

Armenia, Egypt keen to expand trade and economic cooperation



On an official visit to Egypt, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with the country's President, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

The President of Egypt welcomed the official visit of Prime Minister Pashinyan and emphasized that it will give a new impetus to the development and expansion of multi-sectoral cooperation between Egypt and Armenia. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi emphasized the fact of centuries-old close ties between the Armenian and Egyptian peoples, adding that the Armenian community of Egypt has its own role in the development of various fields.

Prime Minister Pashinyan thanked for the warm reception, adding that the Armenian government is interested in expanding and deepening relations with Egypt. The Prime Minister emphasized the expansion and deepening of trade and economic cooperation and emphasized the need to develop business ties in realizing the existing potential.

The Prime Minister of Armenia and the President of Egypt discussed a number of issues related to the implementation of new joint programs in the fields of economy, infrastructure,

tourism, aviation, high technologies, agriculture, environment, education, and culture.

The interlocutors also discussed issues related to the processes taking place in the regions of the South Caucasus and the Middle East. Both sides emphasized the strengthening of peace and stability and the implementation of consistent steps in that direction.

Prime Minister Pashinyan briefed his Egyptian counterpart on the details of the ongoing discussions on the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty and referred to the principled positions of the Armenian side. Reference was also made to the "Crossroads of Peace" project of the Armenian government and its principles.

Nikol Pashinyan also referred to the humanitarian problems of people forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh and the steps taken by the Armenian government to solve them.

After the meeting of Nikol Pashinyan and Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, a number of documents were signed between Armenia and Egypt. ▶ page 3

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Armenian PM, Greek Defense Minister discuss bilateral cooperation, regional security



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received the Minister of National Defense of Greece Nikolaos Dendias, who arrived in the Republic of Armenia on an official visit.

The Prime Minister welcomed the visit of Mr. Dendias to Armenia and noted. “Dear Minister, I welcome you, this time as the Minister of Defense. I remember your visits to Armenia in the past. We appreciate your connection with Armenia, as well as your commitment to deepen the relations between Armenia and Greece. Of course, there is a big agenda in your new status. I am glad that you have already had fruitful negotiations and discussions in continuation of the negotiations between me and the Prime Minister of Greece.

Of course, the deepening of our cooperation in various fields is an agenda jointly adopted by our two governments, and I am very happy about it. During my visit, we had the opportunity to discuss our bilateral agenda, even the trilateral agenda. I am very happy that we have a unified approach to what to do in the future, and I am very happy that we managed to create such a dynamic.

Of course, defense cooperation between our countries is not new, I think we have quite a lot of experience here, but due to these new circumstances, the interest is growing even more, and it is very important to have the proper political will to address these new demands and opportunities, and to manage all challenges we face. Once again, I welcome you and thank you for your visit.”

The Minister of National Defense of Greece said: “Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, First of all, let me convey the regards of the Prime Minister of my country, whom you met a few days ago. It was

a very effective and successful visit, as evidenced by the minutes of the meeting. Thanks again for your efforts to strengthen our defense ties.

We had an extensive discussion with Mr. Papikyan, who also visited us in December 2023. My visit comes after his visit to Athens. This time we had a very practical meeting, that is, not only in terms of discussions, but also in terms of practical steps.

I am sure, he will brief you on our upcoming activities. We see ourselves as a country that will assist Armenia as much as we can, given our historical ties, also because we are very close countries, and we really want to do that.”

The interlocutors reaffirmed the steps for the further implementation of the previously reached agreements, referred to cooperation in military education and other directions.

The sides exchanged ideas on the processes taking place in the South Caucasus region, steps to ensure regional peace and stability.

Armenian Foreign Minister awards Greek Minister of Defense with Order of Friendship

On March 4, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan met with the Minister of National Defense of Greece Nikolaos Dendias, who was on an official visit to Armenia.

The interlocutors expressed satisfaction with the high level of political dialogue between the two countries, emphasizing the expansion of cooperation in various fields of mutual interest on both sides. In this context, they mentioned the Armenian Prime Minister’s recent visit to Greece and the role of high-level reciprocal visits in continuously enriching the bilateral agenda, the foreign ministry said.

According to the source, the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Greece discussed



issues related to deepening the partnership between the Republic of Armenia and the European Union, emphasizing the importance of maximizing the use of existing mechanisms and perspectives.

Ideas were exchanged on the possibilities of interaction in various formats.

Regional topics were discussed during the meeting. Ararat Mirzoyan presented the latest discussions in the process of normalizing relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as Armenia’s positions on key issues. Minister Mirzoyan emphasized Armenia’s efforts aimed at establishing lasting stability and peace in the South Caucasus, adding that achieving this goal requires a clearly expressed commitment from both sides,” the statement reads. For his contribution to the development of relations between Armenia and Greece, including during his tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, the Armenian Foreign Ministry has awarded Nikos Dendias with the Order of Friendship.

Greece stands against any military action in the South Caucasus – Nikolaos Dendias

Greece firmly believes that differences should be settled by peaceful means, Greek Defense Minister Nikolaos Dendias said at a joint press conference with Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan.

“We categorically oppose any military action, any unilateral military action in this region. We support establishment of peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan within the framework of international law,” the Greek Defense Minister said.

The press conference followed a meeting between the Defense Ministers of the two countries.

The meeting focused on the current

state of cooperation between Armenia and Greece in the defense sector, progress made on agreements reached during the December 2023 negotiations in Athens, and the new areas for cooperation.

An agreement was reached to enhance

military-technical cooperation following the ratification of the agreement on military-technical cooperation between the



governments of the two countries.

During the meeting, the parties exchanged views on regional security issues.

The meeting between the Prime Minister of Armenia and the Secretary General of the League of Arab States held in Cairo

In Cairo, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a meeting with Secretary General of the League of Arab States Ahmed Aboul Gheit.

The latter emphasized cooperation with the Armenian government on various international issues, including for the purpose of presenting positions and views.

