

President Sargsyan re-elected as chairman of the Republican Party



The President of Armenia, Chairman of the Republican Party of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan on November 26 participated at the 16th Convention of the RPA at the Karen Demirjian Sport and Concert Complex where he made a summary report.

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Armenia, China keen on deepening economic ties

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan received on November 25 China's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Armenia Tian Erlong.

The Prime Minister attached importance to the continuous expansion and intensification of relations with China and stressed the need to take steps to utilize the existing potential.

Karen Karapetyan emphasized the opportunities of attracting Chinese investments in a number of infrastructure programs and added that the Armenian government is ready to discuss any proposal.

According to PM Karapetyan, Armenia can become an important platform for Chinese business, even as a route to third countries.

Tian Erlong noted that his mission is aimed at contributing to the development of Armenian-Chinese relations and attached special importance to the deepening of economic cooperation in a number of spheres.



Armenia, Moldova abolish visa regime

Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian had a meeting with Moldova's Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Andrei Galbur.

Minister Nalbandian noted that Armenia attaches importance to the deepening of friendly relations with Moldova.

The parties held detailed discussions on issues on bilateral and multilateral agenda, urgent international and regional issues.

The interlocutors exchanged views on steps towards further development of cooperation between the two countries, discussed the trade-economic ties, intensification of scientific-technical and cultural exchange.

Edward Nalbandian and Andrei Galbur referred to the intensification of inter-parliamentary ties, conduct of consultations between the Foreign Ministries and deepening of cooperation within the framework of international organizations.

The Armenian Foreign Minister briefed his Moldovan counterpart on the talks on a new

Armenia-EU framework agreement. Andrei Galbur, in turn, presented the latest developments in the process of Moldova's European integration.

The issue of peaceful settlement of regional conflicts was also on the agenda of the meeting. The interlocutors agreed that all conflicts should be solved exceptionally in a peaceful way. In this context Edward Nalbandian presented the efforts of Armenia and the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing countries aimed at furthering the negotiation process on the peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict.

At the end of the meeting the Ministers signed four documents on elimination of visa regime for citizens of the two countries, as well as agreements on cooperation in the fields of tourism, science and education. The parties also signed the 2017-2018 plan of consultations between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries.



Trade and industry cooperation high on Armenian-Russian agenda



President Serzh Sargsyan received on November 22 Russia's Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov, who has arrived in Armenia to participate in the "Anti-Counterfeit -2016" 4th international conference.

President Sargsyan attached importance to the event dedicated to the state and perspectives of fight against illegal turnover of goods in the EEU area.

"The fight against illegal turnover of goods is part of the great work we are doing in our countries to improve the business environment," President Sargsyan said. He added that "issues of cooperation in the field of industry and trade are high on the agenda of Armenian-Russian cooperation."

The parties discussed issues related to the expansion of trade-economic ties and deepening of cooperation.

Summary report by President Serzh Sargsyan at the 16th Convention of the Republican Party of Armenia

Summary Report of the President of Armenia, Chairman of RPA Serzh Sargsyan at the 16th Convention of the Party

Dear Colleagues,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I salute you and wish efficient work during the 16th Convention of the Republican Party of Armenia. Throughout this day, we will have the opportunity to discuss works carried out after the previous convention, to assess steps taken at all directions of the Party’s activities, to disclose slipups and move forward giving new signals to the party bodies and local structures. The RPA is the ruling party and has assumed the responsibility to advance the political agenda of the country. Thus, today we will also summarize how we have been able to prepare the social and political field after the constitutional amendments to act under the new laws of the game and how the ruling Party itself is ready to adjust to the requirements of the amended Constitution.

Now, point by point about everything. First about the organization of our Party works.

The RPA continues to step by step and

consistently strengthen the complex and multilayered party structure, to raise the efficiency of its impact on the political processes in line with its program objectives. Only this year, the number of the Party’s grassroots organizations has increased by 22, also some some Party structures have been abolished. Along with augmenting the Party with new members, we have also cleared the RPA ranks from those who were using the Party “roof” for their personal ends. It is noteworthy that the Party members aging from 18 to 40 constitute over 35 percent of the total membership. At the same time, women represent the majority and constitute nearly 54 percent of all members. Certainly, the automated increased of the RPA membership is not our objective. We have made considerable efforts to make the Party mechanisms to work efficiently. With this regard, we certainly have some achievements but as we have said on many occasions, we are still far from the structure we have in our minds. Though the society-party grassroots structures-local structures links in recent years have become stronger, the speed of circulation of the problems and their solutions through the vertical hierarchy of the Party remains insufficient. In our structure, the problem-solution, options-decisions-im-

plementation chain moves unacceptably slowly. I believe in this case the problem is not the bureaucracy, which is emblematic for large structures but rather is the inconsistency, even their indecisiveness if you will, of the bodies called to move the issues forward. Existence of such approaches is visible. In the coming year, in the organization of our internal works, we will first of all act on this direction.

We have obvious problems related to the speech discretion of those Party members who carry out public activities. There is no doubt that in recent years, the style and substance of the Party members’ public speech have improved dramatically. We have been very consistent in changing the speech manner adopted by some RPA in the past – contemptuous or derogatory exchanges with the opponents, speaking from the position of strength, mocking, etc. Occurances like that have decreased significantly. Not to see it is at least not fare. However one cannot help seeing that from time to time our colleagues are throwing around ideas, which have not been considered from every angle, which send erroneous signals to the public, distort the existing policies, and cast a blow at the Party’s reputation.

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Armenia, EU to start negotiations on visa liberalization soon



Armenia and EU have achieved progress in the six rounds of negotiations on a new framework agreement, Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalabndian told a press conference after the 8th informal meeting of the informal meeting of the European Partnership Foreign Ministers.

The Minister informed that the next round of talks is set to be held in December and added that the talks will be completed after 2-3 rounds.

“Both Armenia and the European Union want the new framework agreement to fully express the new quality, depth and volume of relations we have,” Minister Nalbandian said.

Minister Nalbandian said the implementation of the provisions of the Riga Declaration has been in the spotlight over the past two years.

“We have held six rounds of talks on a new framework agreement and have registered progress. We have joined a number of programs, such as the COSME program of SME development, the Horizon 2020 research and innovation program. We have kicked off the process of joining the Creative Europe program, which will provide an opportunity to expand the framework of cultural exchange. In the near future we expect to start negotiations towards joining the European Common Aviation Area. We also hope to start the dialogue on visa liberalization soon,” Minister Nalbandian said.

Armenian President says ready to meet Azeri counterpart

The deployment of Russia's Iskander missile systems in Armenia was a necessary measure to ensure regional stability, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan said in an interview with Sputnik.

Iskanders were first demonstrated on September 21 at a military parade in Yerevan marking the 25th anniversary of Armenia's independence. They were reportedly adopted by Armenia's Armed Forces earlier and were put on combat alert during the escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh in April this year.

"I think this [deployment of Iskanders in Armenia] was a necessary measure to somehow balance the military situation in our region," Sargsyan said.

"It is no secret that Azerbaijan has regularly purchased state-of-the-art weaponry in the past few years. We do not have such financial capabilities as Azerbaijan, but we are constantly trying to balance the situation by finding an antidote. I think Iskander is such an antidote in this case," he said.

Azerbaijan's Armenian-dominated break-away region of Nagorno-Karabakh proclaimed its independence in 1991. After the military conflict ended in 1994, Azerbaijan lost control over the region. Violence erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh on April 2, 2016 and led to multiple casualties. The parties to the conflict signed a Russian-brokered ceasefire on April 5, but mutual accusations have not stopped so far.

"There is a solution, and we realize that it should be based on compromises, it is

not the case when Armenia, Azerbaijan or Karabakh would win," Sargsyan said.

He said Yerevan was ready to resume talks with Baku, but "only on the basis of the three principles," which include non-use of force, territorial integrity of states and the right of peoples to self-determination. Sargsyan confirmed to Sputnik his readiness to meet with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, if such talks would be useful.

"We have never refused any meetings. Whether it is [a meeting] on the presidential, foreign ministerial, even working level. But we always call for these meetings to be useful, bring progress. If there is no progress when we meet, and agreements do not get implemented, what is the benefit of meetings?" Sargsyan said.

According to the president, Armenia is ready to sign an agreement on investigation of ceasefire violations in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone "even tonight."

"We want the co-chairs [of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe] and the international community to know who is violating the ceasefire regime," he added.

Armenia Recognizes Azerbaijan's Territorial Integrity

Armenia recognizes the territorial integri-

ty of Azerbaijan, but believes people's right to self-determination needs to be taken into account in resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, Serzh Sargsyan told Sputnik.

"We recognize the territorial integrity of any state, including Azerbaijan. But people's self-determination does not contradict in any way the principle of territorial integrity, because territorial integrity concerns relations between countries while self-determination [is related to] the capital and the people that live compactly in the civilized world, all issues are resolved without the use of force, especially in the historical motherland," Sargsyan said.

According to the president, if Armenia rejected the principle of self-determination, then it should not have left the Soviet Union on its basis. "Therefore, these principles do not contradict each other," he added.

No Need to Establish New Russian Military Bases in Armenia

There is no need to establish new Russian military bases in Armenia, it would be enough to expand the capacity of the existing one in Gyumri, President Sargsyan told Sputnik.

"I do not believe that there is any need in this because the military base is able to take in all elements which may be needed. Therefore, one military base is enough for the small Armenia, it is just necessary to give it military power," Sargsyan said.

The Russian 102nd Military Base is located in the Armenian city of Gyumri. On August 20, 2010, Russia and Armenia agreed to prolong the agreement on the base location until 2044.

Armenia Fully Supports Russia's Actions in Syria

Armenia is supportive of Russia's actions in Syria, President Sargsyan told Sputnik. "We fully support Russia providing help to the Syrian government upon its request.

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Visit to the National Defense Research University as part of NATO Week in Armenia



On November 17, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges Dr. Jamie Shea and Responsible Representative for Armenia in NATO International Staff Gwen Vamos visited the National Defense Research University (NDRU) of the Armenian Ministry of Defense within the framework of “NATO Week” events.

They were accompanied by Gagik Hovhannisyanyan, PhD in Political Science, Head of the Arms Control and International Security Department (ACISD) of the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Karen Israyelyan, PhD in Philology, Head of NATO Di-

vision of the ACISD, MFA, and Serob Bejanyan, Deputy Head of Permanent Mission of the RA in NATO.

The guests were hosted by the Head of the NDRU, Doctor of Political Science, Professor, LTG Hayk S. Kotanjian.

NDRU’s Deputy Head for Research – Head of the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS), PhD in History Benjamin Poghosyan, Head of the Center for Regional Strategic Analysis of the INSS, PhD in History Davit Manasyan, and NDRU Research Fellows also attended the meeting.

LTG Hayk S. Kotanjian introduced to the guests the mission, goals and primary tasks of the NDRU. During conversation, Dr. Kotanjian and NDRU Research Fellows presented in detail the research and educational programs of the NDRU.

They noted that significant attention is paid to the fields of cybersecurity and information resources’ management. The program of establishing the Institute of Cybersecurity and Information Resources Strategy (ICIRS) on the basis of the NDRU’s Center for National Security Policy and Information-Communication Technologies (CNSPICT) is focused on these fields.

