

Armenia committed to contributing to global mission of strengthening democracy – PM Pashinyan addresses the Summit for Democracy



Armenia - Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan takes part in the virtual “Summit for Democracy” organized by U.S. President Joe Biden, December 9, 2021.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan delivered remarks at the virtual “Summit for Democracy” initiated by US President Joe Biden.

The Prime Minister, in particular, noted.

“Honorable President Biden,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honor to represent the Republic of Armenia at today’s Summit for Democracy. Citizens of Armenia do not take for granted the value of government of the people, by the people, for the people. We have fought for it throughout our modern history. By voting for independence in 1991, we also restored a multi-party system and a framework of political rights that is meant to

empower the individual citizen. Over the last three years, Armenians have chosen democracy over authoritarianism twice. The first time was in 2018, following the non-violent Velvet Revolution, and the subsequent free and fair snap election. The second time was in 2021, following a devastating war. Armenians went to the polls, again, to ensure that we would not return to the ways of the past. Indeed, democracy is a perpetual work in progress.

We are committed to the consolidation of democracy in Armenia through strengthening democratic institutions. By embracing transparency and accountability, we are planning governance reforms and the implementation of policies that will build faith both in Armenia and among our partners abroad. By 2026, we aim to achieve continuous improvements in

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Armenia urges Azerbaijan to refrain from provocative rhetoric

The Republic of Armenia calls on the Republic of Azerbaijan to refrain from provocative rhetoric and actions, not to hinder the efforts to establish peace and stability in the region, the Armenian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia is convinced that the mirror withdrawal of the troops from the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the launch of an international monitoring mechanism could be one of the measures to avoid further escalation of the situation.

Below is the full text of the statement:

Military provocations of the Azerbaijani armed forces along the entire Armenian-Azerbaijani border happen every day. On December 10, Vahe Manaseryan, a serviceman of the armed forces of Armenia, was fatally wounded and eight other servicemen were injured in a course of such provocation.

Expressing deep condolences to the family of the fallen serviceman, wishing a speedy recovery to the wounded servicemen, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

of the Republic of Armenia condemns the provocative actions of Azerbaijan, emphasizing that they are pre-planned and aimed to further escalate the situation in the region.

The above-mentioned observation is based on the fact that Azerbaijan is constantly evolving its absurd rhetoric on so-called "Zangezur Corridor", which contradicts the Trilateral Statements of November 9, 2020, January 11, 2021, and the agreements reached in Sochi on November 26, 2021, and are a blatant demonstration of the aspirations towards the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia.

Armed units of Azerbaijan have illegally infiltrated into the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia and occupied an area of more than 40 square kilometers since May of this year, and today's incident took place in one of those areas.

To date, Azerbaijan has not responded to the proposal of the Republic of Armenia on the mirror withdrawal of the troops, which was handed over to the Azerbaijani side in written form on November 26.

The Republic of Armenia draws the

attention of its partner in the security sphere – the Russian Federation, also the Collective Security Treaty Organization, UN Security Council, OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries and the international community to the above-mentioned evidence, as well as to the fact that with its warmongering statements the official Baku continues the threats of use of force against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia, violating the fundamental principles of international law, including the UN Charter, as well as undermining the regional and global security.

The Republic of Armenia calls on the Republic of Azerbaijan to refrain from provocative rhetoric and actions, and not to hinder the efforts of establishing peace and stability in the region.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia is convinced that the mirror withdrawal of the troops from the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and the launch of an international monitoring mechanism could be one of the measures to avoid further escalation of the situation.

Armenian FM, OIF Secretary General discuss regional security-related issues

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan met on December 9 with Secretary General of the International Organization of la Francophonie Louise Mushikiwabo on the sidelines of his working visit in Paris, the foreign ministry reports.

The sides discussed the implementation process of the initiatives within Armenia's chairmanship at the Organization.

Ararat Mirzoyan and Louise Mushikiwabo discussed the prospects of strengthening the Armenia-OIF cooperation,

particularly through the implementation of programs in economy and youth fields.

FM Mirzoyan said that Armenia supports Louise Mushikiwabo's proposed reforms agenda of the Organization.

Louise Mushikiwabo presented to the Armenian FM the report of the OIF mission which observed the 2021 June parliamentary elections of Armenia.

The sides then exchanged ideas about the preparation works ahead of the 18th Francophonie summit to be held in Tunis



in 2022.

FM Mirzoyan also presented a number of issues relating to regional stability and security to the OIF Secretary General.

Armenian PM receives IFRC Secretary General

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan received the Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Jagan Chapagain, the PM's Office reports.

PM Pashinyan highlighted the continuous active cooperation with the organization in solving a number of humanitarian problems. He, particularly, emphasized the facts of a number of humanitarian problems in Artsakh as a result of the 2020 war and the necessity for the IFRC active engagement for solving these issues.

The Prime Minister added that till now,

after the end of the war, Azerbaijan still is not fulfilling the commitments assumed by the 2020 November 9 statement, and highlighted the importance of an adequate response by international organizations for ensuring the return of Armenian prisoners of war, hostages and other persons held.

In turn the IFRC Secretary General said that there is an effective and close cooperation with the Armenian government, adding that the Federation will continue the active efforts to contribute to solving various humanitarian problems.



Issues relating to the humanitarian programs being implemented by the IFRC in Armenia were also discussed during the meeting.

Armenian parliament approves 2022 state budget



The Armenian parliament approved on December 9 the government's draft state budget for next year that calls for a more than 15 percent increase in public spending.

The bill at the same time commits the government to cutting the budget deficit through an even sharper rise in its tax revenues.

It was backed 65 parliamentarians, all of them members of the ruling Civil Contract party, and rejected by 19 others.

Overall public spending is to total almost 2.2 trillion drams (\$4.4 billion) in

2022. Social security will remain the single largest recipient of public funds, with almost 580 billion drams allocated for that purpose.

Another 346.5 billion drams is to be spent on road construction and other capital projects; a year-on-year rise of almost 49 percent.