Ahmed Aboul Gheit mentioned the centuries-old close ties between the Armenian and Arab peoples, which is a good basis for the development of cooperation.

In his speech, the Prime Minister



referred to the processes taking place in the South Caucasus region, the discussions on the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty, and the humanitarian problems of people forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh.

Nikol Pashinyan presented details about the “Crossroads of Peace” project developed by the Armenian government and added that based on the principles of sovereignty, jurisdiction, reciprocity and equality, Armenia is ready to unblock regional transport communications.

The interlocutors also discussed the situation in the Middle East,

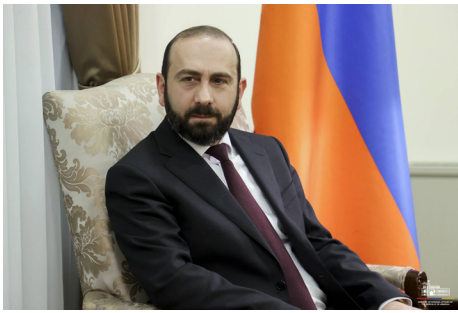
particularly in the Gaza Strip. The sides attached importance to the implementation of consistent steps towards the establishment of peace and stability.

In particular, a memorandum of understanding on economic cooperation was signed between the Armenian Ministry of Economy and the Egyptian Ministry of International Cooperation.

The 2024-2026 program on scientific and technical cooperation in the field of agriculture was signed between the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Armenia and the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Improvement of Egypt.

A memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of environmental protection was signed between the Armenian and Egyptian Ministries of Environment.

Armenia has institutional capacity to carry out border service at Zvartnots Airport – FM



The Russian side has been notified that only Armenian border guards will carry

out service at Zvartnots International Airport, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said at a joint press conference with visiting Foreign Minister of Cyprus, Constantinos Kombos.

He underlined that from the very beginning the presence of Russian border guards at Zvartnots was seen as support to the newly independent state of Armenia.

“This function was expected to be

carried out as long as Armenia needs it, and when Armenia builds institutional capacity, it will fully assume to carry out the function through its relevant bodies. Now we consider that the Republic of Armenia has the institutional capacity to carry out border service on its own and we have notified the Russian side about this and expressed gratitude for the support,” the Foreign Minister said.

Armenia, Azerbaijan border delimitation state commissions hold meeting

On March 7, the 7th meeting of the Commission on Delimitation and Border Security of the State Border between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State Commission on the Delimitation of the State Border between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, under the chairmanship of

Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Mher Grigoryan and Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan Shahin Mustafayev, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said.



According to the source, the parties exchanged views on delimitation issues and proceeded with aligning the draft Regulation on joint activity of the Commission on Delimitation and Border Security of

the State Border between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan and the State Commission on the Delimitation of the State Border between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia. The drafts of relevant guidelines for delimitation order were also discussed.

According to the ministry, the parties have agreed to complete the aligning of the draft Regulation on joint activity of the Commissions

within a short timeframe.

The sides agreed to set the date and the place of the next meeting of the Commissions in working order.

Peskov confident all difficulties in Russia-Armenia relations will pass

Dmitry Peskov, the press secretary of the President of the Russian Federation, expressed confidence that the current difficulties in relations between Russia and Armenia will be overcome. He emphasized that cooperation between the two countries is mutually beneficial.

“The difficulties in the relations between Russia and Armenia will pass,” stated Dmitry Peskov, the press secretary of the Russian President, during the



Knowledge: The First marathon, reports TASS.

“There may be periods of tension among close neighbors, but what is needed here is political will - and we have it.

Constructive dialogue and political foresight from the leaders of both countries are essential, and fortunately, we possess these qualities as well. Therefore, I am confident that these challenges will be overcome; cooperation between Russia and Armenia is mutually beneficial,” TASS quoted Dmitry Peskov as saying.

We are obligated to oppose aggression, support Armenia both politically and materially - Cyprus FM



Sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected, so Cyprus is ready to support Armenia both politically and materially, said the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Cyprus, Constantinos Kombos, during a press conference in Yerevan.

Referring to developments in the Caucasus region, the minister emphasized

that Cyprus has expressed unequivocal support for the people of Armenia from the outset and has sent humanitarian aid to meet the needs of forcibly displaced people from Nagorno-Karabakh.

“Aggression, revisionism, displacement—all these are intolerable tools from the perspective of the international community. Coercion and the use of force cannot serve as alternatives to dialogue and peaceful dispute resolution.

Sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected, and adherence to the UN Charter is an important principle for us. As members of the international community, we are obligated to oppose aggression and revisionism and to support

Armenia both politically and materially,” said Constantinos Kombos and noted that Cyprus welcomes all efforts to normalize relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In response to Armenpress question about the actions of the international community, including the EU and Cyprus, in the event of a violation of Armenia’s territorial integrity and Azerbaijan’s attempts to destabilize the region, the Cypriot Foreign Minister responded that all must be committed to the principles of the UN Charter. There is no alternative.

The Cypriot official added that his country has been a victim of aggression and illegal invasion for 50 years by Turkey.

Egypt to name square in Cairo after Armenia: Pashinyan, Madbouly discuss bilateral ties

On an official visit to Egypt, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had a meeting with his counterpart Prime Mostafa Madbouly.

The latter welcomed the Armenian Prime Minister’s visit to the newly constructed administrative city and emphasized the importance of multi-sectoral cooperation between Armenia and Egypt. Mostafa Madbouly emphasized the fact of centuries-old deep historical relations between the two countries and added that the Armenian community of Egypt lives in the Egyptian society without any problems. Mr. Madbuli noted the effective meetings of the Armenian Prime Minister with the President of the country and representatives of business circles. At the same time, Mostafa Madbuli expressed gratitude to the Armenian government for contributing to the development of

cooperation between Egypt and the Eurasian Economic Union.