Head of the CNSPICT Arman Grigoryan presented the programs aimed at the development of the sphere.

Dr. Shea praised research and educational programs at the NDRU and expressed confidence that they would significantly contribute to the modernization of Armenia’s defense security system.

Defense Minister briefs mass media representatives on proposed changes on social benefits



Armenian Defense Minister Vigen Sargsyan met with mass media representatives to present the program of increased social security benefits to be paid to families of military servicemen killed or handicapped in action or during combat duty.

Attaching importance to meetings with media representatives, Vigen Sargsyan noted that “they provide an opportunity to confer complete information both on the initiative under discussion and army-related

issues of public interest.”

Minister Sargsyan briefed the participants on the ideology of “nation-army” and the main directions of the strategy of achieving maximal results.

The Defense Minister referred to the ongoing works in the armed forces and the future plans, the achievements and omissions.

Noting that the “nation-army” ideology does not lead to the militarization of the public or the state, Vigen Sargsyan noted that “only by utilizing the potential of the army, ensuring full interaction between the economic, social, public, educational, scientific and other fields will it be possible to guarantee the combat readiness of the army and the security of the state.”

Impossible to imagine the Middle East without Christians, Armenian Ambassador says

An international conference on “Damascus: Prism of hope” organized by the Pontifical Oriental Institute was held in Rome.

The Armenian Embassy at the Holy See participated in the organization works. The conference was aimed at considering the problems existing in Syria and the Middle East from different perspectives.

Speeches were delivered by the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Aram I, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches Leon-

ardo Sandri, Armenia’s Ambassador to Vatican Mikayel Minasyan, representatives of different Christian churches and universities of the Middle East.

Addressing the conference, Armenian Ambassador Mikayel Minasyan said that “terrorists are trying to distort the cultural diversity in Syria.” He urged to struggle against such expressions of vandalism, indifference, the systematic destruction of Christian values in Syria, as it is impossible to imagine the Middle East without Christians.

U.S. Embassy brings U.S. & Armenian companies together to make mining sustainable

On November 16, the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan, in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development and Investments, the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, and HSBC Bank, organized a one-day sustainable mining business conference.

The goal was to connect Armenian mine operators with well-known U.S. companies that offer products and services that ensure greater mine productivity, employee safety, and nature protection. Representatives from seven leading U.S. companies and 35 Armenian mining companies attended the event.

The conference was designed to strengthen the growing commercial ties between the United States and Armenia by introducing leading American businesses to Armenian mining sector operators, and by giving the American companies the opportunity to showcase the latest technological advances in the field.

“Mining, done responsibly and transparently in line with the highest international environmental and social standards, can be a successful investment and be of benefit to the Armenian people,” said Ambassador Richard M. Mills, Jr. in his opening remarks. “Sustainable mining, using the latest technology and equipment, can be safe for mining workers and can protect Armenia’s environment.”



The day-long event helped the U.S. companies gain a greater understanding of the objectives and priorities of Armenia’s government leaders and businesses, as well as the perspectives of multilateral financing institutions and other key business actors.

“Today we’re focusing on the mining sector, because as you know, it is one of the leading sectors in the Armenian economy and a major contributor to the GDP and the country’s exports. Mining represents real opportunities for Armenia,” said Ambassador Mills. “And these opportunities are not just ideas on paper; there are successful mining enterprises that are already in opera-

tion and looking to expand. We want to see them grow, and at the same time preserve the country’s natural beauty, invest in the communities where they operate, and protect their workforce.”

Seven U.S. corporations – Modular Mining Systems, General Electric, Caterpillar/Zeppelin, IBM, Honeywell, Terra Source Global and Dow – sent representatives to Yerevan to present their products and services and to learn about business opportunities in Armenia. The one-day program also featured presentations by EBRD Armenia, HSBC Bank, Lydian International, and Armenian government officials.

Germany to provide EUR 54.4 million to Armenia in loans and grants

On November 22, 2016, Deputy Minister of Finance of Armenia, Armen Hayrapetyan, and the Speaker for the South Caucasus at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Johannes Dopffel, signed the results of the bilateral governmental consultations on development cooperation.

The Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Matthias Kiesler, praised the good cooperation between Armenia and Germany in his opening speech at the beginning of the consultations. “One of the hallmarks of German development cooperation is partner orientation. That is why our joint projects are so successful,”

said Ambassador Kiesler.

For the bilateral financial cooperation via the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), loans and grants of EUR 54.4 million were agreed. The funds will finance the federal government programs of the German-Armenian Fund (GAF) on sustainable economic development (36.1 million euros) and promote the introduction of an agricultural insurance system (5.3 million euros). In the area of municipal infrastructure, EUR 8.3 million will be used for waste management in the Lori region, EUR 2 million to strengthen the water sector, and EUR 2.7 million for integrated water resource management in

the Akhouryan River.

The German federal government will provide 22 million euros for regional projects within the framework of the Federal Government’s Caucasus initiative. Of these, EUR 21 million relates to technical cooperation and EUR 1 million to regional projects for financial cooperation.

The ongoing regional projects of the German Association for International Cooperation (GIZ) in the field of sustainable economic development, energy and the environment as well as democracy, municipal development and the rule of law are being pursued.

1st European cargo containers enter Iran from the Armenian border

A maiden shipment has arrived in Iran from Germany via a multimodal transit route connecting Iran to Europe via the Black Sea, secretary of International Transport Association of Iran, Gholamhossein Amiri, announced, the Financial Tribune reports.

Plans are underway for the route to replace the one passing through Turkey.

“Two cargo containers have entered Iran from the Armenian border,” Amiri was quoted as saying by Mehr News Agency.

“The containers were shipped from Hamburg in a relatively shorter journey compared to the Turkish route.”

Amiri did not mention the exact date of the arrival.

“In the past couple of years, we have had problems on the Turkish side of the border regarding transportation of cargo from Europe. This prompted us to start negotiations with several other countries for alternative routes,” he said.

Tehran and Ankara have been grappling with a longstanding transit dispute, arising from different fuel prices in the two neighboring countries. The issue led the government to take measures, such as charging Turkish trucks a fee to compensate the considerably low fuel prices in Iran to sealing the Turkish trucks’ fuel tanks at the Bazargan-Dogubayazit border crossing.

The common border has frequently been the scene of traffic congestion with transit trucks queuing at the border in lines reaching 15 kilometers at times.

Agreements signed by the neighboring countries’ customs officials have done little to help solve the problem.

Border security is another issue hindering transit via Turkey. While on Turkish soil, several Iranian trucks have been the target of arson attacks, which Ankara blamed on armed forces affiliated to Kurdistan Workers’ Party.

The Iranian government demanded Ankara guarantee the safety of Iranian trucks, but the results were found to be unsatisfactory, which led to lack of confidence in Turkey’s ability to stem the violence. Consequently, Iran’s Ministry of Roads and Urban Development advised companies shipping to Europe to avoid routes passing through Turkey.

The ministry advised truck drivers to take two alternative routes: one through Azerbaijan, Russia and Belarus; and another through Armenia, Georgia, the Black Sea and then into Romania or Bulgaria.

“The cost of cargo transportation via the [new] route was 1-2% lower [compared to the Turkish route],” Amiri said.

Recent negotiations with Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Bulgaria, Italy and Greece have centered around a transit corridor involving Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, the Black Sea, Bulgaria, Greece and Italy. According to Amiri, an agreement has been signed by Iran, Armenia and Georgia regarding implementation of the corridor.

Trucks are shipped by roll-on/roll-off ships from Georgia to Bulgaria across the Black Sea. The same method can also be used for trucks shipping goods from Greece’s southern ports to Italy using the Mediterranean Sea.

Armenia plans to boost exports to Iran



A task force will be set up to promote the exports of Armenian goods, including food and agricultural products to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Armenian Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan has given the Ministry of Economic Development and Investments five days to discuss and present a project in cooperation with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Healthcare and Agriculture.

PM Karapetyan said at a government sitting on November 18

that the task force should work with the Iranian side towards creation of institutional structures in Armenia with a view of ensuring the compatibility of Armenian products with Iranian standards, so that they can be exported to Iran according to a simplified procedure.

The Prime Minister said he expects the head of the task force to report on progress by December 25.

Karen Karapetyan also instructed the Ministry of Economic Development and Investments to hold discussions with interested bodies and enterprises the perspective of establishing a free trade zone at areas bordering Iran and present a proposal before December 25.

Two new stamps dedicated to Sergey Paradjanov Museum

On November 18th, 2016, 2 postage stamps dedicated to the theme “Museums of Armenia. Sergey Paradjanov Museum” have been cancelled and put into circulation.

The postage stamps with nominal values of 300 AMD and 380 AMD are printed in “Cartor” printing house in France.

The postage stamp with nominal value of 300 AMD depicts a part of the facade of the Sergey

Paradjanov Museum and the stamp with nominal value of 380 AMD represents the collage image of the halls of the S. Paradjanov Museum.

The postage stamps were cancelled by the “HayPost” CJSC Trust Manager Juan Pablo Gechidjian, the President of the Union of Philatelists of the RA Hovik Musayelyan and the Director of the Sergey Paradjanov Museum Zaven Sargsyan.



The Army News

The Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia has met with media representatives



Compiled by Gourgen Khazhakian

Chief Correspondent

On November 15th, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia Vigen Sargsyan met with media representatives, in the context of the public discussions aimed at presenting the programs for additional payment for insurance for military servicemen killed or maimed during combat operations and combat duty.

Emphasizing the importance of such meetings with media representatives, Vigen Sargsyan noted that they provide an opportunity to communicate with complete information to the society, be in concerning the topic of discussion or any other questions concerning the Armed Forces that pose an interest to the public.

During the meeting, Vigen Sargsyan presented the agenda for the implementation of the "Nation-Army" phi-

losophy and the main strategic routes for maximizing success in this regard, and spoke about the programs for additional payment for insurance for military servicemen killed or maimed during combat operations and combat duty. Emphasizing the fact that the Nation-Army concept does not lead to the militarization of the civilian sectors, Vigen Sargsyan stated that it will lead to collaboration between civilian and military sectors.

The leadership of the Ministry of Defense paid respects to the memory of the heroic serviceman

November 16th was the 20th birthday of Junior Sergeant Robert Abajian who has fallen heroically during the April combat operations (April 2-5), and was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of Artsakh. In order to celebrate the Hero's birth and express gratitude to his parents, the leadership of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia led by Minister of Defense Vigen Sargsyan visited the "Yerablur" pantheon.

A memorial service was done by the spiritual leader of the Armed Forces Bishop Vrtanes Abrahamyan, and the participants laid flowers on the Robert's and other Heroes' tombstones.

On the same day, the military preparedness classroom of Yerevan school #147 that Robert Abajian at-



tended, was renamed in his honor. The opening ceremony was led by the parents of Robert Abajian and Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia Lieutenant-General **Stepan Galstyan**. The 20-year-old Hero's picture hangs in the room, as do his awards and personal belongings, as a permanent reminder of his heroism.

