

camca
Regional Forum

REPORT

OCTOBER 1-2, 2026

BAKU,
AZERBAIJAN

ABOUT THE FORUM

The Forum is a premier annual convening of established leaders from the CAMCA (Central Asia – Mongolia – Caucasus – Afghanistan) region, as well as leading professionals and stakeholders from the broader international community. The Forum was founded and is organized by the CAMCA Network, the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and the Rumsfeld Foundation, with the support of regional partners and sponsors.

The Forum's mission is to serve as a platform for connecting professionals across sectors and facilitating region-wide discussions on ways to advance economic growth and social development in the CAMCA region.

- Established in 2014, there have been **12 CAMCA Regional Forums**.
- Attendance for all Forums totals more than **2,300 participants**.
- Attendees have represented **45+ countries** from around the world.
- Over **630 speakers** have contributed to Forum conversations.
- The Forum location travels each year across the CAMCA region.

2026 FORUM HIGHLIGHTS

THEME: "The World and CAMCA: A Region at the Crossroads"

LOCATION: Fairmont Baku Flame Towers Hotel, Baku, Azerbaijan

SPEAKERS AND PARTICIPANTS: A diverse group of leaders and professionals from all sectors including current and former Ministers, an Assistant to the President, CEOs, Ambassadors, Chairpersons, Executive Directors, founders, entrepreneurs, investors, C-suite executives, university administrators, and more from the CAMCA countries and across the globe

FOCUS AREAS: Regional cooperation across geopolitics and geoeconomics, entrepreneurship, trade and transport, regional culture, education, AI, fintech, venture and investment opportunities, and more

300+ Attendees

25+ Countries

20 Sessions

75+ Speakers



FORUM SESSIONS

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

- **H.E. Hikmet Hajiyev**, Assistant to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan; Head of the Department of Foreign Policy Affairs of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- **H.E. Mikayil Jabbarov**, Minister of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- **Amb. Hafiz Pashayev**, Rector, ADA University; former Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the U.S.
- **H.E. Sodyq Safoev**, First Deputy Chairman, Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- **Amb. Kubanychbek Omuraliev**, Secretary-General of the Organization of Turkic States
- **Lucy Chow**, Investor (LP, Pact VC), International Author & Ecosystem Builder

FORUM SESSIONS:

- A Greater Central Asia-Caucasus Convergence
- CAMCA toward 2030: Global Shifts Affecting the Region
- The Turkic World and the Future of Regional Cooperation
- AI Is Redrawing the Map of Global Tech: Where Does the CAMCA Region Fit? - ***Sponsored by Lineate***
- Education for Innovation, Connectivity, and Regional Resilience
- Voices in Focus: Meet the CAMCA Network
- Regional and Global Consequences of the Iran War
- Regional Synergies: Designing the Next Digital Silk Road
- Greater Central Asia Convergence: From C5 to a Wider Framework
- Connecting CAMCA to the World: Building Regional and Global Economic Connectivity
- Backing the Future: Investing in Innovation During an Age of AI
- Entrepreneurship in CAMCA: Scaling Regional Success
- Culture, Identity and Regional Narratives
- Unlocking CAMCA's Growth Potential: The Policy Case for Regional Cooperation
- Unlocking CAMCA's Growth Potential: The Private Sector Advantage
- Statesmen's Conversation: CAMCA's Role in a Changing World

FIND SESSION RECORDINGS ON OUR YOUTUBE PAGE.

"Some events leave you with new connections and business cards. Others leave you with new friends and bright ideas. CAMCA in Baku was definitely the second one...Great people, great conversations, new connections and hopefully many more collaborations to come."

- Anatoly Strutinsky, SVP at Xsolla & 2026 Panelist

"The CAMCA Regional Forum has become a premier platform for in-depth conversations about geopolitics, technology, and connectivity across the wider Trans-Caspian region. I was delighted to contribute to the discussion about the future of AI and how the countries in the region can cooperate to advance their societies."

