

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

September 18, 2014

His Excellency
Dr. Ilham Aliyev
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Baku

Dear Mr. President:

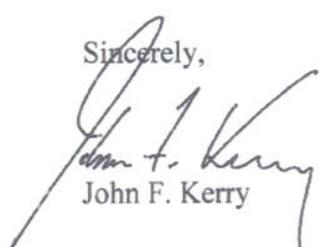
I send warmest wishes to the people of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the 20th anniversary of the "Contract of the Century" and the groundbreaking of the Southern Gas Corridor.

The Contract of the Century was an historic event representing the first major Western investment in the entire former Soviet Union. Over the past 20 years the United States has been a complete partner in Azerbaijan's efforts to develop its energy resources, contribute to European and world energy supplies, and become a strong and independent nation. Along with the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, Azerbaijan became a major supplier of oil to world markets by creating the first direct energy link between the Caspian and the Mediterranean seas. Azerbaijan will play an important role through the Southern Gas Corridor to provide additional energy supply routes to European markets, and strengthen the region's energy security.

Azerbaijan and the United States have done some great things together over the past two decades. The Contract of the Century reminds us what is possible when we move together towards the future. This is true across the board, from further energy development to building an east-west trade corridor, from counterterrorism cooperation to advancing democratic development to reclaim Azerbaijan's leadership role on human rights and fundamental freedoms demonstrated 96 years ago, when Azerbaijan became the first Muslim majority country committed to universal democratic values. The three pillars of our relationship – security, energy and economic development, and democracy and civil society – are all essential to the vision of a stronger, more stable, and more prosperous Azerbaijan.

The United States looks forward to working closely with you and your government on all of these goals. Once again, please accept my warmest congratulations on the anniversary of this important milestone.

Sincerely,



John F. Kerry