Prime Minister Pashinyan expressed gratitude for the warm hospitality and added that he had productive discussions with the Egyptian President. Nikol Pashinyan voiced hope that economic cooperation will deepen along with excellent bilateral political relations as a result of his official visit. In this regard, the Prime Minister emphasized the importance of the meeting with the businessmen. At the same time, it was emphasized that the session of the Armenia-Egypt intergovernmental cooperation commission and the parallel business forum will be held in the near future, during which various investment proposals will be presented. Prime Minister Pashinyan also highlighted Egypt’s support in logistical matters in

sending humanitarian aid from Armenia to Gaza.

The interlocutors discussed issues related to the expansion of trade, the possibilities of implementation of investment programs. Mostafa Madbuli thanked the Armenian side for naming one of Yerevan’s squares after Egypt and added that the Egyptian side will name one of the capital’s squares after Armenia.

Thoughts were also exchanged on issues related to the construction process of the new administrative city in Egypt, as well as the Academic City in Armenia.

An agreement was reached to hold a meeting of the Armenia-Egypt intergovernmental commission and a business forum in the coming months.

Armenian, Iranian Defense Ministers reach agreements on mutual interests

Following the welcoming ceremony at the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a meeting was convened between the Minister of Defence of Armenia, Suren Papikyan, and the Minister of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics of Iran, Brigadier General

Mohammad Reza Gharayi Ashtiani, the Armenian defense ministry said.

The agenda included discussions on the present state of cooperation in the defence sector and prospects for future development. Both ministers exchanged views on international and regional issues,

reiterating their commitment to establishing long-term peace and stability in the South Caucasus region.

Subsequently, several agreements of mutual interest were reached during the meeting.

PM Pashinyan commends cooperation between Armenia and World Bank



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received Antonella Bassani, Vice President of the Europe and Central Asia Region at the World Bank.

The Prime Minister commended the cooperation between the Armenian government and the World Bank in various

directions, including the effective implementation of the reforms implemented in Armenia. In particular, Nikol Pashinyan emphasized the importance of joint projects implemented in the fields of infrastructure development, energy, transport, education and ensuring their further

continuity.

Antonella Bassani also hailed the cooperation with the government of Armenia and noted that the development of the partnership strategy with Armenia is in the final stage, taking into account the priorities of our country.

The interlocutors highly appreciated the results of the joint educational pilot program in Tavush region and expressed hope that it will be implemented in other regions as well.

Issues related to further cooperation in the above-mentioned directions, humanitarian problems of people forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh, "Crossroads of Peace" project presented by the Armenian government and its principles were also discussed. The parties emphasized the importance of unblocking the regional infrastructures in accordance with the principles of sovereignty, jurisdiction, equality and reciprocity, expressing confidence that it will contribute to the development of trade and economic ties.

Armenian Defense Minister highlights close cooperation between Armenia and Greece within EU, NATO framework

The Defense Ministers of Armenia and Greece discussed international and regional security challenges during the meeting held in Yerevan.

Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan said during a joint press conference with his Greek colleague.

"In this context, it should be noted that the two countries have the



same approaches and outlooks towards strengthening the regional and international security environment, which

was once again confirmed during our discussions.

With my colleague, we discussed also

Armenia-Cyprus-Greece cooperation in the trilateral format," the Defense Minister said.

According to the minister, during the discussion they underscored the close cooperation of the two countries within the framework of international organizations, particularly the EU and NATO.

I would like to emphasize specifically that Greece was the first country to pave the way for Armenia in relations with European organizations and states,

participation in international missions and various defense sector affairs," said Papikyan.

Cyprus to finance construction of 10 greenhouses for families displaced from Artsakh

The Government of Cyprus will finance the construction of two greenhouses for families forcibly displaced from Artsakh, the Armenian Embassy in Greece informs.

The construction of 40 greenhouses was initiated by My Step Charitable Foundation on plots owned by families forcibly displaced as a result of the last Artsakh war, in rural communities, where the latter are currently settled. The residents of the regions will also benefit from the program.



The price for each greenhouse is

17,300 euros, with a total cost of around 700,000 euros.

Responding to the call for donations, thanks to the efforts of the State Representative of the Armenian Cypriot Community, Vardges Mahtesyan, the Government of Cyprus created an opportunity to cover the costs of the construction of 10 greenhouses.

Development of Armenia's capital market directly affects economic growth: Yerevan hosts first investment forum

Formation of favorable investment climate and financial market infrastructure in Armenia were discussed at the first investment and financial forum, "Armenian Capital Markets: Future Outlook." The event organized by Freedom Broker Armenia in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy brought together representatives from all branches of the financial sector.

In his opening remarks Timur Turlov, the founder and head of Freedom Holding Corp, emphasized the significance of developing the capital market in Armenia. He believes that developing the capital market can bring vast opportunities to the country, such as introducing new technologies, attracting investors and building closer integration with the European Union, the United States, Central Asian countries, and the rest of the world. And the issue of trust in the financial system is critical here.

"The population's welfare increases with a higher level of trust in the financial system. Tax collection improves with more public companies, and the economy becomes more active with more private investors. As a large enough investor, we are interested in discussing the current opportunities for capital markets and how we can actively pursue them. Freedom Holding Corp. already has a capital of over a billion dollars. We have many talented employees in Armenia who will be happy to contribute to developing culture, financial literacy, and technology to achieve a

more sustainable system and make long-term investments in our development," said Timur Turlov.

The forum's centerpiece was the plenary session devoted to Armenia's investment climate and the prospects of capital market development. Deputy Minister of Economy Narek Teryan said the sphere is still underdeveloped in the country. Companies attract money by classical methods, such as loans from banks or through partners.

He said that the government and the state must create incentives and conditions for developing capital markets to remedy the situation. Building investor confidence is also important. This is one of the critical factors for attracting financing.

"Trust will help increase market transparency, make information about products, terms, and issuers available, and build long-term customer relationships. As a government, we plan to introduce such tools as providing possible guarantees from the state and development institutions, support programs for entering the market of shares or companies that operate in industries and projects promising for the country. We are already implementing some of this. But for balanced development, it is important to ensure that such measures are cross-cutting. We must develop the capital market and gradually shift the focus away from classical fundraising. On top of that, we need to educate

the public to explain why it's safe. But we are only at the beginning of our journey," Narek Teryan noted.

