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PRESS RELEASE

D-8 ORGANIZATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION

D-8 SECRETARY-GENERAL AMBASSADOR SOHAIL MAHMOOD UNDERTAKES FIRST VISIT TO AZERBAIJAN; PARTICIPATES IN WUF13 AND D-8 HIGH-LEVEL ENERGY AND URBAN DIALOGUE

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Secretary-General of the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8), paid his first official visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan (17-20 May) since assuming his position in January 2026. Upon the invitation of the Honourable President His Excellency Ilham Aliyev, the Secretary General participated in the 13th Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) in Baku. He also attended the D-8 High-Level Energy and Urban Dialogue organized on the sidelines of WUF and met with senior members of the Azerbaijan Government.

The Secretary-General was accompanied during the visit by a D-8 delegation comprising Ambassador Mustafa Özcan, Director-I, and Mr. Muhammad Bilal Khan, Executive Assistant.

The 13th World Urban Forum (WUF13) was jointly organized by the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) under the theme “Housing the World: Safe and Resilient Cities and Communities.” The successful hosting of WUF13 marked another major global milestone for Azerbaijan following the successful organization of COP29 in 2024, further reinforcing Azerbaijan’s growing profile as an important convener of international platforms for multilateral dialogue on climate action, sustainable development, and urban transformation. The Forum brought together Heads of State/Government, Ministers, Mayors, senior representatives of international and regional organizations, urban experts, and development stakeholders from across the world to deliberate on the future of resilient, inclusive and sustainable cities. More than 40,000 registered for the Forum (17-22 May 2026).

During the visit, the Secretary-General participated in the D-8 High-Level Energy and Urban Dialogue, held at the Azerbaijan Pavilion with the thematic focus on “Powering Sustainable Cities in the D-8 Region: Aligning Energy Transitions with Urban Development Agendas.” The high-level dialogue focused on the critical nexus between sustainable urbanization, renewable energy, climate resilience and smart infrastructure, and brought together Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Mayors, Senior Officials, experts and development partners from D-8 Member States.

In his keynote intervention, Secretary-General Sohail Mahmood underscored that urbanization and energy transition can no longer be treated as separate policy tracks but must be addressed as interconnected development imperatives. He noted that cities already account for more than 80 percent of global GDP, nearly 70 percent of global energy consumption and over 70 percent of energy-related greenhouse gas



emissions, making sustainable urban planning and clean energy transition central to future development strategies. He emphasized that D-8 countries, with a combined population of 1.28 billion people and GDP exceeding USD 5 trillion, possess significant renewable energy potential, youthful demographics and strategic geographies to emerge as a formidable force in shaping sustainable urban futures.

The Secretary-General highlighted the urgent need to address the financing gap for climate-smart urban infrastructure, stressing that developing countries require enhanced access to concessional finance, technology transfer, and equitable partnerships to align urban development with energy transition goals. He underlined that a just transition must remain people-centered, with particular focus on urban youth, low-income communities, green jobs and inclusive service delivery.

The Secretary-General proposed a five-pronged approach hinging on practical cooperation in the energy transition-urban development context: (i) integrated urban energy planning; (ii) increased digital governance and smart technologies; (iii) enhanced South-South cooperation; (iv) increased investment in climate-resilient infrastructure; and (v) stronger common positioning of D-8 Member States on international platforms. He further urged consideration of initiatives such as designation of “Sustainable D-8 City of the Year,” “D-8 Green Capital,” and “D-8 Clean Energy Capital,” to encourage innovation, sharing best practices, and recognizing cities demonstrating leadership in sustainable urban transformation across the D-8 region.

Within the context of Azerbaijan’s contributions to the D-8 processes, a major outcome of the visit was the reinforcement of progress toward operationalization of three D-8 Centers of Excellence being established in Baku -- namely Energy and Climate, Transport, and the Media. These initiatives were highlighted as practical institutional platforms to strengthen South-South cooperation, policy dialogue, research exchange, innovation, technical cooperation and capacity-building across D-8 Member States in areas of renewable energy, connectivity, media cooperation, climate resilience and sustainable urban development.

In the course of his visit to Baku, Secretary-General Ambassador Sohail Mahmood also held a series of high-level meetings with senior members of the Government. In the meeting with Assistant to the President and Head of the Department of Foreign Policy Affairs of the Presidential Administration H.E. Hikmat Hajiyeu, he exchanged views on Azerbaijan’s expanding role within D-8 and the Organization’s future strategic direction.

