Women in Business

- Contribution of Azerbaijani Women to Global Values and Well-being Over the Last 100 Years
- Women are Great at Multi-tasking, Which is an Asset for Any Leader
- Women Entrepreneurship in Focus
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Dear members,

Welcome to 29th edition of IMPACT Azerbaijan magazine, devoted to “Women in Business”. This is our first issue in 2018, a very special year for Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis all over the world. As a high estimate given to the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic a hundred years ago, President of Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Ilham Aliyev declared 2018 to be a year of ADR. Essentially, it was the first Democratic Republic in the region and the first Muslim-majority country ever to grant voting rights to women. Since that time, we as a nation have done a lot through founding schools for girls, engaging women in politics, acknowledging the gender equality mentally and culturally etc. Today, we reap the fruits of all those initiatives and endeavours. We are proud to say that women are strong not only in political and corporate life, but also widely engaged in entrepreneurship. Spirit, willingness and commitment towards self-actualization make us proud. This all makes a huge contribution to further promoting welfare and equality in the society.

AmCham has been effective in stimulation and empowerment of women in different contexts. We are proud that our Chamber maintains effective relations with the State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Issues, we cooperate with a newly established Azerbaijan Women Entrepreneurs Associations and support a lot of initiatives aimed to empower girls and women. Personally, I am proud to state that I was representing Azerbaijani women in W20 sessions under the G20. During my speech I informed the huge auditorium on us, Azerbaijani women, our achievements, interests and challenges we face, and received a lot of attention and questions from women all over the world.

Over the recent years, women participation in AmCham activities and within the Committees, have been quite active. Furthermore, the record of women participation within AmCham is quite impressive. As a result of energetic involvement of ladies within the Chamber, different only-for-women events are being organized, even in informal ambiance. Currently, there are around 35 female decision-makers among the member companies, 5 out of 8 AmCham Committees are female Chairpersons, 2 out of 8 AmCham Committees are Deputy Chairpersons, and 2 out of 10 AmCham Board Members are women. We strongly believe that there is a further potential for women to contribute more to the mission of AmCham, to the development of the country and the nation.

Happy 8th of March!

Best regards,
Natavan Mammadova

Dear friends, Dear ladies!

The topic of women is always hot, interesting, exciting to discuss – especially for men. Recently, a friend of mine (male) was telling to his mother: “Do you know why I quit from that job? Because there were no pretty women at the office and no willingness to work…” Thus, woman is not only a contributor for driving the business, but also a beauty at workspace.

This edition of IMPACT Azerbaijan is devoted to “Women in Business”, bearing in mind a special date, 8th of March. Herein, we are discussing contribution and role of women in businesses, at work place. In recent years, the topic of women has been quite hot. We have seen lots of actions to stimulate professional growth of women in professional ladder. The changes has been not only on legislation, but at the same time in real actions and engagement projects.

Recent statistics reveal an increasing trend of women in jumping to higher level positions. Furthermore, lots of women are launching private businesses – this happens not only in Baku, but also in regional parts of Azerbaijan. Both trends contribute for well-being of society, further development of businesses and gender equality.

This edition covers special interview from Mrs. Hijran Huseynova and Mrs. Leyla Novruzova, as well as interesting articles by Ashraf Hajiyev, Elnur Eyvazov, Rena Tahirova, Zarangiz Huseynova, Ayten Eynalova, Ruhiiya Isayeva and Rana Mammadova. Even more, the magazine could not be printed without financial contribution of BP, Azerfon, Turkish Airlines, Ekvita and The Science of Beauty.

Enjoy reading,
Aykhan Nasibli
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Contribution of Azerbaijani Women to Global Values and Well-being Over the Last 100 Years

Mrs. Mehriban Aliyev, born to a family of intelligentsia, is a graduate of First Moscow State Medical Institute with honors diploma. Starting her professional career by the end of 1980’s in medical field, Mrs. Aliyeva has been promoting Azerbaijani culture and heritage globally in different capacities, as well as contribute for development of sports and increase well-being of people on the grassroots level. During mid 1990’s, Mrs. Mehriban Aliyev initiated different platforms and organizations for disseminating voice of Azerbaijan globally. She established Azerbaijan Culture Foundation, as well as founded “Azerbaijan-Irs” magazine – published in three languages (Azerbaijani, English and Russian).

Early of this century, Mrs. Mehriban Aliyev was elected the President of the Gymnastics Federation of Azerbaijan. At the same time, from 2004, Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva was elected a member to the Executive Committee of the National Olympic Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the 4th General Assembly of the Organization. Her excellent organizational skills and growing prestige in the world played a decisive role in making a decision by the International Gymnastics Federation to hold the “A” category phase of the world cup competitions on rhythmic gymnastics (2003), the World Cup (2004), 27th World Championship (2005), and 23rd (2007), 25th (2009) and 30th (2014) European championships in Azerbaijan.

During this period, Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva has been leading the Heydar Aliyev Foundation (since 2004). The Foundation is aimed to study the rich legacy of Heydar Aliyev, the national leader of Azerbaijan, as well as deliver his national statehood ideas to new generations.

Even more, due to her hard efforts in protection and development of Azerbaijan’s verbal folk literature and music heritage, Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva was awarded the title of Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO in 2004.


By a decree of the President Ilham Aliyev in 2015, Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva was conferred on the Heydar Aliyev Order for her activity associated with the development of culture, education and healthcare in country, broad promotion of Azerbaijani people’s cultural heritage on an international scale, and great services to the organization of the 1st European Games.

Mrs. Mehriban Aliyeva is a recipient of different honors from various countries, international organizations, Honorary degrees from leading Universities of the World, as well as National honors and medals. According to the results of the survey conducted by the Arab Cultural Heritage Centre of France and “Nefertiti Media Productions” Company of Egypt from 8 March 2013 to 10 January 2014, Mehriban Aliyeva was honored with the title of the “Most Influential Woman” of 2014.
Izzat Orujova was a recognized expert in the field of lubricants technology, their compounding contents and applications. Her research was centered around the issue that is still very topical today. She was significant input to the development of new technologies for oil lubricants' production, enhanced selective refinement and paraffin processing (waxing). In 1970 Izzat Orujova was awarded the State Prize of Azerbaijan for her scientific research. Share was also decorated by a number of orders and medals and elected to the local legislature four times.

Ziver Mammadova

Ziver Mammadova was the first sculpture lady not only in Azerbaijan, but in the whole orient. Graduate of the Higher Drawing School of Baku, she had been working at the studios of the renown sculptors of the day like S.D. Erzyna and P.V.Sabsay. In the years to come she became a recognized artist for portrait sculptures and an author of quite a versatile gallery of works.

She was born to a family of intellectuals. In her recollections she mentioned the European lifestyle and attire of her father, also known for his very advanced ideas. “One of his best features was the ability to see and appreciate the beautiful”, she wrote. Together with her smaller sister, Zivar attended at St.Nina school. Back at that time she used to spend her leisure time either drawing or making small clay figures. Her father was her only hope for support. She managed to persuade him and got his blessing to study sculpture. So, she grabbed all her works and off she was!

The earliest serious works by young Mammadova were created at the time when official communist education was trying to its best to educate women and support them to get rid of the traditional black veil. Her surviving portraits created in stone in 1930-40s, which include outstanding figures like Azim Azimzade, Huseyngulu Sarabsky, Mashadi Azizbayov, Sali Suleymanov, Garay Asadov, Huseynbala Aliyev, Basti Baghirova, Leyla Mammadbayova.

Gamar Almaszade

A 10-years-old girl was the first Azerbaijani to enroll in the ballet studio. By this time she had already been attending some ballet classes with a neighbor girl. Her mother Miriam was really scared with this. “if Hajiagha (Gamar’s father) gets to know about this, he will turn our lives into nightmare”, she said. So, she tried to keep this in secret from her husband and kinsfolk.

In 1929 14-years-old Gamar became a ballerina at the Azerbaijan Opera and Ballet Theatre. In 1932-33 she continued her studies at the choreographic studio of the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. The next place of her studies was Leningrad (St. Petersburg) where she travelled with her husband Arasiyab Badalbayli, a young and gifted composer.

In 1936, upon completion of their studies Gamar Almaszadeh and her husband returned to Baku to become the founders of the Azerbaijan National Songs and Dance Ensemble at the local Philharmonic Society a year later. Under the auspices of outstanding composer Uzeyir Hajibeyov, she made a trio to the countryside areas to upgrade herself in national dances and select young talents.

In 1940 Gamar Almaszadeh performed the primary role of Gulyanag in Afrasiyab Badalbayli’s “Maiden Tower”, the first national ballet in Azerbaijan and the whole Oriental world. This milestone event in Azerbaijan’s history was marked by an enthusiastic article by Uzeyir Hajibeyov.

The follow up of her career was dedicated to the academic where her success was no less impressive. Graduate of the Oil Technology Department from Azerbaijani Industrial Institute, Izzat Orujova made her way from lab assistant to the head of laboratory at the Oil Processing Research Institute. Her career development included positions of the Chief of Laboratory at the Institutes of Petrochemical Processes and Compounding Chemistry of the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan.

Izzat Orujova was the first Azerbaijani movie actress. Her role in promoting local women in social spheres and art was incredible. Her student decision to act in a movie required a great deal of courage indeed.

Back in the years of her youth Izzat Orujova was maintaining close links with Azerbajantilm studio performing leading roles in J.Jabbarly’s Sevil and Almaz movies (1929 & 1936, respectively). Meanwhile, the follow up of her career was dedicated to the academic where her success was no less impressive.

In 1940 Gamar Almaszadeh performed the primary role of Gulyanag in Afrasiyab Badalbayli’s “Maiden Tower”, the first national ballet in Azerbaijan and the whole Oriental world. This milestone event in Azerbaijan’s history was marked by an enthusiastic article by Uzeyir Hajibeyov.

Having completed her dancing career at the age of 36, she became no less successful ballet-master in the years to come and became the principal of the Choreographic School in Baku. The role of Gamar Almaszadeh, the first Azerbaijani ballerina, as well as her contribution to the foundation of the national ballet are exceptional. Her numerous awards and enormous adoration of the audience are a clear indication of this.
Zuleykha Seyidmammadova

After graduation from the Azerbaijan Industrial Institute in 1926, Zuleykhan was admitted to the Zhurovsky Aviation Academy in Moscow to become one of the first Azerbaijani women pilots. Completing the studies in 1941 coincided with the Soviet Union’s involvement to World War 2. That was the time when the first women air squadron was formed. With more than 500 operational combat flights she became a deputy commander of the fighter squadron.

Released from the air forces upon completion of the war in 1945 Z. Seyidmammadova continued her career as a civil servant, komsomol and communist party activist. Her career accomplishments include positions of the Minister for Social Welfare in 1952-1975 and the Deputy Chief of the Board of the Azerbaijan Association for Friendship and Cultural Links with Foreign States since 1975. She was decorated by a number of civilian and military awards. The life proved that plane operating as well as combating can be a woman’s job, which requires a strong will and the dedication.

Zuleykha Seyidmammadova had always been actively involved in the country’s public life

Shovkat Salimova

Shovkat Salimova was the first Azerbaijani woman to become a ship captain. It happened so that a girl born to a family of oil workers attended the Marine School in Baku and succeeded in completion of the navigation courses therein to make a breathtaking career of a seaman in the years to come. While a teenager she won the All-Union Aircraft Modeling Contest in 1934. Upon completion of her studies at Baku Marine School she was sent to Odessa Port Authority in 1940. Soon when she became a captain and during the Second World War the crew headed by Shovkat Salimova was actively involved in fuel supplies of the Soviet troops by the Caspian Sea during the Caucasus and Stalingrad Battles. Notwithstanding the raids by German Air Forces the vessel operated by Shovkat Salimova was shipping oil and food from Baku to Stalingrad and delivering wounded soldiers to Baku and Krasnovodsk hospitals on the way back. She was decorated by a number of wartime awards for her courage including the Red Star Order, the Order for the Battle in the Caucasus, the Order for the Victory over the Nazi Germany, etc. After the Second World War she had been navigating ships in the Mediterranean, The Marmora, the Aegean and the Red Seas, as well as in the Pacific Ocean for 3 years.

The following positions of Shovkat Salimova included instructor of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan in 1952-1954, assistant professor at the Political Economist Chair, dean and pro-rector of Azerbaijan Oil and Chemistry Institute in 1954-1974. Master in Economics since 1967 she was as associate professor since 1970. Honored economist of Azerbaijan as of 1971 and the corresponded member of the International Energy Information Academy. Since 1974 she was heading the chair of the Social Sciences Chair at the State Conservatory of Azerbaijan. Her efforts in the field of education were also remunerated by numerous awards.

