

## Our example may be inspiring for Armenia - Heads of Parliaments of European Countries share their path to European integration



When the Baltic countries began the process of European integration, their biggest supporters were their Northern European partners, who provided advice and encouragement. The Baltic countries also received this support during the process of joining NATO, Estonian Parliament Speaker Lauri Hussar said during a question-and-answer session following the discussion on “Together for Peace and Democracy” held in Yerevan.

“We tried to be the best students in Europe, adopting all the legislative acts. Sometimes we were even more conservative than the Pope. We were criticized a lot, but we made the best decision for ourselves, which helped us implement reforms and create a modern society, leaving the past behind. Our will was to be on the side of Europe and our allies. This can serve as an inspiring example for Armenia as well,” Hussar said.

The Deputy Speaker of the Danish Parliament, Karsten Hønge, noted that when countries choose the path of independence, great powers often find themselves perplexed because they do not know how to act.

“The great powers even tried to hinder the process of recognizing the independence of the Baltic states. The small countries of Northern Europe were the first to recognize the independence of the Baltic states, followed by the recognition from the great European powers. If we are courageous, we can support our partners. This can also serve as an inspiring example for Armenia,” said Hønge.

The Speaker of the Finnish Parliament, Jussi Halla-aho, added that they have the political will to support Armenia, which must focus on its future.

“It is essential to improve and enhance the internal resilience of society so that it becomes stronger. One way is to strengthen trust among citizens, as well as trust in the authorities. The system, in turn, must trust the citizens,” said Halla-aho.

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## Armenian Foreign Minister congratulates Marco on appointment as US Secretary of State

Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan has congratulated Marco Rubio on his appointment as United States Secretary of State.

“Warm congratulations to Marco Rubio on his appointment as Secretary of State! Armenia greatly appreciates its strategic



partnership with the United States, rooted in shared values & common interests. We eagerly anticipate strengthening our cooperation to promote security, democracy, & prosperity for both our nations,” FM Mirzoyan said in a post on X.

## Armenian, Iranian Deputy Foreign Ministers highlight mutual respect for foreign policy priorities

Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia Vahan Kostanyan was received in Tehran on January 20 by the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran Sayyid Abbas Araghchi.

The two officials discussed current political issues of mutual interest to their countries.

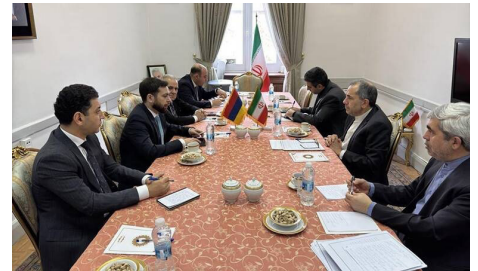
According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Deputy Foreign Minister Kostanyan also held a meeting with Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht Ravanchi. Both sides highlighted the high level of cooperation between Armenia and Iran across various fields.

During discussions on the ongoing political dialogue between the two nations, the importance of joint efforts to foster the continuous development of relations in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust was underscored. Both sides reaffirmed their respect for each other’s foreign policy priorities. Kostanyan emphasized that Armenia highly values Iran’s principled stance on the need to unconditionally respect the territorial integrity of Armenia and the inviolability of its borders.

The two parties also exchanged views on opportunities to deepen economic cooperation, with particular focus on ongoing and planned projects in the

infrastructure and energy sectors.

Deputy Minister Kostanyan briefed his Iranian counterparts on the latest developments in the Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization process, reiterating Armenia’s commitment to a peace agenda and its expectation of reciprocity from Azerbaijan.



## The Prime Minister receives high-level representatives of Northern European and Baltic Parliaments

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received high-level representatives of Northern European and Baltic parliaments.

The Prime Minister welcomed the visit of the Speakers and Deputy Speakers of the Parliaments to Armenia and noted that it is a good opportunity to discuss both the development of inter-parliamentary cooperation and issues of regional importance. Nikol Pashinyan noted that Armenia attaches great importance to active interaction and expansion of dialogue, which contributes to the strengthening of Armenia-European Union relations. The Prime Minister highlighted the support of EU countries in promoting democratic



reforms in Armenia and stressed the commitment of the Government of Armenia to effectively implementing the ambitious reform agenda.

The high representatives of the parliaments of Northern Europe and the Baltic

countries expressed their support for the development of Armenia-EU cooperation and noted their countries’ readiness to assist in the implementation of further reforms and strengthening of democracy in Armenia.

The interlocutors touched upon issues related to the Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process, the possibilities of unblocking regional transport communications. The European parliamentarians expressed their support for the Armenian Government’s “Crossroads of Peace” project and its principles, as well as the peace-oriented efforts of the Armenian side.

## Intelligence indicates banned methods used against Armenian prisoners in Azerbaijan to extort testimonies for escalation, warns PM

Armenia has intelligence data indicating that the Azerbaijani authorities are using banned psychoactive methods against the Armenian prisoners in order to extort narratives or testimonies aimed at inciting regional escalation, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has said.

Pashinyan was asked during an interview aired on Public Television to comment on allegations that his administration hasn't done much to release the Armenian prisoners in Baku because the detained former Karabakh officials are said to be his political opponents.

The Prime Minister strongly denied these allegations.

"I don't consider anyone there to be my



political opponent, and furthermore, we realize that what is happening there is not only seriously concerning but will be used and is used for inciting new escalation in the region. Moreover, we have intelligence data that banned psychoactive methods are being used against those individuals in

order to extort narratives and testimonies aimed at inciting regional escalation. We are deeply concerned over this process," Pashinyan said.

Commenting on the trial in Baku, he added, "That trial will be used against the Republic of Armenia, it is possible that through banned psychoactive methods they will extort from those individuals the kind of testimonies that will be used against the Republic of Armenia in the most various ways. We understand this issue very well and very deeply."

Pashinyan said the government is doing everything it can to resolve the matter.

## Armenian official attends Trump inaugural reception

Armenian Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Narek Mkrtychyan has attended the Newsmax Media inaugural reception at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium dedicated to the inauguration of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Mkrtychyan said he participated in the event in his capacity as foreign relations chief of the Civil Contract party.



In a post on social media, Mkrtychyan said he met with the new U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Newsmax Media CEO Christopher Ruddy, Patrick Orlando and other high-ranking officials and foreign dignitaries.

Armenian Ambassador to the U.S. Lilit Makunts also attended the reception.

## Withdrawal of Russian guards from Armenian borders with Turkiye and Iran 'possible', says deputy FM



Russian border guards currently patrolling Armenia's borders with Turkiye and Iran could eventually withdraw as a result of strengthening border security

capacity, the Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Paruyr Hovhannisyanyan has said.

A U.S. team specialized in customs and border security is set to visit Armenia in the coming weeks to collaborate with Armenian counterparts on enhancing border security capabilities after the signing of the Armenia-U.S. strategic partnership charter.

Asked to elaborate on increasing border security capacity, Hovhannisyanyan told reporters it is time for Armenia to be capable of protecting its borders on its own.

"It has always been done by a third country, we have to be able to finally control our border ourselves," he said.

This could result in Russian border guards withdrawing from the Armenian borders with Turkiye and Iran, the Deputy FM said when asked on the probability of such developments.

"Of course, ideally every country must be able to control its borders. And this assistance concerns the increase of our capacity through exchange of relevant experience," the Deputy FM said.

## Armenia highlights full implementation of CEPA with EU

Armenia attaches great importance to the complete implementation of the CEPA with the European Union, the Deputy Foreign Minister Paruyr Hovhannisyán has said.

Hovhannisyán made the remarks at a parliamentary committee hearing on the bill seeking to launch the process of EU integration in Armenia. He said the foreign ministry endorses the bill.

He said that Armenia attaches importance to the full implementation of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the EU, as well as its roadmap, by making intensive steps for both amending the roadmap and ensuring implementation of obligations assumed under the documents.

On January 9, the Cabinet endorsed the bill seeking to launch the process of EU integration. The bill, which is set to

be discussed in parliament, was initiated by several civic organizations through a petition which garnered enough votes to be considered as a bill by law.

Hovhannisyán said the bill is in line with the dynamics of partnership between Armenia and the EU as well as its member states and the European aspirations of the Armenian people.

“The political will to be closer to the EU was expressed in the Armenian Prime Minister’s speech in the European Parliament, which is also in line with the commitment to develop relations with the EU and its member states recorded in the government’s 2021-2026 program. In turn, the EU has expressed political support to the Armenian leadership,” Hovhannisyán said. The Deputy FM noted that the relations between Armenia and the EU have been developing, the political dialogue has

intensified significantly, cooperation has included security and defense and currently negotiations are underway around the new partnership agenda.

The new partnership agenda will define the priorities of cooperation and supplement the institutional circle of partnership under CEPA. The new agenda includes matters concerning democracy, human rights, good governance, freedom, mobility, economic and sectoral cooperation, trade and people-to-people contacts.

Hovhannisyán said that the institutional circle, intensity and unprecedented pace of development of the Armenia-EU relationship are already outlining Armenia’s foreign policy priority.

“Thus, the Armenian Foreign Ministry suggests endorsing the initiative on launching the process of Armenia’s accession to the EU,” the Deputy FM said.

## Simultaneous membership to EEU and EU incompatible, says petition initiator

Armenia cannot simultaneously be a member of both the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the European Union because the two organizations are incompatible, according to Artak Zeynalyán, a former lawmaker and former minister of justice.

Zeynalyán is one of the initiators of the petition seeking EU integration. The petition garnered sufficient votes to become a bill and will be debated in parliament.

Ahead of the debates the bill was discussed at the parliamentary committee on EU integration.

“If we are speaking theoretically about the Eurasian Economic Union, then Armenia cannot simultaneously be a member of the EU by being a member of another union. They are incompatible. And Armenia, as a sovereign state, an independent

country, can make a decision on both accession and suspension of its membership to intergovernmental organizations. It is a sovereign decision that can be done only through national referendum,” Zeynalyán said when asked by Hayastan faction MP Armen Gevorgyan to clarify the matter.

On January 9, the Cabinet endorsed the bill seeking to launch the process of EU integration. The bill, which is set to be discussed in parliament, was initiated by several civic organizations through a petition which garnered enough votes to be considered as a bill by law.

The bill will be debated in the plenary session after passing the committee hearing.

Artak Zeynalyán, the representative of the initiating group behind the petition, told lawmakers at the committee that the

purpose of passing the bill is to “enshrine the determination of the Armenian people and the will of its current government on joining the family of advanced, civilized, development humanity.”

He added that the adoption of the bill on starting the process of EU integration will contribute to the establishment of peace and stability in the region, diversification of the economy, increase of the quality of goods and services, among others.

Earlier on January 23, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyán indicated that the bill will highly likely pass parliament.

In earlier comments, PM Pashinyán said that his administration endorses the bill but reminded that a decision to join the EU can only be made through a referendum.

## U.S. Secretary of State, Turkish FM discuss Armenia-Azerbaijan

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has discussed Armenia-Azerbaijan normalization with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, the U.S. State Department has said.

In a readout, the State Department said Rubio and Fidan discussed the “importance of a durable and dignified peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.”

“Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan

Fidan yesterday to reaffirm the importance of U.S.-Türkiye relations, Türkiye’s role as a key NATO Ally, and our shared interests in the region. Secretary Rubio highlighted the need for an inclusive transition in Syria, ensuring that the new government prevents Syria from becoming a source for international terrorism, and denying foreign malign actors the opportunity to exploit Syria’s transition

for their own objectives. The Secretary and the Foreign Minister also discussed the importance of a durable and dignified peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Secretary also expressed his deepest condolences for the lives lost and those injured in the tragic hotel fire in Bolu,” the State Department said.

## Armenia not seeking “saviors” - FM details Armenia-U.S. Strategic Partnership Document

Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan has provided details about the Strategic Partnership Document signed between Armenia and the United States.

During a Parliamentary Q&A session with Cabinet members, the minister noted that the document aims to qualitatively improve bilateral relations and covers many areas of cooperation, from economic and security to democracy and defense.

Mirzoyan stated that this strategic partnership document elevates the level of Armenian-American relations.

“This is a very successful, multi-faceted, and promising document,” the minister emphasized.

He added that with this document, Armenia is not seeking “saviors” but aims to strengthen its positions through its own efforts.

Mirzoyan also addressed concerns that the document could negatively affect relations with Iran and Russia.

“I have returned from a working visit to Moscow, and the Deputy Foreign Minister from Tehran. We are in very close contact with our partners, we coordinate many issues, and we work in an atmosphere of mutual understanding,” the minister emphasized.

Mirzoyan urged not to overestimate or underestimate the importance of the document, stressing that it is simply an opportunity to deepen relations between Armenia and the United States, but not a military alliance.

The minister also discussed the background of the document, noting that there had previously been a strategic dialogue format between Armenia and the United

States, which facilitated regular contacts and work at the level of the relevant commission. However, according to Mirzoyan, there was a need to elevate relations to a new level.

“In the spring of 2023, we announced that we would work to elevate relations to the level of strategic partnership. And on January 14, 2024, we signed that document, which slightly changes the format of cooperation. We have indicated new directions, new spheres, and new opportunities,” Mirzoyan noted.

“We are a sovereign country, and all our decisions are guided exclusively by Armenia’s interests. All our partners who respect our sovereignty should approach our position with respect,” he concluded.

## Full-scale Azerbaijani offensive unlikely this year, Armenia’s foreign intelligence says

Armenia’s Foreign Intelligence Service says the likelihood of a large-scale attack on Armenia by the Azerbaijani side is not assessed a high. The conclusion is based on the analysis of various facts, information and phenomena summed up in its annual report on External Security Risks.

Meanwhile, the Intelligence Service says, in the absence of a peace agreement and interstate relations, the risk of local tensions and escalation on the border will remain a part of Azerbaijan’s policy of the threat of use of force. A potential guarantee for addressing this risk can be the smooth continuation of the delimitation and demarcation process, started in 2024.

“In this context, the task of our Service is to continuously assess whether Azerbaijan’s consistent development and financing of various harmful narratives against the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Armenia aim to “legitimize” its intention to use force against Armenia. Among



those narratives are so-called “Western Azerbaijan and Western Azerbaijanis”, “Armenia’s militarization”, “revanchism” and the “Zangezur corridor”, the report reads.

According to the report, the delays in the process of normalization of relations and peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan significantly increase the uncertainty about the real intention of Azerbaijan for establishing lasting peace. In general, the absence of a peace agreement and diplomatic relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan creates a real risk for keeping interstate relations tense, which can deteriorate under the influence of realignments or transformations of historical

alliances in the region.

“The risks of preserving tensions in relations are increased also by Azerbaijan’s aggressive official rhetoric, attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of Armenia, as well as Azerbaijan’s steps to impose its own unilateral demands in the negotiation process by adding various artificial topics. In 2025, the probability of continuous application of this toolkit remains high,” the Foreign Intelligence Service says.

“In 2025, Azerbaijan will maintain the pace of development of its own offensive military capabilities by decreasing the time between the high-level political decision to initiate a military action and the launch of a military action on the ground. Within this framework, Azerbaijan will continue working on the transition to more mobile units, training of their reserve, acquisition and import of new armaments, as well as upgrade of military infrastructure,” the reports emphasizes.

## China's Charge d' Affairs lauds growing ties with Armenia

2024 marked new results in the cooperation between Armenia and China, the Charge d' Affairs of China in Armenia Chen Ming has said.

"Our relationship continues to develop steadily, while political mutual trust continues to deepen," the official said at a Spring Festival reception at the Chinese embassy in Yerevan.

"Last year, within the framework of the BRICS summit, President Xi Jinping talked with Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, which further boosted the development of bilateral ties," Chen Ming said.

He emphasized that bilateral trade grew 38%, amounting to \$2,6 billion.

The Charge d' Affairs of China in

Armenia noted that the recently opened Urumqi-Yerevan flight has significantly simplified the movement of people between the two countries. "The number of Chinese tourists in Armenia continues to grow, and in yearend it surpassed 38,000, which is 60% more compared to the previous year," he said.

## PM Pashinyan, Swiss-Armenian businessman address progress of economic programs in Armenia

As part of his visit to Davos, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with Swiss-Armenian businessman and philanthropist Vahé Gabrache.

According to the Prime Minister's office, the discussion focused on the progress of economic programs implemented by Gabrache in Armenia. The Prime Minister highly appreciated the role of these programs in the country's development and reaffirmed the Government's readiness to support their effective

implementation.

Special attention was given to the initiative to establish a branch of the Swiss Lausanne Hotel Management School in Gyumri.

Pashinyan emphasized the program's significant importance for tourism development, enhancing Armenia's international competitiveness, and boosting the sector's attractiveness.

According to the statement issued by

the Prime Minister's office, the program's implementation will help improve the quality of education in hospitality management and ensure the training of specialists in line with international standards.

Swiss-Armenian businessman and philanthropist Vahé Gabrache thanked the Prime Minister for his support and cooperation, emphasizing his commitment to continuing active investment activities in Armenia.

## PM Pashinyan chairs consultations on regulation of crypto assets in Armenia

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan chaired consultations on the draft law aimed at regulating the crypto-assets.

In particular, discussions focused on the main provisions of the draft law, the advantages and risks in the sector, principles of regulation, and the types of services to be regulated. It was noted that the main goal of the draft law is to curb potential risks in the sector without inhibiting innovations. It was reported that the draft law was developed taking into account the international experience, namely, the European Union. According to the authors, the scope of regulation of the draft law will include the public offering of crypto-assets, services, and trade.

The participants of the consultation emphasized the importance of disclosing the necessary information in the case

of the sale of crypto-assets, noting that "access permission" will be considered mandatory for the provision of services.

Prime Minister Pashinyan emphasized the importance of regulating the sector and instructed to finalize the draft law as

a result of another discussion and submit it for approval by the Government. The Prime Minister noted that the law will be continuously improved in the future, as necessary.



## State Revenue Committee Chairman, Russian Ambassador discuss Upper Lars checkpoint

The Chairman of the State Revenue Committee Eduard Hakobyan hosted a delegation led by Sergey Kopyrkin, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to Armenia.

According to the State Revenue Committee, during the meeting, the Ambassador congratulated Hakobyan on his appointment and expressed hope for the further strengthening of cooperative relations between the two parties.

The Ambassador emphasized that

such cooperation would contribute to the economic development of both countries, within the framework of both bilateral relations and collaboration with the Eurasian Economic Union.

The interlocutors also addressed several issues related to customs and tax cooperation. Chairman Eduard Hakobyan highlighted the organization and implementation of a pilot program for using navigation seals during the transportation of goods between Armenia and Russia, agreed upon at the intergovernmental

commission meeting on economic issues held on December 20, 2024. Hakobyan also stressed the importance of developing a draft intergovernmental agreement on using navigation seals for road transportation.

The discussion also covered challenges at the “Upper Lars” border crossing, focusing on potential solutions and mechanisms for swift responses to emerging problems.

At the conclusion of the meeting, both parties reaffirmed their commitment to close cooperation.

## Pashinyan meets with Bloomberg European Director Constantin Cotzias

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with Bloomberg European Director Constantin Cotzias within the framework of the World Economic Forum.

According to the PM’s office, during the meeting, issues related to the development of Armenia’s economic and investment

environment, as well as the country’s positioning in the global economic system, were discussed.

Prime Minister Pashinyan presented the reforms implemented by the Armenian Government to improve the investment environment, ensure economic stability,

and promote regional cooperation.

Constantin Cotzias highly appreciated Armenia’s efforts to deepen international economic cooperation, emphasizing Bloomberg’s readiness to support the country to be present on international economic platforms.

## The Prime Minister meets with President of Goldman Sachs, one of the world’s leading investment banks



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met with Jared Cohen, President of Global Affairs of Goldman Sachs, one of the world’s leading investment banks, within the framework of the World Economic

Forum in Davos.

During the meeting, the parties discussed the possibilities of cooperation between the Government of Armenia and Goldman Sachs, as well as implementation

of investment programs

The prospects of cooperation in the direction of Armenia’s economic development, attraction of foreign investments, and promotion of innovative and technological projects were highlighted.

Prime Minister Pashinyan presented the reforms implemented by the Government of Armenia, which are aimed at creating a favorable investment environment and developing effective cooperation with international partners.

Jared Cohen highly appreciated Armenia’s role as a regional trade and economic crossroads, as well as the country’s potential in the global technology sector.

The parties expressed their willingness to continue bilateral work and look for opportunities for implementing joint projects.

## We have decided to adopt a balanced and balancing foreign policy, which means that we will try to balance relations with the EU, Russia and regional powers. Prime Minister



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan participated in a panel discussion on “How to Project Europe’s Power” within the framework of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

Nikol Pashinyan answered the moderator’s questions; we present the Q&A in full:

Question - Let me now move to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. Of course, Europe is more than the European Union, is wider, is made of countries that want to become member of the European Union, like is the case of Armenia, is also made of other countries that don’t want to join the European Union, like Switzerland or Norway, but still want closer ties with the European Union. You have recently tabled a bill to initiate the accession negotiations with the European Union. Tell us a little bit what this discussion means for a country like Armenia.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan - Thank you very much. In reality the initiative was by the civil society and they presented the draft law on starting the process of accession of Armenia to the European Union and our Government endorsed that, and there is a very high

probability that our parliament will adopt that law, which would mean that we legally start the process of getting more and more closer to that European Union.

Why do we want to be closer to the European Union? Because we are democracy. When you are democracy you want to be closer or in mainstream of democracy, because otherwise would be illogical. Now we work very closely with the European Union and to be honest during the last years tremendous changes and improvement happened in our relations with the European Union, for example we just started the negotiation on visa liberalization agreement, which was in our agenda for long years, but we were not able to start even the negotiations. And I hope we will be able to end it and sign as soon as possible.

Now Armenia is included in the program of European Peace Facility, which is also very important, we have now the European civilian mission in our country, which is also very important. We are in the process of implementing the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the European Union. We are working

very closely.

As far as economic ties are concerned, of course we want to be closer to the European Union economically as well, but on the other side we want to be economically closer with our regional countries as well, because unfortunately, from the beginning of our independence, we were in kind of economic isolation, because our borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan were and are closed.

To make change not only in our region, but also globally in terms of overcoming this supply chain shocks, we have put on the table our proposal, our project of “Crossroads of Peace”, which I hope is familiar to you. It is about making our regional transport communications more effective and to create new transport communications not only with Azerbaijan, but with Turkey as well, to deepen our cooperation with Georgia, with Iran, but it is also about the European Union, because when this project is implemented, we will have new chain routes through Armenia to European Union.

You know it is not just a matter of economy, it is also a very important security factor, because you just mentioned interdependence as a very important factor for overall stability and security. But of course this project will work only in case, or when we manage to create sustainable peace with Azerbaijan, which unfortunately is not the case now. We are working in that direction. Now we need to establish diplomatic relations with Turkey and we are working on this topic as well. Usually people ask whether I am optimistic or pessimistic on this matter. I must say I am neither optimistic, nor pessimistic, I am pragmatic, I just understand that we need to work until the task is solved. The main and I think most important thing is not to be derailed from

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page 8 ➡ the peace agenda, to concentrate on the goal and to continue working without giving up, without being frustrated. But for this of course we need to have the support of the international community and I hope this support will be delivered.

Question - Thank you Mr. Prime Minister. You reminded me of what my former boss in the European Commission Jacques Delors used to say, "You don't have to choose between being an optimist or a pessimist, you have to choose to be an activist".

The moment we live in is a geopolitical one where every player wants others to take sides. And you will be one of those whom everyone will say you have to be with me, and if you are not with me, you are against me. There is the US, there is obviously China, in your neighborhood there are players too, there is Russia, there is the Gulf countries, there is Europe. So how will you navigate this?

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan - You know that's why we decided to adopt balanced and balancing foreign policy, which means that we will try to create balance between our different relations with the European Union, with Russia, with our regional powers.

Our relations with Iran are very important, and I mentioned already we are trying to establish diplomatic relations



with Turkey, we are trying to reach a peace deal with Azerbaijan. Of course, it is not easy, but from the other side I don't think it is impossible. Because it could seem kind of strange, but we are suspiciously transparent with all our international partners, we are sharing with all our partners what we are doing with other partners.

You mentioned our decision to get closer with the European Union, but we are trying very intensively to share our position with Iran, we are trying to share very actively our position in Russia, and with all our partners. Because, you know, after all, Armenia is an independent country, and of course there are very many challenges and threats in this challenging time, but from the other side it is a huge time

of changes. Definitely and obviously the times of changes bring huge threats, but from the other side also huge opportunities. We are trying to manage threats and to use opportunities.

I think this is the only pragmatic way to go forward, but without forgetting about balances, because losing the balance could lead to very heavy consequences for security and stability, not only in terms of a country, but in terms of a region and in terms of global stability, because any instability in any region could start a process of chain process worldwide, even in small countries and regions. That's why I think to be balanced and not forgetting about the task of balancing is the most important thing.

## Prime Minister and Carnegie Endowment representatives discuss Armenia-Azerbaijan peace process

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received representatives of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Garo Paylan, Eugene Rumer and Thomas de Waal.

According to the Prime Minister's office, Pashinyan welcomed their visit to Armenia, expressed appreciation for the fund's interest in the region, and answered several questions.

The discussion focused on the peace

process between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the border delimitation process, the potential for unblocking regional communication channels, and, in this context, the Armenian government's "Crossroads of Peace" project.

They also discussed the normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations.

The source noted that other topics of international importance were also discussed.



## “If you attack Armenia, you attack democratic values.” Alen Simonyan



At the invitation of the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Alen Simonyan, delegations led by the presidents and vice-presidents of the parliaments of the Nordic-Baltic Eight cooperation format are in Armenia. On January 23, a panel discussion on the topic “Together for Peace and Democracy” was held with the participation of the delegates.

The Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Alen Simonyan, made an opening speech at the start of the expanded discussion. The Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia, Srбуhi Galyan, delivered a speech at the event. According to her, the panel discussion topic is consistent with the agenda of reforms being implemented in the Republic of Armenia, including in the justice sector. Speaking about democracy, the Minister presented the steps taken by the government to strengthen democratic values.

“Democracy is our society’s choice, which is indisputable and irrevocable. Therefore, democracy is also the choice of the state, and democracy is also a way of working for us, the government,” emphasized Srбуhi Galyan.

Justice Sector In the context of reforms, the rapporteur noted that in recent years, with the support of international partners, in particular, the European Union, the Council of Europe, and individual European countries, reforms have been implemented mainly in four areas: These are: the fight against corruption, the protection of human rights, the transformation of the judicial and legal sector, and the development of the penitentiary and probation sectors.

The Minister, emphasizing the

importance of holding such discussions, expressed hope that they will be continuous and contribute to the deepening of the relations established between our countries.

Sona Ghazaryan, a member of the RA NA and the Standing Committee on European Integration, coordinated the panel discussion. The discussions took place within the framework of democratic developments, reforms, and cooperation with the Nordic-Baltic Eight.

The discussions were attended by the Speaker of the RA NA, Alen Simonyan, the Speaker of the Estonian Riigikogu Lauri Hussar, the Speaker of the Latvian Saeima Daiga Mieriņa, the Speaker of the Finnish Eduskunta Jussi Halla-Aho, the Speaker of the Norwegian Storting Masud Gharahkhani, the Deputy Speaker of the Danish Folketing Karsten Hønge, Deputy Speaker of the Saeimas of Lithuania Juozas Olekas, and Deputy Speaker of the Riksdag of Sweden Kenneth Forslund touched upon the EU integration processes, the opportunities for democratic developments and access to the European market, the challenges of democracy and freedom of speech, the negative impact of disinformation flows in these processes and the consequences of authoritarianism.

“I believe democratic societies are more resilient and strong because people feel that they are the masters of their society,” said the Speaker of the Finnish Eduskunta.

“Democracy provides an opportunity to have a better society. Democracy is also important for us because the Armenian people have been deprived of democracy for a long time, and now protecting democracy means for us to establish and establish strong institutions,” Sona Ghazaryan noted. In this context, the issue of trust in democratic institutions was discussed.

Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia Alen Simonyan touched on democracy from a security perspective, noting that the most excellent security system for Armenia is to be a democratic state.

“If you attack Armenia, you attack a democratic state. If you attack Armenia, you attack democratic values,” Alen Simonyan expressed confidence.

The Speaker of the Parliament thanked his colleagues for their cooperation. According to Alen Simonyan, this visit will bring our country a new level of security.

The colleagues believed that democracy is a tool that helps strengthen security.

Cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Partnership was touched upon. In this context, the Deputy Speaker of the Swedish Riksdag expressed the opinion that the Eastern Partnership is a means to contribute to the EU and EU neighboring countries being able to improve the quality of life, the country’s well-being, help protect democracy, and pave the way for EU membership.

The President of the Estonian Riigikogu also highlighted the role of social networks in holding free elections.

“We need to protect democracy and be able to develop it in a truly resilient way,” he noted.

According to the deputy speaker of the Danish Folketing, a resilient society is necessary in the fight against disinformation.

“Freedom of speech is to criticize and be open to criticism. According to him, there is no need to make concessions regarding freedom of speech,” he noted.

The Speaker of the Finnish Eduskunta also touched on freedom of speech on social networks and the importance of protecting society from fake news.

“I believe that restricting freedom of speech on social networks will cause more harm to our societies,” he said.

Before the second part of the panel discussion, a video clip on the “Crossroads of Peace” project was presented. After that, representatives of non-governmental organizations and political parties participated in a question-and-answer format on the topic “South Caucasus Peace Agenda, Security Challenges, Cooperation with the Northern Europe-Baltic Countries Format.”

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia,

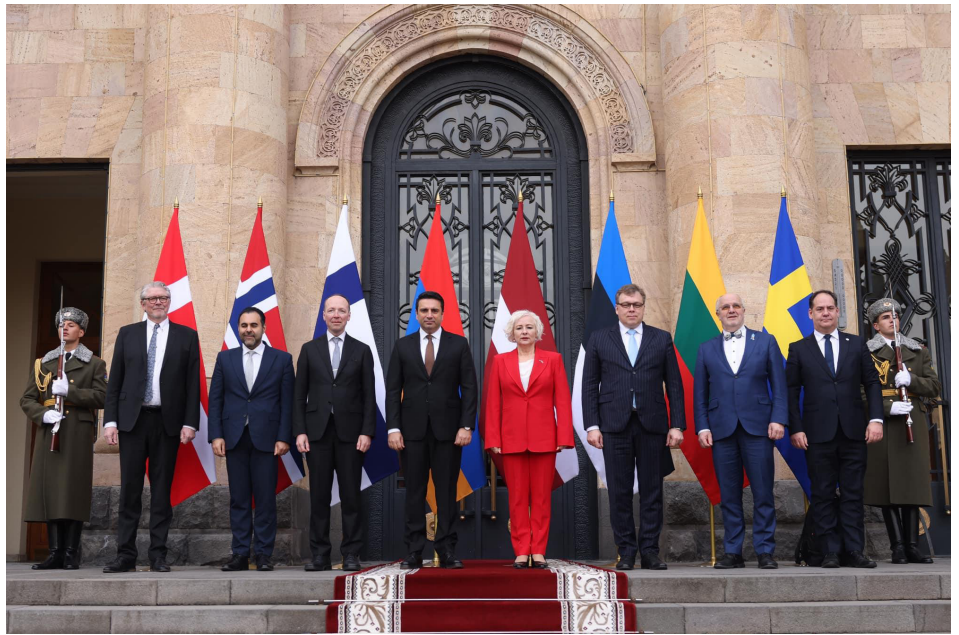
page 10 ➔ Ararat Mirzoyan, made a speech. He assured us that our country has undertaken to seek new opportunities to deepen cooperation with Nordic-Baltic countries.

Speaking about democracy and the pursuit of peace, the Minister stated that, judging by the election results, the citizens of the Republic of Armenia have overwhelmingly chosen democracy and peace.

“In the person of the Republic of Armenia, you have a partner who deeply believes in democracy and peace and will not stop doing everything and all possible steps to have a peaceful and democratic haven in the South Caucasus,” he emphasized. Minister.

Ararat Mirzoyan also touched upon the processes of signing a peace treaty with Azerbaijan and normalizing relations with Turkey.

At the end of the panel discussion, the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Alen Simonyan, and the heads of the delegations of the parliaments of the Nordic-Baltic



Eight cooperation format held a press conference.

According to the NA Speaker’s assessment, such a high-level visit will positively impact the Republic of Armenia’s initiative to start an era of peace in the region. An agreement was reached on deepening cooperation at the parliamentary level and

exchanging experience in several areas.

The partner delegates were willing to support deeper cooperation between Armenia and the European Union in all possible directions. They also highly appreciated Armenia’s achievements in democratic reforms.

## Armenian MP Arusyak Julhakyán elected PACE Vice-President

Armenian MP Arusyak Julhakyán has been elected Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Nineteen Vice-Presidents are elected annually at the beginning of an ordinary session and remain in office until the opening of the next session.

PACE winter session kicked off in Strasbourg on Monday, January 27, and will continue through January 31.

Debates on the humanitarian crisis concerning women, children and the hostages in Gaza; and on the need for a renewed rules-based international order – with a statement by Marko Bošnjak, President of the European Court of Human Rights – are among the highlights of the winter plenary session.

The Assembly will also hold urgent debates on the “Opinion on a draft convention for the protection of the profession of



lawyer”, “The urgent need for free and fair elections in Belarus” and the “European commitment to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine”.

The Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Luc Frieden, will address the parliamentarians and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade and Chair of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers, Xavier Bettel, will present his communication to the Assembly and take questions from members in the framework of

Luxembourg’s Presidency.

His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew will also address the Assembly, and Alain Berset, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, will present a communication to the parliamentarians.

The presentation of a report on multi-perspectivity in remembrance and history education will be followed by a ceremony to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp in the Chamber.

Other highlights on the agenda include the observation of the parliamentary elections in Georgia; immigration as one of the answers to Europe’s demographic ageing; the risks to human rights and the rule of law posed by mercenaries and private military companies; regulating content moderation on social media to safeguard freedom of expression; and age-based discrimination against older persons.

## 15 articles agreed upon, two remaining may take a time – FM on Armenia-Azerbaijan peace treaty

If there were the necessary political will, the process of completing a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan would take very little time, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said during the panel discussion titled “Together for Peace and Democracy” in Yerevan.

Mirzoyan informed attendees that Armenia is working to normalize relations with its immediate neighbors—Turkey and Azerbaijan—and presented the efforts being carried out in these two directions.

Addressing the progress on the peace treaty with Azerbaijan, the Foreign Minister stated that Armenia has worked extensively with Azerbaijan to finalize an agreed text for the peace treaty.

“At the moment, we have 15 agreed articles out of 17 under discussion. On the one hand, we can say that most of the work is done; we only have two articles



left to agree upon. On the other hand, of course, reaching agreement on these articles may still take a long time. The solution is clear—the necessary demonstration of political will by both countries. If there were the necessary political will, I assure you it would take us a very short time to complete the text,” said Mirzoyan.

Mirzoyan assured that Armenia has the necessary political will. He noted that Prime Minister Pashinyan had repeatedly

expressed the Republic of Armenia’s readiness to finalize the text of the agreement and sign it.

“Unfortunately, I cannot say that we see the same constructive approach and readiness from our neighbors. However, this is a process that has no alternative. Even the difficulties we encounter during the negotiations, and even the lack of constructiveness from our neighbors, cannot discourage us,” said Mirzoyan.

The Foreign Minister emphasized that democracy, freedom, and peace simply have no alternative. He informed the delegations of the Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) countries that the Republic of Armenia is a partner deeply committed to democracy and peace. He assured them that Armenia has not stopped, and will not stop, striving to create a peaceful and democratic haven in the South Caucasus.

## MEP calls for more EU aid to Armenian military

Member of the European Parliament François-Xavier Bellamy (France) has called for stronger EU support to Armenia.

“Unfortunately, the European Commission hasn’t been responding with the required determination to Azerbaijan’s conduct for a long time now,” the MEP told Armenpress when asked about Baku’s aggressive statements targeting the EU monitoring mission in Armenia.

“But the European Parliament, on the contrary, has been very unambiguous and decisive, including a few weeks before COP29, when it adopted a resolution approved by the majority, condemning those threats. We demand swift and clear responsive steps, especially towards Azerbaijani diplomacy,” the MEP added. He recalled the infamous case when the Azerbaijani ambassador in Brussels [threatened](#) MEPs for visiting the border to inspect the monitoring mission.

“Isn’t Azerbaijan’s and especially Mr. Aliyev’s rhetoric obvious today? Which, by the way, does not intimidate us. For us, the

main objective is for the European Commission to eventually act. And perhaps the main reason behind the passiveness of the Commission is to avoid the cancellation of the scandalous gas deal signed with the Baku regime,” the MEP said, emphasizing that Azerbaijan depends more on the EU than the other way around.

Calling for support to Armenia, he said, “I think Armenia is under attack today, because it is a democracy, and it is tied with the EU with its common civilizational legacy. This is not only a matter of credibility, but also security for the EU.”

“I believe that today, our duty, the EU’s duty must be not to make a deal with the Aliyev regime, but to work in a way that will make this regime, which is explicitly oppressing fundamental rights both in its territory and beyond, get weaker, isolated, and eventually fall,” the MEP said.

François-Xavier Bellamy also commended the courage displayed by the Armenian people by initiating the petition calling for joining the EU.



He said that the EU monitoring mission must continue its activities. “Furthermore, it is necessary to increase the assistance through the European Peace Facility, especially by providing weapons, equipment, transport and defensive devices to the Armenian Armed Forces. This would increase the country’s security and reflect Europe’s important geopolitical choice,” the MEP said.

Published by Armenpress, original at <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1210096>

## Indian Republic Day reception in Yerevan: Officials laud growing bilateral relationship



Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Mher Grigoryan and other officials attended India's Republic Day reception in Yerevan.

Nilakshi Saha Sinha, India's Ambassador to Armenia, said in her speech that on this day in 1950 India became a Republic by adopting its Constitution.

The Ambassador emphasized that 2024 was an important year for India's democracy: the country successfully held large-scale free and fair general elections, while the National Democratic Alliance led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was re-elected for a third consecutive time.

Among other achievements, the Ambassador emphasized that in 2024 India became the fourth country to successfully achieve an unmanned docking in space.

She said that the relationship between India and Armenia also developed in 2024.

"The bilateral relations between India and Armenia recorded progress and 2024 was marked with further strengthening of the ties, including regular political exchanges and parliamentary contacts, institutionalization of defense cooperation, expansion of trade, cultural and educational ties," the Ambassador said. She highlighted the first Yerevan Dialogue forum,

which was developed at the example of the Indian Raisina Dialogue and jointly organized by the Armenian foreign ministry and the Indian Observer Research Foundation (ORF). The second forum will take place this year.

The Indian Ambassador also highlighted the Armenian Speaker of Parliament Alen Simonyan's visit to the country.

Ambassador Nilakshi Saha Sinha emphasized that in 2024 Armenia became a full member of the International Solar Alliance. India and Armenia displayed unwavering support to each other in international platforms, she said.

"Cooperation, especially capacity building deserves special attention," the ambassador added. She said that the number of Armenian staffers and representatives of the civil society undergoing training in India has been growing, and a group of State Revenue Committee staffers has just completed a training course in India. "We are committed to the further expansion of our development partnership."

The Ambassador announced that the embassy will continue organizing Indian film festivals.

Ambassador Nilakshi Saha Sinha emphasized that Armenia is an important

partner for India in South Caucasus.

"We are glad to see that Armenia is consistently working to establish peace in the region. India, the country of Apostle of Peace Mahatma Gandhi, has always been in favor of peaceful dialogue for conflict resolution," the Indian Ambassador said.

Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigoryan, congratulating India on Republic Day, emphasized that the people of India wrote a new page in its centuries-old history by becoming a major democracy.

"The principles of justice, liberty, equality and brotherhood enshrined in the Constitution are the expression of will of the Indian people's struggle for independence. Armenia treats India's successes and achievements with affinity. Although our countries are geographically far from each other, we are united by the rich historical past, democratic values and deep respect for each other's cultural legacy," the Armenian Deputy PM said.

The bilateral ties are based on the centuries-old friendship between the two peoples, which in turn are based on mutual respect and trust. The comprehensive deepening and development of relations with India is among the Armenian foreign policy priorities.

"India continues to have important significance for Armenia as a significant actor in the international arena. Today we are pleased to note that in the past few years we succeeded in achieving a new milestone in our cooperation in all directions. We are determined to maximally utilize untapped potential in our bilateral ties and elevate the friendship between our peoples to a new qualitative level," Grigoryan said, adding that Yerevan attaches great importance to development of partnership with India as part of regional and global initiatives for the benefit of advancing universal goals of peace and security.

## World Bank Group to Support Job Creation and Resilience in Armenia

The World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors has endorsed a new five-year Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Armenia. The framework aims to reduce poverty and promote prosperity across the country by creating better job opportunities, improving human capital outcomes, and enhancing resilience, the World Bank Group said in a press release.

Armenia has made significant development gains in recent years. However, infrastructure gaps, low levels of domestic and foreign investment, and high levels of unemployment remain as key challenges to growth. Armenia's uneven education and health outcomes create limitations to the employability and productivity of the population. The social protection system requires reforms to better target and support vulnerable populations in times of crisis. Armenia also faces major risks from earthquakes and is increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The new strategy emphasizes the need for a stronger focus on building resilience to economic shocks, fragility and conflicts, natural hazards, and climate change. The proposed CPF will help Armenia in achieving:

- More and better jobs by ensuring better conditions for private sector growth and addressing skill gaps in the workforce.
- Stronger human capital by enhancing access to quality healthcare and improving social protection.

A resilient economy by advancing climate-adaptive economic activities and strengthening government and organizational systems, including public financial management, strategic planning, and public administration reform.

"This new partnership framework is a testament to our commitment to supporting Armenia in building a more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive economy," said Carolin Geginat, World Bank Country Manager for Armenia. "By focusing on job creation, human capital, and resilience, we aim to improve the lives of Armenians and help the country navigate future challenges."

The new strategy emphasizes mobilizing private capital through close collaboration across the World Bank Group's institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). IBRD expects to fund around \$1 billion over the next five years to promote reforms that would allow IFC and MIGA to attract more private capital.

IFC, with its focus on the private sector, plans to boost investments in infrastructure and real sectors, including through public-private partnerships (PPPs). Under the CPF, IFC will aim to support the private sector's contribution to sustainable infrastructure development, such as green energy, water, connectivity, and greener

transport. IFC will also work with financial institutions to broaden the reach of climate-focused products, support sustainable finance, promote green bonds, and advance digital transformation. IFC's investments are expected to range from \$500 million to \$700 million.

"We are committed to driving private sector growth in Armenia by leveraging our expertise in sustainable finance and mobilizing private capital," said Ivana Fernandes Duarte, IFC's Regional Manager for the South Caucasus. "Through our collaborative efforts under the new strategy, we aim to promote green development, ensuring long-term environmental and economic well-being for the country."

The World Bank is committed to continuing its support to Armenia in its development path for reducing poverty and creating a more prosperous and resilient future. Since 1992, the World Bank has provided around \$3 billion, including a current portfolio of around \$400 million in investment lending, grants, analytical work, and technical assistance, to Armenia from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), trust funds, and the International Development Association (IDA), to which Armenia also became a donor in 2023. IFC has invested nearly \$1.3 billion in Armenia, including mobilization, since it became a member country in 1995, and MIGA has investment nearly \$39 million.

## Armenia a perfect destination for a romantic winter getaway – Khaleej Times

While Armenia is often associated with its rich history and stunning landscapes, it is also a hidden gem for a romantic winter escape, *Khaleej Times* writes.

According to the source, this captivating country provides everything from exhilarating outdoor adventures to cozy, intimate retreats.

Armenia should be at the top of your list this winter season, *Khaleej Times* writes.

"For those seeking adventure, Armenia delivers an array of winter activities to match every thrill-seekers desires. Skiers and snowboarders can explore the scenic slopes of Tsaghkadzor, a charming resort

town nestled in the stunning Mount Teghenis, or head to the modern MyLer Mountain Resort near Yeghipatrush, just a short drive from the capital city, Yerevan. With breathtaking views of snow-capped peaks as your backdrop, you'll feel like you're in a winter wonderland," the article reads.

## Three new programs with €8.8 million funding launched in Armenia to support refugees

Funded by the European Union, three projects implemented by civil society organizations with a total budget of €8.8 million were launched in Armenia on January 23.

These projects aim to address the needs of refugees and host communities.

The launch event was attended by the Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador Vassilis Maragos, the Director for the Neighbourhood, Middle East, South-West, and Central Asia at DG ECHO Andreas Papaconstantinou and the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, Armen Ghazaryan.

EU Ambassador Vassilis Maragos noted that the EU's efforts in Armenia have already yielded significant results.

According to the Ambassador, the primary challenges to address are related to the inclusion of refugees. He emphasized that while considerable progress has been made, there remains room for improvement.

Mr. Maragos also shared that the budget support program, announced by the President of the European Commission in October 2023, has been fully allocated

to the Government of Armenia. He expressed satisfaction with the agreement reached for the next phase of the €25 million budget support program.

Welcoming the participants, Mr. Papaconstantinou highlighted the EU's responsibility in addressing the Nagorno-Karabakh refugee crisis amidst numerous challenges in the South Caucasus.

"It is a great honor to be here today, reflecting the European Union's continued strong commitment to supporting Armenia and those in need. My mission follows visits by numerous high-level EU representatives and underscores our shared determination to address both the immediate humanitarian needs and the long-term development of Armenia's disaster management system," he said.

Mr. Papaconstantinou also mentioned his meeting with Armenians displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh, recounting the trauma and suffering he witnessed: "When you talk to these individuals, they show courage and resilience, but they soon become emotional, recalling their losses and the complexity of their future after the collapse of their lives."

He emphasized the vital role of Armenia's vibrant civil society in supporting EU initiatives. Additionally, he stressed the need for a sensitive and tailored approach to ensure social cohesion: "Social cohesion is a primary goal and an essential condition for the successful integration of refugees. Our funding will complement the significant initiatives being launched today. These actions are part of a broader, long-term transition strategy."

*The projects, with a total budget of €8.8 million, aim to address the needs of refugees and host communities. Specifically: "Fostering Sustainable Livelihoods, Business Growth, and Employment Opportunities for Displaced and Host Communities" focuses on creating sustainable livelihoods, promoting business growth, and generating employment opportunities; "RISE – Armenia" aims to enhance local social protection systems, broaden access to social care and socio-rehabilitation services, and strengthen the capacity of social workers; "Human Rights for and with Refugees" seeks to protect the rights of refugees and ensure their access to essential resources.*

## Armenia, Greece keen to develop cooperation in culture and education

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia to Greece Tigran Mkrtychyan met with Maira Myrogianni, Secretary General for Greeks Abroad and Public Diplomacy.

Ms. Myrogianni shared warm memories of her visit to Yerevan in September within the framework of the Global Armenian Summit. The parties exchanged views on a number of issues of common interest. New ways of cooperation in the fields of culture and education were also discussed. Reference was made to initiatives aimed at developing academic ties



between Greek and Armenian universities and scientific institutions, promoting the Armenian language in Greece and the Greek language in Armenia.

Ambassador Mkrtychyan presented the

steps taken towards the above-mentioned issues, in particular highlighting the initiatives to reopen the Hellenic Studies Research and Education Center at Yerevan State University and to establish a Center for Armenian Studies at the Democritus University of Thrace in Greece, with the support of the Embassy.

The parties agreed to continue the work on the development and implementation of joint programs on bilateral and trilateral Armenia-Greece-Cyprus cooperation.

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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



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

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՝  
03ԱՑՑ8368, տրված՝ 11.01.2013թ.  
Registration certificate and the date:  
273.110.00512, 15.12.1995

E-mail: [contact@nt.am](mailto:contact@nt.am)  
URL: [www.nt.am](http://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