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PARLIAMENTARY PROGRAM IN AZERBAIJAN

Quarterly Report (July 1 – September 30, 2009)

Contract No. DFD-I-00-04-00129-00

(Tenth Quarterly Report for Task Order 5)

September 2009

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This quarterly report is submitted to the Program CTO Parviz Musayev of the Office of Democracy and Governance of USAID-Caucasus-Azerbaijan Mission under the guidelines as stated in Clause A.6 of the contract.

ACRONYMS

CoP	Chief of Party
CRS	Congressional Research Service
COTR	Contracting Officer's Technical Representative
D&G	Democracy and Governance
DAI	Development Alternatives, Inc.
DCoP	Deputy Chief of Party
EG	Economic Growth
EU	European Union
ExCom	Local Representative of Executive Power
IREX	International Research and Exchange Board
IT	Information technology
IR	Intermediate Result
LTTA	Long-term technical assistance
MM	Milli Majlis (the Parliament of Azerbaijan)
MP	Member of Parliament
MPA	Member of Parliament's Assistant
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
STTA	Short-term technical assistance
SO	Strategic Objective
TA	Technical assistance
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
II. SUMMARY OF PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS	8
COMPONENT 1: DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY	8
<i>SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS</i>	
<i>SUMMARY OF THIS QUARTER'S MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS</i>	
<i>RESULTS THIS QUARTER</i>	
<i>SUMMARY OF PLANS FOR NEXT QUARTER</i>	
COMPONENT 2: PROMOTING GREATER PROCEDURAL AND LEGISLATIVE TRANSPARENCY	10
<i>SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS</i>	
<i>SUMMARY OF THIS QUARTER'S MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS</i>	
<i>RESULTS THIS QUARTER</i>	
<i>SUMMARY OF PLANS FOR NEXT QUARTER</i>	
COMPONENT 3: ENHANCEMENT OF OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF PARLIAMENT	11
<i>SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS</i>	
<i>SUMMARY OF THIS QUARTER'S MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS</i>	
<i>RESULTS THIS QUARTER</i>	
<i>SUMMARY OF PLANS FOR NEXT QUARTER</i>	
CROSS-CUTTING THEMES	14
<i>SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS</i>	
<i>RESULTS THIS QUARTER</i>	
<i>SUMMARY OF THIS QUARTER'S MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS</i>	
<i>RESULTS THIS QUARTER</i>	
<i>SUMMARY OF PLANS FOR NEXT QUARTER</i>	
III. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION	15
IV. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND REMEDIAL SOLUTIONS	15
V. UNRESOLVED ISSUES OR CONSTRAINTS ON THE PROJECT	15

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Introduction

The **Parliamentary Program in Azerbaijan** (Program) is a two-year technical assistance initiative of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), implemented by Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI) that began in April 2007. A one-year extension was provided, through April 2010. The Program's main partner is the Parliament of Azerbaijan, or Milli Majlis (MM). Program subcontractors include the National Conference of State Legislatures, Indiana University and International Roll Call.

Program activities focus on three general technical components:

- 1) **Developing and strengthening parliamentary capacity**, including the establishment of constituency offices for each Member of Parliament (MP), enhanced committee capacity and sustainable training programs.
- 2) **Institutionalizing greater procedural and legislative transparency** through the provision of technical assistance and resources to expand the accessibility of legislation to citizens, to systematize information, and to improve the website.
- 3) **Enhancing the effectiveness of Parliament** by tailoring resources, including a study tour, for MPs to enhance staff utilization, respond to constituency-based issues, address ethics issues, legislative procedure and process development.

The proposed work plan for Year Three builds upon accomplishments and lessons learned during previous years, while responding to the MM's stated priorities. The Program introduces new methodologies and tools, as well as creates vital institutional infrastructure within the parliament and the Constituency Offices throughout the country, including:

- **Constituency Feedback Database** Designs and supports the implementation of a constituency feedback database and case management system to track constituency complaints, and to assist MPs in prioritizing and responding to constituent concerns so as to inform policy making.
- **Constituency Training** Provides training in policy development at the constituency level to increase representation and citizen input in policy and law-making processes.
- **Parliamentary Research Center (KITAB)** Supports the creation and development of a Research Center, aimed at providing essential research services to MPs and MM staff, to improve policy making and legislative drafting.
- **Committee Strengthening** Assists committees in effectively implementing current procedures and encourages discussion of potential reforms.
- **Professional Development Center** Supports the establishment of a professional development and training center within the HR Department, to provide orientation and continuing education for MPs and staff. This includes a Member Orientation Program.
- **Study Tour** Collaborates with partners to offer a study tour to build parliamentary capacity.