Samvel Khanvelyan, Head of the Public Debt Management Department of the Ministry of Finance, stressed that historically, government bonds have been the locomotive in the capital market. The international bank's assessment results show that Armenia's domestic debt market is more developed regarding infrastructure, but there is still room for growth in the secondary market.

"But we see a positive trend. While banks were the main recipients of bonds in 2020, this figure has now fallen by 26%, meaning that the participation of other participants has increased. The retail system in Armenia was introduced in 1997 but has been developing since 2017, when we introduced an online platform. It's certainly a bit inferior to the regular government bond system in terms of volume, but even here, we're noticing an increase in participation. Starting in March, we will use an improved online trading system. This will enable both residents and non-residents to purchase national securities," he said.

According to Garegin Gevorgyan, Director of the Financial System Stability Directorate at the Central Bank of Armenia, banks have historically dominated the country's financial system. They will remain so in the near

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“Naturally, changes are necessary for the active development of the capital market. However, we currently present it as a pyramid with trade and open markets as its pyramids. We need to start from the foundation to build a strong institutional system—much to be done in this regard, such as forming a market for the Armenian Dram. The Armenian economy lacks the necessary tools to determine its short-term price, which we consider the main issue. All future actions to develop the capital markets will be based on addressing this problem,” Garegin Gevorgyan said.

Hayk Yeganyan, CEO of AMX and chairman of the Management Board, took the floor next. He is confident that for a long time, the market didn’t develop much because it simply lacked the tools, the full chain. At the same time, the republic already has a generally good legislative framework, infrastructure, and a stock exchange with a new collateral program that gives access to final investors through the platform.

“We have a large base of potential investors. This is \$10 billion, mainly stored in deposits or square meters. There is a liquid base for investments and good potential issuers. There are already many of them, including those that have received credit ratings. But there are no investment bankers or miners. There is not enough secondary market due to the



lack of broker-dealers. If you fill this void, the one who takes up this case first will get a good head start and a business case. According to our calculations, it is possible to underwrite from \$500 million to \$1 billion annually,” the speaker shared.

Hayk Yeganyan is sure that, at the same time, it is vital to educate the population. For example, he mentioned the work done by Freedom Holding Corp in Kazakhstan, where people started investing in bonds, foreign assets, and the corporate sector.

Timur Turlov continued the topic. He confirmed that if retail investors understand that they can save on taxes and get a higher return on their savings, they come to the market. They do it especially

actively when these products appear in the banking app, and buying securities becomes as simple as opening a bank deposit.

“If we want to see hundreds of thousands of people, hundreds of thousands of residents of Armenia buying securities, we need to do it as simply as banks do. Moreover, full-fledged investment banks should appear to provide people with these banking operations. Attracting retail is not so difficult when you have such players and digital platforms. Companies enter this market when they realize that they can effectively raise capital. And the state benefits from this in the form of taxes and economic growth,” he concluded.

Fourth GREEN Armenia Platform policy dialogue urges action to enhance the country’s water sector

The Government of Armenia, jointly with the World Bank, the European Union, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), held the 4th policy dialogue of joint *Growth and Recovery to Empower, Equip and Nurture (GREEN) Armenia* Platform. Chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Khachatryan, the meeting identified innovative ideas and shared global knowledge on how sustainable water and wastewater management can contribute to the country’s increased resilience to climate change.

The goal of the GREEN Armenia platform is to combine and optimize policies and investment initiatives to support

Armenia’s transition to a green economy. The event presented the government outlook for the water sector challenges and international partners’ vision and commitments for addressing Armenia’s water sector vulnerabilities, including potential partnerships to mobilize international expertise and prioritize investments in the sector.

Armenia’s water sector faces multifaceted challenges related to surface and groundwater management, water quality, irrigation, water supply and sanitation, as well as its management framework. Climate change is another crosscutting threat affecting the water sector and

requiring better management of natural resources, including water. While in general Armenia’s water resources are sufficient, their regional availability and seasonal fluctuation call for effective and sustainable water resources management. This includes improved water sector infrastructure, increased storage capacity, strengthened institutional capabilities, and relevant sector policies.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that integrates sustainable practices, technological innovations, and community engagement. Synergy among various stakeholders, including

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Armenia, France establish long-term cooperation, including defense field: Ambassador's interview

France expresses concern regarding Azerbaijan's violations of Armenia's territorial integrity. France's defense cooperation with Armenia is exclusively focused on defending Armenia. The two countries are establishing long-term cooperation in the defense sector.

Armenpress has interviewed the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France to Armenia, Olivier Decottignies, covering Armenia-France relations, defense cooperation, upcoming visits from France and other issues.

The interview is presented below:

- Mr. Ambassador, Armenia-France relations have gained a new quality. Last year, the two countries signed documents on defense cooperation. For the first time in history, the French defense minister visited Armenia. What does this mean? How would you assess the visit? Will this cooperation be long-term, and will it deepen or expand?

It is actually not only defense cooperation. Over the past 2-3 weeks, we had meetings between the foreign ministers of both countries in Munich. The Prime Minister of Armenia, Mr. Pashinyan, was in Paris and attended the pantheonization ceremony of Missak Manouchian, a famous resistance fighter of Armenian origin.

He also met with the President and the Prime Minister. And, of course, the landmark visit of the Minister of the French Armed Forces to Armenia was the first visit for the Minister of the French Armed Forces and also for a minister of a NATO member country. We have had diplomatic relations with Armenia for 32 years. Diplomatic relations with independent Armenia were established on February 24, 1992, but they have never been as intensive and confident.

Yes, we are building long-term cooperation, including cooperation in the field of defense, it is not only about military procurement, which is of course important, but also about training, including the training of senior Armenian officers. It's about advising.

When have an agreement between two

military academies of two countries, such as was signed during the visit of the Minister of the French Armed Forces, you are obviously building for the long term.

