

***on the implementation of the actions of the Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for
Landlocked Developing Countries***

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Fulfilling the commitments made by the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an integral part of state policy. The state programs, strategies, and action plans covering social, economic, and environmental spheres have been adjusted to meet the goals and objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while sector strategic plans were also developed within medium-term expenditure, which will be a significant roadmap for SDG financing.

In February, 2021, "Azerbaijan 2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development" was approved by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In this framework, the Government of Azerbaijan has established five national priorities targeted at achieving the long-term evolution towards the social-economic and environmental development of the country for the next decade:

1. a steadily growing, competitive economy;
2. a dynamic, inclusive society based on social justice;
3. areas of modern innovations Economic Development Strategy" is closely mapped to
ures, the country's

s adapted to the new global realities in a short period of time, macroeconomic

ensured, and the population's well-being and health were protected.

number of regulatory legal acts have been adopted and successfully implemented

negative impact of the pandemic and the resulting sharp fluctuations in the world

energy and stock markets on the economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, macroeconomic stability, employment issues and business entities in the country.

The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan responded promptly to the processes taking place in the world economy and global markets, and first of all, emergency anti-inflation measures were implemented in the country.

A number of customs and fiscal regulation measures have been taken in the field of improving the supply of the domestic market with food products included in the minimum consumption basket, as well as stimulating local producers of such products, and protecting the level of self-sufficiency in the domestic market for relevant food products. At the same time, the use of concessional financing instruments for micro, small and medium-sized entrepreneurs involved in the supply and processing of basic food products and the processing of agricultural products has been expanded. As a result of implemented consistent and purposeful economic policy the Azerbaijani economy in 2022 showed an increase of 4.6%.

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Priority Area 1: Fundamental transit policy issues

The transit policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as a landlocked country, aims at creating a new infrastructure and diversifying transport connections, using rationally transit opportunities, providing state support for transport projects, brings the legal and institutional framework closer to international standards, implementing widely transport and logistical systems facilitating transportation operations and the goods movement process.

New projects are being implemented for strengthening the transit potential. In particular, measures are continuously taken by the customs authorities to increase the transit potential of the Republic of Azerbaijan by simplifying border crossing procedures during international transportation. In this area, our country has joined a number of agreements that provide for the use of simplified customs and border crossing procedures during international cargo transportation.

Among these “Protocol among the Customs Administrations of the GUAM (Organization for Democracy and Economic Development) Member States on organizing the preliminary data exchange related to the movement of goods and vehicles across the state borders of the GUAM Member States” dated 8 July 2015, “Transit and Transport Cooperation

envisages the advance data exchange on the transport route, the application of electronic transit document and customs guarantee.

The TIR-EPD system, which provi

March of 2022 and the works related to the harmonization of the legislation as a result of the implementation of the project is being continued.

In the framework of international container transportation, work is being done in the field of studying international experience and creating a national mechanism for ensuring control over the return of temporarily imported containers from the territory of the country. Fundamental reconstruction works have been completed for increasing the release capacity in

Azerbaijan is one of the first among countries to sign the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. It is known that the "Digital Customs" solution is crucial for the implementation of the provisions of the Framework Agreement. In this regard, the relevant work done by the State Customs Committee. Azerbaijan ranked 9th in the survey on trade facilitation and paperless trade in Asia and the Pacific. The strategy of the future development of this sector has been identified and endorsed within the policy documents "Strategic Road Map for the Development of Logistics and Trade in the Republic of Azerbaijan" and other State Programs, approved by the relevant decrees of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The roadmap defines the short-term, medium-term and long-term perspective directions of economic development of Azerbaijan in the field of logistics and trade for the period up to 2020, 2025 and beyond 2025.

In order to implement the relevant provisions of the "Strategy Document on Trade Facilitation" approved within the framework of Organization of Turkic States (OTS), a "Committee on Trade Facilitation" was established under the organization and the necessary work is being continued within the organization.

As a country that plays the role of a bridge f

for optimization of tariffs, coordinating activities of carriers and government agencies, ensuring transparency, simplifying transit procedures and sustainable development of transport.

