

# BULLETIN

HIGHLIGHT OF THE FOREIGN POLICY OF REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

## Table of contents

- I. **Azerbaijan establishes a border checkpoint at the Lachin road**  
2
- II. **Azerbaijan continues to be a reliable energy partner for Europe**  
6
- III. **Azerbaijan strengthens its relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina**  
9
- IV. **Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan continue to boost bilateral ties**  
10
- V. **Azerbaijan and Georgia reaffirm commitment to Middle Corridor**  
12

### **I. Azerbaijan establishes a border checkpoint at the Lachin road**

On April 23, Azerbaijan announced that it had taken appropriate measures to establish control at the starting point of the Lachin-Khankandi road on the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia, citing continued misuse of the road for illicit purposes by the Armenian side. Azerbaijan stated that such misuse is in direct violation of the Trilateral Statement of November 10, 2020, and poses a significant security threat.

Over the past two and a half years, Azerbaijan has raised concerns about the rotation of personnel of Armenian armed forces illegally stationed in Azerbaijani territory, the transfer of weapons and ammunition, entrance of terrorists, illicit trafficking of natural resources and cultural property, and transportation of landmines through the Lachin road. This misuse of the road has led to the planting of anti-personnel landmines on sovereign territory of Azerbaijan, resulting in numerous casualties.

“Since August 2022, more than 2700 anti-personnel landmine produced in Armenia in 2021 have already been detected in the Lachin and Kalbajar districts of Azerbaijan. Evidently, those landmines have been transported to the territory of Azerbaijan through the Lachin road in a blatant violation of the Trilateral Statement. Just recently, on April 22, 2023, a military truck of Azerbaijan’s Army was exploded hitting a 2021-production-landmine planted by Armenians, with 3 of our servicemen injured. Since the end of the war 294 Azerbaijanis became the landmine victims,” the statement on establishment of the border checkpoint issued by the Government of Azerbaijan noted.

“Moreover, on April 22 surveillance cameras of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan recorded the entrance of to the territory of Azerbaijan of two military-purpose container houses and convoy of military vehicles of Armenia, contrary to the Trilateral statement, and the norms and principles of international law. Later, at the beginning of the Lachin-Khankendi road, the placement of military-purpose container houses and the construction of military infrastructure by Armenia were observed at the point closest to the territory of Azerbaijan,” the Government of Azerbaijan added in its statement.

To address these security threats and provocations, Azerbaijan has established a border control mechanism at the starting point of the Lachin road. Azerbaijan stated that the mechanism will ensure transparency over the movement along the road, the rule of law, and the security and safety of the movement.

Azerbaijan has also stated that it will ensure proper conditions for the transparent and regulated passage of Armenian residents living in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan from this checkpoint to Armenia and Azerbaijan in both directions. The government has emphasized that providing border security and ensuring safe traffic on the road is essential for national security, state sovereignty, and the rule of law. Azerbaijan also pointed out that this measure is in line with the obligations of the Trilateral Statement and will be implemented in cooperation with the Russian peacekeeping force.

“Providing border security, as well as ensuring safe traffic on the road, is the prerogative of the Government of Azerbaijan, and an essential prerequisite for the national security, state sovereignty and rule of law. In line with obligations of the Trilateral Statement, in the

framework of this measure of security guarantee by the Republic of Azerbaijan for the movement of citizens, vehicles and cargo through the Lachin road, proper conditions will be ensured for the transparent and regulated passage of Armenian residents living in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan from this checkpoint to Armenia and Azerbaijan in both directions. The said control mechanism shall be implemented in interaction with the Russian peacekeeping force," the statement underscored. Azerbaijan has also expressed its willingness to cooperate to ensure a safe and transparent control regime at the border.

The installation of this checkpoint is a historic event with significant implications for the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process. It is also a significant step towards ensuring the security and safety of the movement along the Lachin-Khankandi road. The establishment of the checkpoint effectively ends Armenian control and misuse of the road. This move will help Azerbaijan to regain control of its borders and prevent any future attempts by Armenia to use the road for illegal purposes. The checkpoint will allow Azerbaijan to control the movement of people and goods along the road, thereby preventing any potential military build-up by Armenia. It will also prevent any further incursions by foreign fighters, such as the Iranian fighters who entered the Karabakh region last year to train separatist forces. The establishment of the checkpoint is a reflection of Azerbaijan's right to control its borders, a principle that is recognized by international law. It is a basic requirement for all countries to have control over their borders, and Azerbaijan is no exception. The checkpoint will ensure that Azerbaijan can exercise its sovereign rights and protect its territorial integrity.

