

Armenian FM meets with NATO First Deputy Secretary General, delivers remarks at North Atlantic Council



Brussels - The Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan and the Deputy Secretary General of NATO Mircea Geoană. March 17, 2022

Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan met with NATO First Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană in Brussels on March 17.

As Noyan Tapan was informed from the press service of the MFA Armenia, Ararat Mirzoyan expressed satisfaction with the existing political dialogue with NATO. In this context, the implementation of the Individual Partnership Action Plan was highlighted as an effective tool for developing cooperation.

The sides also referred to the participation of Armenian peacekeeping units in international peacekeeping missions and Armenia's contribution to strengthening international security and stability.

Issues related to regional security were discussed. Ararat Mirzoyan presented the situation on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, the situation in Nagorno Karabakh, the ceasefire violations by Azerbaijan, the actions aimed at creating a humanitarian crisis in

Nagorno Karabakh, the facts of psychological pressure on the civilian population.

Ararat Mirzoyan and Mircea Geoană exchanged views on the process of normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey.

On the same day the Armenian FM delivered a speech at the North Atlantic Council, where he referred to the Armenia-NATO cooperation over the past 30 years, the consequences of Azerbaijan's aggression against Artsakh in 2020, the humanitarian issues that need to be urgently resolved, in particular, the issues of Armenian prisoners of war illegally detained in Azerbaijan and the entry of international organizations into Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the prospects and opportunities for the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict under the mandate of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, the negotiations on a peace treaty without preconditions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as a number of international and regional security issues.

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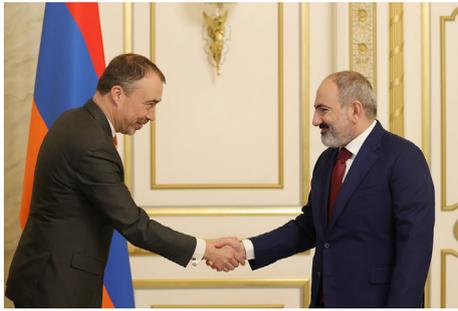
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PM Pashinyan receives EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan received EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the Crisis in Georgia Toivo Klaar. The Head of the EU Delegation to Armenia, Ambassador Andrea Wiktorin was also present at the meeting.

The Prime Minister expressed satisfaction with the dynamic development of the Armenia-EU partnership and highlighted the efforts aimed at strengthening relations. Touching upon the democratic reforms being carried out in Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan stressed that the Government is steadily moving forward towards the implementation of the democratic agenda of Armenia, and thanked the EU for supporting that process.

EU Special Representative Toivo Klaar noted that the European Union attaches great importance to its partnership with Armenia and reaffirms its readiness to sup-



port Armenia's democratic reforms.

The interlocutors referred to the processes taking place in the South Caucasus, the current situation in Nagorno Karabakh and the escalation of tension. In the context of strengthening peace and stability in the region, Nikol Pashinyan and Toivo Klaar exchanged views on the delimitation and demarcation of Armenia – Azerbaijan border, the unblocking of communication

routes, and the Armenia-Turkey dialogue.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia highly assessed the efforts of the President of the European Council Charles Michel aimed at strengthening regional stability. In this context, Nikol Pashinyan highlighted the meetings held in Brussels through the mediation of the President of the European Council and the President of France, and in Sochi mediated by the President of the Russian Federation, and the implementation of the agreements reached within their framework.

The sides stressed the need for a comprehensive settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.

The parties agreed to continue active contacts.

Armenia values effective cooperation with Cyprus, PM Pashinyan says on 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations

Armenia values the warmest interstate relations and effective cooperation with Cyprus over the past three decades, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in a congratulatory message to the President of the Republic of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries

He said the relations are an “evidence of the unwavering brotherhood and mutual support of the Armenian and Cypriot peoples.”

“March 18 marks the consolidation of interstate relations based on centuries-old

Armenian-Cypriot ties and strong friendship, common values, mutual respect and sympathy,” the Prime Minister said.

PM Pashinyan added that Cyprus in one of the EU member states, with which Armenia enjoys high mutual trust and strategic cooperation.

“I am convinced that the rich experience and the multifaceted bilateral agenda gained during these years provide wide opportunities for revealing and comprehensively utilizing the full potential of the Armenian-Cypriot cooperation, giving a new impetus to the bilateral relations, raising them to a qualitatively new level,” he



added.

“The vibrant Armenian community gives a special content and warmth to the Armenian-Cypriot relations with its contribution to the political, economic and cultural life of the country, which has always been highly appreciated by the Government of Cyprus,” Nikol Pashinyan said.

He wished the two countries and brotherly peoples “prosperity, peace, fruitful cooperation full of jubilees.”



Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan had a telephone conversation with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian.

Ararat Mirzoyan and Jean-Yves Le Drian exchanged views on issues on the agenda of the Armenian-French cooperation, particularly referring to the

Armenian, French FMs talk bilateral relations, regional security issues

implementation of the roadmap of the Armenian-French economic cooperation.

The interlocutors discussed a number of issues related to regional and international security. Ararat Mirzoyan briefed his French counterpart on the situation created by the provocations and continuous violations of the ceasefire regime by Azerbaijan on the line of contact with Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, presented the facts of targeting the civilian population, applying

psychological pressure.

During the telephone conversation, the parties discussed issues related to the start of negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan on a peace treaty on the basis of the UN Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Helsinki Final Act. In this context, both sides attached importance to the role of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs.



Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan has paid a working visit to the country's southern Syunik province where deaths of two conscripts in separate incidents were reported earlier this week.

During the visit, which the Defense Ministry's press office said took place on March 17, Papikyan also traveled to the border area where local residents claimed Azerbaijan had moved its military posi-

Armenian Defense Chief Visits Syunik

tions into Armenian territory.

According to the official report, while visiting Syunik the defense minister met with local officers to discuss the recent incidents involving conscripts.

Papikyan reportedly stressed that such incidents were a result of the violation of discipline in some units as well as an "insufficient moral and psychological level of individual servicemen."

"After listening to the reports of the officers responsible for the incidents, the defense minister instructed that the commander of the military unit take the necessary measures to exclude such cases in the future," the report said.

The Investigative Committee on March 17 launched criminal cases over the deaths of two conscripts in noncombat conditions in Kapan and Meghri. Both were found dead with gunshot wounds. At least in one of the cases investigators suspect a suicide, but do not exclude outside influence on the soldier's decision to take his own life.

During the visit Papikyan also reportedly traveled to the border area adjacent to the village of Nerkin Hand in the southeast of Syunik where the commander of the local military unit, Major-General Artak Budaghyan presented to him the current situation.