The number of customs officers at the Yalama station has been increased. In order to speed up the work, the process of transfer of the employees of the State Border Service to the station area is ongoing. Optimization of a number of operations on the Alat complex was carried out within the framework of the operation management service launch. Coordination work has been organized between all related services in the complex. Daily selector meetings were organized with the participation of the main services. Pla

documents of the overpasses have been completed. The project is planned to be completed in

cargoes, including container transportation, as well as wagon and auto equipment transportation by ferry ships. In order to attract additional cargo volumes to the routes across the Caspian Sea, discounted rates have been applied by ASCO to the transportation of a number of cargoes, including container transportation, as well as wagon and auto equipment transportation by ferry ships. Within the framework of infrastructure projects, in the direction of the renewal of the shipping fleet, 26 new ships have been commissioned by ASCO since 2014, including 8 dry cargo ships for the transport fleet, 4 tankers and 2 Ro-Pax/Ferry type ships, and for the specialized oil fleet 1 anchor-carrying supply tug, 4 supply ships, 3 supply tugs, 1 port tug and 3 passenger ships. In addition, the construction of 1 more tanker at the Baku Shipbuilding Plant, and 6 small water-capacity service boats at the Zigh ship repair and construction plant of ASCO is ongoing.

Projects initiated by our country play a special role in the development of international transport corridors. Among these projects, we would like to highlight the Middle Corridor, which starts from Southeast Asia and China, passes through Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkiye, and reaches Europe. Over the last year significant results have been achieved through initiatives of relevant agencies and companies from Azerbaijan, Turkiye, Kazakhstan and Georgia to achieve efficient operations on this corridor:

- Azerbaijan Railways and Georgian Railways processes have been optimized and delivery times reduced (the duration of the train journey ranges from 25-30 days to 8-11 days -from Alat to Georgian ports and in the opposite direction);
- Handling of ships at Alat port from 8-10 hours to 4—5 hours;
- Average container delivery time from Kazakhstan-China border to Poti port reduced from 38-53 days to 19-23 days.

The Operations Management Center was set up jointly with the railway and port administrations of Georgia and Kazakhstan. This initiative has made it possible to organize operational coordination between all parties at Alat port. Thanks to which:

- the daily container loading has doubled;
- the shipment of containers from Alat port (with containers in stock) began with a load of 3 trains per day.

Conference calls have been organized among all participants of the transit corridor. Due to the organization of cooperation and information exchange the travel time from Alat port to

Batumi/Poti port has been reduced by 2-3 times through daily co

Azerbaijan, together with Georgia and Turkiye, realized the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars new railway line project. Within the project, the construction of 101 km of new railway line connecting the Trans-European and Trans-Asian railway networks and the reconstruction of the existing 160 km of railway in Georgia were carried out. For this, the government of Azerbaijan allocated 775 mln. USD.

Another project of regional importance is the construction of the New Baku International Sea Trade Port, In May of 2018, a ceremony of completion of the first phase of construction of the Port was held. Today, the Port, which is capable of serving ferries and Ro-Ro vessels, has a carrying capacity of 15 million tons per year, including 100 thousand containers. Thanks to its location at the intersection of the main directions of transit freight traffic, the Port will transform into a major logistics center for the entire region. Furthermore, the Port, the logistics and transportation hub of the region, strives to align its operational principles with SDG principles, as well as to contribute to the global sustainable development strategy by creating sustainable mechanisms for the development of the regional supply

Over the past years, more than 10000 km of roads and highways have been constructed, reconstructed and repaired. Azerbaijan is ranked 27th for the quality of roads infrastructure among 137 countries in the Global Competitiveness Index 2019 published by the World Economic Forum. Our major road and rail networks are included in Trans-European Transport Network.