The government also pledged to increase its defense spending by 11 percent to 345.4 billion drams (\$700 million).

The main opposition Hayastan bloc, whose parliamentary group voted against the budget, said this increase is not big

enough given the "existential" security challenges facing Armenia after last year's war with Azerbaijan.

Hayastan also questioned the choice of capital projects to be financed in 2022, saying that the government has not come up with any calculations substantiating their necessity and efficiency.

Deputies from the bloc led by former President Robert Kocharyan also deplored the fact that the 2022 budget does not call for increases in the minimum wage, most pensions and public sector salaries.

The government is not planning to raise them despite significant rises in the prices of key goods observed this year. According to its Statistical Committee, consumer price inflation in Armenia reached 9.1 percent in October.

The budgetary targets are based on the assumption that the Armenian economy will grow by 7 percent next year. Opposition politicians and some economists say that this growth projection is not realistic.

The economy shrunk by 7.6 percent last year due to negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic compounded by the six-week war. It returned to growth this spring.

comparative indicators, specifically rising from a score of 50 to 60 in the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicator, and 49 to 60 in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

We also consider tackling climate change as fundamental to democratic governance, and are committed to building a low-emission energy sector and a vibrant green economy.

In our bid to consolidate our democracy, we are facing multiple challenges. The biggest challenge for us comes in the form of military threats to our security. Fighting



for democracy at home is yet another challenge. That challenge is compounded when threats arise from beyond our borders. If we are to restore the appeal of democracy throughout the world, we need to join forces to face these challenges together. Armenia is committed to contributing to the

global mission of strengthening democracy, and we hope that we are not alone".

The two-day event is attended by leaders and representatives of more than a hundred countries.

Joe Biden delivered a speech at the opening of the Summit, after which the panel discussions started.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations and the private sector are also taking part in the conference.

Issues related to countering threats to democracy, fighting corruption and protecting human rights are on the agenda of the two-day debates.



The United Nations' top court ordered both Armenia and Azerbaijan on December 7 to work to prevent racial hatred and discrimination and ease their feud following last year's war over Nagorno-Karabakh.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) also told Azerbaijan to protect Armenian prisoners from the conflict and to stop the desecration of Armenian cultural heritage.

The Hague-based court's orders are pending a full case review of the dispute,

UN Court tells Armenia, Azerbaijan to curb feud

which could take years to resolve. However, the judges have no real means of enforcing their orders.

Yerevan and Baku have both requested that the ICJ take emergency measures against alleged breaches of a UN treaty banning racial discrimination.

The two former Soviet republics "shall refrain from any action which might aggravate or extend the dispute before the court or make it more difficult to resolve," ICJ chief Judge Joan Donoghue said.

The ICJ ordered Azerbaijan to "protect from violence and bodily harm" all Armenian prisoners from the conflict and ensure they are treated lawfully, and to "prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration affecting Armenian cultural heritage."

Both Azerbaijan and Armenia must "take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination" against the other, it ruled. The order involved "officials and institutions" in Azerbaijan and "organizations and private persons" in Armenia.

The ICJ threw out Azerbaijan's request to make Armenia stop laying land mines and to hand over maps of mines, saying that it is not covered by the International Convention On All Forms Of Racial Discrimination (CERD).

During hearings in October, Armenia accused Azerbaijan of fueling a "cycle of hate," while Baku accused Yerevan of "ethnic cleansing."

Aliyev Again Threatens Armenia Over 'Corridor'

(RFE/RL) - Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has again threatened to forcibly open a land "corridor" that would connect Azerbaijan to its Nakhichevan exclave via Armenia's southeastern Syunik province.

Aliyev recalled last year's war over Nagorno-Karabakh when he commented on the transport link sought by Baku during a visit to a region in northern Azerbaijan on Monday.

"Armenia and the whole world saw [during the war] that nobody could stop us ... I was demanding that they present us with a date for the liberation of our lands before we stop [hostilities.] I am saying the same thing now: tells us when the Zangezur corridor will be opened and there will be no problems," he said in remarks publicized on December 7.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry condemned the remarks as a threat to Arme-

nia's territorial integrity. It said they also run counter to understandings that were reached by Aliyev and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan during their talks hosted by Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi on November 26.

Speaking right after those talks, the three leaders reported major progress towards the opening of transport links between Armenia and Azerbaijan envisaged by the Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped the six-week war in November 2020.

Putin said a Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani working group dealing with the matter will announce in the coming days "decisions which we agreed today."

The group co-headed by deputy prime ministers of the three states announced no agreements after holding a meeting in Moscow on December 1. A senior Armenian official confirmed that it failed to

hammer out final details of the deal. He said the Azerbaijani side is "not displaying the kind of political will that's necessary for furthering the agreements reached in Sochi."

Aliyev said on Monday that Yerevan should end its "insincere" position in the talks before it is "too late" to do that.

The truce accord commits Armenia to opening rail and road links between Nakhichevan and the rest of Azerbaijan. Armenia should be able, for its part, to use Azerbaijani territory as a transit route for cargo shipments to Russia and Iran.

Aliyev has repeatedly said that the deal calls for a special "corridor," a claim denied by the Armenian government. Deputy Prime Minister Grigoryan insisted last week that the three leaders discussed in Sochi conventional transport links, rather than "extraterritorial roads" implied by Aliyev.

Meeting in "3+3" platform takes place in Moscow, Russian MFA presents details

The first session of the "3 + 3" regional consulting platform was held in Moscow on December 10 with the participation of the Deputy Foreign Ministers of Russia, Armenia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, as well as the Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, Foreign Ministry of Russia informs.

It is noted that the Georgian representatives, who were also invited, refrained from participating in the meeting.

Prospects for the development of multi-

lateral regional cooperation were discussed during the meeting. An agreement was reached to focus the work of the platform on the practical issues that are of interest to all its participants.

These include confidence-building measures, cooperation in the trade, economic, transport, cultural and humanitarian spheres, and response to common challenges and threats.

The representatives of the five countries expressed interest for Georgia to join



the platform, for which the door remain open.

