

The international community perceives Armenia more and more as a part of international democracy. Prime Minister




Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan participated in the third Armenian Forum for Democracy.

The President of the Constitutional Court Arman Dilanyan, Vice President of the National Assembly Hakob Arshakyan, MPs, Cabinet members, Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador Vassilis Maragos, US Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Armenia Kristina Kvien, Director for Europe and

Eurasia programs at Freedom House Marc Behrendt, representatives of civil society, experts were also present at the event.

In his speech, Prime Minister Pashinyan welcomed the attendees and highlighted the importance of holding such forums. **“Why is it important to hold such forums and this forum? Because as rightly mentioned, this is a good opportunity to discuss the progress of democracy and democratic reforms**

in Armenia, to discuss the challenges that exist for democratic reforms and the development of democracy in Armenia. I think that as a result we should emphasize, summarize together what further development tactics we should adopt for democratic reforms and what road map we should have in order to coordinate our efforts in terms of democracy development. This in turn means that  page 8

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Armenia greatly values the role of the United States in the peace-building process in our region- Pashinyan to Joe Biden



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan sent a congratulatory message to the President of the United States of America, Joe Biden, on the occasion of Independence Day.

The message reads as follows:

"Honorable President Biden,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Armenia and myself, I warmly congratulate you and the people of the United States of America on Independence Day.

The universal values of freedom,

justice, and democracy at the foundation of the United States of America, as well as the ideals reflected in the Declaration of Independence, continue to be a source of inspiration and encouragement around the world.

The multi-layered and close ties between Armenia and the United States, the significant growth and development of cooperation in recent years, the inclusion of new areas in the bilateral agenda emphasize the strength of our partnership based on democratic principles, the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

I am happy to record that the commitment to further expansion of our cooperation in democratic reforms, promotion of economic and energy resilience, justice, fight against corruption, security cooperation and cooperation on other fields was reflected in the vision of raising the strategic dialogue between Armenia and the

USA to the level of strategic partnership.

Armenia greatly values the role of the United States in the peace-building process in our region and deeply appreciates the US support for the sovereignty, independence, democracy, territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of the Republic of Armenia in accordance with the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Armenia's commitment to the peace agenda and express confidence that our continued and strengthening partnership at this critical time will contribute to building a peaceful and more prosperous future for our two countries and the region.

Congratulating you again on Independence Day, I wish you and the friendly people of the USA peace, prosperity and continued progress."

PM Pashinyan congratulates the newly elected president of Iran

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has sent a congratulatory message to Masoud Pezeshkian on the occasion of his victory in Iran's presidential election.

The message issued by the PM's office reads as follows:

"Your Excellency,

I warmly congratulate you on being elected as the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, wishing you continued achievements and new successes.

The relations with the fraternal Islamic Republic of Iran are of special significance



for the government and people of the Republic of Armenia, which have been steadily developing since the declaration of Armenia's independence. The constant

deepening of warm relations between Armenia and Iran is of particular importance in the context of both bilateral cooperation and regional stability and prosperity.

I am sure that thanks to the joint efforts of our governments, the agreements reached between the Republic of Armenia and the Islamic Republic of Iran will be implemented, and we will jointly launch a number of new programs for the welfare of the friendly peoples of Armenia and Iran."

Armenia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Hungarian Secretary of State Tristan Azbej discuss bilateral relations

Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Paruyr Hovhannisyan on July 1 met with the State Secretary of Hungary's "Help and Hungarian Support Program for Persecuted Christians" Tristan Azbej, the foreign ministry said.

During the meeting the parties welcomed the significant progress recorded after restoring the diplomatic relations between the two countries, noting the importance of implementing the agreements signed as a result of high-level mutual meetings.

According to the source, the

interlocutors addressed a wide range of issues regarding the development of bilateral relations, emphasizing the need to enhance connections in trade, economy, culture, education, tourism, and other spheres.

They also discussed the Armenia-EU partnership, noting that Hungary assumed the presidency of the EU on July 1.

It is noted that the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia briefed the interlocutor on the latest developments in the process of normalizing relations between Armenia and

Azerbaijan, including the efforts made by the Republic of Armenia in the direction of concluding a peace treaty, as well as the "Crossroads of Peace" project developed by the Government of the Republic of Armenia.



In parallel to peace treaty negotiations, Baku creates new obstacles, delaying its signing -Mirzoyan



In parallel with the ongoing peace negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Yerevan, unfortunately, sees new obstacles created by Baku to artificially delay the process.

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said this during a joint press conference with Georgian Foreign Minister Ilia Darchiashvili.

He thanked the Georgian side for supporting the normalization of relations with Azerbaijan.

“We attach great importance to the continuation of the delimitation process based on the Alma-Ata Declaration. In parallel, the peace agreement is being prepared, and Armenia is also very constructive here. Armenia’s proposals and approaches are transparent,” the minister

emphasized, stating that Armenia considers it realistic to complete the preparation and sign the peace agreement with Azerbaijan within a month through intensive work.

Mirzoyan reiterated that Armenia has not received a positive response from Azerbaijan regarding this proposal.

“On the contrary, we see that new, I can say with confidence, artificial obstacles are being created to delay the process, but we continue to believe that there is a historical opportunity to establish long-term peace in the region,” Mirzoyan said.

Armenia to Host Joint Military Exercises with U.S.

Armenia, once again, will host joint military drills with the United States from July 15 to 24, in what has become an annual event known as the “Eagle Partner” exercises.

The defense ministry announced on Saturday that the drill will involve Service members from the peacekeeping brigade of Armenia’s Armed Forces, the U.S. Army Europe and Africa, and the Kansas National Guard will participate in the exercise, which has been engaged in peacekeeping training with Armenia for the past several years.

“The exercise will focus on stabilization tasks between conflicting parties during a



peacekeeping mission,” Armenia’s defense ministry said in a statement.

“The purpose of the exercise is to enhance the interoperability of units participating in international peacekeeping missions, exchange best practices in control and tactical communication, and improve the readiness of the Armenian unit,” the defense ministry added.

