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On March 12, 2009, on Parliament Hill, the Canadian-Azerbaijani Interparliamentary Friendship Group (CAIFG) held its annual meeting.

Senators and Members of the Parliament from the Conservatives, Liberals and Bloc Quebecois attended the meeting along with representatives of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Representatives of the Assembly of Azerbaijani Canadian Organizations, Association of Progressive Muslims of Canada, B’Nai Brith Canada were also invited to the event.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, MP (L), Chair of the CAIFG after welcoming remarks, introduced the agenda of the meeting. She pointed out that the goal of the meeting was to elect the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Group, as well as to exchange views on Azerbaijani-Canadian relations. She then invited Mr. Farid Shafiyev, Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy of Azerbaijan, to speak.

Mr. Shafiyev said Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the relations with Canada as one of the leading and advanced democracies and economies. He stressed the great potential which exists between the two countries in political, economic, and social spheres. He also mentioned the similarity of multicultural and multiethnic nature of the two countries.

After that, the CAIFG proceeded to the election of the executives of the Group. The Senators and MPs participating in the meeting re-elected Ms. Yasmin Ratansi, MP (L) as the Chair and Senator David Smith (L) and Mr. Barry Devolin, MP (C) as Vice-chairs of the Group. During the meeting, the executives of the Group were also elected from Conservatives, Liberals and Bloc Quebecois.

Then participants of the meeting held discussions on the prospects of Canada-Azerbaijan relations, bilateral cooperation in different fields, and the situation in the South Caucasus region. The CAIFG members who visited Azerbaijan last year on the occasion of 90th anniversary of Azerbaijani Parliament, established in 1918 during the period of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic, shared their impressions with the guests and spoke about democratic traditions founded from the beginning of the XX century, the current situation in modern Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan’s foreign policy priorities, dynamic economic development, secularism and ethnic, religious tolerance within the society and hospitality of people.

The CAIFG was established in 2006, enrolling members of different parties from the Parliament of Canada. It played a significant role not only in interparliamentary cooperation between the two countries, but also in the political and economic relationship.