- **Media Outreach and Communications** Provides training on internal and external communication skills to raise awareness of parliamentary practices and current legislative business.
- **Improved Use of IT for Transparency and Communication** Assists the MM IT Department to improve internal web preparation functions to accelerate dissemination of current parliamentary information to MPs and to citizens.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This quarter included the Milli Majlis' annual summer break. The Program team addressed activity reporting, activity re-organization, communication, and planning tasks, including a revised Phase Two Work Plan and Performance Management Plan.

The draft work plan for Phase Two (Year 3, April 2009 – April 2010) and expanded Performance Management Plan (PMP) were submitted to USAID/Azerbaijan, and later adjusted with cost-saving measures. The Program works closely with Milli Majlis (MM) counterparts to: create a constituent case management database; Professional Development Center; Parliamentary Research Center; Member Orientation Program; strengthen procedural practices of civic engagement; accelerate digitization of legislation and parliamentary business for public access; enhance the parliament's website; and engage a variety of partners to expand upon essential skill training in policy research and analysis for legislative drafting and oversight, constituent outreach and media relations.

This Quarter, PPA delivered the following key achievements

- The extensive MP Assistant (MPA) professional development program continued with a four-day training featuring a set of modules on Public Policy Research and Analysis as a step toward creating the Parliamentary Research Center.
- Fifteen (15) select MPAs received constituent feedback databases in their computers, as well as user training and a User Guide, facilitated by the DCOP. These fifteen represent a pilot for a broader initiative which will install constituency feedback databases for all MPAs.
- Preparation for version two of the MPA Guidebook began with a hands-on field exercise of data gathering, collection of tools prepared by MPAs, and identification of useful case studies conducted by the acting COP, DCOP and MPA Unit Deputy Director. MM leadership selected MPAs to serve as the core authors of this manual, which will elaborate upon Azerbaijani communication methods and tools for constituents and MPs that have been created by the MPAs during their first years in the field.
- Select MM staff members participated in a two-day Public Policy Research and Analysis training, which is an essential step toward building the MM's core capability of establishing the Research Center. Meanwhile, the Program continues to compile working tools and products created during Phase One for the MM Human Resources Department for the Professional Development Center training archives.
- In collaboration with USAID, the acting COP and DCOP were featured as guest speakers at the American Chamber of Commerce of Azerbaijan (AMCHAM) Members Business Meeting. They delivered presentations on the Azerbaijani legislative process and constituency work of the Milli Majlis, respectively. The highly successful event launched a partnership of the Program with AMCHAM to address key legislative reforms through improved understanding of the rule of law and related procedures.

In summary, during the parliamentary holiday season, all planned activities were successfully implemented while the Program team continued to consolidate working relations with MM leadership and counterparts.

II. SUMMARY OF PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

COMPONENT 1: DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

Activity 1: Improve internal organization and human resource management

Activity 2: Develop a Professional Development Center in the Milli Majlis (MM)

Activity 3: Support establishment of effective constituent relations – development of a constituency complaints database

Activity 4: Build MM Staff Capacity

SUMMARY OF THIS QUARTER'S MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS

Activity 1: Improve Internal Organization and Human Resources Management

Upon in-depth interviews with former and current Milli Majlis staff regarding organizational and human resources management practices, the program revised its approach in this task area to package its support within the framework of a Member Orientation Program (MOP).

The creation of a Member Orientation Program for incumbent and new MPs supports the Parliament Administration's desire to strengthen institutional practices and establish a professional parliamentary climate and culture with MPs during the next legislative session. It also highlights their demonstrated will to initiate modern performance-oriented tools to improve staff performance and internal organization. Creating the MOP entails undertaking organizational and human resource tasks similar to what had been previously proposed and engaged by the Program. However, the MOP serves MM leadership as an influential performance, organizational, management and communication tool to MPs and staff, as well as to the public. This orientation program is particularly important to develop in light of upcoming parliamentary elections in 2010.

The acting COP and DCOP presented a European MOP model to the MM Human Resources (HR) Department Director, who is in charge of the MOP. The presentation and discussion led to the development of SOWs for new short-term advisory positions. An Azerbaijani professional and a consultant from subcontractor NCSL will assist the HR Department to elaborate the manual and other products, and to plan the Member staging. The staging will take place next year.

