

## Armenian FM, US Secretary of State set to meet in Washington



On January 14-15 Minister of Foreign of the Republic of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan will pay a working visit to Washington, D.C, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ani Badalyan informs.

Meetings are scheduled with the U.S. colleagues, including U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Relations between the Republic of Armenia and United States in the previous year were marked by active political dialogue and valuable achievements. Particularly, on April 5, 2024 the trilateral Armenia-USA-EU meeting took place, on June 11 the capstone meeting of the Armenia – U.S. Strategic Dialogue was held in Yerevan, and outlined a vision for deepening ties to elevate the status of the bilateral dialogue to Strategic Partnership.

During the session, the Foreign Minister of Armenia stressed: “The strong commitment to democratic principles is at the very core of our partnership. Our bilateral agenda continues to expand and include dimensions important for the resilience and sustainable development of Armenia. Considering the growing nature and dynamics of bilateral relations, we are hopeful to upgrade our Strategic Dialogue to a Strategic Partnership that could further enhance the structured approach to our multifaceted cooperation.”

Throughout the year, engagements between Armenia and the US have been active at various levels and platforms, including through the bilateral meetings between Minister Mirzoyan and Secretary Blinken.

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## Armenia expand its diplomatic ties and the geography of international presence in 2024 – MFA

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Armenia recapped the past year:

“In 2024, Armenia continued to expand its diplomatic ties and the geography of its international presence.

Establishment of diplomatic relations: Recognition of the State of Palestine and establishment of diplomatic relations.

On September 27 in New York Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan and Prime Minister of the State of Palestine Mohammad



Mustafa signed the joint communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the State of Palestine.

Establishment of diplomatic missions of the Republic of Armenia:

Resident Embassy in Uruguay, Diplomatic Office in Luxembourg, Diplomatic Office in Serbia.

Decisions were made to open resident embassies of the Republic of Armenia in Cyprus, Hungary.

The Resident Embassy of Cyprus was opened in Yerevan,” the MFA of Armenia wrote on Facebook.

## Armenia, Iran tied by natural interests – PM Pashinyan

There is one guarantee in the relations between the two countries, which is unshakable: Armenia and Iran are connected by natural interests, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said as he received Ali Akbar Ahmadian, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Prime Minister reiterated the interest of the Government of the Republic of Armenia in the consistent development and expansion of bilateral cooperation in all directions.

Ali Akbar Ahmadian expressed gratitude for the reception and conveyed to Prime Minister Pashinyan the warm greetings of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Masoud Pezeshkian. The Secretary emphasized that the rich



civilizational past between Armenia and Iran and the warm contacts between the two peoples give confidence that mutually beneficial cooperation will continue to strengthen and deepen.

The interlocutors discussed issues related to the dynamic development of bilateral relations and expressed confidence

that the parties have new opportunities for cooperation, including in the fields of technology, industry, energy, agriculture, infrastructure, road construction and other areas.

The development of cooperation with the Iranian side in the construction of the North-South highway was emphasized. The parties expressed confidence that the construction of the highway will also give a new impetus to the volumes of bilateral trade and

cargo transportation.

In the context of unblocking regional transport routes, reference was made to the Armenian Government’s Crossroads of Peace project. Ali Akbar Ahmadian noted that Iran supports the implementation of the above-mentioned project based on the principles enshrined in it.

## Azerbaijan falsely accuses Armenia of border shooting in renewed disinformation

The Azerbaijani authorities have falsely accused the Armenian military of opening fire at Azeri troops near the border.

The Armenian Ministry of Defense, in a [statement](#) issued on January 6, said that the Azerbaijani accusations are disinformation.

“The statement by the Azerbaijani

Ministry of Defense, claiming that on January 5, between 10:00 p.m. and 10:10 p.m., the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia opened fire on Azerbaijani positions in the southeastern section of the border, does not correspond to reality. It should be noted that the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia

has proposed the establishment of a joint Armenian-Azerbaijani mechanism to investigate ceasefire violations and related cases. To date, Azerbaijan has not provided a response to this proposal,” the Armenian Ministry of Defense said in a statement.

## Exclusive: Prime Minister Pashinyan responds to Aliyev's statements

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, in an interview with Armenpress, responded to the latest statements by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

**Armenpress: Mr. Prime Minister, the Azerbaijani President, in an interview with Azerbaijani broadcasters on January 7, made aggressive statements against the Republic of Armenia. What is your assessment?**

**Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan:** Perhaps Baku is attempting to form "legitimacy" for escalation in the region. Aggressive statements are being made with expectation that aggressive responses will be made by Yerevan, which would enable Baku to make more aggressive statements, pairing this with distribution of false statements about ceasefire violations by the Armenian Army, in order to develop a "justification" for new escalation in the region. We will not take that path and we will remain committed to the strategy of peace and consistently continue the implementation of the peace agenda. This means that we will apply the language of dialogue and not aggressiveness. We will continue to be focused on delimitation, conclusion of the text of the peace treaty, implementation of the Crossroads of Peace project, humanitarian issues, including the issues of determining the fate of the



missing persons.

**Armenpress: The Azerbaijani President has accused Armenia of being a fascist state. Does this also fit in the logic you mentioned?**

**Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan:** Undoubtedly, because the calculation is that the reaction will be 'you are the fascist', and the coil I described will start to strain. But there is another approach, for us to take note that in Azerbaijan there is such a perception about Armenia, and try to understand the reasons behind it. On the other hand, it is obvious that in the Republic of Armenia there is likewise such a perception about Azerbaijan. These very mutual perceptions had led to many years of conflict. But the strategy of peace is for us to take note that there is such a perception about us in Azerbaijan, and for them to take note that there is such a perception about them in Armenia. The

agenda of peace is about discussing, addressing these perceptions. A part of the agreed-upon articles of the draft peace treaty closes the chapter of a part of these perceptions, while the other parts give the chance to make all mutual negative perceptions part of the bilateral agenda and address them. I'll add that we have proposed solutions regarding two outstanding articles of the peace treaty, and in case of a positive response by Azerbaijan, we are ready to sign the treaty.

**Armenpress: The Azerbaijani President again spoke about the corridor, saying that it must be opened, and it will open. What does this mean?**

**Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan:** The Republic of Armenia has brought to the table the Crossroads of Peace project and intends to implement it. There is no other project in our agenda. The Crossroads of Peace implies the opening of all transport connections in the region, including Azerbaijan-Azerbaijan through the territory of Armenia, and Armenia-Azerbaijan through the territory of Azerbaijan. I already had the occasion to announce that we have made a very concrete proposal to Azerbaijan on opening the Yeraskh-Sadarak-Ordubad-Meghri-Zangelan railway. It is more than a proposal, it is a concrete solution to concrete issues, and

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## Armenia considers requesting OSCE to dissolve Minsk Group

Armenia considers the possibility of applying to the OSCE with the request of dissolving the Minsk Group, the Armenian Prime Minister's spokesperson Nazeli Baghdasaryan has said in comments for the media.