- Giorgi Tsikolia, Executive VP at Lineate & 2026 Panelist

SIDELINE EVENTS

Sept 29 - The CAMCA Academic Consortium hosted the 2026 CAMCA Education, Science & Technology Conference (ESTEC) at ADA University. *This dynamic half-day of roundtable discussions and presentations focused on the theme, "New Technologies and Change in Central Eurasia Hype, Hope, or Harm?"*

Sept 30 - CAMCA Network Annual Meeting - *CAMCA Network members gathered to share updates on the network's development and exciting new initiatives, as well as to learn more about the host country, Azerbaijan.*

Oct 1 - MOU Signing with Young Entrepreneurs Group of Asia Pacific (YEGAP) - *The CAMCA Network was pleased to sign an MoU with YEGAP and to welcome YEGAP representatives from Japan to Baku.*

"I strongly believe that the MoU between CAMCA and YEGAP will become an important bridge connecting Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific region for many years to come." - Hiromi Aoki, YEGAP Chairman

Oct 1 - CAMCA Women's Leadership Luncheon - *Speakers and other distinguished attendees met over lunch to network and discuss opportunities for collaboration on women-led projects and initiatives in the region.*

Oct 1-2 - Forum Expo - *Representatives of innovative companies and organizations participated in our 2026 Forum Expo, showcasing some of their unique products and initiatives across the CAMCA region, including some of our valued sponsors:* ***SeaBreeze Resorts, Xsolla, Yango Group, Chabiant Winery and PortBim.***

2026 FORUM AWARD PRESENTATION

The Forum organizers were pleased to present awards to Ambassadors Hafiz Pashayev, Sodyq Safoev and Tedo Japaridze (accepted by Amb. Irakli Alasania) for their lasting contributions to the region's shared future and continued support of the Forum's mission. (See picture below)



SPEAKERS

Adeniyi Adebayo, Chief Business Officer, Yango Group
Ali Aslan, International TV Presenter & Journalist
Aliy Akbarov, Investor Relations, Franklin Templeton
Alex Aleksishvili, Chairman & CEO, Policy and Management Consulting Group (PMCG)
Amb. Irakli Alasania, Co-Founder & CEO, SODI Investment
Undral Amarsaikhan*, Founder, CAMCA TV
Hadeia Amiry*, National Security Fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD)
Dr. Dania Arayssi, Assistant Director, New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy
Farida Asgarzade*, Founder and Managing Director, HUMAN Lab
Rufat Abbasov*, Founder, Synergy Partnership LLC
Dr. Brenda Shaffer, Research Faculty Member, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School
Chyngyz Batyrbekov*, Co-Founder & CEO, KOLFEST
Natig Bakhishov, Executive Director, United States-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce
Ilan Berman, Senior Vice-President, American Foreign Policy Council
Amb. Gela Bezhuashvili, Board Member, Strategy International Ltd.
Amb. Matthew Bryza, Board Member, Jamestown Foundation; Managing Director, Straife LLC
Amy Carlon, Chargé d'affaires, U.S. Embassy in Azerbaijan
Lucy Chow, Investor (LP, Pact VC), International Author & Ecosystem Builder
Dr. Svante Cornell, Director, Research and Publications, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute
Khulan Davaadorj*, International Award-Winning Social Entrepreneur; Founder & Chief Technologist, Lhamour
Laura Demessinova*, Co-founder, CAMCA Talking Magazine
Dovlat Dovlatov, Deputy CEO, Azericonnect Group
Nargis Dustmatova*, Chairwoman, FinTech Association Uzbekistan and Finextra Group
Nino Egadze*, Creative Lead & Founder, Design Institute
Dinara Gaplan*, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, "Bolashak Charity" Public Foundation
Jalal Gasimov, CEO, Pasha Holding
Eldaniz Gusseinov, Co-Founder & Chief of Research, Nightingale Int.
Rasmina Gurbatova*, Owner & Designer, Resm Jewelry
Dr. Ravan Hasanov, Independent Expert
Rufat Hasanov*, Award-winning film director, producer and lecturer, Bazelevs Company
Sarkhan Hashimov*, Deputy Chairman, Cybernet Azerbaijan
H.E. Hikmet Hajiyev, Assistant to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan; Head of the Department of Foreign Policy Affairs of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Fidan Huseynli*, Co-founder, CAMCA Talking Magazine
Farrukh Irnazarov*, Head of Representative Office/Chief of Party, Chemonics International
Dr. Murod Ismailov*, Associate Professor, University of Tsukuba; President, CAMCA Academic Consortium/CAMCA Academy
Fariz Jafarov, Executive Director, 4SiM (Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution)
H.E. Mikayil Jabbarov, Minister of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Anar Jahangirli*, Strategy, Digital Transformation and Advancement Lead, Qarabağ University
Jenny Jenish kyzy*, Product Owner, MBank Junior
Dr. Fuad Karimov*, Managing Regional Director, Xsolla
Tamar Kekenadze*, Managing Director, CAMCA Regional Forum
Anthony Kim, Jay Kingham Research Fellow in International Economic Affairs, Editor of the Index of Economic Freedom, The Heritage Foundation
Prof. Damjan Krnjević Mišković, Director for Policy Research, Analysis and Publications, Institute for Development and Diplomacy, ADA University
William Maley AM, Emeritus Professor of Diplomacy, Australian National University
Jonathan Low, CEO, Ampyre Group, Singapore; #1 Best-Selling Author, Cell to CEO
Samir Mammadov*, Azerbaijan Country Representative, United Nations Global Compact
Tughra Musayeva, Head of Innovations, PASHA Financial Holding
Orkhan Mustafayev, Founder & Chairman of the Board, Sabah Investment Group
Mikheil Nibladze, Senior Strategic Advisor, Cerberus Capital Management; Senior Advisor, LPX Partners
Kodirjon Norov*, Managing Partner, Highland Capital
Amb. Kubanychbek Omuraliev, Secretary-General of the Organization of Turkic States
Rakhim Oshakbayev*, Director, Center of Applied Research TALAP
Victor Orlovski, Founder & Managing Partner, R136 Ventures
Amb. Hafiz Pashayev, Rector, ADA University
Amb. Philip Reeker, Partner and Practice Lead for Europe & Eurasia, DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group
Rolande Simone Pryce, Regional Director for South Caucasus, World Bank
Dr. S. Frederick Starr, Chairman, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, American Foreign Policy Council
H.E. Sodyq Safoev, First Deputy Chairman, Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan
Dr. Farid Shafiyev, Chairman, Center of Analysis of International Relations (AIR Center)
Zhandos Shaimardanov, Director, Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Muna Shukurova*, Managing Director, Alif in Uzbekistan
Urkhan Seyidov, Regional Government Relations Director, Yango Group
Amb. Eduards Stiprais, EU Special Representative for Central Asia
Anatoly Strutinsky, Senior Vice President, Government & Industry Relations - EMEA & CCA, Xsolla
Brittney Stirling, Regional Director of the Levant, Turkey & the Caucasus, The Stirling Foundation
Dr. Ilya Roubanis, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations, Athens, Greece
Sarah Tonucci, Executive Director, Rumsfeld Foundation
Giorgi Tsikolia, Executive Vice President, Europe and the Middle East, Lineate
Dr. Mamuka Tsereteli, Senior Fellow, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute; President, America-Georgia Business Council
Aizhan Zhantayeva*, Co-founder & CEO, CAMCA Talking Magazine