In addition to work with the MOP, during this quarter the MM Secretary General launched the first annual performance evaluation exercise for all staff. The Program contributed reference materials from the Scottish Parliament for this exercise.

Program staff continued to develop the manual for MPs, "Working Effectively with Mass Media," to be submitted to the MM Press Secretary for comment and introduction. This submission is expected after the October 2009 legislative session.

Activity 2: Develop Professional Development Center in the Milli Majlis

Program staff continue to compile working tools and products that were created during Phase One. Program staff will create a simple database of this documentation and submit to

the Speaker's Office. This compilation of training materials and reports will serve as the Center's first archives.

Meanwhile, the MM administration is compiling its own documentation, training materials and records through its internal tracking system. MM staff members continue to tailor a concept paper on the Professional Development Center, using the Program's paper offered last quarter as well as the MM's own comparative research.

Activity 3: Support Establishment of Effective Constituent Relations – Development of a Constituency Complaints Database

Parliamentary staff, working closely with the DCOP, created a pilot database for constituent feedback and trained 15 MPAs in its use. The Program facilitated the creation of a user manual, which was introduced immediately following the policy research and analysis training. The database tracks constituency demographics, priorities, complaints, resolutions and response time. It will become the main tool for constituency case management and represents an important aspect of increasing representation and professionalizing citizen outreach.

MPA Guidebook: Alongside the Deputy Director of the MPA Unit, the acting COP and DCOP traveled throughout the Sheki Region to interview a dozen MPAs as the initial participatory exercise in drafting an Azerbaijani MPA Guidebook. The team examined tools created by MPAs to facilitate their work, identified case studies of MPAs addressing specific constituent issues to be highlighted, and reviewed various outreach and education methods used by MPAs in their constituencies. The MM MPAs Unit Deputy Director used the opportunity to assess each MPA's reporting performance and to advise on improvements where necessary.

Collecting and Analyzing Data for Constituency Representation Index (CRI): CRRC continues to analyse data derived from surveys of MPAs collected for the Constituency Representation Index (CRI). The CRI measures achievement of important benchmarks of representation and is a key PMP indicator developed by the Program. The Program and CRRC signed a contract amendment to extend the delivery date to September 30. A preliminary report has been prepared for edit by CRRC and the DCOP.

Activity 4: Build MM staff capacity

During consultations with the Milli Majlis Speaker's Aide and Secretary General, the Program proposed to "phase up" and institutionalize parliamentary staff development through three main initiatives: longer skill courses to be planned for career tracking and incentives, which will take place between the legislative sessions; a performance management tool targeted to senior staff; and an employee handbook that would fulfill institutional interests in generating higher performance of all MM staff. The three initiatives, linked through the Member Orientation Program (MOP), will achieve the Program partnership objectives, while strengthening the performance of the MM in a pragmatic approach, leaving tools for the leadership to refine as the organization evolves.

Parliamentary leadership concurred with the three initiatives. Soon after, the MM Secretary General launched the performance management system and asked for assistance to develop the employee handbook as it feeds into the MOP. The Program designed and conducted the first longer staff skills course, of several to be conducted during the next program phase.

RESULTS THIS QUARTER

- Constituency Database User Manual of the Milli Majlis created and piloted
- Fifteen MPAs launched streamlined Constituency Database-Constituency Office Version Software
- Milli Majlis initiated pedagogical process to design of MPA Guidebook Version Two
- Development of Member Orientation Program was launched with Human Resources Department

COMPONENT 2: PROMOTING GREATER PROCEDURAL AND LEGISLATIVE TRANSPARENCY

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

Activity 1: Supporting Committee Hearings and Reporting For Greater Public Access and Civic Engagement

Activity 2: Continue Support for Website Improvements and Use of IT For Improved Access To Information

Activity 3: Further Developing a Legislative Database And Improving Access To Legislative Information

SUMMARY OF THIS QUARTER'S MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS

Activity 1: Supporting Committee Hearings and Reporting For Greater Public Access and Civic Engagement

The American Chamber of Commerce of Azerbaijan (AMCHAM), with 204 members in 28 economic sectors, featured a presentation on legislative processes in Azerbaijan and key entry points for constituents into those processes, delivered by acting COP and DCOP at the monthly members' luncheon. The presentation launched a joint initiative of PPA and AMCHAM to promote greater access to the Milli Majlis by corporate constituents during the legislative process. AMCHAM's "mission is to promote the business interests of members by working to improve the business climate in Azerbaijan... An active and positive influence in Azerbaijan, (we) conduct (our) mission with integrity and respect for the country, observing all local laws and insisting on the highest ethical standards in all relationships and transactions.'