"The Republic of Armenia considers the possibility of applying to the OSCE for the dissolution of the MG. On 19 December, 2024, in an interview with Armenpress, when asked about Armenia's stance regarding the idea of dissolving the OSCE MG, Prime Minister Pashinyan said, '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.'

In a Facebook post on 8 January 2025, Prime Minister Pashinyan emphasized that there is no Western Azerbaijan in the territory of Armenia, and cannot be, and emphasized the need for Azerbaijan to abandon that narrative questioning Armenia's territorial integrity, and establish peace.

The Republic of Armenia unambiguously and unequivocally recognizes the

territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and is ready to reaffirm this by signing the peace treaty, as well as implementing all other initiatives and steps described in the abovementioned post. It is important for Azerbaijan to likewise unambiguously and unequivocally recognize the territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia," Baghdasaryan said.



## Azerbaijani media distort Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson's remarks

Azerbaijani media outlets have distorted Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei's statement, attributing remarks about an issue in Turkiye concerning Iranian cargo trucks to the so-called "Zangezur corridor".

Iranian Tasnim news agency, quoting the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson's statement, reported that the statement pertained to a question about an issue with fuel for Iranian cargo vehicles on the border with Turkiye.

"Given the good-neighborliness and that the shipment of goods through routes is important for the two countries, our

efforts together with Turkiye have been to try to somehow solve that issue. Probably our delegation will soon visit Turkiye to discuss the issue up-close in the presence of representatives of the relevant bodies... We hope the issue gets resolved soon," Baqaei said.

Azeri media outlets distorted the abovementioned statement and misrepresented it as pertaining to the so-called "Zangezur corridor".

In the same press conference, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson reiterated Tehran's stance regarding the possible unblocking of connections in the



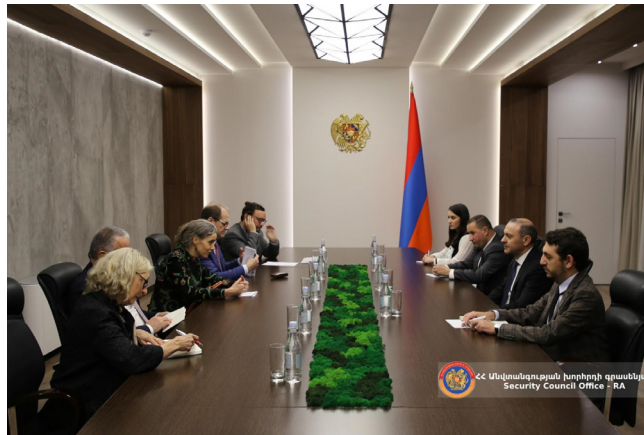
South Caucasus.

"Iran's stance remains unchanged. We welcome the increase of cooperation in the transportation sector, but we emphasize that the countries' sovereign rights must be respected," the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said.

## Armenia's Security Council Secretary, EU Special Representative discuss normalization of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations

Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia Armen Grigoryan on January 10 received the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia Magdalena Grono.

According to Grigoryan's office, the interlocutors touched upon several agenda issues regarding relations between Armenia and the European Union, as well as the further expansion and deepening of their cooperation agenda.



During the meeting, the interlocutors

discussed the extra-regional and regional security situation and the process of normalizing relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The officials also addressed the issue of unblocking regional infrastructures, within which Grigoryan presented the Crossroads of Peace project and Armenia's steps aimed at implementing it.

The Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia also outlined the steps taken by the Armenian government to establish peace with Azerbaijan.

## Parliamentary committee approves bill on ratifying Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907



A parliamentary committee approved

on January 10 the bill on ratifying the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907.

Armenia's Representative for International Legal Affairs Yeghishe Kirakosyan presented the bill to lawmakers at the parliamentary committee on state-legal affairs.

He said that through the ratification of the conventions Armenia will also become a member (contracting party) of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

The PCA has 124 Contracting Parties.

Kirakosyan said that by ratifying the conventions Armenia will send an important message in terms of foreign policy regarding the peaceful resolution of disputes, establishment of peace, and prohibition of the use of force and the threat of force.

The bill will be debated in the plenary session of parliament.

## EU to analyze bill on Armenia integration process



The EU will analyze the bill on the process of Armenia's EU integration and discuss it with Yerevan, the lead spokesperson of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Anitta Hipper has said.

On January 9, the Cabinet approved the bill on launching the process of Armenia's

accession to the EU, which was submitted for parliamentary debates by the Eurovote civic initiative after a petition.

The bill will be debated in parliament afterwards.

"We are aware of the draft law on the process of Armenia's European integration, and will analyse it, and discuss it with the Armenian authorities. Meanwhile, there is plenty we are already doing through implementation of our existing Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, which allows for extensive support and approximation to the EU acquis. We increased our financial assistance to Armenia through the EU's Resilience and Growth Plan for Armenia

of EUR 270 million for the period 2024-2027 with targeted support to boost the country's socio-economic resilience, as well as connectivity, trade and energy diversification," Hipper told Armenpress Brussels correspondent Lilit Gasparyan.

Hipper added that the Armenia-EU relations have never been closer as now.

"Regarding our relations with Armenia, these have never been closer as now. The last year showcased this, namely the decision taken to launch a visa liberalization dialogue and European Peace Facility with EUR 10 million assistance," the EU Foreign Affairs and Security Policy spokesperson said.

## Armenian Ambassador meets Indian Defense Minister

Ambassador of Armenia to India, Vahagn Afyan, along with Armenia's Defense Attaché Arkadi Tonoyan and the Embassy's Counselor Tigran Grigoryan, participated in a roundtable discussion for the heads of diplomatic missions in preparation for AeroIndia 2025.

The Armenian Ambassador had a brief conversation with India's Minister of Defence, Rajnath Singh, and other officials from the



relevant sector, the embassy said in a press release.

The upcoming event's key themes include fostering influential discussions, strategic partnerships, and groundbreaking innovations. AeroIndia 2025 is one of India's largest aerospace exhibitions, serving as an important platform to strengthen international cooperation and showcase cutting-edge advancements in the field.

## EU proposes extension of EUMA term



EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas has proposed to extend by two years the term of the EU monitoring mission in Armenia, RFE/RL's Armenian service reported citing a statement issued by Kallas' office.