**CAMCA Network Member*



INSIGHTS & COVERAGE

REGIONAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR, YANGO GROUP

"The real value of the CAMCA Network lies in its people and the connections between them. Bringing founders, investors, and operators together creates opportunities to exchange insight, build conviction, and turn shared ambitions into cross-border ventures...Deepening the connections between its markets, talent, and capital will help more homegrown success stories become globally competitive businesses."

PROGRAMME COORDINATOR, CODE ACADEMY

"Equally valuable were the conversations beyond the sessions — meeting people from different fields, exchanging ideas, and building new professional connections. A meaningful opportunity to connect education, research, digital humanities, and technology through both discussion and networking."

INVESTOR (LP, PACT VC) & ECOSYSTEM BUILDER

"#CAMCAazerbaijan2026 was filled with an inspiring group of policymakers, entrepreneurs, investors and business leaders. The incredible potential of the CAMCA region, predicated on the ten countries themselves recognizing the benefit of their enhanced cooperation has come to life. Global interest and momentum are in CAMCA's favor. CAMCA can be a model for other countries that may wish to work together as a bloc."

CEO, GEOTECH INTERSERVIS.AZ

"Interesting speakers and discussions on regional connectivity, investment, energy and cooperation between Central Asia and the Caucasus. But as often happens at good forums, the most valuable part was the people — meeting old friends, exchanging ideas and making new connections. Thank you to CAMCA Network for bringing this community together."

HEAD OF REGULATORY & GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, CASPI NOMOS LAW FIRM

"Discussions on peace, trust, connectivity, investment and regional cooperation highlighted how stronger regional ties depend not only on infrastructure and capital, but also on trust and sound legal and institutional frameworks...A genuinely thought-provoking two days and a valuable opportunity to hear different perspectives from across the region."

CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICER, YANGO GROUP

"Thanks to the CAMCA Forum team for hosting, and to my fellow panelists for a sharp conversation. The next big AI names may not come from where we expect. The region is worth watching closely."