The Monte Melqonyan Military School of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia is 23 years old

On November 15th, the Monte Melqonyan Military College of the Ministry of Defense celebrated the 23rd anniversary of its establishment. Freshmen students carried out their pledge during the celebrations. 57 young men enrolled in the Monte Melqonyan school together pledged to become dedicated defenders of their homeland, be honest and disciplined, and apply the skills and knowledge obtained at the school to the benefit of the defense of their nation.

Greeting the participants, the Head of the College, Colonel **Vitaly Voskanyan** made

a brief reference to the establishment and history of the College. Presenting successes achieved, V. Voskanyan noted that the students have gained more than 30 gold, silver and bronze medals at international competitions and olympiads, always honoring the name and reputation of their educational establishment.

Congratulating the freshmen on their pledge and the anniversary of the establishment of their alma mater, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia Vigen Sargsyan emphasized the importance of works aimed at cultivating patriotism, and the role of the Monte Melqonyan Military College in that.

The Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia encouraged the Melqonites who have always distinguished themselves with a high level of preparedness and the will to win and fight, to continue building on, and developing their skills. This is especially true, since the skills obtained at the College will be useful during military service and everyday civilian life.

At the end of the ceremony, several students were awarded due to orders of the Minister of Defense and the College Headmaster. In accordance with tradition, the personal gun of the National Hero of Armenia and Artsakh Monte Melqonyan has been registered for one year to one of the students.

Annual negotiations within Armenian-Greek military cooperation

*Annual negotiations in the frames of Armenian-Greek military cooperation have take place on November 15th at the administrative complex of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia. The Head of the Department of International Relations of the General Staff of National Defense of the Republic of Greece, Brigadier-General **Miltiadis Grillakis** led the Greek delegation.*

The results of cooperation programs in 2016 were summarized during the meeting, and an agreement was made to sign 2017 military cooperation plan between the Republic of Armenia and the Hellenic Republic. Joint training and education programs as well as events for exchange of opinions on matters of mutual interest are included in the plan.

First Deputy Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia **Davit Tonoyan** received the Head of the Dept of Intl Relations of the General Staff of the National Defense of Greece, in order to complete the negotiations. Both sides valued the current level of Armenian-Greek defense cooperation, and the results of the negotiations highly.

Questions concerning regional security issues were also discussed during the negotiations and meetings.



VivaCell-MTS Supports the "SOURCE" Foundation for Children with Disabilities and Their Families

Children with special needs tend to isolate from the society, limiting their social contacts to family members and becoming dependent on mother's constant care of them. The latter not only impedes the children's acquisition of social skills, but also considerably changes the daily life of the family members. The parent has to quit the job, sacrificing the opportunity to make a career and to benefit to the well-being of the family.

To provide efficient help to children with

As a result of the implemented program, 15 out of 50 specialists have started working as permanent and 5 of them – as temporary tutors in 32 families. They provide 8-hour care to children, organize their entertainment and treatment.

In a short period of time, the five-member team of pedagogue-tutors and coordinators has succeeded in reaching tangible results, improving the life quality of the families, creating opportunities for the development

essary care to children. The pedagogue-tutors take care of the children at home, at school and in rehabilitation centers. A special mechanism has been elaborated to control the efficiency of the tutors. Once a week a group of 3 specialists visit the beneficiary families to make an individual development plan for the children and to receive feedback about the relations between the tutors, children and the parents.

Marina Parazyan, the Director of



disabilities, the "SOURCE" Foundation, established three years ago, has also included their families to its target group. In 2016, VivaCell-MTS has joined the Foundation in the implementation of its goals.

For the first time in Armenia 51 classes, aimed at preparing individual tutors, have been organized by leading organizations and professionals in this sphere throughout 2016.

of the children, and, last but not least, making it possible for the mothers to work full time. The individual tutors, aside from the professional competence, also have basic literacy in medicine, which allows them to provide nec-

organizations providing specialized care to children with disabilities, as well as in creating jobs for young specialists in this sphere, supporting the families in the target group and helping the children.

"SOURCE" Foundation, notes that they have managed to achieve the key objectives of the program. In particular, the Foundation has succeeded in uniting various

New Culture Minister Armen Amiryany Invites All His Predecessor Ministers for Advise

As aravot.am informs, referring FB page of Armenian Ministry of Culture, current Minister Armen A. Amiryany invited for a dinner his all predecessors – Culture Ministers of Independent Republic of Armenia – Hakob Movses, Armen Smbatyan, Roland Sharoyan, Tamar Poghosyan, Gevorg Gevorgyan, Hovik Hoveyan, Hasmik Poghosyan, Perch Zeytuntsyan, a prominent writer was not present due to health problems. Yuri Melik-Ohanjanyan, the last Culture Minister of the Soviet Armenia was among the guests at the Mr Amiryany’s home in Saturday evening as well. Reportedly, the Ministers “discussed old and new problems related the country’s culture, and decided to establish non-official Council of the Culture Ministers that will be gathered periodically and as soon as possible – to discuss important problems of cultural area and to suggest their solutions.

Well, it seems one should welcome such an initiative of the new Culture Minister. He seems bringing a new CULTURE, - in terms of respect his predecessors. . .

Notably, by the evening of the Sunday number of readers of the info at aravot.am was very high, especially for non-political news – more than 10,000, with number of “likes” more than 600.

Below we put some Facebook comments:
Vrujr Penesyan, Councillor to the RA National Assembly President: A wonderful

initiative!!

Armine Aghajanyan: Bravo Amiryanyer-jan !

Lusine Aghabekyan: Smart decision has been made by you, our dear beloved, honest Armen Amiryany. . .

Khoren Voskanyan: Creative Armen Amiryany!

Vahe’ Petrosyan: Good for You !



Professor Shahen Shahinyan Re-elected Yerevan State Conservatory Rector

Rector elections were held on 18 November at the Yerevan State Conservatory after Komitas.

As in 2011, the current Rector Professor **Shahen Hakobi Shahinyan** was the only candidate.

The voters are 24 members of the Conservatory Management Board. The last time Mr Shahinyan was elected with 18 votes “yeah”, one vote was declared invalid. This time he

was elected with 23 votes, and a student member of the Council was absent from the country because of his overseas concerts.

Conservatory unchanged rector said that no other candidate wanted to run for this position.

“We were waiting for a month for people who’d apply, but in fact we did not receive any applications. So it was period from October 7 to November 7”.

Well, congratulations Mr Shahinyan !



Armenian President says ready to meet Azeri counterpart

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There can be no doubts here. This is a legal right of the Syrian government to ask for help, and Russia's legal right to provide this help," Sargsyan said.

According to the president, Yerevan would like to see the Syrian crisis resolved quickly, but it can only be settled by the Syrian people.

"Of course, we would like for this issue to be resolved quickly, however, as I can see, there can hardly be a quick solution. There are 20,000 of our compatriots living [in Syria]. We do not have exact information," Sargsyan said.

Armenian-Turkish Border Can Be Opened Only by Mutual Consent

The Armenian-Turkish border can be opened only with the agreement of both sides without any preconditions, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan told Sputnik.

"One cannot say that the issue is 50 percent resolved, that is not the case. Nothing depends on us in this respect," Sargsyan said.

He said that despite tensions in the Armenian-Turkish relations in 2008 Armenia initiated negotiations with Turkey and in 2009 the countries signed protocols on opening the border.

"But unfortunately some time later Turkey turned out not to be ready to ratify these protocols and in fact to establish ties with Armenia without preconditions," Sargsyan said.

The president said that Turkey demanded to exert pressure on Nagorno-Karabakh so that it transferred one of the districts it controlled to Azerbaijan. From Sargsyan's point of view such preconditions should have been announced before signing the protocols. "After that we have no relations with Turkey," he added.

The Armenian-Turkish relations are negatively influenced by what is recognized as genocide of Armenians by Arme-

nia and some other countries. Around 1.2 million Armenians were killed or starved to death by the Ottoman Empire during and after World War I. Turkey has repeatedly denied accusations of committing mass murder of Armenians, claiming that the victims of the tragedy were both Turks and Armenians.

Armenian President Optimistic About Eurasian Economic Union Membership Almost 2 Years On

Serzh Sargsyan said he never regretted his country's entry into the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) almost two years ago, in an interview with Sputnik.

Armenia's accession to the economic bloc of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan came into effect in January 2015, months after Russia was hit by US and EU sanctions over Ukraine. "Armenia's entry into the EAEU coincided, unfortunately, with post-sanctions economic downturn in Russia, the union's powerhouse," Sargsyan said, adding that his country "did the right thing" and "lost nothing."

The fallout from anti-Russia sanctions worsened Armenia's performance, which has a market of three million people and is tied to the Russian economy "with a thousand strings," the president said.

"By joining the Eurasian Economic Union, we became part of a market of 170 million or even more. As soon as we reach the union's main goal of streamlining the flow of goods, services, workforce and capital we will win a lot," he said.

The EAEU promotes economic integration of Eurasian countries and tighter cooperation between the bloc and other trade unions. In May 2015, it signed a preferential trade deal with Vietnam, the first such pact with a non-member country. Russian Prime Minister Medvedev said earlier this month a similar deal could be signed with China's Silk Road Economic Belt.

Armenian Exports Rise Almost 50% in 2016

Armenia's exports have increased nearly 50 percent in 2016, Sargsyan told Sputnik.

"We significantly increased exports this year and last year as well. This year, we

increased exports by almost 50 percent. Most of it headed for the Eurasian Economic Union, or course. And this fact is very, very important," Sargsyan said. The South Caucasus country's relatively small economy has performed well over the past several years despite some members of the Eurasian bloc having gone through economic hardship.

Armenian exports increased over 25 percent year-on-year in September after soaring to over \$160 million, the highest figure since the all-time peak of over \$162 million in 2012, according to the country's National Statistical Service. GDP growth has also exceeded most other EAEU members.

Armenia's Shift to Parliamentary System to Improve Security

Armenia's planned transfer to a parliamentary republic from the current semi-presidential system will improve the country's security, President Serzh Sargsyan told Sputnik.

The current system allows for a deadlock between the presidential executive authority and the parliamentary majority in case the latter is from a rival political bloc. Vesting political power in the parliament will allow for a more efficient distribution of decision-making in terms of security issues, according to the president.

"The [current] constitution says that the president is responsible for the security and the territorial integrity of the country. The president is the commander-in-chief.... The commander-in-chief is tasked with ensuring that the state is working to solve military-political issues. And how could he do that without having the right to spend some of the budget?... So I think that this [parliamentary] form of government will lead to Armenia's security being better ensured," Sargsyan said.

Armenia plans to change to a parliamentary system between 2017 and 2018 after the 2017 parliamentary election takes place. The election will be the first since Armenians voted to adopt a parliamentary system in a referendum on December 6, 2015. Over 66 percent approved the necessary constitutional amendments.

Azerbaijan prefers to spread groundless accusations and suspicious “proofs”



An open discussion on “Water resources, peace and security” was held at the UN Security Council on November 22.

Noting that three quarters of UN Member States share rivers or lake basins with their neighbors, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted the value of water resources as a reason for cooperation, not conflict.

“The need for coordination in water management is especially compelling for the more than 260 international rivers and at least that many transboundary aquifers,” Mr. Ban told a Security Council

debate, which was open to non-Council members.

