



# NEWSLETTER

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## **Azerbaijan Key to Energy Diversity**

Azerbaijan is positioned strategically with the necessary infrastructure to advance the diversification of the European energy sector, officials said. "We have diversified transportation energy. I am confident that the relationship between Azerbaijan and European consumers will develop further," said Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. The President pledged to his colleagues in the oil and gas sector that Azerbaijan would remain an important ally in the region. He pointed to the BTC oil pipeline, the world's second longest, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, or South Caucasus artery, as signs of changing dynamics of the regional energy sector.

## **Azerbaijan President Presides Over Cabinet Meeting on Socio-Economic Results of 2008**

President Ilham Aliyev presided over a meeting with the Cabinet of Ministers to sum up socio-economic results of 2008. President said though 2008 has entered the world history as a year of financial crisis, the last year was successful for Azerbaijan, as in previous years. "Despite financial crisis observed in the world, the state budget for 2009 has increased. Expenses of this year's state budget make up \$15.4 billion, while the consolidated budget is \$18.4 billion," he said. He also stressed the raise of population's incomes up to 36 percent, the notable level of poverty reduction in the country, pointing to a 50 percent raise of minimum wages and pensions, averaging \$335, and \$120 respectively. In his final remarks, President Ilham Aliyev noted that one of the main goals in 2009 is to minimize consequences of the world financial crisis in Azerbaijan. He gave certain instructions for taking serious measures to develop bank sector, to realize social programs, to increase living standard of the internally displaced persons and to provide government support to enterprises

whose export potential has suffered from the financial crisis.

## **OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs Visit the Region**

Co-chairs met with President Aliyev and during their meeting they discussed current negotiations on Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In their interview, they expressed their satisfaction with the talks, and hope for a move forward at the meeting of Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents and Foreign Ministers. Minister Elmar Mamedyarov said Azerbaijani side is currently working at the proposals provided at the meeting with his counterpart and co-chairs in Helsinki and the response will be given probably after the Swiss meetings of the Foreign Ministers and the presidents. As for mutual compromises, he said Azerbaijani side can make all compromises only in the framework of restoration of its territorial integrity and return of internally displaced persons to their homes.

## **Azerbaijani FM met Benita Ferrero-Waldner, EU Commissioner on External Ties and ENP**

Mr. Mamedyarov and EU commissioner discussed the negotiation process on the resolution of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and EU's assistance for the resolution, the issues of energy security, gas projects, as well as projects in the framework of the Eastern Partnership program, suggested to Azerbaijan along with five countries-Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. Ms. Waldner noted the program envisions signing of an associative contract on wider cooperation in economic, political, other spheres, and of a contract on the facilitation of the visa regime.