- Mr. Ambassador, will it expand?

- We are listening to the needs of our Armenian friends.

- Azerbaijan actively buys weapons from Turkey, Israel and other countries, while the President of Azerbaijan accuses France of arming Armenia and contributing to the escalation in the South Caucasus region. Certain cycles also express opinion that the European Union represented by France wants to weaken Russia's influence in the South Caucasus. How would you react to this, what interest does France have in defense cooperation with Armenia?

- Unlike those certain cycles that you refer to, we do not think in terms of spheres of influence, we think in terms of the rights of each nation to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity. And it is actually not only a French concern. Many times the past few years, neighboring country of Armenia like Iran, have expressed concern about Armenia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We disagree with Iran on many issues, but this is one issue we agree on. And I think actually all UN member states should agree on that because under the UN Charter, all UN member states recognize and ought to support the integrity and sovereignty of other member states. That is a general obligation.

When it comes to the Azerbaijani stated concerns, they can be sure that the type of cooperation and the equipment that we are providing to Armenia are aimed at defending the country; it is purely defensive. Let me give you a good example: when we talk about air defense, if you don't enter the airspace of Armenia, you will never face the air defense of Armenia; it is a defensive capability.

- So can we say that defense cooperation is about Armenia's sovereignty?

It is about the sovereignty of Armenia and the protection of its territory and

people. It was clearly stated from the very beginning that all that we are providing—weapons, equipment, training—is consistent with that goal.

- The Prime Minister of Armenia recently announced that Azerbaijan is preparing for a new war against Armenia. There have been negotiations and meetings with the participation of France, what role can France play to prevent the predicted new war?

- There are some concerning statements coming from Baku. France has played an important role in helping to achieve some key elements in the negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in particular, what was agreed between the two parties in Prague in October 2022, the mutual recognition of each other's territorial integrity and the Alma-Ata Declaration as a basis for dealing with border issues.

This is our contribution already. Now we support all efforts under the umbrella of the European Union and the United States to reach a durable stable and just peace agreement. This is our position, and anything goes in that direction has our support.

- Mr. Ambassador, Armenia has always declared that it is ready and interested in peace with Azerbaijan, but bearing in mind Aliyev's way of breaking the agreements, it is always stated that an international guarantee is needed for the implementation of the peace agreement. According to you, who and what can be that guarantee? What role can the EU, especially France play in this regard?

It takes two to tango. First of all, we need two parties to genuinely be willing to achieve an agreement. And of course, over the past 30 years, we've come to a certain confidence that third-party support and guarantees are needed.

In our view, American and European mediations are the most reliable guarantees. And we have seen, when it comes to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, that the guarantee system put in place in 2020 did not work. We must

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page 9 also learn lessons from that.

- Mr. Ambassador, how do you imagine the future cooperation between Armenia and France, especially in what areas do you see the potential for deepening cooperation, in particular, what about economic cooperation?

- The cooperation we have with Armenia is certainly not limited to military matters; it is the latest addition to this cooperation. Many actors are involved in this collaboration: the French government, French government agencies, French companies, French non-governmental organizations, and Diaspora organizations in France. All are trying to take into account the current strategic situation of Armenia.

My advice to them, and I meet with them regularly, is to focus on the most strategic sectors and the most strategic areas of Armenia, even though they are under the greatest threat. If you have a strategic approach, then there is no small project or small question. Everything is relevant, useful, and impactful as long as it is thought out strategically. So, in that

regard, one priority that was discussed during the meeting between Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan and our President in Paris a couple of weeks ago is the infrastructure in the fields of energy, transport, and connectivity. Reinforcing and supporting Armenia also means reinforcing the infrastructure.

- Mr. Ambassador, are there any high-level visit from France planned to Armenia in the nearest future?

- Our two foreign ministers just met a few weeks ago. It was neither in France nor in Armenia, so I guess there will be some visits from both sides in the near future. And, as you know, the Prime Minister of Armenia has invited the Prime Minister of France to visit Armenia. Visits are important because they allow to make significant progress and take stock of what we have done together.

But there are many more visits than just official visits that I would like us to focus on. Over the weekend, two very prominent French surgeons were in Armenia working with Armenians. They taught very

vital gestures that can help save someone suffering from hemorrhage. Thirty percent of Armenian casualties in recent conflicts were inflicted from hemorrhage. Famous surgeons come from France devoting time in helping Armenia. And we have such cases in all fields. Important visits are to come, but there are no small visits as well.

-Mr. Ambassador, would you like to add anything?

- I would like to have a word of thanks. I am very grateful to Armenia for the warm reception extended to myself, my team, and the French representatives from various fields. Over the centuries of contact, a deep sense of confidence and friendship has developed in the relations between our two countries and peoples, which makes our work truly more impactful and meaningful. So, thank you to all Armenians who welcome us in this way.

Interview by Anna Grigoryan

Photo by Hayk Badalyan

Cameraman: Hovhannes Mkrtchyan.

page 8 government agencies, non-governmental organizations, local communities, and international partners, is essential to leverage collective expertise and resources effectively. Additionally, accessing global knowledge networks and securing sufficient financing mechanisms can further bolster Armenia's efforts to implement innovative solutions and build resilience against the impacts of climate change on water resources.

"Armenia has sufficient water resources availability, however this resource is fast declining because of climate change and too much water lost on its way from the source to its destination. A shift in the mindset is needed, recognizing that water requires better management. The World Bank is ready to help Armenia with investment in infrastructure, as well as improvements in its governing institutions and policies, in order to improve the management of one of Armenia's most precious resources," said Carolin Geginat, the World Bank Country Manager for Armenia.

In his speech, Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Khachatryan highlighted the key importance of sustainable management of water resources from the point of view of building a green and resilient future,

especially emphasizing its importance in terms of climate change, and new vulnerabilities emerging as a result. At the same time, from the point of view of effective addressing of the existing problems, Deputy Prime Minister Khachatryan emphasized the need to review the framework of the current water resources management policy, including the adoption of new technologies and approaches.