"The member states have welcomed

the proposal and are now discussing the necessary legal acts with the relevant bodies of the Council of the European Union. The Council's decision around the extension is expected in the coming days," the press office of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy told RFE/RL's Armenian service in written comments.

Azerbaijan has been accusing the EU monitoring mission in Armenia (EUMA) of espionage and bringing instability to the region. In response to the accusations, the EU foreign policy chief's office said, "The mandate of the European Union mission in Armenia is very clear, to observe and report on the ground the situation of

the Armenian-Azerbaijani border from the Armenian side and contribute to the European Union's efforts in the Armenian-Azerbaijani normalization. The number of armed incidents in the border areas has dropped significantly since the deployment of the monitoring mission. As it is known, the EU is regularly informing Azerbaijan about the activities of the mission."

EUMA is a non-executive, non-armed civilian Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) Mission. EUMA observes and reports on the security situation along the Armenian side of the international border with Azerbaijan. The mission was launched in 2023 with a term of 2 years.

## Armenia registers growth in wholesale and retail trade, decline in automobile trade

The volume of trade turnover in Armenia in the first 10 months of 2024, from January to October, amounted to 4 trillion 990 billion 023.3 million drams, an increase of 18.8 percent compared to the same period in 2023.

According to the Statistical Committee, during the mentioned period, the volume of wholesale trade increased by 26.3 percent, totaling 3 trillion 281 billion 425.2 million drams.

The volume of retail trade increased by 8.5%, reaching 1 trillion 512 billion 130.2 million drams. The volume of



automobile trade (which includes both the sale of automobiles, their parts and accessories through specialized trade outlets, as well as their technical maintenance

and repair) amounted to 196 billion 467.9 million drams, showing a decrease of 6.3% compared to the first 10 months of 2023.

Moreover, 83.6 percent of retail trade in the republic was conducted in stores—1 trillion 263 billion 911.7 million drams, an increase of 10.8 percent compared to the same period in 2023.

Trade worth 53 billion 703.3 million drams was conducted in consumer goods markets, 12 billion 774 million drams in agricultural product markets, and 18 billion 227 million drams in kiosks.

## No grounds to suspend the exploitation process of the Amulsar mine at this time - Minister

Lydian Armenia has all the necessary permits to operate the Amulsar mine.

The Minister of Environment of the Republic of Armenia, Hakob Simidyan, stated during a press conference on Friday, summarizing the ministry's work for 2024. The minister noted that the Amulsar mine has undergone two expert examinations regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) permit.

"All the permits required to operate the Amulsar mine are in place, and at the moment, there are no factual or legal grounds, either judicial or administrative, to suspend this process in any way. This is supported by the relevant studies and

examinations," the minister said.

Addressing the risks of operating the mine, Simidyan mentioned that natural risks always arise in cases of subsoil use. However, in the modern world, advanced tools and new technologies are available to help mitigate or neutralize the impact on the environment across various activities.

"If we consider that any type of activity might harm nature, we conduct an impact assessment. If the type of activity, its location, and other conditions are deemed permissible, we set conditions and require taxes to be paid so that we can implement subsidies to reduce the impact on the environment and human health," Simidyan

explained.

The minister emphasized that if violations occur after the mine becomes operational, the government will naturally take appropriate measures.

Earlier, Armenia's Minister of Economy, Gevorg Papoyan, stated that negotiations regarding financing for the operation of the Amulsar gold mine are ongoing. He noted that after the Eurasian Development Bank (EDB) rejected the loan application for the Amulsar mine's operation, discussions are now being held with commercial banks operating in Armenia. Papoyan expressed hope that the mine's operation could begin in 2025.

## Iran installs new over-the-horizon radar with 800 km radius, covering airspace of Armenia and Azerbaijan

Iran has installed a radar with an 800 km radius, covering the skies of Armenia and Azerbaijan, reports Islamic World News.

The radar, located in the highlands of Gilan province, is designed to monitor the northern airspace of the country and has been connected to Iran's air defense network.



It is noted that after the radar is installed in Gilan, the entire airspace of Armenia and Azerbaijan, a significant part of eastern Turkey, most of Georgia, western Turkmenistan, southwestern Kazakhstan, and the Caspian Sea will be under Iranian air defense control.

## Dry Port to become major regional transport hub in case of implementing Crossroads of Peace, says minister

The Shirak Dry Port project is highly feasible in case of the implementation of the Crossroads of Peace project and the establishment of peace, Minister of Economy Gevorg Papoyan has said.

Papoyan said at a press conference that they have conducted

the necessary research around the Shirak Dry Port Industrial Park project.

“We can say for the record that this



project is highly feasible in case of implementing, launching the Crossroads of Peace project and establishing peace. In

that case the Shirak Dry Post will become a major regional transport hub,” Papoyan said.

The minister said that Crossroads of Peace isn't simply an ideology, but a concrete project. It implies the complete construction and commissioning of the North-South road, as well as development of the rail-

way network. The project is feasible, the minister said. A study has been conducted on what actions are specifically required.

## Armenia's 12-month inflation reaches 1.5% in December 2024

In December 2024, the 12-month inflation rate in the consumer market of the Republic of Armenia was 1.5% compared to December 2023. Inflation in December 2024, compared to November 2024, stood at 1%, according to the Statistical Committee.

For the period of January-December 2024, the consumer price index surpassed the corresponding figure for the same period in 2023 by 0.3%.

In December 2024, prices for alcoholic beverages and tobacco products rose by 3.8% compared to December 2023, while inflation for these items stood at 5.4% year-on-year for the period January-December 2024. No changes in prices were recorded on a month-on-month basis in December 2024.

Clothing and footwear were 2.6% cheaper in December 2024 compared to the same month in 2023. Compared to November 2024, their prices decreased by 0.1%. For the January-December 2024 period, deflation amounted to 1.4% compared to the same period in 2023.

In December 2024, prices for housing services, water, electricity, gas, and other

types of fuel decreased by 0.2% compared to December 2023 but increased by 0.9% compared to November 2024. For the January-December 2024 period, prices rose by 0.1% year-on-year.

Prices for household items, household appliances, and daily household care products dropped by 2.5% in December 2024 compared to the same month in 2023 and remained unchanged from November 2024. Year-on-year, prices for these goods decreased by 1.8% during the January-December 2024 period.

In the healthcare sector, prices in December 2024 were 3.2% higher than in the same month in 2023. Compared to November 2024, they rose by 0.6%. For the period of January-December 2024, prices were 1.3% higher than in the same period of 2023.

Transport prices in December 2024 increased by 3.3% compared to December 2023. However, compared to November 2024, a decrease of 1.6% was observed. For the January-December 2024 period, transport prices rose by 8.4% year-on-year.