The further activities were discussed, with the possible joining of the sectoral ministries and departments.

Deputy FM Vahe Gorgyan took part in the meeting from the Armenian side.



The Esplanade of Armenia was inaugurated in Paris on December 11.

Attending the ceremony were Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, the Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo, Armenia's Ambassador to France Hasmik Tolmajian, other elected officials, local Armenians and guests.

"One year after the war, Paris attests to its solidarity with the Armenians," Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said. He noted that the centuries-old links between Armenia and France go back to the kingdom of Cilicia, and relations between the Armenians and Paris were particularly tightened after the genocide. The capital then becomes one of the centers of the Armenian world with personalities like Aznavour, Manouchian, Essayan or Missakian.

Minister Mirzoyan stressed that the last three decades in particular have been marked by strong cooperation in many

Esplanade of Armenia inaugurated in Paris

areas between the two states. Among the important moments, Ararat Mirzoyan pointed to the reception by Jacques Chirac, then city councilor, of the leaders of the Karabakh movement or, in recent months, the vote on the recognition of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh by the Paris City Council. He described it as "a strong signal sent to French society and to the world."

He expressed gratitude to Mayor Anne Hidalgo, her Deputy Arnaud Ngatcha and all the members of the Council of Paris for the creation of this place.

The City Council of Paris voted unanimously on October 14 to establish an Esplanade of Armenia in the 8th arrondissement of the capital.

This space encompasses the part of Court Albert I where the statue of Komitas is located, the Garden of Armenia, and extends as far as the Pont de l'Alma, – an exceptional location in the heart of the prestigious 8th arrondissement of Paris, right in the center of the capital.

"As Mayor of Paris, I have always defended the right of the Armenian people to truth and recognition," Anne Hidalgo said. Fortunately, she said, since 2018 the state

has followed Paris on this path and every year the first genocide of the 20th century is commemorated every year on April 24, which has been designated as a National Day of Remembrance of the Armenian Genocide.

"With this new esplanade bearing the beautiful name of Armenia, this day of commemoration can be held here. We will then be able not only to commemorate the past, but also and above all to transmit this memory so that it guides our daily steps, especially at a time when Armenia is once again facing an existential danger," the Mayor said.

She stressed that "the esplanade must be the symbol of living Armenia, of proud and upright Armenia."



Azerbaijani authorities responsible for violating the rights of Armenian servicemen – Ombudsman

The Azerbaijani authorities are acting in violation of international law and are responsible for deliberately violating the right to life of Armenian servicemen, killing one of them, Armenian Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan said, referring to the armed attack of the Azerbaijani armed forces in the Sotk-Verin Shorzha sections of the Gegharkunik region.

At the heart of this conclusion are the following facts:

1. Azerbaijani armed servicemen invaded, without any reason, deployed near the villages of the Republic of Armenia and on the roads between the communities.
2. After November 9, 2020, in Gegharkunik and Syunik, they are

physically present in buildings and lands (pastures, arable lands, etc.), which, according to legal documents, belong to the residents of the Republic of Armenia or are community property.

3. They regularly fire at the villages and houses of the Republic of Armenia, create a real danger to the life and health of civilians, damage their property, animals, engage in thefts, deliberately hinder agricultural activities, etc.
4. Pastures and hayfields are set on fire near villages in Gegharkunik, in the immediate vicinity of villages. Because of their presence on the roads between Syunik communities, people's right to life is endangered, free



movement of people is restricted, people face isolation and humanitarian problems. After the war in Artsakh, civilians were tortured and deliberately killed.

5. After the war, the Azerbaijani authorities deepened the policy of sponsorship and propaganda of anti-Armenian hatred.
6. No Azerbaijani armed person was punished for his crimes, these actions were only encouraged.
7. Armenian servicemen protect the life and health of civilians, peaceful and safe life.

Armenia, France sign “roadmap for economic cooperation”

Armenia and France have signed the roadmap for economic cooperation for 2021-2026. The document aims at creating a strategy and framework for bilateral economic programs between Armenia and France for the next five years, which will include infrastructure, urban development, energy, agriculture, tourism, innovation, high technology, healthcare and other promising areas.

The first joint sitting of the working group on Armenian-French economic cooperation was held in Paris on December 9. The Armenian delegation was headed by Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, the French delegation was led by Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, Secretary of State for Foreign

Affairs of France.

Minister Mirzoyan thanked Secretary of State Lemoyne for his support of warm hospitality and effective discussions, emphasizing that the joint sitting was the result of nearly a year of bilateral follow-up work, efforts at the level of the two countries' leaders, and agreements reached.

Ararat Mirzoyan stressed the need to work consistently to implement the agreements reached by the top leadership of the two countries to intensify economic relations, which will correspond to the level of privileged relations between Armenia and France.

The sides emphasized the diversification of the Armenian-French trade and



economic relations, the need to enrich the cooperation with new economic programs, and the intensification of mutual investments. The interlocutors also noted the need to intensify contacts between the business circles of France and Armenia, in particular, through mutual visits of delegations and organization of economic events.

2022-2025 Swiss Cooperation Programme for the South Caucasus Region doubles budget for Armenia



On December 9, 2021, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia Stefan Kloetzli, and the Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia and equally Deputy Regional Director of Swiss Cooperation South Caucasus Werner Thut informed the media about the new Swiss Cooperation Programme for the South Caucasus Region 2022-2025. The Programme describes the objectives, which Switzerland's International Cooperation aims to achieve in the South Caucasus. In Armenia, the budget of the new Programme will be doubled, amounting to tentatively over CHF 20 mio over the course of four years.

The Swiss Cooperation Programme for the South Caucasus Region 2022-2025 will focus on four key areas: 1) promoting

civic engagement and cooperation in the region, 2) strengthening democracy and public institutions, 3) improving economic development and creation of decent jobs, and 4) strengthening climate resilience and sustainable resource management. Poverty reduction will be considered as a key requirement in all Swiss financed projects in the South Caucasus region whenever possible. The programme gives particular attention to regional cooperation.

