

## Ohan Yergainharsian, Howth, Dublin, Ireland

HE Dr. Vahe Gabrielyan  
Armenian Embassy  
London

23.09.09

Dear Dr. Gabrielyan,

With great pleasure I would like to inform you that on the 20th of September last the Armenian community in Ireland established the first ever Armenian school in Ireland with two classes and a total of 26 students. The Sunday school is named St. Hripsime Armenian School. It is to provide classes in Armenian language, history, geography, religion and culture.

More than 50 members of the Armenian community gathered on the eve of Armenia's Independence Day to celebrate both happy occasions. Following is a summary of the day's proceedings:

During the opening ceremony, Ohan Yergainharsian welcomed the attendees and in his speech explained "Abovian said 'what holds a nation together is its language and religion' and so it is our sacred duty now as Armenian parents to pass on the torch to the next generation as it has been passed on to us since St. Mashdotz and St. Grigor Lousavorich created Our Alphabet and established Our Church. The teaching of our language and religion to our next generation is our best defense against the perils of assimilation and the wind in our sail which one day will return us to our ancestral lands. Those who think this return is but a dream should remember that for more than 800 years, a free and independent Armenia was also a dream. A dream which our people have now managed to turn into a beautiful reality.'

As the Chinese proverb says 'even the longest journey starts with a single step' and this, our modest school is but a first step in a journey that will see the school in a permanent structure which will also serve as a community centre which shall be called 'Armenia House'. In this centre we shall hold our commemorations, celebrations and we shall regularly gather together under one roof to hold cultural events. In due course, I hope we can build an Armenian church which we will also name, St. Hripsime."

Ohan continued "Fellow Armenians, this daily struggle against the dangers of assimilation is daunting and demands huge sacrifices. We in the Diaspora however are no longer alone in this unequal struggle. We have a government now at home which stands ready and willing to support us. The Armenian Ministry of Diaspora has offered us all the help we need to establish and expand our activities." Ohan read the letter received from the Minister of Diaspora herself, Mrs. Hranoush Hakobyan. This was extremely well received by the assembled crowd. "The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Armenian Embassy in London are also keen to help, Dr. Gabrielyan, our Ambassador, has been here several times offering help and encouragement. Through his efforts, we will soon have an Honorary Consulate here in Ireland to serve the Armenian community. It is hoped that all this will provide us with all we need to have a vibrant community which will support each other and promote Armenian interests here in Ireland and in Armenia itself." Ohan then thanked the parents for their efforts and wished them all well for the future.

This was followed by the teachers, Mrs, Lucine Ustian and Mrs. Anahit Mikayelian who gave a brief description of the proposed curriculum. They explained adequate books, copy books, maps, pictures and CD's and DVD's are already available and will be provided free of charge to each student. The teaching is to be conducted in the Eastern Dialect to help children integrate into the scholastic curriculum in Armenia in the future. The children, many of whom are unfamiliar with our language, were delighted with the wealth and quality of available teaching aids at their disposal.

Ohan reminded the gathering that as the next day was Independence Day, it would be appropriate to sing together our National Anthem, which the gathering sang with gusto and emotion.

Dr. Diana Minassyan, a medical doctor from Armenia, furthering her education in Ireland and who had

travelled to Dublin specially for the occasion, was invited to cut the ribbon and declare the school open.

The ceremonies were concluded after several Armenian songs and poems were sung and recited by the students.

A reception followed where Armenian wine was served to the parents while the children got acquainted with their new school and the available toys.

Dear Dr. Gabrielyan, I would like to thank you personally for all the support and encouragement you have given us over the past few years to help start this project. The Armenian community in Ireland will always be in your debt. I would also like to thank the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora in Yerevan for their kind attention and invaluable support.

With Kind Regards  
Ohan Yergainharsian