In the communications sector, inflation

in December 2024 compared to December 2023 was 0.4%. No change in prices was recorded compared to November 2024. For the period of January-December 2024, prices increased by 0.2% compared to the same period in 2023.

In the sphere of recreation and culture, prices in December 2024 were 0.4% higher than in the same month of 2023. Compared to November 2024, inflation was 0.8%. For the January-December 2024 period, prices increased by 0.4% compared to the same period in 2023.

In the sphere of education, prices in December 2024 were 7.8% higher than in December 2023 and remained unchanged compared to November 2024. For the January-December 2024 period, prices rose by 5.8% compared to the same period in 2023.

In December 2024, prices for restaurants and hotels increased by 1.4% compared to December 2023, but decreased by 0.2% compared to November 2024. For the period of January-December 2024, prices rose by 2.9% compared to the same period in 2023.

## Armenian public opinion faces choice between European and Eurasian integration – Expert



The world is living in an extremely complex period of political and geopolitical transformations. The South Caucasus region has traditionally been perceived as an unstable region full of conflicts since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Now this instability is deepening due to the complex processes unfolding in the larger region.

The Armenian society is in fact being offered to once again think about the choice between Eurasian integration and the increasingly deepening association with the European Union. Political parties supporting a Western orientation, successfully gathering over 50,000 signatures, are demanding the authorities to organize a referendum on Armenia's accession to the European Union.

It is clear that the country's political leadership is favorable towards the issue of deepening and strengthening ties with the EU. However, they understand that relying solely on statements and positive intentions will not be enough. Why? Because the South Caucasus region, where Armenia is located, dictates a sequence of steps and actions that are not always in line with the growing European aspirations within Armenian society.

It is essential to remember that in 2013, when the attitude of the Armenian society towards European and Eurasian integration was being studied, it was found that 70% of our population believed that the processes of Eurasian and European integration could be combined. When asked which process the society would prefer if it were not possible to combine

the two, the response showed that 70% would lean towards participating in the Eurasian integration process led by Russia. This very survey became the foundation for Armenia's political leadership in the process of joining the Eurasian Economic Union.

Nevertheless today, 12 years later, the moods within Armenian society have significantly changed. Following the 44-day war in 2020 and especially the displacement of the Armenian population from Nagorno-Karabakh and their forced migration to Armenia in September 2023, anti-Russian sentiments for various reasons have strengthened considerably within Armenian society.

Various sociological centers conducted surveys throughout 2024, which show that the majority of Armenian society is now oriented towards the United States and the European Union (specifically France).

Russia has experienced a significant decline in its position among Armenia's allies. It is no longer viewed as the sole guarantor of Armenia's security, sovereignty, and stability. With the warming and substantial strengthening of Russian-Azerbaijani and Russian-Turkish relations, fewer people in Armenia believe that Russia can protect Armenian statehood in an existential conflict with neighboring Turkey and Azerbaijan.

This is what is driving the Armenian authorities to take consistent steps towards normalizing relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. The issue of signing a peace treaty with Azerbaijan is particularly emphasized, which would understandably open the way for also normalizing relations with Turkey, establishing diplomatic ties, and reopening transportation routes.

In Armenia, an internal political discussion is emerging about whether the country should continue to actively participate in the process of Eurasian economic integration. Following 2023 and 2024,

when large Armenian businesses gained significant benefits from re-exporting gold and diamonds from Russia to the United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong (Greater China), external trade transactions are expected to show more modest figures in 2025.

Various authoritative international ranking organizations, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Fitch Ratings, and the Eurasian Development Bank, forecast more modest trade and economic figures.

This is where the views of skeptics may become stronger, who believe that Armenia's opportunities and performance in the Eurasian integration process will increasingly become more modest. Therefore, they argue, it is crucial to think about significantly diversifying Armenia's foreign trade, as only in this way can the Armenian economy be truly developed.

In the 2013 sociological survey mentioned above, when asked who Armenia's development is associated with, the majority of respondents answered 'Russia'. When asked with whom they would like to develop ties in the fields of science and education, the majority of respondents answered 'the European Union'.

Today, ten years later, it becomes clear that, despite the fact that Armenia's external trade volumes towards Eurasian directions have increased tenfold, the great expectations of the fourth generation industrial revolution never came true. According to experts from the older generation, the number of intellectual professionals in post-Soviet Armenia has decreased by more than 15 times. The ongoing emigration, declining birth rates, the increasing number of divorcing families, and other social problems indicate that the expectations of society from the Eurasian integration process have not been realized in many areas.

It is known that while

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the older generation believes that the creation of a supranational structure similar to the Soviet Union could have been very beneficial for Armenia in the post-Soviet space, the younger generation absolutely does not think this way and, for the most part, directs its views towards the West.

The deepening of the global confrontation between the Collective West and Russia, the protracted Ukrainian crisis has raised new questions regarding the political outlook of the world. The countries of the South Caucasus understand that they could be drawn into new conflicts at any moment, which will be a response to and a consequence of the West-Russia global conflict. In Armenia today, as in Georgia 22 years ago, there is the belief that by becoming a member of the family of European nations and living by European laws, Armenia could feel safer in the South Caucasus region and neutralize (at least partially) the threat of Turkish-Azerbaijani economic and, subsequently, political expansion.

In any case, there is an internal understanding within Armenian society today that Armenia's membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) does not guarantee the country's protection from external threats, simply because all member countries of that organization have much deeper and closer relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan than member Armenia. However, it is here that

most Armenian political analysts currently advise not to take drastic steps towards leaving the CSTO, because it could increase hostility towards Armenia and further jeopardize the fragile regional balance.

Lastly, over the past three years, the growing trade transactions within the framework of the Eurasian economic integration process have, in fact, overshadowed the trade volumes between Armenia and the European Union. It was enough for the copper concentrate extracted in Armenia to be exported not to Germany, Switzerland, or Bulgaria (as was the case before) but to China, and Armenia-Europe trade constituted an insignificant portion of Armenia's overall external trade picture.

So, it turns out that in recent years, when there has been more talk in Armenia about strengthening and deepening ties with the European Union, economic ties, in relative terms, have been decreasing and are increasingly being overshadowed by the country's external economic policy towards the north or east.

What should be done? The simplest conclusion is that serious consideration should be given to increasing trade and economic cooperation with the European Union. But how? The polite willingness of Armenia's European political friends to improve the current situation has not yet yielded success. Simple solutions are not to be expected here. However, there may be complex solutions that, without dismantling Armenia's accumulated external

economic potential, could guide the Armenian economy towards Europe—though it is difficult to say for now. The prescription for this has not yet been found, which makes the near-term outlook for strengthening political ties uncertain.