Units preparing for international peacekeeping operations regularly engage in similar joint military exercises and training with partner countries.

“Over the years, the Kansas National Guard has built a strong cooperative relationship with the Republic of Armenia,” said Brig. Gen. Michael Venerdi, Adjutant General of Kansas, in a statement issued by the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan.

“Working side by side with our Armenian partners in exercises such as Eagle Partner strengthens the trust and friendships between our nations and the men and women of our military services,” the statement added.

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan met with Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze

The interlocutors discussed several issues on the rich bilateral agenda, expressing confidence that the development of the strategic partnership would give new impetus to the deepening of cooperation in various directions between the two countries. Minister Mirzoyan emphasized that this first visit since the establishment of the strategic partnership and the discussions held testify to the intention to achieve new tangible results for the citizens of both countries.

The Armenian Foreign Minister and the Georgian Prime Minister discussed issues related to regional security. Minister Mirzoyan presented Armenia’s efforts to normalize relations with neighboring countries, emphasizing the importance of making progress on a peace agreement with Azerbaijan in the context of ensuring long-term stability and peace in the South Caucasus.

The meeting also addressed cooperation and mutual support in multilateral

platforms, as well as issues of unblocking regional economic and transport links.



There is a unique opportunity to reach a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan- Blinken

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed the opinion that there is a unique opportunity to reach a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This was reported by the press service of the U.S. State Department, citing Blinken's words from his speech at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

"There is a unique opportunity to implement a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan that will end years of conflict and, in general, I think, will create tremendous opportunities for economic engagement and economic growth in the region, connecting countries



both East and West, and North and South. Azerbaijan plays a critical role in this issue," Blinken emphasized, adding that the United States has been actively pursuing this through diplomacy, trying to help

Azerbaijan and Armenia move closer to a peace agreement.

In his speech, the U.S. Secretary of State also noted that Washington carried out this work in very close cooperation and coordination with the European Union, and expressed the opinion that Yerevan and Baku can indeed achieve peace.

"I spoke this about a week ago during a conversation with President Aliyev. I think it is feasible and fully consistent with the interests of the people of Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as the entire region," concluded Anthony Blinken.

Armenia's resilience is not against its neighbors, it is also beneficial for them - EU ambassador

According to the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Armenia, Ambassador Vassilis Maragos, Armenia's resilience is not directed against its neighbors, on the contrary, this resilience and the increase in Armenia's security level are beneficial to its neighbors. Vassilis Maragos announced this within the framework of the panel discussion entitled "European Prospective of Armenia: Challenges and Opportunities".

Touching upon cooperation between Armenia and the European Union in the field of agriculture, Maragos noted that the EU supported this area within the

framework of a number of programs.

"I have visited several agricultural farms that operate with EU support, but I agree with the idea that more work could be done in this direction," he noted.

The EU Ambassador expressed the opinion that the European Union is ready to facilitate exports from Armenia, to work towards standards, and is also ready to present the experience of member states in this matter.

"In the context of the international legal order, legal relations that everyone supports and treats in good faith, Armenia's resilience is definitely not directed



against its neighbors, on the contrary, this resilience and the increase in Armenia's security level are beneficial to its neighbors," Maragos emphasized, adding that EU integration in a broader sense also applies to this circumstance.

Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister meets French Coordinator for Armenian-French Cooperation



Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Paruyr Hovhannisyan on July 2 received Florence Provendier, coordinator of the Armenian-French cooperation for the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

According to the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Armenia, during the meeting, the parties discussed a wide range of issues related to the existing multi-sectoral

cooperation between the two countries. They addressed the "Armenian-French Economic Cooperation 2021-2026" and discussed further steps toward implementing the roadmap and prospects for decentralized cooperation.

The interlocutors outlined steps for deepening cooperation between the two countries and implementing targeted programs.

PM Pashinyan receives Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan received the Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Lazar Comanescu.

According to the readout issued by the Prime Minister's Office, Pashinyan noted that as a country that has assumed the Chairmanship-in-Office of the Organization since July 1, Armenia attaches importance to the consistent development of cooperation between member states in various spheres of the economy.

PM Pashinyan stressed the role of the



Organization in promoting regional cooperation and added that the Armenian Government is interested in the expansion of connections in transport, energy,

telecommunications and other directions.

According to Lazar Comanescu, effective discussions were held with colleagues from the Armenian Government to outline priorities during their chairmanship-in-office of the Organization and to implement them.

It is noted that the interlocutors exchanged ideas on the "Crossroads of Peace" project of the Armenian Government, the construction process of the North-South highway in Armenia and issues related to regional economic cooperation.

Tomoko Akane and Grigor Minasyan discussed the possibility of expanding cooperation

The Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia Grigor Minasyan met with the President of the International Criminal Court Tomoko Akane in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (The Hague).

According to the message from the Armenian Ministry of Justice, Grigor Minasyan recalled that on October 3, 2023, Armenia ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which entered into force on February 1, 2024.

By ratifying the Statute, Armenia reaffirmed its commitment to combating impunity for the most serious crimes that threaten peace and security throughout the world. Thus, Armenia recognized the



ICC jurisdiction retroactively, committing to bring its national legislation into line with the principles of the Rome Statute.

Grigor Minasyan reaffirmed Armenia's commitment to ensuring the continuous approximation of the national legal framework for the implementation of the Rome

Statute, while expressing its readiness to develop the capabilities of relevant law enforcement agencies in the context of the effective implementation of the post-validation process of the Rome Statute.

In conclusion, Grigor Minasyan expressed gratitude to the International Criminal Court for the opportunity to strengthen cooperation. International Criminal Court President Tomoko Akane congratulated Armenia on joining the ICC and expressed her readiness to support Armenia in the post-validation process of the Rome Statute and in other areas of cooperation.

Tbilisi and Yerevan support each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty – Georgian Foreign Minister

Tbilisi and Yerevan greatly support and respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, said Georgian Foreign Minister Ilia Darchiashvili during a joint press conference with his Armenian counterpart Ararat Mirzoyan.