U.S. Urges Armenia, Azerbaijan to Intensify Diplomacy For 'Comprehensive Solutions'

As a Minsk Group Co-Chair, the United States urges Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue and intensify their diplomatic engagement to find comprehensive solutions to all outstanding issues, the U.S. embassy in Yerevan said on March 17.

In reply to an RFE/RL Armenian Service question regarding Washington's position on Armenia's request for mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs in organizing talks with Azerbaijan on a peace treaty, the embassy said: "The United States remains committed to promoting a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous future for the South Caucasus region. As a Minsk Group Co-Chair, we urge Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue and intensify

their diplomatic engagement to find comprehensive solutions to all outstanding issues. The United States is ready to assist Armenia and Azerbaijan with these efforts."

As for whether the Minsk Group co-chairs plan a visit to the region any time soon, the embassy said it did not have anything new to share on this matter.

The mediating troika, including representatives of the United States, Russia and France, have not visited the region after the 2020 war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia claims the mediators' visit is hampered by Azerbaijan's position.

At a news briefing in Moscow today Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman



Maria Zakharova said that Moscow welcomes the readiness of Armenia and Azerbaijan to engage in the preparation of a peace treaty. She added that Russia was ready to provide "all possible assistance" to such a negotiation process.

Talking to RFE/RL's Armenian Service earlier this week, French Ambassador to Armenia Anne Anne Louyot also said that as one of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, France is ready to do everything possible to achieve a lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

UN Resident Coordinator summoned to Armenian Foreign Ministry over Shushi event

Acting UN Resident Coordinator in Armenia Lila Pieters Yahia was summoned to the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 19.

The Acting UN Resident Coordinator was informed that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia strongly condemns the involvement of the UN Office in Azerbaijan in the March 18 event in Shushi, and was handed a note of protest.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded that the United Nations take steps to restore the UN's neutral position in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

On March 18 UN representatives participated in an event in Artsakh's occupied city of Shushi dedicated to the 30th anniversary of Azerbaijan's membership in the organization.



Armenia improves its positions in fight against human trafficking - deputy PM

Deputy Prime Minister of Armenia Hambarzum Matevosyan chaired on March 18 the session of the Council on fight against human trafficking and exploitation, the deputy PM's Office said.

The deputy PM welcomed the session participants and said that Armenia has registered significant achievements in the fight against human trafficking and exploitation, which, according to him, turned into reality thanks to the efforts of the Council and the working group attached to the Council.

The deputy PM also emphasized the high level of the inter-agency cooperation as one of the guarantees for the progress in the fight against this phenomenon, as well

as the efforts of Armenia's partners – the Council of Europe, the US government and international organizations, NGOs.

“Despite the progress in the field, the challenges facing Armenia lead us to make more efforts and work more actively for improving the positions”, the deputy PM said, wishing a productive work to all the participants.

According to the agenda, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs Tatevik Stepanyan presented the activities carried out in 2021 in the fight against human trafficking and stated that all 19 actions envisaged by the 2020-2022 national program have been implemented.



Then, Head of the Migration Service of the ministry of territorial administration and infrastructure Armen Ghazaryan, who is also the secretary of the Council, presented the current challenges of the field, the actions on resisting them.

Representative of World Vision Armenia Tigran Hovhannisyan presented the goals of the program “Together Against Human Trafficking” and the activities done so far.



On March 18, political consultations between the Foreign Ministries of the Republic of Armenia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands were held in The Hague co-chaired by Paruyr Hovhannisyan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia and Thijs van der Plas, Director General for Political Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Netherlands.

Mutually noting the high level of political dialogue between Armenia and the Netherlands at different levels, the interlocutors discussed a number of issues on the Armenian-Dutch bilateral agenda. Touching upon trade and economic cooperation, the interlocutors noted the positive dynamics observed in recent years, and outlined the steps to be taken towards the

Political consultations between Foreign Ministries of Armenia and the Netherlands

full realization of the existing potential.

The parties touched upon a wide range of events to be organized on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and the Netherlands.

The sides discussed the Armenia-EU partnership agenda, exchanged views on a number of issues of mutual interest on the international and regional agenda, as well as discussed, the cooperation and mutual support within the international organizations.

The interlocutors also touched upon the current situation around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In this context, the parties highlighted the importance of a full resumption of the NK peace process under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship. The Armenian side expressed gratitude for the support and the principled position of the Dutch Parliament during the Azerbaijani aggres-

sion unleashed against Artsakh, as well as for raising the issue by the Government on bilateral and multilateral platforms, emphasizing the need to continue such an approach considering the current geopolitical developments.

Deputy Minister Hovhannisyan also met with Jaap Fredericks, Ambassador for the Eastern Partnership and Bahia Tahzib Lie, Human Rights Ambassador.

During the visit to the Hague, Deputy Minister met with the representatives of the Dutch political parties, and civil society activists, as well as took part at the diplomatic reception dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Armenia and the Netherlands. During the reception a number of persons were awarded for the significant contribution to the deepening of bilateral cooperation between Armenia and the Netherlands.

Armenia, Italy celebrate 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations

The Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Italy exchanged messages on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Italian Republic.

In his message Ararat Mirzoyan, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia, particularly emphasized the fact that the Armenian-Italian cooperation is charac-

terized by a high-level political dialogue. He commended the growing bilateral trade turnover, as well as the volume of Italian investments in Armenia. Minister Mirzoyan expressed determination in bringing bilateral economic relations to the level of political dialogue.

Congratulating the Armenian counterpart, Luigi Di Mayo, the Foreign Minister of Italy, in his turn noted that since the

establishment of diplomatic relations, the Armenian-Italian friendly relations and political dialogue have been developing and strengthening, as evidenced by the high-level reciprocal visits.

He added that the friendly relations between Armenia and Italy establish stable trade-economic and cultural ties, which are complemented by the existing cooperation in various spheres.

Armenia ready to achieve full normalization of relations with Turkey, FM Mirzoyan tells Anadolu Agency

On the margins of the Antalya Diplomatic forum, Foreign Minister of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan had an interview with the Anadolu agency, which is presented below:

Question: What would you like to express about your participation at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum?

Answer: I want to walk you through the highlights of the developments between Armenia and Turkey during the previous months. The leaders of the two countries – Prime Minister Pashinyan and President Erdogan exchanged public statements, expressing readiness to launch talks between the two countries. Later the two countries appointed Special Representatives for the dialogue between Armenia and Turkey.

They have already had 2 meetings respectively in Moscow and Vienna agreeing to continue negotiations without preconditions aimed at full normalization of the relations.

I paid a visit to Antalya to participate in the Antalya Diplomacy Forum to reiterate once again the political will of the Government of the Republic of Armenia to achieve full normalization of relations with Turkey and open the era of peaceful and sustainable development in the region.