Aziza Jafarzade

A famous writer, Aziza Jafarzade, was the author of more than 40 works, a PhD in philology, professor, tireless researcher and an outstanding teacher. Apart from her novels, short stories, essays, researches, recollections and translations, she was an impassioned collector of works by other writers, poets and ashugs (folk song performer), dominated women. With this she left a really invaluable legacy for the Azerbaijani readers and national literature.

Historical novel is believed to be the favorite genre of Aziza Jafarzade. Her novels describe lives of historical persons, like Khurshudbanu Natavan, the daughter of Ibrahim Khan, rules of Karabakh. Another work “Get Back to the Homeland”, reveals the story of a poet Nishat Shirvani in the context of Azerbaijan’s takeover by Russia in the 18th century; “Recall Me” is a narrative of life and legacy of Abbas Sahhat, another famous poet; “Baku 1501” is a story of Shah Ismayil Khatai and his Baku campaign, whereas “Jelaliyye” is a narrative of Nakhchivan’s defense by the country’s ruling queen back in the 12th century, and many others.

Meanwhile, her scientific studies, particularly in the field of other women writers’ legacy, made a significant input to the history of the national literature.

Public activities constitute another remarkable feature of Aziza Jafarzade. The Chairman of the Republican Women’s Council in 1981-1989, A.Jafarzade was among the most ardent advocated of women’s and children’s rights. Her TV and radio shows are nowadays cherished among the most precious pieces of the national media legacy.
In recent years, lots of works have been conducted by the government, including your Committee for stimulating women to entrepreneurship. Could you, please, elaborate a few of them?

Government understands that one of the components of women's active participation in political and public life is their economic independence. It facilitates poverty reduction, ensures advance in women's economic and social performance and in many cases eliminates gender based discrimination in society. H.E. President Mr. Ilham Aliyev pays significant attention to the creation of favorable conditions for the development of private enterprise. The loans provided by the state, the work carried out by the National Fund on Assistance for Entrepreneurship and ABAD centers on Support for Family Business, give an extensive support to the development of women businesses, especially in rural areas. Special competitions are being launched among women graduates from the “Start and Improve Business” Program and the best micro project proposals are being provided by in-kind contribution to start businesses.

In the framework of the projects on “Enabling civil society to play greater role in advancing gender equality and women’s rights” we conduct the assessment of employment opportunities for women in the local labor market. We held meetings with the private sector and banks to sensitize them to gender specific needs and initiate dialogue between the businesses and civil society activists to promote women's rights.

Regional Women’s Resource Centers focusing on economic and social empowerment of rural women are opened to strengthen government efforts in addressing the needs and concerns of rural women in the area of economic and social participation. It also supports network building among economically active women residing in rural and sub-urban settlements. Jointly with local NGOs, we conduct Gender Assessment to analyze barriers to economic and social participation of women and girls both rural and urban areas.

As a result of your work, do you see an immediate positive change or a trend?

After implementation of a series of governmental programs, we can see an increase in women's activeness in different spheres. Such major events as National Congress of Azerbaijani Women, conferences on women leadership have been very important in demonstrating the enormous potential of women. Women take part actively in civil-society building by asserting their presence in both political and public organizations. It should be noted that more than 200 non-governmental organizations are women NGOs dealing with different aspects of women issues. 49% of members of the Leading New Azerbaijan Party are women. There are special Women Councils of the political parties which positively influence on enhancement of the role of women in the political life of the country.
What is the current statistics?
As a result of adopted measures, the decrease of the poverty rate among women from 49% to 5.9% has been achieved in the country. Today 6% of working women are involved in private sector and 31% of them in public. In 2017 share of women entrepreneurs in small and medium business reached 28%, while earlier their share was only 4 percent. Behind of all these listed numbers and figures are people. We try to cover specially women who lost their husbands during the conflict, mothers of many children, women who left unclaimed due to the transformation processes in society. These projects give women a hope and possibilities to subsist and stimulate them to be more active in the society.

What is the role that women play in the modern Azerbaijani society today?
Today, women use all opportunities provided by the state, easily obtain education, raise their professional level, actively participate in social-political processes, are widely represented in such areas as politics, entrepreneurship, work in the field of healthcare, sports, army, national security and law-enforcement bodies, technology and oil sector. Women are more and more involved in the decision making process. The number of women in the parliament has increased from 11% (13 deputies) in the 2005 elections to 16% in the last elections (20 women out of 125 deputies) and the representation of women at municipal level has increased from 4% (2004 elections) to 35% in the elections of 2014. The number of woman deputy head of executive powers increased from 35 to 79 and one woman was appointed to the position of head of executive power in the recent years.

Do we have an opportunity to stimulate young females, based on our rich history and traditions?
Indeed. It is worth to mention our famous diplomat, Sara Khatun, who was provided with all opportunities to administer the state policy and held diplomatic negotiations as far back as in the fifteenth century. This single fact denying false stereotypes about women’s status in the East proves that even in the Middle Ages women in Azerbaijan were involved in important public and social matters and stroke contemporaries with their activity. Among the main problems, dealt with by Azerbaijani enlighteners, an important place was given to women’s education, rights and freedoms. That’s why the first girls’ secular school in the Middle East was opened in Baku in 1901.

When contemporaries would ask the famous philanthropist Haji Zeynalbdin Taghiyev why he pays so much attention to the opening of a school for girls namely, he would respond that the educated girls would eventually become the educated mothers. And exactly an educated mother could teach, direct her children and encourage them for development. The most important legacy of this school was a whole generation of remarkable Azerbaijani women, who later become outstanding educators in their own rights. For example, in 1911 the first women magazine “Ishig” started to be published by Hadija Alibeyova.

Women equally represent the country with the men at international arena. 181 persons out of 271 diplomats working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are women. Women Deputies of the National Parliament are the chairpersons of the Equality and Non-Discrimination Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and coordinators of the PACE campaigns of fight with violence against children and women, etc.

Bearing in the mind that education is the key to the advancement of women, government tries to improve the access of women to quality higher education. The number of women studying at higher education institutions was 80 thousand in 2016-2017. So by the official statistics for the beginning of the 2016 there were 47 women and 53 men per 100 educated students in Azerbaijan. Every year The State Students’ Admission Commission conduct gender review of entrance examination. We strengthen our work in those regions where we see decrease of girls entering the universities. The role of women in the field of science is also significant. 46 % of PhDs and 51 % of all scientific workers are women. Among the women-scientists there are 20 academicians, more than 4000 candidates of sciences.
What are the lessons which the Committee is sharing globally?
Today our women are active players of constructive processes going on not only in the country, but also at international arena. Taking into consideration that Azerbaijan is the only country in the region which has the state body to deal with women issues, our experience is being studied by the neighboring states. We have signed memorandum on cooperation with Kazakhstan, Iran, State of Qatar, Kingdom of Morocco, Kingdom of Jordan, France, Latvia and Republic of Turkey and etc. Through the UN Agencies we accept delegations of women from Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan who comes to learn our experience in the field of women empowerment and gender equality. In framework of these treaties and partnership we send our experts to address gaps and challenges, on women's rights, early marriages and gender based violence. Azerbaijan hosted a number of international conferences on gender and children issues, for example the 7th Council of Azerbaijan hosted a number of international conferences on gender and children issues, for example the 7th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Equality between Women and Men, Fifth Ministerial Conference of Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Women’s Role in Development, Workshops on countering violent extremism through the education of girls in the framework of World Forums on Intercultural dialogue, Conferences of Women’s Wings of Asian Political Parties, etc.
Azerbaijan organizes women business forums and conferences. In the framework of the United Nations Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), where Azerbaijan has been chairing for 6 years, three “International Forums for women entrepreneurs” were held. Besides we hold exchange of experience on women’s economic empowerment with women’s organizations from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. This has given an additional opportunity to strengthen networks among women entrepreneurs at national, regional and global levels. We can state that a gender culture is closely bound with the development of our country. But there are still challenges for promotion and advancement of women. Analyzing that challenges and the reasons of some unbalanced involvement of women in certain areas, the most influential become the armed conflict, war-torn families and the psychological barriers of women themselves to take responsibility of high positions. Of course, it is very hard in such a short time to have a full picture of an Azerbaijani woman. But if you ask me – what makes the living of Azerbaijani women today? – I’ll answer that they want peace, wellbeing of their families, want to see their children healthy and happy. I will not make a mistake calling these values uniting all women of the world.

Can we talk about the role model for young females in Azerbaijan?
The role of the First Vice President of Azerbaijan becomes a positive example for young generation. Mrs.Mehriban Aliyeva exerts great efforts for strengthening of an idea of patronage and charity, preservation and dissemination of cultural legacy of Azerbaijan people all over the world. Alongside with her important mission, being a prominent public figure, she gains success in the field of assisting indigent people, especially women and children. She has taken orphan girls under her patronage and provides them with distinct living conditions, education and job. Her voice is often heard from the tribune of UNESCO and other international forums. And it is always a call to peace and protection of the weak. She is a symbol of a modern, tolerant as well as loyal to her family and Motherland Azerbaijan woman.

Our guest’s biography
Mrs. Hijran Huseynova is Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan since 2006. Mrs. Huseynova started her career as a teacher in a public secondary school #189. In 1978 she became the post graduate student and at the same time started to teach at the Oriental Studies and History departments of Baku State University. In 1985 she got her Ph.D in Political History and in 1992 she became an Associate Professor of the International Relations Department. She taught the following Courses: History of International Relations, The process of the modern integration, Lobbying and Diaspora in International Relations. In November 2001 Mrs. Hijran Huseynova was awarded the academic degree of Doctor of Political Science and the theme of her dissertation was “Azerbaijan in the System of European Integration”. It should be mentioned that she was the first woman in Azerbaijan who could get a degree of Doctor in the field of political sciences.

Mrs. Hijran Huseynova carries various awards: Diploma of the Ministry of Education for her valuable input in the sphere of education (2002), International Diploma of “Famous Scientists of XXI century” (2004), Ambassador of Peace Award (2006), the Supreme Attestation Commission attached to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan awarded her with the academic title of Professor at the department of Diplomacy and Modern Integration (2007), UNIFEM Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of significant contribution she made in promoting of gender equality and advancement of women (2007). Even more, Mrs. Hijran Huseynova was awarded with The National Order of the Legion of Honor by the President of French Republic (2010) and due to her active participation in social and political life of the Republic of Azerbaijan she was awarded with Order “Shohrat” (2015).
How do you see the current position of women in the business sector in Azerbaijan?

The number of women working in government jobs still outweighs the number of women in business. And that’s not surprising: after all, Azerbaijan has been an independent state for only 25 years and it’s hard to beat the 70 year-old Soviet legacy of 100% government jobs. There is however a positive trend in the recent years. Both the statistics and my own observations indicate that the number of enterprises owned and run by women has been increasing. And that’s a great indicator of healthy development of national economy. Women entrepreneurship contributes to the creation of new jobs, encourages economic and social empowerment of women, and also promotes the reduction of gender inequalities in society.

Are women more successful in the corporate sector or personal businesses?

It’s hard to give a definite answer. I know examples of highly successful female entrepreneurs as well as great corporate leaders. The corporate world possibly creates a more stable, predictable environment for growth. You know that if you deliver a certain project or sell a certain number of services, you will be rewarded and may be promoted. So this clarity may still draw more women. Private business is less clear and more risky. Consequently, fewer women venture into opening their own businesses.

I was amazed to attend the fair organized by the Ministry of Economy for females small entrepreneurs where big number of extremely talented women exhibited and sold their handworks, products. We need to do more of these events in the country to help them to develop their businesses.

I admire Rasmina Gurbanova (Resm), Amina Melikova (Azerbaijan Kelagayi, Butaly) for what they do, how they promote national culture through their personal business. And there are others.

What are the main obstacles for boosting the role of women in business?

I can think of two types of barriers to enter the business world: external and internal. Obviously, knowledge – both technical expertise and entrepreneurship skills – can be classified under external barriers. Women are still incomparably less advantaged than men in terms of access to the right information about business development opportunities. Responsibilities in the family can be another major barrier. Often women face a hard choice: to raise their children or to have a full-time job. It’s not easy for mothers to be ‘always there’ for their children and build career, business.

The other barrier – internal – is even more critical. This is about women’s confidence and desire to dive into the business world, be it corporate or private. So we need more encouragement from the society – parents, spouses, children, relatives and friends - to support women who want to set up their own enterprise or join a business workforce.

It is very important that spouses support each other in their developments. It would be very difficult to have good family and career without strong support – moral and practical – from your partner.

What skills are women expected to bring to corporate leadership roles?

The same as men do!