The establishment of the checkpoint has also brought attention to the double standards applied to Azerbaijan by some countries. Azerbaijan has been accused of violating the human rights of its ethnic minorities, yet no country in the world allows its ethnic minority access to the outside world without border and customs control. Azerbaijan has the right to control its borders, and the establishment of the Lachin Road checkpoint is a crucial step towards ensuring its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Azerbaijan denied the accusations made by the Armenian side that it violated obligations under the Trilateral Statement. The Armenian leadership confirmed that the country was not given any function by the Trilateral Statement on the regulation of the traffic on the Lachin road. The Foreign Ministry of Armenia, as a party to the Trilateral Statement, called the step taken by Azerbaijan unacceptable, which Azerbaijan has deemed illogical and contrary to the stated position. According to the Trilateral Statement, Azerbaijan has the obligation to guarantee the security of the movement of citizens, vehicles, and cargo through the Lachin-Khankandi road, including the prevention of misuse of the Lachin road. The establishment of a border checkpoint at the starting point of the road does not create changes in the traffic regime on the road. Azerbaijan emphasized that ensuring border security, which is beyond the scope of the Trilateral Statement, is a prerogative of the government and a necessary condition for national security, state sovereignty, and the rule of law.

The Foreign Ministry of Armenia's claim that the establishment of the border checkpoint is aimed at "ethnic cleansing" is unfounded and unacceptable. Azerbaijan has pointed out

numerous times that there are appropriate conditions for transparent, safe, and orderly passage of local Armenian residents of the Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan in both directions. The statement made by the Foreign Ministry of Armenia, which has boycotted the peace talks, indicated its intention to use this event as a pretext to undermine efforts to resume negotiations. In its response to the allegations made by the Armenian side, Azerbaijan pointed out that the Armenian side should abandon such provocations, take a responsible approach to establishing relations with Azerbaijan on the basis of the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty of both countries, and take a constructive position instead of hindering peace negotiations under various pretexts. Additionally, Azerbaijan called on Armenia to put an end to its attempts to make the international community an instrument for its smear campaign and to distort the well-known decision of the International Court of Justice for this purpose.

Azerbaijan strongly rejected the claims made by the Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan regarding the establishment of a checkpoint on the Azerbaijan-Armenia border. In his speech at the government meeting on April 27, Pashinyan had claimed that the checkpoint was being set up for "ethnic cleansing."

Azerbaijan stated that any intervention by Armenia in the establishment of a border checkpoint on Azerbaijan's sovereign territory is a claim against Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The claims made by Armenia are also against the commitments it made in Prague and Sochi, as well as the norms and principles of international law. Azerbaijan reminded Pashinyan of Armenia's actions that

have escalated the situation and are contrary to the Trilateral Statement after the 44-day Patriotic War, including the use of Lachin road for illegal activities, transportation of weapons and mines, and incomplete withdrawal of the armed forces of Armenia from the territory of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan emphasized that the establishment of the checkpoint will serve to prevent the stated illegal actions and is not intended to negatively impact the peace process. The country has also reiterated that it has authority and sovereign rights over the Lachin road under the Trilateral Statement.

Regarding the Prime Minister's repeated desires and claims on issues such as dialogue with Armenian residents, "guarantee of security," "dispute resolution mechanism," and "sending an international fact-finding mission," Azerbaijan has stated that it will carry out the dialogue with Armenian residents within its own legislation and that third-party intervention in this matter is unacceptable.

Azerbaijan called on Armenia to take a responsible and constructive approach to peace agreement negotiations and to comply with its obligations under the Trilateral Statement. This includes opening communications, withdrawing its forces from the territories of Azerbaijan, and refraining from taking steps aimed at the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan.

Speaking at a joint press conference of the Foreign Ministers of France and Armenia on April 28, the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic Catherine Colonna accused Azerbaijan of intervening in Armenia's territories, despite there being no evidence to support her claims. In response, the Government of Azerbaijan reminded those who made the allegations that the side that

has pursued a policy of occupation and ethnic cleansing for almost 30 years was Armenia. Azerbaijan also criticized France for not condemning Armenia for its illegal occupation policy in three decades. Azerbaijan further noted that the Armenian side has not yet completely withdrawn its armed forces from the territory of Azerbaijan, has not ended the occupation of eight villages of Azerbaijan, and continues military-political provocations.