The Georgian Foreign Minister noted that Yerevan and Tbilisi have special friendly and neighborly relations, which have a history of many centuries. Darchiashvili expressed confidence that Mirzoyan's visit to Georgia will give a new boost to bilateral relations.

"It should be noted that with the signing of the declaration on establishing a strategic partnership, the bilateral

cooperation has reached a qualitatively new level. This new stage was a turning point in our multilateral cooperation," said Ilia Darchiashvili.

The Georgian Foreign Minister thanked his Armenian counterpart for voting in favor of the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly, which confirms the right of all internally displaced persons and refugees to return to Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

"Georgia and Armenia greatly support and respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty," the Georgian Foreign Minister said, noting that he discussed issues related to multi-sectoral cooperation

between the two countries with Foreign Minister Mirzoyan.

Darchiashvili added that Armenia is among Georgia's top ten trade partners and ranks in the top three in terms of tourism.



Foreign Minister Mirzoyan holds meeting with Secretary General of BSEC



Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan had a meeting with the Secretary General of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Lazar Comanescu.

The meeting took place within the framework of Comanescu's visit to Yerevan on the occasion of Armenia's chairmanship of the BSEC from July 1, the foreign

ministry said.

The interlocutors discussed Armenia's cooperation with the BSEC, the priorities of Armenia's Chairmanship-in-Office in the organization, as well as issues of regional economic cooperation.

At the beginning of the meeting, Minister Mirzoyan noted: "Your visit is a good opportunity to exchange ideas on how we can best achieve the goals of Armenia's Chairmanship-in-Office in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, which begins today.

We believe that interconnection and cooperation among member countries within the Organization will not only make a major and tangible contribution to sustainable economic development, but will

also be an important factor in building peace and stability in the wider region. Therefore, connectivity will be at the core of our presidency's priorities.

Especially when it comes to the South Caucasus, the opening of transport channels will not only significantly contribute to peace and security and economic cooperation, but it will also help our region, the South Caucasus, better connect to the global network. In this regard, we rely heavily on the chairmanship and cooperation of the BSEC permanent secretariat.

Of course, connectivity is not the only area; we have also collaborated in other fields such as information technology, tourism and will continue to do so in the future."

World Bank to provide \$110 million to Armenia to support Universal Health Coverage program

The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors approved a loan in the amount of \$110 million equivalent (EUR 102 million) to support the *Enabling Universal Health Coverage Program* for Armenia. The operation aims to improve the quality of primary health care, ensure accessible health care services across the country and increase the efficiency of the government's spending on healthcare. The operation supports the implementation of the Five Year Action (2021-2026) Plan of the Government of Armenia and is a subset of the national Healthcare System Development Strategy.

Although Armenia's health indicators have improved in recent decades for maternal and child health outcomes, non-communicable diseases still account for the largest share of deaths and illnesses. Low government spending on healthcare and the inefficiencies in the health system contribute to high costs, resulting in high out-of-pocket payments. Armenia's share of these payments for health out of current health expenditures (81.4 percent



in 2021) is among the highest in the world.

"Armenia's high private health care costs are an outlier in the world with adverse effects on the quality of services provided to citizens. Ongoing reforms intend to create better financial and regulatory incentives for the provision of quality healthcare," said **Carolyn Geginat, World Bank Country Manager for Armenia**. "The broader reform has the potential for fundamentally altering the disease patterns within the Armenian population and making health care more affordable for the population."

The approved operation will use a Program-for-Results (PforR) financing instrument, which links the disbursement of funds directly to the achievement of

specific program results. It will support an ambitious health reform in the country that includes introducing mandatory health insurance. In addition to the measures for improving the quality of health services, the reforms will aim to increase the efficiency of government health spending such as the adoption of external reference pricing mechanism, which applies international price comparisons to selected publicly financed essential medicines.

The project aims to benefit the entire population of Armenia, who will receive better quality and more affordable health services to prevent non-communicable diseases. Some of the key intended outcomes include introduction of a system where primary health care facilities are financed based on their performance, in terms of both quality and coverage indicators, improved training of nurses and family physicians, a reduction of the prices for prescribed drugs and decreasing out-of-pocket spending as a share of current health expenditures.

Cumulative deposit on flexible terms. Byblos Bank Armenia's new offer



Byblos Bank Armenia introduces a special cumulative deposit offer aimed at fostering dynamic growth of funds.

Once the deposit is fixed, it can be

topped up at any time (except during the three months prior to maturity), and interest will be accrued quarterly.

Deposits starting from AMD 500,000 | \$5,000 | €5,000 and above are accepted, offering competitive interest rates and access to an overdraft facility.

Customers booking a deposit as part of the offer will receive a 50% discount on the rental of safe deposit boxes.

Deposits can be fixed at any branch of Byblos Bank Armenia, while applications

can be submitted online as well.

The offer is valid until December 31. Detailed information can be obtained on the Bank's official [website](#).

Byblos Bank Armenia CJSC was founded and opened the doors of its first branch in 2007. Today, the Bank has four branches in Yerevan where customers can use various banking services and receive financial advice. The Bank provides its customers corporate-retail banking services that meet the highest international standards.

Araratbank allocates \$10 million in funding to women entrepreneurs

In a significant move to enhance economic resilience and business growth in Armenia, the European Fund for South-east Europe (EFSE) has extended a USD 10 million loan facility to Ararat Bank. This investment aims to empower women entrepreneurs by facilitating access to finance.

The new funding will enable Ararat-Bank to issue over 300 sub-loans with longer maturities, targeting micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and especially those that are either majority owned or led by women. This initiative is part of a broader effort to bolster business sustainability and job creation in Armenia, with the potential to support

nearly 1,500 jobs and stimulate further investment in the MSME sector amidst ongoing geopolitical challenges.

Oxana Binzaru, EFSE Regional Director, commented on the partnership: "We are proud to strengthen our collaboration with AraratBank, a long-standing partner committed to fostering inclusive economic growth. This USD 10 million loan is a testament to our shared dedication to enhancing the financial inclusion and empowerment of women entrepreneurs in Armenia, supporting them in overcoming the various challenges they face in the business world."

Mher Ananyan, Chairman of the Executive Board of AraratBank noted: "The



recent focus of the bank's policy has been on supporting women entrepreneurs in the best possible way, aiming to bring their business ideas to fruition effectively. The new cooperation with our trusted partner EFSE will further bolster this effort, making the process even more impactful."

Unblocking communication channels would serve as additional factor in establishing peace in the region - Mirzoyan

During a joint press conference with Georgian Foreign Minister Ilia Darchiashvili, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan expressed his opinion that unblocking communication channels in the South Caucasus would be beneficial both for the region itself and for countries beyond its borders.

Mirzoyan, referring to the unblocking of communication channels in the region, noted that Armenia has presented a constructive proposal and has constructive intentions in this matter.



"We believe that this vision and this unblocking can be economically beneficial not only for Armenia

and Azerbaijan, but also for all countries in the region and even beyond. Moreover, we believe that this program and the unblocking will serve as an additional factor for establishing peace in the region.

That's why we introduced the 'Crossroads of Peace' initiative. It is worth noting that the Armenian Prime Minister first presented the 'Crossroads of Peace' initiative in Tbilisi," Mirzoyan said.

The Armenian Foreign Minister has invited his Georgian counterpart to Yerevan.

page 1 **this forum should record the collective will of all of us to strengthen and develop democracy in the Republic of Armenia. But for this we also need to record what happened to the agenda of democracy that we had 7 years ago. I must record that the changes that have taken place in Armenia in terms of democracy are not few. For example, the phrases “falsification of elections” or “falsification of election results”, I think, have already been attributed to the historical genre in the Republic of Armenia, and this is very important.”**

In that context, the Prime Minister referred to other challenges, in the direction of which tangible positive results have been recorded, in particular, in terms of freedom of assembly of political forces or civil society or ensuring access to certain places for holding assemblies. **“There were places, even outdoors, where it was not so easy, if not impossible, to hold a rally or gathering, not to mention renting halls in hotels or other places to hold political events. Or, for example, repression of freedom of the press, I think this is also a topic that, in fact, is a thing of the past in Armenia.”**

Nikol Pashinyan also referred to the challenges of strengthening democracy, for which there is still work to be done. **“Of course, it is not the case that we have achieved the ideal level of democracy in Armenia or that we are satisfied with the quality of democracy we have. In particular, in my opinion, elections at local government levels are not sufficiently politicized, civil and community oriented. In other words, the**



perception of the elections that we have at the national level is not as evident at the local government level. Basically, the Republic of Armenia has not established standards for the use of force by law enforcement agencies, which is obviously another problem. What can be done to expand our understanding of the scope of human rights protection? And this applies to everyone’s right, because the narrower the scope of that understanding, I mean, of human rights protection, the more incomplete that system is, even for those who are within that scope. That is, the scope seems to be inclusive, but the narrower the scope, the lower the quality of human rights protection, including for people whose rights do not appear to be at issue. What should be done so that in the absence of systemic corruption, corruption itself does not form alternative systems? What can be done so that the judicial system or the independence of the judicial system is not only a slogan, not only a program, but also a widely perceived reality by the public, so that the public perceives it not as a title, but as a reality that he deals with every day? These are issues that are on the agenda not only of the government, but also of non-governmental organizations and, by and large, the public,”

said the Prime Minister.

Nikol Pashinyan emphasized that the statement he made back in 2018 remains unshakable: “democracy for us is not a result of circumstances, that is, it is not a reality caused by circumstances, but it is a strategy. And the government and the ruling majority will continue on this strategic path.”

“One thing is clear: democracy is seriously taking root in Armenia, and the international community perceives the Republic of Armenia more and more as a part of international or global democracy. And this is perhaps the most important record that we can make to-



day and this is perhaps the most visible success that democracy has recorded in the Republic of Armenia,” said the Prime Minister.

Summarizing the speech, Nikol Pashinyan wished success to the third Armenian Forum for Democracy and thanked the civil society representatives and international partners for supporting the implementation of the democratic reform agenda of the Armenian government.

Nikol Pashinyan also participated in the panel discussion within the framework of the forum, during which he answered the questions of the attendees.

Ambassador of France to Armenia attends chamber music concert performed by musicians from Nagorno Karabakh

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France to Armenia Olivier Decottignies attended the chamber music concert performed by musicians from Nagorno Karabakh.

Decottignies was invited to attend the concert by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU).

“It was very emotional attending the

chamber music concert performed by musicians from Nagorno Karabakh at the invitation of the AGBU. For these women and men, who have been united once more after their forced displacement, this concert serves as a victory against exile, injustice and oblivion,” Decottignies wrote in a post on the social network X.



Armenia In “substantive” talks with U.S. on new Nuclear Plant



RFE/RL - Armenia is discussing with the United States the possibility of building a new, U.S.-designed nuclear plant that would replace its aging facility at Metsamor, a senior Armenian official said on July 3.

“We have entered a very substantive phase,” Armen Grigoryan, the secretary of Armenia’s Security Council, told a conference in Yerevan. “We are now discussing with the United States putting in place a legal framework. Without a legal framework, we can’t move forward.”

“I can say that the ball is now in the U.S. court. We expect that they will go through internal U.S. procedures before we begin our work,” he added without giving any details.

The Metsamor nuclear plant, which

generates roughly 40 percent of Armenia’s electricity, went into service in 1980 and is due to be decommissioned in 2036. The Armenian government announced in April 2022 plans to build a new nuclear plant by that time.