In Armenia it is commonly believed that studying the experience of Georgia is very important for increasing the European Union's attention towards the South Caucasus. In Georgia, it is expected that in 2030 the European Union will discuss the issue of Georgia's membership. This may happen, but it may also not happen. If the question of Georgia's membership is postponed indefinitely, it will significantly weaken the positions of those in Armenia who support European integration and will force them to consider a more active and radical participation in the further development and deepening of the Eurasian economic integration process.

In any case, it is very clear that today's Armenian public opinion does not want to make a radical choice between the European Union (which means the collective West) and Russia, but continues to strive to combine these two, currently conflicting vectors.

We believe that the effectiveness of the course pursued by Armenia's political leadership will be assessed in the near future based on the results of acting within this logic.

**Anahit Safaryan**  
Independent researcher

## US, Germany, and France provided a significant share of humanitarian aid to Armenia from January to October 2024

In the first ten months of 2024, from January to October, Armenia received 84 million 188.8 thousand dollars in humanitarian aid, a 4.2-fold increase compared to the same period in 2023, according to the Statistical Committee.

The majority of the humanitarian aid received during this period comprised products from the chemical and related industries, totaling 63 million 386.8 thousand dollars, a 5.2-fold increase compared

to the same period in 2023.

A substantial part of the humanitarian aid also consisted of non-precious metals and articles made from them, as well as land, air, and water transport means, devices and apparatus, machines, equipment, and mechanisms.

The largest share of humanitarian aid to Armenia was sent by the United States, totaling 44 million 583.4 thousand dollars,

accounting for 53 percent of the total aid received in the 10-month period. Germany ranked second with 8 million 158.7 thousand dollars, making up 9.7 percent of the total, while France was third with 3 million 660.2 thousand dollars, accounting for 4.4 percent.

Humanitarian aid was also sent to Armenia from Switzerland, China, Italy, India, and other countries.

page 3 — we are waiting for Azerbaijan's positive reaction, after which the agreement will be documented on paper and we will commence the construction of our sections of the railway.

**Armenpress: What would you say about President Aliyev's latest statement about so-called Western Azerbaijan?**

**Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan:** Nothing new has been said about this topic for me to have a new response, while I had already responded to the previous statements in my previous [interview](#) to Armenpress. I reiterate what I had said.

**Armenpress: The Azerbaijani President again spoke about Armenia's armaments, saying it would only lead to new tensions in the region.**

**Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan:** I have numerously addressed this too. There is not a single element of illegitimacy in the agenda of military reforms of the Republic of Armenia. I have to repeat that

the Republic of Armenia recognizes the territorial integrity of all its neighbors, including Azerbaijan, and expects the same from Azerbaijan, meaning, a clear and unconditional recognition of the territorial integrity of Armenia. I have also announced that we do not have an objective of militarily returning more than 200 square kilometers of occupied territories of the Republic of Armenia, because the delimitation process allows us to address this issue through peaceful negotiations. With that being said, no one can dispute the right of the Republic of Armenia to have a defensible army. Regarding concerns about armaments, we also have concerns about Azerbaijan's armaments, and we have heard their concerns. This is the reason why we proposed to Azerbaijan to form a mutual arms control mechanism and we are waiting for their response.

**Armenpress: In the past few days Azerbaijan, for several times, accused the Armenian military of violating the ceasefire on the Armenia-Azerbaijan**

**border, the Armenian Ministry of Defense denied those accusations and reminded about the proposal to develop a joint mechanism for ceasefire violation investigations.**

**Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan:** Of course, the reports about ceasefire violations by our army do not correspond to reality. But in order not to make such situations a reason for regular debates, we proposed to create a joint mechanism to jointly investigate each report about ceasefire violations, and draw joint conclusions. We are waiting for Azerbaijan's response.

**Armenpress: President Aliyev also said that the next meeting of the delimitation commissions will take place in January.**

**Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan:** Yes, a meeting is planned in January. I am convinced that the positive experience of delimitation of 2024 must be developed in calm, working conditions. We are ready for such work.

## Armenia's Crossroads of Peace project is initiative to improve regional communication, reopen vital connections, says Spanish legislator

Member of the Congress of Deputies of Spain Jon Iñarritu has described Armenia's [Crossroads of Peace](#) project as an initiative to improve regional communication and reopen vital connections, which could be a positive step forward.

The Spanish legislator made the remarks in an interview with Armenpress when asked about the Crossroads of Peace project seeking the reopening of regional connections. Iñarritu also commented on Azerbaijan's corridor narrative.

Jon Iñarritu expressed concern about Azerbaijan's aggressive rhetoric and its so-called Zangezur corridor narrative, which, according to the Spanish legislator, challenges Armenia's sovereignty.

"Armenia has proposed initiatives to



improve regional communication and reopen vital connections, which could be a positive step forward. However, I am concerned about Azerbaijan's aggressive rhetoric, particularly its insistence on a so-called "Zangezur corridor," which challenges Armenia's sovereignty," Jon Iñarritu said.

He highlighted the importance of

regional connectivity for economic and social development, emphasizing that it must be built on mutual respect for sovereignty of all nations involved.

"While regional connectivity is important for economic and social development, it must be built on mutual respect for the sovereignty of all nations involved. Azerbaijan's narrative of a corridor raises both legal and political concerns. The ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and Azerbaijan's recent aggressive actions further highlight the need for caution in these discussions. It is crucial that any regional cooperation respects Armenia's sovereignty and guarantees the security and rights of its people," he added.

# Letters by Armenian Genocide Eyewitnesses Should be published in Several Languages — By Harut Sassounian

By Harut Sassounian

www.TheCaliforniaCourier.com



Last month, I wrote an article about the 8,000 letters that the Armenian survivors of the (Ottoman) Hamidian Massacres of the 1890s had written to Catholicos Khrimian Hayrig, describing their tragic experiences and seeking his assistance for their basic necessities of food and shelter.

This week, I came across another extremely valuable book compiled by Bedros Donabedian in 1922, titled, “The Cry of the Tormented” (Tsayn Darabelots), published in Paris in Armenian. Donabedian was an officer of the British High Commission in Constantinople between 1918 and 1922. The book contains over 300 letters written by the survivors of the Armenian Genocide during the years 1915 to 1919 describing their heart-wrenching eyewitness accounts, while the atrocities were taking place. Many of them perished after writing these letters.