To plan activities during the October 2009 legislative session with Committee leadership, the Program met with select MPs and key Legislative Department staff. The Milli Majlis' new physical space allows committees to invite an increased number of CSO and citizen participants to meetings, per Article 5 of the Law on Standing Committees.

Welcoming the opportunity of increased civic input now possible in larger committee rooms in the new fourteen story annex of the parliament building, parliamentarians invited the Program to suggest and introduce persons within civil society to participate in committee meetings. As permitted in the 1998 Law on Standing Commissions, Article 5, "Standing commission meetings, as a rule, shall be conducted openly... Invitees and media representatives may attend standing commission open meetings. Under the legislative initiative representatives of the government authorities that have submitted draft laws and decisions, interested executive and judicial power bodies, local self-government bodies, political parties, trade unions organizations, public associations, as well as scientists,

experts, specialists and other persons whose participation is considered important may be invited to standing committee meeting. In this case, the commission shall provide the attendees with the documentation to be discussed. “

MPs also noted that the capacity of their new committee rooms will facilitate implementation of Article 21 of the Law on Standing Committees, which states that “audio, video, photo and movie making in a committee meeting may be done upon agreement with the committee.”

With collaboration of the Milli Majlis, the acting COP designed and launched a parliamentary practices survey with the aim of improving citizens’ capacity to participate in the legislative work of committees. Initial survey components focus on legislative drafting and amendment procedures, Constitutional amendment procedures, committee legislative and oversight workloads, committee procedures, and MP profiles. The survey of actual consultative practices by the Milli Majlis per its internal database also aims to encourage citizens by highlighting the extent to which committees invite civic participation in their work.

Outstanding aspects of committee work under examination by Program staff will be publicized as data becomes available. Highlights include numeric and case examples of participation of CSOs and experts in committee work, legislative committee oversight activities, and executive participation with committees in the legislation process.

The Program’s user-friendly Parliamentary Practices tools will become part of the Member Orientation Program. Select tools will be incorporated in the MPA Guidebook Version Two to strengthen civic engagement with the Milli Majlis.

Activity 2: Continue Support for Website Improvements and Use of IT For Improved Access To Information

Recognizing strong budget pressures and in discussion and agreement with USAID the Program discontinued its initiative to provide an IT expert to assess codification systems toward converting parliamentary documentation into .xml format so it could be easily uploaded onto the MM website. While the Milli Majlis website has been rated as the best public sector website by the Azerbaijani public sector media watchdog, the MM IT Department continues to develop its own software to organize current legislative work as well as its archives for inclusion in the website.

Program staff modified the approach to provide an IT expert to develop a training module for staff to use a series of program-created document templates. The new approach includes supporting MM staff to try to accomplish this task and to promote its usefulness to parliamentary leadership.

As mentioned in another section of this report, the Program is piloting an online constituency database and provided training in its to select MPAs. This database is intended to improve information to MPs regarding the needs of their constituents and therefore improve citizen input in legislation and parliamentary functions.

Activity 3: Further Developing a Legislative Database And Improving Access To Legislative Information

The MM Codification Unit continues to enter data into the legislative database at its maximum capacity. During an introductory interview with the acting COP, the Unit Director demonstrated the database capacity and capabilities. As of August 2009, the four-person unit of lawyers had entered 4253 laws, codes and decrees into the database.

The Unit's software, custom-created by the Milli Majlis, can instantly search the data by name, topic, legislature, date (exact or in ranges), and an assortment of variables. The data is currently available on the intranet for all MPs and staff. The database will be completed before the Milli Majlis will publish it on the internet. The Unit Director's major constraint in completing this input work more rapidly is the number of suitably skilled staff in her department. Given budget constraints, the Program is unable to provide significant additional assistance however areas of support are being considered.

