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## **MEXICO EXPECTS GROWTH IN TRADE WITH AZERBAIJAN THIS YEAR**

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Azerbaijan's access to the Caspian Sea and location adjacent to Central Asia determine its strategic position, and on this basis, Mexico sees Azerbaijan as an important partner in the region.

Economic and tourism ties between the two countries have expanded significantly over the past four years. A record volume of trade between Azerbaijan and Mexico was registered at \$26.2 million in 2018.

This year, the figures are expected to exceed last year's indicators, the Mexican Embassy in Azerbaijan told Azertag.

The imports from Mexico to Azerbaijan increased by 35.74 percent in 2017-2018, while Azerbaijani exports to Mexico grew by 12.44 percent during this period.

Speaking of the current presence of Mexican products in the Azerbaijani market, the Embassy noted that 39 percent accounts for drilling parts for the oil industry, 18 percent □ for drilling pipes, and 10-12 percent □ for oil and gas pipes. In addition, Mexico accounts for 12 percent of beer imported to Azerbaijan.

Despite the geographical remoteness between the two states, the Mexican Embassy has done a great job to bring the two countries closer through culture, bilateral trade and tourism.

The dynamics of the Embassy's events, aimed at promotion of culture and trade, stimulate interest in Mexican culture, which has been reflected in the growing tourism relations. Thus, the number of Mexican tourists coming to Azerbaijan increased by 8.93 percent in 2018, and the number of Azerbaijani tourists in Mexico increased by 19.06 percent. Azerbaijani tourists prefer to visit such Mexican cities as Cancun and the capital Mexico City.

In total, the tourist flow between the two countries has surpassed the 20 percent growth since the opening of the diplomatic mission in Baku in 2014.

The Embassy noted that the launch of flights of Turkish Airlines on the Istanbul-Mexico-Cancun-Istanbul route this year will open up new opportunities for tourism between Azerbaijan and Mexico.

In recent years, the trade between Mexico and Azerbaijan has grown dramatically after opening of embassies in both countries. Azerbaijan opened its embassy in Mexico City in 2007 and Mexico followed suit by opening embassy in Baku in 2014.

The trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Mexico amounted to \$26.2 million by the end of 2018, which is a 35.74 percent increase compared to 2017. About 40 percent of the trade accounted for oil products.

Mexico plans to organize export of various types of products to Azerbaijan, in particular, to supermarkets of Mexican products in Baku.

In addition, Mexico intends to increase the number of trade delegations to Azerbaijan to expand trade relations between the countries. Previous Mexican trade delegations visited Azerbaijan in 2017 and 2018.

Mexico is particularly interested in increasing tequila exports to the Azerbaijani market. Every year, Mexico supplies 213.3 million liters of tequila to more than 120 countries.

Azerbaijan and Mexico strive to become transit, trade and energy centers in their regions. The countries have many opportunities for expanding cooperation in the oil and gas sector. Mexican Institute of Petroleum intends to establish exchange of experience and technologies with oil companies operating in Azerbaijan.

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