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## PRIORITIES OF AZERBAIJANI CHAIRMANSHIP IN 2020

Chairmanship in Office of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development – GUAM in the year of 2020 will focus on the matters of economic cooperation between the Member States. Chairmanship will also pay importance to political, humanitarian, scientific, inter-parliamentary and consular issues within the organization. Preference will be given to the goal-oriented projects and initiatives.

### *Priorities of the Chairmanship*

The Chairmanship has defined the sphere of Transport Connectivity as its priority. The priority also includes related sub-sectors being Trade and Customs.

#### *Transport connectivity*

The Chairmanship considers essential to make GUAM an important and integral part of the forming transport scene in Eurasia. Considering the significance to harness the transport and transit potential of the GUAM region for strengthening and diversifying the economic cooperation between the GUAM Member States, it is crucial to consolidate the efforts to realize the GUAM Transport Corridor project. Closer collaboration with the counterpart countries, international organizations and other related parties for developing alternative routes connecting Europe and Asia is also matter of high importance. In this context the Chairmanship plans to take the concrete actions for the implementation of the GUAM Transport Corridor project.

As instructed by the GUAM Heads of Governments at their Summit in 2018, the Chairmanship plans to facilitate the completion and approval of the feasibility study of the GUAM Transport Corridor. In this regard, stronger efforts by the Member States at the discussions with the European Commission are necessary. The Chairmanship will coordinate these discussions in Brussels.

Completion and adoption of the feasibility study of the GUAM Transport Corridor will enable the Member States to identify concrete fields for developing regional projects and their joint implementation together with the international partners and private sector. Contacts with logistical companies will also be established if required.

In this regard, the Azerbaijani side during its Chairmanship will host the meetings of the GUAM Ministers of Transport and Working Group on Transport in Baku with particular attention to the promotion of the GUAM Transport Corridor and attraction of the new partners.

Considering the close link between the transport corridors with the cross-border trade and information flow, the use of digital technologies in transport and logistics will help to improve transport efficiency and accelerate the provision of public and other services in this field. In this regard digitalization of the GUAM Transport Corridor is important.

The Chairmanship will continue to facilitate the partner countries, as well as the European Union, China and other stakeholders to support the implementation of the GUAM Transport Corridor project. To this end, it intends to encourage joint participation in the important international transport and logistics forums.

### ***Trade stimulation***

The economic-trade potential existing in GUAM region is underused and this fact makes essential the transformation of GUAM into an economic-trade organization in Eurasia region. In this regard, as stated at the GUAM Summits, the implementation of the Agreement on Establishment of the Free Trade Area between GUAM Member States is very important. For this reason, the Chairmanship will encourage the efforts of the Member States to agree upon and sign the “Protocol on rules of definition of country of origin of commodities”, which shall constitute an inalienable part of this Agreement. The Chairmanship intends to raise the excellence of this document by improving its quality.

Chairmanship will also promote the efficient function of the GUAM Working Group on Economy and Trade and Working Body for the realization of the Agreement on Free Trade Area.

### ***Cooperation in Customs sphere***

Since the development of transport corridors can facilitate the trade, discussion of the trade promotion issues by customs services plays an important role. In this regard, the Chairmanship proposes to strengthen effective and result-oriented interaction between the customs services of GUAM Member States.

To achieve this goal, the Chairmanship also will be facilitating a meeting of customs officers and a regional forum with the World Customs Organization in order to obtain and apply advanced digital technologies and innovative methods for simplifying and improving the quality and safety of the customs procedures within GUAM.

### ***Other important fields of cooperation***

Meanwhile, areas listed below are also determined as important directions and the Chairmanship will work to develop the agenda to strengthen the cooperation on them:

- Energy;
- Small and medium enterprises;
- Tourism;
- Political contacts;
- Parliamentary dimension;
- Emergency situations;
- Youth and education.

### ***Energy***

As one of the leading energy countries in the region, Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the development of energy cooperation among the GUAM Member States. Joint initiatives and projects in this area can increase the importance of the region in the formation of Europe’s energy security, thus will increase the geostrategic importance of the region and GUAM.

The Chairmanship intends to support the development of cooperation, focusing on new energy initiatives among the GUAM Member States. This work will also be carried out in capacity of the country-coordinator of the GUAM Working Group on Energy. In this regard, depending on the outcomes of the meeting of the Working Group, the Chairmanship will encourage to hold the meeting of the GUAM Ministers of Energy within the 27<sup>th</sup> International Caspian Oil and Gas Exhibition and Conference to be held in Baku on June 2-4, 2020.

