

# Armenia`s New Constitutional Court Chief Elected



The Armenian parliament voted on March 21 to elect Hrayr Tovmasyan, a former opposition politician who switched his allegiance to President Serzh Sargsyan in 2010, the new chairman of the country's Constitutional Court.

The previous, longtime head of Arme-

nia's highest court, Gagik Harutyunyan, was named earlier this month to run a new body that will oversee the Armenian judiciary and supposedly guarantee its independence.

A lawyer by education, Hrayr Tovmasyan was a senior member of

the opposition Zharangutyun (Heritage) party in the 2000s. He was unexpectedly appointed as justice minister in late 2010 and joined Sargsyan's Republican Party of Armenia (HHK) in 2012.

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## Preparations for upcoming Francophone Economic Forum discussed in Paris

On March 22, a high-level preparatory meeting for the Francophone Economic Forum to be held in Armenia on October 10 within the framework of the 17th Summit of La Francophonie took place in Paris. The meeting was attended by Edward Nalbandian, Foreign Minister of Armenia, Chairman-in-Office of the Ministerial Conference of La Francophonie; Henry Rabary-Njaka, Foreign Minister of Madagascar, which chairs the OIF; Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of La Francophonie; Pierre Gattaz, President of the Movement of the Enterprises of France (MEDEF).

Presenting Armenia's initiative to hold an Economic Forum, Edward Nalbandian highlighted that the main goal is to create a permanently operating network of francophone businessmen. Armenia's Foreign Minister outlined the mission of the net-

work, which would be the establishment and development of institutional, professional ties between francophone entrepreneurs, businessmen and their unifying organizations, promotion of favorable conditions for entrepreneurship, encouraging mutual investments aimed at economic development of La Francophonie countries. Edward Nalbandian added that it is planned to create network's digital platform, as a framework for exchanges of best practices and positive experiences.

Foreign Minister of Armenia identified the following as the topics for discussion at the Forum: implementation of infrastructure projects aimed at ensuring the sustainable development; improvement of management in the areas of energy, including renewable energy, communication and transportation, as well as water resources; increasing the efficiency of agricultural and



food production; promotion of cooperation in the field of digital and high technologies; advancement of entrepreneurial activity of women and youth, as well as encouragement of vocational education.

Foreign Minister noted that heads of international and regional economic structures, a limited number of renowned businessmen from the entire francophone world will be invited to the Forum. Minister Nalbandian informed the participants of the meeting that the Economic Forum is planned to be held in Tsagh-

kadzor, one of the picturesque places in Armenia. Foreign Minister of Armenia informed that the participants of the Forum will be invited to the inauguration ceremony of the Summit of La Francophonie on October 11.

The participants of the meeting welcomed Armenia's initiative on organizing Francophone Economic Forum and the related proposals, expressing readiness to provide assistance in works towards both organizing the forum and establishing the network of francophone businessmen.

## NATO Defense Education Enhancement Program experts visit Armenia



On 22 March the NATO Defense Education Enhancement Program Expert Group visited the National Defense Research University (NDRU) of Armenia. The guests were hosted by Lieutenant General Hayk Kotanjian, Founding Head, NDRU, Doctor of Political Science, Professor.

He underlined the NATO Expert Group's support in the process of the defense education

reforms in the RA. Professor Kotanjian stated that at the NDRU the education process was implemented through the adaptation of the Western universities and institutes' model, and Russian think tanks' experience – transferring the products of the academic-applied research activity of the research component as knowledge, to the auditorium.

The guests were briefed on the

main results of the Inter-Agency Executive Education 4-week course of October-November, 2017, as well as on the NDRU-elaborated draft program of the Inter-Agency Executive Education 8-week course. It was emphasized that the course was scheduled to kick off in May-June this year, with participation of the Deputy Ministers from the agencies involved in the defense sphere.

Hayk Kotanjian mentioned that the NDRU had launched the review of the RA National Security Strategy. The Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS), MOD, RA, was the academic coordinator of the first RA National Security Strategy, and now the NDRU, established through the

transformation of the INSS, uses the methodology and knowledge acquired through that process.

At the meeting, Colonel Suren Davtyan, Head, National Institute for Strategic Defense Security Education–Deputy Head in Education, NDRU, made a report.

Brigadier-General (Ret.) Ernest B. Beno from Canada, Member, NATO DEEP Expert Group, delivered a lecture on the "Education of Strategic Leaders in the Inter-Agency Collaborative Environment".

The presentation was followed by a discussion during which the guests asked questions to the NDRU research fellows. At the end of the meeting the NATO DEEP experts expressed their contentment with the visit.

## No political prisoners in Armenia, says Minister

The Armenian authorities have not arrested or imprisoned anyone for political reasons, Justice Minister Davit Harutyunyan said on March 22.

"I don't agree that there are political prisoners in Armenia," he told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am).

Harutyunyan dismissed a list of about a dozen imprisoned individuals drawn up by some human rights groups and other non-governmental organizations.

"I am familiar with many such lists. I have also seen a list drawn up by an international organization which described Nairi Hunanyan as a political prisoner," he said, referring to the jailed leader of an armed group that assassinated Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsyan and seven other officials in the October 1999 attack on the Armenian parliament.

"Everything depends on standards and unfortunately the fact is that this term [political prisoner] is very often used for political purposes," added the minister who has held senior state posts for the last two decades.



The individuals considered to be political prisoners by critics of the Armenian government are mostly members or supporters of fringe opposition groups. One of them, Zhirayr Sefilian, was sentenced this week to 10.5 years in prison on coup charges which he strongly denies.

The lengthy prison sentence has been condemned by Armenian civic groups and mainstream opposition leaders such as Nikol Pashinyan, a leader of

the Yelk alliance.

Another Yelk leader, Edmon Marukyan, on March 22 commented more cautiously on the jail term handed to Sefilian. He said he will pass final judgment only after looking into the verdict handed down by a Yerevan district court. Marukyan made clear at the same time that he believes that the verdict is "connected" with Sefilian's political activities.

