

WELCOMING SPEECH OF MR OGTAY ASADOV,
CHAIRMAN OF THE MILLI MAJLIS OF THE REPUBLIC OF
AZERBAIJAN
at the PACE Standing Committee meeting

(23 May 2014)

Dear Madam Anne Brasseur,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I cordially welcome you all in the Standing Committee meeting held in Baku. I hope that the exchange of views that will be conducted during the meeting and decisions that will be adopted will contribute to the realization of the goals of our organization.

Azerbaijan has undertaken the chairmanship in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for the first time since its membership to the organization approximately 14 years ago. I am assured that during the six-month chairmanship period of Azerbaijan significant steps will be made towards achieving greater unity in Europe.

The 65-year history of the Council of Europe proves that there is no alternative to democracy and democratic ruling system. We bear a responsibility both individually as separate countries and collectively as the Council of Europe to preserve and develop European values that have passed through the tests of centuries. During the period of the chairmanship, Azerbaijan will put efforts in order to successfully continue the works carried out for reinforcing the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe, that is pluralist democracy, rule of law and human rights.

The priorities of Azerbaijan's chairmanship at the Council of Europe have already been declared. These are the fight against corruption, social issues, multiculturalism which characterises Azerbaijan, and education, particularly human rights education. I think that the significance and relevance of these tasks is obvious for everyone.

Corruption is a serious problem destroying social systems, undermining economy, and negatively affecting the images of states. Most importantly, corruption diminishes a society's in authorities, and annihilates the decisions adopted with the view of building free and democratic state.

Social sphere has an influence on every human being, and their life conditions. For this purpose, the public policy shall be implemented in the right manner on the one hand, and efficient cooperation relations shall be established between the society and the state on the other. The experience Azerbaijan has gained in this sphere may be interesting also for other states. The present reality of our country is determined by the implementation of strong social policy along with the conduct of economic reforms.

Azerbaijan also possesses rich experience in the field of multiculturalism. In all stages of history the people of Azerbaijan demonstrated an example of tolerance to the world. Representatives of various religions and ethnicities have always been able to live in our country as friends and brothers. Today, multiculturalism is a lifestyle and state policy in Azerbaijan.

Education is one of the most important spheres of modern life and determines the intellectual, cultural and moral outlook of a society. Education, which plays a role of a transmitter of cultural values, is one of the milestones of any society. The fundamental objective of education is to bring up a person

with comprehensively developed intellect. Therefore, bringing the functioning of education systems up to the level of the modern development of society should be considered in the CoE member states as one of the key tasks.

Dear colleagues,

During the chairmanship in the Committee of Ministers Azerbaijan will also support the reform process within the Council of Europe. It will also pay serious attention to the strengthening of cooperation with other international organizations, particularly, the EU, OSCE and UN.

Azerbaijan will do its best to demonstrate maximum openness and intention towards reaching common goals and objectives. During the upcoming six months, a number of events will be organised in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Baku will host only 18 of them. At the same time, there will be gatherings organised in Strasbourg under the Azerbaijani chairmanship. We will rely on your strong support in overcoming the tasks and duties in front of us.

Dear colleagues,

The Republic of Azerbaijan demonstrates its loyalty to European values and ideals through taking real steps. We are firmly and resolutely moving forward through the way of democratic changes. We carry out thoroughly considered steps for building the state based on the rule of law and conducting necessary reforms in various spheres of life.

Azerbaijan has always approached the commitments and obligations of the country before the Council of Europe and honoured them in a consistent way. Our country has formed the legislative framework in line with European legal norms and standards.

Indeed, we have always felt permanent care and support by the CoE and its Parliamentary Assembly while implementing all these works. These institutions play the role of utmost importance in the development of democratic institutions and expansion of democratic processes.

Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE has attached particular importance to Armenian aggression, which is the most painful problem of Azerbaijan, occupation of Azerbaijani territories, and issues related to the heavy life of refugees and IDPs. In its relevant documents, the organization touched upon the well-known resolutions of the UN claiming release of the occupied Azerbaijani territories and the right of persons who have been expelled from their places of residence to return back to their homes.

Strengthening of the attempts made during recent times to change the geopolitical map of Europe and boost up of the cases of separatism which has been chosen as a tool for this purpose has proven how dangerous the prolongation of the settlement of these problems might be. The international legal order that has been formed in the course of many years and the European security system have been subjected to difficult tests. Today, the decisions about the fate of Europe are being made not in Brussels, but in the new member states. The majority of the problems these countries face are of systematic nature thus requiring systematic approach.

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the end, allow me on the behalf of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan to welcome you all once again and wish you successful and efficient work.

Thank you very much for your attention.