



NEWS BULLETIN

Embassy of the Republic of Armenia

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Presidential News

Yerevan, 5 November. President Robert Kocharyan received Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the Secretary General of NATO and members of his delegation. Mr. Scheffer was visiting Armenia in the framework of a regional trip.

The President stressed Armenia's readiness to expand relations with NATO and expressed confidence that the Secretary General's visit would further enhance the already existing cooperation.

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer positively evaluated the Armenia-NATO relations, highlighting Armenia's participation in NATO and the Euro Atlantic cooperation programmes.

The Parties also discussed the NK peace process. President Kocharyan provided a comprehensive analysis of the approaches and assessments of the Armenian side.

Yerevan, 13-16 November. On the invitation of President Robert Kocharyan, President of Estonia Arnold Ruukel paid an official visit to Armenia.

On November 15, Robert Kocharyan and Arnold Ruukel had a private meeting, after which negotiations were continued in a wider format. At the conclusion of the negotiations the two Presidents gave a joint press conference.

During the official visit, the President of Estonia also met with the President of the National Assembly, as well as the Prime Minister of Armenia. At the Holy See of St. Echmiadzin President Ruukel was hosted by the Catholicos of All Armenians Garegin II.

President Ruukel visited the Genocide Memorial and laid a wreath at the monument to the victims of the 1915 Genocide of Armenians.

Presidents Kocharyan and Ruukel attended the Armenian-Estonian business forum organized in the framework of the visit of Estonia's President.

Berlin, 17-19 November. President Robert Kocharyan visited the Federal Republic of Germany on a three-day working visit.

The President of Armenia met with the President of the Federal Republic of Germany Horst Koehler and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, as well as representatives of German business community.

A concert in honour of the President of Armenia and Mrs. Bella Kocharyan took place at the Berlin Konzerthaus Music Hall with the participation of prominent Armenian musicians.

President Kocharyan also participated in Herbert Quandt Fund's 10th European annual economic Forum dedicated to the EU - CIS relations and presented Armenia's viewpoint on the EU – CIS economic cooperation.

Parliamentary

Paris, 4 November. The third meeting of the presidents of the South Caucasus parliaments, sponsored by Christian Poncelet, President of the Senate of the French Republic, took place in Paris. President of the National Assembly of Armenia Artur Baghdasaryan, President of the Georgian Parliament Nino Burjanadze, and Murtuz Alesgerov, President of the Milli Mejlis of Azerbaijan discussed problems related to development of tourism and preservation of cultural heritage in the region.

Highlighting the importance of regular meetings between the speakers for the development of parliamentary diplomacy, Christian Poncelet expressed the hope that such discussions could bring closer the solutions to the key problems accumulated in the South Caucasus and expressed the readiness of the Senate of France for support.

On Artur Baghdasaryan's proposal a special working group, consisting of three MPs and two representatives of the executive power was established to tackle issues related to the development of regional tourism. He mentioned that the National Assembly of Armenia had

already passed the law "On Tourism and Tourism Activities," and that tourism in Armenia is viewed as a priority direction of the economic development.

The next meeting of the four will be held in Armenia.

London, 15-18 November. Tigran Torossyan, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, and Levon Mkrtchyan MP participated in the meeting of the Presidency of the South Caucasus Inter-Parliamentary Initiative (SCIPI), organised by LINKS, the British NGO that had initiated the process.

The parliamentarians summarized the results of previous work conducted during the Armenian presidency in the last six months and the details of transferring the presidency to Azeri parliamentarians in January, 2005.

Paris, 17 November. At the meeting of the PACE Political Affairs Committee, a report on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict was presented by David Atkinson, a British MP who was appointed rapporteur in September 2004. Mr. T. Torossyan, Deputy Speaker of National Assembly and Head of the Armenian delegation to the PACE, participated in the meeting. Mr Atkinson's report almost entirely repeated that of the previous rapporteur, Terry Davis, a British MP recently elected Secretary General of the CE.

The Armenian delegation made a number of proposals aiming at improving the report which is widely seen in Armenia to be full of inaccuracies, out-of-context interpretations and allegations deemed dangerous for the peace process. Minor changes were made to the report at the Political Committee meeting and it will now be discussed by the plenary session of the Assembly, most probably at the end of January.

