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The Ministry of Education and BP announced a new partnership as they launched “Development of New Occupations in Agricultural Vocational Education” project on September 22.

Participants in the ceremony included Minister of Education Mikayil Jabbarov, Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Carole Crofts, BP’s Regional President for Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey Gordon Birrell and British Council Azerbaijan Country Director Elizabeth White.

In his remarks, Minister Mikayil Jabbarov said global political and economic processes necessitate the improvement of competitiveness of the country’s economy: “President Ilham Aliyev set a number of priorities for us including ensuring comprehensive development of export-oriented non-oil economy and effective use of human capital.”

“Guided by these priorities, the Ministry of Education has such major tasks as meeting the economy’s demand in highly-skilled specialists and building a vocational education system able to flexibly respond to new economic challenges.”

Mikayil Jabbarov said the “State Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan” set the development of vocational education as one of the key priorities. “Thanks to the President’s attention to this sector the State Agency for Vocational Education was established under the Ministry of Education with the aim of raising the efficiency of vocational training and preparing competitive specialists for the country’s economy.”

The minister mentioned the opening of IT STEP Academy, which was attended by President Ilham Aliyev last week. He said the academy was the first vocational education institution in Azerbaijan established based on the labor market demands and public-private partnership mechanism. Mikayil Jabbarov also highlighted world practice of developing vocational education. The minister said the project is aimed at 36 per cent of the country’s employed population, and expressed his confidence that it will contribute to the development of agriculture, which, he described as “one of the most important areas of our economy”.

British Ambassador Carole Crofts, BP’s Regional President for Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey Gordon Birrell and British Council Azerbaijan Country Director Elizabeth White said they believe the project will help develop human capital and build a quality labor market in Azerbaijan.