BY EMAIL

----- Original Message -----
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Cc: Victor Bulmer-Thomas <Bulmer-Thomasv@riia.org; Lindsey Crosswell <Crosswelll@riia.org; Lavinia Allison <AllisonL@riia.org; Valerie Marcel <MarcelV@riia.org; Duncan Brack <dbrack@riia.org
Sent: Friday, July 11, 2003 5:04 PM
Subject: RE: Baku Ceyhan Pipeline

Dear Nick, Kerim, Liana

Thank you for your email and fax sent yesterday. I will try to address the concerns you raise.

The workshop and discussion on the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline Project on 18th July, to which you are all invited, is one of numerous meetings held by Chatham House during the past ten years that have addressed issues connected with Caspian energy resources, environmental, social and economic development in the Caspian Basin countries, and geopolitical prospects in this fluid region. Our extensive and diverse output of publications (detailed on the institute website) will confirm our commitment to a deep understanding of this region.

The institute does not engage in advocacy, but seeks to provide an opportunity for public policy debate, underpinned by research, and a forum for a wide range of perspectives and interpretations of often difficult and contentious issues. This does not mean that we are obliged to find or seek a cross-section of thinking among speakers for each and every meeting we hold. The membership of the institute is frequently exposed to views with which they disagree from one side of the political debate or the other. For example, the Russia and Eurasia Programme itself is currently organising roundtable meetings for which the speakers will be exclusively composed of opposition political leaders of certain Caspian Basin countries. Nor do we seek to 'balance' each potentially controversial speaker on the podium at Chatham House General Meetings (for example, a recent meeting addressed by the Iranian Foreign Minister). But the overall speaker list at Chatham House is certainly diverse. It is important, of course, that to the extent possible, we invite participants to meetings from different backgrounds, who hold varying opinions, and can contribute productively to discussion and debate. This diversity is a particular feature of Chatham House meetings.

The meeting on the 18th is straightforward. Representatives of the BTC Pipeline Company will provide an explication of the BTC Project and will then engage in discussion and respond to questions from an audience which will be composed of a broad range of academic specialists, NGO representatives, journalists, diplomats and business people. This is a relatively unusual opportunity for a serious exchange of opinions and information with officials of the BTC Pipeline Company. To ensure a serious discussion from a range of perspectives the institute has been at pains to invite a wide range of NGO representatives with concerns about the BTC Project to the meeting as well as practitioners and specialists.

It seems that we have a different reading of the invitation letter to the meeting. The letter notes that the Environmental and Social Impact Assessments of the BTC pipeline have been the subject of extensive consultations. But we make no judgement as to whether those consultations, which do seem extensive, have been successful, sufficient or satisfactory. That assessment is for those involved to debate. Secondly, the letter notes a regional objective for the pipeline. However it passes no comment or claim as to whether that objective has been or is likely to be fulfilled.

You can be assured that the Royal Institute of International Affairs takes its responsibilities under its Charter very seriously indeed.

Should you wish to call me, I will be in the office until 6:30 this evening and would be most happy to talk about these matters.

I very much hope to see all of you next Friday, and would be most grateful if you could indicate to me if you are coming.

Sincerely

James Nixey
Programme Coordinator, Russia and Eurasia Programme
The Royal Institute of International Affairs