



BULLETIN

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AZERBAIJAN 20 YEARS LATER: SUCCESS STORY



This year marks the 20th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan from the Soviet Union. On October 18, the Parliament of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic adopted the Law on Independence. A few months later the Soviet Union formally collapsed as a result of the Belovezh Accords. The road to independence for Azerbaijan was difficult and pricy. Just year before independence, on January 20, 1990 the Soviet troops stormed Baku – capital of Azerbaijan, and killed 132 civilians, wounding many others, in an effort to quell the national-liberation movement.

The years following after were also difficult. Azerbaijan faced an open aggression from the Republic of Armenia which still occupies about twenty percent of Azerbaijan's territory. The country encountered many other challenges associated with the economic and social transition from the command to a market economy.

Now, 20 years later, Azerbaijan stands as a regional leader, politically stable, economically well performing, and socially developing. While many challenges remain, including the threat to national security from Armenia, and many efforts to be continued such as fighting corruption and improving good governance, Azerbaijan is indeed a SUCCESS STORY.

And this is why...

Azerbaijan

Business Card

Location: Crossroad of Europe and Asia
Population: 9 million
GDP: 50 billion



2006 - UNCTAD quoted Azerbaijan as NO 1 globally as per the FDI Inflow Performance Index

2007 – UN Public Service Award for Transparent Oil Fund

2008 – World Bank Ranked Azerbaijan Top Reformer

2010 – World Economic Forum ranked Azerbaijan as Leading ICT use and Network Readiness Index among Eurasian countries

2010 – World Bank Praised the Government Strategy for Poverty Reduction: Dropped during 10 years from 49 % to 12 %

Economy

Today, Azerbaijan is one of the leading economies globally in respect of economic growth indicators. A record GDP growth was in 2006 counting 34.5%. During 2009 world financial crisis year overall real GDP growth rate in Azerbaijan reached 9.3%. In 2010 Azerbaijan's GDP has grown 5% and non-oil GDP – 7.9%, which indicates that the future of the country is less dependent on the oil factor.

Azerbaijan-Canada Economic and Trade Cooperation

Bilateral business ties between Azerbaijan and Canada have intensified considerably over recent years, but a large potential still remains to be realized. According to official statistics, bilateral trade between Azerbaijan and Canada increased from 20 million in 2004 to around one billion in 2008. In 2010 trade reached 332.35 million USD, whereas exports to Canada were \$317.07 million and imports \$15.28 million. Our primary trade consists of Azerbaijani crude oil exports to Canada. From Canada, Azerbaijan is importing manufacturing and construction equipment, medicines and some other products.

Azerbaijan and Canada signed the Convention on abrogation of double taxation in respect to income and property taxes and prevention of tax evasion. At present, the two countries are holding negotiations over a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement.

The Government of Azerbaijan attaches great importance to developing bilateral cooperation in the non-oil sector, including such spheres as **ICT, industry, renewable energy sources and the knowledge-based sector**. ICT is a second FDI recipient after the energy sector. Promising areas of economic cooperation also exist in **infrastructure development and agriculture**, including food processing and seed production. Agriculture is one of the important sectors of Azerbaijan's economy, employing about 35% of the labour. **Cotton** is Azerbaijan's leading crop, together with **grape** (for wine production), **fruits, vegetables, and tobacco**.

From March 6 to 9, 2011 the Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan Mr. Huseyn Baghirov visited Canada. During his visit Minister Bagirov took part at the exposition organized by the Canadian Gold Mining Association.

Achievements of Azerbaijan

During the 7th Global Forum on *Reinventing Government* held on June 26-29, 2007 at the United Nations headquarters in Vienna, the State Oil Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SOFAZ) received the **United Nations 2007 Public Service Award**. The UN Public Service Award – the Trophy and Certificate for Improving Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness in Public Service was presented to the SOFAZ respectively which is a first government agency that received the UN Public Service Award among the government institutions of the Eastern Europe and CIS countries.

According to the World Bank's *Doing Business 2009* Report, Azerbaijan was one of the **ten biggest improvers (top reformer)** in the world on economy. In the first half of 2009 gross domestic product (GDP) of Azerbaijan has grown 3.6 percent and non-oil GDP - 4.1 percent, which indicates that the future of the country is less dependent on the oil factor. As a result of the reforms Azerbaijan has made a big jump in the World Bank's ratings. Azerbaijan improved in seven from ten indicators of economy, catapulting 64 places in the rankings, the biggest jump ever recorded by the World Bank.

Azerbaijan is also one of the first countries to sign up to the **Extractive Industries Transparency initiative (EITI)** which is helping to develop a more effective anti corruption agenda. Since the State Oil Fund's operations, especially the results of the EITI have always been a matter of interest of internationally renowned non-governmental organizations. The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the subject of "Strengthening Transparency in Industries" that was brought before members to a vote by the Government of Azerbaijan. The resolution, which passed unanimously, gives strong backing to the EITI and emphasizes that transparency and accountability should be embraced and promoted by all its member states. The resolution was co-sponsored by 22 other countries, including Canada.

According to **Global Information Technology Report 2010 published by the World Economic Forum (WEF)**, Azerbaijan was named as a leading country in ICT use and Network Readiness Index amongst Eurasian countries. Published for the ninth consecutive year with an extensive coverage of 133 countries worldwide, the Global IT Report remains the world's most comprehensive and authoritative international assessment of the impact of ICT on the development process and the competitiveness of nations. WEF highly appreciates Azerbaijan's actions in regards to "government readiness". On this parameter Azerbaijan has been included in the list of the first 30 countries of the world. The report also gives a high appraisal to the legislation and state regulation of ICT industry in Azerbaijan.

In April 2010, World Bank has presented its report that analyzes the improvement of living conditions in Azerbaijan. The document reflects the bank's activity on assessing the level of poverty in the country. In its report World Bank praised Azerbaijan for **Poverty Reduction Strategy**. Within last 10 years the poverty reduction in Azerbaijan dropped from 49 to 12 percentages.

Azerbaijan ranked 57th in the overall ranking in the **Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011** released by the World Economic Forum. Although, the country fell six places from 51st position in 2009-2010 report, it is still above other CIS countries. Azerbaijan kept its dynamics of development and competitiveness as it rescored 4.3 on the Global competitiveness index, the same as in the previous report. The index captures the microeconomic and macroeconomic foundations of national competitiveness.

