



Statement by President von der Leyen with Azerbaijani President Aliyev

Baku, 18 July 2022

Thank you very much Mr President for the warm welcome here in Baku. And thank you for stepping up and for supporting the European Union. Because already before Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine, the Russian gas supplies to Europe were no more reliable. The European Union has therefore decided to diversify away from Russia and to turn towards more reliable, trustworthy partners. And I am glad to count Azerbaijan among them. You are indeed a crucial energy partner for us and you have always been reliable. You were a crucial partner not only for our security of supply, but also in our efforts to become climate neutral. The Memorandum of Understanding that we have just signed makes our energy partnership even stronger.

I want to emphasise three points from our Memorandum of Understanding. The first is that we will double the supply of gas from Azerbaijan to the European Union. Indeed, with this MoU, we commit to the expansion of the Southern Gas Corridor. This is already a very important supply route for the European Union, delivering currently more than 8 billion cubic metres of gas per year. And we will expand its capacity to 20 billion cubic metres in a few years. From next year on, we should already reach 12 billion cubic metres. This will help compensate for cuts in supplies of Russian gas and contribute significantly to Europe's security of supply.

The second point that is very prominent in the MoU is the topic of the renewables. Azerbaijan has a tremendous potential in renewable energy – you just described it, Mr President –, and in particular in offshore wind and green hydrogen. We discussed it extensively in our bilateral meeting. Today, with our MoU, we are laying the ground for solid cooperation in that area. So gradually, Azerbaijan will evolve from being a fossil fuel supplier to becoming a very reliable and prominent renewable energy partner to the European Union.

Finally, our cooperation on gas has to be consistent with our responsibilities on climate. This includes, for example, the emissions of methane. Our MoU sets out commitments to reduce methane emissions throughout the entire gas supply chain. And, as we have discussed, Mr President, I strongly encourage Azerbaijan to join the Global Methane Pledge, which is now supported by 119 countries. Azerbaijan has made enormous progress and has a lot to deliver.

Beyond energy, President Aliyev and I discussed the full range of our relation and cooperation. The EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council will meet tomorrow in Brussels and discuss how to take forward our bilateral cooperation. We are working right now on a new bilateral agreement that we hope to conclude soon. The aim is to further expand the strong economic partnership we do have. Indeed, the European Union is: the first commercial partner of Azerbaijan; its first export destination; and one of its most important sources of investments. And we want to expand this. We are investing EUR 60 million of EU funds in Azerbaijan until 2024. And the Economic and Investment Plan has the potential to mobilise up to EUR 2 billion in additional investments. It is already at work, supporting round about 25,000 Azeri small and medium companies, and making the Port of Baku a sustainable transport hub.

This is for us very important, because this leads indeed to the topic of connectivity that you have mentioned. We also discussed that. In particular, how to deepen our ties to bring our people and societies closer together. This is the mission of our Global Gateway strategy. And this is also the essence of our Eastern Partnership. The European Union wants to work with Azerbaijan to build connections with Central Asia and beyond. So we follow with great interest the discussions and the ideas about trans-Caspian connections. We will deepen these discussions. Finally, we want to finalise the Common Aviation Area Agreement. Because this would greatly boost opportunities for business, trade and for tourism.

To reach Azerbaijan's full potential, it is important to create the right conditions for investor confidence. This includes a greater involvement of civil society, and a free and independent media. The European Union is committed to a secure, stable and prosperous South Caucasus. We are the leading donor in demining in the country, for example. We have also discussed this very important topic. We have now just announced a new EUR-4.25-million package for this purpose. But we are

also willing to offer machinery and skills in this very important field. All in all, the European Union is firmly attached to your region, Mr President. We value our partnership. And this partnership will consistently grow and deepen over time.

Thank you very much again for hosting us here. And thank you very much for the joint signing of the MoU.

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