



ITECA CASPIAN: BECOMING A REGIONAL EXHIBITION CENTER



Caspian Energy (CE): How would you evaluate the activity of the Company in the exhibition market since the very establishment, especially in the last year?

Farid Mammadov, Director, Iteca Caspian LLC: Iteca Caspian has worked since 2000 through even before our partners, the British company ITE Group, independently organised exhibitions in Azerbaijan, starting from 1995. Those years the ITE company was a newcomer in the country market and used to organise only one exhibition. It brought together several branches of economy and was called the Azerbaijani International Trade Fair. After studying the situation in the market, we decided to divide exhibitions into sectors and the time has proved that it was a right approach. Since that time Azerbaijan has travelled a big path. New branches came into being, thus creating the opportunity to organise thematic exhibitions on those sectors that draw the interest of the international business community. Nowadays we are organising over 15 independent projects. Some of them, for example, Caspian Oil&Gas Exhibition and Conference is celebrating its 20th anniversary, while some other our exhibitions will celebrate its 20th anniversary next year.

Besides organisation of main exhibitions, in 2012 Iteca Caspian as a professional event manager was also involved in some very important projects hosted in Azerbaijan. So, in April Baku hosted the Oil, Gas Processing and Petrochemical Complex (OGPC) Forum 2012 of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) with presentation of the Oil, Gas Processing and Petrochemical Complex project as a key topic. All forum visitors noted the high level of guests and event organisation. In September we organised 'Tunneling & Underground Infrastructure of Urban Areas Congress & Exhibition' BITC 2012 for the first time in Azerbaijan at the initiative of the Azerbaijani Association of Tunnels and got many positive responses. A large-scale ICT event, the 7th Internet Governance Forum (Forum for Policy Dialogue on Issues of Internet Governance), was hosted in November on the same platform with BakuTel with the support of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The event brought together about 2,000 delegates from all over the world. Participation in organisation of events of such level speaks about the trust to the work of the Company and proves the quality of exhibitions and conferences organised by Iteca Caspian.

CE: What is the geography of Iteca's operation? Do you plan to expand exhibitions in the future?

Farid Mammadov: Iteca is a part of ITE Group of Companies. In turn, ITE is among five largest private exhibition organizers worldwide. The brand of Iteca is a sub brand of ITE Central Asia. Iteca is involved in activities in many countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia). This brand dates back to 1996. In the exhibitions

portfolio of ITE, Iteca accounts for about 30%. It is a very recognizable brand in the exhibition world. Our customers know this brand very well and trust to it, which is very important.

As far as the second question is concerned, we plan to expand the existing exhibitions. We watch closely the market, do market researches and if we see prospect in this or that field, we initiate organisation of exhibition events. Our main objective this year is quantitative and high-quality development of exhibitions and making each project a main event of the industry of the Caspian region.

CE: Which awards and certificates has the Company received so far?

Farid Mammadov: Looking back to the travelled path, I can tell that the exhibition business is becoming a part of the economic life of the country. Nowadays exhibitions in Azerbaijan are the main platform of the region bringing industry leaders together. Undoubtedly, we are pleased with the fact that from the viewpoint of professional organization Iteca Caspian is one of the most successful companies and that our exhibitions are worthily appreciated and get awards. So, Iteca Caspian is the owner of UGUR award. Moreover, for active contribution to the development of Azerbaijan-Russia trade and economic relations Iteca Caspian LLC received the Progress Award. We are also grateful to our partners for their support and high appreciation of our activity. In particular, I would like to mention the Caspian-European Integration Business Club (CEIBC), which is the organiser of the Caspian Energy Integration Award international prize. Within this awarding ceremony our Company has repeatedly won in the nomination 'The Company of Year in Organisation of Exhibitions'. Some of our exhibitions were recognized the



best exhibition brands of the year. We highly appreciate our partnership with the Club and hope it will be mutually fruitful and long-term.

CE: How would you evaluate competitiveness of company's exhibitions and in general competition in organisation of exhibitions in the Azerbaijan market?

Farid Mammadov: Healthy and fair competition always creates favourable conditions for successful business and high-quality service. We are enjoying a number of advantages which I would like to note. The first, as I already mentioned above, is our strong brand. Industry-leading international companies know it and trust to it. Our second advantage is the wide network of our own international agents who work only for our exhibitions. The third is our professional local team. This is some kind of synergy at all the levels of strong brands, strong international partners and strong local office.

Our employees pass trainings in Great Britain, adopting experience of our partners. They also take part in trainings in the leading exhibition schools of the world. It is very important to stress that the leadership of the republic actively supports the exhibition activity and creates all conditions for our exhibitions

to develop. So, Baku has become a regional exhibition center.

Separately I would like to stress that almost all exhibitions organised by Iteca Caspian undergo the international exhibition audit. We are the only exhibition company in Azerbaijan that invites on its own initiative auditors and receives certificate of conformity of data declared by the organisers, and compliances of the exhibition to international standards.

CE: What are the plans for the near-term outlook? Which exhibitions will be organised in 2013?

Farid Mammadov: This year we are planning to organise 20 exhibitions and 2 conferences in Azerbaijan. In view of the active registration of exhibitors for exhibitions in Baku I would like to note that already now we are looking forward to a very interesting and fruitful exhibition season. In the row of traditional exhibitions such as AITF, WorldFood Azerbaijan, TransCaspian, there is now the debut project CATEF 2013, the Aqua Technologies Exhibition and Forum, organized on the initiative and with the support of AZERSU OJSC. The 20-year anniversary of Caspian Oil & Gas, the first specialized exhibition and conference in Azerbaijan, is going to become an important event this year. For 20 years of successful organisation Caspian Oil &

Gas has become the key branch oil forum in the region. This year the anniversary of Caspian Oil & Gas coincides with the significant date – the 90th anniversary of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev, who stood at the origins of the exhibition. Due to the 20-year anniversary of Caspian Oil & Gas exhibition and conference, we will plan and implement a program of additional events. I am pleased to say that Caspian Energy acts as a general information partner of the Caspian Oil & Gas jubilee exhibition and I am sure that our cooperation will be fruitful.

In the second half of the year of the exhibition season starting in September we will host Education and Career exhibition, BIHE healthcare exhibition, Beauty Azerbaijan beauty exhibition, BakuBuild construction exhibition, Aqua-Therm Baku heating and ventilation exhibition, CIPS Caspian safety exhibition, STE ecology exhibition, SportExpo sports exhibition. This year BakuTel exhibition will be held a little earlier than the usual term, namely on September 25-28.

Seizing the opportunity, I would like to express gratitude to the government agencies for their support to exhibitions in Azerbaijan. I wish prosperity, actual articles, new ideas and more and more new readers to Caspian Energy Journal and I am grateful for the interest to our activity.