Azerbaijan Leads CIS in Capital Investment Growth

Azerbaijan outstripped the other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent Countries (CIS) in terms of the increase in capital investment in 2010. Azerbaijan had the largest growth in major capital investments from all financial sources last year, according to figures from the CIS Statistical Committee. Capital investment in Azerbaijan in 2010 grew 21.2%, compared with 2009. Moldova had the second highest growth (17%) and Belarus the third (16.6%). They are followed by Turkmenistan (14.5%), Tajikistan (11.5%), Uzbekistan (9.2%) and Russia (6%). Other countries posted a decline: investment fell 0.5% in Kazakhstan, 3.3% in Armenia, 2% in Ukraine and 9.8% in Kyrgyzstan. Overall, the CIS experienced a 0.2% fall in investment last year. Investments from all financial sources in Azerbaijan totalled AZN 9.7bn in 2010, a 21.2% increase on 2009, according to figures from the State Statistical Committee.

Fitch Ratings Ltd. Raised Azerbaijan's Credit Ratings to Investment Grade

Fitch Ratings has upgraded the Azerbaijan Mortgage Fund's (AMF) Long-term foreign and local currency ratings to 'BB+' from 'BB' respectively, following the agency's recent sovereign upgrade. The Outlooks are Stable. Azerbaijan's Long-term foreign and local currency Issuer Default ratings (IDRs) were upgraded to 'BBB-' from 'BB+', with Stable Outlooks. AMF is a public-sector entity (PSE) controlled by the Central Bank of Azerbaijan.

"AMF's ratings are notched down from Azerbaijan's Long-term local currency and foreign currency IDRs to reflect its PSE status, sovereign control through the central bank, and the important role of AMF in implementing the national government's housing finance policy. The notching further captures Fitch's view on the currently available support mechanisms for the entity from the government," it was reported.

AMF was established as a PSE in September 2005 by decree No: 299 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Its charter was approved by a separate presidential decree in December 2005. AMF's main purpose is to create funding mechanisms which provide home ownership to Azerbaijani citizens, through long-term financing, and to attract domestic and foreign investment into mortgage financing.

ICT

According to Global Information Technology Report 2010 published by the World Economic Forum (WEF), **Azerbaijan was named as a leading country in ICT use and Network Readiness Index amongst Eurasian countries**. Published for the ninth consecutive year with an extensive coverage of 133 countries worldwide, the Global IT Report remains the world's most comprehensive and authoritative international assessment of the impact of ICT on the development process and the competitiveness of nations. WEF highly appreciates Azerbaijan's actions in regards to "government readiness". On this parameter Azerbaijan has been included in the list of the first 30 countries of the world. The report also gives a high appraisal to the legislation and state regulation of ICT industry in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan's First Telecommunications Satellite is under Construction

By the end of 2012 Azerbaijan will launch its first satellite into an orbit. The satellite called "Azerspace" will provide digital broadcasting, internet access, data transmission, VSAT multiservice networks, and governmental communications. The satellite will be equipped with 24 transponders C band and 12 transponders Ku band. It will be placed in orbit at 46 degrees east longitude. The satellite's term is 20 years. Its service area will cover Europe, Central Asia and Africa. A carrier rocket will be determined in upcoming months to launch the satellite into orbit. The insurance of the satellite will be also determined.



AZERBAIJAN'S PLACE IN THE WORLD

Brief Historical Introduction

Azerbaijan is one of the cradles of human civilization, whose track is engraved in Gobustan stones, an ancient cave dwelling which a famous Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl called "spreading center of the Caucasian people". Azerbaijan was also an ancient place of worship of Zoroastrians attracted by myriads of flames from oil fields. Christianity arrived in Azerbaijan with the mission of St. Eliseus and in IV-VII century it was a dominant religion in Azerbaijan. During the Middle Ages Azerbaijan contributed to the development of Islamic science and arts. In time of oil boom on the verge of XIX and XX centuries Azerbaijan, producing half of the world oil input, allured many business people and artists who brought to our capital Baku bouquet of new gothic and baroque. In 1908 Azerbaijani composer Uzeir Hajibeyov staged the first Oriental opera "Leyli and Mejnun" in Baku.

Azerbaijan was the first Republic in the East established on May 28, 1918, with functioning parliament. In the same year woman suffrage was granted in Azerbaijan – a year earlier than in Canada. Unfortunately, the life of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was short and ended in 1920.

Decades of striving of the Azerbaijani people to live in a free and independent state led to the restoration of independence on October 18, 1991. The Republic of Azerbaijan became a member of the United Nations on March 2, 1992.

Today the people of Azerbaijan, comprising various ethnic and religious groups, are working to develop modern and democratic state with a free market and solid social institutions. Our major foreign policy objectives are to eliminate threats to our independence and territorial integrity, integrate with European and Euro-Atlantic structures, promote trans-regional economic projects, and contribute to the strengthening of global security.

Foreign policy

Azerbaijan-Canada bilateral relations

In May, 2010 Mr. Sabir Rustamkhanli, the Chair of Azerbaijan-Canada Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group in Milli Mejlis (Parliament) of Azerbaijan visited Canada. During the visit Mr. Rustamkhanli met with Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, Chair if the Canada-Azerbaijan Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group and Mr. Consiglio Di Nino, Head of the Canadian delegation to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

In June 2010, members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Mr. Reza Moridi and Mr. Monte Kwinter visited Azerbaijan. During the visit the Canadian delegation had meetings in Milli Mejlis (Parliament), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Economic Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

On September 22, 2010 the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada Mr. Lawrence Cannon on the sidelines of the 65th UN General Assembly in New York. The Ministers exchanged views over bilateral relations between the two countries.

In November, 2010 Canada's OSCE Parliamentary Assembly delegation headed by Senator Consiglio Di Nino visited Azerbaijan as part of an OSCE observation mission to monitor the parliamentary elections in the country.

Azerbaijan and the world

President Ilham Aliyev met with the US President Barack Obama



President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and his U.S. counterpart Barack Obama have met in New York on September 24, 2010. The two presidents commended the development of the Azerbaijan-US relations, which, they said, were based on the principles of strategic cooperation. They stressed the two countries enjoyed high-level relations, emphasizing the importance of the bilateral ties in the fields of economy, energy and security in terms of strengthening the regional cooperation. They also touched upon joint activities of Azerbaijan and the United States in international counter-terror operations. The two Presidents also exchanged views on regional and international problems.

President of Ukraine visits Azerbaijan

On April 28, 2011 President of Ukraine Mr. Viktor Yanukovych paid an official visit to Azerbaijan. During the meeting the leaders of the two states discussed the progressive development of the bilateral relations. The two sides also emphasized the importance of enhancing closer regional cooperation.



