Co-operation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and NATO began on 4 May 1994, when our country joined the Partnership for Peace programme. Taking into consideration that participation within the PfP establishes extensive possibilities for political, economical, cultural, military and military-political co-operation with NATO members and partners, as well as for integration into the European structures, the Republic of Azerbaijan has been making active efforts to implement an Individual Partnership Programme with NATO. It has also been systematically bringing its military forces in line with NATO standards.

A State Commission on Co-operation between the Republic of Azerbaijan and NATO has been established. Its purpose is to coordinate the efforts by the appropriate ministries and agencies of the Republic of Azerbaijan to develop a common programme of co-operation within the PfP.

Liaison Officers of Azerbaijan Armed Forces in the Partnership Coordination Cell (PCC) as well as the Military Representative of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces at the Military Committee have been appointed.

To develop co-operation within the PfP as well as gain experience within NATO’s Multinational Staff structures, three officers of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces are currently serving as part of the Staff Partnership Elements in the International Military Staff (IMS) in Brussels, the Joint Transformation NATO Command, Atlantic in Norfolk, USA and the Regional NATO Command, South Europe in Naples, Italy. Another officer is serving the interim period at NATO’s Defence Planning and Forces Planning Agency in IMS.

The following structures have been established and are functioning:
- Division on Coordination of links to NATO responsible for the STANAGS
Delegates of Azerbaijan during Workshop discussions

One of the priorities of co-operation between the Azerbaijan Armed Forces and NATO is to participate in PARP and to implement the Interoperability Objectives (IOs) and Partnership Goals (PGs) undertaken by Azerbaijan.

As a result of measures conducted within the PARP, the units of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces which interact with NATO forces have been adapted to NATO standards and can be used in the NATO-led Peace Support Operations (PSOs). To interoperate with NATO forces in the Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs),
the Republic of Azerbaijan has allocated a peacekeeping company, a medical platoon, an engineer platoon, and a helicopter team (two helicopters) for this purpose.

At present, a PKG battalion is being established. Since September 1999, as a part of KFOR, the PKG unit of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces has been taking part in peacekeeping and support operations in Kosovo.

Since November 2002, as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the peacekeeping unit has been active in Afghanistan.

Since this August, as part of the Allied Coalition Forces, an Azerbaijani peacekeeping contingent has been active in Iraq.

One Azerbaijani officer has been appointed to complete his active service in the US Central Command (USCENTCOM) in Tampa, Florida. Another officer has been appointed to serve in the Allied Coalition Forces HQ in Iraq.

Azerbaijan considers its integration into the Euro-Atlantic Security Systems as one of the most significant priorities of its foreign policy.

An Individual Partnership Programme of the Republic of Azerbaijan with NATO is being developed and is approved on an annual basis. As one of NATO’s most active participants, Azerbaijan annually participates in more than 300 NATO exercises. Many NATO activities including exercises, workshops, courses, conferences and meetings of expert groups are held in Azerbaijan. The Cooperative Best Effort 2004 Multinational Exercise is expected to be held in Azerbaijan next September. It will be the first time such an exercise is to be conducted in platoon format with the engagement of the Mediterranean Dialogue states. The amount of weapons used and the strength of personnel engaged is expected to be two-to-three times more than during the same exercises of previous years.

In the past, close contacts have been forged with the NATO School (SHAPE NSS) in Oberammergau, Germany, the NATO Defence College in Rome, and PIP Training Centres in Turkey and Sweden. Officers of Azerbaijan’s Armed Forces take an active part in exercises conducted in such training facilities. Co-operation is being implemented with foreign language training centres in Turkey, Hungary, Germany, Great Britain and Slovenia. Over one hundred Azerbaijani soldiers have completed courses in English, French and German at these centres.

French and Italian language study courses were established at the Embassies of France and Italy for our soldiers in the Republic of Azerbaijan. English language study courses were established at the Military College of Azerbaijan’s Armed Forces with the assistance of the British Council.

Soldiers of Azerbaijan’s Armed Forces are currently training in the high military educational institutions of NATO members Turkey, the USA and Italy. Cadets are currently completing their train-
The Republic of Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the development of bilateral co-operation with NATO members in the defence area. Co-operation agreements have been signed with Lithuania and Bulgaria which in 2002 were invited to become members of NATO. Co-operation with Estonia is also expanding.

To speed up the implementation of the Partnership Goals and the development of forces to become interoperable with the Alliance forces, Turkey has been providing assistance to Azerbaijan. As a result of a waiver of the 907 Amendment, a number of co-operation programmes with the US have started such as the International Military Education and Training (IMET), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), Defence Assessment, Regional Air Initiative (RAI), US Co-operation with the Partners, Joint Security Caspian Training (JSCT), Modelling and Simulation, and Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR).

The fruitful bilateral relations of Azerbaijan’s Armed Forces are being developed successfully. This includes programmes of bilateral co-operation with Turkey, the USA, Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Pakistan, China and a number of other states. Each year, within the ‘Azerbaijan-Turkey-Georgia’ format, exercises are conducted in each of these countries to secure oil pipelines and exchange experiences in such areas as military building, military education, mobilization of resources, civil-military co-operation (CIMIC), air movement management. The three countries also exchange expert groups. Also, members of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces undergo training in military-educational institutions of Pakistan and China. Representatives of the Azerbaijan Armed Forces regularly participate in different military industry exhibitions organized in the Turkey, Pakistan, Romania, and United Arab Emirates.

Co-operation in the GUUAM is very important. It aims to consolidate sovereignty, political independence and positions of Azerbaijan and Georgia on the international level as well as to further the development of these countries. The GUUAM association is a natural organisation of states which share common problems in such areas as policy, commercial relations, border and customs issues, dealing with emergency situations etc.

Today, as an equal member of the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and an associated member of NATO’s Parliament Assembly, Azerbaijan supports co-operation based on bilateral and multilateral grounds with all states, including those in the South Caucasus.

At present, however, regional co-operation in the format of the three states of the South Caucasus modelled on a similar co-operation among the three Baltic countries is not being developed, because one of those states, namely Armenia, has committed an act of aggression against
another state and occupied 20 per cent of its territory, and has forcefully expelled more than million of its population from their permanent places of residence. These people have become refugees in their own country and most of them are living in the harshest conditions in tents. Armenia keeps its Armed Forces in the occupied territories and periodically violates the cease-fire regime. This war is continuing to this day. Because of a destructive position adopted by Armenia negotiations aimed to resolve this conflict are in deadlock. Nobody should expect Azerbaijan to accept the loss of its territories. Azerbaijan will never agree to cede an inch of its territory to aggression. We will be ready to cooperate with Armenia only after an unconditional implementation of four resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), withdrawal of occupation troops from the Azerbaijan territories, return of refugees to the places of their permanent residence, and restoration of territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

As for regional co-operation, Azerbaijan carries out its close co-operation in different areas with such countries as Turkey and Georgia. We hope that in the very near future, after the conflict is solved and stability is achieved throughout the region, Azerbaijan will develop comprehensive co-operation with all countries of the region.