The head of the European Union Delegation in Yerevan,

Piotr Switalski, was asked by reporters last September about the existence of political prisoners in Armenia. "The European Union does not always necessarily share the views of non-governmental organizations," Switalski said. "On such issues, we are mainly guided by decisions made by the European Court of Human Rights. As you know, there are no people in Armenia who are qualified by [the Strasbourg court] as political prisoners."

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Tovmasyan was dismissed as justice minister in 2013 to become a key member of a presidential body that drafted controversial constitutional changes calling for Armenia's transformation into a parliamentary republic. He was elected to the current National Assembly on the HHK ticket last year and headed its standing committee on legal affairs until this month.

The HHK-controlled parliament named him a Constitutional Court judge on March 2. It went on to elect him court chairman by 64 votes to 27. The 47-year-

old was backed by deputies from the ruling party and its junior coalition partner, Dashnaktsutyun, but rejected by their colleagues representing the opposition Tsarukian Bloc and Yelk alliance.

Yelk lawmakers were particularly critical of Tovmasyan's candidacy during a debate that preceded the vote. One of them, Nikol Pashinyan, said that he is being rewarded for helping Sargsyan extend his rule as a result of the controversial constitutional reform and several new laws mainly authored by Tovmasyan.

"Hrayr Tovmasyan is being dispatched to the Constitutional Court and appoint-

ed as its chairman in order to serve ... as a watchdog for this fraudulent state," charged Pashinyan.

The HHK's parliamentary leaders claimed that in his new job Tovmasyan will not be influenced by his government background and past affiliation with the president's party.

"I promise that I will be both the chairman of a good Constitutional Court and a good chairman of the Constitutional Court," Tovmasyan said, for his part, right after the vote. He declined to speak to reporters before making his way into an HHK deputy's office moments later.



## Francophone PA Political Affairs Committee confirms support for Minsk Group Co-Chairs

The Political Affairs Committee of Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie (AFP) has expressed deepest concern over the situation created over Nagorno Karabakh and called on the parties to create favorable conditions for exclusively peaceful settlement of the conflict.

The statement adopted upon the conclusion of the Committee's session in Yerevan, reads:

We, the members of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie (AFP), being in Yerevan from March 20 to 21 on the occasion of the Session of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie,

Acting in accordance with Francophonie Charter and the AFP boosted values,

Quoting the decisions on the settlement of the crisis situations, exiting from crisis situations and the establishment of peace on Francophone territory by the heads of the states and governments during the Montreux (2010), Kinshasa (2012), Dakar (2014) and Antananarivo (2016) Summits,

Reaffirming our readiness to resolutely act for the benefit of peace and establishment, strengthening the legal state and protection of human rights for preventing the crises and conflicts,

Being concerned over crisis and conflict situations in numerous countries of Francophone territory,

Encouraging the Francophonie to continue its activities on adequately responding the early alarm, on the settlement of the crisis and conflict situations, the support



of the states in the transition period, being based on the UN Charter, the international law, the nations' self-determination and the rights of territorial integrity of the states,

We express our deepest concern over the situation created over Nagorno Karabakh and call on the parties to create favorable conditions for exclusively peaceful settlement of the conflict,

We underline the necessity of creating an atmosphere of trust for easing the negotiation process and all kinds of announcements threatening the rise of intensification level and the necessity of avoiding the actions,

We confirm our support to the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group in the issue of the peaceful settlement of Karabakh problem,

We call upon the conflict parties to be deprived of the use of force or the threat of the use of force which can endanger the peaceful negotiation process and we invite the parties to continue the negotiations taking as a basis the fundamental principles being proposed by the Minsk Group, i.e. not turning to the use of force or threat of using it, the territorial integrity, the rights of the peoples' legal equality and self-determination as an inseparable part of balanced and stable settlement.

## Armenia joins Creative Europe programme

Armenia has become the fourth of the EU's Eastern Partner countries, after Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, to join the Creative Europe programme. The relevant agreement was signed on 20 March by the EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor Navracsics, and the country's Minister of Culture, Armen Amiryan, at a ceremony in Brussels.

After the signing ceremony, Commissioner Navracsics said: "I welcome this new opportunity to strengthen EU-Armenia cooperation through culture."

"The signature of this agree-



ment is one of the concrete deliverables of the EU strategy on international cultural relations. [...] I am very happy to be build-

ing bridges during our European Year of Cultural Heritage which is a great opportunity to increase awareness of our common cul-

tural heritage across the continent."

According to the EU press release, the agreement will first have to be ratified by the Armenian Parliament before Armenian applicants are eligible to participate in the 2018 Creative Europe calls for proposals.

Creative Europe is the European Commission's programme supporting cultural diversity and the competitiveness of the European cultural and creative sectors and foresees the participation of countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy.



## Latvian Parliament supports ratification of Armenia-EU deal at first reading



The Latvian Saeima without any opposition conceptually supported the Armenia- EU Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, (CEPA) after the 1st reading, Armenia's Ambassador to Latvia Tigran Mkrtchyan said in a Twitter post.

The bill on the ratification of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement between the European Union

and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States on the one hand and the Republic of Armenia on the other, now needs to pass the second reading expected to take place in April.

"The new agreement is expected to intensify cooperation between the European Union and Armenia, including strengthening political dialogue and improving cooperation in other fields," the authors of

the bill in the Foreign Ministry said, according to the Saeima's official website.

"The agreement contains a trade chapter and it is expected that the new regulation will improve the conditions for bilateral trade between the European Union and Armenia, will provide a better regulatory environment for entrepreneurs in the areas of trade in goods and services, establishment and management of companies, capital movements, public procurement, intellectual property rights, sustainable development and competition," says in the annotation to the draft law.