Addressing the meeting, Armenia’s Permanent Representative to the UN Zohrab Mnatsakanyan noted that “trans-border water resources create social and economic interrelation between societies and can serve a cause of conflict and argument inside a country and between states.”

Mr. Mnatsakanyan referred to Sarsang Water reservoir and voiced regret over the fact that Azerbaijan uses the issue to throw mud at and present charges against Armenia.

“The Sarsang water reservoir, which is of key importance to the economy of Nagorno Karabakh, especially from the agricultural and energy perspectives, is under permanent control of the Nagorno Karabakh authorities,” he noted.

Ambassador Mnatsakanyan reminded that the Nagorno Karabakh authorities have on many occasions offered a mechanism of joint use of water resources, which can serve an additional confidence-building measure between the countries.

“Instead, Azerbaijan prefers to spread groundless accusations and suspicious “proofs”, which actually amount to misinformation, to say the least of it. Azerbaijan would have done itself and the region a great favor, had it sincerely engaged in a peace process instead of boosting its caviar diplomacy,” Zohrab Mnatsakanyan said.

Armenian-Turkish “row” at NATO session or why Cavusoglu decided to become a diplomat

Issues of Armenian-Turkish relations and Turkey’s role in conflicts were raised at the 62nd NATO Parliamentary Assembly Session held in Istanbul November 18-25. The Q&A periods turned into heated debates at times and was described in Turkish media as “row” between Armenian and Turkish politicians.

The head of the Armenian delegation Koryun Nahapetyan asked about the closed border with Armenia and Turkey’s role in the Karabakh conflict after Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu’s report on the concept of “zero problems with neighbors.”

“Trapped in an awkward situation, the Turkish FM tried to make some baseless accusations against Armenia and Armenians. He even referred to the issue of Genocide although we had never raised the question,” Nahapetyan said.

The head of the Armenian delegation said he would not describe the debate as a “row,” but added that “Cavusoglu definitely got nervous.” The Turkish Foreign Minister even recalled the reasons behind his decision to become a diplomat.

“He recalled ASALA, the fact that Turkish diplomats were affected by the organization’s activity. Cavusoglu said he became a diplomat ignoring his mother’s objections,” Koryun Nahapetyan said.

During the plenary sitting the Armenian delegates had an opportunity to address questions to NATO Secretary General. Asked about NATO’s possible role in the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border,



Jens Stoltenberg said “it is an issue of the two countries and NATO can play no role here.”

Referring to the Karabakh conflict, the Secretary General said the organization’s stance on the issue had not changed. “NATO is in no way involved in the settlement of the conflict and welcomes the negotiation process under way within the framework of the OSCE Minsk Group.”

Summary report by President Serzh Sargsyan at the 16th Convention of the Republican Party of Armenia

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Everyone should understand that public speech requires serious preparation and homework: the times of “mister-know-all” are gone; the future belongs to the diligent figures who are working meticulously on each idea. Soon, we will create a special body within the RPA which will become a discussion club with the expert element, where newly born ideas or existing approaches laid out in detail will be available to all members. We will continue to reveal and accept to our ranks promising and knowledgeable young people. We have also to make consistent efforts to increase the level of women’s participation in the decision making at all levels. Towards that end, at the previous Convention a number of our colleagues and myself highlighted the importance of establishing the Party’s political school. The school will allow to increase the level of the political and civil education and not only for the Party but for the entire country. We will make it an important platform for intellectual work and international cooperation. I am glad that the decision of the Executive body of the RPA has already given the start to that works. The School named after our friend of blessed memory – Andranik Margarian has already opened its doors for over a hundred young people.

The agenda of the Convention includes also the issue of introducing changes and amendments to the RPA program. We have always attached importance to the competition of ideas and approaches based on the system of values regarding our country’s future development. We propose to modernize the Party program and strengthen the political and ideological axis of national conservatism. The draft of the program and proposed approaches have already been put in circulation and discussed at all Party levels. This Convention will conclude these works.

The pivot of our ideology is the preservation of the historically formed basic values and moral norms. Our conservatism is not about preserving everything old but about validating the eternal. We

are defenders of the lasting rather than the past. Our goal is to pass from generation to generation values that had been established and certified in the past.

In that sense, conservatism is not the worshiping of the past. We pledge the future and oppose the backwardness. Inseparable link of history and times paves the way for eternal values and development. That’s what we defend.

Distinguished Colleagues,

The Party has expanded its ties abroad. International contacts allow to familiarize with and follow the best political practices, technologies, and peculiarities. We have continued our cooperation with the United Russia Party in the bilateral format and in the framework of the Eurasian party-to-party contacts. We have hosted in Yerevan one of the latest events of this important initiative. We are determined to seriously develop and deepen this format of cooperation; we also discuss the opportunities for the regular meetings of our experts and political figures, and exchange programs for the best graduates of our political schools.

As a member of the European Peoples Party, we have been fully engaged in the activities of the largest and most influential European political family. In the process, our youth structure has become a member of the EEP youth structure and the Union of the European Students, while the women’s council has become a member of the EEP women’s organization. The RPA is always represented at the EPP conventions, summits, and political gatherings. Last year, at its political gathering the EPP adopted a strong and straightforward resolution on the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide. Through another political resolution adopted this year, our European partners expressed their support to us during the April war. We maintain active contacts with the Communist Party of China. Such party-to-party relations come to strengthen the centuries-long Armenian-Chinese friendship.

Distinguished Colleagues,

The coming two or three years will be extremely important from the viewpoint of efficiently implementing the transitional provisions of the Constitution. We have spoken about this in detail and many times. The new Constitution provides for a significant new role of the political parties in our public and political life. Thus a person-party or a club-party phenomenon will disappear. The main shapers and driving force of the political parties will become ideologically like-minded individuals.

This new situation will inevitably result in the crystallization of the political field. It will first of all find its manifestation in the strict division of the ruling and opposition poles.

The enlargement of the political units also becomes unavoidable.

In this transition period, the RPA should assume a special mission. The phase of 2016-2018 should be as stable, smooth and shockless as possible. As a team of like-minded individuals, we should come up in this period of time as leaders and principled but at the same time negotiating, mediating and reconciliatory force.

In recent months, the prevailing topic in our political life has been our new government headed by Prime Minister Karen Karapetian. I take this opportunity on behalf of us all to express to him and all members of our new government once again our unconditional support.

Also on behalf of us all, I salute the decision of Prime Minister Karen Karapetian and other colleagues from the government to join the Republican Party. I am confident that Mr. Karapetian’s enthusiastic manner and managerial talent will be fully revealed on this position, bringing new inspiration to the members of our team.

The results of the recent elections to the local governance bodies have become yet another example of the continuous crystallization of the political field. Currently in nearly 70% of Armenia’s communities the Republicans enjoy the trust of the voters. It is a very impressive figure which tells volumes about the work on the sites,

about the efficiency of our partisan efforts, and our steadiness. Yes, we need the vote of trust of our people but not at any cost. We ask the votes for our work, for confidence and our programs and have been and will do everything possible to earn that trust in the honest and fair election process.

Guided by that very conviction, we should move forward towards the parliamentary and Yerevan Council elections to be held in spring 2017. We have already made very serious efforts to come to a historic agreement with the opposition and representatives of the civil society on the principle issues of the electoral process.

At the moment, our main task is to organize and conduct in spring of 2017 impeccable elections. We need only that kind vote of trust. And only then, without vacillation and hesitation, we will move forward with making the reformation of our country a reality. At the coming elections, the Republicans will appear before the public as a unified team of individuals who enjoy high repute and inspire trust; a team which is ready to compete in the open political field with everyone on equal terms and win through the ideas and accurate comparison. We will try through our programs, new initiatives and updated workstyle to preserve and expand our Party's role in the new political environment conditioned by the constitutional changes. For that very reason, we need to be closer to our principle beneficiaries – citizens of the Republic of Armenia and at the same time, much more dynamic, constantly improving and flexible in political debates and in developing new ideas.

I would also like to add that in case we receive the vote of trust in the coming elections, our government will again be headed by Prime Minister Karen Karapetian who will continue to implement the already preset programs.

Esteemed Colleagues,

Number one topic on the government's and our minds is, of course, our economy, the extreme importance of responding effectively to all existing challenges and providing for a lasting social and economic development. Through the

years, the “immunity” so to say of the Armenian economy has changes dramatically. We have been able to develop the institutes which acting as restraints are able to mitigate negative impulses coming from without and prevent their unchecked impact on the people, families. The steadily increasing reserves of that sturdiness have allowed us to register progressive growth. Particularly, in 2007-2015 Armenia registered 29.3 percent actual economic growth, while according to the International Monetary Fund it was a 32% growth. Also according to the IMF, in the same period of time Europe had 8.9 percent growth (5.7% for Western Europe and 17.2 for Eastern Europe) while CIS had a 22.4 percent growth. In last nine years Armenia continued to develop at the same time facing economic shocks which are sometimes compared to the Great Depression of the 1930s. Under these conditions, we were able not only to avoid dwindling but also opened new horizons for the country's development and changed the structure of the economy, making it more diverse, to increase significantly the exports in the structure of our economy reducing at the same time the volume of imports. In particular, if at the beginning of the century the export component constituted only 20-23% of the GDP growth, in recent seven year it became 72%. In 2006, exports from Armenia were 985 million USD, while in 2015 they were 1 billion 485 million USD, and in nine months of this year – 1.3 billion USD. This changes to the structure of the economic growth was in part conditioned by the financial crisis of 2009, on the other hand it became the most serious achievement of the economic policy adopted by Armenia. Dependence of the economic growth on the monetary transfers was substituted by the dominance of the internal economic factors. As a result, actual wages of the working people in 2007-2015 increase by 39.2%. It became possible not only because of a real economic growth but in general and in particular because of the ability to preserve the stability of the prices during the global financial crises. Any expert will argue that from the viewpoint of maintaining steady prices in those difficult years Armenia compared to other countries registered excellent results, and

this is one of our most significant accomplishments.

In recent years, the minimal wage has been rising steadily. In 2007 it was 20,000 AMD, while today it is 55,000 AMD which means that the minimal wage stipulated by law has risen by 2.8. Salaries in the state sector have increased dramatically: In 2007, the average salary in the state sector was 60,985 AMD, while in nine months of 2016 it's been 160,688 AMD which means that in last nine months salaries in the state sector have increased by 2.6. In private sector, in nine months of 2016 average salary is 214,169 AMD, while in 2007 it was 90,879 AMD which means an increase by 2.4. Pensions too have increased significantly. In 2007, the average pension was 12,746 AMD, while in 2016 it is over 42,000 AMD which means that during last nine years, the average monthly pension increased 3.3 times.

As of September 2016, deposits of physical persons and legal entities made 1.6 trillion AMD. For comparison: in December 2006 that number was 272 billion AMD – the increase 5.8 times, and the peoples – physical persons' deposits make nearly 1 trillion AMD, while the number of deposits, which have guarantees of the deposit insurance fund, surpassed 1.8 million.

Of course, one can ask: if salaries went up, pensions went up, the economy is growing, what is the situation with the problem which concerns us the most – poverty? We have to state honestly that the comparatively low level of poverty in Armenia was conditioned mainly by the earnings of the migrant workers and related spending.

A financial crisis struck that sector. It is suffice to say that if in 2008 transfers to the physical persons in Armenia were 2.3 billion drams, in 2009 they fell dramatically, down to 1.6 billion. Moreover, in 2015 due to the next crisis, the same number dropped to half a billion. The same tendency persists this year. Subsequently, as a result of the global financial and economic crisis the level of poverty in our country rose dramatically, by nearly 9 percent. In 2010 it was 35.8 percent. However persistent efforts allowed to

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gradually bring that level down and in 2015 it was 29.8%. Thus we were able to thwart the rise of the poverty level conditioned by the drop in foreign earnings by the real growth of the domestic economy. This can be viewed as a significant economic achievement of the independent Armenia, and it will serve as a base to further boost our economy, reduce poverty and increase prosperity. Moreover, poverty is a very dynamic phenomenon: a little more prosperity for a person, increased earnings and spending do not automatically reduce poverty because individual's demands are increasing too. On this issue we have been honest and calculated the precise ceiling of poverty for each group of population by calculating in 2009 the minimal basket of goods and changing the methodology of defining poverty. Had we preserved the old methodology, had we considered that overcoming the previous threshold was enough, according to the methodology of 2004 we would have declared today that poverty has reduced to 18.1%. The economic policy has been and will continue to take into consideration increasing needs of the population and will not be content with the numbers, needs, or the lowest threshold which were defined ten years ago.

A number of programs have been implemented to increase the prosperity of our people. Among them the introduction of the social package and the process of providing affordable housing for the families of young specialists in Yerevan and marzes. Today, the demands of the people have changed, young people prefer to have their own secure housing, and be self-sufficient. If in 2006 one person had in average 23.6 square meters of the living space, in 2015 that number rose to 31.3 square meters or increased by more than 30%. Consumption of gaz, electrical power and water, as well as many other factors have the same tendency. I will bring only one number: if the average water supply in Yerevan in 2007 was 17.4 hours, today it has become 23.4 hours

which is pretty close to the around the clock supply. These facts prove one thing – the level of people's prosperity has risen significantly. But as they say, though in the past we were content with small things, today we have great demands. It stems from the human nature: people stop to pay attention to many things which are already available, such as electricity or water supply around the clock, illuminated and decorated streets, etc but note immediately things which are still not there. It is natural, and it is good. The important thing is, we will continue to move forward relying on our capabilities.

Are we satisfied with these indicators? Of course, not. Otherwise there would be no need to speak constantly of drastic changes. Moreover, the creation of internal opportunities and economic potential came at a price: we had to increase the foreign debt. But first of all that foreign debt served its main purpose: the economy was able to withstand a difficult economic situation and second, the bulk of the debt was invested into the prospective infrastructure projects such as North-South Highway construction, security of our country, and was not of course wasted on the routine spending.

Changes of the coming years will be groundbreaking, since we have reached the milestone, even if tightening our belts a little more, limiting and adopting a conservative budget, but have been able to efficiently counter the challenges, ensure economic growth, raising the competitiveness of our economy, and increasing exports. The policy of relying on foreign assistance and credits is in the past.

At this point, I would like to speak about restraints once again. Unlike other post-Soviet countries, Armenia has created a macroeconomic environment in which the shocks are regulated through the interest rate or adjustment of the state budget deficit, in which currency sharp fluctuations do not translate into increase of prices thus decreasing the real earnings of the people, in which individuals can make long-term plans for their savings, and save their pensions. For comparison: in many countries as a result of the finan-

cial crisis a considerable part of the population found itself on the streets, or there took place a huge cut of state reserves even resources from the pension fund were channeled towards the stabilization of the situation or the oil revenues were spent significantly. The analysis made by the Reuters is noteworthy: it underscores Armenia's flexible and decisive policy under the financial crisis, noting that in our region Armenia holds a record on the number of political decisions made with regard to the crisis. During year 2016, Armenia has addressed the issue of the refinancing rate and cut it for 9 times. For the last, tenth time the rate was cut and compared to 10.5% in 2015 now it is 6.5%. As a result, Armenia as a country responding to the post-crisis situation, has become a world record holder, significantly boosting monetary and credit policy aimed at the expansion of the economy. Now it's up to businesses and the inquisitive, creative and competitive mind of our entrepreneurs; we see the results already and they will multiply.

Strong Armenia – this is our national idea which we can also call a national aspiration or goal. I am confident that this is the idea which will unite all the citizens of the Republic of Armenia and the entire Armenian nation. Civil accord in our country must be built around this very idea. It should become a new condition, a new formula of solidarity for all.

We have always been striving to link North and South, to build a bridge between West and East. Isolating ourselves in the mountains of Armenia never was our desire or objective.

Today too we are open for cooperation the best proof of which our warm and good-neighborly relations with Georgia and Iran. Our readiness for cooperation is also proved by our accession to the Eurasian Economic Union, as well as our economic cooperation and mutual understanding with the European Union.

However policies of Azerbaijan and Turkey towards us leave us no alternative. We have no choice but to aim for superiority. We don't think we are better than anyone, but we are confident that we

will not be able to develop productively having just a two-three point advantage over our contestants.

We must become superb in the areas where our possibilities for the growth do not depend on the unfriendly policies of our neighbors. We have already set a number of priorities and among them agriculture, education and innovation, information technologies, jewelry and precious stones processing, banking and financial services, tourism. The list certainly will go on and on.

Our advantage over competitors in these areas should be not comparative but absolute. It is our national goal and idea. We must become really competitive at the regional level.

Development of any area I have mentioned cannot take place isolated. All these areas are developing in our country's environment, bearing thus also the impact of the existing negative phenomena.

We need to reduce and eliminate that negative. Any successful reform will bring also new success in other area.

"Armenian" should become the synonym of the "best."

Distinguished Colleagues,

In the international relations Armenia appears as a responsible, balanced, predictable, and a trustworthy country. This is the way our country stands before the world: constructive approaches, readiness to find mutually beneficial solutions with partners, meticulous in the implementation of its international obligations, respectful of agreements and resolute on the issues which are critical for us. This is the route we have chosen in the international relations, this is the businesscard of our diplomacy.

Creation of such an agenda for the country in the interstate relations requires purposefulness and consistent work. I believe many more efforts are required to maintain it and strengthen, especially considering all the difficulties and challenges which currently rock our region and the entire world.

The goal of our foreign policy and the formula of our involvement in the international relations are the development and deepening of our ties with the part-

ners, and more friends of Armenia all over the world.

The Russian Federation is an ally of the Republic of Armenia. This reveals a lot about the depth of our relations, their versatility, and significance.

With the new US Administration we will work on giving a new impetus to our friendly partnership with the United States.

We will continue to deepen our relations with France, Germany, Greece, other European countries based on our common system of civilizational values.

We are glad to register that our relations with China are on the rise, and we will carry on resolutely in the same spirit.

Armenia's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union opened new opportunities for the economic development of our country. With this regard, we should use its potential in full.

We deepen our cooperation with the European Union. We hope that soon we will successfully conclude the negotiations on the legal document defining our relations with the EU.

Esteemed Colleagues,

Azerbaijan continues to boast that it will impose its will on us through force and hostilities. In April, Azerbaijan unleashed a large-scale offensive against Artsakh, committing war crimes against peaceful civilians and prisoners of war. Azerbaijani aggression cast a heavy blow on the process of negotiations. Currently, efforts aimed at the peaceful resolution are divided into "before April" and "after April" phases. "Before" or "after" – our position remains the same: Armenia and Artsakh have no reason to start a war. This is the most significant difference between ours and Azeris' positions.

We are deeply convinced that the Artsakh issue can be solved exclusively through peaceful negotiations. To conclude them successfully it is necessary for the parties to negotiate diligently. However it is equally important for the parties to assess the existing balance of forces precisely and practically. The April events proved that there are serious problems in Baku related to practicality. It becomes obvious from their public rhetoric. The fact is that our Army was able to fulfill the

task before it – to be the party on defense. Unleashing a surprise attack, Azerbaijan was not able to fulfill its military and strategic tasks.

Our position remains unaltered: the problem of Nagorno Karabakh can be solved exclusively through the free self-determination of the people of Artsakh. All other problems are collateral. All other issues will find their logical and fair solution, in parallel with the resolution of the problem. As long as this main problem exists, as long as the status of Artsakh remains uncertain, no other issue can be solved.

The leader of Azerbaijan adores word juggling. On one instance he says that the Co-Chair countries force him to recognize independence of the NKR, and then with the same aplomb insists that the international community fully shares his position. Agree, it's a very weird "consistency."

We assess accurately the balance of forces in our region. We don't pursue a military and political task of occupying Baku and forcing their capitulation. But we also assess very well what kind of irreparable damage we can inflict on the foe. I believe there is no need to elaborate.

We will not enter the arms race; it is pointless. Instead we see very well tasks before our Armed Forces. Our resources are quite sufficient to fulfill these tasks.

No arms or weapons can decide the outcome of the military actions by themselves. People, soldiers remain the ultimate part of the armed forces. The vast majority of our efforts should be channeled towards the willpower and moral characteristics of our Armed Forces, improvement of their professional skills and combat abilities.

The Armenian soldier is the face of the Armenian Army and he has proved more than once that at the battlefield the ability and motivation to use arms are decisive as well as willpower, courage, resolve, dignity, and decency.

Yes, troops on our border are courageous fighters, however they become ten-times more courageous when they feel unity behind their backs, our common united spirit. Let's not forget that our victoris in 1922-94 were not in the least

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conditioned by the fact that the internal political field in Azerbaijan was in chaos. This is an important lesson which we mustn't forget. This in no way diminishes the courages of our soldiers, of our officers, of our nation.

The Armenian Armed Forces must be among the best in the world. To achieve that, we have the most important prerequisite, the indispensable wealth – our brave soldiers and officers. Drafted soldiers are the future of our country; they are our future ministers and prime ministers, our scientists and businessmen, our ambassadors and governors. Military experience plus post graduate, high-quality education – this is our society of tomorrow, which is being formed today, right before our eyes.

There appeared a new and strong layer of the Armenian intelligentsia which wasn't there in the past. That layer comprises officer corps which becomes a worthy part of our elite. Becoming part of the nation's intellectual and official elite should become an aspiration of our most healthy and well-educated young people. Officers enjoy authority within the society because their biographies are stories of being successful in life. Our newly appointed Minister of Defense, who has jointed our ranks, has already been taking steps to improve the professional promotion process for officers, particularly young ones. In general, the Army should become, I am confident it will become very soon, the etalon of fairness in our society. At least, all our steps are aimed at that. Moreover, all state structures should be much more attentive and should provide explicit priority to the reports and requests received from our military, officers, parents of our drafted soldiers aimed at the solution of different problems.

Speaking of the newly appointed Minister of Defense, I would like to add that Vigen Sarkissian has started his works pretty well. We discussed at length many issues related to our Armed Forces and agreed that in a short period of time, along with the issues related to the com-

bat readiness of the Army, which must be constantly kept in the center of attention, we should be able to ensure a distinct advancement in the procurement area, military education, and works of the military medicine establishments.

Today, through the military, technical, technological and personnel modernization, we are shaping a modern army. Recently the profile and arsenal of our Armed Forces have changed seriously. Rest assured that we will spare no effort for the modernization of our Army.

