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## **MOGHERINI HINTS AT IMMINEENT FINALIZATION OF NEW EU-AZERBAIJAN PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

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08.04.2019

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Caspian News (07 April 2019)

The European Unions High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, signaled in a speech made in Brussels on Thursday that Azerbaijan and the EU may soon complete negotiations on a new partnership agreement.

We are currently in an important phase of negotiations, because we are hopefully in the final crucial phase of negotiating our new ambitious bilateral agreement, which I am sure will increase and deepen our relations, Mogherini said at the 16th EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council, according to a video footage posted on European External Action Services (EEAS) official Twitter page.

It will benefit all our citizens both in the EU and in Azerbaijan.

The agreement, which will replace the current deal that has been in force since 1999, is expected to offer EU support for the Azerbaijani economy and support its candidacy to the World Trade Organization. The agreement also addresses education and human capital, as well as strengthening institutions to maintain good governance.

The 28-member EU and Azerbaijan have had relations since 1991, when the country became independent after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the first partnership and cooperation agreement (PCA) was signed in 1996 and went into effect three years later. The scope of that agreement covered primarily political dialogue, trade, investment, economic matters, legislation and cultural linkages.

News about updating the old PCA first made headlines in November 2016, when the European Council adopted a mandate for the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to negotiate a new agreement with Azerbaijan. Negotiations on a new framework agreement with Azerbaijan kicked off in February 2017.

Last summer the EU and Azerbaijan raised the bar and set new partnership priorities intended to usher in a new era of cooperation. Priorities include strengthening institutions and good governance, exploiting economic development and market opportunities, enhancing connectivity, energy efficiency, environment, and climate action partnership, and building stronger people-to-people contacts.

Today in our meeting we also discussed the situation in the wider region where the European

Union and Azerbaijan share common interests and where we are already working together, Mogherini said of her meeting with Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov on the margins of the EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council in Brussels on Thursday.

Azerbaijan has made a very important sustained contribution to the development of the Eastern Partnership. As we discussed today, we both look forward to continuing to focus the initiative of the Eastern Partnership on bringing tangible results and benefits to our citizens' lives.

Azerbaijan came in at number one in the Sustainable Development section of the 2017 Eastern Partnership Index, which measures progress made by the six Eastern Partnership countries towards sustainable democratic development and European integration. The country received the highest score, with 0.79 points, for successfully fulfilling sustainable development policy, sustainable development, as well as the education and culture policy goals.

<https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/mogherini-hints-at-imminent-finalization-of-new-eu-azerbaijan-partnership-agreement-2019-4-6-56/>

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