Energy

In 2021, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the use of renewable energy sources in the production of electricity" was enacted. In connection with the resolution of the issues arising from the said Law, drafts of the Regulations on "Implementation of the active consumer support mechanism", the Regulation on "Renewable energy sources information system", of the rules on "Support for the holding of renewable energy auctions in Azerbaijan" rules, of the rule on "Issuance of a certificate for the source of electric energy produced from renewable energy sources" were prepared and submitted to the Ca

In Azerbaijan, the construction works of a 230 MW solar power plant by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) company "Masdar" and a 240 MW wind power plant by the "ACWA Power", company of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are ongoing. Moreover, "Executive Agreement on the assessment, development and implementation of onshore industrial-scale 1 GW solar and 1 GW wind energy projects in the Republic of Azerbaijan" and "Executive Agreement on the assessment, development and implementation of 2 GW offshore integrated wind and green hydrogen projects" were signed between the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the "Masdar" company of the UAE.

In order to meet the demand for electric energy, new power centers are created, as well as relevant measures are regularly implemented in the transmission and distribution networks.

ICT

ICT is also the most rapidly growing sector of the economy of Azerbaijan. ICT development is part of the country's development priorities and important activities are being carried out in this direction. Numerous state programs and other related important documents have been endorsed to create a sustainable information infrastructure in the country. National Strategy on the Development of Information Society encompasses the development of ICT infrastructure and services, high technologies, promotion of e-government and more effective and transparent public administration, strengthening the scientific and technical potential of high technologies, training of personnel, as well as ensuring cyber security.

Almost 8596 of the Azerbaijan's population use Internet. According to 2020 numbers 8596 of households (8296 in rural and 8896 urban areas) have access to internet at home. Fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants is 20. Government has an active role to play to support the backbone internet infrastructure. The strategy we follow in Azerbaijan is to achieve full home broadband internet coverage by 2024, with a minimum speed of 25Mbis. Work is underway for this project.

In Azerbaijan, the entire population is covered by a mobile-cellular network. Mobile broadband internet is widespread, so far active mobile-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants is 73.

E-services in Azerbaijan are being implemented through “E-Government” portal which is functioning on the basis of “one window” principle. Currently, E-Government Portal offers 454 e-services which belong to various state authorities. Services such as registration of documents, presentation of reports and statements, obtaining social pensions, as well as other services that attach great importance to the citizens are widely used in Portal.

Based on an agreement signed in 2018, the inauguration of the construction of fiber-optic cable along the bottom of the Caspian Sea between Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan took place in Aktau, Kazakhstan, in November 2019, with the participation of top officials from both sides. Measuring 400 kilometers, this line will have a data-transmission capacity reaching 4-6 terabits per second.

Another fiber-optic cable along the bottom of the Caspian Sea is Siyazan-Turkmenbashi line. The initial interstate agreement “On the Organization of Activities by Communications Operators of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan in relation to the joint Construction of Fiber-Optic Transmission Lines along the Bottom of the Caspian Sea on the Azerbaijan-Turkmenistan route, Their Ownership, and Use” was signed in November 2019. With high data-transmission capacity, the new undersea fiber-optic cable will link the cities of Siyazan, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan.

The creation of these lines will substantially contribute to the formation of the so-called “Digital Silk Road” between Europe and Asia by connecting the Internet centers of Frankfurt and Mumbai. It will also enable the transmission of web traffic from Europe to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India via Azerbaijani territory.

Priority 3: International trade and trade facilitation

It is worth noting that work has been ongoing to assess the compliance of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement, moreover, relevant report has been prepared in 2017 with the support of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) within the framework of technical assistance projects implemented with the support of international organizations. Furthermore, within the technical assistance projects financed by the European Union (EU), works were carried out in this direction with the support of experts, and it is planned to continue relevant works in the next technical assistance projects.

Necessary studies are being conducted in the direction of the establishment of the National Committee for Trade Facilitation in the Republic of Azerbaijan. In this regard, within the framework of EU-funded technical assistance projects in 2020 and 2022, international experts presented information on the experience of other countries, the Committee's Statute and functions, and prepared analysis documents. At the same time, in 2020, with the support of UNECE, a meeting and discussions were held regarding the experience of the said Committee in the member states of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) who are also the members of the WTO. Currently, the necessary works are being continued with the participation of the relevant state institutions.