Turkish President Visits Azerbaijan



On August 16-17, 2010 President of Turkey Abdullah Gul paid an official visit to Azerbaijan. During the visit the Turkish Leader met with President Ilham Aliyev. The Presidents praised friendly and fraternal relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey in all fields. They expressed confidence the relations would continue expanding. Touching upon the high level reciprocal visits, the Heads of State stressed the Turkish President's official visit to Azerbaijan would contribute to boosting relations between the two countries. They also discussed bilateral, regional and international issues. During the visit the Presidents signed an "Agreement on strategic partnership and mutual support between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Turkey".

President of Azerbaijan Attended NATO Summit



On November 19-20, 2010 President Ilham Aliyev participated in the Lisbon NATO Summit and spoke at the meeting of the heads of states of the nations contributing to ISAF (International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan). President Aliyev highlighted the successful cooperation between the Azerbaijani armed forces and NATO, including the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan. The President underlined that Azerbaijan's cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is beneficial. Stating that the country had been active in NATO "Partnership for Peace" Program and Individual Partnership Action Plan, President Ilham Aliyev also drew attention to the fact Azerbaijan had been in close cooperation with NATO peacemaking operations around the world.

President of Greece Visited Azerbaijan

On April 5, 2011 Greek President Karolos Papoulias visited Azerbaijan. Giving a very positive assessment to bilateral relations and stressing the importance of the cooperation, the President of Greece called for further development of trade and economic relations. Speaking about the fruitful ties in the energy sphere, the President of Greece said that his country was interested in transporting natural gas from Azerbaijan. Greece, he said, highly appreciates the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) in the energy field.



Azerbaijan Hosted Caspian Summit in Baku

On November 18, President Aliyev hosted his counterparts from Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan. The Baku Summit of the Heads of the Caspian Sea littoral states focused on regional security, environment and maritime delimitation. The event denoted a more intensive regional diplomacy by the Caspian states. The presidents recognized the need for national sectors of the Sea, raising hopes for progress on the Caspian Sea Legal Status Convention. Delimitation of the Caspian Sea, which was divided between Iran and then USSR prior to 1991, remains incomplete.

Azerbaijan and International Security

Azerbaijan actively engages in the Euro-Atlantic processes on the basis of common democratic values such as the promotion and protection of human rights, the rule of law, free market economy and respect for international law. We believe that the Euro-Atlantic integration enlarges the boundaries of democracy, stability and prosperity throughout our continent.

Since Azerbaijan regained its independence, European and Euro-Atlantic political, security and economic institutions has always been and continues to be one of its main foreign policy priorities. NATO-Azerbaijan Partnership started gaining momentum after the Partnership for Peace Framework Document signed in May of 1994. As a vivid proof of its adherence to peace, Azerbaijan has been supporting the efforts of the international community in the Service of Peace.

Kosovo was the first test ground for Azerbaijani peacekeeping forces. Since September 1999 a peacekeeping platoon of Azerbaijani Armed Forces numbering 34 personnel as part of the Turkish peacekeeping battalion served in Kosovo under the command of NATO. Participation in KFOR has improved further the professional experience of peacekeeping forces of Azerbaijan and paved the way for contribution to future peace support operations. On April 15, 2008, the Azerbaijani troops serving in Kosovo returned home.

Azerbaijan's determination to participate actively in the anti-terrorist coalition was followed by the decision to join with peacekeeping platoon the Afghanistan. The number of Azerbaijani peacekeepers in ISAF was raised to 45 in January 2008. At the NATO Bucharest Summit Azerbaijan's President declared the intention of further increasing the military contingency in Afghanistan. Azerbaijan's contribution to peace and security in Afghanistan goes beyond the peacekeeping mission and includes the inputs in civil-military reconstruction of the country such as the education of Afghan officers and civilians in Azerbaijan, contribution to road construction, contribution to humanitarian demining projects, and financial contribution to the NATO Trust Fund project etc.

In August 2003, a peacekeeping contingent of Azerbaijani Armed Forces numbering 151 personnel was sent to Iraq for participation in the operation conducted by the coalition forces for restoration of security and stability in Iraq and the contingent successfully completed the task given to it.

National Security

Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict

As a result of the aggression of the Republic of Armenia against the Republic of Azerbaijan about 20 percent of the territories of Azerbaijan are currently occupied. Since February 1992, the process of mediation efforts on the settlement of Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict within the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (hereinafter - OSCE) has been going on.

In 1993, the UN Security Council adopted resolutions 822, 853, 874 and 884 calling for the cessation of hostilities, unimpeded access for international humanitarian relief efforts, and the eventual deployment of a peacekeeping force in the region. The UN also called for the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all ethnic Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

On 25 December 2005, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution 1416 entitled "The conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference". The Parliamentary Assembly reaffirmed the occupation of a considerable part of the territory of Azerbaijan and expressed its concern that the military action, and the widespread ethnic hostilities which preceded it, led to large-scale ethnic expulsion and the creation of mono-ethnic areas which resemble the terrible concept of ethnic cleansing. The Assembly made it clear that the occupation of foreign territory by a member State constitutes a grave violation of that State's obligations as a member of the Council of Europe and reaffirmed the right of displaced persons from the area of conflict to return to their homes safely and with dignity. The Assembly also recalled the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and urged the parties concerned to comply with them, in particular by withdrawing military forces from any occupied territories.

Position of Azerbaijan towards the conflict settlement

Although the mediation efforts conducted for some time within the framework of the OSCE have not always been consistent and have yet to yield results, Azerbaijan continues to be committed to solving the conflict peacefully and in a constructive manner.

The strategy of the government of Azerbaijan is aimed at the liberation of all occupied territories, the return of forcibly displaced population to their homes, and the establishment of durable peace and stability in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, as well as in the entire South Caucasus.

The ultimate objective of the settlement process is to elaborate and define the model and legal framework of the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh region within Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan believes that the process of definition of any status should take place in normal peaceful conditions with direct, full and equal participation of the entire population of the region, namely, the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities, and in their constructive interaction with the government of Azerbaijan exclusively in the framework of a lawful and democratic process.

However, it is very difficult to hope for a substantial breakthrough judging from a position, on which Armenia persists. Indeed, the military actions against Azerbaijan were aimed from the very beginning at seizing the territories by means of force and fundamental change of their demographic composition. Therefore, it is exactly for the purpose of unilateral secession Armenia wants to retain control over some occupied districts, prevents the displaced Azerbaijani population from returning to their homes and thus excludes equal consideration of opinions of both communities.

While being committed to the peaceful settlement of the conflict, Azerbaijan, however, will never compromise its territorial integrity and thus accept a fait-accompli based solution, which the Armenian side is trying to impose.

The conflict can only be solved on the basis of respect for the territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally-recognized borders of Azerbaijan, and peaceful coexistence of Armenian and Azerbaijani communities in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, fully and equally enjoying the benefits of democracy and prosperity.