DIRECTOR, ALPHA-OMEGA AZERBAIJAN

"Attending the Forum was a good reminder of how much opportunity exists in our region — especially when we stop looking at individual markets in isolation and start thinking about the connections between them. One of the highlights for me was meeting and exchanging ideas with people from very different markets and backgrounds...founders and business leaders from across Asia, and many other CAMCA Fellows."

REGIONAL HEAD OF SPECIAL INITIATIVES, XSOLLA

"Having built my career around regional growth, strategic partnerships, and collaboration — with a primary focus on the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Türkiye — events like CAMCA are particularly meaningful. The momentum in the CAMCA region is undeniable. Looking forward to turning these conversations into impactful regional partnerships ahead!"

CEO OF CIS & UAE, AWE CONSULTING

"What I found interesting was how closely many of these topics connect with the direction we are taking in our own work across the region — building partnerships, sharing knowledge and creating practical opportunities for cooperation across markets. But CAMCA was also about people...I met with local and regional partners, government representatives, colleagues and new contacts. There was a very open and supportive atmosphere — people shared information, introduced each other, exchanged ideas and were genuinely willing to help. I believe the Forum can contribute to stronger connections across the wider region."

BOARD MEMBER, AZERTELECOM

"The Forum brought together an impressive group of leaders to discuss something that is becoming increasingly important for our region: where does CAMCA fit into the next global technology map? The discussion was a great reminder that the future of AI will not be shaped only by algorithms and models. It will also be shaped by geography, infrastructure and connectivity. A big thank you to the CAMCA Forum organizers, fellow panelists and everyone who contributed to such an engaging discussion."

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS, BAKCELL

"I was particularly inspired by the leadership discussions and strong geopolitical and macroeconomic conversations around the future of Central Asia and the Caucasus, and the role that digitalisation, technology and AI will play in shaping this future. Grateful to the organisers and CAMCA Network for the invitation and an exceptional programme, high-level speakers and thought-provoking discussions."

2026 FORUM SPONSORS

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The Times of Central Asia

camca network
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NETWORKING
AZERBAIJAN

FORUM ORGANIZERS

CAMCA NETWORK

www.camcanetwork.com

The CAMCA Network is a collection of professionals committed to sharing ideas, knowledge, expertise, experience and inspiration across the 10 countries of Central Asia, Mongolia, the Caucasus and Afghanistan (CAMCA). This new generation of regional leaders values free market economic systems, good governance, the rule of law and basic human freedoms; supports the sovereignty of their countries and traditional national values; and acknowledges the importance of regional and global cooperation. As an initiative of the alumni of the CAMCA Fellowship Program, members of the CAMCA Network believe in the value of a connected region and are passionate to contribute to the development, prosperity and cooperation of the CAMCA region through joint activities and projects.

CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS INSTITUTE

www.silkroadstudies.org

The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and the Silk Road Studies Program constitute a joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center. The Center is independent and privately funded, and has offices in Washington, D.C., and Stockholm, Sweden. The Center is affiliated with the American Foreign Policy Council and with the Stockholm-based Institute for Security and Development Policy. It is the first Center of its kind in both Europe and North America, and is firmly established as a leading focus of research and policy worldwide, serving a large and diverse community of analysts, scholars, policy-watchers, business leaders, journalists and students.

RUMSELD FOUNDATION

www.rumsfeldfoundation.org

The Rumsfeld Foundation encourages leadership, public service and free political and economic systems in the U.S. and abroad. The Foundation is committed to providing opportunities for rising leaders, honoring service to nation and to promoting liberty.



CAMCA REGIONAL FORUM

ON BEHALF OF THE CAMCA COMMUNITY, THANK YOU TO ALL PARTICIPANTS OF THE 2026 FORUM FOR SHARING YOUR TIME, KNOWLEDGE, AND FORWARD-THINKING PERSPECTIVES AS WE COME TOGETHER TO ADVANCE THE REGION'S PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY.

GET IN TOUCH

Tamar Kekenadze
Forum Managing Director
director@camcaforum.org

David Soumbadze
Central Asia-Caucasus Institute
soumbadze@afpc.org

Sarah Tonucci
Rumsfeld Foundation
sarah@rumsfeldfoundation.org

FOLLOW US

info@camcaforum.org
www.camcaforum.org
@CAMCAForum

2027 CAMCA FORUM

SAVE THE DATES
The next Forum will be hosted in **June 2027** in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

To learn more contact: info@camcaforum.org or sign up for the Forum mailing list at www.camcaforum.org.