Question: How would you evaluate the ongoing normalization process between Turkey and Armenia?

Answer: Overall, we consider it positive. Armenia is ready to establish diplomatic relations and to the opening of the borders with Turkey. I was glad to hear from my Turkish counterpart that there is a political will on their side to lead the process to that end as well. Amid the rapidly developing situation in the world, I do believe we should not hesitate to undertake concrete steps.

Question: What are the benefits of the normalization process for Armenian and Turkish people?

Answer: People are already benefiting from direct flights between Yerevan and Istanbul. Opening of the borders will have its positive impact on the connectivity, trade and economic relations between the two

countries, people to people contacts and overall stability in the region.

Question: Are there going to be reciprocal official visits between Turkey and Armenia? Did you extend an invitation to Turkish officials to visit Armenia or received an invitation to visit Turkey?

Answer: Let me emphasize that this is the first visit of a high-level official of Armenia to Turkey in a decade. Needless to mention that if the process of normalization proceeds smoothly and we achieve positive results, mutual visits can take place.

Question: What can you tell us about the Armenian people's approach to the normalization process?

Answer: Generally, the population of Armenia wants to normalize relations with Turkey. It is reflected in public opinion polls, as well. Of course, both in Armenian and Turkish societies, there are certain groups that, let me say, are skeptical about this process. Officials from both sides should take political leadership to address these issues. During my meeting with Minister Chavushoglu, we have exchanged views on certain sensitivities and I hope that they will be taken into account.



Finance Ministry calls reaffirmation of rating given to Armenia by Fitch a 'positive signal'

Fitch Ratings has affirmed Armenia's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'B+' with a Stable Outlook on March 19.

The Ministry of Finance of Armenia said that "given the macro-economic uncertainties conditioned by the current regional developments, the reaffirmation of the rating granted to Armenia by the agency is a very positive signal and proves

the reliability of the reforms and especially the macro-economic policy being carried out by the authorities of Armenia".

"Armenia's 'B+' IDRs reflect strong per-capita income, governance and business environment indicators relative to peers, as well as a robust macroeconomic and fiscal policy framework and credible commitment to reform, underpinned by IMF support. Set against these strengths are a high share of foreign-currency denominated public debt, relatively weak external finances, and geopolitical risks", Fitch Ratings said in a statement.

According to the statement, Armenia

will be adversely affected by spillovers from the crisis in Russia, given important linkages between the two economies, but Fitch presently expects that the sovereign's policy buffers, financing options, and long-dated commercial debt profile can help it navigate the shock without major impairment of repayment capacity.

Despite the current situation, Fitch forecasts some slowdown in Armenia's economic growth for 2022, but says "growth will return to 4.2% in 2023 ('B' median: 3.6%), reflecting favorable domestic investment prospects and an expected positive contribution of net trade".

Armenia's Central Bank raises refinancing rate by 1.25% to 9.25%

At the March 15, 2022 meeting, the CBA Board decided to raise the refinancing rate by 1.25 percentage points, setting it at 9.25%.

In February 2022, both 12-month and natural inflation fell in line with the CBA projection, totaling 6.5% and 6.4%, respectively.

In the external sector, in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict, various sanctions have been imposed on Russia's economy. As a result, a significant increase in financial market volatility and uncertainty about economic prospects was observed. In the United States and the Eurozone slowdown of economic growth is expected this year, and economic decline is expected in Russia. At the same time, the disruption of the reviewed supply chains in the international commodity and food markets has caused a significant increase

in prices. This is reflected in the formation of a higher-than-expected inflationary environment in partner countries. As a result, a mainly inflationary impact is expected on the Armenian economy from the external sector.

The impact of the sanctions imposed on Russia, will be reflected in the significant slowdown of economic growth in Armenia. This will be mostly conditioned by the industrial decline. Total demand will be affected by declining remittances and sluggish external demand. A positive contribution from tourism sector is expected. Growing geopolitical risks in the region and the high uncertainty has led to increased volatility in the Armenian financial markets and bigger risk premium. The existing uncertainties were reflected in the inflation dynamics and inflation expectations as well.

In view of the above, the Board judges appropriate to increase the refinancing rate by a relatively large step. The Board considers that amid the economic outlook uncertainties and provided the risks of rising inflation expectations persist, the need for possible tightening of monetary conditions in the near future will be considered as well. Due to this policy actions, 12-month inflation will gradually decrease and reach the target of 4% in the forecast horizon.

The CBA Board considers that as a result of the geopolitical developments, the uncertainty in terms of macroeconomic perspective has significantly expanded. At the same time, the risks of inflation deviation from the projected trajectory are mainly balanced. Should the risks materialize in any direction

Armenia expected to lift customs duties for exports under AMD 1 million

The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Economic Affairs on March 16 discussed and approved the government-proposed draft on amendments to the Law on State Duty, which will see the simplification of the customs clearance process and reduction of related costs.

Minister of Economy Vahan Kerobyan noted that the bill envisages exempting economic entities from paying duties for exports, the total customs value of which does not exceed AMD 1 million.

It was also noted that the proposed change is aimed at improving the competitive environment, in particular, in case of export of low-value goods. Exemption from paying the duties is expected to increase the number of suppliers in these markets.

The adoption and implementation of the bill is expected to have a positive im-



act on the business and investment environment, given that the regulations will facilitate the customs clearance process, as

well as reduce the financial and administrative costs for small and medium enterprises.



To help women entrepreneurs grow their businesses, attract funding, and generate more revenue, IFC, in partnership with the government of Japan, has launched a new initiative in Armenia. The program will help improve access to finance for women-owned businesses, unlocking their full potential and enabling greater participation of women in the country's economy.

Access to finance is one of the biggest challenges in Armenia, especially for micro, small, and medium businesses, a majority of which are women-owned, according to IFC's Women Entrepreneurship Study 2021. In response, IFC has developed a new initiative to help women-owned firms attract investments by improving their business skills and access to business networks, thereby addressing one of the key obstacles women entrepreneurs

IFC unveils new initiative to drive investments for women entrepreneurs in Armenia

face.

Over the next 11 months the IFC Investment Readiness Program for Women-Owned Firms in Armenia program will provide women-owned firms with a mix of individual and group mentoring, coaching, and advice. The aim is to help them improve their investment readiness and soft skills, which are key for business negotiations and boosting confidence.

Fukushima Masanori, Ambassador of Japan to Armenia, said, "The government of Japan is convinced this extremely important project is in line with the times, as the role of women in business is growing every day in Armenia and around the world. We expect this project to provide women with increased opportunities to feel confident as entrepreneurs and in business, and we look forward to seeing many important outcomes by the completion of the project."