At the same time, the Army can become the driving force of our economy, the locomotive of technological progress. The Army is one of the largest consumers in the country, thus it is impossible not to have its impact on the advancement of our country's economy.

Resources channeled towards the needs of the Armed Forces as much as possible should be spent inside Armenia – from food to construction materials, from weapons to computer programs, other goods and services which the Army requires. We have to give priority to the Armenian products, with the anticipation that it will create added value in the country.

I mean in particular the area of high technologies, because one of the principle customer for the innovations created here is the Army. Armenian specialists are able to come up with the solutions which will satisfy contemporary demands, and the Army should benefit from these solutions.

Esteemed Colleagues,

The existing challenges require new approaches in the resolution of the problems also in the relations between Armenia and Spyurk. We will undoubtedly continue our efforts related to the NK problem, Armenian Genocide, preservation of the Armenian identity and other traditional priorities. Obviously, the unbreakable unity of the Armenian nation must be strengthened also by the understanding and vision of the present and, of course, of the future. Today almost everybody is confident with

regard to the goal, i.e. Armenia's long-term social and economic development and consolidation of the entire Armenian nation around Armenia which is heading forward. This is a simple objective, with no intricate footnotes which nevertheless requires new approaches in our common work and a more robust mindset.

Yes, we will continue to discover potential of our brothers and sisters in Diaspora, striving to channel it towards Armenia's sustainable development. We have almost all necessary preconditions to organize works in the economic, legal, social, scientific and educational, cultural, information and other areas. In this period of time, we have accomplished considerable work in that area. The time has come to add one significant element to the joint Armenia-Spyurk works. It is the fusion of unity and responsibility. We have Spyurk concerned with Armenia's development, we have compatriots who have achieved global success and whose personal and institutional possibilities are much more for moving forward something in Armenia than the capabilities of a number of state structures combined. These individuals are truly concerned with Armenia's advancement. It means that the time has come to implement the development strategy together.

Let's be honest: until today it wasn't a distinct reality. With a few exceptions, policies for this or that area were developed and implemented in Armenia, in due course our compatriots from Spyurk were invited to participate or assist. We make a switch and say, from now on we will be working together according to the preset formats, we will set objectives together, we will assume roles together, we will implement together and in the end we will say together what has been successful and what has not.

Throughout this process we will eliminate the sharp corners of misunderstanding, will stay away from "we said, they didn't listen" distressed definitions; for any able and willing Armenian we will try to find his or her personal part for acting and assuming responsibility.

We are ready for open and frank discus-

sions. Personally I use every opportunity for such discussions, especially during my visits abroad. From now on, it will be a permanently acting mechanism in Armenia. We had long discussions on this with the prime minister. The government is ready to become a driving force behind moving the Armenia-Spyurk partnership to a new level. We will work together on the implementation of the policies aimed at advancing this or that area in Armenia. Just as together with our government individuals like Eduardo Ernekian, Samvel Karapetian, Vache Manukian, Rouben Vardanian, Sam Simonian, Vardan Sermakesh are changing something in our country every day – these are individuals who in the very concrete areas of our economy are installing new culture and ensure their development. Just like on the road towards the resolution of the problems facing our country very often institutional role is assumed by the Armenian Church, AGBU, Office of Hai Dat, Armenian Assmely of America, other Spyurk structures all over the world. However we will hardly find time and, honestly, desire to name one by one all the individuals who haven't been in Armenia at all or didn't stay for long, who do not understand our reality, in some cases don't participate even at their community events but assumed the role of judges and are slamming and reproving us at every corner. I am sure such behavior has no prospects and in time will simply disappear.

Today we confirm that we will be giv-

ing a new impetus to the consolidation of the potential of the Armenians all over the world. We will try to engage in the development and implementation of the policies for different areas able forces which are ready to assume responsibility and agree that from now on the resolution of the problems lies in the field of unity and responsibility and not in the field of unilateral public appeals or on the pages of international press. We need the cooperation of the compassionate and problem solving compatriots rather than the control of self-proclaimed individuals. We do. And I believe this is the right time and right place to express our gratitude to all those who in the Republic of Armenia, Artsakh or Spyurk are doing benevolent work. We are grateful to all those who provide funds and, of course, to those who do it within the limits of their abilities, including the individuals who at the telemarathon held the day before yesterday donate 23-24 Euros. Let's together thank them.

We will undoubtedly keep in the focus of our attention works aimed at the self-organization of the Armenians in Spyurk, preservation of the national identity and involvement of the young people. We may not be content with our achievements. We need to set a new bar. We have been given a historic chance to stand as a multiplied force, using capacities of Armenia, Artsakh, and Spyurk.

Distinguished Colleagues,
Priorities I have mentioned in the com-

ing years will be guiding our steps. We remain the principle political team which is implementing in Armenia political, economic, and social reforms. I used the work "team" on purpose. Yes, I am confident that being a Republican first of all means being a partner, a team player, a like-minded person.

However it doesn't mean that we limit the ranks of our like-minded persons and partners only by the Party members. Our government is the best proof of that; in the government our partner in coalition – the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, nonpartisan partners work and cooperates with us and assumed serious responsibilities. It is also proved by the fact that many party leaders have linked their destiny with the RPA, participating at the elections together with the Republicans and working in our Parliament. The RPA is open for cooperation to all interested and patriotic forces and individuals. We are ready to work with anyone who is willing to put a brick on brick to make our common home more prosperous.

We believe in our people, we believe in hard work, education, ability to absorb the new, readiness to utilize it. We will lean on the values of strong and traditional families. Yes, we view the family as a miniature of the society and an important stimulus for the country's progression. With the solidarity typical for families we will consistently solve all problems in front of us.

Thank you.

President Sargsyan meets EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn

President Serzh Sargsyan received on November 17 EU Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn.

The Armenian President and the EU Commissioner emphasized the qualitative progress in the Armenia-EU cooperation and the intensified political dialogue.

Serzh Sargsyan stressed that Armenia attaches importance to the participation in the Eastern Partnership Program, and has done its best for the development of that format. The Armenian President voiced hope that the discussions of the Ministers of Education, Science and Research will contribute to the reinforcement of cooperation between EU member and partner countries ahead of the Eastern Partnership summit to be held in Brussels in 2017.

President Sargsyan and Commissioner Hahn exchanged views on regional issues and challenges, the process of settlement of the Karabakh conflict.



Armenians should reach out to Trump through Republican friends in Congress



*Harut
Sassounian*

An unprecedented U.S. presidential campaign came to an end with the unexpected victory of Donald Trump!

Since the November 8 elections, there has been endless speculation by self-styled Armenian analysts about the President-elect's business ties with Azerbaijan and Turkey, wrongly concluding that he would side with Armenia's enemies! Since Trump has made no comments on Armenian issues, no one can really know what his position is likely to be....

Beyond Trump's sweeping campaign promises to "drain the swamp in Washington," and "make America great again," no one can predict what he might do on domestic or foreign policy fronts. In addition, there is no guarantee that he will stick to the positions he assumed during the campaign. In recent months, and particularly since the election, Trump has moderated his views on a number of major issues, such as banning all Muslims from entering the United States, building a wall along the Mexican border, deporting 11 million illegal aliens, and repealing Obamacare. As Pres. Obama explained during his November 14 press conference, Trump is a pragmatist, not an ideologue with fixed opinions.

Consequently, rather than speculating about what Trump may do as President, let's follow Hillary Clinton's wise advice to keep "an open mind" and give Donald Trump "a chance to lead!"

Since the President-elect has not yet taken a concrete position on Armenian issues, now is the time for Armenian-Americans to ask friendly Republican members of Congress to convey the community's vital concerns to Trump and his team. It would be much more difficult to make such con-

tacts once the President is inaugurated in January and has given his marching orders to the new Cabinet. Meanwhile, Turkish and Azeri officials are busy establishing their own contacts with Trump's transition team and Congress through their high powered lobbyists in Washington! Furthermore, while many heads of state, including those of Armenia and Azerbaijan, have sent congratulatory messages to the President-elect, Turkish President Erdogan personally telephoned Trump, urging closer ties between their countries!

Already there are warning signs that two of Trump's closest aides, who may be appointed to top positions in the new administration, are rabid Turkophiles:

1) Former House Speaker Newt Ging-



rich has repeatedly declared his admiration for Kemal Ataturk, the father of modern Turkey, viewing him as a hero;

2) Retired Lt. General Michael Flynn wrote an article in *The Hill* last week, calling on the U.S. government "to adjust our foreign policy to recognize Turkey as a priority. We need to see the world from Turkey's perspective."

While Armenian-American ties with the President-elect are practically non-existent, the community has fortunately cultivated excellent relations with many reelected members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, who can adopt bills and pass resolutions on issues of importance to Armenia and Armenians.

Over 90% of the Congressional candi-

dates endorsed by the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) were elected on November 8. In the House of Representatives, 117 out of the 122 candidates endorsed by ANCA won their election bids, including Congresswomen Jackie Speier and Anna Eshoo, Armenian-American Democrats from California. Regrettably, Cong. Robert Dold (Republican-Illinois), Co-Chair of the Congressional Armenian Caucus, was not reelected; and candidate Danny Tarkanian (Republican-Nevada) lost his bid for the House.

In the U.S. Senate, 7 of the 11 candidates endorsed by ANCA won their election bids on November 8. Armenian Caucus member Cong. Chris Van Hollen (Democrat-Maryland) was elected

to the Senate after defeating Turkish Caucus member Cong. Donna Edwards in the Maryland Primary. Unfortunately, Senator Mark Kirk (Republican-Illinois), a staunch supporter of Armenian issues, was not reelected.

Significantly, while 11 members of the Congressional Armenian Caucus did not return to the House due to failure to win, retirement, resignation or seeking other office, the Turkish Caucus suffered a greater loss, with 19

of its members not returning to the House, including Co-Chair Ed Whitfield (Republican-Kentucky) who resigned earlier this year due to an ethics probe.

The substantial electoral success, enjoyed by Congressional friends of the Armenian community, bodes well for the pursuit of Armenian issues in the new Congress. Given that the Republican Party will be controlling both Houses of Congress and the White House, it is incumbent upon Republican Armenians to win over more members of the majority party, while Democrat Armenians can build on their long-established ties with the minority party. After all, the Armenian Cause, as a nonpartisan issue, should be supported by both parties!

Dr. Akcam Confirms Turks' Genocidal Intent By Proving Validity of Talat's Telegrams



*Harut
Sassounian*

Professor Taner Akcam struck a major blow to Turkish denials of the Armenian Genocide in a highly informative lecture at Ararat-Eskijian Museum-Sheen Chapel in Mission Hills, California, on November 20. Akcam, a Turkish scholar, is holder of the Robert Aram & Marianne Kalousdian, and Stephen & Marion Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University.

In his recently published book, *The Memoirs of Naim Bey and Talat Pasha's Telegrams*, Professor Akcam laid to rest persistent Turkish denials of Naim Bey's existence and authenticity of the telegrams he sold to Aram Andonian, who published them in his book, "Meds Vojire" (The Great Crime), in the early 1920's in English, French, and Armenian. Andonian, a genocide survivor, first met Naim Bey, an Ottoman official, in the concentration camp of Meskene, Turkey, in 1916, and later in Aleppo, Syria, in 1918.