The agreement also contains rules on cooperation in areas such as transport, energy, health, the environment, climate change, taxes, education and culture, employment and social affairs, banks and insurance, industrial policy, agriculture and rural development, tourism, research and innovation, and the development of raw materials extraction. The agreement will also apply to judicial cooperation, the rule of law, money laundering and the financing of terrorism, the fight against organized crime and corruption.

## Australian lawmakers passes resolution declaring solidarity with Artsakh

The New South Wales (NSW) Armenia – Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group has passed a resolution, declaring the cross-party collective's solidarity with the Republic of Artsakh and its people's right to self-determination, reported the Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC-AU).

Following a meeting between members of the NSW Armenia – Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group and the Republic of Artsakh's visiting Minister of State Arayik Harutyunyan, the Artsakh Representative to Australia Kaylar Michaelian, and members of the Armenian National Committee of Australia, the following was resolved:

"The NSW Armenia – Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group:

1. Notes that in 2012 the Legislative Council recognised



the right to self-determination of all peoples including those of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh; and called on the Commonwealth Government to officially recognise the independence of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh and strengthen Australia's relationship with Nagorno-Karabakh

(now known as Artsakh) and its citizens;

2. Stands in solidarity with the 2012 resolution by the Legislative Council, including to recognise the right to self-determination of people in Artsakh (previously known as Nagorno Karabakh)."

ANC-AU Executive Direc-

tor, Haig Kayserian praised the symbolic show of support from the Group of Members of the Parliament in Australia's largest state.

"This is a group of around 25 political leaders, representatives of all parties across both chambers, in the Parliament of Australia's largest state of NSW, declaring they stand with the Republic of Artsakh and the people of Artsakh," said Kayserian. "They have pledged their solidarity with the motion the NSW Legislative Council historically passed in 2012, and for this we thank them."

The NSW Armenia – Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group is chaired by Jonathan O'Dea MP and vice-chaired by the Hon. Walt Secord MLC, and lists among its members a growing number of MPs in the NSW State Parliament.



## World Bank, Armenia discuss 2018-2022 partnership framework

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan received a delegation led by World Bank Yerevan Office Head Sylvie Bossoutrot.

During the meeting Ms. Bossoutrot presented the partnership framework between WB and Armenia for 2018-2022 and the proposed reform agenda, based on the Government's five-year plan. She underlined that the World Bank is ready to build on the ties of effective cooperation with the Government of Armenia in a number of areas, including public administration, infrastructure, export promotion, human capital development, sustainable environment and natural resource management.

The WB Yerevan Office Head appreciated the ongoing transformations in Armenia and complimented the Prime Minister for achieving high rates of growth. Highlighting the successful course of constitutional reforms, the completion of our country's transition to the parliamentary system, the signing of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, the high rates of economic growth and the rising tide of Diaspora's involvement in various spheres of the economy, Sylvie Bossoutrot noted their positive impact on the ongoing reform process in Armenia.

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan attached importance to the deepening and



expansion of bilateral cooperation, welcomed the draft partnership program and the proposed reforms. The head of the Armenian government suggested continuing discussions on various projects with the government agencies and thanked the World Bank for supporting the reform of the water resource management system. Karen Karapetyan noted that his government will continue to reform this sector and take further steps towards its optimization.

"We have started implementing a large

package of projects in the field of agriculture, aimed at directing farmers to engage in a more efficient, modern and intensive agriculture. In this regard, it is important for us to continue the reforms in the sphere of water resource management so that it becomes a logical business, which in turn will lead to higher efficiency, discipline and cost-effectiveness," the Prime Minister said.

A number of other issues of bilateral cooperation were discussed during the meeting.

## Trade turnover between Armenia and Italy grew 25% in 2017

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan received outgoing Italian Ambassador to Armenia Giovanni Ricciulli on completion of his diplomatic mission in our country.

Karen Karapetyan thanked the Ambassador for the work done since December, 2013 toward developing the Armenian-Italian relations and wished him every success in his future activities. Highly appreciative of the ongoing cooperation in political and cultural spheres, the Prime Minister made a point of further steps aimed at deepening economic ties.

"In this respect, we have much more potential than we what is actually realized. Ar-



menia and Italy boasted a 25% growth in commodity turnover in 2017, and we hope that this trend will continue owing to the active efforts of the Intergovernmental Commission," he said. The Premier

attached importance to cooperation with Italy in the frame of EU-Armenia relations.

Ambassador Giovanni Ricciulli thanked Karen Karapetyan for close cooperation and went on to underscore

that sound trends in business relations have been observed in Armenian-Italian relations over the past few years. He noted that the Armenian Government's active efforts have resulted in increased interest for Armenia among Italian business circles. "I am sure that this interest will bring about good results in the near future," Giovanni Ricciulli said.

As they discussed other issues of topical interest, the parties touched upon the possibility of launching direct air flights and highlighted the importance of the Armenian-Italian intergovernmental commission, which held its first session last year.



## Armenian official chides Iran over "conflicting claims" on gas price

An Armenian pro-government lawmaker accused Iranian officials on March 21 of misleading Yerevan about potential prices of Iranian natural gas delivered to Armenia.

Mihran Hakobyan, who represents the ruling Republican Party (HHK), cited statements by Iran's current and former ambassadors in Yerevan that Iranian gas could cost Armenia less than Russian gas. "But as soon as you ask these people whether they would charge us even one [U.S.] cent less than Russia at the Armenian border you get a negative answer," he complained in the parliament.

"This is one component of Iran's regional policy," Hakobyan went on. "To put it bluntly, they let down the Armenian authorities and the Armenian state based on their regional policy components."

It was not immediately clear whether Hakobyan's comments reflected only his personal view or the Armenian government's position.

Armenia imports more than 80



percent of its gas from Russia at a discounted price currently set at \$150 per thousand cubic meters. The remaining gas imports come from Iran under a swap arrangement involving supplies of Armenian electricity to the Islamic Republic.