The U.S. has shown an interest in the ambitious project, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan signing in May 2022 a memorandum of understanding on “strategic nuclear cooperation” between their countries. A senior U.S. State Department official said a year later that Washington is “assessing the feasibility” of building a nuclear plant equipped with small modular reactors (SMRs) in Armenia. She said the US technology could make the South Caucasus nation less dependent on Russia for energy.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced afterwards that an Armenian government delegation will visit the U.S. soon to take a close look at local SMRs. He suggested that they could be more affordable for Armenia than the much more

powerful nuclear facilities built by Russia.

In June 2023, Pashinyan set up a working group tasked with exploring various options for building the new facility, including the SMRs, and submit its findings to the prime minister’s staff within two months. No such findings have been made public since then.

In May this year, Pashinyan’s government announced that it is negotiating with the U.S., Russia and South Korea on the project. It did not elaborate.

The U.S. company NuScale Power Corp planned to build America’s first SMR plant in Idaho by 2030. It was due to consist of six reactors with a combined capacity of 462 megawatts. However, the company cancelled the project last November, saying that it has not attracted enough utilities interested in buying electricity from the would-be plant.

NuScale revised the cost of the project from \$5.3 billion to \$9.3 billion in January 2023. The revised figure exceeds Armenia’s annual state budget.

Armenia, Azerbaijan Claim Progress In Border Delimitation Talks

RFE/RL - Armenia and Azerbaijan have made more progress in ongoing negotiations on the delimitation of their border, the Armenian government said on July 1.

“Negotiations continue constructively,” read a short statement released by the office of Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan.

It said that the Armenian and Azerbaijani government commissions on border delimitation have proposed to each other draft “regulations” for their joint work and should work out a relevant common document “soon.”

The Azerbaijani government issued a similar statement. It too gave no details.

The two commissions pledged to agree on the regulations by July 1 when they announced on April 19 the start of the delimitation process that took the form of Armenian territorial concessions to Azerbaijan. In the following weeks, Baku gained control of disputed border areas

that that used to be occupied by four Azerbaijani villages captured by Armenian forces in 1991-1992.

For its part, the Azerbaijani army had at occupied at the time large swathes of nearby land belonging to several villages in Armenia’s Tavush province. It has not withdrawn from that land in return for the Armenian concessions. Baku has also refused to withdraw from Armenian territory seized by its troops in 2021 and 2022.

The land transfer strongly condemned by the Armenian opposition sparked angry protests in Tavush border villages seriously affected by it. The protests were led by Archbishop Bagrat Galstanyan, the then head of the Armenian Apostolic Church. After failing to scuttle preparations for the handover, Galstanyan took his campaign to Yerevan where he held a series of big rallies in May and June in a bid to oust Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan.

Pashinian repeatedly defended his unilateral concessions, saying that they

will lay the groundwork for Azerbaijan’s recognition of Armenia’s territorial integrity. He said that this “positive experience” will be used in the border delimitation and demarcation process that will supposedly be based on the 1991 Alma-Ata Declaration signed by newly independent ex-Soviet republics.

Earlier on Monday, Pashinyan refused to answer a question about the process when he was approached by RFE/RL correspondent in Yerevan.

The 1991 declaration committed Armenia, Azerbaijan and other ex-Soviet state to recognizing each other’s Soviet-era borders. But it does not contain a detailed description of those borders.

Yerevan has insisted, at least until recently, that the two South Caucasus states should use Soviet military maps drawn in the 1970s as a basis for the border delimitation. Baku has rejected this, highlighting its apparent desire to gain even more territory and cede nothing in return.

Bipartisan Congressional delegation led by Senator Roger Wicker visits Armenia



The U.S. Embassy in Yerevan welcomes

to Armenia a bipartisan U.S. Congressional Delegation led by Senator Roger Wicker, according to the statement from U.S. Embassy in Armenia.

Senator Wicker is a senior member of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—also known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission. Senator Wicker is also the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Senator Wicker is joined by Helsinki Commission Chairman, Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC-2), Co-Chairman Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), who is also Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as well as Senator John Cornyn (R-TX), Representative Robert Aderholt (R-AL-4), Representative Richard Hudson (R-NC-9), Representative Trent Kelly (R-MS-1), and Representative Andy Harris (R-MD-1).

Ameriabank and COAF pool efforts to develop beekeeping in Lori region

Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) and Ameriabank present their joint program “Harvesting Nature’s Bounty”, to be implemented as part of COAF’s Beekeeping to Empower Economic System (BEES) project.

The mission of the program is to promote beekeeping in Lori region of Armenia, improve the practical skills of beekeepers, and enhance the quality of the beekeeping value chain. Complete with educational, economic and social components, the program is designed to engage 50 beneficiaries. Along with attending innovative training courses, the beneficiaries will be provided with bee-hives and bee colonies to start their own business in future. One of the key goals of the project is to include among the beneficiaries also those COAF SMART Center students, who have been forcibly displaced from Artsakh, are currently enrolled in the SMART Center’s agrotech program and have shown interest in and possess potential in beekeeping as a field.

“Ameriabank highly values entrepreneurship as an important driver of economic empowerment of our country, especially regions outside the capital city. In this respect we especially highlight resource-efficient and environmentally sustainable spheres. In supporting beekeeping in rural communities, we set it as our aim, along with development of regional entrepreneurship, to improve the quality of life of people in these communities by empowering them with the opportunity



to establish sustainable production and pursue effective long-term occupation”, - emphasizing the importance of supporting such projects, says Rebecca Hakobyan, Chief Marketing and Communication Officer at Ameriabank.

Referring to the long-standing fruitful cooperation between COAF and Ameriabank, Haig Boyadjian, Vice President of Development at COAF, says: “Ameriabank is a trusted partner of COAF, supporting us in various initiatives. This cooperation is important as part of the beekeeping development project, as a significant booster of the potential of Lori region. It is common knowledge that beekeeping is a vital sector, by developing which we can contribute not only to preservation of local biodiversity, but also to increased employment and steady earnings in rural communities”.

COAF is no novice to beekeeping. Back in 2022, the fund successfully launched its Beekeeping to Empower Economic System (BEES) project, as part of which the Beekeeping Center was established under Lori’s SMART Center, complete with all the necessary equipment and facilities to

enable beekeepers to produce and market quality products.

Ameriabank is a leading financial and technology company in Armenia, a major contributor to the Armenian economy, with assets exceeding AMD 1 trillion. In the course of digital transformation, it has launched a number of innovative solutions and platforms going beyond banking-only needs of its diverse customer base, thus creating a dynamically evolving financial technology space.

Ameria was the first in Armenia to create ecosystems for both businesses and individuals, which give one-window access to a range of banking and non-banking services, among them - Estate.ameriabank.am, Automarket.ameriabank.am, Business.ameriabank.am.

As a truly customer-centric company, Ameria aims to be a trusted and secure financial technology space with seamless solutions to improve the quality of life.

Ameriabank is supervised by the Central Bank of Armenia.

Children of Armenia Fund aims at improving the quality of life in rural Armenia, with particular focus on projects and needs of children and youth. COAF’s target development areas include education, healthcare, as well as social and economic development. COAF launched its programs in 2004, starting in one village and expanding to 82+ communities across Armenia and Artsakh, investing more than USD 70 million to support over 100,000 beneficiaries in rural areas.

The French periodical published an article about Armenia



*The French periodical **Le Devoir** published an article about Armenia, highlighting its rich cuisine and winemaking heritage.*

As reported by the RA Tourism Committee, the author considers Armenia a land of continuous discoveries, calling it a hidden destination.

Featuring everything from Yerevan's bustling markets to national dishes such as jengyalov bread, it encourages tourists to visit and discover for themselves the country with its rich winemaking history.

The full article in French below

Escale gourmande dans la capitale arménienne

Aurélia Crémoux
Collaboration spéciale

En 2021, le magazine Forbes considérait que l'Arménie était LA nouvelle destination gastronomique et oenologique. Pour avoir un aperçu de la richesse culinaire qu'offre ce territoire montagneux, situé le long de l'ancienne route de la soie, au carrefour de l'Europe et de l'Asie, direction la capitale, Erevan.

Constituée notamment de légumes et de fruits, de viande, d'herbes et d'épices, la cuisine arménienne est colorée et éveille les papilles. « Depuis que je ne vis plus ici, me confie une Arménienne qui réside à l'étranger depuis plusieurs années, je trouve difficile de manger des plats qui ont autant de saveurs qu'en Arménie. »

Un éventail de saveurs

Et pour avoir un aperçu des goûts qu'on trouve dans la cuisine arménienne, il est incontournable de commencer sa visite

au très coloré marché couvert d'Erevan, plus connu sous le nom de GUM.

Sur les étals, fruits et légumes côtoient fromages et charcuteries. Il faut d'ailleurs y tester l'emblématique basturma, qui

la ferme familiale. Impossible également de ne pas succomber à la bouchée de soujouk sucré qu'il nous tend, une friandise en forme de saucisson réalisée à partir de noix enrobées de sirop.



est une sorte de saucisson local, à base de viande de boeuf crue séchée. Mais ce qui attise le plus notre curiosité dès l'entrée dans le marché, ce sont les analis. Ces fruits séchés au soleil ont le coeur rempli d'un mélange constitué de noix concassées, d'iode et de cannelle. « On met environ une heure pour faire cinq à six pièces », me confie un marchand, qui vend chaque jour sur le marché les produits de

En continuant notre tour des lieux, on tombe nez à nez avec ces grands étalages de lavash, ce pain arménien aux allures de pita, constitué de farine, d'eau et de sel. « Même s'il existe encore des recettes cuites de manière traditionnelle au feu de bois dans un four tandoor, m'explique une vendeuse de lavash au marché, ce pain est désormais souvent préparé dans un four »

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UNDP launches ‘Resilience from the Beginning’ program in Armenia with Serbian Government funding

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Armenia, in collaboration with the Embassy of Serbia in Armenia and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia, is implementing a new program called “Resilience from the Beginning,” worth 1 million euros.

Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Vache Terteryan noted during the program’s presentation that this event confirms the reliable cooperation between Armenia and its international partners, as well as the prompt response of international organizations to existing and often suddenly arising issues in our country.

“It is very important that UNDP, having great experience in the field of institutional work, was able to find an opportunity together with the Serbian government to support the integration of our compatriots forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh into our communities. We have discussed the content of the project many times, and the work has been coordinated with the partners of the Armenian Foreign Ministry, ensuring that it is harmonious and coordinated,” said Vache Terteryan, Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of Armenia.

Armenian Deputy Minister of Foreign

Affairs Paruyr Hovhannisyan emphasized the significance of the day, as Armenia celebrates the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Serbia, noting that this event is the best manifestation of the centuries-old friendship between the Armenian and Serbian peoples.

“This program is of great importance in addressing the humanitarian challenges in Armenia, which continues to be a primary focus on the Armenian government’s agenda. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also committed to supporting the implementation of such programs,” said the Armenian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Serbia to Armenia, Tatjana Panajotović Cvetković said that the assistance provided by her country to Armenia emphasizes the new role of Serbia as a development partner of Armenia and is, in fact, a true reflection of the strong ties, deep-rooted solidarity, and friendship between the two peoples.

“Serbia has always stood in solidarity with Armenia, as it does today, when we also celebrate another important event - the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries. Humanitarian aid is a significant milestone in our partnership.

In this regard, we are very proud of the cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the United Nations Development Program, and the Government of the Republic of Armenia,” said the diplomat.

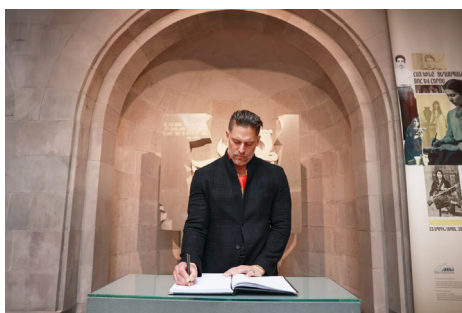
Natia Natsvlishvili, the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Armenia, thanked the Government of Serbia for the allocated funding and highly appreciated the successful partnership with the Government of Armenia at all levels.

