

## The Green World Solidarity Year

Climate change is one of the global problems that concern the world today. Climate changes and their impact on the bioenvironment are increasingly troubling the world community. Our country has not been spared from the impact of global climate changes, either. Agriculture, water resources, energy, forest, tourism, healthcare sector and coastal zones are sensitive to climate change in Azerbaijan. In order to increase focus and strengthen international solidarity in the fight against this problem, on December 25, 2023, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mr. Ilham Aliyev signed a decree declaring 2024 as the “Green World Solidarity Year”. This decree once again proves that Azerbaijan is among the first countries to join global initiatives. The declaration of 2024 by the head of state as the “Green World Solidarity Year” indicates that activities in this field will be expanded during the year and the work to be performed for the protection of environment will be significantly intensified.

As stated in the decree, the Republic of Azerbaijan as a reliable and responsible member of the international community makes its contribution to the fight against the consequences of climate change. Compared to the base year (1990), Azerbaijan has set a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 35 percent by 2030, and by 40 percent by 2050. Two years ago, our country voluntarily committed to replace 30% of the produced electricity with renewable energy by 2030 in the fight against global climate changes. Serious steps have been taken to unlock the renewable energy potential of the territories liberated from occupation. The territories of Azerbaijan, subjected to environmental terrorism by Armenia, have turned into a regional ecological disaster zone. During the occupation, our resources in the territories were exploited and looted. Unable to accept the defeat, the Armenians carried out environmental terrorist activities against Azerbaijan in the region until the end. At present, comprehensive response is being taken to restore the environmental situation in the territories liberated from occupation. Today, one of the state's priorities is to improve the environment along with the economic development of these areas, to quickly restore and increase greenery, and to ensure the efficient use of water resources and sustainable energy sources.

In this regard, agreements have been signed with ACWA Power and Masdar, the world's leading companies experienced in the field of renewable energy, and documents related to the construction of solar and wind power plants have been approved. With the investment of the Masdar company, the 230



megawatt Garadag solar power plant was built and put into operation. The renewable energy potential of our country - wind and solar energy on land is more than 27 gigawatts, and wind energy in the Azerbaijani sector of the Caspian Sea is 157 gigawatts. On May 18, 2021, President Ilham Aliyev, meeting with public representatives of Agdam, declared that the entire Karabakh zone will be a "green energy" zone. "Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities of Socio-Economic Development" defined by President Ilham Aliyev and adopted in February 2021 constitutes the strategic basis of Azerbaijan's renewable energy production policy. The clean environment and "green growth" country priority, which is one of the five National Priorities, sets new goals. The state of Azerbaijan is taking serious steps in this field and will export its renewable energy and green hydrogen to Europe through the bottom of the Black Sea in the near future. This will also lead to saving gas used in energy production and empower our export to Europe. As Europe buys more natural gas from Azerbaijan, it will reduce the burning of coal used for electricity generation and contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere.

Carrying out large-scale work to solve environmental problems in Azerbaijan, the state policy aimed at improving the environment is an important component of the country's long-term development strategy.



The core of the environmental policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan is to protect ecosystems in order to ensure that people live in an ecologically clean environment, to ensure sustainable development with the efficient use of natural resources, minimal

harmful impact on the environment, and to restore and protect its original state.

For the protection of the environment and the efficient use of natural resources, measures are being implemented within the framework of the "Socio-economic Development Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2022-2026", "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", "State Program for the Socio-Economic Development of the Regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2019-2023", "Action Plan for 2020-2022 to Ensure the Efficient Use of Water Resources", "State Program for geological study of subsurface and the efficient use of the mineral raw material base for 2020-2024" and other programs.

Determining quantitative and qualitative indicators of the level of environmental pollution and taking prompt measures in this regard is the main factor in environmental protection. To that end, ecological laboratories are being set up in the regions in order to establish a permanent monitoring control system over the state of pollution of environmental components throughout the country.