Speaking in Yerevan in December 2013, the then Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Reisi seemed to imply that Tehran is ready to offer the Armenian side an even lower gas price. However, a senior executive of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) made clear in August last year that Yerevan would have to pay a price

higher than the existing Russian tariff should it opt for additional gas supplies from Iran.

Energy Minister Ashot Manukyan insisted on Wednesday that Russian gas is cheaper for Armenia than gas coming from Iran or other potential supplies. "I've just returned from [gas-rich] Turkmenistan," he said during the government's question-and-answer session in the parliament. "[Gas-related] discussions have long been underway and they will continue. I can report no progress at the moment because the prices offered to us are not competitive compared to the prices of gas im-

ported by us."

Edmon Marukyan, a pro-Western opposition lawmaker, dismissed the minister's assurances. He claimed that the government is not diversifying gas supplies to Armenia because the domestic gas distribution network is owned by Russia's Gazprom energy giant. Marukyan also pointed to the fact that Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan used to run that network and hold senior positions in other Gazprom subsidiaries.

Karapetyan discussed gas supplies with senior Iranian officials during an official visit to Tehran last October. He also reportedly explored the possibility of Armenian imports of gas from Turkmenistan via Iran.

The Armenian-Iranian gas-for-electricity arrangement is due to be significantly expanded after Armenia completes the ongoing construction of a third power transmission line connecting it to Iran. The \$120 million line is expected to go on stream next year.

## Business Armenia sets targets \$46.3 million investments in 2018



The Development Foundation of Armenia will now function under a new name – Business Armenia.

The Foundation has set the target to ensure \$16.3 million exports and \$46.8 million investments in 2018.

This year, "Select Armenia"

comprehensive e-platform will be created with the support of the Asian Development Bank, which will present Armenia's investment opportunities and full export potential in its "Invest Armenia" and "Made in Armenia" sections.

In 2018, the DFA will introduce the "Customer Relationship Management" system that will enhance the effectiveness of DFA aftercare services for beneficiary companies. Moreover, the DFA Aftercare team will run a "Hot Line", enabling faster response to the problems faced by investors and exporters.

The "eRegulations" tool of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) will be installed within the frames of a grant program with a budget of 394 000 USD: the tool will be used to classify and publish detailed information on Armenia's investment processes that will allow to identify the impediments to their implementation. The Fundraising

team successfully completed financial negotiations to introduce the given platform and systems.

As for the results of 2017, seventy-five Armenian companies attended 11 international exhibitions with the support of the Development Foundation of Armenia, established new business ties and signed export contracts with a record total value of 5 billion 391 million AMD. This result is twice higher than last year's indicator, and as a result of each dram spent, the Foundation attracted more than 23 drams. Another 317 million AMD transactions were concluded as a result of 12 business forums organized with the support of the DFA.

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## Charles Aznavour on Armenia, Karabakh, Francophonie and his path to diplomacy

Living legend Charles Aznavour has talked to the UN Special about his path to diplomacy and the role and relationship of Armenia with the United Nations and Switzerland.

"I was born in Paris, but both my parents were survivors of the genocide. My father, Misha, was an Armenian from Georgia; my mother, Knar, from a family of Armenian traders from Turkey. France quickly became my country. At home we spoke both Armenian and French, and we felt both 100% French and 100% Armenian," Aznavour said.

"Many Armenians in France believe that I played a certain role in the term 'Armenian' being included in the French national narrative, and then, after the song 'They Fell,' which I wrote in 1975, they regarded me as someone who, finally, represented them," he added.

Charles Aznavour, who serves as Ambassador of Armenia to the United Nations in Geneva and to Switzerland, added, however, that his commitment to Armenia is relatively recent.

"Before its independence, I went there once, in 1964, just for a concert. It was the devastating earthquake of 1988 that alerted my consciousness. In twenty-four hours, I decided to launch an association: 'Aznavour for Armenia', which for many Armenians in Armenia in those difficult times, embodied hope for the future," he said.

"The newly independent Republic of Armenia trusted me with a function that would strengthen and formalize my commitment. First, I was appointed as Armenia's Ambassador to UNESCO, and then, in 2009, President Sargsyan, who granted me the Armenian nationality, proposed that I represent Armenia in Switzer-

land and the United Nations in Geneva. At first I hesitated, thinking it would not be easy. Then I thought what is important for Armenia must be important for all of us," Charles Aznavour stated.

"For Armenians, with a history of millennia, the last quarter of the century was particularly critical. Last year, Armenia celebrated the 25th anniversary of its membership of the United Nations. Over the past years, despite a

community aimed at combating terrorism and responding to the refugee crisis. Armenia is the third country in Europe in terms of hosting the largest number of refugees per capita. Twenty-two thousand refugees from Syria have found shelter in Armenia."

"Since it became a member of the United Nations, Armenia has been actively engaged in the activities of the Organization and its bodies in various areas. This, in particular,



number of challenges, Armenia has become a fully-fledged and responsible member of the international community. On becoming a member of the United Nations, Armenia committed to making its own contribution to the efforts of the international community aimed at building a peaceful future based on universal values, including respect for the principles of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples," Aznavour said.

He attached importance to the participation of Armenia in a number of United Nations peacekeeping missions: from Afghanistan to Iraq, from Kosovo to Lebanon and Mali, through which Armenia contributes to the establishment of international peace and security.

"Armenia is committed to contributing to the joint efforts of the international com-

relates to our commitment to the United Nations prevention agenda. In this regard, the efforts of Armenia directed towards the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide are essential. As a nation which has survived the horror of a genocide, we feel moral responsibility to voice the importance of the prevention of genocide and crimes against humanity and to take action in this domain," Aznavour said.