I will be honest with you: I have been in leadership roles for the past 15 years and I can tell you that professionalism, technical expertise, attention to detail and ability to see the big picture are expected of any leaders, irrespective of gender.
If you ask me what qualities women should pay more attention to, I will highlight confidence and decision making. By nature, most women are perfectionist and consider lots of variables before making a decision. This can be a problem in a fast-paced business world. Secondly, due to the very same perfectionism, women often judge themselves harder than men and tend to underestimate themselves. This often translates into a communication style, which is more tentative than resolute. However, women are great at multi-tasking, which is an asset for any leader. In my opinion, we can also combine logic (I see the men rolling their eyes when reading, but yes, we have logic!) and instinct, or intuition, better than men. The latter skill can be invaluable for any corporate boardroom.

**How can we increase entrepreneurship among women?**

I see two major gaps, which need to be filled to see more women in business.

First is knowledge. Women, especially outside the capital city, should get way more information about the ways to start their own business: from setting up a legal entity and opening a bank account to applying for a loan and developing a marketing campaign.

We in Baku tend to take access to information for granted. The more informed women are, the higher will be the number of our female entrepreneurs.

Second, they need to see success stories – real female entrepreneurs – who have gone this way. Aspiring women need to be inspired and empowered by other ladies and moved from thought to action. “Yes I can” must be the attitude, otherwise dreams will remain dreams.

Javadova, who is our leading geologist, or Nigar Jalilova, who is our engineering team leader and there are many others. Many women in the company are in business-critical positions that are often associated with men.

One of our employees, Ayan Aliyeva, who is leading Continuous Improvement in Operations is going to the UK to attend global webcast dedicated to International Women Day along with senior leaders across the world.

In my view, the key enablers for the growth of the above-mentioned women have been dedication to work, constant development, healthy ambition and self-confidence. They all have families and successfully combine personal and work life, remain feminine but get tough when it comes to decision making.

**Do you have success stories of developing women leaders in BP Azerbaijan?**

Of course!

First of all, BP is an equal opportunity employer. This means we don’t ever differentiate based on gender when we recruit people. The key indicator is the candidate’s ability to perform the job better than the remaining applicants. By end 2016, the number of national senior managers reached 314. Of these, twenty percent were female, mostly working in offshore and onshore operations, finance and human resources.

Among the success stories are such people as Narmina Nabiyeva, who leads BP AGT modernization and transformation team, Arzu Javadova, who is our leading geologist, or Nigar Jalilova, who is our engineering team leader and there are many others. Many women in the company are in business-critical positions that are often associated with men.

Our guest’s biography

Mrs. Leyla Novruzova is Vice President in Human Resources in BP Exploration (Caspian Sea) Ltd for AGT Region, since July, 2013. Mrs. Novruzova joined Amoco in Baku in 1993, and held positions of increasing responsibility within the HR, not only in Azerbaijan but also on successful assignments to BP Pakistan and BP Russia. In 2007 she was appointed International Mobility team leader for AGT and subsequently held HR Manager roles for Midstream organization (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey), as well as for the Offshore Operations and Wells organization. In 2009, on 15th anniversary of the ACG Production Sharing Agreement, she was one of the 15 Azerbaijani employees who was awarded with “Tereggi” (Progress) medal for contributions to Azerbaijan’s oil industry by the President of Azerbaijan. That same year, Leyla went on assignment to US as VP HR for Subsurface Function, based in Houston, then appointed as Reward Manager for Upstream’s Developments Division.
By established tradition, we, women, are remembered just once in a year, certainly in anticipation of March 8. Since only pleasant words and compliments are heard on holidays, people speak about women’s successes, achievements and beauty. In a word, a sheer of good things. Successful businesswomen are spoken with special pompousness. No doubt, they deserve appraisal and glorification. Most of these business women work in small companies, in the sphere of service and their annual income does not exceed four zeros, but they speak as super successful ones. And the subtext is usually “ladies, don’t be lazy and you will attain what the heroes of business front have achieved. Everything is possible! Anyway, what is positive about us, what can be surely brag about and what should we strive for?

Despite traditions and patriarchal society, an Azerbaijani woman was the first in the East to get the right to vote. And it was exactly 100 years ago, during the creation of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Just imagine - even our great-grandmothers and grandmothers could vote and openly express their point of view. This right was also enshrined in the Constitution of the ASSR and in modern times. Women were active during the formation of Azerbaijan’s independence in 1990s, led NGOs and were active members of political parties and national independence movements.

Today the number of women in the parliament, political parties and power structures is slowly growing and by adopting international conventions and resolutions, the government admits the problem of gender equality and undertakes to improve the situation. However, the issue of quotas still seems a far dream, but, in general, the adopted laws protecting women’s rights help to empower them.

There are many smart and professional women in business sector. Though business reacts more promptly to changes and new tendencies, the number of female managers is incomparable with the number of men. In informal conversations, a woman often admits that at a certain stage of career growth she faces obstacles that have nothing to do with her business qualities or abilities. The real matter is different: people cannot get rid of stereotypes in a belief that only a man can be a leader. Therefore, the overwhelming majority do not see and even do not try to accept a woman as a head of an enterprise, a firm, an organization, or a department. Another cause that becomes a barrier is the misperception about women’s emotionality and unpredictability. Ahh, they are so imbalanced, they cry at every trifle, they are very fidgety… and all these are said about us. But a contemporary woman is already completely different: she is strong-willed, purposeful, educated, but the main thing, she knows well how to do and act better, correctly, quickly and effectively.

She is easy to communicate and is a reliable partner. However, ignorant people continue to believe that if a man screams at meetings, he puts all the soul’s passion into words, while if a woman gives angry replica, she is unnecessarily emotional. When a man says what he thinks, he is straightforward, and when a woman says so, she is aggressive. The slightest error in the woman’s business will cause the people around her to refer to her sexual identity. Whereas men’s mistakes are only mistakes and nothing else. Making a miscalculation in the case, the woman will face indulgence at best and reproach that business does not tolerate mistakes, at worst. That’s why they prefer male candidates. It should be admitted that this attitude frightens off women, they do not dare to compete with men in such unequal conditions.

Although, we are sure that this is a matter of time. Many workers already admit that they have nothing against a female leader. There are also those who are ready to build a
A very topical issue, which is always very difficult to find an answer! The specialists of our aesthetic center, The Science of Beauty, approached uniquely to its solution. We conducted research among women of different ages and defined several basic principles. Women dream not only of a wedding dress and rosy-cheeked babies, as it might seem at first glance (although this too). The first place is occupied by a healthy attitude towards oneself. What does it mean? Standing and admiring next to the mirror from the very morning, live for life, stop saving everyone and concentrating only on saving ourselves, my beloved, but that’s not all! Second place was awarded to the idea of creating an ideal figure and doing sports. Women want to stop absorbing rolls and lose weight, stop eating at night and motivate themselves to do morning exercise. Learn to swim, try a ride on a snowboard.

In the third place is class desire, occupation, do what you like, find work for the soul and for money. Paradoxically the last place in our statistics based on the romantic relationship. And what do modern women mean in this phrase? “I want a romantic relations both in the the traditional manner, as well as with material benefits in a new way. Learn to boldly break off relationships that do not suit me, and stop holding on them only because of the fear of being left alone. To marry, of course!”

In conclusion, it may be noted that women are very delicate and sensitive creatures, no matter how strong they try not to reveal it, they still need to be treated with understanding and respect!

On behalf of our center, I want to congratulate all women on International Women’s Day! Always remain beautiful, young, cheerful and successful in everything!

Welcome to our center, The Science of Beauty, where our specialists will help to emphasize your personality and create a unique image.
Such businessmen say that women are more honest and responsible than some men. This is understandable, since today people want to be led by a person who views them as humans, not robots, a person who can empathize, notice, mark, and support. But it’s exactly so, because for a woman the team is her family, and she behaves here as in a family: she makes a decision, calculates the budget, checks lessons, praises for good behavior, looks after the senior members, taps the smallest by their heads. And, most importantly, she does it all unobtrusively, without reproaches, not demanding unquestioning obedience and power. It is not for nothing that they say: women hide their power, and men constantly try to show it, even when they do not have it. Women usually set modest goals, which means that they fail less often and do not take much risk. Women are more inclined to cooperate, and this is their advantage. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the managerial staff of the companies should not be viewed from the point of view of gender, but solely in terms of efficiency of doing business.

According to recent observations, companies in the Scandinavian countries that have women in their board of directors record a payback rate a quarter as high as those companies whose board of directors consists solely of men. Another example is the international company LafargeHolcim (LH).

Today, women make up 18% of LH total workforce and hold 16% of senior management roles. An internal task force has reached out to hundreds of these women and men to check their perceptions about gender balance. After the introduction of Diversity and Inclusion LH program, talented women throughout the world is reached. In Sustainability Strategy 2030 LH clearly state the value of diversity, respect of each individual and that it makes full business sense for LH. The company targets to achieve 30% of gender diversity at the managerial level within the organization. Putting these tasks before the group companies, it clearly tracks trends and successes. For example, in Australia and New Zealand, recruitment policies ensuring women have equal chance to secure even most senior roles and in inclusive practices, such as having personal protective equipment design especially for women. Also, parental leave policies including a return to work bonus and additional superannuation or pension contributions paid during unpaid leave. In El Salvador 50% of Executive Committee are women, as well as in Central America cluster. In Azerbaijan LH is represented by Holcim Azerbaijan.

The managerial staff of the company is represented by 20% of women. The good news is that there are also women among engineers. Finally, most importantly, women constitute 50% in the Directors’ Board of the companies. I am sure that this kind of companies still exist in Azerbaijan, but this is more an exception than a rule.

Carefully weighing all the pros and cons, the positive and negative consequences, I urge all women to decide in favor of career and professionalism. And let this hard, but a very grateful road be accompanied by success. The new generation already assess people according to their abilities, business acumen, knowledge, skills, and human qualities. In any case, it is primary for them. So, great changes await us after some twenty years. You don’t think so? But I am sure about it!

Author’s biography

Mrs. Rena Tahiroya is the Head of Marketing, Communication and CSR department of Holcim Azerbaijan. She has considerable expertise in CSR and CSV from 2004, and her specialization covers public relations, crisis management, media relations and advocacy. Mrs. Tahiroya has led numerous communication initiatives, including LafargeHolcim Awards for Sustainable construction. Since 2016 she is working in capacity of Head of Marketing, Communication and CSR department. As head of the division, she is responsible for marketing communications, product portfolio review, customer excellence projects and other customer related activities. At the same time, Mrs. Tahiroya involved to different civil society initiatives: member of NGO group for United Nation Sustainable development Goals, Women Empowerment and Peacebuilding network. Mrs. Rena Tahiroya is graduated from Kutafin Moscow State Law University and attended at management seminar at St. Gallen University (Switzerland).
Economic development cannot be achieved without the active participation of women in all aspects of life, especially in business. In all societies, women act as a driving force by being key figures in families and occupying an increasing share in the professional world. The restoration of state independence and the sovereignty of Azerbaijan has opened new opportunities and horizons for its citizens to start their businesses, to develop carriers, and to become more open to the world. This new and modern Azerbaijan has also allowed the women in the country to thrive and build their own paths as they choose, leading to a whole new powerful workforce for the country.

Throughout history, Azerbaijani women have been known for their courage, heroism, and loyalty to their families, alongside many other outstanding features. However, independent Azerbaijan has fostered a new type of Azerbaijani woman who has much in common with the representatives of the beautiful gender all over the world – they are empowered, strong, independent, and empathetic. They raise and care for excellent children (in some cases acting as both parents for them); they run businesses. They like socialising and going out with their family and friends, they travel, participate in sports and pursue hobbies and interests – and they manage to find time for all of this within 24 hours per day. Women are often dynamic leaders of change, encouraging involvement in important issues, claiming their rights, strengthening communities and protecting the World. Researches and statistics show that, when more women participate in the workforce, this results in faster economic growth and poverty reduction. Research has demonstrated that there is a very strong correlation between corporate financial performance and gender diversity.

My own firm has made a global commitment to create a more diverse and inclusive working environment around the world. The Dentons Baku office has gone beyond this general goal in retaining and promoting women lawyers: although in Azerbaijan the legal profession has traditionally been assumed to be a male-oriented job, but at Dentons 80% of our lawyers in the Baku office are women.

Gender diversity and equality, the prohibition of discrimination by gender and empowerment are extremely important both for individual businesses and economic development, as well as for human development and poverty reduction. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, it is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.

For this reason, one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ("SDGs") set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by world leaders at an historic UN Summit in September 2015 (which officially came into force on 1 January 2016) calls on states to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Under this Goal, states shall ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, and shall adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Gender equality and women economic empowerment were also one of the key themes at the recent 48th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting held in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, in January 2018. During a "Meet the Leader" session at World Economic Forum, the founder and Executive Chairman of Alibaba, Jack Ma, said "If you want your company to be successful; if you want your company to operate with wisdom, with care, then women are the best". Companies greatly benefit from providing increasing leadership opportunities for women, with more women on board they can maximize their company’s performance, score higher in all dimensions of organizational effectiveness, and statistically outperform their peers over a long period of time. The lower share of women at managerial levels restricts their involvement in making and adopting economic and political decisions. Therefore, one of the factors ensuring the active participation of women in society is their equal representation in high managerial positions and decision-making level. In Azerbaijan, women constitute the majority of the population, but there are certain differences in the structure of men and women employment in relation to the type of activity and economic area. Statistically, the proportion of women in business, as well as at a senior management level still remains low.

Although by law women nominally have the same rights as men. The Constitution ensures equal rights of men and women and prohibits discrimination based on sex, including any gender-based discrimination in labor rights. Azerbaijan also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1995 and signed its Optional Protocol.
in 2000, undertaking the obligation to take all appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Additionally, the Law on Guarantees of Gender (Men and Women) Equality aims to eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination and seeks to ensure gender equality in the political, economic, social, cultural and other spheres.

During the last two years there was also an important upswing in governmental support for women’s development, bringing the concerns and issues of women to the forefront of different areas of economic and social policies. Many initiatives have been implemented aimed to support and strengthen the role of women in entrepreneurship, such as the creation of business incubation centers for women, the creation of Women Resource Centers in the regions, the establishment of the Association of Women Entrepreneurs, the organization of the international conference “Development of women entrepreneurship: problems and prospects”, and the joining the Global Startup Weekend Women.

One such event which played a great role in motivating women and promoting women’s entrepreneurship in Azerbaijan was the 1st International SHE Congress, organized on March 28, 2017 by 100 Business Women of Azerbaijan in cooperation with the American Chamber of Commerce in Azerbaijan. The Congress invited both international and local female executives and business owners to share their experience, knowledge and career paths with others, providing speeches on the role of women in business, as well as on current gender equality issues and possible solutions. The 2nd International SHE Congress, for which more than 1,500 applications have been received, is scheduled for March 6, 2018, in Baku.

Although the gender diversity issue has been on the business agenda for many years now, yet many businesses in Azerbaijan still have no women at a senior management level. The reasons are various, including the structural impediments preventing women from reaching the top, i.e. gender-based discrimination and the problem of balancing work and family life. The “women’s question” in Azerbaijan continues to be challenging, since the dominant national discourse primarily regards women as mothers and guardians of national traditions. According to the UN’s The World’s Women 2015 Report, women in developing countries typically spend three hours more per day than men on unpaid work, such as household chores and caring for children and elderly relatives, and two hours more than men in developed countries.

Nevertheless, we have women in Azerbaijan who manage to survive and succeed despite challenges and many obstacles. Examples of such women are Ms. Mehriban Aliyeva, successful and leading business owner in rendering interpretation and translation services, as well as the first and only Azerbaijani citizen to become the member of the AIIC (International Association of Conference Interpreters); Ms. Rasmina Gurbatova, the owner of the “Resm” Jewellery brand; Ms. Nigar Kocharli, the owner of Ali and Nino bookshops in Baku and many others whose accomplishments needs to be acknowledged.

The successes of such Azerbaijani women set an example for others who strive to create and own their businesses. In many ways, our women are still the great-untapped resource in business and are often unaware of their power. Therefore, we need to enhance the image of Azerbaijani women by promoting their advanced status and their impact on the economy and decision-making. The targets behind this objective are increased acknowledgment of the contributions and accomplishments of women, improved visibility of role models and mentors and increased inspiration and motivation to encourage women to reach their full potential.

As a step forward to achieve this goal is the recently launched Certified Leadership Coaching Program further to which 13 selected women will attend the first ever professional coaching training (15 days) conducted in Azerbaijan and accredited by the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and then will coach and mentor 100 young women upon completion of the trainings. The Program is implemented within USAID funded Women’s Participation Program (WPP) and seeks to improve the status of women in Azerbaijan by raising public awareness on issues that affect women: improving women’s abilities to engage in strengthening the capacity of civic and state organizations to address women’s issues. Gender equality and empowering women to participate fully in economic life is essential to build stronger economies and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities. The business sector has a central and active role to play in achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. So let us work together to make 2018 a year for women to thrive.

Author’s biography
Ms. Ruhiiyya Isayeva is a Senior Associate at Dentons’ Baku office. A member of the Collegium of Advocates of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and a practicing advocate, she has extensive experience in litigation and dispute resolution of civil, economic and administrative matters. In 2013, Ruhiiyya was awarded by the Presidium of the Collegium of Advocates with a Certificate of Appreciation for long-term efficient legal practice. Ms. Ruhiiyya Isayeva teaches in English on the Impact of EU Law on the National Law of Member States at the LLM program on European Law of the Baku State University. She also serves as the Chair of the Board of Directors of local NGO, “Legal Resource and Information Centre”.

Recently Ms. Ruhiiyya Isayeva was selected as one of 13 women to attend the Certified Leadership Coaching Program accredited by the International Coaching Federation upon which 100 young women will be coached and mentored.

Ms. Ruhiiyya Isayeva graduated from the School of Law and Social Sciences of Khazar University (BSc, 1998) and Azerbaijan University (LLM, 2004).
Recently, we have done a number of surveys with focus on economy and gender in Azerbaijan and Central Asia. And when I got a notification from AmCham that the next issue of IMPACT Azerbaijan is devoted to “Women in Business”, it only strengthened my idea that the topic is becoming more and more trendy.

So looking back at the year of 2017, we can see women entrepreneurship has been in the focus both in Azerbaijan and globally:

1. In March 2017, there was the first SHE Congress (dedicated to the role of women in business, as well as on current gender equality issues and possible solutions) held by Top 100 Business Women of Azerbaijan, AmCham, PASHA Bank, and Master Card.

2. In April 2017, Baku hosted an international conference on “Development of women entrepreneurship: problems and prospects”. This conference was co-organized by Azerbaijan’s State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Economy and the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers’) Organizations of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ASK). It was mentioned that the number of female entrepreneurs is more than 121,000\(^1\) in the country (suggesting that ~5% of employed women are entrepreneurs).

3. In October 2017, The Women Entrepreneurs’ Association has been established in Azerbaijan with support of the Ministry of Economy the State Committee for Family, Women and Children and the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs of Azerbaijan. Besides, the government kept supporting female entrepreneurs with soft loans, and in January-September 2017, a total of 5.4 million manats have been issued to women, according to the Deputy Minister of Economy Sahib Mammadov\(^2\), who also added that “so far, about 4,000 women entrepreneurs have been granted with soft loans worth 90.4 million manats.”

4. In March 2017, Mastercard has issued a report on a study called "Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs 2017"\(^3\).

There were many interesting results that are definitely worth reading, analyzing and acting upon. Interestingly, there are 6 key constraints for the progress of women business owners, namely:

- Lack of funding/venture capital
- Regulatory restrictions and institutional inefficiencies
- Lack of self-belief/entrepreneurial drive
- Socio-cultural restrictions
- Lack of training and education

5. In December 2017, OECD published “The Missing Entrepreneurs”\(^4\), where among other interesting results it was mentioned that women are less likely to report that they have skills and knowledge to start a business than men. Besides, the report shows that policy makers are also increasingly concerned with the new forms of work and self-employment, notably work organized through online platforms and mobile applications.

6. Finally, according to the article\(^5\) published by the World Economic Forum, despite a closing of gender gap in labor force participation rates in OECD countries over the past 25 years, women continue to be under-represented in entrepreneurship. And a new OECD policy brief highlights five ways that policy can address the gender gap in entrepreneurship:

- Improve the institutional conditions
- Improve access to entrepreneurship skills programs
- Increase the use of loan guarantees
- Help women realize the growth potential of their businesses
- Improve access to risk capital for women entrepreneurs

During this short desk research we have found out that there is a lack of data that can show who the Azerbaijani women-entrepreneurs are and which factors lead to their decision to start their own business.

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With the idea in mind to shed some light to these questions, SIAR Research and Consulting Group has run an online survey, the link to which was disseminated across members of two organizations: Top 100 Business Women of Azerbaijan and Active Moms Club. Thanks to the involvement and collaboration of these 2 entities, we managed to get responses from 48 women entrepreneurs, who are active in Azerbaijan.

And short summary of results are shown below:

1. **Size of the business:** While 16% decided not to disclose the size of their business in terms of number of employees, 58% of surveyed women said that they had up to 10 employees, 23% - up to 40 employees, and only 4% had more than 40 employees.

2. **Age when they started their business at:** 81% start their business before the age of 36. And it is worth mentioning that 29% launched it even before they turned 26.

3. **Education of women entrepreneurs:** 2% (or 1 respondent) completed high school and did not pursue a BA degree; 54% of respondents have reached the BA level; 33% have reached the MA level; 10% have a PhD degree.

4. **Do you have any help in your household chores?:** 46% of respondents use the services of a maid at home; parents and other family members are of help to 29% and 21% of women entrepreneurs, respectively. And only 21% of surveyed women said that they had no help at home and do chores on their own.

5. **Is this company your first business?:** 62.5% of surveyed women said that their current main business is actually their first business.

6. **Who created this company?:** 79% of respondents said they created/founded this current business on their own, while remaining either have co-founders, bought an existing business, or have inherited a family business.

7. **Did you have a holiday in 2017?:** 69% of respondents did have a holiday in the year of 2017.

8. **Would you say that your family suffers from your being engaged into business?:** 33% of surveyed women entrepreneurs said that their family rather or definitely suffers from their involvement into the business; 23% could not make a concrete decision on the question; and 44% said that their family does not suffer from their involvement into the business.

9. **What made you start your own business?** The answers here are shown in the form of word cloud:

**Author’s biography**

**Mr. Ashraf Hajiyev** is Research Director and Partner at SIAR Research and Consulting Group. He is responsible for various research projects and development of SIAR activities in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Central Asia and Moldova. As Research Director, Ashraf is strongly focused on quality of research and bringing international methodologies and techniques. His experience includes customized research, social and healthcare research, retail audit, studies covering FMCG, services, finance, construction, durables, healthcare, automotive, and other sectors. Since 2015 Ashraf has also been elected to be a country representative for ESOMAR (World Association of Research Professionals) in Azerbaijan. And through SIAR he is also a member of such prominent organizations as WAPOR (World Association of Public Opinion Research), ISA (International Sociological Association) and MSPA (Mystery Shopping Providers Association).

Mr. Hajiyev obtained BA on Economical Cybernetics from Baku State University (2001) and MA in Economics from the Central European University (2003).
False Perceptions of Women’s Abilities and Skills
There is a general tendency to believe that women and men are simply divergent and women have less capabilities to advance on career ladder. Furthermore, this view is exacerbated by the unfounded approach that men and women pursue distinct goals, define happiness in separate ways, and tend to have dissimilar kinds of abilities and skills. Therefore, for all those reasons, women gravitate to different kinds of professions and career paths which tend to be less competitive and paid. Now, if all those things are true, then we should expect to see just what we do see: significant occupational segregation. Additionally, the biological explanation functions less directly when career paths and family paths conflict. Women who physically carry children find themselves removed willingly or not from work for significant periods. Sometimes this fact is misunderstood by many employers and businesses world-wide.

The widely encountered cases of underestimation and misunderstanding of the women’s abilities occur in the following situations in the corporate business environment: a) an employment decision on hiring, promoting, demoting, firing that might adversely affect women as an employee or applicant; b) usually, the decision on women’s career and professional development is based on the women’s gender rather than individual merit; c) the decision rests on unverified stereotypes or generalizations about women’s abilities, skills and experiences.

Finally, there is concrete and broad statistics from various parts of the world showing that women receive lower wages than men when doing distinct but comparable or similar work. Moreover, women who do pursue career lines dominated by men can find their advance up the promotion ladder halted by a difficult to see barrier, a kind of glass ceiling.

Comparable Worth – Do the Women Get Comparable Pay?
As it was indicated earlier, we can encounter with concrete and broad statistics from various parts of the world showing that women receive lower wages than men when doing distinct but comparable or similar work although it is prohibited by the employment, diversity and human rights laws in many countries, including international law. This reality is at odds with the well-known principal of comparable worth which is supported and protected by international law at the international level and even employment, human rights and diversity laws at the national and local levels in many countries. This well-known principal of comparable worth states that when two occupations require comparable levels of skill, training, effort, and responsibility, both men and women should be rewarded with comparable salaries. The gender problem associated with comparable worth is that statistical evidence suggests that so-called women’s work has consistently garnered lower wages than men’s work. For example, according to the US government, the median income of American working women is $29,000, while for men it is $39,000. More, the differences hold when adjusting for educational levels. For high school grads, it is $23,000 versus $32,000. For college grads, it’s $40,000 versus $60,000. At the PhD level, it’s $55,000 versus $78,000. Unfortunately, this tendency is prevalent in various parts of the world despite of the legal requirements to guaranty equal pay based on the merit but not on the gender differences.