Yerevan, 23 November. Speaker of the National Assembly, Artur Baghdasaryan received a delegation headed by Margherita Boniver, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

Mr. Baghdasaryan highlighted Italy's contribution to political, economic, cultural processes in Armenia and underlined the importance of a further expansion of the existing cooperation. Specific attention was paid to the developing tourism, small and medium enterprises and inter-regional ties.

Establishment of an 'Italian Home' in Armenia, which is believed to be a new stimulus for strengthening government to government and inter-parliamentary ties was also discussed.

Mrs. Boniver emphasized her country's eagerness to enlarge cooperation in all the spheres with Armenia and promised to promote the fulfilment of all the mentioned projects.

Governmental News

Florida, 31 October – 5 November. Mikael Harutyunian, General-Colonel, Chief of Staff of Armed Forces of Armenia, paid an official visit to the US on the invitation of General Richard Myers, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Issues related to Armenian-US military relations, peacemaking activities, Armenia's participation in "Partnership for Peace" NATO program were discussed. General Harutyunian also visited Arlington National Cemetery and laid a wreath at the monument of the Unknown Soldier on behalf of RA Armed Forces.

Mikael Harutyunian was awarded the "Legion of Honour," the US military order, for establishing stable and constructive relations between RA and the US Defence Ministries, for active participation in the war against terror and "Partnership for Peace" NATO program.

Yerevan, 9 November. Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian gave an exclusive interview to RFE/RL, commenting, particularly, on the US-Armenia relations and the resolution of the Karabakh conflict.

Oskanian stated that "serious progress" has been achieved during his four meetings with his Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Mammadyarov in Prague and Strasbourg over the past six months.

"We can now enter the second stage of the Prague meetings and deepen the achievements of the first stage," Oskanian said. "Armenia is ready to resume the negotiations as early as tomorrow."

The Armenian Foreign Minister characterized Azerbaijan's initiative to include in the agenda of UN General Assembly the issue of so-called "settlements" on Armenian-controlled territories around Nagorno-Karabakh as "a diplomatic mistake".

"Azerbaijan should not hope to continue the negotiations within the OSCE Minsk Group and at the same time expect other solutions for separate issues picked from the whole package in other instances. It never happens," Oskanian said. "Either we continue the negotiations within the Minsk Group, trying to reach a solution of the whole problem, or Azerbaijan can take the issue to other instances, seeking separate solutions, and in that case Baku will have to deal directly with the authorities of Karabakh. The ball today is in their court", commented Mr. Oskanian.

Yerevan, 11 November. Minister Vartan Oskanian received Political Director of Germany's Foreign Office Dr. Michael Schafer and French Deputy Secretary General for Political and Security Affairs, Stanislas Lefevre de Laboulaye, in the framework of their three-day visit to Armenia following similar trips to Baku and Tbilisi.

The discussion that evolved within the political framework of Wider Europe and New Neighbourhood policy explored issues related to increased level of interaction between the countries of the South Caucasus and European Union and new opportunities offered by this new EU policy.

Issues related to Armenia - Turkey relations against the background of imminent negotiations for Turkey's accession to the EU were also addressed.

Speaking about the current stage and issues of the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Minister Oskanian stressed Armenia's adherence to her commitment to resolving the conflict through peaceful negotiations and the country's readiness to restart the negotiations at any moment subject to reciprocal readiness of Azerbaijan.

Washington, 12 November. Armenia was re-selected to participate in the Millennium Challenge programme 2005. Speaking on the goals of this US initiative, Colin Powell, the outgoing US Secretary of State and Chairman of the Millennium Challenge Corporation Board of Directors, stated that out of 68 needy countries, the US selected the 16 "which have demonstrated through their policies and practices that they rule justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom." The Secretary also added that the selection simply means eligibility to receive but does not guarantee funding; each country must first develop and present its own proposal to

promote growth and reduce poverty. Armenia's proposal for 2005 will be presented before the end of this year.

Moscow, 12 November. Foreign Minister Oskanian participated in the one-day Ministerial meeting of the Collective Security Agreement in Moscow. Among other items, the meeting addressed the need for a quicker response to new challenges and threats, and the battle against illegal drugs and organized crime.

In his statement, Minister Oskanian expressed Armenia's surprise that some members of the Collective Security had chosen to disregard the statement of the Minsk Group co-chairs on the recent UN General Assembly vote on an Azerbaijani motion to submit a draft resolution on the NK conflict. The Minister said that by so doing the countries that have voted in favour in fact voted against the peace process, since the co-chairs -- those most knowledgeable about the negotiations -- had clearly stated that such a resolution would not be helpful to the process.

