

TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE CASPIAN OIL & GAS EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to congratulate you on the opening of the Caspian International Oil & Gas Exhibition and Conference, and wish you the best of luck in your work.

The fact that the Caspian International Oil & Gas Exhibition and Conference has been held annually for the past 16 years with an increasing number of participants, is a sign of our country's integration into the world economy. It is also a sign of stronger relations and more effective cooperation with international organisations. But above all, it shows that our country's world-renowned reputation has gained momentum.

It is not fortuitous that our country hosts such exhibitions and conferences every year. Baku is the oldest oil field in the world. Globally speaking, the very first industrial oil production operation was implemented in Azerbaijan. In the ensuing years, the oil fields of Azerbaijan began to draw the interest of esteemed international companies and at the dawn of the 19th Century, Azerbaijan became the largest oil country in the world.

The Oil Strategy initiated by our all-national leader Mr. Heydar Aliyev in 1994, has restored the reputation of Azerbaijan as an oil country. Today, due to its favorable geographical location and natural resources which are of global and strategic importance, Azerbaijan has an extended and diversified cooperation with a number of states, as well as with many renowned economic and financial institutions and companies throughout the world. Over 120 national and trans-regional projects, including a very important project on the development and transportation of Caspian hydrocarbon resources, are currently ongoing with an active participation of and support from the aforementioned entities.

The extended implementation of the new Oil Strategy, which is successfully being continued by HE President Ilham Aliyev, has further strengthened the leading position of our country, both in the region and throughout the world. It has ensured that Azerbaijan is one of the most important partners of the European Union as a guarantor of energy security.

In 2008, one of the remarkable milestones in oil production was the first oil from the ACG (Deepwater Gunashli) Phase 3 Project. As a result of these operations, ACG oil production reached one million barrels of oil per day. Recently, another important step towards the strengthening our energy independence was the development of the Shah Deniz field, which was developed jointly with our foreign investors. With over 1.2 trillion cubic meters of gas-in-place, Shah Deniz is extremely important in terms of energy security, both in the region and in Europe. According to forecasts, Shah Deniz is expected to produce 40 mn barrels of condensate per day and 9 billion cubic meters of gas annually.

The Baku Energy Summit, held on 14 November 2008, adopted a declaration which underlined the importance of Azerbaijan in ensuring energy security in the Caspian region and beyond, particularly throughout Europe. With this regard, our country supported the involvement of the Euro-Asian Oil Transportation Corridor, including Odessa-Brodi Oil Pipeline. Interested parties were then called to join in their efforts to export natural gas through Georgia and Turkey via ITGI and Nabucco gas pipelines.

I believe this exhibition and conference will further contribute to strengthening the relationship among our countries and companies and will provide impetus to opening new areas for improved cooperation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organisers and particularly, the Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. I would also like to wish the exhibitors the best of luck and success in their future work.

Yours truly,

Natig Aliyev
Minister of Industry and Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan