



Dear Readers!

As the year comes to a close, we extend our sincere gratitude for your trust and engagement with our publication. This holiday season, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a successful New Year. May 2025 bring clarity, strength, and progress to all your endeavors.

We remain committed to delivering accurate and reliable information, staying true to our principles, and serving you with integrity in the coming year.

Respectfully,
 The "Noyan Tapan" Team

Defense Minister Papikyan meets with French Minister for the Armed Forces



On December 17, on the sidelines of his working visit to the French Republic, the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia Suren Papikyan met with the Minister for the Armed Forces of the French Republic Sébastien Lecornu.

According to a press release issued by the Armenian Defense Ministry, the meeting was preceded by an official welcoming ceremony featuring a guard of honor. The national anthems of both countries were performed.

At the outset of the meeting, Minister of Defence Suren Papikyan expressed his condolences for the victims of the cyclone in the Indian Ocean, on the French overseas island of Mayotte, and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

During the meeting, the current state of cooperation between Armenia and France in the defence sector was discussed.

Suren Papikyan underscored the importance of the steady implementation of previously reached agreements with Sébastien Lecornu, as well as the significance of new agreements to be achieved during this meeting.

Both parties reaffirmed that the cooperation between Armenia and France is set on long-term institutional basis.

Minister for the Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu confirmed France's commitment to further developing bilateral defence cooperation.

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Armenian Defense Minister meets with French president Macron's chief military adviser

On December 16, during his visit to France, the Minister of Defence of Armenia Suren Papikyan had a meeting with General Fabien Mandon, the Military Adviser and Chief of the Military Staff of the President of France.

Armenian Ambassador to France

Arman Khachatryan also attended the meeting.

The discussion centered on topics related to Armenia-France defense cooperation, according to a readout issued by the defense ministry. Comprehensive discussions were held on various areas of

cooperation, including military education, training programs, advisory support, and military-technical issues.

Additionally, regional and international security issues were addressed.

Both sides exchanged their views and approaches on these topics.

Armenia and Greece set to sign protocol, opening new opportunities in bilateral relations

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Paruyr Hovhannisyan received a delegation led by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece and Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Industrial and Scientific-Technical Cooperation between Armenia and Greece, Konstantinos (Costas) Fragkogiannis.

According to Armenia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, welcoming the delegation, Deputy Minister Hovhannisyan expressed satisfaction that, after a pause due to objective reasons, the 6th session of the Armenian-Greek Joint Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Industrial, and Scientific-Technical Cooperation will convene in Yerevan on December 17.

He emphasized that the governments



The signing of the protocol is expected to open new opportunities for enhancing the comprehensive and high-level relations between the two countries. It will also serve as an important economic platform for expanding and strengthening Armenian-Greek business ties.

According to the source, the parties expressed mutual satisfaction with the current state of warm and

of the two friendly countries show the necessary political will and commitment to developing interstate relations in various fields. The two sides noted that during their online and in-person meetings, constructive discussions were held between the delegations, resulting in the formation of a joint protocol. This protocol is set to be signed at the conclusion of tomorrow's joint session.

trusting Armenia-Greece relations, which are built on mutual respect and trust. They emphasized the importance of expanding cooperation in areas of shared interest and making joint efforts to fully realize the existing potential. Reference was also made to both bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Armenian Foreign Ministry hosts official reception for heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Armenia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted an official reception attended by the heads of Diplomatic Missions accredited in Armenia, the ministry has said in a press release.

Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Davit Karapetyan delivered welcoming remarks, extending his congratulations to the guests on the occasion of the forthcoming Christmas

and New Year celebrations.

"This is a time to reflect on what we have achieved, and look ahead to our objectives for the future. The values that will guide us toward a better future are - integrity, teamwork, and a strong commitment to peace and progress. We need to work together to tackle countless issues we face, whether they relate to security,

sustainable development, climate change, or the promotion of human rights and justice," he said, congratulating everyone on the upcoming New Year.

"May it be filled with joy, love, and great achievements," said Karapetyan.

The reception featured a ceremonial lighting of the Foreign Ministry Christmas tree.

Armenia values France's efforts aimed at establishment of peace in the region: Pashinyan congratulates Bayrou on appointment

Armenia values France's consistent efforts aimed at establishing security and just and lasting peace in the region, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in a congratulatory message to newly-appointed Prime Minister of France François Bayrou.

"I am confident that your great professional and political experience and abilities will be put to use for the benefit of friendly France and the French people," PM Pashinyan said.

"I am convinced that our governments will continue close cooperation to expand the special relations established between



our two states, based on the strong friendship of the Armenian and French peoples. I express my firm willingness to take steps with joint efforts to develop strategic cooperation between Armenia and France,

particularly within the framework of economic cooperation," he noted.

"We greatly value France's consistent efforts aimed at establishing security and just and lasting peace in our region. We highly appreciate your continued attention to issues related to Armenia and the solidarity shown to the Armenian people," the Prime Minister added.

"It would be a great honor to host you on an official visit to Armenia in the near future to hold substantive discussions on the further development of Armenian-French cooperation," Nikol Pashinyan said.

Armenian Speaker of Parliament meets with President of India

A delegation led by Speaker of Parliament Alen Simonyan on December 16 met with President of India Droupadi Murmu during an official visit to India.

During the meeting both sides were pleased to note the high dynamics of development of bilateral relations and added that despite the broad cooperation there is still untapped potential in the ties, according to a readout issued by the Armenian

parliament's press service.

President Droupadi Murmu thanked Speaker Simonyan for the official visit to India and expressed confidence that it will open a new chapter in bilateral relations.

Speaker Simonyan thanked for the meeting and stressed that India is an important partner for Armenia.

Issues of bilateral interest were discussed, including issues pertaining to

the peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan.



Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process is 'an area of vital importance' to Biden Administration, says U.S. State Department

The Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process continues to be an area of vital importance to the Biden administration and to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, a spokesperson for the State Department has said.

Asked at a press briefing whether the State Department is frustrated that its efforts in the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalizations haven't yet given results, Principal Deputy Spokesperson for the United States

Department of State Vedant Patel said, "We try not to focus on frustrations and just continuing to do the work. Secretary Blinken has long said, in a lot of areas, that it's the so many days of just hard work until the – something comes to fruition. I probably really butchered that quote, so you'll forgive me. But this continues to be an area of vital importance to this administration and to the Secretary, and

we'll continue to work at it till our last day in office."



