict and are the most suffered ones, their contribution to the peace process is important. Tural Ganjaliyev, head of the Azerbaijani community of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, mentioned that “we witness the peaceful calls of Azerbaijani women from Nagorno-Karabakh. We expect our women to actively participate in the reconstruction work after the occupation is over”.

The panel discussions on "Promoting Women's Rights and Participation in Conflict-Controlled Environments" and "Human Face of Conflict" followed. During the second panel discussion, women who suffered directly from

Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict shared their life stories. It was an effective way to understand the vulnerabilities of women during the conflict, as well as to experience their aspiration towards peace.

V. Italy-Azerbaijan Relations

President Ilham Aliyev completed a state visit (the highest-level visit possible in inter-state ties) to Italy from February 19th-22nd. One of the significant events of the visit was the Italy-Azerbaijan Business Forum, held on February 21st. In his address of the event, President Aliyev noted that there were more than 25 documents signed covering “political, economic, cultural, humanitarian spheres, education, energy, space industry, military industry and other areas [providing] an excellent basis for further cooperation” (azertag.az, 21.02.2020). The variety of areas discussed in these documents indicates the advanced level at which bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Italy are progressing. Additionally, President Aliyev spoke on the Joint Declaration on Strengthening Multidimensional Strategic Partnership. He stated that “This is a very serious political document essentially defining the main priorities of our further bilateral cooperation” (azertag.az, 21.02.2020). This document has a vital political importance for the future relations of the countries, as it also indicates Italy’s supportive stance towards the peaceful settlement of Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict based on

the relevant international documents, including first and foremost, the four resolutions (822, 853, 874 and 884) of the UN Security Council and the fundamental principles of the CSCE Helsinki Final Act (1975), which recognizes the primacy of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and inviolability of internationally recognized borders.

This document will also lead to the achievement of closer economic partnership between the two countries. Currently, Azerbaijan's largest trading partner in Europe is Italy, with a trade turnover of over \$6 billion. Of this \$6 billion, approximately \$5.9 billion is Azerbaijani exports to Italy, showing a large trade imbalance between the two. Italy is a huge consumer of Azerbaijani oil, as in 2018 Azerbaijan exported approximately 18% of Italy's total oil consumption (statista.com, 04.02.2020). Additionally, though Italy is focused on diversifying energy supplies, oil remains relevant and natural gas dominates energy consumption. This demonstrates that Italy will be importing Azerbaijani energy in the foreseeable future. Pertinently, the TAP pipeline is set to be completed this year finalizing the construction of the Southern Gas Corridor. The Southern Gas Corridor will link Azerbaijan and Italy and supply the latter and the rest of Europe with natural gas. Thus, economic ties between the two countries are stable and advancing.

Azerbaijan and Italy targeted even higher

levels of partnership during this visit, as the sides reached over an agreement on the military cooperation. Zakir Hasanov, the minister of defense of Azerbaijan, and Alessandro Profumo, the chief executive officer of Italian aeronautics manufacturer Leonardo S.p.A, agreed on the procurement of M-346 Master trainers/light-attack aircraft. As part of this agreement Azerbaijan will acquire 10–25 of these jets from the Italian company. There was also agreement over the ground-based training aids between the sides. Azerbaijan agreed to buy the M-346s which is planned to assist Baku to instruct fifth-generation multi-role fighter pilots.