



**GANJA GREEN
ECONOMY FORUM**

**On 5 March 2024 five universities of Azerbaijan signed
Memorandum of Understanding for establishment of annual
Ganja Green Economy Forum (GGEF)**

Within the framework of the Year of Solidarity for the Green World in Azerbaijan in 2024, Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC), Ganja State University (GSU), Azerbaijan State Agrarian University (ASAU), Mingachevir State University (MSU) and Azerbaijan University of Technology (ATU) held an online meeting on 5 March 2024 and signed Memorandum of Understanding to establish Ganja Green Economy Forum (GGEF).

Deputy Minister of Agriculture Ilhama Gadimova, Deputy Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources Vugar Karimov, Chief Advisor of the Secretariat of the First Vice President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Elmar Mammadov, Head of the Department for Sustainable Development and Social Policy of the Ministry of Economy Huseyn Huseynov, Rector of UNEC Adalat Muradov, Rector of GSU Yusif Yusibov, Rector of ASAU Zafar Gurbanov, Rector of MSU Shahin Bayramov and Acting Rector of ATU Yashar Omarov delivered speeches and supported the initiative of establishing GGEF. Representatives of the Ministry of Digital Development and Transport, the Ministry of Energy and the State Tourism Agency also participated in the online meeting.

Moderated by Elmar Mammadov, the online meeting discussed the main goals of GGEF on contribution to studying global best practices related to tackling climate change and promoting green transition, including just green transition and integrity of the trio "*green growth - green economy - sustainable development*", as well as development of national human capital, promotion of scientific research by faculty and students of these universities, creation of green start-ups, development of national green economic sectors, promotion of public-private "green" partnerships, development of international green cooperation and particularly, exploration of special green transition way for national economy.

The speakers noted that the GGEF initiative was born in Ganja not by chance. Because this city is a native city of outstanding representative of the world literature, great Azerbaijani poet and thinker Nizami Ganjavi, who promoted back in the XII century the key issues that are at the root of today's climate change and sustainable development efforts to save our planet for humanity. It was highlighted that in the XVII century, European orientalist Barthélemy d'Herbelot de Molainville informed Europe that Nizami Ganjavi in an unusually beautiful poetic and widely accessible form proclaimed the following slogan back in the XII century: "*On earth, in society, between people and nature, should reign harmony and consent, otherwise humanity will destroy itself.*"

The speakers also stated that in his works, Nizami emphasized the need for protection of the nature by humanity and harmony between people and nature, the benefits of frugality and underlined that greed is also wrong and highlighted the importance of standing between greed and frugality. A few specific examples can somehow reflect his great love for nature. In his “Seven Beauties” poem, Nizami stated that *“Greenness is the freshness of everything, green color is brightening of the eyes”*. In his “Isgandarname” poem, the poet and thinker raised such a poignant question: *“If a plant does not grow in one place, how can a living thing live there?”*. It was underlined that such small examples from the poems of Nizami Ganjavi, who created the rare pearls of the world poetry, demonstrate that back in the XII century Nizami called humanity to reasonable savings and economic efficiency, and necessity of protection of the nature and the planet.

The speakers reminded that within the framework of the Year of Nizami Ganjavi in Azerbaijan in 2021, three following Centers were established in Azerbaijan:

- Center for Sustainable Development and Green Economy named after Nizami Ganjavi at UNEC;
- Center for Smart Sustainable Regions and Cities named after Nizami Ganjavi at GSU;
- Research Center for Sustainable Development and Regional Innovations at MSU.

The speakers highly appreciated the initiative of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on the first green city project in Azerbaijan to be implemented in Ganja – the native city of Nizami Ganjavi. They also reminded that it is the first time in the history of EBRD Green City program, which involves more than 50 participating green cities from different countries, that a university and namely, the Center for Smart Sustainable Regions and Cities named after Nizami Ganjavi at GSU is acting as a local partner for the Green City Action Plan of the participating city – Ganja.

Then, the rectors of five universities with a total number of nearly 40.000 students signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of GGEF.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding, GGEF will start its work on 5 June – the World Environment Day, will end on 7 June World Food Safety Day and will be held annually in Ganja on 5-7 June. Each year, one founding university will chair GGEF for a year, which will start and end on 7 June and will be main organizer of the Forum. The Forum will consist of five sessions and each university will be responsible for organizing its own session.

In the future, other universities of Azerbaijan can also join GGEF.

The first edition of GGEF will be organized by GSU in Ganja on 5-7 June 2024 within the year of COP29. The publication of the Green Development News Bulletin is also planned by founding universities.

The GGEF will have a Management Board consisting of five rectors, a Permanent Board consisting of five vice-rectors and five coordinators from each founding university, and a Supervisory Board consisting of fifteen representatives from public and private sectors, academia, NGOs and other partners.

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