French Foreign Minister calls on EU to strengthen ties with Armenia

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot has expressed support for Yerevan and urged the European Union to strengthen its relations with Armenia.

“I will call on the European Union to

develop its relations with this country, to which France is deeply committed, so that we can provide Armenia with the support it rightfully expects,” the French Foreign Minister stated during a briefing with journalists.



Aliyev points out unresolved issues in peace talks with Armenia

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has pointed out two of the 17 terms of the would-be peace treaty with Armenia that have yet to be resolved.

“We’ve actually had big progress in terms of the peace treaty,” Aliyev told RIA Novosti. “15 of the 17 articles of the document are agreed upon, and two are left. One of them pertains to refraining from

filing international lawsuits against each other; the other is about not deploying representatives of other countries on our border.”

Armenian FM Ararat Mirzoyan had also recently announced that 15 of the 17 articles have been agreed upon.

In an earlier interview, PM Nikol Pashinyan had addressed Azerbaijan’s

demands on the withdrawal of the European Union’s civilian monitoring mission in Armenia. The Armenian PM said he had offered Azerbaijan to regulate the matter in terms of the parts of the border that have already been delimited. Those parts, according to the PM, do not require monitoring. The offer has so far remained unanswered.

Armenia-Greece-Cyprus trilateral defense consultations held in Athens



On December 19, Armenia-Greece bilateral and Armenia-Greece-Cyprus trilateral defense consultations were held in Athens, the ministry of defense said in a press release.

Armenia was represented by a delegation led by Levon Aivazyan, the Head of the Defense Policy and International Cooperation Department of the Ministry

of Defense.

Throughout the consultations, the work carried out in the direction of defense cooperation in 2024 and the tasks for 2025 were discussed.

The parties recorded that the cooperation has made significant progress in terms of both capacity and content and has included important areas that require

more long-term, systematic work.

Issues of introducing new approaches and standards in the defense sphere were also discussed. Levon Aivazyan introduced to his colleagues the process of transformation of the Armenian military and highlighted the contribution of the Greek and Cypriot partners, especially in the training of various branches of the Armenian Armed Forces, military education, military exercises and training, exchange of experience, advisory support and other directions.

The latest regional and international military-political developments were also touched upon.

The parties highlighted the importance of holding regular defense consultations.

The consultations concluded with the signing of the Armenia-Greece bilateral and Armenia-Greece-Cyprus trilateral defense cooperation programs for 2025, which include dozens of events in numerous spheres of the vital activity of the Armed Forces.

Defense Minister Suren Papikyan discusses defense cooperation with French Senate members



On December 17, within the framework of the working visit to the French

Republic, Defense Minister of the Republic of Armenia Suren Papikyan met with the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Armed Services of the French Senate, Cédric Perrin, and several members of the Senate, Defense Minister Papikyan has said in a post on Facebook.

According to the post, during the meeting, they discussed issues on bilateral defense cooperation.

“I emphasized the high level of

cooperation between the two countries and underscored the prospects for further development, highlighting that the achievements have been made possible due to the Senate’s continuous support.

In turn, Cédric Perrin reaffirmed the importance of the Senate’s support in advancing cooperation in the defence sector.

The meeting also addressed issues related to regional security threats,” reads the post.

Elon Musk’s stars over Armenia: Forbes weights in on Starlink’s “transformative force”

The skies above Yerevan might soon host more than just stars as Elon Musk’s Starlink is set to start operating in Armenia after receiving a license from the country’s regulatory body.

Starlink’s satellite-based service could be a transformative force in Armenia’s regions, where high-speed broadband remains a distant dream, Craig S. Smith writes in an article published by [Forbes](#).

The Armenian Public Services Regulatory Commission on Friday [approved](#) applications by STARLINK AM LLC for an exploitation license to operate a public electronic communication network and a permit to use radio frequencies.

“One of the most significant aspects of Starlink’s arrival is its potential impact on rural and underserved areas. Armenia’s mountainous geography has long been an obstacle to consistent internet



connectivity. In regions where high-speed broadband remains a distant dream, Starlink’s satellite-based service could be a transformative force. With high-speed, reliable internet, rural communities will have unprecedented access to online education, telemedicine, and digital commerce – opportunities that were once limited to urban centers,” the author says.

Besides, he says, Starlink would ensure Armenia’s internet connectivity

during conflicts with its neighbors, particularly Azerbaijan, with which it has had military tensions, especially over Nagorno-Karabakh.

According to Forbes, Starlink’s arrival offers Armenia a tool to enhance its independence, both digitally and economically.

“Will Armenia fully embrace this opportunity and navigate the complexities that come with it? The journey is underway, and with recent regulatory approvals and the commencement of testing, the timeline for Starlink’s operational launch in Armenia is accelerating. The skies above Yerevan might soon host more than just stars; they could be the new arteries of connectivity linking a nation—from its remotest villages to the bustling streets of the capital—to the boundless expanse of the digital world,” Craig S. Smith writes.

Defense Ministry seeks to replace militia system with local defense forces

The Defense Ministry has presented a bill to parliament on replacing the current militia system with voluntary local defense forces.

The local defense forces will be subordinate to the army corps commander. The forces will be included in the military bases under the given army corps command

as support units.

Citizens who are listed as Group 2 reservists or have been withdrawn from military registries are entitled to enlist to the local defense forces through their regional enlistment offices. The enlistment contract does not amount to a military service contract, deputy defense minister

Arman Sargsyan told lawmakers during a committee hearing.

The purpose of the new system is to organize and regulate the training and involvement process of citizens, which will mostly maintain the conditions under the law on militia.

Armenia and Greece plan to boost economic ties

Armenia and Greece plan to boost economic relations, increase trade turnover and mutually offer investment opportunities to businesses.

On December 17, Yerevan hosted the 6th session of the Armenia-Greece Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Industrial and Scientific-Technical Cooperation.

Armenian Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan, who co-chairs the commission, said that the trade-economic cooperation between the two countries is based on the historical and cultural ties between Armenia and Greece.

The session was co-chaired by Greek Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Konstantinos Fragkogiannis.

This year, trade turnover between the two countries (January-October) amounted to 44,7 million dollars, a decrease of 14,3%.

Papoyan said the EU sanctions against Russia and the lifting of GSP+ have had negative impact.

“Our goal is to have sustainable growth, a continuous growth in Armenia-Greece



trade turnover, both in exports and imports,” Papoyan said.

Despite mutual investments, the minister said the volume of mutual capital in each other’s countries is far from sufficient.

“It is time to boost our relationship economically. We would want the Greek capital to expand in Armenia, which would be mutually beneficial for our economies,” the minister said.

Papoyan said that Armenia-EU partnership is Armenia’s priority. He said that the development of economic ties with Greece is part of the exports diversification

policy. He said that the Crossroads of Peace project can transform the divided region into a powerful hub of economic cooperation.

Fragkogiannis said that both countries want to deepen and strengthen their relationship.

“Armenia and Greece have created strong relations based on common values and historical similarities,” he said. “We have a common desire to deepen and strengthen our relationship.”

The Greek official further added, “We are one of the fastest growing economies in Europe. Greece is very favorable for foreign investments. And we would like our business community to have broader involvement in the trade with Armenia and investments.”

In case of Armenia choosing a pro-EU policy Greece would fully support it, he said.

The Greek Deputy FM said that his country always stands by Armenia.

The sides discussed cooperation in various areas, such as high technologies, industry, tourism and others.

Armenia’s trade within EEU surges above \$11 billion in ten months of 2024



Trade turnover between Armenia and its fellow EEU member states already exceeded \$11 billion in the ten months of

2024, deputy minister of economy Narek Hovakimyan has said.

“This is a very good result. The main exports are wines, brandy, agricultural products, as well as industrial and tech products,” Hovakimyan said at a session of the parliamentary committee on regional and Eurasian integration affairs.

Textile industry is also important, the sector has grown and is demanded

especially in the Russian market.

Joining the EEU gave Armenia the opportunity to enter a market of 150,000,000 consumers, which created new possibilities for local producers, exporters and various branches of the economy.

Hovakimyan said that Armenian exports to EEU member states grew from the \$300 million of 2015 to \$3,4 billion in 2023.

Armenia and Hungary to sign economic cooperation agreement

The Cabinet has approved the signing of an economic cooperation agreement with Hungary.

The agreement was approved during the Cabinet meeting on Thursday.

It envisages the expansion of bilateral economic ties between Armenia and Hungary aimed at the development of mutually beneficial cooperation.

The agreement allows the development

of cooperation in trade, pharmaceuticals, tourism, energy, transport, agriculture, forestry, research and innovation, environmental protection and water resource management.

Other areas of mutual interest will also be included in the cooperation.

The agreement envisages promotion of bilateral trade-economic cooperation, creation of an intergovernmental economic commission between the two countries to organize and encourage mutual economic

programs and create new business opportunities to fully utilize the potential of the two economies.



World Bank rolls out new Armenia Public Finance Review

World Bank country manager for Armenia Carolin Geginat presented the Armenia Public Finance Review Enhancing Fiscal Policy Efficiency during an official presentation on December 17.

According to the report, fairer taxes and investments in quality education and learning outcomes can help Armenia in achieving its targets in revenues, education and sustainable development.

“The public finance review is one of our main knowledge products. The World Bank prefers to call itself a bank of knowledge, because we like not only to give money, but knowledge, thus, one of such tools, such as the Armenian public finance review, is a very important tool that we provide to the stakeholders. States use these tools to learn, to get informed about the experience of other countries and make decisions also based on studies conducted through our independent tools,” Geginat said.

“The government of Armenia adopted an ambitious five-year program (2021–2026) to support inclusive growth by various means. The program is built on six pillars, one of which focuses on human capital development and envisages: (i) providing affordable, high-quality health-care services and introducing universal health insurance in Armenia, where out-of-pocket expenditures are among the highest in the world; (ii) improving the coverage and targeting of social assistance programs as well as increasing pensions; and (iii) improving education outcomes by modernizing the curriculum, upgrading infrastructure, and strengthening the links between education and the labor market. vi. Realizing this ambitious program



requires boosting revenue collection as well as improving spending efficiency and service delivery outcomes. In this context, it is important to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the fiscal system, as well as its ability to support broader developmental objectives tied to the country’s economic plans,” reads the 2024 review.

The review notes that Armenia has a reasonable tax to GDP ratio that has increased in recent years and which the government plans to raise further. Thanks to tax policy and administration reforms, revenue collection increased from an average of around 21.2 percent between 2014 and 2019 to an average of 23.5 percent over the last three years (2021–2023). The government’s Five-Year Plan (2021–2026) set a tax to GDP target of at least 25 percent by 2026 and aims to improve the competitiveness of the business environment through tax policy reforms.

Armenia can improve the efficiency, equity, and sustainability of its tax system through a revenue-positive tax policy reform package, it added.

In terms of education, the review notes that despite high enrollment rates in general education within Armenia, there is room to improve learning outcomes.

“Armenia can improve its educational outcomes even at the current level

of expenditures by enhancing spending efficiency. A cross-country data envelope analysis (DEA) suggests that while the efficiency of public spending on education in Armenia is better than that of its regional neighbors, it remains below the efficiency frontier. Armenia could increase its learning-adjusted years of schooling by 14 percent with its current expenditure levels, which would translate to

a substantial increase in educational outcomes. After accounting for school size, location, and per student expenditures, the results show that the average school in Armenia has an efficiency score of 0.53, while schools in the 20th and 80th percentile have efficiency scores of 0.29 and 0.75, respectively. This large variation in technical efficiency within Armenia suggests that improvements can be achieved with the current level of school expenditures,” the review stated.

The review recommends that pre-primary education coverage and systemic inefficiencies should be addressed; The sustainable implementation of the new curriculum reform will help to enhance learning outcomes; Improvements in the national student assessment system and school funding formula need to address the education outcome challenges; The introduction of school networks will help address some of the inefficiencies in small schools; Improving teachers’ salaries and investing in the professional development of teachers will help make the teaching profession more attractive; Enrollment in both vocational and higher education can be expanded through targeted interventions, improved financial aid programs, and ensuring the connection with labor market needs.

If Azerbaijan doesn't have intentions to attack Armenia the likelihood of escalation in the region is zero – PM Pashinyan responds to Aliyev

Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan has given an interview to Armenpress.

Below is the Q&A.

Armenpress: Mr. Prime Minister, in an interview with a Russian media outlet, the Azerbaijani President confirmed that 15 of the 17 articles of the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty have been agreed upon, and one of the unresolved issues pertains to the non-deployment of third countries' forces along the border, and the other to the withdrawal of lawsuits against each other in international courts. What is the stance of the Republic of Armenia in this regard?

Prime Minister Pashinyan: We continue to be constructively engaged in the discussions around the peace treaty with Azerbaijan, and we have conveyed proposals on the two outstanding articles of the peace treaty to Azerbaijan for more than a month now, and we haven't yet had a response. We propose the article about the non-deployment of the forces of third countries to cover the delimited parts of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, and this is logical, because in those parts the risk of escalation is significantly decreasing if not minimizing. Therefore, after the complete delimitation, there won't be the need for the presence of a third force in any part of the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, and the Republic of Armenia is proposing this logic. Regarding the withdrawal of lawsuits filed against each other, when a peace treaty is signed this is logical, thus, the idea is acceptable for us. There are two nuances here: one of them is that there must be an understandable prospect for bilaterally resolving the individual humanitarian issues currently under discussion in international courts, and secondly, it must be clear that after withdrawing the disputes in international platforms regarding other issues the sides shall not put forward the same issues in the bilateral relations agenda and make them a source of lasting escalations.

Armenpress: What do you mean?

Prime Minister Pashinyan: I mean that not only shall we abandon the

resolution of disputes in international courts, but the disputes themselves. We are ready to take that path. At this phase we are searching for solutions also in terms of individual humanitarian matters.

Armenpress: In the same interview, the Azerbaijani President once again voiced the matter of the change of Armenian Constitution, once again claiming that it contains territorial demands against Azerbaijan.

Prime Minister Pashinyan: I've had several occasions to address that topic, and I find it necessary to emphasize that if this is a sincere concern expressed by Azerbaijan, all grounds exist to consider these concerns dispelled. Why? Because the allegations that the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia contains territorial demands against Azerbaijan are based on the argument that the preamble of our Constitution contains a general reference to the Declaration of Independence, which in turn mentions Nagorno-Karabakh. In its 26 September 2024 ruling, the Constitutional Court of Armenia recorded that the reference to the Declaration of Independence in the preamble of the Constitution relates exclusively to those articles of the declaration that have gained literal stipulation in the articles of the Constitution. There is neither direct nor indirect mention of Nagorno-Karabakh in any article of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia. If we were to accept the content of the Constitution the way Azerbaijan interprets it, then a question would arise, why didn't Karabakh participate in the 1995 Constitutional Referendum, why didn't polling stations open there and why didn't the people vote on the Constitution. The same can be said about the subsequent presidential and parliamentary elections in Armenia. Besides, if the Azerbaijani interpretation of the Armenian Constitution were to be accurate, then the recognition of our brothers and sisters from Karabakh as refugees by Armenia would have been impossible.

Armenpress: You had said that Armenia has concerns that the Constitution of Azerbaijan itself contains territorial demands against Armenia.

Prime Minister Pashinyan: Indeed,

and this concern is based on the fact that the preamble of the Azerbaijani Constitution contains a reference to the Constitutional Act adopted by the Azerbaijani Parliament on 18 October 1991. In turn, the Constitutional Act refers to the Declaration of Independence of the First Republic of Azerbaijan adopted on 28 May 1918, which records that the First Republic of Azerbaijan includes Eastern and Southern Transcaucasia. In November 1919, the Republic of Azerbaijan presented to the Entente its administrative map, according to which, Azerbaijan included the entirety of the provinces of Syunik and Vayots Dzor of Armenia, as well as parts of the provinces of Ararat, Armavir, Gegharkunik, Tavush, Lori and Shirak of Armenia, some 60 percent of the territory of the Republic of Armenia. Thus, the Constitution of Azerbaijan contains territorial demands against the Republic of Armenia. But we are not raising an issue of changing the Constitution of Azerbaijan for two reasons, first of all such an issue would bring the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process into a deadlock, and secondly, the agreed-upon part of the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty contains an article which stipulates that the parties cannot refer to their internal legislation to justify the failure of implementation of the peace treaty. Another article of the agreed-upon part of the peace treaty says that the parties recognize each other's territorial integrity, do not have territorial demands against each other and are bound to not make such demands in the future.

Armenpress: You mean that the concerns about the Constitution must not be the reason for not signing the peace treaty, but that the signing of the peace treaty itself will dispel these concerns?

Prime Minister Pashinyan: Definitely. And if we approach the matter from the viewpoint of the legislation of the Republic of Armenia, by our laws the peace treaty must be ratified in the National Assembly after the signing. Before that, the government must submit the treaty to the Constitutional Court to verify its compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia. If the Constitutional Court

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decides that the text of the peace treaty does not comply with the Constitution, although such a development is less likely after the 26 September 2024 decision, it would turn out that Azerbaijan's arguments in this matter were correct and Armenia would have to make a choice between some articles of the Constitution and the peace treaty. But if the Constitutional Court decided that the text of the peace treaty complies with the Constitution of Armenia, it will pass the ratification process in our parliament. And according to paragraph 3 of article 5 of the Armenian Constitution, in case of conflict between the norms of international treaties ratified by the Republic of Armenia and those of laws, the norms of international treaties shall apply. Thus, after ratification in parliament, the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty will gain superior legal force against laws and other normative legal acts of Armenia, and the topic of territorial demands will be closed forever. The same would happen in Azerbaijan. Meaning, it is the signing of the peace treaty that will practically dispel the concerns of both Armenia and Azerbaijan, including in relation to the constitutions.

Armenpress: And what is Armenia's stance over the idea to disband the OSCE Minsk Group?

Prime Minister Pashinyan: Constructive. We understand the stance that if there is no conflict what's the meaning of the existence of a format dealing with the conflict resolution. But we also want to be convinced that Azerbaijan is approaching this issue in this same logic, and for instance, that its motive under developing the narrative of the so-called Western Azerbaijan isn't about engaging in aggressive policy against the territory of the Republic of Armenia.

Armenpress: But Azerbaijan says that by doing so it is not making any territorial demands against Armenia, and that it is a matter of the refugees' right to return and is calling upon the government of Armenia to respond to this right.

Prime Minister Pashinyan: It is obvious that official Baku, with its narrative of the so-called Western Azerbaijan, wants to materialize its territorial demands against the Republic of Armenia, which, as I showed above, is recorded in Azerbaijan's

constitution. If that's not the case, and if we are wrong in our perceptions, then by saying Western Azerbaijan one must understand the regions of Gazakh, Tovuz, Aghstafa, Gadabay, Dashkesan, Kelbajar, Lachin, Kubatlu and Zangelan of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Therefore, the return of the people there is the internal matter of Azerbaijan, and the government of Armenia has nothing to do or discuss here, besides the matters that it is already discussing with Azerbaijan. I mean the establishment of normal relations that would ensure, among others, the security of Azerbaijan's western and Armenia's eastern borders.

Armenpress: Azerbaijan is accusing Armenia of acquiring non-defensive weapons and says that Armenia will not withstand an arms race with it.

Prime Minister Pashinyan: Armenia is not engaged in an arms race with any country, we are acquiring armaments exclusively for defending Armenia's borders and territorial integrity, meaning for defensive goals, and our goals are transparent. We are told that defensive weapons must be bought for defensive purposes. But it is impossible to organize defense only with defensive weapons. For instance, if Armenia were to have highly modern anti-air and electronic warfare measures, how would it defend itself in case of a land attack? Of course with artillery, of course with missiles, of course with other strike measures. Azerbaijan is also acquiring non-defensive weapons, does it mean that they are engaged in revanchist policy?

Armenpress: Azerbaijan is overall attempting to make the arms acquisition of Armenia a topic on the agenda.

Prime Minister Pashinyan: According to all international norms, the Republic of Armenia has the right to have armed forces and an obligation to protect its own citizens, including from possible foreign threats. The army reforms are our legitimate right. Is this a threat for Azerbaijan? No. Because we have clearly recognized and recognize the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan in the territory of the Soviet Azerbaijan and we expect that Azerbaijan, like us, without leaving room for misinterpretations, will recognize the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia, in accordance with our agreements, and will refrain from the policy of threats. Threatening statements

are made from Azerbaijan to the Republic of Armenia practically every day. In such conditions our reaction even gets internal criticism, because we say that we don't even have an objective to militarily return the over 200 square kilometers of our sovereign territory that is currently under occupation, because the institutional solutions reached in the delimitation issue enable us to resolve this issue in a peaceful, negotiated way. In this context we even offered Azerbaijan to create a bilateral mechanism of mutual arms control. But Azerbaijan hasn't responded so far, while the difference of the military budgets of Armenia and Azerbaijan is threefold, in Azerbaijan's favor. Accusing us of acquiring armaments in such conditions is not fair, to say the least.

Armenpress: And how would you assess the risk of renewed escalation in the region?

Prime Minister Pashinyan: I can guarantee that Armenia has no intention, goals or plans to attack or engage in any provocative actions against Azerbaijan, and that it will not take that path. If Azerbaijan also doesn't have intentions to attack Armenia, then the likelihood of escalation in the region is zero.

Mr. Prime Minister, will the delimitation process go on? If yes, in which section?

Prime Minister Pashinyan: The regulations of the delimitation commissions are ratified in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, which means that the delimitation process must continue. I think the delimitation commissions will meet soon to discuss in which section the delimitation shall continue. We are ready for constructive work in this matter as well.

Armenpress: And what about the issue of regional connections. Azerbaijan continues to develop its narrative of a so-called corridor.

Prime Minister Pashinyan: We assess that we have found a solution on how to reopen railway connection for it to be fully acceptable for both Armenia and Azerbaijan. And we have conveyed the offer of this solution in a written form to Azerbaijan and we are waiting for their positive response. When this reaction happens, it will be necessary to swiftly sign an agreement and start the construction of the railway.

In Syria's current situation, supporting democratic forces is essential - MEP

Regime change in Syria was the desire of its people, but given the current situation, one should not be naive; it is essential to support the country's democratic forces, believes Evin Incir, a Swedish MEP.

In an interview with Armenpress Brussels correspondent, Ms.Incir also addressed Turkey's destabilizing role in Syria, the future of Syria's Armenian, Kurdish, and other communities, Azerbaijan's ongoing threats against Armenia, and the reasons behind the EU's inability to act effectively.

According to experts, the American dream became a reality at the instigation of Turkey - the Assad regime no longer exists, for Russia this is considered as a political defeat. How do you assess the current situation and how do you imagine the status of minorities - ordinary Christian, Armenian, Kurdish communities?

I would say that it is actually the dream of the Syrian people rather than the American dream, even if they might also be satisfied. It is the Syrian people—all the people in the country—who have managed to get rid of the heinous dictatorship of the Assad regime. Now, we need to ensure that the democratic forces in the country get the support they need. Turkey's unlawful actions right now in Syria, with the help of its extremist partners in SNA, must be put to an end and the territorial integrity and sovereignty must be respected. Israel's unlawful actions must also stop.

I do not believe in HTS either for one second. Looking into their history, it is an extremist organization, and I am worried about what can come if the right forces are not receiving support. There is a risk that Afghanistan and Iran will be repeated in Syria. Extremist parties often promise inclusion and democracy and then refuse to deliver. So, the Western world and the



international community should not be naive. There is one partner in the region—and in Syria—that has delivered consistently through the years: the North and East Syrian Autonomous region.

They need the support they have unfortunately lacked over the years, even though the Kurds, Christians, and many other groups living in northern Syria have been sacrificing their lives in the fight against ISIS.

You mentioned HTS. They had been recognized as a terrorist organization in some countries. However, its actions and statements are acceptable to many superpowers today. Do they really change or does this a real politic?

I think it's good that Assad is gone, but we shouldn't be naive about who some of the main actors in Syria are right now. We heard similar rhetoric from Khomeini during the Iranian revolution, from the Taliban in Afghanistan, and now from HTS, which comes from Al-Qaeda. These extremist organizations know what to say and when to say it, but they never deliver on their promises.

That's why I emphasize the importance of not being naive regarding developments

in the region. While we celebrate Assad's departure, the next step must be ensuring a truly democratic and inclusive Syria—one that respects all people's rights, including the

majority Arabs and minority groups. During the years, minority and women's rights, have been neglected. Without inclusiveness and equality, there isn't a true democracy.

Turkey is trying to play a role in all existing conflicts, to maintain good relations on all fronts. How do you assess Turkey's current foreign policy? Especially given Erdogan's statement that Turkey has no territorial claims in Syria but will continue fighting against the Kurds?

It's very evident that Erdogan does not respect Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The Kurdish people for example have always been part of Syria's history and will be part of the future. Erdogan's mission has consistently been to eliminate the Kurds because he fears their autonomy in Syria will influence the Kurds in the Turkish part and that they also will demand autonomy.

Furthermore, there is misinformation

claiming that the Kurds in Syria come from Turkish territories, which is not true. Most Syrian Kurds have been there for generations. Alongside Christians and Armenians, they have often lived in the region longer than the majority population. Then, of course, some Kurds had moved from northern Kurdistan to eastern to Western to South, etc because of the oppression.

Erdogan's actions—such as supporting SNA and taking over parts of Syria—clearly show his ambitions, despite his words to the contrary. Because otherwise their support for SNA to take over bigger and bigger parts of Syria would not have happened.

A few days ago, after a meeting with the Turkish Foreign Minister, the EU High Representative wrote that Turkey is an important strategic partner for the EU. How are such statements received in the Council of Europe?

It looks different in different groups here in the European Parliament, as it does in all parliaments. But I would say that Europe is doing a big strategic, if you want to call it so, but also say a big general mistake when not daring to criticize Turkey. Many far-right and center-right politicians are hesitant due to fears of migration, linked to the EU-Turkey migration agreement. To ensure that people are not forcibly displaced, the best way is to end conflicts, not stay silent against oppressors.

Turkey's actions create conflicts and force more people to leave their homes, and their families. Yet, the European Commission and several Member States have acted in contradiction to their interests. The EU should focus on ending conflicts rather than indirectly encouraging despotism. Ensuring stability should be a shared interest—not just for the European Union, but for all people—because nobody wants to be displaced. Majority of people wants to stay where they are. My parents were forced to leave Turkey

because of the political oppression in

Turkey during the 80s beginning of the 90s, which in a way still persists.

Another displaced population is the Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh and the developments in Syria, if not directly, then indirectly relate to the South Caucasus, where developments do not seem promising these days either. Azerbaijan continues its anti-Armenian rhetoric, policy and threats. The negotiations have not yet led to the signing of a peace treaty. How is all this perceived at the European level?

The EU has soft power through trade agreements and cooperation, but it has failed to use it effectively due to disagreements among Member States. One of the biggest problems is the lack of unanimity between the Member States. Azerbaijan, for example, is laundering Russian gas and oil while conflicts persist. Turkey indeed plays a role in many contexts of situations. But the question is what kind of role, and unfortunately in all the contexts that I can see until now, it's only been a bad role.

Turkey, too, has played a detrimental role in Nagorno-Karabakh, Syria, and elsewhere. Despite this, the EU has failed to address Erdogan decisively. Instead, fear seems to dominate decision-making.

How confident do you think the new composition of the European Commission is in the context of the current challenges?

I see issues with the new High Representative's limited experience, which focuses mainly on Russia and Ukraine. While addressing Russian aggression against Ukraine is essential, the EU must also be a global actor capable of addressing other conflicts, including the South Caucasus and the Middle East.

Unfortunately, until now I have not really seen the new High Representative deliver solutions. She has a lot to learn, but at the same time, the world is not stopping to

develop in one way or the other, because we or our representative needs time to understand the context.

The President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced a phone call with Erdogan regarding Syria and plans to visit Turkey next week. This delay in response shows a worrying lack of urgency. Since everything is right now happening per minute, to wait a week from now, could mean we'll have another Middle East.

Last but not least, now that Sweden too is a member of NATO, do you think that fact has increased Sweden's security? What is Sweden's public opinion regarding Russia's war on Ukraine, especially that it was this war that triggered Sweden's membership in NATO?

Most Swedes feel that unity among countries enhances security. However, Turkey remains a problematic NATO member that doesn't respect agreements. 23 out of 27 of

the EU Member States are a member of NATO. I think that those 23 countries could play a significant role within the NATO if they jointly put pressure on Turkey. That is possible but hasn't been exercised effectively.

Do you want to add something?

Yes, I believe the future of Syria will especially affect minorities and women. The situation in one country can easily spill over and destabilize the entire region and the EU needs to recognize these connections to respond effectively. Russia and Turkey use these created opportunities to their advantage, which is of course not to our advantage in the sense of respecting international law and human rights. EU must start acting.

Published by Armenpress, original at <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1207575>

European Parliament condemns human rights breaches in Azerbaijan, calls for release of Armenian prisoners



In its plenary session on December 19, the European Parliament adopted the resolution on “The Continued repression of civil society and independent media in Azerbaijan and the cases of Dr Gubad Ibadoghlu, Anar Mammadli, Kamran Mammadli, Rufat Safarov and Meydan TV” with 434 votes in favor, 30 against, and 89 abstentions. The vote was preceded by a parliamentary debate on the subject on 18 December.

Members of the European Parliament strongly condemn the repression of press freedom and the crackdown on dissent by the Aliyev regime and call on the EU executive to enact targeted sanctions against Azerbaijani officials violating human rights and suspending the 2022 Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic Partnership in the Field of Energy, further insisting that Azerbaijan must “unconditionally release and drop all charges against human rights defenders, journalists, political and other

activists prosecuted under fabricated and politically motivated charges.”

The European Parliament strongly condemns the ongoing repression of civil society, independent media, and political opposition in Azerbaijan. The resolution highlights the escalating crackdown since 2023, particularly intensified around the COP29 summit, and calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners. The resolution further highlights the routine violation of prisoners’ human rights, including inhumane detention conditions, torture, and targeted harassment of female political prisoners.

Crucially, the resolution mentions the 23 Armenian POWs “including leaders of former Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and calls for their immediate release along with all political prisoners in the country.

During the parliamentary debate on Wednesday, several MEPs raised the issue of the Armenian hostages as well as the policies of aggression and violations of human rights directed at the indigenous Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, with MEP Bert-Jan Ruissen calling for a “change in [the] approach” of the European Parliament and increased sanctions against Azerbaijan particularly referencing the “max expulsion of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh”.

MEP Marina Mesure stated that “Human rights are systematically violated, Azerbaijan is one of the worst countries when it comes to press freedom, HRW has also documented torture and degrading treatment against prisoners who were detained after the operations in Nagorno-Karabakh” and decried a “Policy of repression against the Armenian neighbors.”

Commenting on the resolution, the president of the EAFJD, Kaspar Karampetian, noted: “This resolution highlights the necessity for the EU Executive to enact comprehensive and effective measures to dissuade the Aliyev regime from its policies of repression and injustice”

He further stated “The increasing crackdown on opposition figures and journalists and the inhumane conditions under which the political prisoners, including the former leaders of the Nagorno-Karabakh republic and other falsely imprisoned Armenians are detained, represents a violation of the fundamental principles and values of the European Union. The EAFJD is committed to ensure that these values, evident in the will of the EP with this resolution, are defended and we will continue to highlight the international principles of press freedom, justice and human rights in our actions.”

USAID’s Samantha Power reiterates strong partnership between US and Armenia

On December 17, the Embassy of Armenia in Washington, D.C. hosted a special fireside chat on USAID’s lasting impact in strengthening Armenia’s economic resilience and democratic governance. The event featured USAID Administrator Samantha Power, alongside Ambassador Lilit Makunts.

Ambassador Makunts opened the event by welcoming the distinguished guests, representatives of the Armenian American community and acknowledging the importance of USAID’s contributions to Armenia’s development. She expressed deep appreciation for Administrator Power’s leadership in advancing democratic values, human rights, and international development, emphasizing her commitment to Armenia’s growth.

In her remarks Administrator Power reiterated the strong partnership between the United States and Armenia, emphasizing the importance of continued collaboration on issues such as energy security, climate change, and food security.

The fireside chat was moderated by Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch, a distinguished diplomat who served as the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia from 2008 to 2011.

The fireside chat was followed by Q&A session.

During the Q&A Ambassador Makunts mentioned that the bilateral relations are anchored first of all on the shared values of the two countries. She expressed conviction that there are a number of issues

where the interests of the Republic of Armenia and the United States strategically align, one of them being peace in the South Caucasus. The Ambassador also spoke about the role of the Diaspora in strengthening Armenia-U.S. relations.

Ambassador Makunts closed the event by reaffirming Armenia’s commitment to further enhancing its partnership with the United States. She expressed optimism about the continued cooperation in areas of mutual interest and about further strengthening this relationship with the incoming administration. The event, with the participation of representatives from U.S. government, Congress, think tanks, Armenian community, concluded with a reception.

In Iranian culture, Armenians are considered honest and sincere - Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts



The Minister of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of the Republic of Armenia, Zhanna Andreasyan, received a delegation led by the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri.

The meeting was also attended by Mehdi Sobhani, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Armenia.

Minister Andreasyan welcomed Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, expressing confidence that the visit would contribute to the development of cooperation between

Armenia and Iran and the implementation of new initiatives in the fields of culture, cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts.

“Cooperation in the field of culture occupies a special place in the interstate relations between Armenia and Iran. We are already collaborating in various areas, and the cooperation documents signed between the two countries will give impetus to the implementation of new, effective programs,” said Zhanna Andreasyan, emphasizing that the peoples of Armenia and Iran are committed to preserving common values. Minister Andreasyan highlighted the importance

of encouraging the joint work of cultural institutions and implementing new projects across various fields.

The Iranian Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts also emphasized the importance of strengthening cultural ties between the two peoples, noting that such cooperation would contribute to deepening relations in other sectors.

“In Iranian culture, the Armenian people are considered honest and sincere, and we are happy to cooperate with you in various fields,” said Minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri.

Regarding cooperation in the cultural sphere, the ministers discussed the possibility of holding cultural heritage days in Yerevan and Tehran, submitting a joint application to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, organizing exhibitions, and implementing joint programs in the museum sector. Special emphasis was placed on cooperation in the preservation and promotion of Armenian and Iranian cultural heritage, particularly in safeguarding monuments as important tourist sites.

The Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of the Islamic Republic of Iran arrived in Yerevan to participate in the 8th Ministerial Meeting of the “Ancient Civilizations” Forum, coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

Yerevan Mayor orders action plan for reduction of air pollution

Yerevan Mayor Tigran Avinyan has tasked city officials to develop a 4-year action plan to improve the Armenian capital’s air quality.

Speaking at a City Hall meeting on December 16, the mayor said city officials have clear objectives when it comes to reduction of man-made air pollution.

“I suggest we develop a four-year action plan on the measures that City Hall must take



to reduce air pollution. This plan must

include the simplest methods, such as tree planting and forestation, with concrete indicators, as well as some restrictions, for example the use of ageing vehicles in Yerevan, the ones that leave behind two kilometers of smoke,” Avinyan said.

He said the action plan must involve comprehensive steps and take into account the City Hall’s powers and possibilities.

City officials are tasked to present the plan in two months.

Legal team for Ruben Vardanyan condemns Azerbaijan's new spurious charges threatening life imprisonment



In an unprecedented escalation of its ongoing crackdown on dissent, Azerbaijani prosecutors have unveiled a new and enormous array of some 45 potential charges against unlawfully detained former State Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh Ruben Vardanyan, according to his legal team.

If convicted, Vardanyan faces the grim prospect of life imprisonment, his legal team said in a statement published by PRNewswire.

The legal team describes Vardanyan as a political prisoner.

The new charges presented against Ruben Vardanyan fall under 20 different articles of Azerbaijan's Criminal Code. "Illustrating the extent to which the regime is desperate to justify its ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh and illegal imprisonment of its former leaders, the fabricated evidence is presented in more than 25,000 pages across 100 volumes, all written in Azeri," reads the statement published by PRNewswire.

The alleged evidence is conveniently hidden both from Ruben and public view based on claims the charges relate to the "national security of Azerbaijan." The regime has, at the same time, refused to

provide copies of the alleged evidence to Vardanyan and counsel, who are currently only allowed to review these materials without a proper translation and at limited times. Their ability to take notes is also restricted due to "national security," further constraining Ruben and his counsel's extremely limited ability to prepare the defense for the trial.