Career Promotion and Glass Ceiling
Women who do pursue career lines dominated by men can find their advance up the promotion ladder halted by a difficult to see barrier, a kind of glass ceiling. That given the way things are now in corporate business environment, if a woman wants to break through to the highest echelons of management, she’s probably going to have to learn male
rules, and then play by them. Especially, as the office culture becomes increasingly male on the way up and diversity is not the backbone of the corporate culture of the companies, women are decreasingly able to communicate with and work well with male dominated colleagues.

In the medium to long term, the way to truly demolish the barriers, obstacles and glass ceiling is for women to work their way up and occupy more high level posts. In order for this to occur, businesses should promote diversity and equal opportunity environment in hiring and promotion based on the merit and abilities rather than on gender differences which get less due to significant advancements in technology, quality of education of women and employment and equal opportunity laws and international legal commitments. It’s clear that there aren’t enough women in business, and the stereotypes will exist as long as there aren’t enough of women put in the positions of responsibility in business environment.

Case of Motherhood

Women quite often have to confront with and prioritize family and career interests and options at some point of their professional development in the corporate business environment. Specifically, this issue becomes when women is about to become a mother. Of course, women are entitled to get a professional maternity leave, but it might lead to some unwanted consequences at times. Granting professional leaves for the fulfillment of parental responsibilities makes sense for woman. Upon resumption of duties, her career would continue and advance as though there had been no interruption. In fact, in many European countries including Azerbaijan, Spain, France, and Germany, such leave is actually required by law. The problem is that in the real world and in many industries, it’s nearly impossible to go away for a long time and then resume responsibilities seamlessly. In the interim, projects have been completed and new ones have begun, clients have changed, subordinates have been promoted, managers have moved on, and the organization’s basic strategies have transformed. The fear that companies and managers even those with the best intentions will end up channeling those they presume will seek parental leaves into less important roles. The potential mother won’t be the one chosen to pursue research on the company’s most exciting new product even if she’s the best researcher because the firm won’t be able to just put project development on hold at some point in the future while she’s away. The end result is that the so-called mommy track for professional life becomes the dead end track.

There are no easy solutions to this problem, though there are ways to limit it. Technology can be a major contributor. Just something as simple as Skype, most importantly, telecommuting, digital businesses and flexible work schedule can allow women at home with young children to be connected with the office regularly and work at a distance. Further, big companies with enough resources can, and increasingly are, providing day care facilities in the building.

In conclusion, active participation of women in the corporate business environment is strongly desirable. If businesses and companies encourage this equal opportunity environment, it shows that these companies and businesses meet the highest business ethics standards. As a result, may stakeholders will want to cooperate with these companies and businesses. In the long-run, these companies and business will benefit both from becoming more profitable and having very good and professional diverse workforce.

Author’s biography

Mr. Elnur Eyvazov is a Professor of Business Law and Business Ethics at ADA University Business School. He is also a Director of the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunities at ADA University. Also, Mr. Eyvazov is a Senior Legal Advisor with Capital Legal Services.

Professor Elnur Eyvazov is an expert in business law, investments, business ethics, and finance. He received his LL.B degree from the Law Faculty of Baku State University and master degree in International Commercial Law from the Law Faculty of Cambridge University. Mr. Eyvazov is also a graduate of Law faculty of Oxford University where he got his MJuris/M. Phil degree in financial, banking and corporate finance law. Mr. Eyvazov also attended Columbia University School of Law on a Fulbright Fellowship where he obtained MCL degree in Law and Finance.

Mr. Eyvazov carries strong international professional experience. While in Oxford, Mr. Eyvazov had his Vocational Scheme Program with Clifford Chance LLP in London. Mr. Eyvazov worked as a Legal Adviser for New World Frontiers, Co., Ltd. and he advised the company on various business projects. He worked in the Legal Department of BP as a legal advisor where he provided advice in connection with the BP’s exploration and production/upstream and midstream projects in Azerbaijan. Professor Eyvazov practiced law and finance as a summer associate at JP Morgan & Co, Investment Bank, Legal and Compliance in New York. While at JP Morgan, he provided legal and investment advice in connection with regulatory, compliance, structured finance, capital markets, M&A and other investment banking activities of the investment bank. Professor Eyvazov also has a considerable experience in disability rights law.
Based on the latest research that E&Y has done for their #PressforProgress program, if everything goes the same way, it would take us 216 years more, to reach gender parity globally¹.

It has been agreed that companies with even one woman director outperform the ones with none, an organization with up to 30% female leaders, could add up to 6% to its net margin, public sector will get more innovative solutions by getting more women on board. As Jack Ma, the Co Founder and CEO of Alibaba Group, has said during The World Economic Forum 2018 in Davos: “If you want your company to be successful; if you want your company to operate with wisdom, with care, then women are the best. 37% of senior management in Alibaba are women. Part of the ‘secret sauce’ of our success is because we have so many women colleagues”².

So what is happening in the VC funding and start up’s world? Fortune magazine reports that Female Founders got only around 2% of total Venture Capital Dollars in 2017².

We can talk about the reasons of these quite sad numbers for long, but the main “categories” of those reasons would be either External or Internal. Today, I want to talk about the internal ones.

Just recently WoWoman, the women empowerment platform, which creates the space, tools and the community for women to grow and get to their dreams and goals, both personally and professionally, organized the 3rd anniversary. During the panel discussion “Azerbaijani WoWoman in 2025”, which I have moderated, the panelists have constantly mentioned the internal barriers as the main ones. Not having the confidence to ask for a raise, to follow the career path, which others say is not good, to speak up, to start a company and the list goes on and on. Despite of all challenges that an 18 year old young woman may face while building own business from scratch in Azerbaijan, now looking back, I strongly believe that the internal confidence in “doing the things you believe in, no matter if others say that it is impossible”, is the key factor.

I’ve started my first business at this age, 7 years ago, with just $200 dollars budget and without any outside investment got it to boutiques of evening and wedding dresses in the city center. Then I went on to launch a WoWoman platform, which is just 3 years old, but had over 200+ events, trainings and workshops, 40+ programs and projects, over 7000+ participants, and a total of 20.000+ community members. Established in Azerbaijan, it is represented in a dozen of countries, and in places like Stanford, Harvard and MIT Universities, on TEDx in Germany, Latitude59 in Estonia,

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which is one of the biggest startup conferences in Europe, at Impact Hub in Ukraine and so on. In such a short period of time, we have managed to build partnerships with companies like Google, Microsoft, P&G and many more. We have a long way to go, but as a young woman entrepreneur, here are three lessons/advice that I learned along the journey, which I would like to highlight today:

Firstly, the team, of course. No matter how basic this sounds, many startups and companies just don’t implement this. **Investing in your team and trusting them to make things happen.**

We always choose the team members based not on skills, but on attitude. Skills can be taught, but it’s very hard to change the mindset. We are looking and promoting entrepreneurial, proactive, solution-oriented mindset consistently. Personalities which are eager to learn, to challenge themselves and to grow all the time. Many of our events, courses and programs are focused specifically on this. Super proud and grateful to my teams, which are creating value and impact on daily basis, despite of anything.

Then comes the belief in “Launching early and adapting fast”. Especially as a first time entrepreneur, one will never be 100% ready, so the faster you launch and the more flexible you are in pivoting in this fast changing times, the more chances you have to succeed. Early stage companies have this luxury of creating, testing, analyzing and then adapting fast, which bigger companies can’t really afford that easily. Again, quite basic, but reality and data shows that many founders get so “in love” with their initial ideas that they spend more time developing it, while competition, market and so much more has already changed. The hardest part is keeping the balance between all the changing factors and keeping the focus on vision and intention for starting the company.

And last, but not the least, I think what we should all, especially women entrepreneurs, always remember is “Firstly, put the mask on yourself!”, as they say in airplanes. Trying to take care of our companies, teams, customers and family, we often forget to take care of ourselves. Burnout and poor business decisions, just to name the two, appear quite fast, as a result of this issue.

To conclude, I wish more women and men, both private and public sector to work on creating better external environment for women leadership in all spheres, but for younger women, to not focus on the lack of support or any resources, to not complain about what is not there, but to focus on and be grateful for what is. To realize that the main barriers in creating anything they want, are internal ones.

**Author’s biography**

Ms. Zara Huseynova has been an entrepreneur from the first day of her professional journey. Founded ALZA at 18 and then WoWoman at 21, she is now running both businesses remotely and travels around the world. She was one out of 4 participants from around the world to receive full scholarship from MIT University to attend Global Entrepreneurship program, 2016. Prior to starting a business, she was a 5 times National Champion in Sports Ballroom dancing. Ms. Huseynova holds BBA from State Oil Academy.
Empowering women and supporting gender equality are important not just in terms of human rights, but also for the well-being of the society and even for growth of business. This important subject was one of the key items on the World Economic Forum agenda in 2018, as giving women the opportunity to succeed can also transform societies and economies.

Relation between women empowerment and success of nations is well justified by economic factors. As noted in the latest World Economic Forum discussions, raising women’s employment can boost overall GDP. IMF reports indicate that reducing gender gaps in employment, as well as in education, can help economies diversify their exports; appointing more women onto banking supervision boards can support greater bank stability and financial sector resilience; and tackling gender inequality can reduce income inequality, which, in turn, can drive more sustainable growth.

As an Azerbaijani woman I am proud with the role our women played throughout the history of our nation. At different periods of our history women took courage to stand for the security of our nation, contributed to social and cultural development of our society. Today we see women in many areas. It is encouraging to see girls pursuing their education and careers and at the same time managing their families. We see women represented in senior positions in the government. However, representation of women in business sector requires more attention and investment. This is also important in the light of government’s strategy to strengthen entrepreneurship, small and medium businesses in Azerbaijan.

Since I represent Coca-Cola System I would also like to mention a few facts about how our company takes the women empowerment seriously. Coca-Cola has been on a productive journey in women’s leadership in recent years, from establishing Women’s Club and other internal initiatives, to the ongoing progress of 5by20 global program, Coca-Cola’s external commitment to help empower 5 million women entrepreneurs globally over the course of this decade.

Inside Coca-Cola, women now account for over 30 percent of senior leadership roles, up from 23 percent in 2008. Meanwhile, the number of women in mid-level management has risen from 28 percent to 36 percent. By the end of 2016, the Coca-Cola system and its partners had reached 1.7 million women entrepreneurs with business training, mentoring and improved access to capital.

One of the examples of how Coca-Cola strives to empower women globally and nationally is our partnership with UNDP and the State Committee on Family, Women and Child Affairs. As a result of this partnership 2 women resource centers were established in Salyan and Neftchala districts of Azerbaijan. These centers provide a number of training courses and mentorship to empower rural women, especially those who would like to try start small businesses. These two centers are part of wider network of women centers in Sabirabad, Bilasuvar and Masalli, the regions where gender inequality is more acute.

The centers serve as a public platform to plan and coordinate women’s economic and social initiatives, and provide opportunities for capacity building, entrepreneurial activity, vocational education and gaining public voice.

To this date, as part of the initiative for economic and social empowerment of rural women and youth supported by the Coca-Cola Foundation, UNDP trained some 400 women on economic educational and social skills in Neftchala and Salyan districts. It also supported development of 28 women-led businesses; raised awareness about gender and violence issues among 1300 men and women, provided vocational education to 114 young rural women; and improved water and sanitation facilities for over 800 girls in six rural communities.

We believe such efforts will contribute to overall well-being of our society. There are more and more opportunities in the current world for women to realize their dreams and aspirations. I believe AmCham being the network of leading local and international companies can also play a role in this and I call on AmCham members to include this topic into their CSR agenda.

As one of legendary Azerbaijani businessmen, Mr. Haji Zeynalabdin Tagiyev said, an educated woman, is educated mother, who will educate her children. In other words, if we help women get successful, whether it is education, career or business, this will help make the society successful.

Author’s biography
Dr. Rana Mammadova is one of the senior women leaders in Coca-Cola System. She joined Azerbaijan Coca-Cola Bottlers in 1996 and has held roles of increasing responsibilities in the quality assurance and supply chain management. During her 22 years with Coca-Cola, Mrs. Mammadova successfully led a number of projects to enhance quality assurance and supply chain management. She is also one of the founders and supporters of Coca-Cola Women’s Club. Rana is a graduate of Baku State University, Department of Biology and holds PhD. in Biology. She is an author of several scientific works published in leading local and international sources. Rana loves playing tennis, maintains an active lifestyle and follows global environmental innovations.
Autism in Azerbaijan and Steps Ahead

Autism is a genetic, neurobiological, fundamental, developmental disorder that begins with the birth. It prevents communicating with others, leads child to frame himself/herself only with her/his own inner world, and, in general, creates negative influences on the person regarding the abilities of building up successful social relationships and behaviors of children by giving it up before the age of three. Studies indicate that autism affects the structure of the brain. Autism shows itself through the child’s inability to establish social communication, developmental problems in language-communication, and stereotypic behavior.

