



NEWS BULLETIN

Embassy of the Republic of Armenia

Bulletin #4.October 2004

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Presidential News

Yerevan, 2 October. President Kocharyan received the delegation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, headed by the President of the Federal Council Sergei Mironov.

During the meeting an emphasis was put on the importance of invigorating the activities of the Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation. Special attention was paid to the fight against terrorism and the repercussions of the tragic events in Beslan which have led to the closure of the Russian-Georgian border, causing serious difficulties for the transportation of passengers and cargo to Armenia. (*The border re-opened on October 22nd, coinciding with President Kocharyan's official visit to Georgia*)

Yerevan, 5 October. On the invitation of the President of Armenia Robert Kocharyan, President Georgi Purvanov of Bulgaria paid a two-day official visit to Yerevan. Presidents Kocharyan and Purvanov discussed different aspects of Armenian-Bulgarian bilateral relations, and a wide range of issues pertaining to the current state and prospects of cooperation.

The two Presidents held a joint press conference and attended the closing ceremony of the Armenian-Bulgarian business forum.

Yerevan, 6 October. President Kocharyan received participants of the 83rd AGBU conference. Altogether 350 delegates from 24 countries participated in the conference. Highlighting the fact that the Conference of the Armenian General Benevolent Union is taking place in Armenia, the President of Armenia highly valued the activities of the AGBU in areas of culture, education and in preserving Armenian identity in general. President Kocharyan dwelt on issues that were of interest to the delegates, speaking particularly about the economic and social situation in Armenia,

prospects for development, and the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process.

Yerevan, 11 October. President Kocharyan received a delegation of the Eurasia Foundation headed by its President Charles William Maynes. Speaking about future programmes of the Foundation, it was mentioned that projects would continue in three main directions – strengthening of the local governance structures, support for small and medium businesses with the emphasis on the programmes developed for marzes (provinces or regions), and community building for establishing viable structures in the communities.

The Foundation supported numerous pioneering initiatives including the Izmirlyan – Eurasia Small Business Loan Programme, Public Dialogue, Media Strengthening Programme, South Caucasus Cooperation Programme and Caucasus Research Resource Centres.

Tbilisi, 22-24 October. On the invitation of President Mikhail Sahakashvili, President Robert Kocharyan conducted a three-day official visit to Georgia. Presidents Robert Kocharyan and Mikhail Sahakashvili held a private meeting at the residence of the Georgian President, which was followed by high-level negotiations. The Presidents gave a joint press conference. The President of Armenia also met the President of the Georgian Parliament Nino Burdjanadze and Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania.

Robert Kocharyan was also hosted by the Catholicos of All Georgians, Patriarch Ilia II. The President laid a wreath at the Memorial of the Heroes who fell for the unity of Georgia. The President of Armenia met with the leaders of the Armenian community of Georgia.

An Armenian-Georgian business forum was held on October 24, and was attended by the Presidents of Armenia and Georgia.

Parliamentary News

Yerevan, 18-20 October. Demetris Christofias, Chairman of the House of Representatives of Cyprus, paid an official visit to Yerevan on the

invitation by Artur Baghdasaryan, Chairman of National Assembly of Armenia. On October 19, Artur Baghdasaryan and Demetris Cristofias signed a Joint Memorandum, reiterating that Armenia and Cyprus are political partners that have no contradictions in any sphere and have vast potential for cooperation. Both sides underlined that cooperation in the international structures is a priority and Cyprus will be supporting Armenia within the framework of the EU New Neighbours programme.

Yerevan/ Stepanakert 18-21 October. A delegation of UK Parliamentarians, representing the British branch of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, visited Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Led by Gordon Marsden MP, the delegation included Baroness Cox, Vice-Speaker of the House of Lords, Jane Griffiths MP, Candy Atherton MP, and Jim Rogers, Deputy Secretary of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The delegation met the Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly Artur Bagdasaryan. Issues of Armenian-British inter-parliamentary and regional cooperation were discussed. It was stated that the UK could support Armenia within the framework of the programme Expanded Europe: New Neighbours.

The delegation was received also by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Tatul Margaryan, who briefed them on Armenia's position in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, reaffirming Armenia's readiness for a peaceful solution.

On 20th of October the delegation visited Nagorno Karabakh, where they met President Arkady Ghoukassian. The NK president emphasized that the visit of the UK Parliament members was a good opportunity for the people and leadership of the NKR to inform the international community about processes going on in Karabakh. The President underlined that the most important goal for the NK authorities was to prevent the resumption of military operations and provide for the security of the Nagorno Karabakh population.

