

**Speech by Gordon Birrell,
BP's Regional President for Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey
Event on the occasion of presentation of eleven laboratories to
Qafqaz University
Monday, 9 December 2013**

**Excellency, Mr Minister, Mr Abdullayev, Rector, Distinguished
Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**

BP is pleased to be part of today's event which marks the success of our five-year long partnership with one of the leading universities in Azerbaijan.

BP as operator of Azerbaijan's major oil and gas projects has always seen a role for itself to play in developing Azerbaijan's oil and gas specialised human resources to international standards. We have been working closely with SOCAR and the Ministry of Education to support their efforts to develop world class local experts and workforce who will be involved in our future giant projects and operations in the Caspian.

During our 20 year presence in the Caspian we have been involved in hundreds of projects that aim at creating new sustainable opportunities for people. We believe such opportunities can be created by helping build knowledge and develop capabilities, skills and expertise. We support such initiatives and efforts in communities, local enterprises, universities and vocational schools.

Our partnership with Qafqaz University is a very good example to demonstrate that such initiatives can bring a change. This partnership has allowed us to be involved in establishing new departments and providing access to world class laboratories and educational equipment.

I am aware that the chemical engineering department which we established here in 2009 has attracted very talented young people from all over Azerbaijan. The five world-class laboratories, which we presented to that department in 2011, have served a very useful tool for them to acquire international standard knowledge within Azerbaijan without having to go to a western university.

The mechanical engineering department which BP established here in 2011 has also attracted equally talented young people who have selected to be the first local graduates in this important discipline. I am particularly pleased to hear that all students of these departments have been admitted with high scores and even some of them with the highest possible scores that have allowed them to receive presidential scholarships.

And today we are presenting eleven world class laboratories to the mechanical engineering department to support students to receive high quality education.

I am really honoured that BP supports such talented young people in Azerbaijan and would like to thank our partner in this project – the Qafqaz University - for the success of our joint initiative.

We look forward to working together in the future to support development of the new generation of national engineers and workforce.

Thank you for your attention!