"An international day of commemoration and dignity for the victims of the crime of genocide and the prevention of this crime has been officially and unanimously established by the United Nations General Assembly. At the origin of this initiative was the Human Rights Council in Geneva, through a resolution presented by Armenia. As a

descendant of genocide survivors, and, moreover, as a public figure, I have a particular responsibility. I carry the weight of their infinite suffering. It is our task to stand for their respect and dignity, and to make sure that oblivion and denial do not kill them a second time. Those who were annihilated in 1915, 1941 and 1994, were the Armenians, the Jews, the Tutsis... not for what they had done, but for who they were. It was me, but it was you too. Because at Der Zor, Auschwitz, and Kigali their target was humanity. The barbarism that has not been eradicated resurfaces under another mask. It can be observed in the fate of the minorities in the Middle East nowadays. Impunity has set the wrong pattern," Charles Aznavour stated. Although Armenian-Swiss diplomatic relations were established only a quarter of a century ago, the friendship between the two peoples is not new, he said.

"The political dialogue between the two countries intensified after the opening of diplomatic missions in Switzerland and Armenia, with many reciprocal high-level visits, as well as due to the close collaboration in the framework of such international organizations as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the International Organization of Francophonie," Aznavour added.

"I am also very happy that Switzerland hosted two recent summits of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in the framework of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process. I believe that settlement of this issue will contribute greatly to the overall security and stability in the region.



Since 1990s the peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan have been mediated by the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group (France, Russia, USA), the only internationally mandated body to mediate in the settlement of this conflict. The mediation hinges upon a package of proposals, which are based on such principles of international law as the nonuse of force, self-determination and territorial integrity,” Armenia’s Ambassador to Switzerland stated.

“The trilateral (Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan, Armenia) cease-fire agreements signed in 1994 and consolidated in 1995 shall be fully respected. In this regard, it’s important to have in place the investigative mechanism on the Na-

gorno-Karabakh contact line with Azerbaijan, which has repeatedly been called for by the Co-Chair countries. I hope the neighbouring country will agree and will not hinder this mechanism. This will save the lives of 18-year-old boys and civilians. The co-chairs have also been calling for the authorities to prepare their people for peace, not war. I hope their voices will be heard. Thirty years after Sumgait, the international community, including the United Nations, should be more vigilant and attentive in pushing for peaceful resolution, to which there is no alternative, for the sake of the people living in the region,” Charles Aznavour added.

Mr. Aznavour hailed the decision of the heads of states of La Francophonie decid-

ed to hold its summit in Yerevan.

“Yes, I was glad to know that this year, in October, the heads of states of La Francophonie decided to hold its summit in Yerevan. This will be the largest event not only in the history of independent Armenia, but also of the Organization in the region. As a member of La Francophonie, Armenia shares its values of peace, solidarity, dialogue, the equality of peoples, human rights and cultural diversity, and will prioritize them during its presidency. The summit slogan – “Living together” reflects these humanitarian values, which, I am sure, can strengthen the cohesion of our societies and bring peace and prosperity to the francophone space,” Charles Aznavour concluded.

## How Armenians helped develop photography in the Ottoman Empire and beyond

An exhibition titled “An Armenian Family Odyssey” will be on display at Brand Library & Art Center in Glendale from March 24 to April 27. The exhibition traces the lives of the Dildilian family through the last decades of the Ottoman Empire and the violent eradication of Armenians from their homeland in the 1915 genocide.

Drawing upon the family archive consisting of thousands of photographs, glass negatives, drawings, artwork, documents, letters, and family heirlooms, this exhibition provides a unique perspective of a tumultuous time through the lens of one Armenian family.

This exhibition tells the story of an Armenian family, the Dildilians, many of whose members worked as photographers in Ottoman Turkey. They lived, worked, and raised their families in the Anatolian cities of Sebastia (Sivas), Marsovan (Merzifon), Sam-sun and the surrounding communities. The story begins in the 1870s, tracing the lives of the Dildilians through the last decades of the declining Ottoman Empire. The rupture created by the genocide and their eventual exile from their homeland in 1922 play a central role in the story. While the surviving members of the family rebuilt their lives in their adopted countries of Greece, France, and the United States, the Dildilians never forgot the life they left behind. The story is a painful one, encompassing the violent eradication of Armenians from their 3,000-year old homeland. Yet the photographic narrative also testifies to the cultural, educational, and commercial achievements of this proud nation. Armenians were among the first photographers in the Middle East.



Their talents soon gave them a dominant role in the profession.

Many of the photographs gathered for this exhibition were taken by Tso-lag and Aram Dildilian over the course of 34 years in the cities, towns, and countryside of central Anatolia and the Black Sea Coast. Other members of the family worked in the studio as it expanded across the region. The next generation continued the family legacy of photography in Greece and the United States through the 1970s. The photographs and glass negatives in the family archive number in the thousands – a truly unique treasure unmatched by Armenian families who survived the genocide. Additional photographs from private collections and the archive of Anatolia College have been incorporated into the exhibition.

The texts of the exhibition were written

by Armen T. Marsoobian, the grandson of Tso-lag Dildilian. They are based upon the written and oral memoirs of two generations of storytellers. Written accounts beginning with Tso-lag in the 1920s were greatly expanded upon by his brother Aram in the subsequent decades. The women of the Dildilian family also give written and oral accounts including that of Armen and Aram’s sister Haiganouch as conveyed by her daughter Maritsa.

Between 2013 and 2016, exhibitions were held in the Republic of Turkey based upon this photographic archive and the extensive written and recorded memoirs of the Dildilian family. Under the farsighted leadership of the civil society activist and philanthropist, Osman Kavala, the Turkish NGO, Anadolu Kültür organized these groundbreaking exhibitions across Turkey in the cities of Istanbul, Merzifon, Diyarbakir, and Ankara. While controversial — because of the official Turkish state policy of genocide denial — the exhibitions attempted to break the silence surrounding Turkey’s troubled and often violent past.