### ***Strengthening the cooperation in the field of small and medium enterprises***

The Chairmanship will continue to promote cooperation among business communities of GUAM Member States in connection with the implementation of measures to strengthen economic and trade cooperation. In this context, the active participation of the private sector and the establishment of public-private partnerships are important in the implementation key transport and trade initiatives of GUAM.

In this regard, the Chairmanship will support the efforts of the business communities and institutions representing their interests, as well as the GUAM Secretariat within the interests of the Member States.

For this purpose, it is important to revise the working mechanism of the Chamber of Commerce or Business Council. Inactive structures or subagencies should be abolished, and instead should be created a platform that will incorporate flexible and practical elements and promote daily collaboration. The relevant mechanism or structure should be able to bring together the representatives of the private sectors of all Member States and carry out an active work for their interests.

Supporting the initiative of GUAM Member States to hold regular meetings of Heads of States and Governments, the Chairmanship will explore the possibilities of holding such a meeting in Azerbaijan and a business forum dedicated to this.

### ***Tourism***

Tourism, as one of the dynamically developing sectors of the GUAM Member States’ economies, has great potential for regional and international cooperation with the aim of diversifying national economies, developing small and medium enterprises, and increasing the GUAM’s popularity as a tourist destination. Chairmanship will try to strengthen cooperation among the countries to stimulate tourism, simplify procedures and increase the touristic attractiveness of the region. Chairmanship will stimulate the development of the international cooperation in order to learn and apply advanced experience and modern technologies and to increase the quality and standards in tourism industry. To this end, the Chairmanship will facilitate the discussions on developing a joint travel product for GUAM Member States and initiate a consultation meeting with the participation of representatives of government agencies and organizations of the Member States. Discussion of the info-tours and press-tours according to the Azerbaijan-Georgia and Ukraine-Moldova scheme for representatives of Japan, China and other countries in order to expand visits to GUAM countries is also planned at the proposed meeting.

### ***Political Dimension***

The Chairmanship plans to take actions for strengthening the political dialogue by organizing high level meetings of Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Council of National Coordinators, GUAM Parliamentary Assembly, as well as coordinate the cooperation through the relevant diplomatic missions.

The Chairmanship will coordinate the efforts aimed at drafting and submitting the UN General Assembly resolution entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Democracy and Economic Cooperation – GUAM”. The Chairmanship will make efforts towards promoting the draft resolution on “Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development”.

The Chairmanship will also coordinate the efforts for increasing support of the Council of Europe, OSCE etc., to the issues of joint interest, particularly protection of the territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders and sovereignty.

### *Parliamentary dimension*

The Chairmanship will also promote the development of inter-parliamentary cooperation of the GUAM Member States within the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly, and will take actions for improving the effectiveness of this cooperation, especially the coordination and interaction of sectoral cooperation bodies and relevant parliamentary committees. The Chairmanship will also promote interaction of parliamentary delegations of GUAM Member States within the international organizations. In accordance with the existing practice, the Chairmanship plans to host the session of the GUAM Parliamentary Assembly and a committee meeting in Baku.

### *Emergency situations*

The chairmanship will support the development and deepening of cooperation between the emergency agencies. Given the existing contacts of the GUAM Member States on the fight against natural and man-made cataclysms, and the growing interest in cooperation in this area, the Chairmanship may consider hosting events in Azerbaijan.

Given the dynamics of law-enforcement cooperation in the fight against organized crime and terrorism, the Chairmanship will encourage cooperation aimed in improving efficiency in this area.

### *Cooperation in the areas of Youth and Education*

Taking into account the results of the first meeting of the diplomatic academies and institutes under the Foreign Ministries of GUAM in Baku in July 2019, the Chairmanship will encourage further widening and deepening the cooperation in this field.

The Chairmanship will support the implementation of all agreed initiatives and activities in the field of youth and education.

### *Adoption of the Documents*

The Chairmanship will:

- Contribute to the development of the partnership strategy through agreement and adoption of the Chairmanship Vision Paper;
- In line with the recommendation of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 08.10.2017, will speed up the joint development of the Strategic Communication;
- Take necessary actions for strengthening the dialogue in consular issues and finalizing the work on convention on mutual rendering of assistance in consular matters;
- In terms of the memorandums of understanding or other cooperation documents with international and regional organizations, support the development and expansion of international cooperation aimed at concrete results with both GUAM partners, international organizations and all stakeholders sharing the goals and principles of GUAM.

In addition to the key areas of cooperation mentioned above, the Chairmanship will encourage the implementation of existing initiatives in other areas of cooperation. In this context, the focus will be on the effectiveness of these initiatives and the achievement of specific outcomes.