

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

**TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE 16TH INTERNATIONAL CASPIAN OIL AND GAS, REFINING AND
PETROCHEMICALS EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE 2009**

Esteemed exhibition and conference participants!

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly welcome you to the opening of the 16th International Caspian Oil and Gas, Refining and Petrochemicals Exhibition & Conference 2009.

The foundation of this now traditional exhibition and conference was laid in 1994 by the national leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev and gave great impetus to the process of attracting the oil and gas world to our country.

The historic Contract of Century, which was signed right after the first exhibition, marked the inception of our country's international integration and determined the long-term directions for the development of our economy.

At present, a number of transnational projects are being implemented on our initiative in the oil and gas sector and to improve the infrastructure. Given its rich energy resources, Azerbaijan has always played a constructive role in regional cooperation issues as a transit country and has proved itself to be a reliable partner of Europe and Asia. The diversification policy being pursued in the energy sector, coupled with the existing pipeline network, has made a significant contribution to ensuring the world's energy security.

Azerbaijan's active participation in well-established energy summits and its prospects for involvement in new strategic mega-projects prove that the international influence of Azerbaijan has increased.

Thanks to the 15 years it has been running, the International Caspian Oil and Gas, Refining and Petrochemicals Exhibition & Conference today unites all our efforts, forges a spirit of strong partnership between all participants and creates the ideal conditions for wide-ranging cooperation and economic links. Despite the problems which have arisen as a result of the deep-rooted international economic crisis, interest in this event, which is conducted with growing success every year, remains undiminished. To date, about 5,400 companies from more than 70 different countries have already been represented at this exhibition and conference.

I believe that by building mutually advantageous cooperation we will achieve durable economic development for the benefit of our people and towards the further provision of peace and security in a rapidly-globalising world.

I would like to wish you every success in your business and peace and serenity to your countries.

Ilham Aliyev

President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Baku, 19 May 2009