“At the heart of the UNDP mission is our unwavering commitment to sustainable development, leaving no one behind.”

We strive to expand the rights and opportunities of women and youth from both refugee and host communities, raising their voices and providing leadership opportunities to promote inclusive growth and strengthen social cohesion.

In addition, we will advocate for integrated solutions in the field of water supply and green energy. We will support the flood-affected areas, providing much-needed aid and rehabilitation, promoting resilience in every community where we work,” said the UNDP Resident Representative in Armenia.

Hollywood actor Joe Manganiello visits Armenian Genocide Memorial



Hollywood actor, producer, director Joe Manganiello visited the Armenian Genocide Memorial and Museum on May 29, accompanied by Zareh Sinanyan, High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs.

Terviz Rose Darakjian, Manganiello’s maternal great-grandmother, survived the Armenian Genocide. Her husband and seven children were killed by the Turks, and the 8th drowned while fleeing across the Euphrates River. Shortly after these events, Terviz’s ninth child, Sirarpi, the grandmother of Joe Manganiello, was born. The actor talks about his great grandmother from Kharberd with great excitement and admiration.

The guests were welcomed and escorted to the Armenian Genocide Memorial by Edita Gzoyan, Director of the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute.

Joe Manganiello also toured the Armenian Genocide Museum, where he got acquainted with the permanent and temporary exhibitions accompanied by the deputy director of the Museum Lusine Abrahamyan, and left a note in the memorial book of honored guests. Expressing gratitude for the visit, Lusine Abrahamyan presented books on the Armenian Genocide to the honored guest.

At the end of the visit, Joe Manganiello planted a fir tree in the Memory Alley in memory of his great-grandmother Terviz Rose Darakjian and grandmother Sirarpi, fulfilling a long-held dream.

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électrique. » Inscrit depuis 2014 au patrimoine im-



matériel de l'humanité par l'UNESCO, il sert de base à plusieurs spécialités de la cuisine arménienne.

C'est tout près de l'opéra, dans le restaurant Tun Lahmajo que nous allons goûter l'un des plats préférés des Arméniens, surnommé la « pizza arménienne ». La lahmajjo est constituée d'un pain lavash garni de boeuf haché, de persil et de tomates. Préparée et cuite au four à mesure dans le four à pain dans l'entrée de l'établissement, elle est présentée avec un quartier de citron qu'on presse sur sa « pizza ». On la roule ensuite pour la déguster avec les doigts. Un délice.

Et si le temps vous manque (ou que vous êtes sans un sou), rien de tel que les jengyalov hats, qu'on trouve dans le restaurant du même nom. À peine assis et sans même avoir commandé, on reçoit de la serveuse une assiette remplie de légumes verts hachés roulés dans du pain lavash. Ce plat est originaire du Haut-Karabakh (Artsakh), une ancienne enclave armé-

enne qui était majoritairement peuplée d'Arméniens jusqu'à l'offensive azerbaïdjanaise de septembre dernier. Il s'accompagne de tan, une boisson typiquement arménienne composée d'eau, de sel et de matzoun (le yogourt arménien).

Photo: Aurélia CrémouxLes « jengyalov hats » du restaurant du même nom

Pour une cuisine plus élaborée,

direction le restaurant Lavash, un lieu bien connu des Erevanais, situé dans l'un des quartiers les plus centraux de la capitale. Créé en 2017 d'après le concept de la ferme à la table, il y propose des produits essentiellement issus de l'agriculture locale. Sur le menu, en plus des classiques khorovats (grillades arméniennes), on trouve des tolmas, faits d'une farce à base de viande hachée de boeuf et de riz, enroulée dans des feuilles de vigne. On peut aussi y déguster l'un des plats quotidiens préférés des Arméniens, la harissa. Composée de blé moulu et de viande effilochée, elle est souvent servie avec du beurre. « Elle doit cuire toute la nuit, m'explique Margarita Gaboyan, une Arménienne rencontrée lors de mon séjour. Si elle est bien préparée, chaque bouchée fond dans la bouche. »

La gastronomie de la capitale est à l'image de sa population. Depuis 2011, de nombreux Arméniens de la diaspora ont fui la guerre de Syrie, en venant s'établir sur la terre de leurs ancêtres. Parmi eux, plusieurs ont ouvert des établissements dans lesquels on peut goûter leur cuisine



aux touches du Moyen-Orient.

Au restaurant Anteb, l'un des plus réputés pour la cuisine arménienne occidentale, nous savourons les fameux manti, des sortes de raviolis fourrés avec un mélange de viande, d'ail, d'oignons, d'épices et d'herbes. Ici, ils sont servis sous forme de soupe avec du bouillon de poulet, une cuillerée de matzoun et du

sumac sur le dessus.

Photo: Aurélia CrémouxLes « manti » du restaurant Anteb

Pas d'inquiétude, les becs sucrés ne seront pas non plus en reste dans la capitale arménienne. Direction le Kond, l'un des plus anciens quartiers de la ville, conservé depuis le XVII^e siècle, pour déguster un café accompagné d'une pâtisserie composée de farine, du beurre et de sucre : la gata. « Nous avons décidé d'ouvrir un café au rez-de-chaussée de notre maison, me confie la fille des propriétaires de l'un des rares établissements des environs, le Kond st 253. Plusieurs visiteurs voulaient boire un café et manger une gata de manière authentique dans le quartier. »

Photo: Aurélia CrémouxLa « gata » du café Kond st 253

« Tu dois absolument goûter les ponchiki », m'assure-t-on. Et pour cela, direction le café haut en couleur, le Grand Candy Ponchikanots. Ce dessert, très populaire pendant l'époque soviétique, se situe entre les pancakes et les beignets. Fourrés à la vanille, au chocolat, au caramel ou à la confiture d'abricot, ils sont si fondants

qu'ils se dévorent sans faim.