"Increased irrigation needs, climate change, and an outdated water infrastructure pose risks to the available water resources in Armenia. In order to prevent further water losses, Armenia needs to develop better wastewater treatment, step up efforts to clean Lake Sevan and develop and implement a water management strategy, in line with the Art. 48 of CEPA. The EU stands ready to support the Government in all of these efforts, including in the context of the EU-Armenian Investment Coordination Platform that was established to accelerate investments of critical and strategic importance for Armenia," said Vassilis Maragos, EU Ambassador, and the Head of EU Delegation to Armenia.

"Climate change presents a significant threat to Armenia's water resources. To build forward better, ensuring sustainable

water and wastewater management is crucial. The Water Sector Adaptation Plan represents critical steps in achieving this objective. It also places a much-needed spotlight on local-level, climate-smart water management solutions that UNDP has been successfully demonstrating over the past decades. This dialogue is a step forward in coordinating efforts and finding new collaborative solutions," said Natia Natsvlishvili, UNDP Resident Representative in Armenia.

GREEN Armenia platform was initiated in June of 2022 with the aim of streamlining policy and investment initiatives for Armenia's green transition and ensuring a more efficient coordination with the development partners. This was the fourth in the series of the high-level policy dialogues, which have been instrumental in elevating and streamlining policy and technical assistance on issues related to green economy transition, air pollution and water resource management. The counterparts remain committed to continuing these series, given their results driven and successful outcomes, with clear commitments both on the part of the government of Armenia and the development partners.

Iran's Role in Armenia's Foreign Policy Diversification



(ARMENPRESS) The old regional order has been destroyed, and the new one has not been fully formed. This transition at the regional level is also taking place at the global level. Against the backdrop of this turbulence, Armenia faces new security threats. In order to mitigate them, it is necessary to accelerate economic and small state power potential.

Iran's role in Armenia's communications

To unlock your potential, you must first pay attention to your neighborhood. For decades, Armenia has been under blockade by Turkey and Azerbaijan. In December 1993, Ankara unilaterally closed its border with Yerevan. In 2022, Azerbaijan blocked the Lachin corridor connecting Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh. The consistency of Ankara's and Baku's steps leads to the conclusion that the blockade policy is one of the instruments of the policy directed against Armenia. Therefore, opening the borders will not mean that one day they will not be closed again.

Over the past decades, Georgia and Iran have served as Armenia's window to the outside world. In the case of Tbilisi, the allied nature of Armenian-Russian relations could influence relations between the neighbours. And the extensive presence of Azerbaijan and Turkey in the Georgian economy and energy sector can also affect relations between Yerevan and Tbilisi. An example of this is the Georgian refusal to provide airspace for the transit of arms to Armenia during the 2020 war. At that time, an aircraft carrying weapons from Russia had to make a long detour over the Caspian Sea, to deliver to Armenia

through Iranian airspace. But Georgia allowed Azerbaijan to use its airspace to carry weapons from Turkey and Israel.

Today, the military-technical co-operation between Armenia and Russia is at a low level. The arms and military equipment envisaged in the 2021 contract have not yet been fully delivered to Armenia. In the context of diversification in this sphere, Armenia's efforts to intensify its relations with India are noteworthy. Iran can also play an important role. The only route for delivery of Indian arms to Armenia is through the territory and airspace of Iran. It is not possible to deliver weapons in any other way today. Therefore, Iran's role remains significant in the context of restoring Armenia's military potential.

Moreover, the Arab and Asian destinations are becoming increasingly important in Armenia's foreign economic activities: the UAE and China are among Armenia's main trading partners. The most convenient route for cargo delivery is through Iranian ports, which provide Armenia with access to the world's ocean. Therefore, as part of the diversification, where the growing Asian and Southern markets may take an important place, Iran's role in Armenia's communications will grow rapidly.

Iran's Role in Armenia's Economic Development and Energy Security

In addition, Tehran plays a key role in economic transport and logistics routes. Armenia is part of the North-South and Persian Gulf-Black Sea projects. From the perspective of Armenia's interests, these projects should link Yerevan with the Indian market, as well as the Gulf States, whose role is also increasing as part of Armenia's diversification efforts in foreign policy. An important component is the establishment of its own or a joint terminal with India in the Iranian port of Chabahar. It will facilitate access to Arab, Asian and Indian markets, with the potential to become an important hub for Armenia in the short term.

The full-fledged free trade agreement (FTA) between the EAEU and Iran, signed at the end of 2023, creates new opportunities for Yerevan, too. Armenia is the only EAEU member state that has a direct land border with Iran. According to Eurasian Economic Commission [forecasts](#), trade turnover between the EAEU and Iran will triple in the short term. Such a prospect will help Armenia unlock its transit potential by focusing on vertical rather than horizontal routes, as well as create new opportunities for the economy. An example could be to establish on its territory the production of goods and services that would be relevant to both the EAEU member states and Iran, which has signed a Free Trade Agreement with the EAEU, as well as India, which is negotiating a similar agreement.

The Iranian direction of Armenia's diversification policy is also relevant in the energy sector. Today, most of Armenia's gas comes from Russia at a discounted price of US \$165 per 1000 m3. However, the importance of diversification is not due to the risk of higher prices. Over the last few years, the supply of Russian gas through the territory of Georgia has been temporarily suspended due to various circumstances, including reconstruction works. According to different assessments, Iran can supply Armenia with approximately [1 billion m3](#) of gas per year, which is more than half of its annual consumption. Moreover, an Iranian direction of gas imports will stimulate the development of electricity generation in Armenia, as the formula of exchanging "gas for electricity" will pursue.

Iran's Role in Ensuring Armenia's Security

The balance of power in the South Caucasus has changed radically after the 2020 war. Azerbaijan and Turkey began to set the regional agenda by putting military pressure on Armenia. Azerbaijan's takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023,

page 11 ➔ Baku's continued refusal to sign any peace agreement with Yerevan, its regular aggression against Armenia during 2021-2023, combined with its continued military build-up, indicate Azerbaijan's territorial ambitions against Armenia.