Switzerland's support to Armenia will continue to focus on strengthening the rural economy by diversification of agricultural value chains, further improving accountability mechanisms, civic oversight and transparency in politics, as well as conservation of biodiversity and the natural endowment in response to climate change. Apart from these thematic focuses, Switzerland will further finance small initiatives by local NGOs on topics such as media, migration, and environment. Moreover, Switzerland will support the local Armenian art scene by financing cultural projects, as part of a regional art and culture programme.

All these activities will build on more than 30 years of Swiss engagement in Armenia. “Thanks to its long-standing engagement in the region, Switzerland has built strong and trustful relations with Armenia. The new Regional Cooperation Programme is the continuity of this strong and close relationship,” said Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Stefan Kloetzli during the launch event of the programme.

Werner Thut, Deputy Regional Director of Swiss Cooperation South Caucasus, presented the new Regional Programme on December 8, 2021, at the Congress Hotel, Yerevan. Deputy Ministers and Senior Officials from the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports participated to the event physically and on-line. Moreover, representatives of the international donor community and partner organizations, civil society, and academia participated to the launch event, as informs Media and Communication Office of the Swiss Cooperation Office in Yerevan.

Armenian companies participate in Dubai MENOPE international exhibition



Eight Armenian companies participated in the annual Middle East Organic Exhibition “MENOPE” in Dubai with a joint pavilion with funding support by the European Union and Austrian Development Cooperation. The expo is the only dedicated business event in the region that focuses on natural products.

Participation in the joint pavilion of Armenia was organized within the framework of the EU Green Agriculture Initiative in Armenia (EU-GAIA), a project funded by the European Union (EU) and co-funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation, and implemented by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and UNDP, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Economy of Armenia.

This year Armenia was showcasing sustainable agricultural products produced by EU-GAIA beneficiaries, including:

- Organic and natural honey
- Canned natural fruits and vegetables
- Herbs / herbal teas
- Beans cultivated by sustainable methods (humus and tahini)
- Grain Seed Processing and Production
- Organic fertilizers and briquettes

In the Armenian pavilion, visitors could taste not only EU, NOP and USDA certified “organic” products, but also a wide selection of “green” and “sustainable” products. This means that food is produced primarily with an obligation to protect the environment, based on EU-compliant agricultural standards and regulations.

“The EU helps farmers in different regions of Armenia to improve their production both in quantity and quality, and to find markets for the products, as well as promoting exports. Armenia has particular strengths for the production of healthy natural and niche products. Indeed, it is an advantage that Armenian companies

have an organic certification with support from the EU-Green Agriculture Initiative in Armenia,”- said the Ambassador Andrea Wiktorin, the head of the EU delegation in Armenia “.

At the MENOPE exhibition, Armenia has achieved great success not only among reputable partners, but also among buyers who appreciate the health and quality of the food they choose for their family.

“Austria as the organic leader in the European Union is proud to support Armenia going organic. Helping the producers access international markets is one of our core activities, and the growing Arab market is very promising for Armenian organic and green products”, noted Pascal Bokkers, EU-GAIA Project Manager.

The demand for organic products is growing exponentially in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as consumers are placing higher value on sustainable and healthy



products. Dubai’s unique geographical location also makes the country a crucial link in international trade routes and an important gateway to the GCC and Pan Arab Markets.

Sustainable shopping choices will make a huge impact on the rural people of Armenia, as well as preservation of the Mother Earth.



EU investing 4 million euros in a New Technical Assistance Project in Armenia with UNIDO



The European Union on December 9 signed a Contribution Agreement with United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The EU is investing EUR 4mln in a New Technical Assistance Project in Armenia with UNIDO.

“We are happy to support sustainable economic development in Armenia to the benefit of all Armenian citizens. The improvement of food safety and health, mitigation of climate change and care towards the environment are all benefits of Quality Infrastructure. The improved trade competitiveness and meaningful utilization of these benefits will bring us closer to the spirit of CEPA,” mentioned Frank Hess, Head of Cooperation at EU Delegation to Armenia.

This action is in line with the commitments of the EU and the Republic of Armenia under the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), resulting in improved trade competitiveness and meaningful utilization of the benefits of the CEPA. The project will support to upgrade the Metrology system of Armenia through the institutional strengthening of the National Body for Standards and Metrology, improving legal, regulatory and governance system in line with international recommendations and best practices, increase Armenia’s participation in the international and regional metrology communities as well as interaction with the European Association of Metrology Institutes (EURAMET).

The project will help establish 4 calibration laboratories by purchasing, installing and commissioning the measurement standards, measuring instruments and equipment required to develop the required calibration and measurement capabilities, and preparing them for international accreditation. As a result of this project, sustainable and internationally recognized

metrology services will be provided to stakeholders.

By implementing this Action, Armenia will be able to meaningfully use the benefits of CEPA, improve the quality of goods produced in Armenia, and ensure the international recognition of tests performed in Armenia, resulting in increased trade with the EU and other foreign markets.

The benefits of Quality Infrastructure (QI) are not limited to trade; a robust QI also contributes to other areas including, but not limited to, food safety and security, health, climate change and the environment. Once again, the EU stands by Armenia and strengthen the Armenian Government’s strategic and technical capacity to plan and implement structural reforms.”



Armenia, Qatar keen to develop bilateral cooperation



President Armen Sarkissian met with the Emir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

Welcoming the President of Armenia, the Emir of Qatar praised the atmosphere of mutual trust and constructive dialogue between Armenia and Qatar, as well as his warm relations with the President of Armenia.

President Sarkissian noted that Armenia is interested in deepening cooperation with the Gulf countries in various spheres

and added that in that context Qatar is one of our country’s strong partners.

The President of Armenia presented information on the situation in Armenia, the current challenges, in particular, humanitarian issues.

The President of Armenia and the Emir of Qatar stressed the great potential of cooperation between the two friendly countries, the mutual readiness to expand and strengthen relations. They referred to the agreements reached during the previous meetings, the implementation of which was slowed down due to the coronavirus and war, and stressed the need to implement them as soon as possible.