Nowadays, data show that the autism is increasing intensely. One out of 68 children today is born with autism, while every 2500 in 1985, 250 in 2001, and one out of 88 children in 2013 were diagnosed with autism. The risk of autism in boys is 4 times more than girls.

Among the symptoms of autism: too many curiosity and stereotypical attitudes, such as refusing to make eye contact, staring at one point, not looking back when one calls him/her by his/her name, repeating words, showing no interest in the games played by their peers, swinging, slipping, walking on finger tips, interest on rotating things.

Currently, the only known treatment for autism is the intense and regular, special education with early diagnosis. An example for this educational methodology is the ABA (Applied Behavioral Analysis), which is the only scientifically based and effective one in the education of children with autism syndrome. Early intervention and subsequent learning, regarding the characteristics of each child may lead to the substantial difference in the lives of children with autism and it may be possible to bring them to the same level with typical children related to the reading skills.

As in all over the world, attention is increasing with each passing day to Autism syndrome, and our country is not an exception either. One out of 68 children in the world is born with autism syndrome. Unfortunately, there is no official statistics in our country. In recent times, various government agencies, parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations, local media, members of different levels of society have mobilized their forces in order to draw attention to the syndrome and to develop state support mechanisms for children with autism.

“Together & Healthy” Public Union (PU), is an organization established in Baku in 2013 which works with autistic children and supports their families in our country. The purpose of the association is to help people with mental and intellectual disabilities; therefore, to benefit from treatment and rehabilitation services for people in need of special care, including their social inclusion. I would like to note that for the first time in the history of our country, as a result of the appeal of our public association to the Milli Majlis on Social Policy...
Commission, autism was also included in the “Criteria for Determining Disability and Health Opportunities Limitations” approved by the decision number 413 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on December 30, 2015.

With the decision of the United Nations in April 2007, April was considered as the World Autism Awareness Month, and 2 April was recognized World Autism Awareness Day.

The goal of establishing a “Together & Healthy” PU is now a teenage 15-year-old Autism syndromic boy and this is a struggle for survival of a mother and family who have this adult. As a mother and a woman of Azerbaijan, I have been implementing a series of awareness-raising projects in our country since 2013, for securing my motherly life from experiencing problems in my life, as well as mothers with children with autism syndrome like me.

As an example: “Light It Up Blue”, International and Local Seminar Conferences, Autism Panels at Medical University, Choir and Rhythm Concert, Fashion Shows, action in under name of Walk For Autism, developing educational activity in the well-known places of our country in our universities, the Autism song written by celebrities, social video with participation of celebrities, animation film first time in our native language, our projects with the help of our ministries and their support, as well as the development of printed materials that are important in the field of autism, and the introduction of awareness-raising activities in our country in the field of autism.

Studies in the field of autism show that, the integration of social life is one of the most important issues in this area of teenagers and young people in need of special care. Increasing the knowledge and skills of young people in need of special care can help them to gain some profession in the future, which is also an indispensable support for their families, who are not alone in their lives.

One of the main goals of our union is to educate adolescent and young people who need special care. Under the auspices of the union, there are cafe and musical room that support teens and young people to gain vital skills for their future lives. In our workshop and cafeteria with the support of various public and private organizations, these young people are enhancing their skills of cooking, watering, cleaning, painting and various handicrafts, for the first time in our country, we develop music skills of our Choir and Rhythm team. Unexpected results are achieved in these activities that are supported by professional teachers.

In addition to the above-mentioned issues, the protection and support from the government of children and families are also necessary. Implementation of existing support mechanisms in accordance with international practice in our country will contribute to social-oriented state building. Special support for special education, certain tax benefits, social allowances, support to families, and improvement of existing legislation can be the main steps taken by the state.

Author’s biography
Mrs. Ayten Eynalova is the founder of “Together & Healthy” Public Union. From 1999 till 2012 Mrs. Ayten Eynalova worked as a teacher at schools and gymnasium. From 2012 till 2014, she was Head of Child Rehabilitation Center at Memoria Nevro-Psychology Center in Baku. In 2012, decided to create a new public union which is specifically working with autistic syndromic children and later on actively works on autism awareness issues. Mrs. Eynalova is pursuing Ph.D. at Engineering University on Education Management. She holds master degree on Faculty of Education (Education Management) at Caucasus University and bachelor degree in Faculty of Education (Biology, Primary School Teacher) from Gazi University.
Established in 1996, AmCham is composed of over 270 members and associates active in every sector of the Azerbaijani economy. We represent 80% of all foreign investment, as well as a significant portion of local investment which allows us to promote American, Azerbaijani and multinational corporations. This includes leading companies in Energy, Banking, ICT, Legislative/Financial Consulting, Professional Services, Education, Real Estate Development, Health, Transportation, Travel and Production fields.

An active and positive influence in Azerbaijan, we conduct our mission with integrity and respect for the country, observing all local laws and insisting on the highest ethical standards in all relationships and transactions.

Why join?

Key member benefit – best networking opportunities in Azerbaijan!

As a member of AmCham, your company has access to a vast network of business information and contacts in Azerbaijan and in the US government, as well as valuable information on US businesses across Europe through ECACC (European Council of American Chambers of Commerce) and US Chamber of Commerce.

Additional Member Benefits include:

- Annual Employee Salary Survey
- Quarterly Inflation Survey
- AmCham Membership Directory
- AmCham Resource Library

For more detailed information please visit our website www.amcham.az

To apply

To apply for affiliation with AmCham, a candidate must submit a written application in the form adopted by the Board of Directors. Membership applications are available at the AmCham office or on our website at www.amcham.az. The application form should be completed and sent to our office with the company registration certificate issued by the Ministry of Justice of Azerbaijan.

A candidate meeting the objective and subjective requirements for affiliation with AmCham is accepted as either a Member or Associate upon receiving an affirmative majority vote of the Board of Directors and paying the first year’s fee for the candidate’s category of affiliation.

To maintain affiliation with AmCham, Members and Associates must continue to meet our eligibility requirements, be in good standing in the community, and be current with all financial obligations to AmCham.

Membership

There are two types of affiliation with AmCham: Member and Associate. Member status includes voting privileges and eligibility for Board and committee chairmanships in addition to the privileges granted to Associates. For affiliation as a Member, a candidate must be a legal entity, registered and doing business in Azerbaijan and be in good standing in the community, as determined by the Board of Directors.

A legal entity, branch or representative office of a legal entity is eligible to be affiliated with AmCham as an Associate, subject to the Board of Directors’ determination of good standing in the community.

Associates are eligible to participate in various activities; receive our regular publications, including the Membership Directory, Annual National Employee Salary Survey and Quarterly Inflation Survey. Associates, however, are not entitled to vote or serve on our Board of Directors.
AmCham Azerbaijan

Business Events

Annual General Meeting, 2018

On February 27, 2018 AmCham Annual General Assembly took place. February Monthly Members’ Luncheon of AmCham Azerbaijan highlighted the most important event in Chamber’s annual calendar – Annual General Assembly – featuring the Board of Directors members’ elections. The Chamber’s Regular Members in good standing took part in the elections. This year there were four vacant seats at the Board of Directors.

Through the anonymous voting process, the following Board members were reelected for another term:
- Teyba Gouliyeva – Head of Central Asia and Caucasus Region at Societe Generale Banking Group
- Fariz Ismailzade – Vice Rector at ADA University
- Nuran Kerimov – Managing Partner at Deloitte Azerbaijan
- Movlan Pashayev – Managing Partner at PwC Azerbaijan

Besides, the General Assembly highlighted the speeches by honorable guest speakers: Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, UN Resident Coordinator/ UNDP Resident Representative, as well as Mr. Marcos Neto, Director, Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development, United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
AmCham representatives met with the State Migration Service

On February 5, AmCham representatives met with the Chief of State Migration Service, 2nd rank State Migration Service Counselor Mr. Firudin Nabiyev. Mr. Nabiyev touched upon the importance of such meetings and noted that the Service has always paid special attention and care to the private sector. He expressed confidence that today’s meeting will bring positive results.

The Chief of the Service said that migration issue in the world has become a matter of urgency today. At the same time, proper migration policy is crucial for regulating migration processes in line with country’s economic interests. Mr. Nabiyev added that the domestic and foreign policy implemented by President Ilham Aliyev increases the international image of Azerbaijan from day to day. The radical economic reforms carried out in our country are already bearing fruits. Azerbaijan’s giant transnational infrastructure projects are changing the map of energy and transport in Eurasia.

Furthermore, it was mentioned that the basis of success is security and stability in our country. Because no investment is made in non-stable countries. Today, hosting prestigious international events, including sports games, further enhances reputation and position of Azerbaijan. Even more, Mr. Firudin Nabiyev highlighted the important role of the Service in coordination of visa works, which as a result increases the number of tourists to our country. Even more, currently within “ASAN Xidmat”, the State Migration Service provides different services. According to the Chief of the Service, regular works are underway to simplify the documentation for foreigners living and working in the country.

Launch of AmCham White Paper 2018
Preparation Process

AmCham has launched the preparation process of the subsequent edition of its White Paper on observations and recommendations for improving Azerbaijan’s business climate. On January 22, members of the Board of Directors, the executive team, committee chairs and deputy chairs met together to discuss the White Paper 2018 roadmap and to outline goals related to the document’s drafting.

Meet Your Candidate Coctail 2018

On February 12, 2018 AmCham Azerbaijan hosted a remarkable cocktail dedicated to the elections to AmCham Board of Directors.

During the event each candidate to the Board made a three minutes of speech – covering their election platforms with the audience.

This year we had five candidates standing for four vacant seats at the Board of Directors:
1. Mrs. Teyba Gouliyeva – Head of Central Asia and Caucasian Region at Societe Generale Banking Group
2. Mr. Asif Huseynli – BP Accounts Manager for Caspian West Region at Halliburton
3. Mr. Fariz Ismailzade – Vice Rector at ADA University
4. Mr. Nuran Kerimov – Managing Partner at Deloitte Azerbaijan
5. Mr. Movlan Pashayev – Managing Partner at PwC Azerbaijan
On February 2, 2018, AmCham Azerbaijan organized its monthly members’ luncheon featuring participation and speech by Mr. Aydin Aliyev, Chairman of State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Around 150 participants attended the event, including representatives of diplomatic corps.

Mr. Nuran Kerimov, President of AmCham Azerbaijan and Mrs. Natavan Mammadova, Executive Director of AmCham Azerbaijan welcomed guests and expressed their appreciation to Mr. Aydin Aliyev for joining the luncheon as a keynote speaker.

Mr. Aydin Aliyev addressed the Chamber members and spoke about the development of the non-oil sector owing to the purposeful reforms led by President H.E. Ilham Aliyev, the rapid growth of our country’s export potential, the reforms carried out in 2017 in the customs system and the impact of these measures on improving the trade environment in the country. Information was also provided on accomplishments made last year in improving the legal framework for the customs service work, combating smuggling and other crimes, application of innovation projects, organization of electronic customs services etc.

The development of electronic customs services as one of the key priority areas of the State Customs Committee over the past year was also mentioned during the meeting. “I would like to point out that the introduction of information technologies has been expanded even further to facilitate customs clearance, ensure transparency and minimize the citizens’ involvement with the customs procedures, and the number of services provided by the State Customs Committee through the Electronic Government Portal has been increased. Nowadays, the State Customs Committee provides citizens and entrepreneurs with 11 electronic services over the Electronic Government Portal.” – Mr. Aydin Aliyev said.

During the speech, it was also stressed upon that the State Customs Committee has been always ready for an open dialogue with private sector. With this aim, a series of meetings between the Committee management and local and foreign business sector representatives were organized in 2017 in order to build a more efficient and transparent customs system.

At the end of his speech, Mr. Aydin Aliyev thanked the guests and the representatives of AmCham Azerbaijan for their invitation, stressing out the importance of regular meetings between the Government and the business community and applauded the efficient work carried out aimed at further development of the country’s business environment. Afterwards, the State Customs Committee Chairman provided detailed answers to the questions of the Luncheon participants. Then, the member-company presentations were delivered by Scientific-Cultural Center of Administration of State Historical-Architectural Reserve “Icherisheher” as well as “Baku International Sea Trade Port” CJSC. The event proceeded with an impressive overview of Baku’s history by Mr. Fuad Akhundov, a famous connoisseur of the capital of our country.
Committee Highlights

Healthcare & Medical Insurance Committee Meetings

On February 21, AmCham Healthcare & Medical Insurance (HMI) Committee hosted its regular meeting. HMI Committee Chair Ms. Lala Bilandarli opened the meeting and gave information on the process of the AmCham White Paper. Participants actively participated in the discussion for developing recommendations in the HMI sector to be included in the next issue of the document. The meeting participants made their suggestions on what should be amended. It was decided to divide some ideas into two parts in order to explain clearly.