The MPs stated that the visit to Nagorno Karabakh helped them get more detailed information about the life in the republic. The goal of the visit was also to find possibilities for international organisations to implement humanitarian projects and strengthen civic society in Nagorno Karabakh.

Government News

Washington, DC, 5 October. The ninth session of the U.S.-Armenia intergovernmental

task force on economic cooperation (USATF) was held in Washington, DC. USATF is the format that promotes discussions between the governments of the United States and Armenia on bilateral economic and related issues. Its sessions are held on a bi-annual basis. The Armenian delegation to the Ninth Session of USATF was led by the Minister of Finance and Economy Vardan Khachatryan.

The agenda included issues of coordination and directions of U.S. assistance programmes in Armenia within the context of the Armenian government's strategy for poverty reduction and economic growth, the implementation of the Millennium Challenge Account programme in Armenia and other issues of bilateral concern.

Prior to the USATF session, the Armenian governmental delegation participated, on October 2nd and 3rd, in the annual Governor's Meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Yerevan, 6-9 October. By the invitation of the Minister of Health Norayr Davidyan, Professor Sir Ara Darzi, OBE, Head of Surgery, Imperial College London, visited Armenia, where he held a two-day workshop with demo-operations at the *Malatia Medical Centre*. This is believed to be a valuable contribution to the training programme for keyhole surgeons in Armenia. Professor Darzi and his team are internationally respected for their innovative work in the advancement of minimal invasive surgery and in the development and use of allied technologies. Professor Darzi was knighted by the Queen as a Knight Commander of the most excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE) in December 2002.

Yerevan, 10 October. Foreign Minister Oskanian received the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Norway Jan Petersen who was on a regional visit to the countries of the South Caucasus. In the context of European integration, the parties discussed the progress of democratic reforms in Armenia. Minister Oskanian briefed his counterpart on Armenia's steps towards fulfilment of its commitments vis-à-vis the Council of Europe, highlighting, particularly, the reform of the constitution and the electoral code.

The Foreign Minister of Norway was also received by President Kocharyan. At the Parliament he met the chairs of the NA Standing Committees. At these meetings both sides underlined the importance of mutually beneficial regional cooperation, which could become a serious factor for a peaceful

resolution of conflicts, as well as had discussions on the promotion of economic cooperation, in particular Armenian-Norwegian partnership in the sphere of hydropower engineering.

Yerevan, 14 October. Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian met with delegates of the Trusteeship Council of the Armenian Assembly of America, who had arrived in Armenia for their annual conference.

Minister Oskanian expressed his gratitude to the AAA for their significant contribution to the development of a close relationship between Armenia and the US, and for the protection of Armenian interests.

Minister Oskanian spoke of Armenia's achievements of the last years in foreign relations and other areas. He presented recent developments in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict resolution and addressed issues of Armenian-Turkish relations.

Yerevan, 14 October. Minister Oskanian received Laura Kennedy, Assistant to US Secretary of State. They exchanged views on bilateral and urgent international issues and defined the Armenian-American relations as dynamic and having high level of certainty. During the meeting, the parties exchanged views on the current status of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement, and Armenia - Turkey relations, discussed the results of the 9th meeting of the Armenian-US Task Force recently held in Washington.

Rome/Vatican/Venice, 18-19 October. Foreign Minister Oskanian paid an official visit to Italy and met the Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, to discuss a wide range of bilateral and international issues. The ministers paid special attention to high priority programmes of economic development of Armenia, aiming at the use of relevant Italian experience. Small and medium businesses, as well as the development of tourism were specifically highlighted.

On the same day Minister Oskanian visited The Vatican and met the Secretary of Relations with Foreign States of the Holy See, Giovanni Loyola.

Minister Oskanian also attended a *South Caucasus: Stability and security of the region* round-table discussion organized by the Institute of Foreign Affairs of Italy and the

Embassy of Armenia. Minister Oskanian expressed his satisfaction by the results of his official visit, noting the achievement of specific agreements in the talks with his counterpart. He presented the priorities of Armenia's foreign policy, underlining the Government's efforts towards strengthening the country's security system, economic development, Euro-integration, and settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

In pointing out possible ways for achieving long-term peace and stability, Minister Oskanian expressed satisfaction on the involvement of South Caucasian states in the EU New Neighbourhood policy, as well as the deepening of the NATO Partnership programme in the region. He stated that the European direction of the South Caucasian states and the growing activity of the European Union in the region create new prospects for settlement of the conflicts, especially if the states themselves express political foresight and will.