The interlocutors noted that the two countries can advance their relations, especially in the fields of information technologies, scientific and educational innovation, finance and banking, tourism and climate change.

President Sarkissian said that Armenia strives to become a leading country of high technologies and innovations. In this context, he referred to the ATOM Presidential Initiative, which aims to develop the innovative technologies and artificial intelligence in Armenia, noting that Qatar can be a potential partner in this program.

President Sarkissian said Armenia has great investment potential and noted that Qatari companies are welcome to invest in various sectors of Armenian economy.

“Artificial intelligence, science, the financial and banking system, education and culture are the areas where our cooperation can be deepened,” the President said.

During the meeting, they also spoke about cooperation within the framework of the Debt for Climate program.

The President of Armenia and the Emir of Qatar also touched upon a wide range of regional issues.

Unblocking of regional communications separate from border delimitation and demarcation – Armenian Deputy PM

The possible unblocking of communications in the region is not related to the delimitation and demarcation of borders between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan said in an interview with *TASS*.

“We follow the Sochi statement of the leaders of the three countries, according to which we agreed to take steps to increase the level of stability and security on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border and to lead the case towards the creation of a bilateral commission on the delimitation of the state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan with its subsequent demarcation with the advisory assistance of the Russian Federation. The issue is in no way interconnected with the possible opening of transport communications in the region,” he said.

The Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia also added that within the framework of the trilateral working group co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Ministers of Armenia, Russia and Azerbaijan on unblocking transport communications, an expert subgroup has been created, which is working on the issues of ensuring transportation in the event of opening the borders. “There has been no discussion of the final regula-

tion of these issues,” he said.

According to the Deputy Prime Minister, Azerbaijan’s statement on the alleged “Zangezur Corridor” in the border Sinyuk region of Armenia was unexpected for the Armenian authorities, but Yerevan hopes that the work of the Deputy Prime Ministers of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia to unblock regional communications will continue within the framework of the fundamental principles that have already been agreed.

“The last statement of official Baku was unexpected for us. It was assumed that in the coming days we will continue the work [of the working group]. I hope that the situation will return to a constructive track, and we will continue to work within the framework of the fundamental principles that have already been agreed upon,” he said.

According to Grigoryan, “all the meetings of the working group have so far been held in the format of a constructive dialogue.” “We hoped that the work would continue within the framework of the basic principles that were fixed in the statements of the leaders of the three countries, and had already been agreed upon during the



discussions at the platform of the working group of the deputy prime ministers,” he added.

As the Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia noted, within the framework of the working group, the parties “had a mutual understanding on the issues of restoring and unblocking the railway infrastructure.” “There was also an understanding that the sovereignty of the roads will be retained by those countries through whose territory they will pass, and these roads, in turn, will be under the jurisdiction of the country through which they pass. There were some nuances on other issues,” he stressed.

The last meeting of the trilateral working group of the vice-premiers of Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation was held on December 1 in Moscow.



The delegation led by the head of the Customs Administration of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mehdi Mirashrafi has arrived in Armenia on a working visit.

At Meghri border crossing point the

delegation was welcomed by Rustam Badasyan, head of Armenia’s State Revenue Committee. The officials toured the Meghri checkpoint, got acquainted with the conditions created for foreign economic operators and for delivering services to citizens. During the meeting the parties touched upon issues of mutual interest in customs cooperation, the simplification of customs procedures between the two countries, the

Armenia, Iran mull simplification of customs procedures

steps aimed at improving the conditions of cargo transportation.

The heads of customs services of the two countries discussed the possibilities of preliminary exchange of information, the mechanisms of increasing the effectiveness of the fight against smuggling, as well as the need to intensify the direct contacts of the leaders of the Norduz and Meghri border checkpoints.

Rustam Badasyan and Mehdi Mirashrafi are scheduled to have a private conversation in Yerevan on December 9.

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Rustam Badasyan and Mehdi Mirashrafi are scheduled to have a private conversation in Yerevan on December 9.



The spiritual leaders of American Christians of Armenian heritage have called on President Biden to cease all U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan – fully enforcing Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act.

“As you know, Armenia, the world’s first Christian nation is today a landlocked, blockaded, genocide survivor state, striving to survive on the frontiers of global freedom. The United States should stand in solidarity with Armenia in every way, and that must begin by ending any and all U.S. military aid to a nation that would erase our ancient nation from the map of the world. We must never, as Americans, be complicit in such genocidal violence,” the leaders say.

Below is the full text of the letter:

Dear President Biden,

We write today, as the spiritual leaders of American Christians of Armenian heritage, to ask you to cease all U.S. military

Armenian American spiritual leaders call on Biden to cease all military aid to Azerbaijan

aid to Azerbaijan, a wealthy nation that has used its vast riches to assault and ethnically-cleanse Christian Armenians living upon our ancient and indigenous homeland.

We welcomed your support as a Senator for Section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, and were encouraged by your call, as a candidate, for the enforcement of this law by your predecessor. You were correct in assessing that Azerbaijan has violated both the spirit and the letter of this statute. Inspired and informed by the very stand that you have taken on this issue, we are today asking you to withdraw your waiver of Section 907 and fully enforce this provision of U.S. law.

As you know, Armenia, the world’s first Christian nation is today a landlocked, blockaded, genocide survivor state, striving to survive on the frontiers of global freedom. The United States should stand in solidarity with Armenia in every way, and that must begin by ending any and all U.S. military aid to a nation that would erase our ancient nation from the map of the world. We must never, as Americans, be complicit in such genocidal violence.

In light of these concerns, and given

Azerbaijan’s thoroughly documented pattern of violating internationally recognized human rights, we call upon you to suspend U.S. security and military assistance to Azerbaijan.

We look forward to learning of your renewed leadership in saving Christian Armenian lives.