In this context, it is important for Armenia to have a close partner able to level the imbalance of power in the region. Iran, who has several times stated the need to maintain the regional status quo and its readiness to prevent changes in the [regional configuration](#), can be such an actor. According to some reports, in September 2022, Tehran already [helped prevent](#) a larger-scale aggression of Azerbaijan against Armenia. This shows that beyond political will, there are relevant capabilities that can be deployed at a critical moment.

For Tehran too, Armenia's security and the existence of a direct Armenian-Iranian border is an important condition for the country's development. Otherwise, if Turkey and Azerbaijan open a corridor through Syunik, Iran's entire northern border will be under Turkey's control or in its sphere of influence. Therefore, Tehran is interested in strengthening Syunik as the most vulnerable region. The opening of the consulate in Kapan and investment programmes in the region such as

the construction of the Agarak-Kajaran new highway, are being implemented in this logic.

These measures are primarily aimed at preserving stability in the northern part of the Iranian border. However, Tehran's role in ensuring Armenia's security may not be limited to these initiatives. One of the prospective areas of cooperation is military-technical. Modern Iranian weaponry has been tested through various conflicts. In addition to the quality, Iranian weapons have a number of advantages relevant for Armenia. Firstly, the products of the Iranian military-industrial complex are relatively low-cost. This is not only a competitive advantage, but also an important factor for Armenia's rapid military capacity building. Secondly, the geographical proximity allows for prompt deliveries of both arms and military equipment and organizing maintenance. Thirdly, the range of Iran's MIC is quite broad - from artillery and UAVs to electronic warfare and air defense systems. Despite the advantages of large-scale procurement in the Indian market, this area of cooperation should also be diversified so as not to depend solely on a single supplier.

Therefore, all necessary preconditions have been created for expanding

cooperation with Iran, the main of which is a good degree of alignment of interests. Taking into account that one of the principles of diversification is the expansion of foreign policy directions, Tehran can be one of the most relevant ones for Armenia. At the same time, it is important not to perceive Iran solely as a transit route. Tehran plays an important role in restoring the balance of power in the South Caucasus, which is in Armenia's interests today.

There might be concerns for Armenia on the threat of Western sanctions for close cooperation with Iran. However, these concerns may be overestimated. First, the growing trade and economic cooperation between Yerevan and Tehran today, as well as discussions on defense cooperation in 2015-2016, have not triggered serious concerns from Brussels and Washington. Second, Iran has experience in conducting military exercises with Azerbaijan, which has also not been affected by sanctions. Third, cooperation with Iran does not mean replacing existing economic and security partners, which could cause resentment on the part of Russia, the EU, the US and India. Thus, Armenia in its pursuit of diversification can develop smooth relations with all centers of power, including Iran.

Armenian Ombudsperson briefs CoE Secretary General on protection of rights of people forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh



On March 5, Armenia's Human Rights Defender Anahit Manasyan met with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, within the framework of her working visit to Strasbourg.

The Defender presented issues related to the protection of the rights of people forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh,

referred to the fact-finding activities carried out by her personally and by her staff, during which information was obtained about death, torture, disrespect of bodies, mutilation and ill-treatment of civilians, prohibited by international law. The mentioned information was included in the ad hoc report of the Human Rights Defender, which was presented by the Defender to the international organizations and actors with the mandate of human rights protection, with the confidential section proving the authenticity of the information.

Anahit Manasyan also referred to the protection of women's rights, the prevention of domestic violence, the need to ratify the Istanbul Convention, the details of

the implementation of the human rights protection program in the field of biomedicine, including the issue of ratifying the Oviedo Convention by Armenia.

The Defender presented the activities carried out in the fields of discrimination, intolerance, fight against hate speech, the right to freedom of assembly and in a number of other areas.

At the end of the meeting, the parties highly appreciated the level of long-term and effective cooperation between the Defender's Office and the Council of Europe in the field of human rights protection and outlined directions for expanding cooperation.

EU or Regional Alliances? Armenia's Delicate Balancing Act

In a conversation with Noyan Tapan, Hovsep Khurshudyan, the chairman of "Free Citizen" NGO and an analyst, explored reports suggesting Pashinyan's plan to apply for European Union (EU) membership within a month.

Pashinyan reportedly announced Armenia's intention to apply for EU membership in a closed meeting, with Khurshudyan suggesting it's encouraging and grounded. Khurshudyan asserts that the decision reflects a proven basis, highlighting Armenia's concerns about Russia, considering it an enemy state due to perceived violations and a reluctance to strain relations with Azerbaijan.

The analyst finds the decision to apply for EU membership promising but stresses the importance of assessing the EU's readiness for Armenia's application. Earlier signals in August 2022 hinted at Germany's interest, with Tigran Khzmalyan claiming a proposal was discussed during the visit of Germany's Minister of Foreign Economic Relations. However, the proposal was overlooked, and the analyst assumes the Prime Minister did not find it expedient at the time.

After that, in fact, it was in August 2022 that German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced at the conference of social democratic parties the development of a plan for the expansion of Europe 27+3+6, consisting of 27 countries that are already members of the European Union, 3 countries - Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, and 6 Balkan countries. In other words, 9 countries were supposed to join in 2027. Internal signals and negotiations revealed a plan to include 10 countries, with ongoing efforts to persuade Armenian authorities to be the tenth. Armenia has now concluded that taking this step is necessary.

Continuing the discussion, Khurshudyan mentions that in November of last year, at the conference of the Eastern Partnership Political Awareness Forum, the analyst posed a question to Dirk Schuebel, who is the head of division for the Eastern Partnership and

for bilateral relations with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and the Southern Caucasus at the European External Action Service. The analyst inquired about the possibility of considering Armenia's application for membership, to which Schuebel affirmed that the doors have not been closed to Armenia since 2013. The analyst quotes Pashinyan, emphasizing the need to choose between EU membership and current alliances. To align with the EU, Armenia must depart from the EAEU, align with the EU's customs zone, and exit the CSTO and other agreements.