Ivana Fernandes Duarte, IFC Regional Manager for the South Caucasus, said, "Though women play a critical role in

economies as entrepreneurs, the obstacles they face often prevent them from unlocking their full potential. In Armenia, IFC's advisory work aims to provide women entrepreneurs with the tools and resources they need to enhance their confidence and capacity, while driving inclusive growth."

The program will include a series of networking events, aimed at expanding women-owned business linkages through new business networks. The focus will be on connecting small and medium enterprises with financial institutions to address limited access to finance. The advisory support will also aim to help large firms integrate women into supply chains, improving their access to business networks. The program is expected to help women entrepreneurs create more jobs in Armenia.

IFC's program will be implemented by Enterprise Incubator Foundation and Granatus Ventures, in partnership with Gyumri Technology Center and Vanadzor Technology Center, in Yerevan, Shirak, and the Lori region of Armenia.



IMF forecasts 1.5% economic growth for Armenia in 2022

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) team, led by Thanos Arvanitis, conducted discussions during March 1–16, 2022 for the sixth review of Armenia's economic program, which is supported by an IMF Stand-By Arrangement (SBA). The SBA was approved on May 17, 2019 and will expire on May 16, 2022, the IMF said in a statement.

At the conclusion of the discussions, Mr. Arvanitis issued the following statement: "The IMF team has reached a staff-level agreement with the Armenian authorities for the conclusion of the sixth, and final, review of the economic reform program supported by a three-year Stand-By Arrangement. The agreement is subject to approval by the IMF's Executive Board, which is scheduled to consider

this review in mid-May. About \$36 million (SDR 25.716 million) would become available after the Board meeting, bringing total disbursements under the program to about \$430 million.

The Armenian economy has continued to recover, posting 5.7 percent growth in 2021, and continuing to grow strongly in early 2022. Annual CPI inflation has steadily declined to 6.5 percent in February supported by monetary policy tightening. Fiscal policy helped to cushion the impact of the shocks on the economy in the last two years, but remains anchored on the broader objective of debt sustainability, and tax policy and administration reforms continue to broaden the tax base. The fiscal deficit is estimated to have narrowed to 4.7 percent of GDP in 2021, largely on the back of lower government spending. The external position has strengthened, especially in 2021, as the current account deficit narrowed during the Covid-19 pan-

demic while remittances stayed strong, and the Eurobond issuance and the SDR allocation added to international reserves. The banking system has remained adequately capitalized and liquid, and asset quality has improved.

The regional and global spillovers from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, however, weigh on the outlook and would inevitably have a notable impact on Armenia. The wide-ranging sanctions on Russia, higher food and fuel prices, lower remittances, increased global financial market volatility, are expected to widen the current account deficit, lead to a pickup in inflation, and reduce economic growth in the coming months. While there is considerable uncertainty about the magnitude of the impact on Armenia, as the situation is still evolving, our preliminary assessment is that the economy could grow at around 1½ percent in 2022—a much slower pace than previously expected".

Clarifying the final status of Artsakh vital – Armenia FM

For the Armenian side, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not a territorial issue, but a matter of rights, Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan said in an interview with Armenpress.

“It is vital for the Armenian side that the rights and freedoms of the Armenians of Artsakh are clearly guaranteed, and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh is finally clarified,” the Foreign Minister said.

Below is the full text of the interview:

Question: Yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan publicized 5 principles of peace treaty, as they claim, which were handed over to Armenia. Was that the document passed to Armenia?

Answer: Yes, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan publicly announced the proposals handed over to Armenia. By the way, it is noteworthy that the letter dated February 21 was passed to the Armenian side only on March 10.

Question: What is the position of the Armenian side on the mentioned proposals?

Answer: First of all, it should be emphasized that any negotiations on a peace treaty must be held without preconditions.

As for the main proposals, the two



countries, having signed the “Agreement on the Establishment of Cooperation of Independent States” on December 8, 1991, in fact have already recognized each other’s territorial integrity and accepted that they have no territorial claims towards each other.

It should be noted that the provisions mentioned in the proposal do not fully reflect the whole agenda of the existing problems. It is vital for the Armenian side that the rights and freedoms of the Armenians of Artsakh are clearly guaranteed, and the status of Nagorno-Karabakh is finally clarified. For us, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not a territorial issue, but a matter of rights.

As we have already informed, the Armenian side responded to the proposal of Azerbaijan in line with the already men-

tioned position.

Question: The proposals of Azerbaijan refer to the process of delimitation and demarcation between the two countries, as well as the unblocking of transport infrastructure in the region. How are these processes going?

Answer: We believe that the agreements reached under the Trilateral Statements of November 9, 2020, January 11, 2021, and November 26, 2021, should be fully implemented, and we are consistent in this regard. As you know, we have even made comprehensive proposals for the implementation of these agreements, such as the proposal to launch a delimitation process through the mirrored withdrawal of troops and the introduction of an international monitoring mechanism, which, however, was rejected by the Azerbaijani side.

Question: What format do you see the possible negotiations on a peace treaty within?

Answer: Earlier, the Foreign Ministry of Armenia stated that it had applied to the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmanship to organize negotiations on a peace treaty on the basis of the UN Charter, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Helsinki Final Act.

EBRD names George Akhalkatsi as head of Yerevan Office

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has appointed George Akhalkatsi as the new head of its Yerevan Resident Office, replacing Dimitri Gvindadze.

Mr Akhalkatsi will take up his new role on 1 May 2022 and be based in the Armenian capital. He will oversee the Bank’s investments and operations in Armenia, reporting to Catarina Bjorlin Hansen, Regional Director for the Caucasus.

Mr Akhalkatsi, a Georgian national, started his career as a lawyer before moving into banking at Société Générale. He



joined the EBRD in 2009 and his most recent position was Associate Director, Senior Banker based in Tbilisi.

He has previously worked with the EBRD’s Manufacturing & Services and Credit Risk Management teams in London.

He has a Masters in Law from Tbilisi State University and an MBA from INSEAD.

As the new Head of Office, Mr Akhalkatsi will draw on his significant country-level and cross-sectoral experience to maintain the Bank’s successful partnership with Armenia.

The EBRD has been working in Armenia since 1992. Its focus is on helping to diversify the economy by supporting investment in various sectors, as well as promoting the development of the financial sector and small and medium-sized enterprises.

We know how it feels when civilian population is under bombardment – Ambassador Nersesyan’s interview with Times Radio

The Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Varuzhan Nersesyan gave an interview to the British Times Radio. We present the interview below.