Here are excerpts from some of the letters written in the midst of the Armenian Genocide:

–From Vartig Dzniguan. Garin. Feb. 6, 1919: “My soul, you ask about my brother. The poor fellow is free from this miserable world. Those who survive the troubling conditions of this evil world and depart to heaven are happier than those who are

living in this world.”  
 –From Satenig. Der-Zor. No date: “My brother, we started marching through bloody roads, advancing toward Malatya.... Here, over 170 male adults were snatched from our ill-fated caravan and all of them were tortured to death in the presence of their own families by the order of the Kurd Bey. I am the only survivor of my family. I witnessed how one by one they were viciously killed or died from torture and hunger. I will also face the same fate.... Your miserable sister.”

–From Vartan. Erzerum. March 8, 1917: “Dear, we survived. The rest of the boys were shot; but my daughter-in-law, Khachinga, was Turkified. Should you ask me about your family members, I have no information about them. But, Ohan, Setrag and my Baghdasar were shot. If you ask about your father-in-law’s family members, all the adults were killed, but the children are alive. If you ask about Tato’s family, the adult members are killed, but the children are alive. If you ask about the Oshkers, all the adults were killed. All of Mirak’s family survived and live among the Kurds. Lern’s adult family members were killed. The rest are alive. Sako’s adult family members were killed. The rest are alive. My dear, I can’t put on paper the many tortures and difficulties we went through to survive. We stayed hungry for weeks or collected tasteless grass which we ate without salt so we would not die from hunger. For an entire year, we faced such difficulties. We were almost always hungry. We could not find barley bread to eat, until one day God opened a door for us. We came here, where the Russian authorities provide us daily with a half-ration of bread. So we live hungry and get upset. Many refugees died from hunger and cold, deprived of everything they had. The Turks thoroughly looted us, took all our money, and left us naked.”

–From Stepan Garabedian. Batum. April 6, 1917: “Brother, we have no one else with us who made it to Russia. I want you to know that I picked up two of my children; and, facing death, I marched through snow and valleys and, putting my trust in God, I survived.”

–From Sarkis. Perri. February 17, 1917: “Dear cousin, if you ask me about your family members, no one is left except

Assadour’s wife who was snatched by the Turks. They shot Assadour along with my uncle.... I lost all my family members. The only survivors are my brother and I. All the rest, including the children, have perished.”

–From Mother Sofo. Erzerum. January 24, 1917: “My children, the sad news came and will tell us word for word what was witnessed. Darkness has engulfed our world. Having escaped such tortures — hungry, thirsty, barefoot — we arrived at Eriza and Erzerum with fear in our hearts. What is going to happen to the people up in the mountains, in the cold and without a bed to lie on? A black grave! The pain is strangling me. It’s difficult to write the names of the dead. I try to stay strong, but tears fall from my eyes and roll down when I remember the more than 100 young lives who died from fear and torture in front of my eyes.”

It is extremely important to locate the original copies of these most valuable eyewitness testimonies. Donabedian, in his 1922 book, mentioned two addresses: 1) Printing house: Hagop Turabian, 227 Boulevard Raspail, Paris, France; 2) Donabedian’s own address: 53 Addison Gardens, London, W. 14, UK.

Individuals or Armenian organizations in Paris or London should try to locate these archives. If the originals are discovered, they should be sent to the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan.

This book was translated into English in 2015 by Dr. Garo Khachigian and edited by Mary Ellen Hewsen at the request of the Armenian Museum of Fresno. Even though the English translation is not published as a book, its contents can be downloaded from Kindle through Amazon for \$9.95.

This book should be published and distributed worldwide in several languages. Besides the Armenian original and the English version, these letters have been translated into Turkish, Russian, Spanish and partly German, none of which is published.

All those interested in making a contribution towards the printing costs of this valuable book in English, can send an email to:ArmenianMuseum.Fresno@gmail.com.

## California wildfires: Death toll reaches 24



Firefighters raced to contain the frontiers of two Los Angeles wildfires that burned for the sixth straight day on Sunday, taking advantage of a brief respite in hazardous conditions before high winds were expected to fan the flames anew, Reuters reports.

At least 24 people have died in what California Governor Gavin Newsom said could be the most devastating natural disaster in U.S. history, one that has destroyed thousands of homes and forced 100,000

people to evacuate.

Flames have reduced whole neighborhoods to smoldering ruins, leveling the homes of the rich and famous and ordinary folk alike, and leaving an apocalyptic landscape. Officials said 12,300 structures have been damaged or destroyed.

"L.A. County had another night of unimaginable terror and heartbreak," Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath said.

Aerial firefighters, some of them scooping water out of the Pacific Ocean, dropped water and retardant while land crews with hand tools and hoses held the line of the Palisades Fire as it encroached on the upscale Brentwood section and other populated areas of Los Angeles.

That fire on the western side of town has consumed 23,713 acres (96 sq km) or 37 square miles and stood at 11%

contained, a figure representing the percentage of the fire's perimeter that firefighters have under control.

The Eaton Fire in the foothills east of Los Angeles scorched another 14,117 acres (57 sq km) or 22 square miles - itself nearly the size of Manhattan - and firefighters increased the containment to 27%, up from 15% a day earlier.

North of the city, the Hurst Fire was 89% contained, and three other fires that had ravaged other parts of the county were now 100% contained, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) reported, though areas within the containment lines may still be burning.

Officials warned the entire Los Angeles County population of nearly 10 million that anyone may be ordered to evacuate from the flames and toxic smoke.

## AAA stands united with Armenian community affected by Los Angeles fires – statement

The Armenian Assembly of America has extended its thoughts and prayers to all those impacted by the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles.

Below is the full statement issued by the Armenian Assembly of America (AAA):

"The Armenian Assembly of America extends its heartfelt thoughts and prayers to our Assembly family, friends, and supporters, and all impacted as Los Angeles faces its most destructive fires in its history, which has tragically resulted in casualties, injuries, and the loss of thousands of homes, schools, and businesses. The losses to the Armenian community and greater Los Angeles profoundly affect us all.

"We extend our gratitude to all of the firefighters and first responders who are working day and night to respond to the

immense fires in order to protect our communities. The Assembly stands with those affected.

"Please refer to the list below for information on emergency support, shelter, and community resources."

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Assembly Western Region Director David Ojakian at [dojakian@aaainc.org](mailto:dojakian@aaainc.org).

**LA County Emergency Information and Resources** including shelters: <https://lacounty.gov/emergency/>

**LA City Resources:** [emergency.lacity.gov/updates](https://www.lacity.gov/updates) for up-to-date information

**American Red Cross Shelters and Disaster Relief Services:**

<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/>

[find-an-open-shelter.html](#)

**FEMA/Disaster Assistance:**

Residents and businesses impacted by the ongoing wildfires can begin applying for assistance at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov) or by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362) or by using the FEMA App

Relief includes: displacement assistance for up to 14 days to help cover hotel costs for those forced to evacuate, \$770 for essential items, and larger direct grants to cover essential costs, medical bills, cars, and more. Small Business Administration low-interest loans are available for impacted small business owners and residents.