In accordance with the recommendations of the World Customs Organization and best international practice, the "Green Corridor" release system has been implemented since February 1, 2019 in order to form a culture of voluntary compliance among foreign trade participants and to make customs clearance and customs control of goods and vehicles more prompt and transparent.

Since 2019, a total of 1,049 foreign trade participants have applied for the right to permanent use of the "Green Corridor" release system. As a result of the analysis of the received applications, 284 foreign trade participants were granted the right to export, 508 foreign trade participants were granted the right to import operations, and a total of 792 foreign trade participants were granted the right to use the "Green Corridor" release system.

In accordance with the relevant recommendations of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, the Customs Code of the European Union, the Revised Kyoto Convention and the World Customs Organization, "Advance Rulings" project on the classification of goods and the determination of the country of origin is being implemented by the State Customs Committee in order to implement the customs clearance process of goods in a fast and simplified manner, elimination of loss of time and costs, efficient forecasting of people's business plans in advance, exclude repeated expert examination requests during the clearance of goods with the same characteristics and to increase economic competitiveness by providing support to foreign trade participants in general. In this regard, "The Guidelines for the application of advance rulings for the tariff classification of goods and country of origin", "Application forms", "Rules" for submission of an electronic application form on issuance of advance rulings" have been prepared and placed as an electronic service in the subsection "Advance Rulings" created in

of an electronic one-stop system for foreign trade without incurring additional costs by examining the missing parties and analyzing international experience by coordinating the existing systems, as well as taking into account the proposals of the relevant institutions when considering the establishment of

Regional integration and cooperation

In February 2017, ADY became a member of "Trans-Caspian International Transport Route" International Association in order to implement developed port infrastructure, unified transport technology and effective tariff policy.

As part of the industrialization measures, the diversification of the industry has been expanded, new production areas such as shipbuilding industry, defense industry, pharmaceutical industry, automobile industry, production of rubber and plastic mass products, chemical industry, waste processing and competitive enterprises based on modern technologies have been created.

The application of the elements of the knowledge economy, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, integration into the global value chain, clustering, the development of the modern industrial ecosystem, the protection of strategic industrial areas, as well as the promotion of foreign direct investments, providing support to the small and medium entrepreneurship, transformation of the industry into a new digital era, development of R&D centers are among the main drivers of the industrial policy for the coming years.

The creation of industrial zones is one of the progressive methods and mechanisms in the sustainable development of the industry, especially the non-oil industry. The industrial zones, apart from being one of the most successful models of the industrialization policy and playing an important role in the development of the country's industry, make an important contribution to the development of the economy, to the increase of export potential and production of competitive products. Currently, there are 5 industrial parks in the country - Sumgayit Kimya, Pirallahi, Mingachevir, Garadag, Balakhani industrial parks. Aghdam Industrial Park and Araz Valley Economic Zone Industrial Park are also under construction. Moreover, there are Hajigabul, Masalli, Neftchala, Sabirabad and Sharur industrial districts in Azerbaijan.

Pursuant to the national legislation, stimulating measures include provision of infrastructure for the industrial park, determination of the minimum rent for land, provision of preferential loans, simplification of administrative procedures, organization of services for the efficient implementation of entrepreneurial activities, preferential tariffs for the sale of heat, electricity, water and gas, waste water discharge and household waste collection. Residents of industrial parks are exempt from income tax, profit tax, property tax, land tax for 10 years from the date of their registration.

Furthermore, importian ip

exemption from 50% of profit or income tax;
full exemption from land and property tax;
full exemption from customs duty and VAT of machinery, technological equipment and equipment imported from abroad under the project, based on the relevant confirmation document.

With the financial support of the European Union, the "Strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) to improve effectiveness and efficiency of state support to agriculture" Twinning Project was implemented and completed in 2022. The overall objective of the Twinning project "Strengthening the capacity of the MOA to improve effectiveness and efficiency of state support to agriculture" was to contribute to improving the performance of the agricultural sector thereby implementing Government policy on diversification of the economy, decreasing regional disparities, and improving rural livelihoods. The project worked towards this goal aiming to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture to define, programme, and administer effective state support to agriculture and for rural development and in line with relevant EU policy principles and best practices.

