



# THE SOUTH CAUCASUS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Annual Symposium of International Relations Scholars

Baku, Azerbaijan, 22-23 October 2010

## Concept Paper



### 1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The growing role of the South Caucasus in contemporary world politics is indisputable. In the context of emerging threats, accelerated processes towards globalization and the revolution in information and communication technology, the South Caucasus, lying at the crossroads of a geopolitically strategic zone and considered to be the most potentially explosive region in the world, becomes all the more important. Despite their recent independence, the countries of this region have attracted the attention of dominant powers and have been visited by many prominent decision-makers over the last 15 years. Three of the world's four frozen conflicts are based in the region; this brings numerous decision-makers, conflict specialists and experts on quests seeking "permanent peace". Bordering the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey and Russia – the most important players in the region – the South Caucasus promises to be a real battleground for diplomats.

In light of the fluidity of the situation here, the importance of building a knowledge-based society and a pool of regional experts becomes more evident. With this and many other objectives in mind, Azerbaijan intends to hold an international conference, in Baku, in late October 2010, in order to develop a systematic and sustainable platform of communication, involving experts on the region from around the world. It is planned to make this an annual conference which will provide a basis for the continuous development of new levels of discussion.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

General: By enhancing regional cooperation and networking, the Symposium aims to contribute to the growing community of scholars in Azerbaijan and the region who are interested in regional politics, economics and international relationships.

The specific objectives are to:

- Promote active participation by scholars of international relations in the political and public life of the region.
- Reaffirm and reinforce the role of young students of international relations in academic discourse, and to direct their activities towards more efficient and Western-oriented approaches to research and publication.
- Assess the achievements of regionally-known international scholars, while ensuring the emergence of a new generation of independent experts in the fields of international relations, politics and public sciences.
- Extend processes of regional cooperation on international relations, opening them up to new subjects and new participants.
- Support dialogue within the South Caucasus in order to implement more vigorous debate between scholars and foreign experts directly or indirectly engaged in the region.

## **3. ANTICIPATED RESULTS & FOLLOW-UP**

The Symposium, which will be held annually, is not intended to be an end in itself, but rather to serve as a platform for future forms of cooperation, both operational and academic.

It is planned to publish a book including papers delivered at the Symposium by participant-scholars. Participants of the Symposium will also get a chance to continue their discussions on an online forum, created by the organizers of the conference.

The Executive Board is open to further contributions by other potential partners willing to co-organize the Symposium.

#### **4. FORMAT**

The Symposium will take place over two days, with an opening session, five different panel sessions and a closing session.

The working language of the Symposium is English.

The opening session of the Symposium will include speeches by high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. These will be followed by the presentation of the panel co-chairs and by their formal approval. The afternoon will be devoted to panel sessions attended by experts and scholars specifically assigned to each panel.

All expenses (accommodation, food and transportation) of selected scholars will be covered by the Symposium.

#### **5. PANEL THEMES**

- A. Global Challenges in a Regional Context
- B. Regional Security Challenges – Conflicts and post-conflict developments
- C. Emerging Economic trends in the South Caucasus – the future of IT and energy in the region
- D. Religion and Identity in the South Caucasus
- E. Foreign Policy in the South Caucasus: Visions, Strategies and Choices

#### **6. SYMPOSIUM ORGANIZERS**

The Symposium is jointly promoted and organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Centre for Strategic Studies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan University of Languages, Qafqaz University, Khazar University, London Information Network on Conflicts and State-building (LINKS), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Scientific Research Centre of the IRELI Public Union, and others.

#### **7. PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS**

An abstract (not more than 1000 words) and a one-page CV in Ms. Word format should be sent to the E-mail address - info@asirs.org - by 1 September 2010. Acceptance notification will be sent to authors on 15 September 2010, following approval by a Scientific Board comprised of well-known scholars. The complete papers of accepted abstracts should be submitted before 10 October 2010.