Azerbaijan also highlighted that interference with the establishment of a border checkpoint on its sovereign territory, which is an internal issue of Azerbaijan, contradicts Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The country also said that assessing the establishment of this checkpoint, which will regulate the regime of entry and exit from the border to the road, as a closure of the road, is completely wrong. Instead of demonstrating biased approaches, Azerbaijan urged France to encourage Armenia to fulfill its obligations arising from agreements and to deter Armenia from provocations against Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan has also criticized a statement by Canada's Foreign Minister, Mélanie Joly, regarding the establishment of a border checkpoint on the Azerbaijan-Armenia border. The checkpoint will be established on Azerbaijan's sovereign territory and is within the framework of all international regulations. The move is a national security decision taken in response to Armenia's military provocations against Azerbaijan, illegal activities on the Lachin road, transportation of weapons and mines, and rotation of military personnel in contravention of the provisions of the Trilateral Statement. Azerbaijan maintain that the allegations that the checkpoint will affect the peace process and stability in the region are baseless. Azerbaijan stated that the

checkpoint will regulate entry and exit from the border and will guarantee safe movement for citizens, vehicles, and goods on the Lachin road. Azerbaijan noted once again that there are appropriate conditions for transparent and regulated passage of Armenian residents living in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan from the checkpoint in both directions. Furthermore, Azerbaijan pointed out that it is unacceptable for the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada to mistakenly refer to the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan as "Nagorno-Karabakh." They urged Canada to pay attention to such details in future statements.

Azerbaijan sees these kind of statements to be yet another attempt to interfere with the country's internal affairs. Azerbaijan stated repeatedly that the decision to establish the border checkpoint was a legitimate one, and that it was taken in accordance with international law. The checkpoint is located in Azerbaijan's sovereign territory, and it is well within the framework of all international regulations. Azerbaijan also noted many times that the establishment of the checkpoint is a national security decision, made in light of continuing military provocations by Armenia against Azerbaijan, the usage of the road for illegal activities, transportation of weapons, mines, and rotation of military personnel of Armenia, contrary to the provisions of the Trilateral Statement.

The establishment of the checkpoint is an essential component of the peace process between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Despite fearmongering campaigns by some experts and politicians, the establishment of the checkpoint is a step towards building trust between the two nations and promoting stability in the region. It is hoped that the establishment of the checkpoint will pave the

way for further cooperation and dialogue between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and ultimately lead to a lasting peace in the South Caucasus. It is important to note that Baku has promised to provide all the rights and security for the Armenian community in Karabakh, a promise that has been reiterated at the highest level. The allegations of ethnic cleansing, genocide, and possible military escalation made by certain individuals and institutions are unfounded. On the contrary, the establishment of the checkpoint makes it more realistic to expect that Armenia and Azerbaijan can sign a peace treaty soon and recognize each other's territorial integrity, with Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan.

It is crucial to remember that the establishment of the checkpoint is not a panacea for all the issues between the two nations, but it is a step in the right direction. It is a symbol of Azerbaijan's willingness to work towards a peaceful resolution and its commitment to the principles of international law. The establishment of the checkpoint also highlights the need for both Armenia and Azerbaijan to recognize the importance of mutual respect and cooperation. It is essential for both nations to focus on the future and work towards building a relationship based on mutual trust and understanding. The establishment of the checkpoint is a tangible sign of progress towards this goal.

The establishment of the checkpoint on the Lachin Road is a significant development for the negotiations over the re-opening of transportation links between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The disagreement over the building of a checkpoint at Lachin Road and the Armenian side's refusal to agree to it in exchange for Azerbaijan's consent to checkpoints at the Zangazur Road was a major

obstacle to talks about transportation routes. However, the establishment of the checkpoint on the Lachin Road changes the situation, providing a reason to expect that Baku and Yerevan will return to the negotiating table and launch works to open the Zangazur Road as well. The re-opening of transportation links between Armenia and Azerbaijan would provide significant benefits to the region, enhancing economic cooperation, and promoting stability. The transportation links have been closed for over 30 years, and their reopening would provide significant benefits to both nations. It would also promote greater regional integration and serve as a critical step towards the sustainable regional peace and stability.

The checkpoint also demonstrates Baku's capability to pursue its own agenda concerning the future of the Karabakh region, despite the challenges posed by foreign actors. The regional international environment is volatile, and balancing the interests of various actors is challenging. Explicit foreign resistance to the proposal to set up a checkpoint at the Lachin Road did not deter Azerbaijan. Baku pursued its agenda and successfully established the checkpoint.

## **II. Azerbaijan continues to be a reliable energy partner for Europe**

In a bid to enhance cooperation between gas transmission system operators, Bulgaria's Bulgartransgaz EAD, Romania's Transgaz S.A., Hungary's FGSZ Ltd., Slovakia's EUSTREAM, and the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in Sofia, Bulgaria on April 25. The MOU aims to promote the Solidarity Ring (STRING) joint initiative, which

is backed by the European Commission, to boost the security of natural gas supplies for the European Union and Central and South-Eastern European regions. The energy and economy ministers of each respective country signed the agreement at an official ceremony. The STRING initiative focuses on upgrading the transmission network systems of Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia, to enable additional gas deliveries from alternative sources, particularly from Azerbaijan, for European customers. By promoting the use of alternative gas sources, the MOU aims to strengthen the energy security of the European Union and improve the sustainability of its energy mix. The cooperation between these gas transmission system operators will help to develop infrastructure and enable the delivery of natural gas from the Caspian region to the European market. The signing of this MOU marks a significant step towards a more secure and diversified energy supply for the European Union.

The signing ceremony was attended by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of the Republic of Bulgaria Rumen Radev. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Minister of Energy of Azerbaijan Parviz Shahbazov, Minister of Energy of Bulgaria Rossen Hristov, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Energy of Romania Virgil-Daniel Popescu, and Minister of Economy of Slovakia Karel Hirman. The purpose of the agreement is to establish a framework for cooperation among the parties involved, promote the development of energy infrastructure, and ensure the efficient use of existing energy resources.

During the ceremony, the ministers from each country addressed the audience and emphasized the significance of the agreement. Minister Shahbazov noted that the cooperation among the countries will help diversify the routes and sources of energy supplies and improve the energy security of the region. Minister Hristov added that the agreement will contribute to the development of the energy sector in the Balkans and enhance the regional integration. Minister Szijjártó emphasized the role of natural gas in the energy transition and the importance of the Southern Gas Corridor in this process. Minister Popescu emphasized the need for regional cooperation in ensuring the security of gas supplies, and Minister Hirman highlighted the benefits of cooperation in developing cross-border infrastructure.

The ceremony featured a video address by EU Commissioner for Energy Kadri Simson and speeches by the ministers of the signatory countries. Commissioner Kadri Simson's message emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in achieving energy security and meeting the EU's climate and energy goals. Commissioner Simson also expressed support for the efforts of the parties involved in the agreement.

President Ilham Aliyev underscored that the MoU would strengthen energy security in Europe and enable Azerbaijan to export more gas to many more European countries, adding that Azerbaijan was a reliable partner of Europe, not only in the area of energy but also in many other areas. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that this partnership has a very important future. The signing of the MoU will encourage cooperation among the companies and promote the exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of gas transmission. It

will also provide a framework for joint investment and project development in the energy sector. President Ilham Aliyev also pointed out that Azerbaijan has signed agreements or declarations on strategic partnership with nine EU member states, which is equivalent to one third of the EU member states.

At the same time, the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) has inaugurated its office in Sofia. The opening ceremony was also attended by President Ilham Aliyev and President Rumen Radev, who cut the ribbon symbolizing the opening of the building. Both heads of state also inspected the office's facilities. During his visit, President Ilham Aliyev had a meeting with President Rumen Radev. The strategic partnership between the two countries was the focus of their meeting. The meeting between President Aliyev and President Radev highlights the importance of strengthening ties between Azerbaijan and Bulgaria. The "Solidarity Ring" project is a significant step towards ensuring Europe's energy security, and Azerbaijan's role as a reliable partner in this effort is recognized. The meeting also underscores the potential for increased collaboration between the two countries in various areas, including political and economic fields.

President Radev expressed his appreciation for President Ilham Aliyev's attendance at the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding between SOCAR and distribution system operators of Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia. He also expressed his hope for the successful implementation of the "Solidarity Ring" project. In response, President Aliyev thanked President Radev for the invitation to visit Bulgaria and underlined the importance of the

Memorandum of Understanding between SOCAR and the upgraded transmission network system operators of Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia. The two leaders discussed cooperation issues between their countries, including political, economic, transport, energy, and other fields. They exchanged views on deepening their cooperation in these areas.