In a crucial telegram dated September 22, 1915, Interior Minister Talat gave "the order that all of the Armenians' rights on Turkish soil, such as the right to live and work, have been eliminated, and not one is to be left [alive] — not even the infant in the cradle; the government accepts all responsibility for this."

In another cable sent to the Provincial Governor of Aleppo on September 29, 1915, Talat wrote: It "was previously reported that the decision to eliminate and annihilate all Armenians present in Turkey had been taken by the government, on orders of the Committee [of Union

and Progress]... regardless of how horrible the annihilation measures, and without giving in to the pangs of conscience, an end will be put to their existence, be they women, children, or invalids."

In 1983, the Turkish Historical Society published a book by Sinasi Orel and Sureyya Yuca, claiming that Talat's telegrams published by Andonian were forgeries and that Naim Bey never existed. Orel and Yuca raised 12 arguments as to why they believed that these documents were fake. Although Dr. Vahakn Dadrian had published a detailed rebuttal to Orel and Yuca in 1986, some scholars remained doubtful of the materials included in Andonian's book.

After a lengthy and painstaking research based on Ottoman archives made



Taner Akcam (Source: University of Illinois–Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies)

available in recent years, Professor Akcam was able to prove conclusively that Orel and Yuca's accusations were wrong and baseless. In his newly-published Turkish-language book and November 20 lecture, Akcam asserted:

1) There was in fact a Turkish civil servant by the name of Naim Bey. Original Ottoman records confirm his existence. In fact, Volume 7 of the Turkish Military Archive published in 2007, contains a document that describes him as: "Naim Effendi, son of Huseyin Nuri Effendi, age 26, from Silifke, married, former dispatch officer at Meskene, currently employed

as grain storehouse officer of the municipality (November 14-15, 1916)." Akcam confirmed that there are three other Ottoman records with Naim's name; two of them are in the Boghos Noubar Library in Paris.

2) Akcam announced that he had in his possession a copy of the original memoirs of Naim Bey, handwritten in Ottoman Turkish. He found the memoirs in the archives of noted researcher Father Krikor Guerguerian who had photographed Naim Bey's 35-page manuscript while visiting the Boghos Noubar Pasha Library in 1950. The original has since disappeared from the library.

3) The names of individuals and events Naim Bey had described in his memoirs are corroborated by materials Akcam recently obtained from the Ottoman archives.

4) Akcam was able to confirm that Orel and Yuca's main arguments about various aspects of Talat's telegrams, including the type of paper used and coding techniques, were incorrect.

In his scholarly quest to prove that Talat's telegrams included in Andonian's book are authentic, and debunk Turkish claims that they are forged, Akcam has made a much more significant revelation. Talat's September 22, 1915 telegram confirms that Turkish leaders had ordered the wholesale massacre of all Armenian men, women, and children, and not simply their deportation as Turkish denialists have falsely claimed for over a century. By authenticating these telegrams, Dr. Akcam has shown that Talat had a murderous INTENT — a crucial element in qualifying the Armenian mass killings as genocide, according to the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

Model OSCE Conference in Yerevan brings together Armenian youth to practice their negotiating skills

Some 58 young people from Armenia gathered on November 17 in Yerevan for the start of a two-day simulation of the OSCE's Permanent Council, one of the key decision-making bodies of the Organization, to build their skills in negotiation, diplomacy, conflict prevention and to learn more about the OSCE.

Organized by the OSCE Office in Yerevan, the two-day Model OSCE Conference will see participants discuss the diplomatic relations between the hypothetical countries of Dalutia and Varbia, which need to solve questions related to territorial disputes and cyber-security. The aim of the exercise is to give young people hands-on experience on dealing with some of the most important issues that states face in the era of information

technology.

"The Model OSCE Conference has become a good tradition in Armenia, providing participants with an opportunity to practice and improve their negotiating



skills," said Ambassador Argo Avakov, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. "The Conference has proved to be a productive way to promote OSCE values among youth. It also enables young people to come together and try to reach consensus through peaceful negotiations."

Prior to the Model OSCE conference, the participants attended practical trainings in negotiation skills, public speaking, as well as lectures on the OSCE, its activities and cyber-security. The simulation aims to promote the engagement of Armenia's youth in issues that are important for the country. It gives them a chance to act as ambassadors and to discuss an agreement that meets the interests of all.

Last month a Model OSCE Conference was organized for students of the Russian-Armenian University. The focus of that simulation exercise was to find a solution to challenges relating to national minorities between two hypothetical states. The OSCE Office in Yerevan has been organizing Model OSCE Conferences since 2008.

Garo Paylan calls Turkish PM's attention to hate crimes against Armenians, other minorities

HDP Istanbul MP Garo Paylan has brought the impunity of the hate crimes against the minority groups to the parliamentary agenda, Agos reports.

Paylan tabled a written parliamentary question addressed to Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım. He reminded that the suspects who placed a black wreath in front of the office of Agos had been released last week.

He also reminded that some racist statements had been written on the walls of 3 Armenian schools within a year. He pointed out that Asri Jewish Cemetery in Hatay and the Syriac ancient cemetery of the Syriac Orthodox Mor Peter and Mor Paul Church had been vandalized.

Paylan asked what kind of efforts there are for preventing the crimes against the minority groups, whether there are precautions for protecting the minority institutions at risk and whether there is any investigation on hate crimes.

Here is the full parliamentary question:

"On April 24, 2015, a black wreath was placed in front of the office of Agos and the perpetrators released a statement on social media titled as 'One night, we might come to visit you unexpectedly.' Agos filed a criminal complaint against this threat and a lawsuit was launched against Nationalist Turkish Party Istanbul Chair Bilal Gökçeyurt and the chair of so-called Turan Organization Ercan Uçar. The prosecution demanded prison sentence for the suspects on the charges of threatening and insulting. However, on November 17, the suspects had been acquitted.

Furthermore, in 2016, racist statements had been written on the walls of 3 Armenian schools in different times. On August 2016, it was written 'Suffering for Armenians' on the wall of Surp Haç



Tibrevank High School; it was written 'Suffering for Armenians' on the front wall of Kalfayan on January 2016 and 'Long may live Turkish race' on September 2016; and on November 2016, it was written, 'One night, we will seize Karabakh unexpectedly' on the wall of Bomonti Mihitaryan High School.

In addition, Jewish cemetery in Hatay was vandalized on June 2016 and the Syriac ancient cemetery of the Syriac Orthodox Mor Peter and Mor Paul Church had been vandalized on November.

Thus, I would like to ask:

- 1- What kind of works is the government carrying out for preventing the hate crimes against the minority groups, that has been increasing and going unpunished?
- 2- Is the government taking any specific precautions for protecting the minority institutions and their properties?
- 3- Is the Intelligence Department of Turkey (MİT) carrying out any investigation on the hate crimes against the minority groups?

ANCA Chairman reviews Armenian American policy priorities with House Speaker Paul Ryan



Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) Chairman Raffi Hamparian recently discussed the Armenian American community's foreign policy priorities with U.S. House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI), who was unanimously selected yesterday by House Republicans to continue serving as Speaker for the coming session of Congress.

Hamparian underscored the ANCA's eagerness to support the efforts of Speaker Ryan and his newly elected GOP leadership team, as well as House Democratic leaders Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer, to advance bipartisan issues of concern to Armenian American voters during the upcoming 115th Congress, which will convene in January of 2017.

"I was pleased to have an opportunity to exchange views with the newly selected Speaker of the House, a leader with deep roots in the Racine, Wisconsin area – home to a vibrant Armenian community," said Hamparian. "The ANCA has a keen interest in working with Speaker Ryan and House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy to engage the incoming administration on Armenian American issues. These issues include, but are not limited to, our legislative priorities of ending U.S. complicity in Turkey's denial of the Armenian Genocide, security and self-determination for the independent Artsakh Republic, and the growth of U.S.-Armenia economic, political, and military relations."

Commenting on their meeting, following the November 8th elections, Hamparian added that the ANCA will work with the House leadership and Congressional Republican friends

to reach out to the Trump transition team and incoming Administration. Among the priorities, Administration and Congressional are:

- An end to U.S. complicity in Turkey's denial of truth and justice for the Armenian Genocide.

- U.S. support for security and self-determination for the independent Artsakh Republic (Nagorno Karabakh)

- U.S. pressure on Baku to stop obstructing the Royce-Engel proposals for Nagorno Karabakh peace.

- Continued direct U.S. assistance to Nagorno Karabakh, to support rehabilitation efforts and de-mining activity.

- A U.S.-Armenia Tax Treaty to eliminate the threat of double taxation.

- A Millennium Challenge compact with Armenia to support Science, Technology, Educational and Math (STEM) education.

- A fundamental reevaluation of U.S.-Turkey ties, including limits on arms sales and the re-positioning of NATO nuclear weapons.

- Increased assistance to help Armenia serve as a safe haven for Armenians, Christians, and other Middle East refugees.

- Close gaps in the delivery of need-based humanitarian aid to Armenians and other at-risk communities in Syria.

The ANCA endorsed Speaker Ryan in the 2016 election. He is a member of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues and has historically been supportive of Armenian American issues in Congress.

In 2010, during consideration of the Armenian Genocide Resolution (H.Res.252), Congressman Ryan signed a letter to then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi pledging his support for this bipartisan genocide prevention measure. Speaker Pelosi had shared with the ANCA the need to secure Republican support for the measure as a requirement for scheduling it for a vote of the full House. Congressman Ryan stepped forward, joining with several of his senior House Republican colleagues in pledging, in writing, to vote in favor of H.Res.252.

Despite this letter, Speaker Pelosi did not bring the Armenian Genocide resolution to a vote.

Trump's presidency and the Armenian issues

Donald Trump's election as US President will have a positive impact on the situation in the Middle East, since the confrontation between Russia and the US will tend to weaken, expert of Turkish studies Ruben Safrastyan considers.

Speaking about the perspectives of development of American-Turkish relations, Safrastyan said "the close allied relations will be maintained, but the relationship will be void of extra sensitivity."

What's more important to Armenians is the perspective of recognition of the Armenian Genocide. "American Armenians face a tough task in this respect as they have not raised the issue during Trump's candidacy," political scientist Stepan Grigoryan says. According to him, this is the first time American Armenians get no promise, the first time they do not work in that direction.

"Trump, who has a reputation of an unpredictable man, may once recognize the Armenian Genocide in the same unexpected way," Stepan Grigoryan says.

According to Ruben Safrastyan, for the first time American Armenians will have to deal with President, who has never been related to Armenians or the Armenian Cause, which is a challenge to both American Armenians and Armenia.

"Before the inauguration ceremony scheduled for January 20, Armenians have to do their best to have Trump's administration present him true information about Armenia-related issues," Safrastyan says.

He notes that "Donald Trump has not given importance to the South Caucasus during his campaign, which means he will approach the issues of the South Caucasus from the Russian perspective."

New souvenir sheet marks 350th anniversary of the First Bible in Armenian



Asbarez— Major developments are expected in the near future in Armenian-American relations, U.S. Congresswoman Jackie Speier, told the Voice of America Armenian service.