Host: Now we’re all getting used to seeing the map of the Ukraine, it lies north of the Black Sea, pull the zoom out a bit and look south east and you’ll see Armenia and Azerbaijan. These two countries have long been in conflict over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Russian troops have kept the peace and thousands are stationed in Armenia but some say that Armenia suffers from Stockholm syndrome about Russia, it has to love the Russian forces that in fact keep it captive. Let’s speak to Varuzhan Nersesyan who is the Armenian Ambassador to the UK. Good morning to you.

Ambassador: Good morning and I’d like to welcome all of the listeners to your radio station.

Host: Welcome. I think it’s fair to say there will be some people who are aware of what’s gone on in Armenia and Azerbaijan, specifically we are talking about Armenia, but some people will not. Can you just explain how the war has affected tensions that may already have existed in Armenia?

Ambassador: Absolutely, thank you very much for your question and of course Armenia is located in a very vulnerable geo-political location in the South Caucasus. Already, before the crisis in Ukraine Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh suffered immensely, from the aggression, from the war that was perpetrated by a neighboring country in September 2020.

The current crisis in Ukraine has been used to escalate the situation as we have seen, because the attention of the international community is focused currently on Ukraine. We have seen certain attempts by Azerbaijan to escalate the situation, particularly in Nagorno-Karabakh. The population has been harassed and threatened by the Azerbaijani government. There have been many attempts to create constant provocation at the line of contact and violations of the ceasefire. Not only that but a psychological warfare is being conducted against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, particularly the Azerbaijani side brings loudspeakers and harasses the local popu-

lation, threatening them to leave their own villages, their own homeland, and their ancestral land. Threatening to use force unless they abide by these threats and leave their homes. Aside from this, unfortunately, the Azerbaijani has exploded a gas pipeline leading to Nagorno-Karabakh and not allowing specialists to actually enter that area and restore the gas pipeline, and because of this the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh is deprived of gas and energy supply and are on the brink of a serious humanitarian crisis.

Host: And were the Russian troops invited to help, to keep the peace?

Ambassador: Well, the Russian troops, these are not troops. These are Russian peacekeeping forces that are deployed there in accordance to November 9 and 10 ceasefire statement agreed by Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation and the Russian peacekeeping force at the time was able to stop the bloodshed in November 2020 after they entered the area, after the ceasefire. They are currently, yes, in that area and thanks to them the peace is being maintained in that area.

Host: Of course, and I understand you have your own concerns within your country. You’ve talked about this intimidation; you’ve spoken about the gas pipeline but you’ve also spoken about the bloodshed. Now, Russia is currently responsible for a huge amount of bloodshed of children and civilians in Ukraine. Does that make your links with Russia, your reliance on Russian peace keeping troops, as you call them, less palatable, more difficult?

Ambassador: Well of course we are very much concerned about the current crisis in Ukraine as we have centuries’ old relationship with both countries. With the Russian people and the Ukrainian people, we have old bonds of friendship and close relations. Aside from that, of course, we have large Armenian communities in Ukraine, around half a million in Ukraine and 2 million in the Russian Federation. So, already we are receiving hundreds, if not thousands of groups of people who seek refuge in Armenia. Not only Armenians but people of the Russian origin, of the Ukrainian origin, they come to Armenia and are seeking refuge.

We are already in one or another way affected and of course we want this crisis to be ended as soon as possible and we

hope that the negotiations that have been carried out by both sides will succeed and will lead...

Host: Well I was going to say to you that Russia says it was a military operation, the international community says it’s an invasion. What do you think it is?

Ambassador: Well as I said we maintain very close relations between both countries. We are not in a position to bring an evaluation. Our government is completely neutral in this endeavor and situation. As I said our position as soon as possible is to help them, both sides to achieve peace. At this stage the most important thing is not to create evaluations but is to stop the bloodshed. That’s the most important task for all sides involved. Be it Armenia, be it the international community be it the Russian Federation or Ukraine. The most important task is to stop the bloodshed and then to address the situation and then to find solutions because this suffering is for everybody. The international community is so much interlinked and intertwined, this suffering cannot only be localized.

Host: Okay.

Ambassador: When Armenia was subjected to aggression and Nagorno-Karabakh was subjected to aggression by Azerbaijan, and, by the way, also Turkey, we were expecting the world to react in a vigorous way. So, we know what is like when a population, when a civilian population is under bombardment.

Host: Of course, Varuzhan, let me just ask you one final question because I understand you say you have to remain neutral. A lot of people won’t understand that but some people will because of your geo-political situation. You say the bloodshed needs to end, there needs to be a solution. What do you think that solution might be?

Ambassador: Well first of all it’s up to the two countries to have a common vision about the future, it’s about Russia and Ukraine to find out a common solution. These nations share a common history. It’s really painful to watch what’s going on. It’s really painful to watch what’s going on, they share a common history, common traditions and it’s very-very painful. It’s first of all up to the two countries to find a mutually equitable solution, so they are satisfied and create a common future for them.

Report on violation of Artsakh people's rights by Azerbaijan sent to international organizations



The Human Rights Ombudsman's Staff has published a trilingual (Armenian, Russian, English) [interim report](#) on "The Violations of the Rights of the People of Artsakh by Azerbaijan in February – March 2022," which was sent to the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, organizations with a primary human rights protection mandate and international human rights organizations.

The report briefs on the violations committed by Azerbaijan against the life, health, physical and psychological integrity of the people of Artsakh after the adoption of the trilateral statement on November 9, 2020.

The first section presents facts about the Azerbaijani criminal actions in the direction of the border communities of the Republic of Artsakh in February – March

2022. From March 7 to 12, 2022, the Azerbaijani side used a 60 mm grenade launcher, a total of 57 projectiles were fired at various regions of Artsakh. During that time, the ceasefire regime was continuously violated by firearms targeting residential houses and other civilian infrastructures. One civilian was injured.

The second section presents the humanitarian consequences of the disruption of gas supply by Azerbaijan in the territory of Artsakh. 65% of the schools in the country where 60% of the total number of students receive education are heated with gas. Due to the lack of proper heating, classes in all secondary schools have been suspended. The attendance of children in kindergartens is 22%. 12 kindergartens have ceased their activities at all, and some of them are working for a half day. 90% of secondary vocational education institutions, art schools, medical and music collages, children's creative centers heated by the use of gas have completely ceased their activities.

70% of health organizations and hospitals are heated by gas, 419 citizens are currently receiving inpatient treatment, including 46 children in the children's

hospital, and 51 newborns and mothers in the maternity hospital. Hundreds of entrepreneurs also suffer great losses as a result of the gas supply disruption. Gas stations were particularly hard-hit causing personnel downtime, greenhouses operating with gas supply were also affected.