Within the framework of the project, activities were carried out in the direction of increasing the capacity of MOA for analyzing, compiling, monitoring, reporting and evaluating the current subsidy policy, preparing a pr Å 4 c MT fE ä Å

Development Volunteers were trained by international experts and the tender works for the purchase of IT equipment for them were finalized.

3 computers, 2 printers, 1 camera, 1 stabilizer and 1 tripod were purchased and handed over to volunteers at the FAO-Azerbaijan Office in order to strengthen the material and technical base of the Agrarian Development Volunteers to stimulate the individual development of young people, to increase their sense of social responsibility, to effectively use the potential of youth for the well-being of the people and the sustainable development of our country.

In Gabala, Gakh and Guba districts, "Gilan Holding", "Ani Delta" and "Fruit and Tea Cultivation Institute" conducted an internship program for farmers in the agrarian field in the fields of fruit growing and animal husbandry, and certificates were presented to the beneficiaries who participated in the training. Within the framework of the project, trainings on business plan preparation were organized in order to develop the entrepreneurial skills of young farmers across the country, as well as to ensure their access to financial resources. 428 young farmers applied for the training organized in this direction and they were trained by experts based on the "Start and develop your own business" program of the International Labor Organization. In

festival an information session and trainings were held on a number of priority issues of interest to farmers, such as intensive gardening, precision agriculture, pests and diseases control etc.

More than 4,000 farmers had the opportunity to get acquainted with innovative agricultural products and technologies at the festivals organized by the Agrarian Innovation Center in Guba, Ujar, Gobustan, Aghstafa, Zagatala, Imishli, Shamkir and Astara districts in 2022.

For the first time in the country, about 10 specialists were trained on embryo transfer, 35 heifers were equipped, and 30 heifers were transferred embryos within the framework of the project "Improvement of Cattle Production in Azerbaijan through Establishment of Effective Cattle Breeding and Feeding Systems".

In addition, within the framework of the project "Development and application of sustainable sheep production and food value chains", training skills were formed for the selected facilitators for the establishment of farmer business schools (FBM), orientation trainings on FBM were held, and phenotypic evaluation of local breeds was carried out for the first time in 3 districts. Also, the creation of 2 semi-intensive farms and 1 pilot farm for the management of local breeds has been started.

Within the framework of the FAO Azerbaijan Partnership Program (FATP), training programs were developed based on needs surveys under the project "Improved food security and rural livelihoods through women's economic empowerment - WEP", virtual trainings were conducted by local experts to more than 30 agrarian consultancy providers, a gender assessment document for the country - agriculture and a national gender profile of rural conditions, as well as a report on the assessment of the development of agriculture and rural areas for the first time in Azerbaijan.

8 video lessons on fruit and vegetable growing have been prepared. 277 beneficiaries of the 12 target regions of the project were provided with online and on-site trainings in agriculture, agro-tourism and business areas, about 300 rural women farmers were trained in business management, food safety, marketing and sales, beekeeping, poultry, animal husbandry, vegetable growing and horticulture, support was provided in increasing knowledge and skills on innovative agricultural technologies.

In accordance with the approved business plans, 245 women farmers received various types of technical equipment, as well as information technology equipment (notebook, printer, ADLS modem) to 14 women's groups.

83 beekeepers were provided with bee colonies, beehives, and beekeeping supplies, more than 120 beneficiaries were provided with dairy and poultry equipment, including milking machines, milk separators, feed grinders, incubators, generators, bird feed and water containers, 13 beneficiaries were provided with drip irrigation systems, Gardening equipment was presented to 41 beneficiaries.

A brand called "Sovgat" was formed to select some products of project beneficiaries and market them. AKIA granted credits and discounts for the purchase of agricultural machinery and equipment for 102 requests to the processing area in 2022.

