

**The Azerbaijan-Turkey-US relationship  
and its Importance for Eurasia  
December 10, 2007**

**SPEECH**

**by Mr. Ahmet Erentok,**

**Chairman of the Board of Azerbaijan Turkey Businessmen Association (ATIB)**

Welcome to Ministers, Government officials, country delegations and all guests. As I look throughout the crowd, I see many recognizable faces, faces of all those who've traveled to participate in this Conference.

I'm proud to be part of such an important event for discussing areas of trilateral cooperation in defining and prioritizing key geopolitical issues in Eurasia. Using the opportunity given to me, I would like to thank all of the Conference participants for attributing importance to it.

Azerbaijan and Turkey's active participation in all areas of our society is well known throughout the region. This Conference: **The Azerbaijan-Turkey-US relationship and its Importance for Eurasia** is a monumental event with participation of guest and speakers from all the three countries.

Azerbaijan and Turkey play a growing geo-strategic role in the region as the leaders of regional projects, with their rapid economic and social developments. The already functioning regional projects such as Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, Baku-Tbilisi-Arzurum gas pipeline and emerging projects, including the Nabucco and Turkey-Greece-Italy gas pipelines increase their role in energy security of the region.

As the President H.E. Ilham Aliyev stated, Azerbaijan has witnessed two important historical events in 2006. First, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the main export route going into full operation. And the construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Arzurum gas pipeline finishing well ahead of schedule. These two projects are of great importance for Azerbaijan, its relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey, for the region and the entire world. We must not forget mentioning a notable and momentous project signed in February 2007, with our Georgian and Turkish brothers the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, another stepping stone that increases the role of Azerbaijan in the region.

These two countries play a unique role in the emerging transportation corridor that stretches from Central Asia through the South Caucasus and Turkey and into Europe, which possesses a great potential to enable the free flow of non-oil industry and SMEs as well as also people, technology, and information.

The goal of our conference is to make efforts for region's prosperity by joining together specialists, different point of views of state organizations at the head,

politicians, academicians, universities, public unities and business world; in brief, unities representing various strata of society. As a result we wish to provide regular and continuous economic development by extending collaboration of advanced countries in Euroasia geopolitics. Particularly, by developing of non oil sectors in order to provide next generation with more healthy (strong) and reliable future.

All the sources of the country with the energy at the head are of great importance for all the world and especially for European Union. With this aim during 40-60 forthcoming years we consider the importance of cooperation in the sphere of production and distribution of the crop.

We believe in significance of being more superior of region and humanity's prosperity, than country and private. We have seen enough in world history that minor group individual advantages hard manner was compensated by people masses. And it is time to make result of these experiences, not be indifferent to development of organizations representing various strata of society and make necessary affairs in time.

One of the main obstacles to economic development in the region is undoubtedly the existing conflicts. These conflicts greatly hinder the improvement of nations' well being by impeding economic development of the region.

Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict and the ungrounded issue of "Armenian Genocide", which is being discussed in several countries by the support of Armenian lobby are obstacles on the way of development of economic relations between our countries. As you are aware, a large-scale and organised Armenian lobby, having a great financial support and the support of several dishonest politicians is functioning against us. Azerbaijan and Turkey have to join their efforts against this lobby in order to reveal truth to the World and to unmask the propaganda directed against our nations.

As I stressed, the Armenian issue is emerging as a priority problem requiring the joint action of the two countries. It requires joint activity of state and government bodies scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations and business people and formation of a joint strategy. In case of realisation of Armenians' plans, our currently existing strategic advantages will disappear, the direct border between Azerbaijan and Turkey will be utterly removed, relations between the two countries and their geopolitical standing in the region will be seriously damaged that will result in weakening their control over the energy resources in the region.

On the other hand, Armenian people has to understand that the activity of Armenian lobby is negatively affecting first of all Armenians living in the territory of Armenia. The country is moved aside from the economic projects being implemented in the region and its access to resources necessary for developing the national economy is becoming limited. As a result, the well-being of population in Armenia is worsening day-by-day, which can be seen from the number of people abandoning the country.

Namely on this point, Azerbaijan and Turkey have to form a joint strategy by using their political, economic, social and cultural advantages.

We regret that several people and organisations functioning abroad are threatening the stability in the region by establishing business relations with politicians of foreign countries and making decisions in parliaments of various countries for meeting interests of groups they are representing without taking problems and future of their compatriots into consideration. As a result our occupied territories are not given back, historically formed strategic cooperation with these countries are put into risk by enticing several politicians with verbal scenarios and lies and impenetrable obstacles are being created. Is this a goal? It would be better to leave investigating historical issues to professionals, wouldn't it? What can we achieve by commissioning an advocate with a work of a doctor, a psychologist with a work of an engineer and a politician a with a work of an historian?

The World has significantly changed. The previous environment for achieving a hundred year ago wishes is not in place any more. Nowadays, conflict solution is possible only by consensus. Self-interested groups and their accomplices should not be given an opportunity, relations should be set and developed in each platform for more sustainable functioning of future circumstances.

Azerbaijan Turkey Businessmen Association is continuously functioning in this sphere. The Azerbaijan Turkey Historical Researches – ATAF Project is one of the activities in this field. The Fund will focus on carrying out researches on Azerbaijan and Turkey history, determining joint problems and finding the ways for their solution, contributing to tackling the problems obstructing peace and economic integration and improvement of well-being in the region.

The Fund can play an important role in neutral and scientific evaluation of the Armenian problem, revealing the truth on the basis of existing documents and solving conflicts among the nations and problems obstructing cooperation in the region.

The full evaluation of economic potential of the region will be possible after ensuring peace among Caucasus nations. Economic Cooperation in the Caucasus is also important for realisation of economic integration potential in Eurasia region.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

If we look through the economic growth analysis explanation of countries made by Strategy and Competition Institution of Harvard Business School in 2003, we will see that in the past the economic growth of countries was defined only by government; but in the new model the economic growth of the country, it is characterized by a joint activity and cooperation of state and government bodies, scientific, technological and education institutions, NGOs and business community. I want to

stress that I seriously believe in this meeting and think that the activity meeting this definition is important for the region.

At the end of my speech I would like to thank all the partner organizations, namely the Hudson Institute, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program at J. Hopkins University and Azerbaijan Exports and Investments Promotion Fund for their hard work and contributions for organizing such a Conference. I wish great success in holding the Conference, and hope we will make mutual exchange of views, share our opinions and experience with valuable speakers and participants.