The third section presents the manifestations of psychological terrorism and information attacks carried out by Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh which are aimed at creating an atmosphere of fear, despair among the civilian population under the threat of use of force and compelling the people to leave their homes.

The report was prepared on the basis of studies conducted by the Human Rights Ombudsman's Staff, visits to various communities, educational and health institutions, communities, private conversations with citizens, as well as the information received from state-authorized bodies. The report aims to document the cases of violations of rights of the people of Artsakh by Azerbaijan and their various manifestations, to draw the attention of international structures and human rights organizations to the situation in Artsakh.

Australian Government urged to reconsider aid to Armenians in light of assistance to Ukraine

The Armenian National Committee of Australia (ANC-AU) has written to Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon. Marise Payne, urging the Australian Government to reconsider the Armenian-Australian community's request for emergency humanitarian assistance to tens of thousands of Armenians still suffering the consequences of Azerbaijan's unprovoked attacks against Armenians in 2020.

This follows the Australian Government's announcement on 1 March 2022, to provide a total of \$105 million to help meet the urgent needs of the Ukrainian people—\$75 million in military assistance and \$35 million in emergency humanitarian support.

The ANC-AU first appealed to Australia's Foreign Affairs Minister for emergency humanitarian aid in February 2021, requesting financial support to assist the displaced inhabitants of the Republic of Artsakh, and injured and captured Armenians from the 2020 Nagorno Karabakh war.

The peak Armenian-Australian public affairs body's request for aid through humanitarian organizations on the ground in Armenia received support from a long list of Federal parliamentarians, as well as the New South Wales Australia-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group in a letter co-signed by the Chair, Jonathan O'Dea MP and Vice-Chair Walt Secord MLC.

In light of Australia's exemplary support to the Ukrainian people, the ANC-AU has elaborated on the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the region and the urgent need for assistance to alleviate the stress on Armenians in their letter.

"Whilst our community praises Australia's generosity and support for Ukraine, Lebanon and India, we feel neglected and forgotten when considering our Government's lack of action and failure to provide humanitarian aid to our Armenian brothers and sisters," said ANC-AU Executive Director Haig Kayserian.

"We have explained to Foreign Minister Marise Payne that Azerbaijan's pol-

icy of ethnically cleansing the Armenian Republic of Artsakh continues unabated, with the dictatorship recently cutting off gas supply in increasingly freezing temperatures for the region's indigenous Armenians."

"In addition, we elaborated that Armenians still require immediate emergency assistance from nations worldwide to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis, including the internal displacement of refugees that have lost their homes to war and the after-effects of Azerbaijan's aggression and the ongoing captivity of Armenian prisoners of war by Baku," Kayserian added.

"The Armenian National Committee of Australia has urged the Australian Government to reassess its formal decision not to provide humanitarian assistance to the tens of thousands of Armenian men, women and children currently facing ongoing threats in terms of health, safety and well-being following the precedents that have been set during the Ukraine conflict."

Diverse coalition calls on Biden to stop U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan

A diverse coalition of human rights, faith-based, and ethnic groups are calling on President Biden to stop U.S. military aid to Azerbaijan's Aliyev regime, reported the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

In a letter sent today to the White House, a dozen organizations voiced their "opposition to continued U.S. taxpayer-funded



Section 333 (Capacity Building), Foreign Military Financing, International Military Education and Training, and other U.S. military or security assistance to the government of Azerbaijan, on the basis of Section 502B(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act and other provisions of U.S. law." They closed their letter, stressing that, "in light of these concerns, and given Azerbaijan's consistent pattern of violating internationally recognized human rights, we call upon you to suspend U.S. security and military assistance to Azerbaijan."

Coalition members include: American Friends of Kurdistan, Armenian National Committee of America, Assyrian Policy Institute, Christian Solidarity International, Code Pink, Coptic Solidarity, Hellenic American Leadership Council, Hindu American Foundation, In Defense of Christians, Israeli-American Civic Action Network, Jewish World Watch, National Council of Churches, and Women for Weapons Trade Transparency.

The full text of the coalition letter is provided below:

Dear President Biden,

We, the undersigned non-governmental organizations, write in opposition to continued U.S. taxpayer-funded Section 333 (Capacity Building), Foreign Military Financing, International Military Education and Training, and other U.S. military or security assistance to the gov-

ernment of Azerbaijan, on the basis of Section 502B(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act and other provisions of U.S. law.

Any additional U.S. assistance – above and beyond the \$164,000,000 that has reportedly already been sent to the armed forces of Azerbaijan – risks materially strengthening Baku's authoritarian capabilities and emboldening the unelected and unaccountable leaders of this authoritarian single-family regime. Azerbaijan, an oil-rich nation that already spends billions annually on its military, neither needs nor deserves U.S. tax dollars.

Continuing to send U.S. security or military aid to Azerbaijan – even assistance described as defensive or non-lethal – sends the dangerous signal to the Aliyev government that the United States is indifferent or, even worse, supportive of its violations of human rights. New military or security aid to Azerbaijan poses a serious risk of additional harm to civilians. Our nation must never be complicit in such state-sponsored violence. More broadly, this assistance undermines your Administration's aim of centering human rights and democracy in our nation's foreign policy.

Azerbaijan's consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights is documented by our own

State Department and leading human rights organizations, and reflected in growing Congressional concern over Baku's violations of humanitarian and international law.

Our U.S. Department of State's most recent Human Rights Country Report on Azerbaijan documents "Significant human rights issues," including: "unlawful or arbitrary killing; torture; arbitrary detention; harsh and sometimes life-threatening prison conditions; political prisoners."

Freedom House rates Azerbaijan as Not Free, noting that: "power in Azerbaijan's authoritarian regime remains heavily concentrated in the hands of Ilham Aliyev, who has served as president since 2003, and his extended family."

Amnesty International has reported that: "war crimes were committed by Azerbaijani forces in Nagorno-Karabakh. Several verified videos depicted the mistreatment of prisoners of war and other captives, decapitations, and desecration of the dead bodies of enemy soldiers."

Human Rights Watch has reported that: "Azerbaijan's government continues to wage a vicious crackdown on critics and dissenting voices."

Credible reports of Azerbaijani human rights violations during fighting in Nagorno Karabakh in the fall of 2020 were addressed by the U.S. House of Representatives, which adopted the Cardenas-Schiff amendment to the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act. This measure called for Azerbaijan's immediate and unconditional release of illegally held and abused Armenian prisoners of war, and requested a State Department investigation into Azerbaijani war crimes – including Azerbaijan's deployment of foreign mercenaries and use of illegal cluster bomb and white phosphorous.