During his Moscow visit, Minister Oskanian also held a meeting with Sergei Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia. They discussed both bilateral and international issues of mutual concern.

That same day, the Armenian Foreign Minister also met with the Russian and French co-chairs of the Minsk Group, Ambassadors Yuri Merzlyakov and Henry Jacolin. They discussed prospects for resolution of the NK conflict.

Yerevan, 15 November. Minister Oskanian received the Monitoring group of the CE Council of Ministers, headed by Germany's Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, Ambassador Roland Wegener. This is the second visit this year of the group also known as the "Ago Group" (Italian Ambassador Pietro Ago was the group's first chairman until early this year) to Armenia to assess the country's progress in meeting its Council of Europe membership obligations.

Ambassador Wegener stressed the importance of continuity and consistency in the way the Group carries on its work, briefed the Minister on their earlier meetings with Armenian officials and presented their views on the progress of constitutional and electoral code reforms. He expressed the need for a dialogue between the authorities and the opposition.

The Foreign Minister said that the Group's visits render additional momentum to the reforms and contribute to Armenia's speedy and timely fulfilment of its obligations. He detailed Armenia's approaches to meeting the obligations and explained the necessity of government and opposition partnership.

Earlier, the group had met with Tigran Torossyan, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament.

Yerevan, 22 November. Foreign Minister Oskanian received Ruud Lubbers, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) who was in Yerevan as part of a regional visit.

High Commissioner's first visit aimed at obtaining first-hand knowledge about the situation of refugees and respective national policies.

The parties discussed programs and actions aimed at addressing the issues of refugees in Armenia. Minister Oskanian highly praised UNHCR activities in Armenia since 1992 and expressed hope that the Field Office will continue to be actively involved in all refugee-related initiatives of the Armenian government who from the very first day embarked upon addressing the issues of the refugees and have been effectively addressing their housing, naturalization and employment needs.

Minister Oskanian and Ruud Lubbers signed a cooperation agreement between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

About 400,000 refugees fled massacres and violent ethnic cleansing in their home towns and villages in Azerbaijan in early 1990's. Most of them found safe haven in Armenia.

Washington, 19 November. The US Senate adopted a Miscellaneous Trade and Technical Corrections Act that includes a provision on granting PNTR (permanent normal trade relations) status to Armenia. The House of Representatives had passed the same act earlier this year.

Establishment of Armenia - US permanent normal trade relations effectively repeals application of Jackson-Vanik amendment, and Armenia-US trade relations will from now on be regulated by not only bilateral, but also international agreements including WTO ones.

The volume of Armenia - US trade relations, including Armenian exports to the US, has already started to grow. According to the US Department of Trade, Armenia's exports to the US during January - September of 2004 amounted to US\$33.2 million, a 42 percent increase compared to the same period in 2003.

New York, 23 November. A draft resolution under the title of "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan" was introduced by Azerbaijan and included in the agenda of the UN General Assembly on November 23. Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Eldar Mamedyarov introduced the draft and the Turkish and Pakistani representatives and delivered supporting speeches. The US representative Ms. Susan Moore spoke on behalf of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs.

The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Armenia to the UN, Ambassador Armen Martirosyan pointed at the propagandist essence of the Azeri proposal by recalling that from the very beginning the idea of including the issue in the GA agenda did not have the support of most countries. The Minsk Group co-chairmen also declared their opposition, considering it both destructive and inappropriate.

"Azerbaijan tries to present its resolution from the perspective of human rights and humanitarian law," stated A. Martirosyan. "A country which has violated these laws itself by meticulously planned and systematically carried out massacres of Armenians in Baku, Sumgait and Kirovabad in peacetime from 1988 to 1990, is trying to cloak its own actions by selective application of international humanitarian law. It limits the application of the return of refugees to "the area of conflict" and to ethnic Azeris only, conveniently leaving out the rights of over 400 000 Armenians under the same laws, particularly those from the immediate conflict zone from Shahumian, Getashen and Northern Martakert. Their homes today are fully confiscated and populated by ethnic Azeris,"- stated the Armenian representative.

"With this resolution Azerbaijan tries to dissect the issue of the so-called "occupied territories" from the whole package of negotiations. However, it fails to admit that those territories have come under the control of Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians as a result of the war unleashed by Azerbaijan in an attempt to stifle the peaceful drive of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh for self-determination," stated A. Martirosyan.

