

In 2018, Iteca Caspian has a plan to hold 17 exhibitions which will cover topical and important themes relevant both for the country and the region as a whole: AITF (tourism), Horex Caucasus (hospitality), WorldFood Azerbaijan (food industry), IPACK Caspian (packaging), Caspian Oil&Gas (Oil and Gas), Caspian Power (alternative energy), TransCaspian/TransLogistika (transport), Road&Traffic (road infrastructure), BIHE (healthcare), Beauty Azerbaijan (aesthetic medicine), WorldBuild Baku (construction), Aquatherm Baku (heating and air-conditioning), Securika Caspian (protection and security). Each exhibition plays a part in the development of the industry, thereby positively affecting the entire economy of the country. The main focus in 2018 will be the Anniversary Caspian Oil&Gas Exhibition which gave beginning to the exhibition industry of Azerbaijan. The first trade show of the independent Azerbaijan state, International Caspian Oil and Gas Exhibition, will mark its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018. This exhibition was first held in May 1994, shortly before the signing of the Contract of the Century. At that point, National Leader of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev supported the initiative of holding Azerbaijan's first oil and gas exhibition. Since then, Caspian Oil and Gas has been a meeting place for leading oil, gas and energy industry professionals, where memoranda, agreements, and contracts for future cooperation are signed. Every year, the exhibition is visited by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev who also participates in the opening ceremony. The Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and SOCAR provide close support to the exhibition. Each year, the most important industry players take part in this annual exhibition, and a number of companies provide sponsorship to the exhibition and conference. This year's landmark anniversary will welcome guests and visitors from all over the world. Moreover, the exhibition organisers have prepared a special program of events.

## 2017

In October 2017, the next season of international exhibitions and conferences in Azerbaijan was successfully completed. During 2017, the leading exhibition company of the Caspian region Iteca Caspian together with its partner British Exhibition Company ITE Group held 17 specialized exhibitions and conferences. All events of Iteca Caspian are actively supported by state structures, among which Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SOCAR), Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, State Housing Development Agency under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, State Committee for Town Planning and Architecture of the Republic of Azerbaijan, The Union of Architects of Azerbaijan, Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan, TRACECA, Azerbaijan Stomatological Association, Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO), National Confederation of The Entrepreneurs (Employers) Organizations of Azerbaijan Republic (AEC). On the part of international structures, AITF has support from The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Pacific Asia Travel Association, also a number of exhibitions have a certificate of UFI (the global association of the exhibition industry). President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev visited a number of exhibitions, among which AITF, WorldFood Azerbaijan, Caspian Oil&Gas, and also sent letters of greetings to the participants of a number of exhibitions. Exhibitions were also attended by ministers and other representatives of the sectoral ministries of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Baku confirmed its undeniable international reputation as a business hub of the region in 2017. Over 50 high-ranking guests from abroad visited the exhibitions of the past year. Among them: Mr. José Maria Botelho de Vasconcelos, Minister of Petroleum of Angola, Mr. Iulian-Robert Tudorache, Deputy Minister

of Energy of Romania, Mrs. Robin Dunnigan, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy Diplomacy Bureau of Energy Resources, USA, Mr. Valery Malashko, Minister of Health of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. Jiří Šír, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Czech Republic, Mr. Giorgi Chkheidze, Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Georgia, Mr. Vladimir Vladimirov, Governor of the Stavropol Territory, Mrs. Rabiya Zakavova acting minister for tourism and folk art crafts of the Republic of Dagestan and others.

2017 exhibitions welcomed 1,301 participating companies from more than 40 countries and over 33,000 visitors both from Azerbaijan and its neighbouring countries; 22 national and regional stands formed part of the last exhibition year: Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Hungary, Iran, Italy, Morocco, Poland, OAE, Thailand, Turkey, the Dominican Republic, the Czech Republic and Sri Lanka; regional stands – Rogaška Slatina (Slovenia) and Stavropol Region (Russia), and also the debutants – Dagestan (Russia), Kazan (Russia) and Odessa (Ukraine). This year Colombia, Cuba and Mexico added their national stands for the first time with the support of their embassies in Azerbaijan. It was encouraging that the stands of local companies occupied almost 40% of the total exposition area. Manufacturing companies of Azerbaijan were actively participating under the “Made in Azerbaijan” brand.

The role of partners and sponsors in the successful implementation of exhibition projects in 2017 is important. So, sponsors in 2017 were: SOCAR, BP, Petronas, Turkiye Petrolleri, Azeri M-İ Drilling Fluids, AZFEN, Baku Steel Company, Caspian Drilling Company Ltd, Caspian Marine Services (CMS), Global Energy Azerbaijan, RussNeft, SIMONE Research Group, SOCAR Polymer, Tekfen Construction, Inpex, McDermott, Statoil, Caspian Geophysical, Dentons, Fluor, Huawei, Microsoft, Nobel Upstream, Reflex Marine, Schlumberger, Siemens, TAP, Total, Yokogawa, Zenith Energy, Lamor Corporation, NB Group, Caspian Energy, “House and Interior” (“Dom i Interyer”).