New rehabilitation department opens at Vanadzor Medical Center

On March 15, the official opening ceremony of a new rehabilitation department took place at Vanadzor Medical Centre. The event was attended by RA Minister of Health Anahit Avanesyan, French Ambassador to Armenia Anne Louyot, Co-founder and Chairman of the Aznavour Foundation Nicolas Aznavour, CEO of the Aznavour Foundation Kristina Aznavour, as well as representatives of local self-government bodies of Vanadzor and other guests. Nicolas Aznavour and the director of Vanadzor MC Vahagn Mkrtchyan took part in the official ribbon-cutting ceremony at the opening of the department.

As a result of a large-scale war in Artsakh in 2020, thousands of young people received serious injuries and still need treatment in order to improve their quality of life. Weapons used during the war (including banned weapons) caused serious brain and spine injuries that require long-term physical and psychological recovery. Taking into account the above-mentioned points, the Aznavour Foundation initiated its "Provision of Mixed Rehabilitation in Post-War Armenia" project, with the support of the Crisis and Support Center of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, that provided up to 205,000 euros,

as part of significant humanitarian aid put in place for the benefit of Armenia.

The goal of the project was to target several issues at once, creating an opportunity for psychological and physical rehabilitation for a wide range of beneficiaries. Within the framework of the project, a large rehabilitation department was created at the Vanadzor Medical Centre in Lori region of Armenia. In order to ensure the best quality of services, the department was provided with twelve units of rehabilitation equipment, which meet the highest international standards of functionality and quality. Besides, within the framework of the project, local specialists were given the opportunity to take part in training sessions by experienced French doctors. The number of specialists who gained new knowledge in the field of physical rehabilitation and psychological support is currently 14. Two more groups of French professionals will arrive in Vanadzor in May.

During the program, specialists from France worked with over 120 people who lost relatives in the recent war. They held meetings and consultations on the topic of prevention and overcoming PTSD.

The establishment of the rehabilitation department in the Lori region will facilitate



the work of similar centres in Yerevan and Gyumri which are often overloaded. It will also improve the life of the people who had to travel to the capital from distant regions each time they needed treatment.

The center is already providing support to our compatriots who suffered from the Artsakh war and to other patients in need of rehabilitation treatment, but after the official opening ceremony and the awareness campaign, it will provide even more assistance to the beneficiaries.

The project was implemented with the participation of the Crisis and Support Centre of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. The other partners of the project are the RA Ministry of Health and Vanadzor Medical Center.



Rosa Linn, Armenia's representative at this year's Eurovision Song Contest, has just released her entry song "Snap", together with the official music video.

Rosa says this song is a journey into her inner world, a personal story everyone can relate to: "I think we've all been at a snapping point, where it felt like there's no way out and that the entire world is just crumbling down around you. You start questioning everything, including yourself. I have been there. And what I realized was that I had the strength to shape my reality – it just took getting out of my own way and finding inner-peace. It's all about self-love and accepting that you are enough. Writing "Snap" was a form of therapy for me and I

Armenia premieres its entry song and the official music video for the Eurovision Song Contest 2022

hope that it can be that for others who are also going through hard times."

"Snap" was written by Rosa Linn, Larzz Principato, Courtney Harrell, Allie Crystal, Tamar Mardirossian Kaprelian. Lyrics by Rosa Linn, Larzz Principato, Courtney Harrell, Allie Crystal, Tamar Mardirossian Kaprelian, Jeremy Dusoulet

Channel One's music producer Anushik Ter-Ghukasyan says minor adjustments have been made to the initial version of the song composed by Rosa. "Snap" is honest, uplifting and very emotional. That's because Rosa wrote the song herself and she's telling her own story. When it comes to production, I am very happy that this year we have an extraordinary team working on "Snap" – from Yerevan all the way to LA."

The song was produced by Alex Salibian, Ethan Schneiderman, Larzz Principato, Ben Samama, Lilith Navasardyan (Arme-

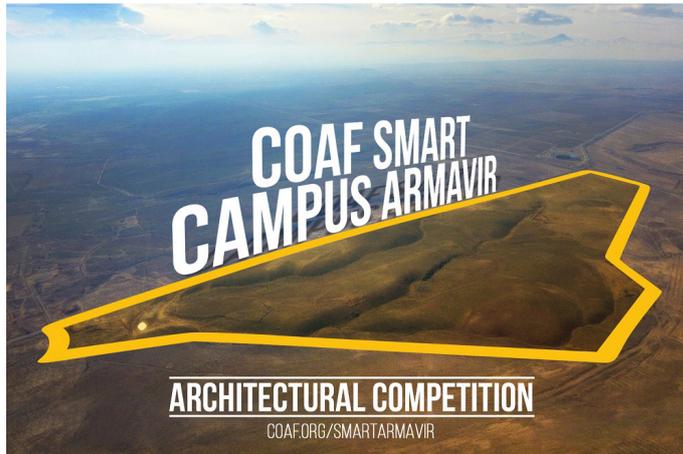
nia). Mixing and mastering was done by Grammy winner Tony Maseratti, who collaborated with Aretha Franklin, Beyoncé, Sia, Selena Gomez, Sher, Lady Gaga and other world-famous artists.

"Snap" is a vulnerable, honest, well-crafted pop song," says Nvak co-founder Tamar Kaprelian. "It will hopefully bring new attention to this up-and-coming generation of Armenian singers, songwriters, and producers."

The music video was directed by Aramays Hayrapetyan. "Once I heard "Snap", I kept thinking that I had to show the artist's emotions as comprehensibly and correctly as possible. Not leaving the artist in the background was an important precondition for me. We made the video for the purpose of giving the viewers a chance to travel to another, extraordinary reality through artistic and visual solutions," says Hayrapetyan.

COAF to build its second SMART Center in Armenia

The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) has launched the international architectural competition for the COAF SMART Campus in Armenia's Armavir region. Architects worldwide are welcome to submit their innovative architectural concepts for a 90-hectare rural environment of world-class educational, cultural, and tourism facilities online by May 2, 2022.



of the Campus and this competition is the establishment of a new SMART Center designed to offer underserved rural children in Armavir long-term educational prospects through multidisciplinary after-school programs. Echoing the design of its predecessor, the Armavir SMART Center will be embedded into an intricate ecosystem of training facilities and social enterprises aimed at driving economic growth through tourism and agricultural diversification.

Winning design proposals will be selected by an international jury panel, chaired by award-winning architect Michel Mossessian and composed of internationally-renowned architects and representatives of educational institutions.