Prayerfully,

Archb. Hovnan Derderian
Primate, Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church

Archb. Anoushavan Tanielian
Prelate, Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church

Bishop Daniel Findikian
Primate, Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church

Bishop Torkom Donoyan
Prelate, Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church

Bishop Mikhael Mouradian
Eparch, Armenian Catholic Eparchy

Rev. Hendrik Shahnazarian
Minister, Armenian Evangelical Union

Zaven Khanjian
Executive Director Armenian Missionary Association of America

Azerbaijan continues to threaten Armenia’s safety and sovereignty – Rep. Pallone

Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr.’s (NJ-06) amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed the U.S. House of Representatives. The amendment would help advance human rights around the world by requiring the Department of Defense to review existing requirements for conducting human rights training of foreign national security forces participating in security cooperation programs like the Section 333 Building Partner Capacity Program. It also calls for a review to the current Department of Defense (DOD) data collection practices and procedures for accessing, monitoring, and evaluating human rights training programs. The amendment will ensure compliance with U.S. law that prohibits use of funds for assistance to foreign security forces that have committed gross human rights violations.

The NDAA also includes language from an amendment led by Congressman Adam Schiff (CA-28) that Congressman Pallone co-sponsored and calls for the immediate release of the prisoners of war, including civilians, who Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev continues to hold hostage as bargaining chips. This language

further requires a report from DOD on the deadly 44-day war initiated by Azerbaijani and Turkish forces in the fall of 2020. The report will include an assessment of U.S. weapons systems or technology used in the conflict, a description of the involvement of foreign actors – which were heavily used by Azerbaijan – and any violations of the November 9, 2020 statement that ended most of the fighting.

“The United States has long stood as a beacon for the rights of every person, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality. We must continue to lead by example and ensure that American tax dollars do not contradict our values at home or abroad,” **Pallone said**. “My amendment sends a clear signal that the United States takes seriously its democratic norms and commitment to peace by ensuring oversight of our security assistance.

“Azerbaijan continues to threaten Armenia’s safety and sovereignty, which makes these amendments especially urgent. The United States should not be aiding and abetting reckless, autocratic states with appalling human rights records for any reason. Because of our efforts, the

Department of Defense is now required to undergo a thorough investigation that will bring attention to the gross human rights abuses committed by Azerbaijan during last year’s war and focus on their deadly actions in Armenian territory that are still taking place to this day. Data from this report will help us to finally bring an end to U.S. funding for the murderous Aliyev regime and instead urge strong support of fellow democracies like Armenia,” **Pallone concluded**.

The amendment is an important step in creating oversight for the Defense Department’s Section 333 Building Partner Capacity Program that has sent enormous sums of money to human rights abusing regimes and dictators, including that of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, which has numerous documented human rights violations. The Department has spent nearly \$4 billion over the last four years on the program. Even though the State Department has singled out Azerbaijani border units for committing human rights violations, those forces received over \$100 million in security assistance in fiscal years 2018 and 2019 through the program.

Armenia to work diligently to raise awareness of past genocides and new challenges

The Republic of Armenia will continue to work diligently to raise awareness of past genocides, the dangers of their impunity and the new challenges, the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on the occasion of the International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide.

On December 9, 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the first human rights treaty – the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

“The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide clearly stipulates that “genocides have caused enormous harm to humanity at all stages of history,” thus reaffirming that the crimes of genocide appeared before the adoption of the Convention. The Armenian Genocide served as an important precedent for the adoption of the Genocide Convention, which was publicly mentioned by the author of the Convention, Raphael Lemkin,” the Ministry said.

It noted that “despite the enormous work that has been carried out, the international community still needs to make further efforts for adequate and timely response, including for condemnation of gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as for holding accountable the states guilty of genocide.

“Today, there are different methods and toolkit for committing the crime of genocide, as modern weapons of mass destruction are being used. However, those who justify genocide have not changed their aspiration to achieve geopolitical goals through mass atrocities,” the Foreign Ministry stated.

In 2015, due to Armenia’s efforts, December 9th was included in the list of UN International Days as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and the Prevention of this Crime.

A resolution on the prevention of geno-

cide, initiated by Armenia and adopted with consensus by the UN Human Rights Council in 2020, clearly states that “the justification of genocide, bias assessment and denial of past crimes increases the risk of a recurrence of violence.”

Armenia emphasizes that historical memory, education and the dissemination of accurate information concerning previous genocides are essential to prevent a recurrence of mass atrocities.

“The deliberate destruction of cultural heritage should also be condemned as it is a vital element for the preservation of national identity. Manifestations of domination over national, ethnic, religious or racial groups or justifications for the use of force against the latter are unacceptable,” the Foreign Ministry said.

It noted that the Republic of Armenia will continue to work diligently to raise awareness of past genocides, the dangers of their impunity and the new challenges.

UN chief says ‘accountability and reparations for past atrocity crimes’ must be ensured

We must ensure accountability and reparations for past atrocity crimes, UN Secretary General

António Guterres said in a message on the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide

“On this day, every year, we honor the memory of the victims of genocide and other atrocity crimes, and we rededicate ourselves to preventing these horrendous acts,” the Secretary General said.

“The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide has given us a better understanding of early warning signs and risk factors. Yet, today, genocide remains a very real threat. The international community has repeatedly failed to respond collaboratively, swiftly and decisively to prevent genocide and



related atrocity crimes,” he added.

“Today, we face the highest number of violent conflicts since 1945. They are lasting longer and are increasingly complex. Impunity is rife and human rights and the rule of law are regularly ignored. Identity-based hate speech, incitement and discrimination continue to spread and are increasingly being used for political

manipulation and gain. These are all alarming warning signs that should prompt action,” the UN chief stated.

“We know what is needed. We must eliminate identity-based discrimination and recognize diversity as a strength. We must respect human rights and the rule of law. We must ensure accountability and reparations for past atrocity crimes. And we must reconcile and restore broken communities,” Mr. Guterres continued.

“States have the primary responsibility for preventing genocide, but this cannot be achieved without the participation of society as a whole. Young people, religious and community leaders, the private sector and the media – especially social media platforms — all have a responsibility to become champions of prevention, he concluded.