President Aliyev expressed his gratitude to President Radev for the initiative and praised the level of cooperation between Bulgaria and Azerbaijan. He highlighted that Azerbaijan is a reliable partner of Europe, not only in energy but also in many other areas. Azerbaijan has already signed agreements or declarations on strategic partnership with nine EU member states, which means that one-third of EU member states are strategic partners of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan plans to double its gas supply to the European Union market by 2027, and this year, the target is to deliver 12 billion cubic meters to Europe. Azerbaijani gas is already exported to Georgia, Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Italy, and Romania, and the plan is to start gas supplies to Hungary and Slovakia by the end of this year. The country is also in the process of negotiations with Albania to build a local gas distribution system.

President Ilham Aliyev underlined that natural gas is not the only energy product that Azerbaijan exports to Europe. The country has been a reliable partner and important crude oil supplier for over 20 years. Petrochemicals and electricity are also part of Azerbaijan's exports. Azerbaijan is also working to transform into a source of production and export of renewable energy. Leading international companies in the field of renewable energy have signed contracts and MoUs with Azerbaijan to



produce more than 25 gigawatts of renewable energy in Azerbaijan. Construction of the first wind and solar power plants has started, and the estimated potential of renewables in Azerbaijan is about 200 gigawatts, including 157 gigawatts in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea.

President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that Azerbaijan is redrawing the energy map of Eurasia and continuing its active energy diplomacy and implementation of mega-projects, starting from oil, gas, and now electricity supply and green energy projects.

### **III. Azerbaijan strengthens its relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina**

President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev met with the Chairwoman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Željka Cvijanović, and members of the Presidency, Željko Komšić and Denis Bećirović, in Sarajevo on April 13. The meeting was held to discuss and strengthen the friendly relations between the two countries. During the meeting, Željka Cvijanović, Željko Komšić, and Denis Bećirović expressed their appreciation for Azerbaijan's continuous support towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. They acknowledged Azerbaijan's humanitarian efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the provision of material and financial support for flood relief in 2014 and assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Azerbaijan has also implemented various humanitarian infrastructure projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly for the visually impaired and the elderly.

The Chairwoman and members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina expressed their confidence that President

Aliyev's visit would initiate a new chapter in the partnership between the two countries and make a significant contribution to their bilateral relations. The meeting provided an opportunity for both sides to exchange views on the bilateral agenda and international issues.

It was emphasized that the political relationship between Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina was excellent, with both countries supporting each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The opening of Azerbaijan's embassy in Bosnia and Herzegovina played a crucial role in strengthening their relationship, and Bosnia and Herzegovina is expected to reciprocate by opening its embassy in Azerbaijan soon. Additionally, Bosnia and Herzegovina has removed the visa regime for Azerbaijani citizens, and Azerbaijan will also take appropriate measures to facilitate travel for Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizens. During the meeting, the Chairwoman and members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted the importance of acknowledging the tragedy that occurred in Khojaly in Azerbaijan in 1992. They drew parallels to similar events in the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, emphasizing the need to remember such atrocities to prevent their recurrence.

President Aliyev's meeting with the Chairwoman and members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina signifies the growing partnership between the two countries. Both sides expressed their commitment to strengthening their relations and collaborating on various issues, including humanitarian aid and infrastructure development. The relationship between Baku and Sarajevo, which was established in 1972

through a twinning agreement, has been based on brotherhood. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that the Joint Declaration on the strategic partnership to be signed between Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina would bring their bilateral relations to a new level. The President expressed his appreciation for the mutual support that Bosnia and Herzegovina and Azerbaijan have shown each other, particularly in matters of territorial integrity and sovereignty. President Aliyev stated that Bosnia and Herzegovina's support during the occupation of Azerbaijani lands was highly appreciated. The head of state also thanked Bosnia and Herzegovina for their political support during the 44-day war.

President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the opportunities for cooperation between Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina in various fields, including the economy, trade, agriculture, energy, investments, transport, tourism, culture, science, and education. He further stressed that there were extensive possibilities for collaboration between the two countries in these fields. The President's comments showed the depth of Azerbaijan's commitment to developing a strategic partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The meeting between the two sides provides a significant opportunity for both countries to work together on areas of mutual interest and to build a stronger relationship. With the signing of the Joint Declaration, it is expected that the friendship and cooperation between Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to flourish. During President Ilham Aliyev's visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the "Joint Declaration on the strategic partnership between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina" has been signed in Sarajevo. The document was inked by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and

Chairwoman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Željka Cvijanović.