RESULTS THIS QUARTER

- Civil Society and Corporate Advocates' knowledge of the legislative process enhanced for increased participation in committee work
- Committees request assistance in reaching out to civil society to improve work
- Improved capacity of MPAs to use database in Constituency Offices

COMPONENT 3: ENHANCEMENT OF THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF PARLIAMENT

Activity 1: Develop Capacity of Research and Information Center (MM Library And Research Services Department)

During this quarter, Dr Anar Ahmadov, London School of Economics and Political Science PhD Candidate who has served as Director of The Institute of Politics of Khazar University and of the Caucasus Research Resource Center, trained ten MM staff in Public Policy Research and Analysis. Using an eight-step approach to modern research and analysis of public policy, the course provided practical understanding of research methods by focusing on actual policies under review in the parliament. The training materials will be submitted to the Professional Development Center, where they will be available to MM staff who did not participate. When the Center will develop in-house training programs, this material will also serve as a foundation for future courses on this topic.

Dr. Ahmadov's training examined the process of policy development and adoption and included the following steps: Policy research and analysis; Preparation of case studies (pre-training session); Issue identification/needs assessment; Analysis of existing political and legal framework in the context of issues (two full sessions); Identification of policy alternatives; Evaluation criteria and policy choice; Development of policy document; and Policy discussion and communication.

In response to a request by the Milli Majlis Speaker's Aide and to follow-up the July 2008 Workshop on Parliamentary Research Centers, the acting COP consulted with the featured Knesset speaker, as well as the Israeli Ambassador to Azerbaijan, to see what next steps could be provided. With clarification of the Knesset Research Facility presentation and the speaker's recommendations, the PPA offered to assist the Milli Majlis in using the same approach to developing the KITAB. Facing budgetary constraints and an inadequate "supply of experts with appropriate IT research skill", the Knesset recruited young, inexpensive student-graduates, who served as interns. The parliament later transformed the positions into staff, as resources became available to develop the parliamentary research center. PPA is working to identify ways to provide support in a similar manner.

Activity 2: Building Capacity for Legislative Drafting

With the September start-up of the two-year EU Twinning Project, PPA met with EU representatives to exchange information on activities and to discuss general collaboration with the Milli Majlis. A central aspect of this collaboration focuses on fostering an Azerbaijani-oriented legislative process to reform the country's legislation toward EU accession. During this meeting, we emphasized accomplishments of the MPAs' and the constituency feedback database, as well as their relation to committee work and shared initial survey charts. The EU representatives appreciated the opportunity to incorporate both elements into their planning.

Activity 3: Build MPs Technical Knowledge and Capacity In Specific Legislative Areas

The Program developed an approach to accelerate MPs' use of experts to increase the parliamentarians' knowledge of economic and social sectors that they legislate. Working closely with AMCHAM and USAID implementation partners, the Program is developing a broadened pool of experts available to MPs per the committees' legislative workload during the October 2009 session. The Program will facilitate the introduction of these experts into committee work meetings and sessions inside the Milli Majlis, rather than hosting roundtables of experts with MPs outside the parliament.

Milli Majlis committees regularly engage Azerbaijani specialists to "draft legislation and decisions and/or provide opinion on them, as well as to assist in analyzing and summarizing the materials received by the committees" that aim to legislate on related issues, per Article 23 of the Law on Standing Committees. The paid or pro-bono experts work closely with the Milli Majlis Legislative Departments in the legislative drafting process, in addition to advising MPs. Committee leaders discreetly expressed their frustration in identifying experts who are qualified in both the concerned technical areas and in policy analysis and reform.

In response to this, the acting COP and DCOP discussed pending legislation on key topics with AMCHAM leadership and with other USAID implementers. AMCHAM members will indicate their interest and availability to work with the parliament through the AMCHAM secretariat, which will screen and submit member experts representing twenty-eight sectors that relate to legislation in the eleven parliamentary committees. Thus, this new channel will provide the parliament with significant expertise through an Azerbaijani organization.

Meanwhile, Program staff discontinued planning a series of external round tables with international organizations and experts to address MPs of target committees on a wide range of topics.

Activity 4: Build MPs and MM Staff Expertise and Understanding of International Best Practice in Parliamentary Process through Targeted Study Tours

Upon cancellation of a proposed November, 2009 study tour to Washington, DC, and Boulder, Colorado, the Program is consulting with a representative from OpenWorld to discuss an alternative study tour plan to be held in 2010. Based on previous experience with MPs and on feedback received from the Milli Majlis, PPA advised scheduling the travel outside of the session calendar and to target the specific policy interests of the MPs, given their responsibilities in the Milli Majlis. The planning will be coordinated with key MPs to ensure its tailored appropriately for their needs. MPs benefit less from generic tours than from those that are well-tailored to suit their policy needs.