In 2017, as part of almost each exhibition, the organizers provided additional business areas which brought foreign exhibitors and local distributors, along with manufacturers and buyers around one table. B2B meetings were positively received by exhibitors and visitors. Therefore, the organizers decided to continue this practice in 2018. B2B meetings provide exhibition participants and professional visitors with the opportunity to hold bilateral meetings. This business model is focused on the interaction between companies in the process of production and sale of their goods or services.

For the first time within the framework of the BIHE exhibition was held a Congress of Doctors and consisted of several panel discussions. Within the framework of the Congress, a number of topics on neonatology, ultrasound research and depression treatment were discussed. The Congress also was hosted a presentation on aesthetic medicine regarding the modern methods of weight loss. The Congress was concluded with a certificate award ceremony.

During the entire days of the exhibition, a workshop for young designers was held in cooperation with the Union of Architects of Azerbaijan. Participants of the workshop expected to create a project which used the building materials presented at the exhibition within 2 days. The exhibition participants, whose products were used in the projects, expressed their interest and thanked the young architects for their interesting ideas. The awarding ceremony took place directly at the exhibition.

This year for the first time for the participant of the exhibition and delegates of the conference is organised excursion to the Bibi-Heybat oil field SOCAR – the world's first oil well drilled in an industrial way. And an excursion to the Rustam Mustafayev Museum of National Art of Azerbaijan was organised for the exhibitors of WorldBuild Baku, where gathered the best works of painting and sculpture.

Iteca Caspian continues the programme of support for art and craft works. So, handmade and paintings from the children's shelter “Umid Yeri”, a charitable public non-governmental organisation were presented at the Caspian Oil and Gas exhibition. At a number of exhibitions, Active Mom's Club

community demonstrated works of Mom–needlewomen (unique ornaments, handmade dolls and much more).

According to the regular survey conducted by the organisers, exhibitions in 2017 were successful for exhibitors. As a result of the exhibitions a number of important contracts and agreements were signed. So, on the first day of the Healthcare exhibition BIHE 2017 Azerbaijan companies and Belarusian pharmaceutical plants RUE Belmedpreparaty (Belpharm) and Borisov Plant of Medical Supplies OJSC entered into five lucrative contracts for the supply of medicines with a total value of more than \$ 7 000000. Also the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the participating company Hayat Pharm signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the establishment and development of the pharmaceutical industry. The MoU was signed jointly by Deputy Minister of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan Niyazi Safarov and General Director of Hayat Pharm Ramin Hajiyev. According to the Deputy Minister Niyazi Safarov, the MOU encourages the establishment of an Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and foster the export of these products, alongside the production of new types of pharmaceutical products and investment in research and development in this field.

Thus, the exhibitions proved again that they are the most efficient tool for finding new customers and sales markets and for expanding the geography of sales for participating companies. This is evidenced also by the organizers' rebuking data, which averagely equals to 30% for each exhibition. Business breakfasts hosted for the first time by the organizers facilitated the preparations for WorldFood Azerbaijan, WorldBuild Baku, Aquatherm Baku exhibitions to some extent. The aim of this business breakfast was to help the participants to take better advantage of the opportunities which the exhibitions present. The business breakfast was led by a professional coach from the Big City Coaching Company, Ksenika Borisova, who was specially invited by the Organisers. During the breakfast, the main issues relating to stand organisation were touched upon, and a formula for successful participation at the exhibitions was presented. The coach emphasized the importance of maximizing the use of all the available resources at the exhibitions to establish contacts, and also catalogued the free resources that the organisers offer before, during and after the exhibitions.

Exhibitions and all accompanying events were widely covered both by local media and international news agencies. In 2017, information support to the exhibitions was provided by more than 300 media. Moreover, 6 issues of Daily News, official newspaper of the exhibitions, were published along with official catalogues for each exhibition.

Offices of ITE Group's were attracted to network: – ITE London; ITE Moscow (Russia); EUF (Turkey); GIMA (Germany); ITE China; Caspian Event Management (UAE); ITE Poland and ITE Malaysia, which have actively invited international companies to exhibit. Among the partners Iteca Caspian in 2017, the tour operator "Premier Tour", the official hotel "Qafqaz Point Hotel" and "Hyatt Regency", and AzExpoMontage, the official stand builder and Baku Expo Center. There was a children's area at the exhibitions where your children could be trusted to the professionals who take care of your children as well as entertain them with useful and exciting activities. This service was gladly provided by Aqil and Bilgi.

Thus, exhibitions and conferences offer almost unlimited opportunities and promise to bring new technologies, new contacts, partners and investments to the rapidly developing national economy. The full schedule of exhibitions, which to be held in 2018 can be found on the official website of the company [www.iteca.az](http://www.iteca.az)