Recent developments on the conflict

On May 20, 2010 The European Parliament adopted the resolution entitled "The need for an EU Strategy for the South Caucasus" on the basis of the report of the Bulgarian member of the Parliament Mr. Evgeni Kirilov. **The resolution mentioned that the conflict situation in the region is unacceptable.** The European Parliamentary MPs expressed concern about the increase in military spending in recent years and **called for the withdrawal of Armenian forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan, the resolution said.** While strongly supporting the EU initiatives on the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, the European Parliament called for an increasingly active role of the EU

to transform the South Caucasus into a region of sustainable peace, stability and prosperity with a view to enhancing the integration of these countries into the European policies.

On June 26, during the 2010 G-8 Summit held in Muskoka, Canada, the presidents of France, Russia and US made a statement on the main principles for the settlement of the conflict. The Muskoka statement of the presidents was another important development. It reiterated a similar statement by the mediator countries' presidents in July 2009 in L'Aquila and was meant to send a strong message to both sides that the international community unanimously supports the peace plan and expects both sides to quickly finalize their agreement on it.

Upon the request of the Republic of Azerbaijan, concerned about continued illegal activities perpetrated by the Republic of Armenia in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, including the illegal settlement practices, economic exploitation and devastation of these territories, the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs conducted a Field Assessment Mission (FAM) to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan surrounding its Nagorno-Karabakh region from October 7-12 2010, with the aim to assess the overall situation there. The FAM revealed once again the continuation of the policy of illegal settlement by the ethnic Armenians in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan as well as infrastructure changes and economic activities conducted in these territories in violation of humanitarian law. According to the visual appraisal and information provided by the locals, the number of illegal Armenian settlers in the occupied seven districts of Azerbaijan is roughly estimated by the Mission as 14,000 persons. Some of these settlers live in rehabilitated or newly constructed housing. According to the FAM observations a number of administrative, educational and medical buildings visited by the Mission in the occupied territories were constructed and/or equipped with the outside **financial support of Armenian diaspora**.

On November 19-20, 2010 the Declaration of the NATO Summit held in Lisbon stated: "With our vision of a Euro-Atlantic area at peace, the persistence of protracted regional conflicts in South Caucasus and the Republic of Moldova continues to be a matter of great concern for the Alliance. We urge all parties to engage constructively and with reinforced political will in peaceful conflict resolution, and to respect the current negotiation formats. We call on them all to avoid steps that undermine regional security and stability. We remain committed in our support of the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, and will also continue to support efforts towards a peaceful settlement of these regional conflicts, taking into account these principles".

On December 1-2, 2010 heads of delegations of OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries and Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia issued a joint statement on Nagorno-Karabakh. The heads of delegations agreed that the time has come for more decisive efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In this context, they recalled the joint statements of the Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, with the President of the Russian Federation, on November 2, 2008, in Moscow, and on October 27, 2010, in Astrakhan. They further agreed that a peaceful, negotiated settlement will bring stability and security and is the only way to bring real reconciliation to the peoples of the region. The Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan reaffirmed their commitment to seek a final settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, based upon: the principles and norms of international law; the United Nations Charter; the Helsinki Final Act; as well as the statements of Presidents Medvedev, Sarkozy, and Obama, at L'Aquila on July 10, 2009, and at Muskoka on June 26, 2010.

On March 8, 2011 as a result of a cease fire violation by the Armenian Armed Forces on the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 9 year old boy Fariz Badalov was shot by an Armenian sniper. The boy was playing outside his house on Tuesday in the village of Orta Garvand in Azerbaijan's Agdam District when was wounded in the head by a sniper from the Armenian-occupied territory and died on the way to hospital. This outrageous violation of international humanitarian law occurred three days after President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and Armenia Serge Sarkysyan met in Sochi, Russia under the auspices of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to discuss a peaceful resolution of the Armenia-Azerbaijani conflict. On March 9, 2011 Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, Ambassadors Bernard Fassier of France, Robert Bradtke of the United States, and Igor Popov of the Russian Federation, dealing with the negotiation process between Azerbaijan and Armenia, released the statement, expressing deep concern over cease fire violations after March 5 Sochi meeting. "Such senseless acts, - said in the statement, - would contravene the commitment of the parties to refrain from the use of force and to seek a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict."

TOURISM

Tourism to become a major source for economic development in Azerbaijan by 2014

The state program on the development of tourism in the country in 2010-2014, which was recently endorsed by the President Ilham Aliyev, will contribute in resolving the problems existing in tourism and ensure larger development of tourism in the country. The key objective of the state program is to develop a modern tourism meeting high ecological, social and economic requirements, and changing it into a one of the major source of development for the country.

The state program indicates that to meet these targets it is planned to implement goal-directed actions in the tourist infrastructure in line with international standards, which stimulate investment and business climate for attracting domestic and foreign investment in this sphere, to create an efficient mechanism to manage and regulate tourism by applying in advanced international experience, to upgrade the quality of services in line with international standards and to boost competitiveness of the Azerbaijani tourism at the market of international tourism services.

The state program stipulates implementing goal-directed actions for improving a mechanism of state regulator and legal base in the sphere of tourism, establishing relevant infrastructure in the tourist and recreation zones, expanding possible use of tourism potential of the country, stimulating tourism activities in all regions of the country, attracting local and foreign investments in the sphere of tourism, developing different directions of tourism, and creating new tourist routes.

It is also planned to design and apply advanced methods and standards to improve quality of tourist services, to expand network of hotels and other enterprises on tourism services, to improve retraining and training of experts in the field of tourism, to implement goal-directed education projects in foreign countries, to apply advanced information and communication technologies, to publish and disseminate materials about national historical, cultural and moral heritage of Azerbaijan, to propagandize national traditions worldwide, to expand international cooperation in the development of tourism.

All actions, included in the state program will be financed by the public budget funds, assigned for the Azerbaijani Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and other sources in accordance with the relevant legislation.

PLACES TO VISIT

Baku: Icheri Sheher (Old City)



Baku is one of the ancient cultural, trade and political centers of Azerbaijan. Due to the advantageous geographical location on the crossing of East and West, South and North and the confluence of the trade roads the city has been turned into the important populated area. During the reign of Shirvanshahs, Baku had a period of exceptional growth. At the same time it was one of the chief scientific, cultural and art centers. *Gyz Galasy* (Maiden Tower), the complex of *Shirvanshahs` Palace* and the fortress walls located in Baku are included into the World Heritage List by UNESCO.

Baku: Outer City

During the first oil boom in Azerbaijan under Imperial Russia (1805-1917) Baku experienced the rapid development fueled by oil tycoons. Opera house, schools, public building, casinos, clubs and residential palaces were constructed in the surrounding areas around the Old City. Kathleen Kingsbury, the New York Times travel reporter, has highlighted in her recent article about Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, that “magnificent European-style Beaux-Arts mansions, built by the city’s first oil barons a century ago”.



Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape

The Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape or simply Gobustan is a hill and mountain site occupying the southeast ending of the Big Caucasian Ridge. It is located in the west of the settlement of Gobustan, about 64 km southwest of the centre of Baku on the west bank of the Caspian Sea. Gobustan is very rich in archaeological monuments. The reserve has more than 6,000 rock engravings dating back between 5,000 - 40,000 years. The site also features the remains of inhabited caves, settlements and burials, all reflecting an intensive human use by the inhabitants of the area during the wet period that followed the last Ice Age, from the Upper Paleolithic to the Middle Ages. The site, which covers an area of 537 ha, is a part of the larger protected Gobustan Reservation. Most of the rock engravings depict primitive men, animals, battle-pieces, ritual dances, bullfights, and boats with armed oarsmen, warriors with lances in their hands, camel caravans, pictures of sun and stars. The petroglyphs and rock engravings are an exceptional testimony to a way of life that has disappeared, graphic representations of activities connected with hunting and fishing at a time when the climate and vegetation of the area were warmer and wetter than today. In 2007 Gobustan was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site considered to be of "outstanding universal value" for the quality and density of its rock art engravings, for the substantial evidence the collection of rock art images presents for hunting, fauna, flora and lifestyles in pre-historic times and for the cultural continuity between prehistoric and medieval times that the site reflects.



Lahij

Lahij is one of the ancient handicraft centers of Azerbaijan. Even today the question of its establishment date has been often debated among the scientists. This fact, however, is evidence of the ancient foundation of Lahij. Built of the principle of block building, Lahij has a unique charm thanks to its high standard of town-planning. There are not such a number of the cooper workshops anywhere else but in this place. In the Middle Ages the most part of the male population was occupied with the cooper craft. Copper ware made in Lahij was exported to all Eastern countries. Nowadays, these works of art are kept in many world museums as well as in the private collections.



Sheki



The town of Sheki is considered to be emerged as far back as ages BC. Famed in various fields during the whole history, this town was renowned for its craftsmen. Such branches of handicraft as intricate "shebeke" (net), embroideries, stucco, pottery, metalwork and mural painting were highly developed in Sheki. A peculiar architectural and decorative style of the town was formed during the centuries. Built in XVIII century, the mosaic-fronted Sheki Khan's Palace (King Palace) is a beautiful specimen of a aforesaid. Many craftsmen that worked at a decorative design of the palace had created a matchless work of art.

The mud volcanoes – the mystery of nature

Azerbaijan keeps the first place in the world for the number of mud volcanoes. There are 800 mud volcanoes on the Earth and 400 of them are in the Southern Caspian region. About 300 mud volcanoes are to be found in Azerbaijan – at the shore, in the sea and on islands. There are all types of mud volcanoes – both active and dormant. Volcanoes can be high and low, gryphons and buried ones, submarine and subterranean. Each of them has its own character and chemical composition. As the most of remarkable sites of Azerbaijan the 23 of the most interesting volcanoes got the status of a national park and are protected by the state. Mud volcanoes are definite accompaniments of oil and gas fields confirming the availability of the great natural resources in Azerbaijan. The mud volcanoes can supply raw materials for chemical and building industries as well as for pharmacology. The mud and clay of these volcanoes alongside with the volcanic waters can treat many diseases. These substances consist of many chemical elements. The mud volcanoes are a natural lab and storehouse for the scientists.



The mud volcanoes are also interesting for the tourists. The strange landscape reminds the youth of our planet or the views of the Moon but unlike the old Moon's dead surface the mud volcanoes of Azerbaijan are still alive.

Naftalan



Naftalan is a small oil-rich town and a major health resort of Azerbaijan.

The properties of the oil extracted from Naftalan are known since ancient times. While Naftalan crude oil is too heavy for normal export uses, it contains about 50 percent naphthalene, a hydrocarbon that is the active ingredient in coal tar soaps, which are used to treat psoriasis. As such, it is only used for medicinal purposes. The naphthalene in the oil has given it therapeutic properties; however it is not clear whether it is also a possible carcinogen. For centuries the local oil has been transformed into an ointment exported all to Asia and the Middle East, and patients have travelled thousands of kilometers to benefit from the Naftalan treatments.

The main natural curing factor is unique Naftalan oil which is extracted from bore wells and used for curing of diseases and after-effects of injury of motor and supporting organs, diseases of peripheral nervous system, skin, peripheral vessels and gynecological disorders. On April 25, 2011, Canada's CTV News channel broadcasted a video trailer dedicated to Naftalan (<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/healed-crude-oil-13452875>). The video contains information about renovated Naftalan Therapeutic Center and Naftalan petroleum spas, which are effective as a treatment against many diseases.

Yanar Dag (Fire Mountain)

Yanar Dag is an ancient and visually stunning natural gas fire which blazes continuously on a hillside on the Absheron Peninsula on the Caspian Sea near Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, which itself is known as the "land of fire." Flames jet out into the air 10 feet (3.0 m) from a thin, porous sandstone layer. Geologists have also called Yanar Dag one of the "mud volcanoes" or "sedimentary volcanoes" or "gas – oil volcanoes" as these are indicative of oil and gas reserves (largely methane gas) concealed below land and sea in the Caspian region and which Azerbaijan has the largest concentration globally, though others exist in Turkey, Turkmenistan and elsewhere. The mud volcanoes are unpredictable and their formation is not fully understood.



Unlike Mud Volcanoes, the Yanar Dag flame burns fairly steadily, as it is not a periodic eruption, but a steady seep of gas from the subsurface. It is also claimed that the Yanar Dag flame was only noted when accidentally lit by a shepherd in the 1950's.

Zoroastrian Temple

Zoroastrian Temple called Ateshgah or "Fire Temple" is a castle-like religious structure in Surakhani, a suburb of greater Baku, Azerbaijan. The pentagonal complex, which has a courtyard surrounded by cells for monks and a tetrapillar-altar in the middle, was built during the 17th and 18th centuries. It was abandoned after 1883 when oil and gas plants were established in the vicinity. The complex was turned into a museum in 1975 and now receives 15,000 visitors a year. It was nominated for UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 1998.



Culture

Nowruz Holiday

For Azerbaijanis, "Nowruz" that celebrates the New Year and the arrival of spring, is the most ancient and cherished holiday on the Azerbaijani calendar. Celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox (March 20-21), Nowruz represents nature, renewal and fertility. Other countries in Central Asia such as Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, also celebrate this special holiday, although during the Soviet period it was given unofficial status and even prohibited.



