



## Promoting a Lasting Partnership Between Azerbaijan and America

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### Alliance Celebrates Azerbaijan Independence Day with Thought Leaders at American University for Panel Discussion Addressing Timely Energy and Regional Issues

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**(Washington, D.C ---October 18, 2012)** The Alliance chose Azerbaijan Independence Day to assemble institutional, governmental, business, diplomatic, and policy leaders at American University to discuss the important topic of *Azerbaijan: Strategic Implications of the Increased Natural Gas Supply to Europe*.

The panel featured **Dr. Svante Cornell**, Research Director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (CACI) who addressed the European Union (EU)'s dependence on imported energy, emphasizing Eastern European countries' dependence on Russian oil and gas. As a result, he noted, Azerbaijan is a very important energy importer for Europe's energy diversification strategy. Dr. Cornell tackled two main points where Azerbaijan plays an important role for Europe's energy stability – exporting Azeri gas to Europe and playing a role in EU's negotiations with Turkmenistan on Turkmenistan's gas exports to Europe through Azerbaijan.

The European Union perspective was presented by **Dr. Christian Burgsmueller**, who serves as Head of the Transport, Energy, Environment and Nuclear Affairs Section of the Delegation of the EU to the U.S. He explained the EU's strategy towards energy independence, which parallels Europe's increasing energy demand. He also discussed several factors of EU's energy strategy, which include competitiveness, security of supply, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and diversification where Azerbaijan plays an important role.

**Greg Saunders**, Senior Director, Global Government and International Affairs at BP, discussed the company's activities in Azerbaijan and shared his views on their process for evaluating, negotiating, engineering and building pipelines from Azerbaijan to Europe. Mr. Saunders also discussed the *Shah Deniz* field that is operated by BP and the volume of gas imported to Europe from Russia noting the potential of gas importation from Caspian Sea countries and the important role it would play in Europe's energy diversification.



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The program was closed by **Dr. Nargiz Gurbanova**, Deputy Chief of Mission and Economic Counselor of the Azerbaijan Embassy, who discussed Azerbaijan's energy policy priorities and its cooperation with Europe for energy trade. She also addressed Azerbaijan's commitment to Europe's energy diversification strategy.

Opening the evening event was **Dr. Mamuka Tsereteli**, Director of the Center for Black Sea-Caspian Region at American University, who also moderated the panel. Following the panel discussion, there was a robust question and answer session. The event included a reception and exhibition displaying photos of Azerbaijan's energy history. It was scheduled on October 18, which since 1991 has been the national day of celebration of Azerbaijan's independence.

This program was hosted by the Azerbaijan America Alliance in collaboration with the Center for Black Sea -Caspian Studies and the School of International Service of American University. The Alliance offers these educational programs to contribute to important discourse on timely topics affecting Azerbaijan and the United States.

**The Azerbaijan America Alliance is a non-partisan, non-profit organization, with an educational mission to foster an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect between the people of Azerbaijan and America. Through academic discussion, cultural programming, and political discourse, the Alliance is dedicated to promoting a lasting partnership between Azerbaijan and America. For more information, please visit the organization's website at <http://azerbaijanamericaalliance.org>.**