The future SMART Campus in Armavir is the second of its kind, following in the footsteps of COAF's SMART Campus in the northern Lori region, inaugurated in 2018. Over the past four years, more than 3,000 rural children have attended the Lori SMART Center, enjoying equitable access to quality education in arts, athletics, engineering, entrepreneurship, languages and music.

and professional qualifications of Armenia's rural youth, the SMART Campus has laid a strong foundation for tourism and economic development by placing a series of social enterprises, including a boutique hotel (Concept Hotel), a tourism information center (Visitor Center), a tree nursery and an upcoming conferencing facility (Conference Center) within walking distance from the SMART Center and right in Lori's mountainous countryside.

The construction of the new SMART Campus in Armavir reiterates COAF's commitment to offering a centralized and comprehensive approach to rebuilding Armenia's rural communities. At the core

The announcement of the architectural competition for Armenia's second SMART Campus marks the beginning of a new phase for COAF's rural development approach—one in which the organization amplifies its impact on working and living conditions in rural communities by establishing SMART Campuses nationwide, starting in its home region, Armavir. The organization invites architects from around the globe to contribute their groundbreaking solutions to bring an architectural masterstroke to Armenia's most overlooked rural areas and help build the country's future in many aspects.

Alongside developing the academic

Greek author presents new book on Armenian Genocide

A new book on Armenian Genocide by Greek author Alexandros Pigadas was presented in Athens.

Titled "Nation and ethnic minorities: Study of the Armenian Genocide," the book examines the painful pages of the history of the Armenian people, the events that preceded the genocide, and at the same time touches upon the process of the formation of the Armenian Diaspora, as well as the efforts aimed at the international recognition and condemnation of the crime of genocide.

The book plays a unique role in understanding the Armenian cause, as well as the



policy of planned extermination of Armenians.

Addressing the attendees, Armenian Ambassador to Greece Tigran Mkrtchyan welcomed the publication of the book and

emphasized its peculiarities. In particular, the Ambassador highlighted the fact that the Armenian Genocide influenced the formation of the Greek-Armenian community.

The Ambassador emphasized the young scholar's view that international recognition of the genocide was not only important for the restoration of historical memory and justice, but also for the protection of human rights, emphasizing that in this sense, the recognition of the genocide by the legal successors of the perpetrators of the genocide can only symbolize the maturity of the state and society.



On the International Day of La Francophonie Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan emphasized the strong cultural and historical ties that link Armenia to the organization.

He said this year the International Day of La Francophonie has a particular meaning for Armenia since the country celebrates ten years of its full membership in the organization.

“The cultural and historical ties that unite Armenia and La Francophonie are solid and inalienable, stemming from the spirit of mutual cooperation prevailing in

Armenia and La Francophone united by strong cultural and historical ties – FM

the French-speaking community,” the Foreign Minister said.

“It is with immense enthusiasm that our country has committed itself during these years to promoting the values of La Francophonie for the sake of cultural diversity, democracy, human rights and freedoms and is resolutely determined to continue its efforts,” he noted.

“After having had the honor of hosting the 18th Summit of La Francophonie, Armenia continues to hold its presidency assumed in 2018 with the same vigor. The smooth running of this Presidency and the effective contribution of Armenia to the International Organization of La Francophonie, as well as the dissemination of the ideas of La Francophonie are among the priorities of the Armenian Government,”

Minister Mirzoyan said.

This year Armenia is once again actively involved in the organization of cultural and educational events aimed at celebrating the richness and diversity of French-speaking cultures and our common values.

To this end, a number of events will be organized in Yerevan and all regions of Armenia, with the participation of Francophone institutions operating in the country, as well as local self-government bodies and communities, the Foreign Minister said.

“I am convinced that these initiatives will strengthen the bonds of solidarity and friendship that unite us within the French-speaking world and affirm our un-failing attachment to French-speaking culture,” he added.

Refugees, immigrants or tourists: Nearly 4000 Ukrainian citizens of Armenian descent arrive in Armenia in 3 weeks

Nearly 4000 citizens of Ukraine arrived to Armenia in the last three weeks, according to the Ukrainian Chargé d'affaires in Armenia Denis Avtonomov.

Avtonomov said at a news conference that most of these 4000 Ukrainian citizens are ethnic Armenians. Avtonomov said those who arrived are either refugees, immigrants or tourists. “The peculiarity is that almost all of them are ethnic Armenians, and they have friends, families, homes here, that’s why they aren’t asking for help,” Avtonomov said.



He added that the Ukrainian Embassy in Yerevan has some possibilities to solve

the accommodation issues for the arriving nationals, however the employment issue is far more difficult to solve.

According to Avtonomov, many citizens of Armenia – be it in Yerevan or in other cities – are applying to the Ukrainian embassy and expressing willingness to help the Ukrainian refugees in finding homes.

Overall, according to Avtonomov, “tens of thousands” of people from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus have come to Armenia since February 24 as refugees, immigrants or tourists.

Aeroflot to resume flights to Yerevan from March 22

The Russian Aeroflot Airline will resume flights to Yerevan on March 22. The flights will be operated by Russian Sukhoi Superjet 100 aircraft. The airline is open sales of tickets for daily regular flights to Yerevan.

In late February, Russia closed airspace to 36 countries (Armenia not included) in response to the closure of airspace to Russian aircraft. Moreover, the Federal

Air Transport Agency recommended that Russian airlines significantly limit flights abroad given “a high risk of detention or arrest of aircraft of Russian airlines abroad.”

After this recommendation, some airlines, such as Aeroflot, S7 and Pobeda, completely halted international flights except those to Minsk, Belarus.



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Armenian Identity Card

The goal of the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) non-profit organization is to unify Armenians worldwide in a common platform so that through contacts, queries and referenda they can express their views and positions regarding issues of general interest to Armenians around the world and issues of particular interest to Armenian communities in various countries.

Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) also makes it possible to establish business networks, the cardholder can participate in various charitable projects, and can obtain discounts from Armenian and non-Armenian businesses all over the world. Armenians should feel themselves to be full-fledged "citizens" of a reborn Armenia and the Armenian Identity Card is the «passport» for all Armenians.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID)

network is an effective environment where Armenians can implement various projects and pan-Armenian programs. At the heart of HyeID is the creation of an Armenian database which will become the reliable and objective basis to realize the potential of all Armenians around the world. Based on that database, it will be possible to implement various permanent and temporary initiatives through the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) organization.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) worldwide network enables cardholders to elect and get elected to the leadership of The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) network structures.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can benefit from the possibility of discounts intended for HyeID cardholders when shopping for products and services in various countries of the world.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can participate in queries and referenda initiated by the HyeID network and vote on issues of national interest to Armenians.

- Ensure the security and privacy of The Armenian Identification Card (HyeID) cardholders.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders who live in the Diaspora intend to utilize the possibilities made available through HyeID to form a Diaspora representative body — Diaspora Armenian Parliament — through democratic elections.

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