We are entering a quantum era: Armenian President participates in Ada Lovelace festival

President Armen Sarkissian participated online in the Ada Lovelace festival in Germany titled “Quantum World.”

The festival, named after mathematician Ada Lovelace, is a unique platform for talented techies and tech enthusiasts to discuss the impact of technological change on different aspects of life. Representatives of the German government and leading technology companies are taking part in the festival.

Within the framework of the festival, President Sarkissian answered the questions on challenges of the changing world and quantum politics.

“What we are witnessing now, I call R-evolution, that is, rapid evolution,” said the President. “In other words, we will live in a period of constant rapid evolution, where quantum computing will completely change our lives. I’m sure that the people who are present at the conference are well aware of that.”

President Sarkissian noted that we must realize that we live in a world that is completely different even from the world 30 years ago. “The way we communicate, the fact that everyone has a device in their hands that contains a wealth of information, the fact that people can express their ideas on social media, the way we manage our healthcare system have completely changed our planet,” he said.”

“The planet has now become smaller, more crowded, very fast. Each of us leads two lives. We have our material life, and the electronic or alternative life that is constantly with us. This life is absolutely quantum in the sense that it travels at the



speed of light, allowing you to receive large-scale information. That life also affects our material life,” President Sarkissian stated.

Asked about the impact of technological changes on the policy, President Sarkissian noted that the policy is changing. “Thirty, fifty or a hundred years ago, classical politics was implemented through a parliamentary, presidential or monarchical structure, through international structures. “Everything is different today,” he said. “You vote not every 5 years, but at least 5 times a day through Facebook. Democracy has changed. The political events in the world over the last 10-15 years have become very unpredictable and unstable. We need to understand that we are entering a completely different era for humanity, which has one formulation – quantum.”

According to President Sarkissian, in the future people will make decisions with the help of artificial intelligence. “To compare what can happen, I will give an example from different areas of our lives. Take chess, for example. It’s a great game. I am

proud to say that every child in Armenia learns chess from the first grade at school, because it is a fantastic tool to develop logic, concentration, thinking discipline,” said the President.

“Today chess has become a combination of a person with fantastic talent and a computer. No one can become a world champion today if he does not train with a computer. In other words, it has become an excellent helper that can analyze all possible steps. Tomorrow, the supercomputer, with the help of artificial intelligence, can help chess players take the right steps. But in any case, the chess players will be individuals, because chess is not just about making the right move. It is completely different when you see the person sitting in front of you, you have a struggle of personalities, characters, knowledge, cultures, maybe it is a struggle of morality. In other words, the decision-maker will be the person, but he can be supported by artificial intelligence. It will be the same in politics. Decisions will be made by people, but they will be helped by artificial intelligence.”



Armenian-American scientist Ardem Patapoutian was awarded the Nobel Prize Wednesday for helping discover how humans sense temperature and touch, *The San Diego Union-Tribune* reports.

Karin Olofsdotter, the Swedish ambassador to the United States, conferred an 18-karat gold medal for physiology or medicine on Patapoutian and one on his co-winner, David Julius of UC San Francisco, under circumstances that also were highly unusual.

All Nobel medals and diplomas — except for the ones given in peace — have historically been given in Stockholm, Sweden. But the Nobel Foundation decided — as it did a year ago — to honor the laureates in their home countries due to COVID-19 issues.

The four Western U.S. laureates received their prizes during a brief ceremony at the National Academies' home near UC Irvine. They include Patapoutian and Ju-

Ardem Patapoutian receives Nobel Prize during special ceremony in Irvine

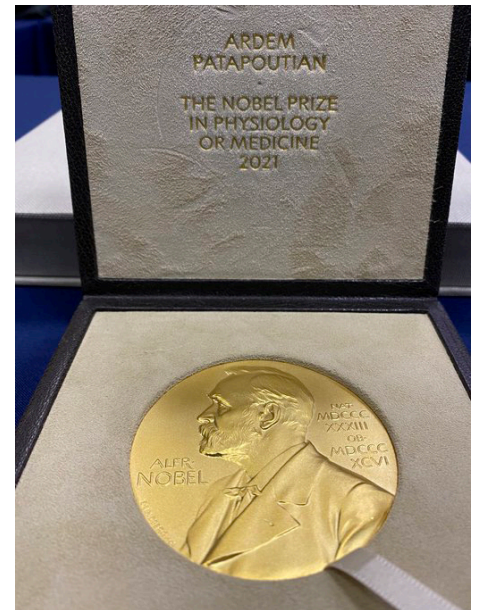
lius, as well as David Card of UC Berkeley and Guido Imbens of Stanford, who won a Nobel in economics.

Patapoutian, 54, fled civil war in his native Lebanon in 1986 to emigrate to the U.S., where he began his career as a biochemist and later joined Scripps, where he still works.

He had his phone turned off in the hours before dawn on Oct. 4 when the Nobel Committee was trying to reach him to say that he'd won. The committee was able to reach his 94-year-old father, who lives in the Los Angeles area, who then contacted Patapoutian, telling him to call Sweden.

He and Julius discovered cell receptors that make it possible for people to sense heat, cold, pain, touch and sound. The work is important in drug development, especially at places like Scripps Research, which works closely with pharmaceutical companies to turn its discoveries into new therapeutics.

Patapoutian told the Union-Tribune in October, "I came here with very little money and hardly spoke the language. I worked in a lab and just fell in love with doing research. Ever since then, this has



been my life and joy."

In October Armenian President Armen Sarkissian congratulated Ardem Patapoutian on winning the Nobel Prize in Medicine.

"As the President of the Republic of Armenia, I am very happy for your great success, which, I think, we all consider one of the greatest achievements of our nation," Sarkissian then said.

Master's program in American studies launched at Yerevan State University

On December 9, U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Lynne Tracy and Yerevan State University acting Rector Hovhannes Hovhannisyan jointly participated in the opening of the American Studies Center and official launch of the first master's program in American Studies at Yerevan State University.