She expressed a view that Armenia-US relations have huge potential for further expanding and involving new domains.

As co-chair of the U.S. congressional friendship group with Armenia, Speier plans to implement numerous projects in the coming year.

She said they plan to organize a large congressional delegation visit to Armenia in a foreseeable future.

Speier added that the declaration of new sister cities between the U.S. and Armenia as well as the launch of direct flights between Los Angeles and Yerevan are also on the agenda.

But the key pressing issue in Armenian-American relations, and which Speier hopes to resolve in 2017, is the reinstatement of the Millennium Challenge Corporation aid to Armenia.

She also noted that special importance should be given to the development of Armenia-U.S. economic relations. Per Speier in this new age of technology, scientific and technical ties should be developed more.

In her words, new prospects need to be reached in Armenian-American relations, in the new century.

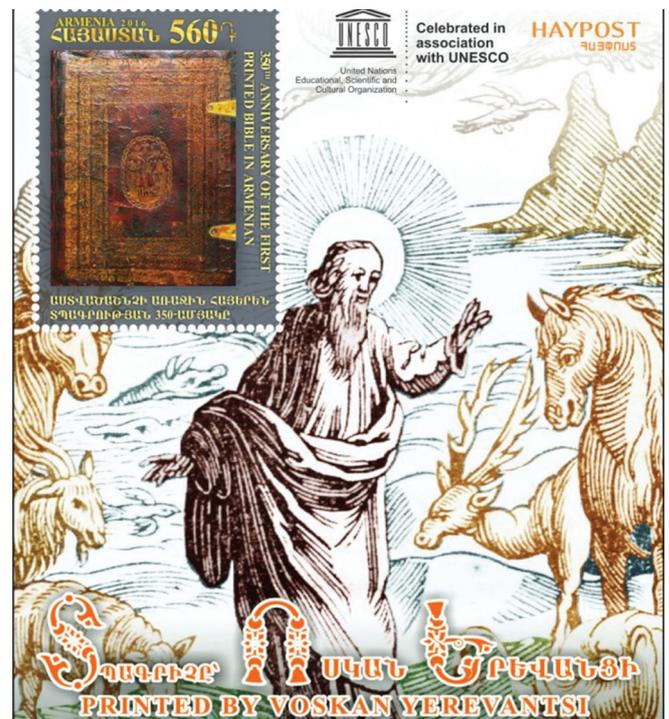
Speier also stated that the American-Armenian community is stronger today more than ever, Armenia has an influential ambassador in the U.S., and the two sides should seize these opportunities and further develop relations.

New souvenir sheet marks 350th anniversary of the First Bible in Armenian

On November 13th, a souvenir sheet with 1 postage stamp dedicated to the theme ““Religion. 350th anniversary of the First Bible in Armenian printed by Voskan Yerevantsi” has been cancelled in the hall of the Special Collections of the University of Amsterdam.

The stamp depicts the first printed Bible in Armenian language and the souvenir sheet depicts the illustration from the Genesis Book of the Bible picturing the Creation of the World.

The official cancellation of the souvenir sheet was attended by the Ambassador of Armenia in the Netherlands Dzyunik Aghajanyan, Member of the Christian Party in the Dutch Parliament Joel Voordewind, president of the board of the University of Amsterdam, prof. dr. Geert ten Dam, the Vicar of the Patriarchal Delegate of Western Europe in the Netherlands, Hayr Aren Shahinian, the director of Saint Grigor Narekatsi School Vahan Avagyan (Surp Hoki Armenian Apostolic Church Amsterdam) and the Acting Chief Executive Officer of “HayPost” CJSC.



Religion. 350th anniversary of the First Bible in Armenian printed by Voskan Yerevantsi

Date of issue: November 13, 2016

Designer: David Dovlatyan

Printing house: Cartor, France

Stamp size: 30,0 x 40,0 mm

S/sheet size: 80,0 x 93,0 mm

Print run: 20 000 pcs.

Armenian to be taught as separate profession at Beijing Language and Culture University



The Armenian language will be taught as a separate profession at the Beijing Language and Culture University. China's Education Minister Chen Baosheng confirmed the plans at a meeting with Armenian Minister of Education and Science Levon Mkrtchyan.

He welcomed the agreement reached between the Beijing Pedagogical University and the Yerevan State Pedagogical University to implement joint programs and issue double diplomas.

The perspectives of functioning of the Chinese school being constructed in Yerevan were also discussed at the meeting.

The parties emphasized the importance of giving a regional status to the school and creating a training system.

EuFoA concerned by tensions along Karabakh line of contact



On behalf of the European Friends of Armenia (EuFoA), I express my deepest concern regarding the current tensions along the Line of Contact between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, and condemn the grave violations of the cease-fire agreements perpetrated by the Azerbaijani forces since the early hours of Friday, November 11.

The shelling of the military posts near Talish and Yarmja with 60mm and 82mm mortars is the most severe escalation of the fragile situation since the April Four-Day War and the agreements

reached at the summits held in Vienna and in St Petersburg earlier this year.

Running in parallel with Azerbaijan's largest-scale military exercises ever, with 60,000 soldiers, heavy weaponry and all sorts of military material near the border with Nagorno-Karabakh, these grave violations of the cease-fire indicate the real intentions of Azerbaijan, already revealed by its recurrent war rhetoric: to impede, at any costs, the implementation of the agreed measures for more effective monitoring of the cease-fire, the investigation of in-

cidents in the Line of Contact and, ultimately, the resumption of the peace negotiations.

Unfortunately, the otherwise positive news of the adoption by the Council of a mandate for the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to negotiate, on behalf of the EU and its member states, a comprehensive agreement with the Republic of Azerbaijan, could not have come at a less opportune time. What is being announced by the EU as an opportunity for political dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation will be portrayed by the regime in Baku as an endorsement of its domestic repression of political opponents, civil society and free media, as well as of its dangerous warmongering.

We urge the European Union and its member states not to look the other way, and use all means available to prevent Azerbaijan from launching yet another offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh, which would further jeopardise the peace efforts and could carry a heavy cost in human lives and infrastructure on both sides

Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

News from distant sources, educators, publishers, church, or legal interests may be startling this week. A friend or acquaintance may trigger an old emotional injury. See the lead

paragraph for help. Give yourself time to heal, but don't allow it to carry you down that drain.



Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Encounters with people at a distance flow especially well at this time. Love life and romance are improving. Those who are into online dating may find a positive candidate this week. Activities involving the arts and things of beauty are inspir-

ing and bring pleasure.



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

You are probably much more sensitive to what others think right now. Don't ask anyone else to evaluate you or critique your work. Wait until you are finished with your creative efforts. On this same theme, avoid

critiquing others. You do not have all the facts and your rationale may be flawed.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

Your romantic side is cooperating well with your nurturing side at this time. This is especially good for female friendships. Make a date for lunch and reconnect with people you like. Work, health, or matters of life

routine may seem to be in your way at this time. This is short-lived.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

Early in the week you are completing one or more projects related to family and home. Later your attention shifts to the areas of romance and personal creativity. An idea original to you alone may drop onto your radar. It will require skills that

many others do not have. It may seem to them as if you are a magician.



Virgo (August 22–September 22)

Please read the leading paragraph. You are one who might slip down the drain, as described there. This is because you are so prone to worry, often over things that never happen. When you are tired, this old habit is

more problematic. Dealing with others is a challenge right now. Try to follow your own path until this is over.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

Events of this week trigger your sense of compassion and draw you into the need to assist in the healing of another. As you live into this experience, you will discover that hav-

ing compassion also heals you. Your spirit is lifted. Don't ignore the call.



Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

Your sign is endowed with especially deep feelings. Your empathy for others is greater than most. See the lead paragraph and be especially cautious about absorbing the pain of

the world around you at this time. It could affect you on a physical level.



Sagittarius (November 22–December 20)

You may have discovered that the foundation of your current project has some flaws. Don't let that throw you off track. Take a deep breath.

You can repair or redesign around it if you so wish. It is possible that family attitudes are undermining you. Listen with discernment for the truth and throw away the rest.



Capricorn (December 21–January 19)

Activities involving the law, publishing, travel, education or the church are favored during this season. A person or persons who enter your life may bring you inspiration

to proceed with your plans. This contact may be instrumental in opening doors that will be helpful to you in the future.



Aquarius (January 20–February 17)

You may feel angry about finances, whether that be your own or things you share with another. At this point you can do nothing about

it, so don't let the anger make you ill. Take another look at this later, when you have more clarity and are not caught by the adrenaline fear. You will find a solution.



Pisces (February 18–March 19)

Please read the leading paragraph. Neptune (Poseidon) is in your sign. You may be more reactive than others to the drain on your energy at this time. Be good to yourself and avoid wallowing in old issues or hurt

feelings. If you can do nothing else, watch good movies and read inspiring articles/books.

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Paris Office: 34 Avenue des Champs Elysees
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Yerevan Address: 8, Khorenatsi St.

Young filmmaker wins Awards for 'Save Kessab' documentary

Asbarez – Alexander Edep, a graduating Senior at Pine Crest School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, has received multiple awards for his documentary “Save Kessab.”

Alexander produced and directed a documentary titled “Save Kessab” which helped propel awareness of the Armenian Genocide. The film was accepted and screened in Times Square in New York City, at the 2015 All American High School Film Festival; it is an official selection of the 2016 Rockland Youth Film Festival, and also received a prestigious “Gold Key Award” for Excellence in Visual Arts. The film was shown on exhibit at the Broward County Children’s Art Museum.

The film featured his grandfather, Joseph Megerdichian, detailing the horrors suffered by Armenians, particularly Kessabtsis, at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. “Save Kessab,” along with Alexander’s other work can be viewed at Alexanderedep.com. Alexander plans to attend film school in the fall of 2017.

He is an aspiring filmmaker and has received numerous awards and recognition during his high school years. Recently, he has been awarded a \$25,000.00 grant by AT&T for a web series to be shown on full screen. The series will highlight issues of cyber-bullying among teens.



PACE co-rapporteurs pay tribute to the memory of Armenian Genocide victims

Giuseppe Galati (Italy, EPP/CD) and Alan Meale (United Kingdom, SOC), co-rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the

Council of Europe (PACE) for the monitoring of obligations and commitments by Armenia visited the Tsitsemakaberd Memorial on November 23.

The guests laid flowers at the Eternal Fire and paid tribute to the memory of the victims with a minute of silence.

The co-rapporteurs visited the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute and familiarized with documents proving the Armenian Genocide.

Alan Meale noted that the atrocities and genocide committed against Armenians by Turks should be condemned by everyone. “Governments should recognize what has happened in reality. People must be informed, genocide should be taught at schools and everything should be done to prevent their reoccurrence,” he said.

According to Giuseppe Galati, the Council of Europe has been doing a huge work towards clarification and stabilization of relations between countries of different beliefs to avoid such tragedies.



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Gayaneh Arakelyan
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E-mail: contact@nt.am
URL: www.nt.am

Address in Armenia: 28 Isahakian Str., Yerevan, 0009, RA.
 Tel.: (+374 60) 35-11-23
 (+374 60) 35-11-22

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

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

Հասցի՝ Բասիսկյան 28, Երևան, ՀՀ, 0009