There are a number of age-old traditions with Nowruz that Azerbaijanis have maintained over the generations, and are now free to celebrate publicly. Preparations for Nowruz begin long before the holiday with spring-cleaning, planting trees, making new clothes, painting eggs, preparing national dishes such as shakarbura and pakhlava, with the one essential item being "semeni" - sprouts of wheat. Celebrations begin four weeks before the actual day of festivity. Each Tuesday of these four weeks is devoted to one of the four elements and is named accordingly, so there is Water Tuesday, Flame Tuesday, Earth Tuesday and Wind Tuesday. According to folklore, Water renews and refreshes nature, Fire is a symbol of rebirth, Earth signifies the revival of the earth and Wind opens the buds to announce the arrival of spring.



Thus, the celebrations begin with the first Tuesday, or Water Tuesday, when most Azerbaijanis light small fires on the street, in courtyards or gateways, as a tribute to fire. Indeed, fires are lit on each Tuesday preceding Nowruz. On the last Tuesday, all members of the Azerbaijani families are expected to jump over the fire as an act of purification. On the eve of Nowruz, families visit the graves of relatives as an act of remembrance at this special time and then, in the evening, the whole family gathers together to enjoy the various traditional dishes. The holiday continues for several days and ends with festive public dancing, folk bands and sports contests.

The Nowruz holiday is really a family time, a time when old disputes are laid to rest, and distant relatives and friends visit to share in the celebrations. Younger Azerbaijanis visit older and elderly relatives, bringing them pakhlava and shakarbura to eat as well as gifts. So Nowruz signifies not only the New Year and arrival of spring, but also represents unity, love and respect for old traditions and customs.

As with Christmas in the West, Nowruz is enjoyed particularly by young children. They are given sweets and cookies as well as gifts. They carry out traditional games or tricks, such as laying a cap outside the door of a relative or neighbour, knocking the door and then hiding until the cap is filled with sweets by the person living there. Jumping over the small fires is also a fun experience for children as well as for adults.

UN recognizes Nowruz as an International Day

On 23 February, 2010 the General Assembly of UN in its 64th plenary session recognized the International Day of Nowruz, a spring festival of Zoroastrian origin, by the initiative put forward by Azerbaijan. According to the preamble of the resolution on the International Day, Nowruz, which means new day, is celebrated on 21 March, the day of the vernal equinox, by more than 300 million people worldwide as the beginning of the new year. It has been celebrated for over 3,000 years in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and other regions. The text was introduced by Azerbaijan's representative, who said that, as a holiday celebrated in many parts of the world with themes important to all humanity, Nowruz encouraged intercultural dialogue and understanding.

The Assembly called on Member States that celebrate the festival to study its history and traditions with a view to disseminating that knowledge among the international community and organizing annual commemoration events.

Welcoming the inclusion of Nowruz into the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 30 September 2009, the text notes the

festival's "affirmation of life in harmony with nature, the awareness of the inseparable link between constructive labour and natural cycles of renewal and the solicitous and respectful attitude towards natural sources of life".

Nowruz, originally a Zoroastrian festival, as a first day of spring is celebrated on the day of the astronomical vernal equinox, the moment when the Sun crosses the celestial equator and equalizes night and day.

The celebration of Nowruz is a cherished holiday of a New Year and spring and is one of the most oldest traditions of Azerbaijani people along with other peoples sharing this tradition.

The Canadian parliament by unanimous consent, also has passed a bill to add Nowruz to the national calendar of Canada, on March 30, 2009.

Azerbaijani Actor Awarded "Hollywood Young Artists Award"

Mr. Timur Odushev, a young Azerbaijani actor was awarded "Hollywood Young Artists Award" for his role played in "Precinct" movie in nomination of the "Best leading role in foreign movie". The awarding ceremony was held in Los Angeles, US. "Precinct" is a co-production between Azerbaijan ("Narimanfilm") and Georgia ("Georgiafilm" & "Bagira Films").



Azerbaijani Carpet-Weaving Recognized as World Cultural Heritage

Oil and gas wealth may have put Azerbaijan on the map, but UNESCO has decided that the world is also indebted to the Caspian Sea country for its tradition of carpet-weaving. The ancient craft won a place on the list of world heritages that the world body for culture and science wants to celebrate and preserve. The Intangible Cultural Heritage list differs from UNESCO's World Heritage Site list by commemorating "intangibles" such as the performing arts, social practices, rituals and festivals, rather than "monuments and collections of objects." Azerbaijani carpet-weaving, around for millennia, shared pride of place with French cuisine and Turkish oil wrestling. Dancing, singing and even hopping are among the world's other impalpable cultural assets, according to UNESCO.

New Synagogue Opened in Azerbaijan

Dignitaries, including several foreign ambassadors, have attended the opening ceremony for a new synagogue in the Azerbaijani capital, Baku on April 5, 2011. The opening was attended by Mr. Matthew Bryza, U.S. Ambassador and envoys from Israel and Turkey, among others. Mr. Hidayet Orujov, the head of the State Committee for Work with Religious Groups, told that the opening of a new synagogue was a major event for Baku. He said that the construction of the house of worship was funded by the Azerbaijani government and was the biggest synagogue in Baku. "Religious tolerance is one significant factor in Azerbaijan's policy. This policy will continue," Mr. Orujov said. Mr. Semyon Ichiilov, the head of Azerbaijan's Mountain Jews Community, thanked the president of Azerbaijan, adding, "I want all nations to live in one family in Azerbaijan." Mr. Michael Lavon Lotem, Israel's ambassador to Azerbaijan, said that the synagogue would be a major source of support for the country's Jewish population.



Bicycling on the Silk Road: Canadian Experience in Azerbaijan

Frank Bradley

This is excerpts from the diary of Mr. Frank Bradley who was a member of the Silk Route cycle trip from Istanbul to Beijing in 2007.

We (40 cyclists) began our *Silk Route* tour on 4 August 2007 in Istanbul and cycled 136 km east through nice farm country to a lovely campground on the Black Sea. We cycled for 11 days through Turkey covering 1,600 km, or 145 km/da... and covered 550 km through Georgia, an average of 140 km/da. In Lagodekhi (Georgia), we were woken early by roosters and dogs, but had to wait for the border post (10km downhill) to open. Once open, they took all our passports and left us to wait. When we finally got our passports back, we were joined by 8 young Azerbaijan cyclists (on fancy road bikes), Grade X students who would cycle with us to Baku. But before we left the border post, we were surprised by an *official reception* with dancers, music and speeches! Amazing!



