

## **Ambassador Morningstar's Q&A with Press after the American Chamber of Commerce Luncheon**

**September 28, 2012**

**Ambassador Morningstar:** This was an extraordinarily good luncheon. I think there were about 160 people at the luncheon. The people at the luncheon represented mostly businesses but also NGOs. I spoke, but also had a significant question and answer discussion period with companies and others, all of whom have an interest in Azerbaijan developing even further into a vibrant market oriented democracy, and looking to help the development of Azerbaijan in sectors that go beyond energy and into a lot of other areas as well.

I think the American Chamber of Commerce, which sponsored the luncheon, does a terrific job here in Baku. I'm looking forward to working with the American Chamber, working with its companies, and working with the government to help further develop the economy. I think Azerbaijan has made a tremendous amount of progress, and I think it has the opportunity to make a lot more progress.

I'll take one or two questions.

**Press:** [Through Interpreter]. Mr. Ambassador, we know that the U.S. has some planned initiatives on security in the Caspian Sea. What is the current status of this initiative?

**Ambassador Morningstar:** This is an area that we want to work closely with Azerbaijan on. And we are talking with them about various ways that we can help from a security standpoint and protect infrastructure on the Caspian. It's something that is a matter of ongoing discussions.

**Press:** [Through Interpreter]. Mr. Ambassador, both President Ilham Aliyev and Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov have made a statement that Armenian side doesn't want to make concessions regarding the solution of Nagorno-Karabakh problem. And the negotiations have reached an impasse. How would you characterize, as a representative of one of the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, the current status of the negotiations on the Nagorno-Karabakh?

**Ambassador Morningstar:** First of all, we have our own America Minsk Group negotiator and he handles the negotiations. All I can say about it is that I think it's important that the parties break whatever log jams there are and to make progress towards a peaceful settlement. I will work with our negotiators, our Minsk Group negotiators, and with the government here to hopefully make progress with respect to the negotiation. We can never give up because peace is the only answer with respect to Nagorno-Karabakh.

**Press:** You mentioned the Open Skies Agreement between the U.S. and Azerbaijan. Have negotiations already started? If not, how long will the process take?

**Ambassador Morningstar:** I can't tell you how long it will take. They're at preliminary stages. I know that we want to work with Azerbaijan so that there can be flights ultimately to the United States and possibly flights here from the United States. We will work on that over the next year or two and hopefully we will reach agreement.

**Press:** But you start the negotiation, right?

**Ambassador Morningstar:** Yeah. Real negotiations have to begin.

We have our economics counselor here. Is that the correct answer?

**Economic Counselor:** We have not begun negotiations yet. We need to.

**Ambassador Morningstar:** Thank you very much.

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