Minister Oskanian also visited Venice and had meetings with the municipal authorities and business circles of Venice. The talks were about the necessity of starting Armenian-Italian relations at a regional level. The role of the Mkhitarian Abbey in maintaining close historical ties and traditions between Venice and Armenia was emphasized.

Yerevan, 29 October. A NATO Conference entitled "Contributing to a More Favourable Security Environment through Informing Public Opinion" was held in Yerevan. Fifty participants including representatives of Foreign Ministries from 25 Euro-Atlantic nations and officials from NATO headquarters, attended the Conference. The Conference, which is a part of 2004 Action Plan for Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, was co-organized by NATO and Armenia's Foreign Ministry and was chaired by NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy Jean Fournet.

Addressing the Conference, Deputy Foreign Minister Tatoul Margarian mentioned that public opinion is an important factor of conflict settlement in the South Caucasus. Unbiased reporting on national security issues by the mass media, aimed at shaping public opinion in support of constructive dialogue and problem solving gains critical importance in terms of re-establishing mutual confidence between the nations of the region.

He also referred to the balanced and consistent application of NATO partnership principles

aimed at promoting real cooperation and partnership in the region.

Tbilisi, 29 October. Foreign Minister Oskanian participated in the 11th Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). The meeting discussed and adopted documents related to cooperation between BSEC and other international structures, financial and administrative matters. In his statement Minister Oskanian particularly stressed: "Not much more than a decade ago the Black Sea divided the countries, that today make up BSEC...For all of us, a common sea and functioning bridges are essential for two-way traffic to flow from our past to our future".

Embassy News

London, 16 October. *New Names of Armenia*, an ensemble of young musicians, performed in a Charity Concert at the Manoukian Cultural Centre, St. Yeghiche Church. The virtuosity of ten young Armenian musicians, who are already prize-winners of many International Competitions, was awarded by long ovations of the highly satisfied audience. The Concert, dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of the *Anahid Association*, was organised by the *Anahid Association* under the auspices of the the Armenian Embassy and the Honorary Patronage of Mrs. Hasmik Gabrielyan. The youngsters also attended Master Classes at the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Royal Academy of Music.

Brussels, 18-19 October. Ambassador to the UK, HE Dr. Vahe Gabrielyan participated in the First Convention of European Armenians, organised by the European Armenian Federation. The convention brought together more than two hundred European citizens of Armenian origin and many European officials, including leaders of various organizations and individuals from sixteen countries. Among the participants were Ruben Shugaryan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Armenian Ambassadors to EU countries, religious dignitaries representing the two Catholicoses of the Armenian Apostolic Church and a civil representative of the Patriarch of the Armenian Catholic Church.

The Convention covered many issues: from the European Commission's New Neighbourhood Policy, to the protection and the development of the Armenian language in the Diaspora. The Convention adopted a Charter presented by

Hilda Tchoboian, the Chairperson of the European Armenian Federation.

Other News

London, 17-20 October. Prime Minister of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic Mr. Anoushavan Danielyan visited the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister met representatives of Armenian Community institutions: the UK branches of the All-Armenian "Hayastan" Fund and the AGBU, as well as of the Armenian Church and Community Council. Their contributions to vital programmes such as the North-South highway, and many possible other issues were at the forefront of discussions. A. Danielyan had a dinner at the House of Lords, hosted by British-Armenian All-Party Parliamentary Group and paid a visit to Wales on the invitation by the *Wales-Armenia Solidarity Group*.

Paris, October. Armenia will be granted an Observer status in the intergovernmental Agency of Francophonie, according to a decision made at the meeting of the Agency's Permanent Council. Armenia is officially invited to participate in the 10th Summit of Francophonie to be held in Wagadugu, capital of Burkina Faso, from 24 to 26 November, 2004. Foreign Minister V. Oskanyan will lead the Armenian delegation to the Summit, where the official granting ceremony will take place.

Francophonie has 51 members and five Observer members – the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Poland.

The intergovernmental Agency of Francophonie develops programmes of co-operation in the fields of education, culture, the media, economy and good governance between its member states.

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