

## **FAREWELL NOTE FROM AMBASSADOR SULEYMANOV**

**Dear friends and colleagues,**

As I complete my diplomatic tour as Azerbaijan's ambassador in Washington, I am humbled by the privilege of representing the Republic of Azerbaijan in the United States. Azerbaijan marks three decades since restoring independence this year, and, in 2022, we will celebrate the 30 years of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United States. Serving as ambassador for an entire decade at such historic time has been a unique honor for me, and I am deeply grateful to President Ilham Aliyev for granting me this opportunity.

Azerbaijan's partnership with America has always focused on strategic issues and has benefited both of our nations, as well as our partners in the region and beyond. I trust that we will continue building on the strong basis established over the years of practical, result-oriented bilateral cooperation. In 2020, the protracted, three-decade conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Armenia's illegal occupation of the Azerbaijani lands were brought to an end. As a former UNHCR officer, who saw the pain and tragedy of forced displacement as a result of Armenia's occupation, I am especially happy to see the displaced communities returning to their homes. This is a long process, but they are no longer refugees. Today, our region has a unique chance to develop a fully inclusive model of regional integration through reaching a final and comprehensive peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We should not miss this chance, and our American friends can contribute to the cause of peace and prosperity by encouraging Armenia to accept Azerbaijan's offer of a peace agreement and economic cooperation. This is in everyone's best interest.

Working and studying in the United States has been an enriching and transformational experience. Prior to becoming an ambassador, I was an exchange student in Toledo, Ohio, a mid-level diplomat at the Embassy in Washington, a student at the Fletcher School, and served as Azerbaijan's first Consul-General in Los Angeles. From my first day in Toledo, Ohio, when complete strangers opened their homes and hearts to inaugural and somewhat confused group of Muskie Fellows to my college years both at the University of Toledo and the Fletcher School to meeting colleagues as a young diplomat in Washington during crucial early post-Soviet years to being overwhelmed by the magnificence of California and the Rocky Mountains to receiving the Oklahoma National Guard's Thunderbird Medal, I have never ceased to marvel at the openness, generosity, and warmth of the people I meet throughout the United States.

Over these years, I have traveled to 45 states and have seen America's diversity and beauty first hand. In fact, for my wife Lala and I, the kindness and hospitality of the American people and the stunning splendor of America's nature make our experience so special and unforgettable. This connection also underscores the similarities between Azerbaijan and the United States – amazing people living on beautiful land.

I am most grateful to my friends and colleagues from whom I have and continue to learn every day. It is you, who have made our years in the United States so special and

enjoyable. Being a part of Washington's illustrious diplomatic corps along with many outstanding ambassadors has been an honor, and I greatly appreciate the work of my colleagues and counterparts in successive administrations and in Congress towards making our partnership stronger and our region more prosperous and peaceful. Of course, I want to thank members of the vibrant Azerbaijani-American community, who are very patriotic about the United States and, at the same time, maintain an unbreakable bond with Azerbaijan. Similarly, just like anywhere around the world, our Turkish brothers and sisters always treat us as a family and instantly make one feel at home. Of course, I owe a special thank you to our good friends among the Jewish community, who appreciate and celebrate the strong connection between the Azerbaijani and Jewish peoples.

I wish all the best to our newly appointed ambassador, my good friend and long-time colleague Khazar Ibrahim, as he begins his new assignment following very successful postings as representative at NATO and ambassador in Ankara. Also, I would like to thank the amazing, hard-working and dedicated team at our Embassy in Washington. I thanked my colleagues in person earlier and want to say it once again: it has been a privilege to work with you.

Both Lala and I will cherish the friendship and support we have always felt from our American friends and look forward to staying in touch as we move on to our next posting in London. Thank you!

**Sincerely,  
Elin Suleymanov**