"Today those territories are serving as security belt around Nagorno-Karabakh. Given the efforts for military suppression in the very recent past, as well as the war-mongering rhetoric of the current Azerbaijani leadership, the issue of those territories cannot be resolved unless there is a resolution on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, and unless security guarantees are provided," stressed A. Martirosyan.

In his speech Ambassador Martirosyan stated again that Nagorno-Karabakh has never been part of independent Azerbaijan. "The people of Nagorno-Karabakh have proven their right to live freely and securely on their own territory both legally through a referendum conducted in 1991 in full conformity of the existing Soviet legislation of the time, and by defending this right in the war unleashed against its population by Azerbaijan," stated the Armenian ambassador. He said that the peace should be achieved, first and foremost, between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. The latter, however, has rejected and walked out of every single peace proposal made by the OSCE Minsk Group for the last six years.

"Azerbaijan is not interested in the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," stated Martirosyan. "The increased belligerent rhetoric and incitement of anti-Armenian hatred in Azerbaijan clearly testifies to the true intentions of its current leadership. The present Azerbaijani motion aims at torpedoing the negotiations within the OSCE Minsk Group and diverting the international community's efforts into parallel processes, which would allow it to manoeuvre between them without committing to the final settlement of the conflict. Azerbaijan tries to use the United Nations and its General Assembly to do that, Azerbaijan's initiative to undo the peace process should not be supported."

It was however decided to delay any action on the draft resolution since the parties were conducting parallel consultations.

Embassy News

London, 23 November. Ambassador of Armenia to the UK Dr Vahe Gabrielyan participated in the State Opening of the British Parliament to listen to The Queen's speech - the 50th delivered amid traditional pomp in the House of Lords. The representatives of both Houses, as well as members of the British diplomatic corps were present at the annual ceremony.

London, 27 November. For the first time in UK *The Barn Sinfonietta* ensemble performed the Symphony for Strings and Timpani of renown Armenian composer Edvard Mirzoyan, one of the last living giants of the modern "Soviet School" of composers. The concert in Oxted was attended by Ambassador Vahe Gabrielyan.

Other News

Washington, D.C. 5 November. Armenia's Embassy in Washington, D.C., in cooperation with Armenian Cultural and Educational Society hosted an evening dedicated to life and work of Armenian-American artist Arshile Gorky.

Opening remarks by Ambassador A. Kirakosyan were followed by a presentation by Melvin Lader, a Gorky scholar and art history professor at George Washington University. "It is inconceivable that a son of Armenian refugees, a refugee himself, was the first one ever to internationalise American art and elevate it to international level", said Prof. Lader.

Representatives of social and cultural circles of the US and Armenian Diaspora attended the evening.

Stepanakert, 27 November. "Azerbaijan's attempts to transfer the discussion of the Karabakh problem from the frames of the OSCE Minsk Group into other international organizations format will prolong the settlement process", Ashot Ghouljian, Foreign Minister of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic stated during an interview, while commenting upon the Azerbaijan-initiated discussion of the issue in the United Nations Organization.

According to him, "neither the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairmen, nor the countries interested in the soonest peaceful resolution of the problem welcome such efforts of the Azeri side".

The head of the Nagorno Karabakh Foreign Ministry stressed that the official Baku had used this tactics every time the parties approached concrete agreements.

"Such activities by Azerbaijan aimed at diverting the attention of the international community from the focal point of the Karabakh problem, namely, the status of Nagorno-Karabakh, thus hampering any progress in resolving the conflict," Ashot Ghouljian stressed.

Los-Angeles, 25 November. "Hayastan" All-Armenian Fund's annual Telethon was launched in the LA, US. The funds raised during this event will be directed to the construction of the North-South highway that started four years ago.

This year's Telethon was great success: pledges for more than \$11 million were received. This will enable to continue the construction of the remaining portion of the 160 km-long highway.

Armenians from the Republic of Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and various Diaspora communities all over the world contributed to this very important common goal. Over 1 million dollars were received from Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh alone. Another 800.000 euros had been raised during the Phonethon in France earlier this month, and about 15 million drams were received from the Phonethon in Armenia.

Among the big donors were well-known, long-time Armenian benefactors Louise Simone Manoogian, Hrair Hovnanian, Kevork Hovnanian, Sarkis Hakopian, Eduardo Ernekian, Caroline Mugar, Gerard Cafesjian, Ara Abrahamyan and others.

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