Once underway from the border post, we cycled through farmland with lots of sheep, horses, wagons & produce. We were riding beside the Caucasus Mountains on our left. The highway was lined on both sides with Lombardy poplars. It was very scenic. There were very few fences in this part of Azerbaijan, except for stone fences around each house with metal gates and lots of wrought-iron work. Livestock (cows and lots & lots of sheep) was allowed to wander wherever they chose.

After our lunch stop, the sun disappeared and it began to cloud over as we approached some distant hills. It started to rain. As we got to the outskirts of Sheki (our destination) it started to pour! And the road started to climb steeply! But we all made it to the Caravanseri Hotel, a

historic stopping point on the ancient Silk Road! It was a beautiful, 3-storey stone building with Azerbaijani carpets and metre-thick walls. It

contained a park-like central courtyard made up of pools & rest areas onto which all rooms faced. It looked Moorish. I had visions of Ali Baba. We were served an Azerbaijani Dinner of bread, butter, cheeses, soup (with a chicken leg in it) and tender lamb & chips! Superb!



Day #2 in Azerbaijan was short, so no lunch stop along the way. We cycled the 100 km to Qabala Campground (100 km) before eating lunch. *All along our route, local police helped us at major intersections, plus shepherd us along by slowing traffic.* Near camp, I 'raced' a local 12-year-old boy up a hill and made his day. He grinned from ear to ear as he *just* beat me to the top! Fun! Drivers are good and people are friendly with directions.

On Day #3 we rode on winding roads through forests, over rolling hills, past sheep in the fields, around cows in the road and saw many local people selling bags of mulberry nuts at the side of the road. The route included two hills with posted 12% grades! The vehicles on the road included numerous Ladas (old and new) plus Mercedes,

BMW's, Toyotas and Renaults, as well as a great number of motorcycles, many with sidecars. The farmers make square hay bales, rather than the loose haying we had seen in Georgia. We ended our ride at the Olympic Training Centre in Shamakhi which looked new and included extensive facilities for swimming, soccer, volleyball, tennis, etc., as well as a cycling velodrome! No athletes were staying at the centre while we were there, likely on their own vacation. There was an official music/dance again that night, this time at the small, on-site stadium.



It is not obvious that Azerbaijan is a Moslem country. It is like the Ottawa Valley 50 years ago (when I spent time at my grandparents' farm) with people in fedora hats, suit jackets, everyone smoking cigarettes, cattle & sheep in strange places, cars stopping in the middle of the road for a chat, and cars parked anywhere with the doors hanging open. Every fourth car honks just to say 'Hello!' to this stranger on a bicycle. Unscientifically, we got the feeling that Azerbaijan was on the upswing, particularly compared with the part of Georgia which we cycled through where it looked like people were abandoning their farms and villages to move to Tbilisi.



On our last day cycling in Azerbaijan (Day #4) we headed off into gently-rolling, arid land past lots of sheep on our way to Baku. Traffic got heavier the closer we got to Baku. When we came to a deep gorge, I stopped to change my glasses and take off my jacket. We had to cycle down a steep switchback road, cross a small river, then climb back up the steep switchback on the other side. Before I restarted, Phillip zipped past me heading downhill. When I reached the bottom of the descent, I saw Phillip starting up the other side and saw a dog running away from him up the hill, barking at two more dogs. Dogs are a problem for cyclists, anywhere in the world, but particularly in Azerbaijan where we encountered many. A white Lada cut right in front of me and

slammed on its brakes! I swerved into the middle of the road! The dogs swerved into the hillside and ran off! The Lada waited for a minute to make sure the dogs didn't return, then passed me as I got to the next switchback bend. He waved 'Hello!' I waved a "Big Thank You!!!" and gave him a thumbs up!

We all stopped 20 km outside Baku, to ride into the city in convoy (one truck at the front, one truck at the back, cyclists riding triple in between). We booked into the Velotreki Hotel in the suburbs of Baku, right beside a subway stop. It is a university facility with a banked cycling track with grandstands! Many of us cyclists took a turn cycling the track, just for fun.

We had a 'rest day' in Baku, fixed our bikes, did our laundry, found an Internet Cafe, toured the old city, toured the new, saw the Parliament building, went to the rug market, played tourist, found a bicycle museum at the downtown university, walked the seaside parks and looked at the amusement rides and chess games being played. In many ways it reminded me of old Montreal. I found an English pub to watch the F1 Gran Prix of Turkey live on TV.



The following afternoon, after clearing Azerbaijan customs, we boarded the ferry for our overnight trip across the Caspian Sea to Turkmenistan. Our *Silk Route* adventures were continuing. On to Beijing!

Photos are the courtesy of Mr. Frank Bradley.

Activities of the Embassy in Canada

Azerbaijani Movie Premiered in Ottawa

On March 30, 2010 Azerbaijani movie "Gala" (Fortress) premiered at the Bytowne Cinema in Ottawa. The film, which was about on love, heroism and war, was welcomed by the Canadian audience very warmly. The movie attended 33rd Montreal World Film Festival last year and was among the candidates for "the best foreign movie" for Oscar in 2008.



Presentation at the Concordia University

On April 7, 2010 Ambassador Farid Shafiyev delivered a lecture at the Concordia University of Montreal on Energy Security and New Geopolitics in the Caspian Sea Region. During the presentation Ambassador Shafiyev spoke about the various issues related to the Azerbaijan's energy security policy, energy projects being implemented in the region and touched upon the geopolitical situation in the South Caucasus.

Concert of Azerbaijani Classic and Folk Music in Ottawa



On May 25, 2010, on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Canada organized a concert of traditional Azerbaijani classical and folk music at the National Gallery of Canada. The concert featured the music of Uzeyir Hajibeyov, Gara Garayev, Hasan Rzayev as well as mugham – traditional Azerbaijani folk music performed by Toronto Silk Road Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Ismayil Hajiyev and mugham trio from Azerbaijan: Munis Sharifov (kemancha), Sahib Pashazade (tar), Eytiram Huseynov (vocal).

An evening of Azerbaijani Music in Canada

An evening of Azerbaijani music took place in Niagara city, Canada on August 26, 2010. Mr. Gary Burroughs, Mayor of Niagara made an opening speech. He presented honorary diplomas to Mr. Ismayil Hacıyev, the chief of "Silk Road" chamber orchestra and sculptor Mr. Omar Eldarov. Ambassador Shafiyev and MPs of Ontario also made speeches. The works of great Azerbaijani composers such as Uzeyir Hajibayli, Gara Garayev, Hasan Rzayev and Farhad Badalbayli were performed at the festival. August 26 was announced as International Day of Azerbaijani mugham and the music day of the countries located in the Great Silk Road. The decision was adopted by mayor of Canadian city Niagara and leadership of annual International Niagara Music Festival.