A full account of the family story can be found in Marsoobian’s recently published books, *Fragments of a Lost Homeland: Remembering Armenia* (I. B. Tauris, 2015) and *Reimagining a Lost Armenian Home: The Dildilian Photography Collection* (I. B. Tauris, 2017).

This exhibition e exhibition was curated by Işın Önel and is dedicated to Osman Kavala who currently is unjustly imprisoned in Turkey for his human rights work that has sought to foster dialogue between Turks, Kurds, Greeks, and Armenians.

## EMS Conference

### Emil Artin International Conference

**Dedicated to the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Emil Artin (03.07.1898-20.12.1962)**

**Yerevan, the Republic of Armenia, May 27-June 2, 2018.**

#### The conference is organized by:

- Armenian Mathematical Union
- Yerevan State University
- American University of Armenia
- Committee of Emil Artin Junior Prize in Mathematics
- Institute of Mathematics of National Academy of Sciences of Armenia
- University of Bergen

Academically supported by the Steklov Mathematical Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The aim of the conference is to provide a forum where specialists will meet to share ideas of latest research in Algebraic Structures, Mathematical Logic, Number Theory, Pure and Applied Mathematics, Discrete Mathematics and Computer Science.

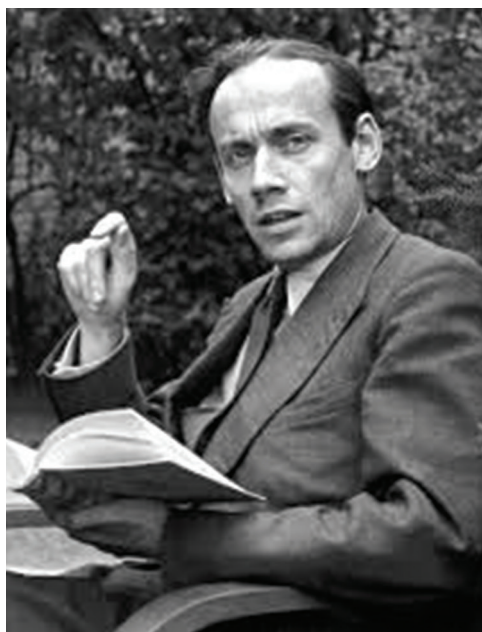
The conference will be held at the Yerevan State University and American University of Armenia.

#### Conference Topics:

- Classical and non-classical Algebraic Structures,
- Algebra and Logics, Number Theory,
- Geometry and Topology, Analysis and Equations,
- Boolean and De Morgan functions, Cryptography and Discrete Mathematics, Applied Mathematics,
- Universal Algebra, Computer Science and IT,
- Artin L-functions, Dynamical Systems,
- Quantum information theory, Quantum Logic and Quantum Computation, Quantum Groups and Quantum Quasigroups.

#### Invited speakers that confirmed their participation:

- Sergey Adian (Steklov Mathematical Institute of Russian Academy of Sciences)
- Ara Basmajian (City University of New York, Hunter College, USA)
- Lilya Budaghyan (Bergen University, Norway)
- Tullio Ceccherini-Silberstein (Universita' del Sannio, Italy)
- Rostislav Grigorchuk (Texas A&M University, USA)
- Alexander Guterman (Moscow State University, Russia)
- Vadim Kaimanovich (University of Ottawa, Canada)
- Jörg Koppitz (Potsdam University, Germany)
- Aleksandar Krapež (Mathematical Institute SASA, Belgrade, Serbia)
- Hayk Melikyan (North Carolina Central University, USA)
- Daniele Mundici (University of Florence, Italy)
- Alexander Olshanskii (Vanderbilt University,



USA)

- Alexey Parshin (Steklov Mathematical Institute of Russian Academy of Sciences)
- Evgeny Plotkin (Bar Ilan University, Israel)
- Victor Pambuccian (Arizona State University, USA)
- Nikolay Romanovskiy (Sobolev Institute of Mathematics, Russia)
- Anna Romanowska (Warsaw University of Technology, Poland)
- Hanamantagouda Sankappanavar (State University of New York at New Paltz, USA)
- Armen Sergeev (Steklov Mathematical Institute of Russian Academy of Sciences)
- Victor Shcherbacov (Institute of Informatics and Mathematics Moldova Academy of Sciences)
- Ivan Shestakov (São Paulo University, Brazil)
- Jonathan Smith (Iowa State University, USA)
- Katrin Tent (University of Münster, Germany)
- Anatoly Vershik (St.Petersburg Dept. of Steklov Mathematical Institute of Russian Academy of Sciences)
- Mikhail Volkov (Ural Federal University, Russia)
- Efim Zelmanov (University of California, USA)
- Anatolii Zhuchok (Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University, Ukraine)

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- Artur Sahakyan
- Vladimir Sahakyan

**Registration fee** for the conference is \$200 for participants and covers the conference materials and coffee breaks. **Banquet:** \$50. All fees are due upon arrival, at the registration desk.

#### Important dates:

The deadline for conformation of participation and submission of abstracts is April 1, 2018 by E-mail address: [amu@ysu.am](mailto:amu@ysu.am). Please submit one-page abstract in LaTeX and PDF formats (in English) to [amu@ysu.am](mailto:amu@ysu.am).

Working days: May 28, 2018 (Registration, 9:30; Opening ceremony, 10.00) – June 1, 2018.

Arrival: May 27, 2018; departure: June 2, 2018.

**Additional information can be requested by e-mail:** [amu@ysu.am](mailto:amu@ysu.am)

**The conference website:** <http://math.sci.am/conference/artin120>

We are looking forward to welcome you in Yerevan, Armenia for the Emil Artin International Conference.