The Joint Declaration on the strategic raised the quality of bilateral relations to a new level. The leaders decided to set up a joint intergovernmental commission and working groups to develop cooperation projects in relevant fields. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that Azerbaijan had initiated investment projects in many countries and could participate in various investment projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. Azerbaijan's natural gas is being exported to the Balkan region and the neighboring countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the sides pointed to the possibility of future cooperation in the energy sector. President Ilham Aliyev said that both Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina were multi-confessional countries, and it would be a positive development if the sides could exchange experience in this respect. The sides also stressed the importance of cooperation between the two countries' civil society institutions and scientific research centers. Lastly, the leaders highlighted the importance of cooperation and the exchange of experience in mine clearance. Both Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina are countries polluted by mines, and it is crucial to collaborate and share knowledge in this field.

#### **IV. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan continue to boost bilateral ties**

On April 10th, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev welcomed President Ilham Aliyev on his official visit to Kazakhstan. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev highlighted the productive outcomes of his previous visit to Baku in August, which boosted bilateral

relations between the two countries. President Tokayev stressed that Azerbaijan is a fraternal and close state for Kazakhstan, and that they are committed to developing comprehensive cooperation in various fields, including trade, economy, investment, and politics.

President Tokayev also noted that the special documentary on the 100th anniversary of the birth of National Leader Heydar Aliyev, prepared by the TV and radio corporation "Kazakhstan," was aired in Kazakh and Russian languages. President Tokayev presented the film to President Ilham Aliyev and expressed the hope of showing it to the Azerbaijani public as well. President Tokayev highlighted the important role played by Heydar Aliyev in establishing and developing cooperation between Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan and noted the issuance of a stamp dedicated to his 100th birth anniversary. The presidents also opened a street named after National Leader Heydar Aliyev. President Tokayev also emphasized the commitment of Kazakhstan to develop economic cooperation and cooperation with Azerbaijan, which plays a leading role in the Caucasus region, and states that there are no problems between the two countries, only the desire to move forward in this direction. President Ilham Aliyev expressed gratitude for the invitation and hospitality, and thanked President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev for the respect shown towards the memory of Heydar Aliyev. President Ilham Aliyev noted that the Azerbaijani people have always felt the good attitude of the people of Kazakhstan towards their country, and that regular meetings in the bilateral format are effective for monitoring the implementation of instructions and strengthening interaction. President Ilham Aliyev acknowledged the sincere and brotherly feelings that exist between the two countries,

which serve as a good basis for developing bilateral cooperation, adding that the areas of cooperation cover practically all spheres of life, with a focus on trade, economic, and investment projects, as well as transport and logistical infrastructure. President Ilham Aliyev highlighted the extensive delegation accompanying him on the visit, consisting of many ministers and heads of state agencies who will also actively interact with their Kazakh counterparts. President Ilham Aliyev expressed confidence that the visit will achieve good results and define another milestone in the bilateral relationship. During their meeting, the Presidents discussed the positive development of trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, which has increased by 40 percent. They also agreed that there is still room for growth, with the possibility of increasing trade turnover to a billion dollars. The leaders also talked about the export of Kazakhstan's crude oil through Azerbaijan, joint investment projects, and the laying of fiber-optic cables under the Caspian Sea.

The two presidents also discussed regional issues, with President Ilham Aliyev highlighting Azerbaijan's efforts to ensure peace and stability in the South Caucasus region, including the recent signing of a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev also provided information on Azerbaijan's ongoing efforts to expand its transport infrastructure, including the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line and the Port of Baku. President Tokayev, for his part, shared information on the increase of Kazakhstan's transport capabilities. The importance of synchronizing the transport infrastructure of the two countries and ensuring faster passage of goods was also stressed during the conversation. Both leaders hailed the

successful cooperation between their nations in international organizations and emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong political dialogue.

President Ilham Aliyev expressed his gratitude for the invitation to visit Kazakhstan and for the opportunity to continue the dialogue between the two countries. He noted that the decisions made during their first meeting are being implemented and expressed his confidence that the decisions that they will make during his visit to Kazakhstan will also be implemented. President Ilham Aliyev thanked President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev for honoring the memory of his father, National Leader Heydar Aliyev, by having one of the central streets of the capital of Kazakhstan named after him. He also expressed his gratitude for the decision to build the Kurmangazy Children's Art Center in liberated Karabakh, which he believes will be a good symbol of friendship and brotherhood between the two peoples.