While many countries, like Turkey, have applied for EU membership, the analyst contends that drawing a parallel with them is inappropriate. According to the analyst, Turkey is considered a dangerous prospect for the European Union due to concerns related to its cultural, religious, and identity aspects. There is notable unease within the EU about the impact of incorporating Turkey, particularly on the part of France.

The discussion shifts to Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, suggesting that separating Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations could contribute to resolving issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Turkey initially asserted that a comprehensive agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan would resolve all issues, including opening borders and establishing diplomatic relations. However, this stance is contradicted by Erdogan's recent statement claiming, "Karabakh was a bleeding wound for 30 years, and we solved that problem with Azerbaijan." He further added, "We will continue the settlement process started with Armenia in agreement with Azerbaijan." Notably, Turkey's EU membership prerequisites include regulating relations with neighbors. The analyst emphasizes Armenia's role in fostering such regulation to align with EU expectations.

The question arises: Can we assume that Turkey will take the Western mantle on its shoulders and advance the interests of Russia? Recent

discussions between Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Russia's Sergey Lavrov, emphasizing collaboration within the Caspian Five and the 3+3 platform, prompt speculation. Azerbaijan and Russia's shared interest in regionalization and reducing Western influence suggests a potential shift in Turkey's role and priorities, prompting questions about its stance and alliances in the evolving geopolitical landscape.

The analyst identifies a potential danger in attempts to involve Iran against the evolving process around Armenia. The crucial aspect lies in the West's leverage over Turkey. If we consider three sides, adding Russia as the fourth, which is unfriendly to Europe and the West, it highlights the complexity of Armenia's European integration. It emphasizes the vital need for Armenia to address its existential security concerns through careful diplomacy.

The resurgence of Azerbaijan on Western platforms, witnessed in events like those in Munich and Berlin, signifies a comprehensive strategy. This strategy aims to detach Armenia from Russia, ensuring security through a meticulously calculated plan. The plan covers various aspects, including settling relations with Turkey, attracting European Union investments, pursuing EU membership, and addressing the Azerbaijani conflict. These elements are advancing collectively, compelling Azerbaijan to respond, highlighting Armenia's pivotal role.

In this crucial juncture, Armenia must refrain from unwarranted concessions, having already made significant compromises in Granada. The agreement signed in Granada involved numerous concessions from Armenia, reciprocated by Azerbaijan's acknowledgment of our territorial integrity. Presently, Azerbaijan is pressuring us to replicate our actions or abandon applications submitted to international courts - essentially, asking us to forgive their war crimes. Armenia faces a delicate decision, requiring a thoughtful

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Vardavar: Mickey Mouse Funhouse episode on the traditional Armenian festival premieres on Disney Channel

Disney's episode centered on the traditional Armenian festival Vardavar premiered on Disney Channel and Disney Junior on Friday, March 1, the *Armenian Film Society* informs.

The episode of Mickey Mouse Funhouse is written by Kathleen Sarnelli Kapukchyan, whose husband is Armenian.

In the episode, Minnie Mouse wears the wrong outfit to celebrate Vardavar. Minnie, Mickey, and their friends are greeted by the goddess Astghik who wears a traditional Armenian Taraz, as she comes down from her magical temple and



splashes them with water! The episode is set in the Land of Myth and Legend, which is modeled after Armenian architecture

– notably Garni and Cascade, creating an amalgamation of the two sites. The character of Astghik is voiced by Liana Bdéwi, who is of Armenian heritage.

The episode is filled with cultural references – Minnie wears an Armenian Taraz, Armenian is spoken throughout the episode, and we even catch a glimpse of Chip and Dale selling tahn and making khorovats.

The episode marks the first-ever representation of Armenian culture at Disney.

“Vardavar!” is available on [DisneyNow.com](https://www.disney.com) and in the DisneyNow app, and will be available on Disney+ at a later date.

Armenian government allocates nearly \$700,000 for organization of UEFA Futsal Champions League final



The Armenian government will allocate about AMD 280 million (nearly \$700,000) to the Ministry of Education,

Science, Culture and Sports for hosting the semi-final and final of the UEFA Futsal Champions League at Karen Demirchyan Sports and Concert Complex in Yerevan.

Armenia won the bid to host the matches in competition with Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Spain and Switzerland.

Spanish Barcelona and Palma Futsal, as well as Portuguese Sporting and Benfica will participate in the Futsal Champions League final stage. The semi-finals will be held on May 3, the final and the 3rd place

match are scheduled for May 5.

The events are expected to attract a significant number of tourists, given the prestige of the tournament and the large army of fans of the competing teams.

After the draw on March 14, the tickets will go on sale on electronic platforms. The cost will range from 1000 to 5000 drams.

Fifty countries have already acquired broadcasting rights, but the number is expected to grow.

page 11 ➡ and strategic response to safeguard its interests.

The analyst highlights a lack of understanding among Armenian leaders regarding potential public backlash if they retract applications and concessions, specifically addressing Alen Simonyan's statement. The question arises about the initial acceptance of the Rome Statute, prompting concerns about the potential ramifications of reversing such decisions, emphasizing the need for careful consideration by Armenian authorities.

The second point of concessions they seek revolves around ensuring the corridor, suggesting special mechanisms at the Azerbaijan border with international guarantees to identify cargo origin. However, Armenia should reject the proposal to mark cargoes passing from Azerbaijan to Nakhichevan, exempting them from taxation and checks. The official stance maintains that all cargo passing through Armenia should undergo customs, with no need for additional concessions beyond what was agreed upon

in Granada.

In conclusion, Armenia faces a comprehensive plan aimed at separating it from Russia and ensuring security through Western alliances. Amidst negotiations and potential concessions, Armenia must carefully navigate these diplomatic challenges to safeguard its interests and avoid unnecessary compromises, especially considering past agreements in Granada.

Translated by Liana Sargsyan

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