"Catalyzing the Efficiency and Sustainability of Azerbaijan's Hazelnut Sector – HAZER", a study was conducted on the use of sustainable bioenergy in the field of hazelnut cultivation.

Bioenergy technologies and the possibilities of renewable energy sources in Azerbaijan were reviewed in order to provide biofuel to households that are not connected to the natural gas network. Loans and concessions for financing the purchase of 12,458 heads of breeding cattle and 8,961 agricultural machinery (including 50 combines and 1,338 tractors) at the expense of the Agency in 2022. Cash preferential loans were given to 2870 entrepreneurs working in agricultural products for processing in the county in 2022. The total amount of loans granted in 2022 was 1.1 million AZN.

Practical work has been done to support agritourism, which can be considered a new direction for the private sector. In order to define the concept of agrotourism, to determine the special support measures provided by the state, to direct agriculture to multifunctionality and diversification, the potential opportunities of agrotourism were investigated, and a draft of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "Law on Agrotourism" was prepared based on the experiences of advanced countries included in the EU.

At the same time, in addition to the preparation of guidelines reflecting the methodology of developing a rural development program in line with EU approaches, the implementation of the Rural Development Framework in Azerbaijan within the framework of the Twinning project "Strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture to improve effectiveness and efficiency of state support to agriculture" (financed by the EU) and a "Seminar on introducing a Rural Development framework and setting-up a national Agritourism system in Azerbaijan" was organized.

Within the framework of the project, in the context of rural development policy, guidelines for the agritourism sector have been prepared in detail, including the Action Plan, which reflects the necessary steps for launching the National Agritourism System in Azerbaijan.

The Tourism Development Strategy document of the State Tourism Agency and the Azerbaijan Tourism Bureau for 2023-2026 reflects a strategic and holistic approach to tourism development in the country over the next four years. In general, the following issues are among the top priorities for tourism development:

- State management of tourism;
- Policy and regulation;
- Development of destinations, cultural heritage, and communities;
- Destination marketing;
- Tourism products;
- Digitalization, innovation and technology;
- Statistics, analytics and research;
- Tourism investment and cooperation;
- Human resources development.

The Strategic Roadmaps for National Economy and Key Sectors of the Economy were approved by the Decree No. 1138 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated December 6, 2016. The directions covered in these strategic roadmaps include the

development of oil and gas industry, production and processing of agricultural products, production of consumer goods at the level of small and medium enterprises, heavy industry and machine building, specialized tourism industry, logistics and trade, provision of affordable housing, vocational education and training, financial services, telecommunications and information technologies, utilities (electricity and heat energy, water and gas). The period of implementation of the measures determined in the mentioned areas is 2017-2020. As a result of the implementation of the strategic roadmaps, the economy of Azerbaijan recovered from the negative impact of external shocks in 2015-2016 and stabilized in the short term, while the development was restored in the medium term. It is as a result of this that the immunity gained by the Azerbaijani economy has made it possible to minimize the effects of the global crisis in 2020.

The SMBDA issues startup certificates and micro and small businesses can apply for a Startup Certificate. According to the Tax Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan, entrepreneurs engaged in micro and small businesses are exempt from income and profit tax on income from innovation activity for 3 years from the date of receiving the Startup Certificate. The SMBDA finances educational, scientific, research, and support projects related to the development of micro, small, and medium businesses by arranging competitions. In 2022, about 700 trainings on various topics were held by SME Development Centers, more than 9,000 hours of consulting services were provided, and up to 9,000 SMEs, start-ups and those who newly started their business benefited from these services. Also, free support to entrepreneurs in the preparation of more than 300 business plans were provided. Moreover, the creation of 30 new SMEs was supported in the fields of agriculture and services, including Baku and the regions of Azerbaijan.

In June, 2022, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On investment activity" was enacted with the aim to increase the attractiveness of the investment environment and create a favorable environment for attracting foreign direct investment. Moreover, in December, 2022, the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on public-private partnership was adopted in order to increase the efficiency of investments, activity in the non-oil sector, and public-private partnership.