

Speech by Gordon Birrell, BP's Regional President for Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, at PREP Graduation Ceremony

Marriott Hotel of Baku

September 24, 2013

Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the first Graduation Ceremony of BP's unique learning programme for Azerbaijani petro-technical graduates. The programme is called PREP which means Petro-technical Resource Entry Programme. The most important and unique thing about this programme is that as a preliminary step for graduates' development, it allows them to prepare themselves for a long-term professional career. It represents a transition from university graduation to professional employment at an international oil and gas company.

Around the world, BP has a goal of being a safe, reliable, technically advanced partner to governments and National Oil companies. And a company that nurtures and develops talent for the future. Our business depends on having great, capable people deeply engaged in solving the complex problems encountered in the oil and gas industry.

Here in Azerbaijan this goal is particularly valid given the challenges we face. In support of this goal BP is proud to have initiated this learning programme. One year has passed since the PREP was launched and most of you were present in our launch ceremony last year when we announced that we had selected 55 first PREP trainees specializing in surface engineering, subsurface, and wells disciplines. They were selected from among approximately one thousand applicants to petro-technical graduate positions announced by BP.

And now I am proud to say that the first year results have been very successful. Some 45 of the trainees have successfully completed the programme joining BP's global Challenge Programme - the next step of their career development, and three of them have been hired to various specialist roles within BP.

PREP is also designed to help us diversify our talent pool, by hiring graduates from disciplines such as applied math, chemistry and physics. Seven of our graduates today represent these disciplines. So, with introduction of PREP, we have provided unique opportunities for a wider group of Azerbaijani graduates to join the international oil and gas industry.

These results have allowed us to hire a record number of Azerbaijani nationals into petro-technical Challenger roles in 2013. I would like to congratulate all successful trainees and welcome them to BP.

I am confident that with each year that passes we will be able to hire and train more and more national petro-technical engineers. We have already selected 88 graduates from various national and international universities for PREP's second year. They were selected from among approximately 3000 applicants.

Thus I am looking forward to another successful year of PREP with even bigger number of selected trainees who wish to join BP for their career.

As an oil and gas company, we rely on talented engineers, geoscientists, geophysicists, petrophysicists and other technical experts to deliver our new projects and run our existing world-class safe operations offshore and onshore. But such experts are in short supply not only in Azerbaijan but around the world. This is why we launched this unique learning programme in Azerbaijan last year, as a world-class learning programme to help young Azerbaijanis specializing in petro-technical disciplines prepare for successful employment in the oil industry.

As Azerbaijan's biggest oil and gas industry partner, we have always supported the country in its efforts to increase the professional and intellectual capital of the nation. In this regard, we have continuously provided opportunities for bright Azerbaijanis to contribute to the prosperity and development of their country.

In addition to PREP, BP itself and jointly with its co-venturers has to date developed and operated many other successful learning tools to help professional development of national technical and petro-technical experts. These include the Caspian Technical Training Center (CTTC) located at the Sangachal Terminal, which to date has trained about 900 technicians, and BP's internal Challenge programme.

Our multi-million dollar support to the Qafqaz University in establishing new chemical and mechanical engineering departments with about 200 students already majoring in these disciplines, the world-class laboratories that we have presented to this university, BP and co-venturers' international standard Project Management School created at the Khazar University, and which has already trained 230 national experts, are just a few examples of BP and its partners' support for national educational development.

For many years we have also awarded scholarships and bursary awards to a large number bright Azerbaijani students studying at national and international universities. To date about 650 Azerbaijani petro-technical students have received BP scholarships and bursary awards. Starting this year we will also fund training costs of 100 community members who will attend SOCAR's newly-opened vocational school in the Garadagh district.

In total BP has to date supported educational development of about 2200 nationals through various programmes and projects and we hope these people will make a major contribution to the development of the country's economy.

We expect that starting 2014 about 500 people in total will benefit from our training and development programmes annually and this number will continue to grow by about 10 per cent every year.

Once again, I extend my sincere congratulation to all PREP graduates. I want to encourage them to share their insights, experience with the newly-hired PREP trainees. At the same time, I am sure they will become excellent ambassadors of the programme in their communities and among talented Azerbaijani students.

Thank you!