Then, Mr. Teymur Kravchenko, from A-Group Insurance was invited to make a presentation on “Innovation in Insurance”. He mentioned customer expectations, digital disruptions in insurance in 2017, especially on new products and technological innovations. After, Mr. Kravchenko briefed information about mobile concierge which created by A-Group insurance and mentioned benefits of the mobile application for users. He concluded his speech with showing some examples regarding the features of the application.

At the end of the meeting Ms. Bilandarli thanked everyone for participation.

On January 17, AmCham Healthcare & Medical Insurance (HMI) Committee hosted its meeting. The HMI Committee Chair Ms. Lala Bilandarli opened the meeting and introduced AmCham White Paper (produced biannually). She requested the participants to actively contribute in developing recommendations in the HMI sector to be included to the next issue of the document.

The meeting participants made their suggestions, in particular, the challenges for businesses because of the total production costs increase, parallel market issues, vaccination, healthcare expenditure etc. It was decided to hold frequent meetings of a smaller Working Group on the White Paper 2018 in order to work on these ideas.

Tax & Customs Committee Meetings

On February 22 AmCham Tax & Customs Committee conducted its regular meeting concentrating on recommendations for AmCham White Paper 2018. Ms. Arzu Hajiyeva and Mr. Jeyhun Mamedov, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Committee, opened the meeting and discussed White Paper preparation process.

Meeting participants actively took part in the discussion for developing recommendations and shared their opinions on different issues. The Committee members were informed that participants who want to add some details to the White Paper are welcome.

On January 17 AmCham Tax & Customs Committee conducted its first meeting for 2018 concentrating on AmCham White Paper 2018. Ms. Arzu Hajiyeva and Mr. Jeyhun Mamedov, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Committee, respectively, opened the meeting and
talked about the importance of member contributions to the document. Afterwards, they discussed the previous White Paper preparation process and Ms. Hajiyeva shared information on potential challenges faced throughout the process.

It was decided to hold frequent meetings of a smaller Working Group on the White Paper 2018 in order to work on the ideas. The Committee members were informed that volunteers who want to contribute to the White Paper are welcomed.

After the discussion of a White Paper roadmap, Committee meeting participants (including AmCham BoD members) shared their opinions on the issue, asked questions and clarified unclear moments.

Human Resources Committee Meeting
On January 26 AmCham HR Committee hosted its regular meeting for this month.

The HR Committee Chair Ms. Leyla Novruzova opened the first meeting of 2018 by welcoming the members and outlining the context of the agenda. Then she invited Ms. Gulnur Ismayil, Director, Career Management Center to the floor. Ms. Ismayil delivered a speech on ADA University and informed about Job Fair which they are planning to hold as in past years.

Then, Ms. Novruzova passed the floor to the speakers from KCAD, E&Y, and BP – Ms. Tarana Aliyeva, Ms. Gulnar Najafova and Ms. Samira Shabanova to present different practices, systems and basic overview of Performance Management. They briefed about companies’ views and explained their approaches to Performance, Career, and Development by using examples and tables. “What is the most applicable model for Azerbaijan” was also discussed during the presentations.

Then HR Committee Deputy Chair Ms. Laura Hamidova introduced Ms. Fatima Taghiyeva, from BP, who made a presentation on “Managing Underperformance through Disciplinary Process”. She shared how BP changed their approach to Performance Management. She concluded her speech with showing some examples regarding the old and new process.

Later, Ms. Gulnar Najafova had another presentation on “Discipline Procedure” at KCA Deutag. Some examples of their performance calculation system were also provided during her presentation.

Finally, Mr. Teymur Mahmudov from SOCAR was invited to share SOCAR’s experience. He presented “Performance and Training Development System”.

Travel, Hospitality & Tourism Committee Meeting
On January 25 AmCham THT Committee hosted its regular meeting.

Mr. Farid Isayev, Chairman of the THT Committee opened the meeting by welcoming the audience and announced the agenda of the meeting.

Later, Mr. Isayev gave the floor to Ms. Farida Akhundova, Marketing and Communication Director in Azerbaijan Convention Bureau to provide some information about activities and future plans. Ms. Akhundova made a presentation on their company’s vision and plans. She briefed participants about upcoming shopping festival in Baku and provided information on the process, statistics, and strategy.
The further discussion was dedicated to the White Paper. Mr. Isayev discussed preparation process and shared information on potential topics which they can emphasize throughout the process. It was decided to hold frequent meetings of a smaller Working Group on the White Paper 2018 in order to work further. The Committee members were informed that volunteers who want to contribute to the White Paper are welcome.

Then, Mr. Rauf Pashayev, Deputy Head of Tourism Department, Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan mentioned key problems experienced during tourist trips. He highlighted the negative impact of certain visa issues and gave some statistical results with comparing neighbor countries. Mr. Pashayev suggested to take into account problematic areas and simplify them without any negative impacts on the security system.

Information & Communications Technology Committee Meeting

On January 30, AmCham Information and Communications Technology Committee hosted its first meeting for 2018. Ms. Kamilla Shahbazov, Chairperson of the Committee, opened the meeting and introduced the AmCham White Paper. Ms. Shahbazov discussed preparation process, guidelines, and deadlines for the document drafting. Afterwards, the Committee members discussed the previous White Paper preparation process and Mr. Rashid Mammadov, Legal & Policy Officer in AmCham, also shared information on topics which were mentioned in the last White Paper.

Ms. Shahbazov talked about the importance of member contributions to the document. It was decided to hold frequent meetings of smaller Working Group on the White Paper 2018 in order to work on the ideas. The Committee members were informed that volunteers who want to contribute to the White Paper are welcome.

Potential topics which they can be emphasized throughout the process also were highlighted. The meeting participants made their suggestions on what should be raised, in particular, as far as challenges for IT sector because of the lack of IT specialists, security system, cybersecurity, software etc. are concerned.

After the discussion of the White Paper roadmap, Ms. Shahbazov also mentioned about the first IT conference – Digital future of Azerbaijan, the road to Digital economy, which is planned to be held.

At the end of the meeting, Ms. Kamilla Shahbazov requested the participants to actively contribute in developing recommendations in the ICT sector to be included to the next issue of the document and thanked everyone for participation.

Corporate Social Responsibility Committee Meeting

On February 1, AmCham CSR Committee hosted its first regular meeting for this year.

Ms. Aynura Piriyeva, CSR Committee Chair welcomed the members of the Committee and expressed gratitude to PASHA Insurance for hosting the meeting. Then the representative of PASHA Insurance, Deputy CEO, Mr. Tural Aliyev welcomed the participants, thanked Ms. Piriyeva and AmCham for the meeting and talked briefly about their company.

Before starting the presentations, Ms. Jamilya Talibzadeh, Vice Chairperson of the Committee, also thanked PASHA Insurance and participants. Then, Ms. Piriyeva gave the floor to Mr. Vugar Safarov, Head of Prosper Digital Agency, who delivered a presentation on “Digital Transformation of Economy”. He displayed some examples about how to set and execute the global and local digital strategy to achieve business goals.

Later, Mr. Adil Bakirov, Marketing & PR Specialist in PASHA Insurance, delivered a presentation on CSR – as a way of building sustainable community and business. Mr. Bakirov talked about PASHA Insurance CSR projects such as Mysterious Baku, Green Baku, First Graders, etc.

Furthermore, Ms. Piriyeva and Ms. Talibzadeh gave information about the concept of AmCham White Paper. Mr. Fariz Ismailzade, Vice Rector of ADA University, also added some points regarding the document. The Committee members were informed that volunteers who want to contribute to the White Paper are welcome.
BANKING AND FINANCE
Mortgage and Credit Guarantee Fund has been established
The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan has signed the Decree “On a number of measures related to the establishment and functioning of the Mortgage and Credit Guarantee Fund of the Republic of Azerbaijan, according to which the Fund has been established as a result of merging of Azerbaijan Mortgage Fund and Credit Guarantee Fund Open Joint Stock Companies. The Fund has been established in the form of a non-commercial legal entity as a legal successor of those joint stock companies. The Fund is responsible for establishing a mechanism for providing long-term mortgage lending to the population in the Republic of Azerbaijan with respect to living areas, providing assistance in attracting local and foreign financial resources to mortgage lending, granting guarantees to entrepreneurs for their loans in AZN from authorized banks as well as subsidizing the part of the interest accrued on those loans in cases and order determined by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

LABOUR, MIGRATION AND TOURISM
Law on amendment to the Migration Code has been adopted
On December 29, 2017, President Ilham Aliyev signed the law “On making amendments to the Migration Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan”. According to the amendment, foreigners and stateless persons arriving in the Republic of Azerbaijan with electronic visa obtained through “ASAN Visa” system will now be able to stay for the longer period - up to 90 days period with a multiple entry visa, alongside with up to 30 days stay period with single-entry visa as already stipulated in the legislation. These terms are applicable to all types of visas, apart from the labour visa.

Law on Tourism was amended
On December 29, 2017, President Ilham Aliyev signed the law on making amendments to the law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Tourism”. In accordance with the amendments, as a matter of accelerated procedure applications on the issuance of an electronic visa should be reviewed within 3 hours upon submission of the application.

Rules of visa formalization for foreigners and stateless persons were amended
On January 31, 2018, President Ilham Aliyev signed decree on making amendments to the decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan #326 dated 13 September 2010 on issues regarding the visa registration for foreigners and stateless persons arriving in the Republic of Azerbaijan. According to
the amendment, foreigners and stateless persons may obtain visas, without submitting an application form to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, but at the state border checkpoints of the Republic of Azerbaijan directly, if indicated in interstate and intergovernmental agreements, upon official invitation of President, Prime Minister, Chairman of National Assembly and other authorized persons of the Republic of Azerbaijan, visiting Azerbaijan due to death of the family member and other cases stipulated in the decree.

Procedure of visa issuance for foreigners and stateless persons changed

Several Rules on Unemployment Insurance have been adopted
On 29 December 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted several decrees approving rules related to implementation of unemployment insurance. The Rules are effective from 01 January 2018 and comprise the following:
1. The Rules “On issuance of insurance payments”;
2. The Rules “On registration of the unemployment insurance funds and reporting procedure”. These Rules define the procedure for payment of unemployment insurance funds, registration of these funds and reporting. According to the Rules, the State Social Protection Fund under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population has been defined as a supervisory state authority in this field.
3. The Rules “On financing of the salaries of the insureds”;
4. The Rules “On registration of the employers and the insureds for the unemployment insurance purposes within the insurer”.

Unemployment allowance has been annulled
According to the Decree #608 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Rules approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On calculation and payment of unemployment allowance” have been annulled as a result of implementation of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On unemployment insurance”, which has been effective since 01 January 2018.

The form of quarterly reports on unemployment insurance has been approved
The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan approved the form of the quarterly reports on unemployment insurance on 20 December 2017. Please follow the below link to find the form of the report:
http://e-qanun.az/framework/37452

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INVESTMENT
Agency on development of small and medium entrepreneurship has been established
By virtue of the decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 28, 2017, the Agency on Development of Small and Medium Entrepreneurship (“Agency”) has been established as a public legal entity under the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Agency is aimed at supporting the development of small and medium entrepreneurship in the country and shall carry out a range of services to SME subjects, coordinate and regulate the services of state authorities in this area. “Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Houses” shall be established within the Agency, which shall offer small and medium-sized businesses a range of services, such as training, consulting, information, business incubator, innovation center, financial services, etc. in the country’s major cities and regions. The activities of such houses will be carried out through ASAN service centers and the departments of the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the regions where ASAN service centers are not present.

Export legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan was amended
On January 11, 2018, President Ilham Aliyev signed decree on making amendments to the decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan #1063 dated October 5, 2016 on approval of the Rules on organization of export missions to foreign countries, research of foreign markets and marketing activity, promotion of the “Made in Azerbaijan” brand in foreign markets, obtaining of export related patent and certificates by local companies at foreign countries, export related research-development programs and projects, determination of the compensated parts of the expenses from state budget in relation to the projects and regulation of the payment mechanism. According to the decree, following changes will be made for the development of export policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan:
- Buyer missions which deal with the import or distribution of the products to foreign countries will be organized no more than 20 times per calendar year and their expenses of organizational issues related to their visits to the Republic of Azerbaijan will be covered by the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- Support will be provided for obtaining of international certificates through the list determined by the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the goods to be exported and/or services to be rendered.

Amendment to the Law on Entrepreneurial Activity has been approved
President Ilham Aliyev signed decree “On application of the Law on Amendment to the Law on Entrepreneurial Activity” on February 5, 2018. According to the Law, article 4-1 has been added to the Law in the following content:
“Article 4-1. Division of business entities by criteria
1. Subjects of entrepreneurship are divided into micro, small, medium and large entrepreneurship subjects according to the
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certain criteria provided in second paragraph of the article 4-1 of this Law.

