**Azerbaijan Leads Non-Aligned Movement**

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Azerbaijan hosted a significant summit-level meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group in Baku City, which aimed to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic global recovery. President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, Chairman of NAM, chaired this important meeting as Azerbaijan is leading this 120-member organization to navigate through the challenging global political and economic upheavals.

The Meeting was attended by nearly 70 heads of state and government representatives including important international organizations. At the inaugural event, President Ilham Aliyev highlighted how NAM mobilized global efforts to initiate a global response to the pandemic and the role of Azerbaijan in contributing to the organization’s progress. As the world continues to grapple with the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, NAM has played a crucial role in mobilizing global efforts to initiate a coordinated and effective global response.

Established in 1961, NAM currently comprises 120 member states, making it the largest grouping of states outside the United Nations. NAM is a group of countries that have chosen not to align themselves with any major power blocs to preserve their national independence and sovereignty. The purpose of these interactions was to deliberate on the mutual issues faced by NAM member states in the post-pandemic world. NAM has also played a critical role in highlighting the socio-economic issues of developing states and sensitizing people to the lack of resources in the third world during the pandemic.

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Azerbaijan assumed its presidency in 2019, a critical time when the world was hit by a global calamity; coronavirus. Yet Baku managed to fight for all of its members at the United Nations to get their due share in health and other pandemic resources. NAM Summit in Baku provided an important platform for member states to come together and discuss the world’s challenges in the post-pandemic era. With the leadership of President Aliyev and the active participation of member states, NAM has continued to play a key role in promoting global cooperation and advancing the interests of its member states.

During the Summit, President Aliyev highlighted NAM’s contributions to the pandemic response, specifically focusing on developing a database for the pandemic needs of NAM member states. This significant effort by NAM was aimed at identifying and addressing the unique challenges faced by its members in dealing with the pandemic.

The database compiled by NAM was later utilized by the World Health Organization (WHO) to address the specific needs of NAM member states, underscoring the vital role played by NAM in the global response to the pandemic. President Aliyev also called on the United Nations in 2020 to host the United Nations General Assembly Special Session to deliberate on the concerns of NAM members. Over 70 state ensured their presence in the session to emphasize a higher degree of cooperation in fighting the pandemic.

As the Chairman of NAM, President Aliyev has strongly advocated for promoting cooperation and collaboration among member states. In his speech, President said that as the chair of the NAM, Azerbaijan aims to defend justice and international law and highlighted the tremendous role that NAM has played during and post-pandemic period. He has emphasized the importance of maintaining the principles of non-alignment, which are rooted in respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations. Azerbaijan, under the leadership of President Aliyev, has also played an active role in promoting regional cooperation and stability, particularly in the South Caucasus region.

NAM gained global traction when it began to demand health justice for the grouping of 120 states. Azerbaijan fought for rights to the global leaders and international platforms for equitable provision of vaccines and other critical supplies. He suggested establishing a high-level United Nations panel on Global Recovery from Covid-19.

The other significant policy option by Azerbaijan is worthy of its leadership. Baku called on the developed states to surrender the patents and intellectual copyrights of vaccines and other critical supplies. President Aliyev opposed the nationalization of life-saving supplies to enable their accessibility, availability, and affordability equitable across the globe. It demonstrates the sheer sense of responsibility, capitalization of the organization’s influence, and leadership of Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, Azerbaijan has remained at the forefront in assisting the NAM members through its resources, either bilaterally or through World Health Organization. During the pandemic, Baku realized the lack of coordination and efficiency in the organization, especially during the emergency conditions like Covid-19. Baku established the NAM Parliamentary Network to create inclusivity and enhance coordination. Baku further played a pivotal role in establishing the NAM Youth Organization in 2022 during Shusha Accords.

It is pertinent to mention that NAM had partially lost its importance after the Cold War because it ended the global utility of military blocks. But with the emergence of non-traditional security threats in the 21st century, NAM adapted itself according to modern security needs and shaped a distinct character in the international security framework. Today, NAM feels that multilateralism is under attack, which threatens international security norms, including violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In extension, the recent NAM Summit echoed the concerns over evolving the new global order and possible confrontation between the East and the West. Azerbaijan is tirelessly contributing towards making NAM the second largest international organization after the UN to play a visible and efficient role in international issues. NAM is committed to inherently remaining a non-military block and retaining its non-aligned character in the New World Order.

The NAM countries remain at the receiving end of the global agenda on security, peace, and development. This is why NAM demands more representation and say in the international system, especially to cope with the post-pandemic challenges. The efforts of Azerbaijan for NAM reflect the dynamic leader whose vision has the potential to transform the organization for good. If the agenda of President Aliyev is supported in NAM and gets momentum, it will change the fate of NAM in the international system for good. Baku has led the organization with utmost passion and deep vision to the point where it can make a difference in real terms.

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