Azerbaijani Ambassador to Canada Visited Vancouver



Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Canada Farid Shafiev visited Vancouver (British Columbia) on September 14-18, 2010. During the visit Mr. Shafiyev met with the Minister of Small Business, Technology and Economic Development of British Columbia Ian Black, deputy minister Don Fast, representatives of the mayor of Vancouver, the Head of the Trade Council Grayden Hayward and the Head of the Commission for Economic Cooperation in Vancouver John Tylee. During the meetings the sides discussed prospects of cooperation in trade and economic spheres between Azerbaijan and the Province of British Columbia. Also, the ambassador visited the University of British Columbia (UBC). During meetings with representatives of the University the importance of developing cooperation between UBC and

Azerbaijani universities was stressed. The presentation of economic and investment opportunities in Azerbaijan with the support of Canada Eurasia Russia Business Association (CERBA) was held during the visit. Speaking at the presentation,

Ambassador Shafiyev informed the participants about the broad opportunities and major economic projects in Azerbaijan. In the framework of the visit to the province, the ambassador visited the second largest city in BC - Surrey, where he held meetings with the head of the Trade Council of the City - Nigel Watkinson and local administration representatives. Ambassador Shafiyev also met with representatives of the Azerbaijani Diaspora of Vancouver. Following the visit F. Shafiyev gave an interview to a local CKNW radio station, in which he informed listeners about religious tolerance and other successes achieved in Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijani Ambassador to Canada Addressed Event at Ontario Legislature

On November 26, 2010 Ambassador Shafiyev took part as a keynote speaker at a banquet held by the Association of Progressive Muslims of Ontario (APMO) at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in Toronto. During his speech Mr. Shafiyev touched on relationship between Islamic and Western worlds, and noted with regret the rise of Islamophobia in some Western countries. He said that in Azerbaijan, which was a secular state with more than 90% of its population comprised of Muslims, there were several synagogues and churches. The Ambassador noted that despite Azerbaijan had been subjected to an aggression, and the destruction of mosques in its occupied territories, the attitude to Christianity and other religions in the country remained tolerant. At the event Mr. Shafiyev has received an APMO's award.



Azerbaijani Ambassador to Canada Met with the Mayor of Montreal



On November 30, 2010 Farid Shafiyev, Azerbaijani ambassador to Canada held a meeting with Mr. Gerald Tremblay, the Mayor of Montreal. They discussed the prospects of cooperation in economy, culture and education. Mr. Shafiyev stressed the existence of wide potential for the development of cooperation and importance of the implementation of a number of projects for further enhancing the relations. Mr. Tremblay said he was interested in expanding ties with Azerbaijan.

Performance about Azerbaijani Refugees Showed in Montreal

On November 30, 2010 a French language theatre performance about the Azerbaijani refugees titled "Gulnara's dress" (La robe de Gulnara), written by a Canadian Isabelle Hubert, was shown in Montreal. Before the show Farid Shafiyev addressed the audience. Mr. Shafiyev thanked the creators and organizers of the performance and underlined the importance of the play for drawing attention to the problem of refugees in the world, including Azerbaijan. He noted that the Embassy was ready to contribute to the development of cultural relations between Azerbaijan and Canada. At the end of the play the audience went for the standing ovation. Following the show the Embassy hosted an official reception. "La robe de Gulnara" will be shown in Montreal until December 11, 2010. In September-December, 2011 the performance is scheduled to be staged in Quebec and other provinces of Canada.



Azerbaijani Ambassador to Canada Visited Sudbury

Farid Shafiyev, the Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Canada visited Sudbury, Ontario on January 18, 2011. In a meeting with Ms. Marianne Matichuk, the mayor of Sudbury, there was discussion of issues of bilateral cooperation, focused on the experience of Sudbury in the mining industry. Ambassador Shafiyev also met with Sudbury MP Glenn Thibeault. They discussed the bilateral development of parliamentary relations as well as political, economical and humanitarian issues. The ambassador also visited "Dynamic Earth", an underground tunnel that explains the mining industry.

Azerbaijani Ambassador Made Presentation at Laurentian University



On January 19, 2011 Laurentian University hosted a presentation “Azerbaijan: international law issues” by Farid Shafiyev in Sudbury. The ambassador gave a guest lecture about the history of Azerbaijan, including the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the legal status of the Caspian Sea. Following the presentation, Mr. Shafiyev met with Mr. Dominic Giroux, the president of the university to discuss educational cooperation between Azerbaijan and Canada.

Energy Politics and Pipelines Strategy Presentation in Ottawa

On January 26, 2011 Azerbaijan’s ambassador in Canada Farid Shafiyev made a presentation about "Energy Security and Pipeline Politics: Azerbaijani perspectives" at a seminar organized by the Society for International Development, Ottawa Gatineau Chapter. In his presentation, the diplomat gave general information on Azerbaijan, including its economic development, energy projects, achievements, and its role in the region. Shafiyev also raised awareness of participants about Azerbaijan’s energy and pipeline strategy and future projects.



Presentation about Azerbaijan at Glendon College of the York University

Azerbaijan Farid Shafiyev gave a presentation on the issue “Fight against transnational organized crime in Azerbaijan” at Glendon College, York University on January 21, 2011. Mr. Shafiyev gave general information about Azerbaijan and the current regional security issues. Ambassador spoke about the fight against the organized crime, human trafficking and illegal trafficking of drugs in Azerbaijan. Mr. Shafiyev held a meeting with Mr. Kenneth McRoberts, principal of Glendon College and discussed the perspectives of bilateral scientific, research and student exchange issues.



Azerbaijani Embassy in Canada Contributes to Help Japan’s Earthquake Victims

On April 10, 2011 Azerbaijan Embassy to Canada cosponsored a charity concert organized by the Ottawa Japanese Society, Ottawa Folk Festival and Bronson Centre to assist the people who suffered from the earthquakes and tsunami in Japan. Azerbaijani Ambassador to Canada Farid Shafiyev gave interview to Canada’s Rogers TV channel. He noted the importance of international assistance in disaster situations, stressing Azerbaijan’s one million dollar relief aid to Japan. The ambassador stressed that Azerbaijan highly appreciates Japan’s assistance the country once rendered during the humanitarian crisis in the 1990s as a result of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

BAKU NIGHT LIFE

Baku has earned a stamp of approval from the well known travel company Lonely Planet as one of the world's top 10 party cities along with Montreal, Dubai, Buenos Aires and others. Baku has a reputation for offering a vibrant nightlife, and many clubs that are open until dawn can be found throughout the city. Some of the most popular discotheques and night clubs include, "X-Site", "Le Chevalier" at Grand Hotel Europe, "Zagulba Disco Club" and "Le Mirage". Most of them are open till the early hours of the morning.