Sincerely,

Prof. Yu. Movsisyan

President of the Armenian Mathematical Union



## 26th group of Peace Corps volunteers arrived to Armenia

42 American Peace Corps Volunteers have arrived to Armenia on March 21. The Volunteers form the 26th group of Peace Corps Volunteers to serve in our country. With the addition of this new group, currently there are approximately 110 Peace Corps Volunteers serving in rural villages and towns throughout all of the regions of Armenia. The Volunteers have come to Armenia with two year commitment to work as English language teachers in schools, as well as in NGOs.

Before coming to Armenia, the Volunteers have participated in a virtual online course and they have learnt the Armenian alphabet and some elementary Armenian words and phrases.

Before the Volunteers start

their service in Armenia, they will have a 3-month training to learn the Armenian language and culture, as well as to develop their technical skills. During these three months the Volunteers will live in Ararat marz with Armenian families. After the completion of the training, the Volunteers will officially be sworn-in and depart for their communities throughout all of the regions of Armenia.

The United States Peace Corps was founded in 1961 by John F. Kennedy to strengthen world peace and friendship. The Peace Corps started its activities in Armenia in 1992 at the invitation of the Government of Armenia. Over the past 26 years more than 1,000 Volunteers have served in Armenia.



## France's Macron congratulates Armenia's President-elect on victory

French President Emmanuel Macron has congratulated Armenia's President-elect Armen Sarkissian on victory.

"I will be glad to work with you to strengthen our bilateral relations based on historical long-term relationships, as well as the political privileged ties at the level of governments, parliaments, local self-governing bodies and civil societies," the French President said.

"The Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, recently signed with the European Union, gives new dynamics, which, I hope, will be expressed in growth



of investment and trade-economic relations between our two countries," Mr. Macron

added.

Emmanuel Macron said the Francophonie Summit to be held in Armenia on October 11-12 is a unique opportunity to deepen the ties between Armenia and France.

He assured that "France will ensure its participation in the success of the summit." "I'm glad to participate in it and visit Armenia on this occasion," the President added.

Mr. Macron assured that "as an OSCE Minsk Group co-chairing country, France is fully committed to the process of finding a negotiated and sustainable solution to the Karabakh conflict."

## Business Armenia sets targets \$46.3 million investments in 2018

*from page 7*

In 2017, the Development Foundation of Armenia underwent structural reforms: The Tourism component was subtracted from the scope of DFA work, turning it into a predominantly business-oriented structure.

The member companies of the newly established Business Support Club will provide consulting services with no charge or at lower rates to producers and

investors for a period from 2 months to termless. Dozens of companies have already taken advantages of logistic, legal, accounting, tax and business consulting services, and one new company with a foreign capital was registered.

The DFA Aftercare team developed the database of 300 FDI companies, identified and solved 10 problems faced by the business community. The DFA hosted 19 business missions and carried out 3 out-

reach missions to Lebanon, Great Britain, and the USA. The Foundation received business delegations from Iran, Lithuania, India, Japan, Mexico, Switzerland, Russia, France.

The DFA has created a network of representatives and today, through its 35 official representatives in 25 countries of the world, "Business Armenia" "speaks" with Businesses about Armenia in 16 languages.



## Creative Armenia unites filmmakers and legal experts for human rights summit



The panels featured acclaimed social impact filmmakers Ed Zwick (*Blood Diamond*), Terry George (*Hotel Rwanda*, *The Promise*), Reginald Hudlin (*Marshall*), Amy Ziering (*The Hunting Ground*), Catherine Hardwicke (*Thirteen*, *Twilight*), Evgeny Afineefsky (*Cries from Syria*, *Winter on Fire*), alongside producers Dr. Eric Esrailian (*The Promise*) and Michael Medavoy (*Zodiac*), actress Angela Sarafyan (*Westworld*, *1915*), social impact producer Bonnia Abaunza, and entertainment legal experts Gabriel Brakin (Participant Media), Daniel M. Mayeda, and Kelli Sager.

"Good intentions are easy," said Alec Mouhibian, VP of Productions at Creative Armenia, who moderated the panel titled *Art and War: Creating Human Rights Films*. "Transmuting them into truthful, riveting,

Asbarez – Prominent filmmakers and producers joined some of the top legal minds in America on March 16 to form *Lights. Camera. Reaction*—a groundbreaking UCLA summit on confronting human rights issues through entertainment. The daylong event at the Hammer Museum concluded with the presentation of the first annual Promise Institute Award for Contribution to Human Rights through the Arts to Oscar-winning actress Mira Sorvino.

"None of us knew this would spark this crazy movement," Sorvino said, in a personal and revealing acceptance speech during which, in the presence of her father, Paul Sorvino, she reflected in depth on her experiences with Harvey Weinstein and others that culminated in the #TimesUp and #MeToo movement. "Something happened in our hearts where we said, 'We have to tell the truth.'"

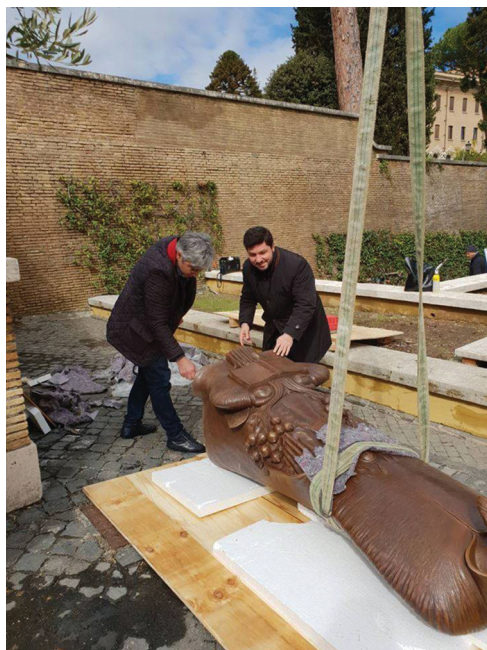


unpredictable stories about important subjects – not so easy. Our talented panelists offered us a golden look into how they've managed to craft and create effective entertainment amid monumental challenges."

