

From: Tavlarides, Mark <mtavlarides@bgrdc.com>
Sent: Friday, January 29, 2021 11:36 AM
To: Tavlarides, Mark <mtavlarides@bgrdc.com>
Subject: Azerbaijan Update

Good morning,

Attached is a letter to your boss from Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the U.S. Elin Suleymanov welcoming the start of the new Congress and praising the strong U.S.-Azerbaijan relationship. He discusses recent developments in the region and writes, "Let us seize this historic opportunity to create a better future and to help Armenia and Azerbaijan build a prosperous neighborhood."

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best,
Mark

Mark J. Tavlarides
Principal, International
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Azərbaycan Respublikasının Səfiri
Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan

1.29.2021

**U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510**

Dear Honorable Senator,

As the 117th Congress begins, I would like to wish you every success in your important work on behalf of your constituents and America's national interests. Azerbaijan stands as America's reliable friend and tested ally in one of the world's most strategic regions. For example, it is the only nation that borders both Russia and Iran. Increasingly, Azerbaijan is becoming a key player in Europe's energy security with the Southern Gas Corridor making major progress. Our society has been widely recognized internationally for its tolerance, openness, and diversity. Azerbaijan is a strong regional partner of Israel and has pioneered the relations between Israel and Muslim nations and consistently supports intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Recently, our region has witnessed deep and fundamental changes, including the restoration of Azerbaijan's control over its internationally-recognized territories previously under Armenia's illegal occupation, completion of the strategic Southern Gas Corridor, and the signing of the Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan agreement on cooperation on the 'Dostluq' Caspian oil field. All these changes provide new, unique opportunities for enhancing regional cooperation and breaking barriers that have persisted for the last three decades. For instance, the completion of the Southern Gas Corridor is already creating incentives for widening and expanding regional energy and infrastructure projects.

The United States can play a very important role to ensure long-term peace, security, and regional integration in the South Caucasus. It is important, therefore, to see the new realities as an opportunity and encourage Armenia to look to the future for its own people and the broader region. For a long time, a major priority for the U.S. has been to include Armenia in the regional integration and economic cooperation projects with its neighbors. Today, for the first time since Armenia's and Azerbaijan's independence, such opportunities are realistically within reach and are supported by Azerbaijan. In fact, the Deputy Prime Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan are discussing normalizing economic relations and potential cooperation projects.

Azerbaijan is currently working on rebuilding the areas devastated by the three-decade long occupation and on restoring transportation links with and through Armenia. The ownership of peace belongs to Armenia and Azerbaijan. Therefore, the U.S. should support this effort in pursuit of America's own national interests and in partnership with Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The latest active phase of the conflict began with Armenia's cross-border attack in July of 2020 in the border region of Tovuz along the location of the strategic East-West transportation lines. The attack was launched shortly before the completion of the Southern Gas Corridor. Given the regional dynamic that led to a major breakthrough in resolving the long-standing discussion between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan on the 'Dostluq' field, it is now obvious that the disruption could have had much wider implications. As a result of Armenia's constant attacks, Azerbaijan has now restored control over its internationally-recognized territory in accordance with the four UN Security Council resolutions. Importantly, Azerbaijan now fully controls its border with Iran. Previously, some 132 km of the border were without control with meaningful accountability, which remained a serious threat, including on non-proliferation issues. Now, Azerbaijani border guards control the Azerbaijan-Iran border, while Armenia's border with Iran, and now Azerbaijan, are guarded by Russian forces based on Armenia's request.

Focusing on sustainable development and peace, the U.S. has good reasons to support the normalization and economic cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In fact, the Minsk Group should build on its long track record of facilitating dialogue and focus on encouraging normalization between the two nations. Moreover, Azerbaijan, with its experience and traditions of a tolerant, inclusive, and diverse society, is exactly the type of partner America needs. Baku is committed to protecting the heritage of all citizens of Azerbaijan - Christian, Jewish, and Muslim alike. Accusations against Azerbaijan of neglecting Christian heritage are offensive and intentionally divisive to a society with centuries-old indigenous Christian and Jewish communities.

We hope our strategic and mutually beneficial partnership with the United States will grow even stronger. For example, as early as a decade ago, then-Senators Joseph Biden and Richard Lugar strongly championed the energy security of Europe, where the Southern Gas Corridor is a key part. With focus now on bringing Caspian gas to the Balkans and the breakthrough agreement between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, the importance of the Caspian region is increasing. Additionally, Azerbaijan has always encouraged U.S. engagement with Central Asia. Azerbaijan is a gateway to Central Asia, and the U.S. strategy on Central Asia simply geographically requires a greater engagement with Azerbaijan.

American companies can and should actively participate in rebuilding and developing the territories previously under occupation. There are wide-ranging opportunities in agriculture, energy, transportation, and other areas, especially for companies specializing in renewable energy and clean technologies. In addition, potential economic cooperation projects between Armenia and Azerbaijan may provide new opportunities for U.S.-based businesses.

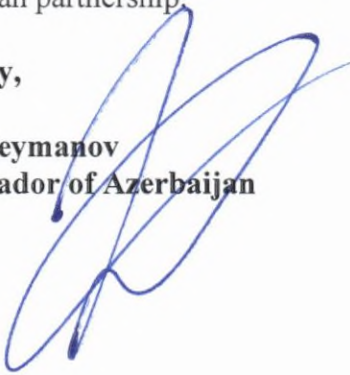
The return of the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons to their native homes and coexistence with their neighbors will lead to development and job opportunities, especially for women in rural areas. Azerbaijan is strongly committed to promoting gender equality and equal opportunity. Moreover, from sustainable farming to green technologies to protection of the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan is working with neighbors and partners to promote a more responsible stewardship of natural resources. The Government of Azerbaijan declared that all the rebuilding

and rehabilitation projects on the previously occupied territories should be based on clean energy and the highest environmental standards.

Let us seize this historic opportunity to create a better future and to help Armenia and Azerbaijan build a prosperous neighborhood. The U.S. can be a major positive contributor to our region's success, and I look forward to working with you and your colleagues on strengthening the U.S.-Azerbaijan partnership.

Sincerely,

Elin Suleymanov
Ambassador of Azerbaijan

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom, positioned to the right of the typed name.



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1.29.2021

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Washington, D.C. 20515**

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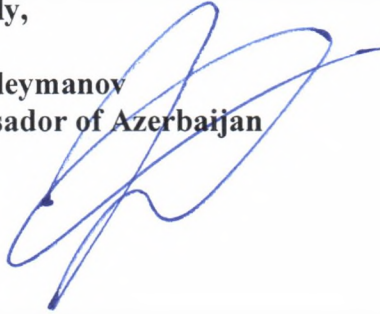
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