2. Criteria for the division of micro, small, medium and large entrepreneurship subjects shall be approved by the relevant executive authority.

3. State support and incentives within framework of entrepreneurship regulation measures for micro, small and medium entrepreneurship subjects shall be implemented on the basis of the criteria provided in second paragraph of the article 4-1 of this Law.”

In accordance with the decree, the Cabinet of Ministers shall approve criteria for division of micro, small, medium and large entrepreneurship referred in second paragraph of the article 4-1 of the Law in three-month period with consent of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

New law on Investment Activity to be adopted

President Ilham Aliyev signed order “On several measures regarding promotion of investment activity and protection of rights of foreign investors” on January 18, 2018. According to the order, for creating favorable investment climate in Azerbaijan, taking into account international experience, the Cabinet of Ministers has been instructed to prepare a new draft law “On Investment Activity” on the basis of the laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Investment Activity” and “On Protection of Rights of Foreign Investors” within three months and to submit it to the president. In accordance with the order, the following issues shall be regulated within the new draft law:

1. Main directions of state policy in investment activity;
2. Set of measures promoting investment activity;
3. Mechanisms for protection of rights of investors and providing state guarantee for them;
4. Solution of disputes through negotiations, court, as well as arbitration (taking into account provisions of international arbitration rules);
5. Procedure for compensation of damage to investor, including lost profits.

CIVIL, CRIMINAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEGISLATION

Amendments to the Civil Code

On 9 February 2018, the Law on Amendments to the Civil Code was published. According to the law, the following amendments have been implemented to the Civil Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, including:

- The common ownership to be established in the immovable property might be divided into shares based on the division plan;
- The owner holding permission on construction of the building composed of components on the land area under his ownership may divide that land into shares in proportion to the number and area of the components of the building to be constructed in accordance with the division plan and may require the property right over each share to be indicated on the basis of the division plan, and might get control of each of the share arisen from the division based on the division plan and shares with regards to components of the building construction of which was not completed after the registration in the state register. Contracts on getting control of these shares must be certified by a notary and a note of guarantee must be made in favor of the parties purchasing components;
- Contractual service relationship arising during the appropriation of the shares connected with components in the land plot where the construction of the building is not completed, the payment of the fee (charge) shall be made subject to rates determined for each construction level, without exceeding them.

Law On amendments to the Administrative Offences Code has been adopted

With the amendments, the following part has been added (to Article 461) to the chapter of “administrative penalties for non-compliance with rules on payments of taxes, duties, financial and insurance” of the Administrative Offences Code. The amendment will be read as follow: Not submission of the documents, in defined period of time, (or data) or non-compliance with the information therein by the persons who are not registered for tax purposes, in conducting response to the inquiries over data-exchange from the foreign countries on the basis of international conventions which imply tax and finance data-exchange and are ratified by the Republic of Azerbaijan, will be subject to administrative penalty – for natural persons AZN 50, for natural persons AZN 100.

Administrative and criminal liability for violation of the rules on internal and external borrowing by state-owned legal entities

On 16 and 17 December 2017, the amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative Offences (the “Amendments”) were published. The Amendments establish administrative and criminal liability for violation of the rules on internal and external borrowing by state-owned legal entities. To be more precise, internal and external borrowing by state-owned legal entities without prior approval from Ministry of Finance is now subject to administrative and criminal liability depending on the amount of damage caused by a particular violation. For this purpose, it is worth to clarify, that under the Amendments, borrowing of state-owned legal entities without prior approval from the Ministry of Finance resulting in minor damage (e.g. up to AZN 20,000) is subject to administrative liability, while the damage starting from AZN 20,000 constitutes criminal liability. By way of background information, it should be noted, that the Amendments refer to the Rules on external and internal borrowing by state-owned legal entities (hereinafter in this section - the “Rules”) establishing an approval procedure of borrowing by such entities. Pursuant to the Rules, the concept of state-owned legal entities encompasses the following legal entities:

- Joint-Stock Companies, Limited Liability Companies in which state, either directly or indirectly owns 51% or more percent of the shares;
- Non-commercial legal entities and public legal entities established by the state;
- Commercial legal entities, non-commercial legal entities and public legal entities that are established by any of the legal entities listed above, provided that the latter owns 51 or more percent of the shares in the established entities.
MISCELLANEOUS

Law on restrictions on use of tobacco products has been approved

The new law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On restrictions on use of tobacco products” (“Law”) has been approved by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. According to the law, individuals and legal entities while selling tobacco products are not allowed to encourage the tobacco users by means of distributing free products or free samples, offering tobacco products as a lottery, competition, sports competitions, awards for games, etc. The Law also prohibits all forms of advertising or promotion of tobacco products, as well as through sponsorship of tobacco products. Smoking in public areas, buildings and facilities such as educational, health and sport centers and institutions, including their areas, public-catering facilities, including restaurants, cafes, bars, trade facilities, cinemas, theaters, elevators, workplaces, etc. has been banned by the Law. The breach of this rule is subject to the administrative penalty of AZN 30 according to Article 212.1 of the Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Administrative Offences (“Code”). The Law requires all enterprises, institutions and organizations to ensure that boards with signs or marks “smoking is prohibited” are placed in the areas mentioned above. Failure to comply with this requirement is subject to the administrative penalty of AZN 400 for officials and AZN 1,000 for legal entities pursuant to Article 212.2 of the Code. It should be noted that recently established State Advertisement Agency is a competent body (except for Icherisheher and Qala). It should also be noted that the Permit is given for a period not exceeding one year;

- Amount of state duty for obtainment of the Permit:
- Amount of payment for the placement of outdoor advertising:

New regulations on outdoor advertising have been approved

On 19 December 2017, the President signed decree approving the following acts:

- The Rules on issuance of permit for outdoor advertising and supervision over this area:
- These rules establish general procedure on application for obtainment of the permit for outdoor advertising (the “Permit”), bodies entitled to issue the Permit and rules for supervision over the outdoor advertising. It should be noted that recently established State Advertisement Agency is a competent body (except for Icherisheher and Qala). It should also be noted that the Permit is given for a period not exceeding one year;

Legislation on food products regulation was amended

On February 05, 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan adopted the resolution on making amendments to the “Rules of implementation of state control over observance of standards and requirements in the field of provision of quality and safety of food products”, approved by the resolution #154 of the Cabinet of Ministers dated August 16, 2005. According to the amendments the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the State Committee for Standardization, Metrology and Patents of the Republic of Azerbaijan have been excluded from the list of bodies implementing state control over for the quality and safety of food products, whereas Food Safety Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan will now execute these authorities.

New to AmCham

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Exhibitions are the perfect platform for meeting key people in your industry!

This year’s season of international exhibitions which are organised annually by Iteca Caspian in Azerbaijan will kick off in April. In total, there is a plan to host 16 exhibitions and 1 conference during the year. Exhibitions will be held in Baku Expo Center with the support of government industry agencies.

The 1st Exhibition celebrates 25th Anniversary

From 29th of May to 1st June, oil and gas industry professionals will focus their attention on 25th Anniversary International Caspian Oil and Gas Exhibition and Conference, the largest energy event in the Caspian region. Over the years, this first specialized exhibition of Azerbaijan has turned into the main industry forum which annually brings together leading experts and leaders of the oil industry from around the world. This anniversary, marked with a series of events with Caspian Oil and Gas, falls on a significant date – it is 95 years since the birth of Heydar Aliyev, Azerbaijan’s National Leader who was at the forefront of the event’s foundation. The annual participation of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Ilham Aliyev in the exhibition’s opening ceremony testifies to its high status. Throughout the years, Caspian Oil and Gas has been supported by the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and SOCAR. This year’s anniversary exhibition will bring together over 250 exhibitors. For now, more than 70% of the exhibition space has already been occupied by world-famous companies that are regular participants of the exhibition. A series of special events to mark the event’s 25th anniversary have been planned by the organizers.

Caspian Oil and Gas conference is the perfect platform for meeting key people in oil & gas industry!

Despite its 25 year-long run, the traditional Caspian Oil and Gas conference, which annually accompanies the exhibition, has remained the focus of attention of the major oil and gas players of the world. Over 30 delegates are expected to attend the conference which will be held at Fairmont Baku Hotel from the 30th to the 31st of May. This year’s theme of the plenary session at the conference will be the “Global and economic outlook in oil and gas industry – talking about the cost of oil and opportunities in a downturned environment”.

The annual participants

The composition of sponsors at this year’s exhibitions demonstrates how important these exhibitions are in the business life of companies. The sponsor companies already include such businesses as SOCAR, BP, Petronas, AZFEN J.V., Azeri M-I Drilling, Baku Steel Company, Baku Steel Company, Bos Shelf, Caspian Drilling Company, Caspian Marine Services, Dentons, Global Energy, Ernst & Young, Inpex Corporation, NB Qrup ASC, Nobel Upstream, Lamor, Statoil, SOCAR Polymer, SOCAR-AQS LLC, S.C. Euro Gas Systems, Tekfen Construction, Total E & P Absheron, Turkiye Petrolleri.

So, the next season of exhibitions will create excellent opportunities for professionals and experts of all industry to obtain a lot of relevant and useful information and find new business niches and meet reliable partners, while motivating and attracting new companies to the Caspian region in a short period of time. Complete details about exhibitions can be found on the company’s official website www.iteca.az.
Projects

AmCham Azerbaijan, Index of Prices

The new edition of Consumer Price Index (CPI) covers the 4th quarter of 2017. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is designed to measure the change in the average level of prices paid for consumer goods and services by private households. AmCham members will find it useful in setting pay increases, product prices etc. The CPI can also be used to determine the value of a sum of money from the past at today’s level. Over the last year (the base is 100 at 31 December 2016) the AAIP rose by 15.31 percent for Azerbaijani consumers and 14.32 for Expatriate consumers. In the 4th quarter of 2017 the AAIP rose by 0.95 percent for Azerbaijani consumers and 0.85 for Expatriate consumers. The upward effect on the AAIP rate came from Fruits & Vegetables where Index of Prices rose by 6.11 percent.

The survey is conducted collecting the prices of a fixed representative group or ‘basket’ of goods and services every quarter. These prices are then compared to the prices of the same goods and services from the previous quarter and the price change calculated. The prices of these goods and services are then combined into a single index measuring the overall level of prices. Different ‘weights’ are attributed to the various goods and services to reflect the average expenditure by households. The sample of representative goods and services for which prices are collected each period is held constant and the set of weights is fixed to reflect the importance in the typical household budget of the particular good or service. It is possible that, following the trial period. First ‘basket’ was represented by AmCham Azerbaijan in 2006. In 2012 the weights were adjusted and ‘basket’ was reviewed. The entire report is available on AmCham web-page.
(M2M) Discount Program

**JW MARRIOTT ABSHERON BAKU**
- 10% discount on all Food & Beverages – Discount is applicable maximum for 20 people per card. The card cannot be applied for meetings & events held in hotel
- 10% discount on all Spa Treatments – The limit is 20 guests per card. Discount does not apply for spa products retail
- 30% discount on Laundry & Cleaning – Discount is applicable for minimum on 3 days service

**HYATT REGENCY BAKU**
- 15% discount on restaurant and bar
- 15% discount on laundry and dry cleaning
- 20% discount on Spa treatments at Amrati Spa & Fitness

**FOUR SEASONS HOTEL BAKU**
- 10% off on Zafferoano Restaurant & Bentley’s Bar
- 10% off on Jaleh SPA (treatment, gym offer, retail products)

**THE LANDMARK HOTEL BAKU**
- 15% discount on Food & Beverages at: Caspian Grill & Terrace (ala carte) Lunch & Dinner
- Bangkok Ni (ala carte) lunch
- Sato (ala carte) Lunch & Dinner
- Sato (ala carte) Lunch & Dinner
- Shin Shin (ala carte) Lunch & Dinner
- Dolce Pausa (regular menu) Throughout the day

**HOLIDAY INN BAKU**
- 10% Discount on Food and Beverages at Holiday Inn Restaurant Marina 18 and Sagi Bar
- 15% Discount on Holiday INN Spa annual subscription (fitness center and swimming pool)
- 10% Discount on “Your Special Day” events inclusive Weddings, Engagements, Henna Parties

**INTERNATIONAL BANK OF AZERBAIJAN**
- 50% discount on Amex Gold card
- 50% discount on Amex Platinum card
- Free MC World Elite card

**PASHA INSURANCE**
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- 10% discount on voluntary motor insurance (CASCOC)

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- up to 15% on Internet Services at LandMark and other business centers

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- FREE migration to CLOUD.AZ Services
- up to 5% on IT Equipment, Cartridges and Software Licensing
- up to 15% on Internet Services at LandMark and other business centers

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