À manger... et à boire

Il y a quelques années, des archéologues ont découvert la plus ancienne fabrique de vin connue à ce jour, datant de 6100 ans, dans une caverne en Arménie. Depuis, la tradition viticole perdure. Alors même si l'Arménie se déguste... elle se boit aussi.

Vous pourrez vous faire une idée de la richesse oenologique arménienne si vous allez faire un tour en direction de la rue Martiros Saryan, où se situent de nombreux bars à vin. Chez In Vino, qui, en plus d'être un bar, est également un magasin et un club pour les amateurs de vin : on en trouve plus de 2000, dont près d'une soixantaine sont arméniens.

One should shoot what they want and not follow market trends - Atom Egoyan

Canadian-Armenian director Atom Egoyan, whose film "Seven Veils" opened the Yerevan Golden Apricot International Film Festival, emphasizes that the film symbolizes desire, longing, and strength.

Egoyan directed the opera "Salome" in 1990, and the film "Seven Veils," which premiered at the Toronto Film Festival in 2023, is based on the opera "Salome." The film offers a gripping and vivid reimagining of Richard Strauss' opera "Salome," with actress Amanda Seyfried shining as a theater director striving to bring her own interpretation of the biblical story of Salome to life.

During a meeting with movie fans on July 8 as part of the "Golden Apricot" festival, the director stated that the production chain, which began in 1996, had a highly provocative aspect and had a significant impact on societies, being influenced by society as well.

"While shooting the film I wanted to go in a completely different direction. I wanted the main character to be a woman and created a whole story around that. I didn't want it to be just my personal story. The main heroine is actually a fictional character, but I was able to feel her, to see that the character is a woman striving for peace. I created a new interpretation. What was on the stage was different," said Egoyan.

At the age of 20-25, Atom Egoyan was primarily involved in theatre, but when he began directing films, he gradually moved away from the theatre. He admits that he couldn't live solely through theatre art.

"The dilemma often leads an artist in another direction, where inspiring elements can be found, where you can create a world governed by definite laws. This becomes your theme," he said.

According to him, the main character in the film "Seven Veils" has her own ideas;



she aspires to direct opera, wants to recall her traumatic past, but when she reflects on the past, this trauma intensifies.

"From the very beginning, we didn't expect the film to take this path. The return to the past is perhaps connected to my Armenian roots. Sometimes life leads us in strange ways. The present is awful, tragic, and we want to make our present better and see what happened a few years ago, and we get disappointed. What do we need? We want to communicate. This is what interests me and what I wanted to show," emphasized Egoyan.

He believes that sometimes the film market can be disappointing, but one should make what they want, rather than follow market trends.

"If you want to talk about trauma, do it; if you want to talk about loneliness, you should do it," said the director.

Returning to the movie "Seven Veils," Egoyan stressed that everyone asked why the main character doesn't do anything terrible at the end of the movie.

"People wanted it. Perhaps I could have allowed the heroine to take a terrible step,

and it would have turned into a horror film, but I will never do such a thing," he said.

Earlier, at a briefing with journalists, the director spoke about the "Golden Apricot" and noted that it is an exceptional festival for the country. Even in difficult times, it is able to gather prominent figures of culture and preserve cultural heritage.

The 21st Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival (GAIFF) will take place on 7-14 July this year.

Golden Apricot will present to the public films from different countries of the world in the competition sections, as well as films from top film festivals (Cannes, Berlin, etc.).

This year, the festival hosted such prominent guests as: two-time Oscar-winning director Alexander Payne, director Tarsem Singh, who is considered the ambassador of Parajanov all over the world, Atom Egoyan, Armenia's ambassador to the world of cinema, world-famous actor of theater and cinema, Oscar-winner Kevin Spacey.

This year's festival will place a special focus on the 100th birth anniversaries of renowned French-Armenian singer Charles Aznavour and filmmaker Sergei Parajanov.

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 AZAD Pharma AG AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG			
Switzerland AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG Durachweg 15 CH-8200 Schaffhausen Phone No: +41 52 632 09 10 Fax: +41 52 632 09 11 AZAD Pharma AG Bahnhofstrasse 9 CH-3125 Toffen Phone No: +41 31 810 40 10 Fax: +41 31 810 40 11	Canada AZAD Fine Chemicals Ltd. 1895 - 55th Avenue Dorval, Qc H9P 1G9 Phone No: +1 514 636 19 99 Fax: +1 514 636 75 55 Atlit Inc. 16 Westminster Ave., Suite 306A Montreal, Qc H4X 1Z1 Phone No: +1 514 369 25 91 Fax: +1 514 369 81 67	China Hangzhou Representative Office of AZAD Pharmaceutical Ingredients AG Room 801-087, Lixin Plaza, #102 Moganshan Road 310051 -Hangzhou China Phone +86-571-8761 5336 Mobile +86-153-5505-0903 Fax: +86-571- 8895 8963	Germany AZAD Pharma GmbH Fritz-Reichle-Ring 6a DE-78315 Radolfzell Phone No: +49 7732 939101510 Fax: +49 7732 9391016 Armenia AZAD Pharmaceuticals LLC Vanahovit 8, Proshian Asharak Ave., Kotayk Maiz Phone No: +374 93 40 40 62 Fax: +374 93 40 34 40



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 Chief Correspondent: **GOURGEN KHAZHAKIAN**
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E-mail: contact@nt.am
 URL: www.nt.am

Address in Armenia:
 28 Isahakian Str., Yerevan, 0009, RA
 Tel.: (+374 60) 35-11-22 (+374 60) 35-11-24

Address in France: Masion De L'Armenie,
 Paris 17e-95, Bld. Gouvion, France
 Tel.: (+33) 01 43 59 66 72

Address in USA: 1146 E. Lexington Dr., #112,
 Glendale, CA, USA, 91206
 Tel.: +1 (818) 646 10 72

Հասցե՝ Իսահակյան 28, Երևան, ՀՀ, 0009