RESULTS THIS QUARTER

- Expert pool available to committees expanded by twenty-eight economic sectors
- Increased skills in public policy research and analysis by core Milli Majlis staff
- Collaboration with EU to advance mutual legislative drafting objectives
- Study tour to US rescheduled by Embassy at request of Milli Majlis

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

D. Establishing and Strengthening Linkages with Other USAID Programs

Anti-Corruption

The Milli Majlis passed reforms to the Competition Code in the second reading during the past legislative session. The highly debated code addresses the conduct and practices of the private sector, as well as of national and local public organs. Several international and national organizations, including USAID implementers, participated in deliberative sessions to assist the parliament to draft reforms that represent their interests.

The parliament is expected to undertake the code's third reading - during which it may only accept or reject, but not amend it during the October 2009 session. The Program met with MPAs and discussed including the MPs' votes on this topic (and on all issues) in the MP Bulletins and other Constituency Office communication tools that would summarize - in non-legal terms - what the reform states and how/why s/he voted. During the Fall Session, a few MPAs will The MPAs in the Constituency Offices have proven to be quick and effective disseminators of such information, because they personally reach most citizens, who have grown to rely on them as a trustworthy source of information.

The acting COP met with the outgoing Azerbaijan Program Against Corruption (AZPAC) Advisor to discuss accomplishments and activities of the USAID-CoE Program that followed the joint conference (February 2009) on corruption. AZPAC recommended that the Program establish direct relations with the Azerbaijani Anti-Corruption Agency and related executive offices to follow-up with cross-cutting objectives.

Registered as a CSO in Azerbaijan in February 2009, South Caucasus Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption (CAUPAC) leadership has steadily reached out to MPs and former MPs, as well as to executive branch officials, to discuss its vision, charter, and other basic issues to launch its presence as an official chapter of GOPAC. A partnership of Azerbaijani and Georgian MPs and xMPs, CAUPAC leadership will participate in the next GOPAC meeting, in November 2009. The meeting will provide an opportunity to consult with GOPAC executive leadership about environmental conditions before advancing plans to develop the new chapter.

Islam:

The Milli Majlis recently passed legislation to prohibit foreign-trained religious scholars from teaching religion in Azerbaijan. This legislation aims to prevent unfamiliar approaches to religious education from starting while respecting established indigenous religious institutions. Meanwhile, MP Assistants have not registered Azerbaijani citizen complaints related to religion, per their meticulous records.

Gender:

While the Milli Majlis demonstrates its adherence to the Azerbaijani Civil Service Law and Labor Code through hiring and promotion practices of staff without gender discrimination, leadership acknowledges the most formidable constraint in hiring more women is the limited supply of adequately educated and skilled female candidates. Thus, addressing this situation through broad social reforms is recognized as an essential long-term approach.

E. Donor Coordination

Program staff participated in occasional program planning meetings with USAID.

To initiate a working partnership with the EU, Program staff met with EU representatives. The first, two-year phase of the EU Twinning Project with the Lithuanian Parliament includes four areas: EU legislative approximation; legislative impact assessment; legislative - executive branch relations; and awareness of the EU in the Milli Majlis. The Program team exchanged basic information about parliamentary business and Program activities, and established a collaborative protocol regarding activities planned with the Milli Majlis, especially during the next legislative session.

To explore potential collaboration of activities with Milli Majlis committees, Program staff met with OSCE representatives. While the activity planning was later discontinued, the Program team exchanged information about other activities underway during this session, which would involve the OSCE.

III. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Chief of Party Petro Morgos departed on medical leave in June and Julia Demichelis arrived in Baku on July 15 to assume duties as acting COP. Meanwhile, DCOP Aybeniz Mammadova plays a vital role in maintaining continuity with Milli Majlis leadership and staff.

The Program team undertook an internal administrative review with all Program documentation. Meanwhile, the Program technical team compiled all technical and activity reporting documentation into a centralized database, classified chronologically per activity.

IV. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND REMEDIAL SOLUTIONS

No challenges of extraordinary scale were encountered during this Quarter.

V. UNRESOLVED ISSUES AND CONSTRAINTS OF THE PROJECT

Programmatic and operational issues that arose with the Milli Majlis during this period included a modification of planned project activities due to available funding. The Program team continues to address this situation through redesigning activities, cutting costs where possible, and/or through discussing how to defer activities to the next program phase. The acting COP and DCOP also meet with collaborating donor and partner representatives to explore alternative opportunities that could address Milli Majlis' express interests to advance its institutional development initiatives.