Efficient use of water resources, protection of the ecological environment of the Caspian Sea, waste management, reduction of the adverse effects of climate change, modernization of observation and monitoring systems, protection of atmospheric air, protection of biodiversity, development of ecotourism and aquaculture, protection and increase of forest cover, green spaces, restoration of polluted areas, increasing the fertility of soil resources, expanding the base of mineral raw materials and efficient use of natural resources, increasing ecological thinking are the main priority areas of the state's environmental policy.

Concrete steps are being taken to increase the share of green spaces in the country. IDEA (International Dialogue for Environmental Action) Public Association, launched on July 12, 2011 at the initiative of Leyla Aliyeva, the vice-president of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, is aimed at promoting public awareness of environmental issues and action, collaboration with youth, education in the field of environmental problems and finding proper solutions for them. The remarkable thing here is that each project is realized with the initiative, participation and leadership of the young generation.

With the joint activity of IDEA Public Union and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, new forest strips were planted in different regions of Azerbaijan, especially in lowland regions, on the sides of highways leading from Baku to different areas. The Heydar Aliyev Foundation's "Let's Plant a Tree" project, designed to protect ecology and the environment, also made great contributions to this field. As part of the project, implemented at the initiative of the President of the Foundation Mehriban Aliyeva, hundreds of hectares of land were planted with trees in our country. The project "Let's Plant a Tree" has become a broad green movement. As a result of the works carried out by this movement, infertile soil has become fertile, drop irrigation of new forest strips has been ensured, and soil erosion has been prevented. In addition, tree planting campaigns are held in many regions and cities of our country as part of the "Green World Solidarity Year".



For 30 years, Armenians committed acts of vandalism in our lands, forests, National Parks and Reserves. Valuable trees and other rare examples of biodiversity in the territories of Basitchay and Karagol State Reserves, Arazboyu, Lachin, Gubadli and Dashalti State Nature Reserves were destroyed. The destruction of a unique ecosystem of valuable and perennial dense forests of oak, juniper, beech, hornbeam, pine, ash tree, and walnut with a total area of more than 8,000 hectares was the heaviest blow to endemic biodiversity. Thus, Armenia violated the international conventions on ecology and environment, which it had joined. For, the forests of Karabakh, which are rich in the most valuable species of flora and fauna, were cut down and transported abroad. Birds and animals accustomed to the

richness of greenery have been displaced from these places. Many lakes of ecological importance have been greatly anthropogenically affected. The most important point in this issue was the contamination of rivers flowing from the territory of Armenia and forming sources of drinking water in Azerbaijan with chemical, biological and other radioactive waste. The balance of nature was disrupted and soil erosion began.

Important steps are being taken to restore the ecological situation in the liberated areas. Within the “Green World Solidarity Year”, Karabakh and Eastern Zangezur, as well as the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, were declared green energy zones. One of the main issues in the large-scale process of restoration and reconstruction of the liberated areas is the protection of the environment and the restoration of rich forests that have been vandalized by the enemy. The use of modern innovative projects such as “smart village” and “smart city” is a new approach to the ecosystem. Tree-planting actions are continued in Gubadli and Jabrayil. All territories liberated from occupation are being demined and secured.



It is a logical result of the environmental policy implemented by Azerbaijan that the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) will be held in Baku in 2024.

Within the framework of COP29, which will take place this year, the processes going on in the world, including issues related to climate, "green ideas", "green program", will be looked into on the Azerbaijani platform and Azerbaijani experience will be demonstrated.

The basis of the world community once again supporting Azerbaijan in this prestigious event is the reputation gained by our country and its confirmation as a reliable partner. Azerbaijan is creating both renewable energy and rapidly pursuing greening. At the international conference COP 29, which will be held in our country, Azerbaijan will clearly convey to the world community its contribution to climate action and unite the whole world in solidarity with this global challenge. At the same time, Azerbaijan, constantly introducing innovations, will fulfill the responsibilities and obligations arising from the “Green World Solidarity Year”.