President Ilham Aliyev mentioned that the relations between the peoples of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have a long history and have always been seen as relations between brothers. The two countries are building their future on this solid foundation and have great potential for cooperation, particularly in energy, transport, and transit. He noted that there are many areas of mutual interest and that the two countries are reaching a qualitatively new level of interaction and alliance, which is already reflected in the Declaration that was signed earlier and will be signed that day.

President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that cooperation in the humanitarian sphere is of paramount importance and that the organization of the Days of Culture of

Kazakhstan in Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan in Kazakhstan will bring the two peoples even closer together. President Ilham Aliyev pointed out that the humanitarian track serves as the foundation on which their interstate relations are being built. President Ilham Aliyev also noted that Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan are countries that fully rely on their own resources, do not depend on foreign assistance, and are building their own destiny and their own future, which is also the most important factor in world politics today. Both leaders positively evaluated the establishment of the Supreme Interstate Council, recognizing it as a crucial step among the documents to be signed that day. They emphasized that it was a demonstration of the enhancement of relations between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, and that the documents signed during the Kazakh President's visit to Azerbaijan had laid the foundation for the countries to develop an alliance.

The presidents then proceeded to the expanded meeting with the participation of delegations from both sides. During the meeting, President Tokayev emphasized the deep roots of friendship and mutual respect that have existed between the two countries for centuries, citing historical ties, geographical proximity, and longstanding relations as the basis for the deepening of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. He also referred to Azerbaijan as a "brotherly and close state" and expressed his interest in further developing mutually beneficial relations. The two countries have established a solid contractual and legal framework, having signed more than 90 documents to date. Last year, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan signed the Declaration on Deepening Strategic Partnership and Expanding Allied Relations, as well as a

comprehensive program for developing cooperation until 2026. President Tokayev noted that the establishment of the Supreme Interstate Council, which is being consolidated within the framework of President Ilham Aliyev's visit to Kazakhstan, will give a powerful impetus to bilateral relations.

The two presidents also discussed the significant progress in their trade and economic cooperation, with the trade turnover growing by 40 percent to reach half a billion dollars. President Tokayev expressed his confidence that as the economic potential of the two countries is fully developed, they will be able to raise this figure to one billion dollars. To achieve this, there are serious reserves in such areas as energy, transport, logistics, IT, agriculture, industry, and other sectors. Cultural and humanitarian ties are also strengthening between the two countries. The key link here is the presence of 130,000 citizens of Azerbaijani nationality living in Kazakhstan. The two countries have agreed to hold days of culture of the two countries, with the Days of Culture of Kazakhstan being held as early as this year.

Further evidence of the sincere friendship and mutual support of the two countries is the gift of the Kazakh people to Azerbaijan – the Children's Art Center named after Kurmangazy in the city of Fuzuli. The construction of this facility is progressing at a fairly rapid pace, and President Tokayev hopes that it will start operating in the very near future. Both presidents are determined to further develop all-round humanitarian contacts in every possible way and enrich the treasury of common spiritual and cultural values. During the meeting, the two presidents discussed topical issues on their agenda, identified new points for the growth of interaction between

the two states, and exchanged views on strengthening their dialogue within the framework of international structures. All these will be reflected in the joint statement that they signed. President Ilham Aliyev's visit to Kazakhstan is of great importance and is expected to give a powerful impetus to the development of allied relations between the two countries.

#### **V. Azerbaijan and Georgia reaffirm commitment to Middle Corridor**

On April 7, Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili visited Azerbaijan to meet with President Ilham Aliyev. The meeting was significant, given the recent developments in the Caucasus region. The 30 years of friendly relations and partnership between the two countries should serve as an example for other South Caucasus states. During their meeting, President Aliyev and Prime Minister Garibashvili emphasized the importance of energy and infrastructure projects implemented jointly by Azerbaijan and Georgia. They highlighted the significance of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project and stressed the important role of Azerbaijan and Georgia in the Middle Corridor. They also noted the increasing trade turnover between the two countries and additional measures taken in this direction. The successful operation of Azerbaijan's SOCAR company in Georgia was underlined at the meeting. The two leaders also discussed cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia in the humanitarian, cultural, educational, defense industry, military, security, agricultural, and other spheres. The Georgian Prime Minister underlined that Azerbaijan would celebrate the 100th anniversary of National Leader Heydar Aliyev this year, adding that the

National Leader's memory is honored by the people of Georgia with great respect.

