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The Black Sea Region: New Challenges and Opportunities for Regional Cooperation

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Panel II: The State of Affairs: Views from the Region

Part II.2 Analyses from Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan

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Dear ladies and gentlemen!

First of all, I express my gratitude to the organisers for inviting me here and for excellent organisation. I think it is a good opportunity to discuss processes ongoing in the region, way of cooperation, achievements gained and prospects.

Our country has a big culture, history and rich traditions. But as independent country, member of international community we have been living for 17 years only. Those years are very necessary for our independence and sovereign development.

Today there are all institutions in Azerbaijan and our country is actively integrating to European institutions. We are cooperating with EU and this cooperation is implemented in frame of new neighbouring policy. We have established very firm ties with influential international organizations and democratization, political reforms in our country are accompanied by strong economic policy.

My country has made and makes big contributions to the regional cooperation and it is not an easy task. First, because of its geographic location and second existing conflicts in the region.

We first invited foreign companies to Caspian Sea. As you know prior to that Caspian Sea was closed for foreigners. My country involved investments, started to produce oil. We achieved to build pipelines in very difficult, complicated geographic and geopolitical circumstance. Oil produced now in Azerbaijan is delivered in big scale to world markets via Mediterranean and Black seas. There are 3 pipelines for this purpose. Also, after discovering Shahdeniz field possessing more than 1 trillion cubic meter of gas Azerbaijan immediately began to build gas pipeline from Baku to West. Construction of gas pipeline to Europe has been completed and we produce much more gas, become potential supplier country for our neighbours and Europe.

We completed construction of pipelines and are working on the railway construction. Baku-Tbilisi-Kars is very good transport project and can link Europe with Asia. Azerbaijan will have access to Turkey via railway. It is direct access to Europe. It also assures new access for us to Kazakhstan and China via Caspian Sea. It is new corridor and Azerbaijan acts as sponsor of this project.

Projects started in this region - South Caucasus and expanded all over the region have impact on the entire continent in wide sense. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey make valuable contributions to Europe energy security.

The Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline will help to develop Nabucco project successfully, which involves Austria, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. That project is aimed at construction of a natural gas pipeline crossing the territories of the above-mentioned countries to join the European gas grid at the territory of Austria with the purpose to supply Europe with natural gas;

All these projects strengthen energy and transport corridor. Looking at map of our region we would see different opportunities there, different corridors can be opened. But only those corridors work that are supported by countries the corridors cross. Routes crossing the territory are important. Investments will be made there where there is stability, interest will increase and our region will develop.

I am confident we will be continuing our successful energy cooperation in coming years. Building 4 oil and gas pipelines Azerbaijan has fulfilled all issues set in this field phase and we are working in new directions. We are working on regional cooperation of Caspian Sea- Black Sea- Baltic Sea.

In addition, there are issues disturbing us. Taking the opportunity I would like to draw the attention of participants of our Conference to the conflict in South Caucasus. Unsettled conflicts as well 20% of territories of Azerbaijan are still under occupation as result of Armenian aggression to Azerbaijan. As result of this occupation and ethnic cleansing policy there are over 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons. It is great injustice, it is violation of international legal norms. UN Security Council's 4 resolutions on this issue remain unfulfilled. Those resolutions envisage withdrawal of occupant forces.

Thus, non-settlement of the issue brings to growth of tension in the region. Peace in the region is not established. There is temporary ceasefire that is very sensible. The events of last August once again demonstrated this. I think, aggressors should understand we do not live in middle ages but in XXI century, features of which must be base to every country. We want the peace to exist in region, international law assured. Every occupant must know this occupation will have no end. End of this occupation is either agreement of peace or inevitable defeat.

Armenia is now beyond any transportation routes. We have built oil and gas pipelines passing by the territory of Armenia. In a word, they were isolated from entire regional cooperation.

I would like to mention one fact. 10 years back in one of the meetings of Presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia Azerbaijani President proposed to Armenian counterpart to liberate at least 5 Azerbaijani regions and start regional cooperation. These propose was made when major regional projects were not implemented, but what Armenian President did? He

refused this proposal and said that his country is in the position to overcome difficulties. I leave this fact to your judgement.

Today regional cooperation is strengthened in the region, Georgia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Central Asia, Europe has energy and transport corridors. Of course, it will play positive role in solution of all conflicts. Because as we become stronger, when you are strong you will have much more successes.

Therefore, we are on the eve of very big regional development. Those separatist conflicts look like a bomb working with time and are the same everywhere. The same in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Osetia, Dnestr region.

This is necessary not for us only, but for the all region. Because, region dynamically develops and Azerbaijan is its locomotive. Energy, transportation projects have been started by us and these create fully new situation now.

Yesterday some of my colleague said that there was development in recent meeting of President in Prague. There was no any result, the position of Armenia is still destructive and unfortunately, the activity of Minsk Group co chairs is not sufficient.

Finally, to express concerns over the existing threats in the region, armed conflicts, aggressive separatism and terrorism as a main threat to the comprehensive and full-scale regional cooperation and, in this regard, call for the soonest and full-elimination of these threats on the basis of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the states, that would contribute to the restoration of security, stability and peace, and thus, promoting regional cooperation, including in the field of energy.

Thank you.