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Call for Participation; CESD Annual International Conference

November, 21, 2012, Baku Azerbaijan

”Ensuring energy security in the future and NATO role in protection of critical energy infrastructure in the Caspian basin”

Organized by the Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD) with support of Embassy of Romania in Azerbaijan and NATO.

Confirmed participant countries; Azerbaijan, Romania, Lithuania, Belgium, Georgia, Turkey

Registration is open by November 15, 2012. Registration is free of charge and coffee/tea and lunch will be provided. For registration, please, send your CV to info@cesd.az. Working languages of the conference is English and Azerbaijani.

Scope of the Conference (Project Description)

The Caspian region currently holds one of the world’s largest oil and gas reserves. The proven hydrocarbon reserves of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan make them competitive alternatives to traditional energy supply centers. These hydrocarbon resources have changed the energy map of the region in general and, specifically, the role that Caspian littoral countries play in world energy security. In particular, Azerbaijan has become not only an energy producing country but also a critical location for energy transportation initiatives. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) oil and gas pipelines transport one million barrels of oil per day and 6.6 bcm of gas per year, respectively. The “Shahdeniz” gas field, whose reserves are estimated to be 1 trillion cubic meters, is one of the largest natural gas fields in the world. The newly discovered gas field (2010) brings Azerbaijan’s gas reserves to more than 2,5 trillion cubic meters. According to SOCAR representatives, after fully exploring these reserves Azerbaijan could become the fourth largest gas supplier for European countries after Russia, Norway, and North Africa countries.

The magnitude of Azerbaijan's oil and gas resources combined with its role as an energy transportation hub for the other Caspian countries increase Azerbaijan's geopolitical significance. This, in turn, presents Azerbaijan with some political and security challenges because its lack of direct access to the international markets forces it to rely on its neighboring countries for exports. Azerbaijan is situated in a very politically challenging region, caught between Russia and Iran while being in the proximity of Turkey and Europe. Azerbaijan's geographic position makes it a kind of "defensive shield" for the Caspian and South Caucasus countries. Therefore, the security threats that the country might face must be extensively considered and assessed.

The main risk is terrorism, which can be a major threat to energy supply and stability. Refineries, ships, and pipelines are all at risk of terrorist attack. Another challenge comes from Iran, the neighbor with nuclear ambitions. Iranian officials openly show their disagreement with Azerbaijan's pro-Western approach. The other key challenge is natural or man-made disasters, the consequences of which often cross borders and can destabilize the entire region. There are some other key energy security challenges, like vulnerability of energy supply networks, failed states, and regional conflicts that can only be addressed through concerted international cooperation.

Today's security environment demands NATO's involvement in fostering security in the region and the **workshop** will address the key elements of cooperation and the main areas where NATO could add value in the field of energy security.

EU countries have strongly lobbied for NATO's involvement in energy issues and initiatives that are sustained by Washington. The idea of transforming NATO into a military-energy bloc was first discussed at the NATO Summit in Riga, Latvia in 2006 where American senator Dick Lugar underscored that "energy could become the weapon of choice for those who possess it. It may seem to be a less lethal weapon than military force, but a natural gas shutdown to a European country in the middle of winter could cause death and economic loss on the scale of a military attack." (Kommersant, November 27, 2006)

The Workshop will provide a valuable opportunity to address NATO's role in energy security and to increase awareness that in a world of increasingly complex, interdependent security challenges, energy security is a global concern that necessitates effective international cooperation.

The workshop will consider NATO's role mainly in:

- fostering security in the region, studying the experiences of NATO member countries, and seeking ways to apply best practices at the national level;
- raising awareness among NATO Allies and partners of energy security issues and exchanging expertise and experience.
- monitoring issues connected to energy security and bringing together experts to share best practices on the protection of critical energy infrastructure and provide analysis on energy-related issues.

- assessing risks and threats to energy security and infrastructure, examining the economic consequences of energy security issues, and tracking relevant technological and environmental developments that affect energy security.
- protecting critical energy infrastructure, transit areas and lines, while cooperating with partners and other organizations involved with energy security.
- expanding the dialogue with other actors involved in energy security, such as the European Union and the International Energy Agency, as well as deepening partnerships with the academic community and the private sector.
- assisting Azerbaijan in developing its national civil emergency and disaster-management capabilities

The agenda of the meeting will focus specifically on:

- Regional Overview – Assessment of Threats and Risks to Energy Infrastructure Security; Energy Infrastructure Protection Challenges
- Improving Energy Infrastructure Security – Opportunities and Solutions
 - Improving border security
 - Improving maritime security and Caspian littoral countries' capabilities to reduce illegal activities in the Caspian Sea in cooperation with NATO countries
 - Enhancing the role of the Caspian Sea basin countries in growing the opportunities in energy security and in the critical infrastructure delivering energy resources
 - NATO's approach and tools in contributing to energy security
 - Exploring the political and economic situation of the region and its impact on energy supply
 - Addressing the main challenges, risks, and threats to energy security and ways to deal with them efficiently
 - Highlighting regional security as the key to a stable and secure energy supply for some EU countries and several NATO members
 - Providing a stable and reliable energy supply, diversification of routes
 - Assessing the vulnerabilities of critical energy infrastructure.

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