"These charges represent a flagrant violation of Azerbaijan's obligations under international law," said Vardanyan's legal counsel, Jared Genser. "The laundry list of charges—a transparently brazen attempt to blame everything that the Azeri regime did in Nagorno-Karabakh on Ruben—in addition to Azerbaijan's refusal to provide and make public all of the charges and so-called evidence against Ruben for review, reaffirms that the charges are politically motivated and that the regime knows no objective observer would conclude there is any credible evidence to support its allegations. This approach is clearly designed for Aliyev to justify holding a secret trial before a tribunal that will be neither independent nor impartial."

Warning that the new charges signal an intensifying campaign by Aliyev to silence dissenting voices, the family of Ruben Vardanyan are calling on the democratic world to show that such flagrant violations cannot be tolerated anymore and to ensure international organizations and media are present during the trial.

"The most recent charges against my father, are a travesty of justice and retribution for the failures of COP29 upon an innocent scapegoat," said David

Vardanyan, son of Ruben Vardanyan. "Ruben Vardanyan was the State Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh for three months, where he sought to improve the livelihoods of its citizens through meaningful social programs. Sadly, he was rewarded with the threat of life imprisonment by one of the most corrupt regimes on earth. His arrest and these new fallacious charges are a symbol to all Armenians around the world that no one is safe. It has been over two years since our family has been able to see Ruben. We are afraid that we might not be able to see him again if the democratic world does not act to put an end to this non-sense."

While Vardanyan has already spent more than a year in illegal detention under Azerbaijan's regime, this latest escalation marks a troubling new low in President Ilham Aliyev's authoritarian rule. Freedom House currently gives Azerbaijan a "global freedom score" of seven out of one hundred, placing it behind countries such as Somalia, Myanmar, and Venezuela in measures of political and civil liberties. These latest developments underscore the systemic erosion of fundamental freedoms in Azerbaijan and highlight the regime's ongoing efforts to silence dissent and consolidate power.

Last September, armed forces of the Government of Azerbaijan invaded Nagorno-Karabakh, driving out the 120,000 Armenians of the region. During the flight of the refugees, Vardanyan and seven other former officials were arrested and face spurious and politically motivated charges.

Russia has clear political will to strengthen relationship with Armenia, says ambassador

Russia has clear political will to maintain and elevate its relationship with Armenia to a new level, according to Russian Ambassador to Armenia Sergey Kopyrkin.

"This forum is taking place at a very important period of time when it is important for Armenia and Russia to not only maintain everything that unites us, but also elevate cooperation to a new level and conform it to new demands. I can say that

there is such political will on the Russian side," Kopyrkin said at the 9th Armenian-Russian Healthcare Forum.

He said that the healthcare sector has a special place in the overall complex of bilateral ties.

The envoy said the partnership in healthcare will be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the Armenian-Russian intergovernmental commission.



High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs meets with French-Armenian youth in Paris



High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan, during a visit to France, met with French-Armenian youth at the Armenian Embassy. The meeting was initiated by Petros Asturyan and Silva Sahakyan, participants of the 2024-2025

Diaspora Youth Ambassador Program.

Armenian Ambassador to France Arman Khachatryan also attended the meeting.

Sinanyan presented the activities of his office and programs aimed at youth involvement. He also presented the upcoming 2025 Second National Youth Forum to be held in Armenia and other initiatives.

The participants of the meeting spoke about the programs and events in the Armenian community of France.

Possibilities of cooperation between the French-Armenian youth and the Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs were also discussed.

Tourism Committee to conduct aggressive marketing to promote Armenia across the world

The Tourism Committee of Armenia is set to start 2025 with a strategy of recording new achievements, the committee's newly appointed president Lusine Gevorgyan has said.

Gevorgyan told Armenpress that the committee is working in all directions.

"I've already met with representatives of the medical sector, we discussed issues in the medical tourism and spa tourism sectors.

We also met with representatives of guest homes and we discussed their winter season offers, particularly New Year holiday offers, so that our countrymen choose to spend their holidays here in Armenia," Gevorgyan said.

Legislative discussions are underway.

The law on tourism took effect September 1, and 28 related legislative acts must be adopted. 3 of the 28 have already been adopted.

Gevorgyan said she has met with representatives of tourism sector and



collected their issues of concern.

"Companies offering guest house services mostly complained about the inaccessibility of business loans," she said, adding that she has asked Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan to clarify the matter with banks and the tax authority.

"We have many objectives, first is the promotion of Armenia as a tourism destination all around the world. Next year I plan to contribute more money from our budget for this and conduct aggressive marketing in markets of our interest,"

Lusine Gevorgyan said.

The Tourism Committee has already developed the 2025-2029 strategy. The development of tourism clusters, implemented with the World Bank, is another priority program.

"It's about dividing the country into clusters and conducting targeted work. For example, at this moment we have seven selected clusters in various provinces, and we are now developing a

master plan in this regard with support from international donors and local consultative companies," Gevorgyan said.

"For example, we are studying the tourism potential of Dilijan, we are calculating the number of guests the hotels can accommodate, what kind of forums Dilijan can host, and what infrastructures are needed for Dilijan to become a business forum center," she added.

Such studies are underway in all clusters.

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The publisher: NT Holding LTD
Լրատվական գործունեություն իրականացնող՝
ՆՏ Հորիզոն ԲԻՐԸ

Ծավալը՝ 2.25 մամուլ, տպաքանակը՝ 1500
Circulation: 1500 print copies and
15600 copies by e-mail list in PDF format

Weekly Newspaper, Since May 4, 1993

President of the NT Media Holding:
TIGRAN HARUTYUNYAN
Editor-in-Chief of the Media Holding:
GAYANEH ARAKELYAN
Director of the weekly:
MARINA HARUTYUNYAN
Chief Correspondent: **GOURGEN KHAZHAKIAN**
Computer Design: **Ashot Khalapyan**

Համարի թող. պատ.՝ Մ.Հարությունյան

ISSN 1829-0604
Գրանցման վկայականի համարը՝
03ԱՑՑՑ368, տրված՝ 11.01.2013թ.
Registration certificate and the date:
273.110.00512, 15.12.1995

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