In 2019, YSU received a grant from the Public Diplomacy Section of the U.S. Embassy in Armenia to develop a master's program in American Studies and establish



an American Studies Center. YSU partnered with Arizona State University for the implementation of this program. The American Studies Center will serve as a

hub for research and exchange of ideas about the U.S. policies and society. The master's program welcomed its new cohort of students in September 2021.

"This graduate program will provide the opportunity for Armenian students to study various aspects of U.S. society, politics, diplomacy, and economics here in Armenia. In doing so, they will better equip themselves with the skills necessary to understand and explain our policies and society to Armenian audiences," said Ambassador Tracy.

New stamp honors 2020 Aurora Prize laureates

On the International Day for the Commemoration and Dignity of Victims of Genocide, representatives of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, the Ministry of High-Tech Industry of Armenia and HayPost, the National Postal Operator of Armenia, presented a new stamp featuring 2020 Aurora Prize Laureates Fartuun Adan and Ilwad Elman. The mother and daughter team who lead the Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre in Somalia had been named the Aurora Prize Laureates online in 2020 but were unable to receive the Prize statuette due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. In October, Fartuun Adan was finally given the statuette at the Aurora Dialogues in Venice held during the 2021 Aurora Prize events.

“Today, on the International Day for the Commemoration and Dignity of Victims of Genocide, it is so critical to think about global atrocities and what we can and must do to prevent them. This stamp is a great honor that, hopefully, will let more people around the globe to learn about our work. We are truly humbled to get this personal stamp from Armenia,” said 2020 Aurora Prize Laureate Ilwad Elman who unfortunately couldn’t travel to Armenia this year to personally take part in this special event.

Aurora has been releasing stamps featuring the Aurora Prize Laureates annually since 2017 and is especially proud to uphold this valued tradition in uncertain times like these. The stamp was created by designer Alla Mingalyova, Art Director of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. It’s also a fundraising tool: attached to the first-class stamp, valued at 350 AMD, is a donation coupon for 150 AMD.

“Today, we are going to cancel the fifth postage stamp dedicated to the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. This year, we are very happy to issue a stamp that honors Mrs. Fartuun Adan and Ms. Ilwad Elman. For five years, HayPost CJSC has been issuing postage stamps dedicated to the Aurora Prize Laureates and continuing the tradition of featuring Aurora Prize Lau-

reates on Armenia’s international stamps. HayPost is committed to supporting the global humanitarian movement, as well as sharing Armenian culture and history with



the world,” noted Hayk Karapetyan, Chief Executive Officer of HayPost.

“The Aurora Prize has the exceptional universal significance and is given for the global contribution to make people’s lives better. The issuance of postage stamps is very significant not only for the Armenian philatelists, but also for millions of philatelists abroad,” said Hovik Musayelyan, President of the Armenian Association of Philatelists.

HayPost transfers each 150 AMD donation value to Aurora, which supports 36 humanitarian projects by 15 designated organizations. Among them are the ones selected by Fartuun Adan and Ilwad Elman – Love Does, Panzi Foundation, and Prajwala – that fight for freedom and human rights, provide healthcare to marginalized populations, and save victims of sex-trafficking.

“The fact that our 2020 Aurora Prize Laureates couldn’t come to Armenia is a reminder of how much challenges we’ve all had to face and are still facing because of COVID-19, but life is slowly going back to normal. It’s great that we can once again meet in person and celebrate traditions like this one, honoring Fartuun and Ilwad with this beautiful stamp and doing justice to their work by raising money for a good cause,” said Nicola Stanisch, Executive Director of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.

Thanks to Aurora’s funds, Love Does has started the construction of All-Girls Leadership Academy, Primary School and Middle School in Somalia. The three fa-

cilities will benefit 400 children and their families. The organization’s local Baby Home shelter is expected to take care of 40 children, while their center for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence started operations in August and is already supporting 48 women and children. Meanwhile, Love Does is also building a school in the DRC, in the Mugunga community that doesn’t have access to education. The institution will give a second chance in life to 300 children.

Also in DRC, Panzi Foundation has begun the renovation of 2 schools, which have a total of 1012 students. Parents of 400 of them received training on income-generating activities, positive approach to dialogue in the household and in the community, human rights, and child protection. In addition, thanks to Panzi Foundation and Aurora, 100 sex workers received training on the organization of mutual solidarity groups (MUSO) and income-generating activities. Meanwhile, local leaders were instructed on child protection and women’s rights.

In January–October 2021, Prajwala used Aurora’s funds to provide holistic rehabilitation to 215 child victims of sex-trafficking and sex crime in Hyderabad, India. The program aims at creating a healing space for the survivors to overcome the trauma and facilitating their fight for justice.

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Armenian Identity Card

The goal of the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) non-profit organization is to unify Armenians worldwide in a common platform so that through contacts, queries and referenda they can express their views and positions regarding issues of general interest to Armenians around the world and issues of particular interest to Armenian communities in various countries.

Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) also makes it possible to establish business networks, the cardholder can participate in various charitable projects, and can obtain discounts from Armenian and non-Armenian businesses all over the world. Armenians should feel themselves to be full-fledged "citizens" of a reborn Armenia and the Armenian Identity Card is the «passport» for all Armenians.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID)

network is an effective environment where Armenians can implement various projects and pan-Armenian programs. At the heart of HyeID is the creation of an Armenian database which will become the reliable and objective basis to realize the potential of all Armenians around the world. Based on that database, it will be possible to implement various permanent and temporary initiatives through the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) organization.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) worldwide network enables cardholders to elect and get elected to the leadership of The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) network structures.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can benefit from the possibility of discounts intended for HyeID cardholders when shopping for products and services in various countries of the world.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can participate in queries and referenda initiated by the HyeID network and vote on issues of national interest to Armenians.

- Ensure the security and privacy of The Armenian Identification Card (HyeID) cardholders.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders who live in the Diaspora intend to utilize the possibilities made available through HyeID to form a Diaspora representative body — Diaspora Armenian Parliament — through democratic elections.

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