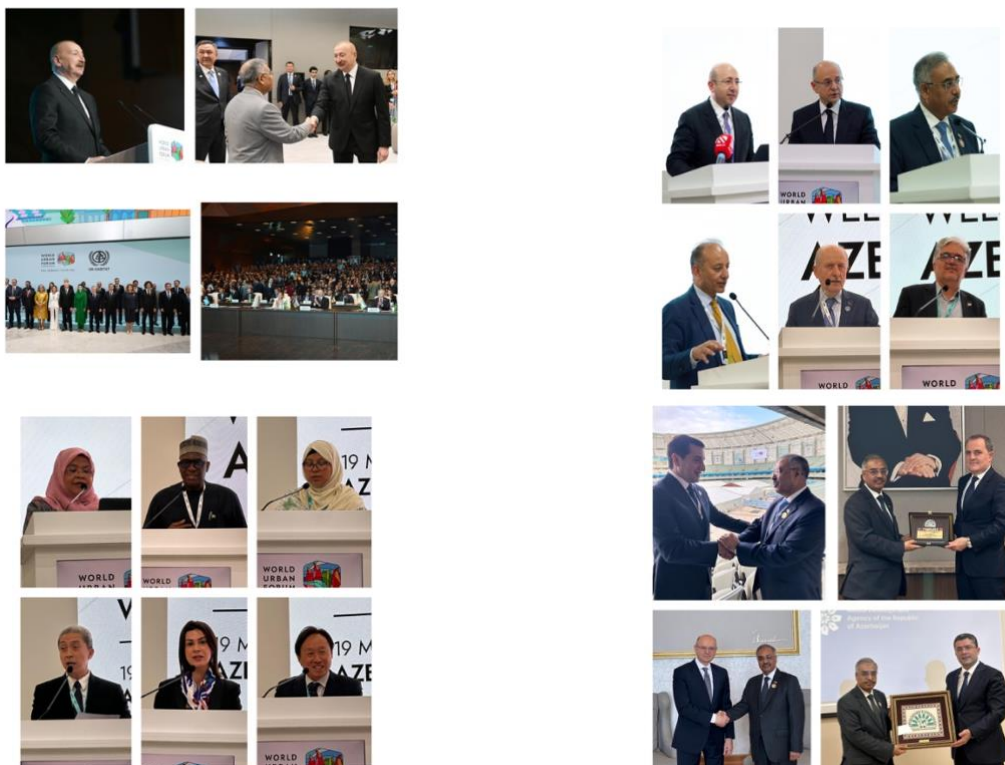
The Secretary General also called on H.E. Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov, holding discussions on the broad spectrum of D-8–Azerbaijan cooperation and the Organization’s future strategic direction. Views were exchanged on further strengthening economic and institutional cooperation within D-8, including the ongoing reform process aimed at enhancing the institutional and financial capacity of the D-8 Secretariat. Discussions also covered preparations for the 12th D-8 Summit in Jakarta, Azerbaijan’s dynamic role and positive momentum within the Organization following its accession, and the process of accession to key D-8 legal instruments and frameworks.



In the meeting with H.E. Minister of Energy Parviz Shahbazov, discussions focused on the operationalization of the proposed D-8 Energy and Climate Center in Baku, as well as preparations for the First Meeting of D-8 Energy Ministers being held in Baku on 1 June 2026. The two sides also deliberated on enhancing cooperation in energy security, renewable energy investment, sustainable financing, climate resilience and green transition initiatives across D-8 Member States.

The Secretary-General also met with Mr. Ahmad Ismayilov, Executive Director of the Media Development Agency of Azerbaijan (MEDIA), where discussions focused on the operationalization of the Media Excellence Center in the near future and further strengthening media cooperation among D-8 Member States through professional exchanges, joint capacity-building programmes, media literacy initiatives, and collaborative communication platforms.

Overall, the exchanges during the Secretary General's first official visit to Baku illustrated the high priority that the leadership in Azerbaijan places on D-8 membership and Azerbaijan's dynamic role and contributions to the D-8 processes. The D-8 High Level Energy and Urban Dialogue in the context of WUF enabled sharing of D-8 perspectives in the global discourse on sustainable development and outlining practical and forward-looking framework aimed at delivering tangible outcomes across the D-8 region.



Istanbul, 22 May 2026