In addition to political and security cooperation, Azerbaijan and Georgia have also enjoyed successful economic relations. The two countries have implemented joint energy and infrastructure projects that have increased their regional importance and made significant contributions to Europe's energy security. For example, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project has been expanded to increase its capabilities, connecting the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea, and beyond. The two countries have also collaborated on green energy development and transmission, including laying a submarine cable under the Black Sea, as well as cooperation with Romania and Hungary. Furthermore, Azerbaijan's SOCAR company has been successfully operating in Georgia, contributing to the country's energy sector. Trade turnover between the two countries has also increased, and additional measures have been taken to strengthen economic ties.

Beyond the economic sphere, Azerbaijan and Georgia have also cooperated in humanitarian, cultural, educational, defense industry, military, security, and agricultural areas. Overall, the 30-year-long partnership between Azerbaijan and Georgia serves as a model for peaceful and cooperative relations in the South Caucasus region. As neighboring countries continue to face complex geopolitical realities, the example of Azerbaijan-Georgia relations can serve as an inspiration for others to follow.

During the meeting, the leaders discussed the longstanding friendly and brotherly relations between Azerbaijan and Georgia. President Ilham Aliyev recalled his visit to Georgia in October of the previous year and stressed the

importance of the discussions held during that trip. President Ilham Aliyev emphasized that the current visit of the Georgian Prime Minister was also significant, and that it was a tradition to hold meetings in the regions as part of these visits. Over the past three decades, both countries have made significant contributions to the development of the Middle Corridor, which connects the East and West. Notably, they have successfully implemented several measures to strengthen the corridor. The leaders noted the crucial role of Azerbaijan and Georgia in the Middle Corridor and stressed the importance of joint efforts in this regard. Energy and infrastructure projects implemented jointly by Azerbaijan and Georgia were highlighted in the conversation, with the leaders underscoring their significance for Europe's energy security. The increasing demand for these energy resources was also noted. The importance of implementing road infrastructure projects was emphasized, and the expansion of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project and increasing its capabilities were also discussed.

In recognition of these achievements, President Ilham Aliyev highlighted Azerbaijan and Georgia's successful implementation of the Middle Corridor during the press conference. This statement holds great significance for regional cooperation, especially given concerns that Georgian projects may become less relevant with the Zangezur corridor coming into focus after the 44-Day War. Moreover, last year during President Ilham Aliyev's visit to Georgia, an agreement was reached between Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, and Hungary on the export of green energy produced in Azerbaijan to Europe via Georgia. This agreement further increases Georgia's importance in the Middle Corridor and underscores the continued

cooperation and partnership between Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Azerbaijan offered Armenia the opportunity to join the Middle Corridor via the Zangezur corridor, but Armenia has been slow to act. The leaders' statement about the Middle Corridor can also be interpreted as a message to Armenia that if it does not open the Zangezur corridor soon, Azerbaijan will look to other alternatives. Azerbaijan's strong relationship with Georgia serves as the best alternative in this case. The successful relations between Azerbaijan and Georgia can also serve as a model for peace and cooperation in the region, and Armenia could potentially benefit from this lesson and work towards normalizing its relations with Azerbaijan. The Zangezur corridor proposed by Azerbaijan could serve as both a transportation and green energy corridor, providing a potential opportunity for Armenia. Moreover, President Ilham Aliyev has proposed establishing a dialogue platform in the trilateral format of Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia to ensure peace and stability in the South Caucasus. However, Armenia has not yet agreed to this platform.

Iran has joined Armenia in blocking the Zangezur Corridor project and has increased its hostility towards the project. Iran has proposed a transit route involving India, Iran, Armenia, Georgia, and Bulgaria, and even held meetings on the subject. To prevent the Zangezur corridor from being realized, Iran has been applying pressure to Armenia, the weakest link in the South Caucasus region. However, the Middle Corridor has received backing from Turkey, the EU, and the USA. Prime Minister Garibashvili endorsed the Middle Corridor in the press release with President Ilham Aliyev, indicating that the Iran-Armenia-Georgia-Black Sea project is not on Tbilisi's agenda at this time. The meeting between President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili highlighted the importance of the strong and longstanding relationship between Azerbaijan and Georgia. The discussions on energy and infrastructure projects, trade, and cooperation in various sectors demonstrate the commitment of both countries to further strengthen their bonds and promote mutual prosperity.