The event was hosted by Creative Armenia, the Promise Institute for Human Rights at the UCLA School of Law, and the Skoll Center for Social Impact Entertainment at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television. Each of the three panels focused on different categories of challenge and opportunity in social impact filmmaking – legal and ethical, production and business, and finally, the creative process itself. Discussion was frank, trenchant, and often intense as it touched upon events current and historical.



## Gregory of Narek statue installed in Vatican Gardens



A two-meter-tall statue of Gregory of Narek, a 10th-century Armenian priest, has been installed in the Vatican Gardens, Armenia's Ambassador to the Holy See Mikayel Minasyan said in a Facebook post.

In 2016 Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan presented a small model of the statue to Pope Francis, as a symbol of the

Pontiff's "pilgrimage to the first Christian nation."

President Sargsyan then voiced hope that a bigger statue would be installed in the Vatican in the future. Pope liked the statue and gave his consent, the Ambassador said.

"Soon afterwards a creative team headed by People's Artist of Armenia, creator of St. Gregory's statue David Yerevantsi started working on the project. Architect



Mikael Hasratyan and project manager Vardan Karapetyan got involved in the work and my friend Artur Janibekyan, who is very devoted to promoting Narek worldwide, joined me as the second sponsor of the statue," said Mikayel Minasyan.

The statue will officially be unveiled on April 5.

On February 23, 2015, Pope Francis declared St Gregory of Narek a Doctor of the Church, a title going to selected saints whose teaching and life have a special importance for the Catholic Church.

**A fruit garden meant for agricultural purposes is on sale in an administrative district of Yerevan.**

**The garden covers an area of 40 hectares.**

**The total number of trees is 1150 of which 500 apricot trees, 350 black plums, 200 Greek nuts and other.**

**The area is supplied with water both for drinking and irrigation it also has gas and electricity.**

**Moreover the road leading to the garden is covered with asphalt and there is a farm house and a greenhouse nearby.**

**For further information phone 099 10 5453**

## Zodiac Weekly Forecast



**Aries (March 20–April 19)**

Mercury is turning retrograde in your sign and will be more likely to affect your daily affairs than many of the other signs. Don't even try to finalize anything while a retrograding Mercury is with you. You may even reverse decisions which you have recently made.



**Taurus (April 20 -- May 20)**

Memories from your life history may surface for examination at this time. Old friends or acquaintances who return for a short time could be the trigger for this life review. It is possible you may have a greater than normal need to reflect, to write, and otherwise give attention to your inner self. For that reason, circumstances will slow down in your outer life.



**Gemini (May 20–June 20)**

You are likely to find yourself thinking a lot about old friends and may want to get in touch with one or two of them. This is a time for nostalgia and reminiscence. Others are thinking about you, too, but you are a sign with more initiative than many, so pick up the telephone.



**Cancer (June 21–July 21)**

Mercury, has altered directions in your house of career and life direction. This is more of a tweaked change than a life change. However, if you happen to have applied for a job recently, you may find that you are changing your mind about that particular path. Now is the time to research the best possible choices, but don't take action yet.



**Leo (July 22–August 21)**

Mercury is changing directions in the territory which deals with education, publishing, travel, public speaking, the law, and philosophy. Any of these activities are subject to shifts, changes, or sudden deceleration due to lack of decision. Maybe the right solution just is not available yet. Have a sense of humor. This, too, shall pass.



**Virgo (August 22–September 22)**

Mercury is retrograding in the territory of taxes, debt, and joint resources. You will likely experience a need to go back and review financial history. Given this is tax time, be alert to the higher probability of making errors. You may make them, or alternatively, you may discover and correct them.



**Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)**

Because Mercury is retrograding in your 7th house, changes will be coming to you through others. A partner may change his/her mind about a previously made decision. Those of you engaged in any kind of contract or promise may feel the need to back off and rethink the situation. Those who are recently separated may want to try the relationship again.



**Scorpio (October 23–November 21)**

This Mercury retrograde experience occurs in the territory of health, coworkers, tenants, employees, and pets. You may find it very hard to move forward with your diet and exercise program. It is a particularly good time to organize and sort closets, records, and files. Coworkers, tenants, and employees may be indecisive.



**Sagittarius**

**(November 22–December 20)**

Mercury is turning retrograde in the territory that rules children, creative efforts, and love life. Anything on your radar screen that is related to these territories is subject to turnaround, review, deceleration, rethinking for a few weeks. Maybe you'll want to check out a previous love interest.



**Capricorn (December 21–January 19)**

The area of focus is related to property, family, and issues of security. You are likely reworking things in one of these territories. Family members may be erratic or indecisive, making it difficult to conclude open agendas. Have patience. Mercury turns direct on April 15.



**Aquarius (January 20–February 17)**

The Mercury retrograde focus is specifically on communications, neighbors, siblings, and others who are in your daily environment. Concentrate as much as possible on clear communications and double check what you think you heard. You may need to consider the needs of your vehicle now. Give it a checkup. Make repairs as needed.



**Pisces (February 18–March 19)**

The probability is high that you will discover some financial error made in the past that must be rectified soon. It may be as simple as finding a bill that was forgotten and left unpaid. Or it could be a little more complicated and involve a previous misunderstanding with a loved one.



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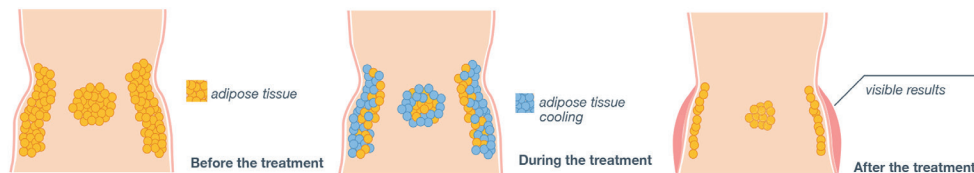
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