Published by Armenpress, original at <https://armenpress.am/en/article/1209262>

## Government presents 2024-2040 Action Plan for Improvement of Demographic Situation

The government has published the bill on approving the 2024-2040 Action Plan of the Strategy for Improvement of Demographic Situation.

The bill aims at defining concrete actions for implementing the strategic goals.

The action plan envisages the creation

of a favorable environment, contributing to the development of the family, reducing factors of the risk of death, and promoting healthy lifestyle, reducing migration, preserving and involving highly qualified human capital, ensuring dignified elderly care, etc.

The action plan is urgent given the current demographic situation in Armenia, including the decreased birth rate, increased death rate and migration issues and other issues.

## Armenians in Kolkata celebrate Christmas – Times of India



The Armenian community, with less than 200 members in Kolkata, came together on Monday to celebrate Christmas, a tradition steeped in history and faith, *The Times of India* reports.

The celebrations began in the morning at the Armenian Church of the Holy Nazareth on Armenian Street in the bustling

Burrabazar area. The congregation gathered to offer prayers, their voices rising in unison with hymns.

The presiding priest spoke about the significance of the Armenian Christmas. The grand altar was decorated with flowers and candles. The Christmas choir, consisting of boys and girls from the Armenian College, sang from the balcony.

“It’s not just a religious observance but a reaffirmation of our identity and heritage,” said Zareh Arathon Stephen, a member of the community.

In the evening, the community congregated at the Armenian Sports Club on Park Street, which was adorned with festive

lights and traditional Armenian motifs. Families and friends shared meals, exchanged greetings, and reminisced about their shared past.

The Armenians’ presence in Kolkata dates back several centuries, with records suggesting their arrival in the late 16th century. Known for their acumen in trade, they became integral to the city’s commercial fabric, excelling in industries like jute, textiles, and real estate. They also set up the Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy in 1821. Today, the Armenian community in Kolkata numbers fewer than 200.

## Armenians in Kirkuk celebrate Christmas, call to strengthen community

Armenian Orthodox community in Kirkuk gathered, on January 6, to celebrate Christmas at the Virgin Mary Church, performing sacred rituals and prayers in a show of faith and unity, *Safaq News* reports.

Kepork Shakya, head of the Armenian Orthodox community in Kirkuk, said the event brought together families from the community. “This celebration brought together Armenian families from Kirkuk to perform sacred rituals,” Shakya told *Shafaq News*.

He expressed concern over the sharp decline in Kirkuk’s Armenian population due to migration, leaving only about 30 families compared to the once-thriving



Armenian presence in the city.

“Migration and Iraq’s turbulent circumstances have deeply impacted our community,” Shakya said, urging young Armenians to marry and contribute to population growth. He added that the

church supports initiatives to strengthen the Armenian family structure.

In 2015, Kirkuk opened its first Armenian church. Its pastor, Avedik Mardirosyan, said violence and instability had forced many Armenian families to leave.

Armenians have lived in Iraq for centuries, with initial waves of migration from Armenia through

Iran settling in southern Iraq. The first Armenian diocese was established in Basra in 1222, with subsequent migrations to Baghdad. The Armenian community was officially recognized as a Christian denomination in Iraq in 1638.

## Armenia to participate in DEFEA 2025 International Defense and Security Exhibition

The Ministry of High-Tech Industry is accepting applications for participation in DEFEA 2025 International Defense and Security Exhibition in Athens.

DEFEA is a high-profile international defense exhibition where international companies present land, naval, aerospace, national and cyber security defense systems. DEFEA will take place 6th to 8th May 2025. It is organized under the auspices of



the Hellenic Ministry of National Defense,

with the cooperation of the SEKPY - Hellenic Manufacturers of Defense Material Association and is organized by ROTA Exhibitions Greece.

Armenian defense and security companies interested in participation shall submit the application form to the ministry by 30 January. The ministry, together with selected applicants, will participate in the event under a unified pavilion.

## Lladro Produces ‘Karabagh Horse’ Porcelain Figurines as Propaganda for Azerbaijan — By Harut Sassounian

By Harut Sassounian

[www.TheCaliforniaCourier.com](http://www.TheCaliforniaCourier.com)

Regrettably, the only things that matter in this world are money and power. All the other issues that naïve people put a value on, such as truth, justice, and human rights, are self-defeating delusions. Rich and powerful people and countries can do almost anything they want. The only ones that can stop them are those who possess greater power. The weak are at the mercy of the powerful wolves.

These thoughts came to my mind as I received an email from the Lladro Company, which is world famous for the porcelain figurines it produces in Valencia, Spain. A lot of people have valuable collections of Lladro figurines in their homes. They are frequently given as gifts.

The email I received from Lladro was a pitch to sell its latest porcelain figurine named: ‘Karabakh Horse.’ Next to the image of a horse, the email stated: “The Karabakh horse is a symbol of Azerbaijan’s cultural legacy and its indomitable spirit. Our artists have portrayed it in porcelain, underscoring the elegance and beauty of this unique breed. Following ancient tradition, the horse is covered with a Karabakh rug with its rightly famous patterns decorated in intense colors and golden lusters. Discover all the details of this specimen, available in a limited edition.”

In the above short paragraph, Lladro made several factual errors. First of all, the Karabagh horse cannot be a symbol of Azerbaijan since Karabagh (Artsakh) is a part of historic Armenia. To make matters worse, Lladro falsely added that this horse is a symbol of Azerbaijan’s “cultural legacy and its indomitable spirit.” There is no

such thing as Azerbaijan’s ‘cultural legacy’ since the country is a little over 100 years old. I also don’t understand Lladro’s reference to Azerbaijan’s ‘indomitable spirit.’ Where did that ‘indomitable spirit’ come from? Azerbaijan, during its short-lived history, has engaged in barbaric beheadings of Armenian prisoners of war, committed massacres, ethnic cleansing, and genocide, destroyed Armenian churches and cultural monuments, distorted history, and committed massive violations of the human rights of its own citizens, including the jailing of journalists and political dissidents on trumped-up charges.

Since I know very little about horses, I searched about the ‘Karabagh horse’ on the Internet. Here is what I found: “The Karabagh horse breed is influenced by Persian horses and other breeds like the Akhal-Teke, Kabarda, Turkoman, and Arabian horses.” The Akhal-Teke horse originates from Turkmenistan, while the Kabarda from the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic in Russia. I don’t see any reference to Azerbaijan in that sentence.

In another obvious error, Lladro explained in its email that ‘Karabakh Horse’ means ‘golden horse.’ This is false. The name Karabagh is composed of two words: ‘Kara’ which means black in Turkish and ‘bagh’ which means garden in Farsi. Therefore, Karabagh means Black Garden.

Lladro is selling the ‘Karabakh Horse’ porcelain figurine for \$6,580 each. It is a ‘limited edition’ production with only 750 copies. It weighs 20 lbs. The dimensions are: 17 inches (high), 20 inches (wide), and 8 inches (long).

To promote the ‘Karabakh Horse’ figurine, Lladro held its unveiling at the

Shirvanshah Palace Museum in Baku, where the Azerbaijan National Conservatory provided a live musical concert. The guest speaker was Yashar Quluzade, the owner of the largest number of actual Karabagh horses.

To represent Karabagh as part of Azerbaijan, and promote the Karabagh horse worldwide, Pres. Aliyev gifted in 2022 a Karabagh horse and two equestrian-themed sculptures to Queen Elizabeth II of England. This is the second time that the Queen has received a Karabagh horse from Azerbaijan. The first one was in 1956.

Since the only thing Lladro executives care about is profit, Armenians and their supporters should counter the use of the Karabagh horse as a tool for Azeri propaganda by boycotting the purchase of all Lladro products. Complaints should be sent to Ana Rodríguez Nogueiras, the Chief Executive Officer of Lladro. Her email is: [agonzalez@es.lladro.com](mailto:agonzalez@es.lladro.com).

I do not know what kind of business arrangements have been made between Azerbaijan’s leaders and Lladro. Who is getting what percentage of the sales and who is personally benefiting from the resulting income?

It is surprising that the Karabagh Horse figurines are still not sold out since they were launched several months ago. Since Azeri leaders donate lavish gifts to foreign dignitaries visiting Azerbaijan, why haven’t they purchased all 750 copies of the Karabagh Horse porcelain and given them as souvenirs? I am certain that Pres. Aliyev, who is a billionaire, can easily afford to purchase all 750 copies at \$6,580 each for a total cost of \$4.9 million.

## Armenia commences organizational work for COP17

Organizational work for the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP17) is underway in Armenia, the Minister of Environment Hakob Simidyan has said.

Armenia will host the COP17 in 2026. “It is a major and important

environmental event, and the organizational work has already commenced, a committee has been set up led by Hambardzum Matevosyan, the chief adviser to the Prime Minister,” Simidyan told reporters.

On October 31, 2024, during the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity,

Armenia was elected as the host country of the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP17).

Armenia won the bid to host the conference with 65 votes, while Azerbaijan, which also sought the right to host, garnered only 58 votes.

## EU reiterates importance of avoiding harsh rhetoric and threats to use force in Armenia-Azerbaijan talks

The EU reiterates the importance of Armenia and Azerbaijan negotiating on all outstanding matters in good faith, while avoiding harsh rhetoric and threats to use force, the lead spokesperson of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Anitta Hipper told Armenpress Brussels correspondent.

In an interview, Hipper said that the EU has been encouraging the sides to work on mutually acceptable solutions towards a stable and peaceful future for all populations in the region.

The spokesperson reiterated EU's readiness to support the sides to achieve sustainable peace.

- **President Ilham Aliyev's recent statements have not only threatened the EU monitoring mission along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border but also challenge the broader principles and security of the European Union. How does the EU plan to respond to such provocations, and what measures will be taken to ensure regional stability and uphold the EU's fundamental values?**

The EU has consistently been calling on the sides to refrain from engaging in steps that could undermine the peace process. In particular, we have been raising the importance of avoiding harsh rhetoric and have been encouraging the sides to

work on mutually acceptable solutions towards a stable and peaceful future for all populations in the region.

The EU continues its strong engagement with both sides, including its consultations on the normalisation process and last year's positive developments on their bilateral track. We very much encourage the sides to continue their exchanges and look for mutually acceptable solutions that would address their respective concerns. This message was most recently passed this week by EU Special Representative Grono during her visits to Baku and Yerevan, where she met with both leaderships. It was also reiterated by European Council President Costa in his telephone conversation with President Aliyev on Thursday, 09 January.

- **Azerbaijan's continued aggression against Armenia, coupled with the displacement of the indigenous population of Nagorno-Karabakh, raises serious human rights and territorial integrity concerns. What practical actions is the EU prepared to implement to exert pressure on Azerbaijan and address these violations?**

The EU has been supporting both sides in the normalisation process over the past few years, including on issues relating to displaced populations. We reiterate our call on both sides to negotiate on all

outstanding matters in good faith and will remain in dialogue on these matters with both parties.

- **Aliyev's remarks undermine the EU's credibility as a mediator in the South Caucasus and threaten the path of democracy chosen by Armenia. How does the EU intend to preserve its role as a fair and effective mediator, and will there be tangible consequences for Azerbaijan's actions and rhetoric?**

The EU reiterates the importance of both sides negotiating on all outstanding matters in good faith, while avoiding harsh rhetoric and threats to use force.

We welcome all efforts towards achieving sustainable peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In addition to other international efforts, what is known as the "Brussels process" allowed the leaders of both sides to intensively engage in 2021-2023 on core issues. This provided a structured framework and the space needed to advance the normalisation process, which was appreciated by both sides.

The EU very much welcomes the progress achieved subsequently on the bilateral track and hopes 2025 will bring more positive outcomes, for the benefit of all populations in the region. The EU remains ready to provide additional support to the two sides.

## Well-known Czech news website lists Armenia as a top vacation destination for 2025

The famous Czech news website Novinky.cz has included Armenia in its list of the most interesting vacation destinations of 2025.

The article highlights Armenia's rich history and culture, the unique beauty of its nature, and the ancient traditions of wine production, making it an incomparable destination for travelers.

The Novinky.cz article also describes Armenia as one of the oldest wine-making

regions in the world, with the discovery of the Areni-1 vineyard, which dates back to 4100-4000 BC. For wine lovers, Armenia offers not only delicious wines but also a unique opportunity to explore the centuries-old traditions of winemaking.

The article further highlights Armenia's historical and cultural treasures. Special attention is given to the Khor Virap Monastery, which offers a stunning view of Mount Ararat, as well as Lake Sevan,

Sevanavank, and the Geghard Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The article describes Armenia as a country distinguished by its relatively affordable prices. It also refers to Armenia as the cradle of Christianity.

According to the article, the country's spiritual and historical centers, along with its rich cultural heritage, offer unique experiences for every visitor.

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