



# NEWS BULLETIN

## Embassy of the Republic of Armenia

Bulletin # 1, January 2005

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### **Presidential News**

**Rome, 27 - 29 January.** By the invitation of the President of the Italian Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi President Robert Kocharyan conducted an official visit to Italy on January 27-30.

In Rome President Kocharyan and President Ciampi discussed bilateral relations, as well as regional and international issues. Special attention was attached to the issues pertaining to the Armenia's integration in Europe.

President Kocharyan assured that Armenia was ready to seriously deepen relations with the European Union in the framework of the "Enlarged Europe: New Neighbourhood" initiative. The President of Italy stressed that his country would assist Armenia in the process of establishing closer contacts with the EU, promoting advancement and peaceful future for the people of Armenia.

At the meetings with the Prime Minister, Presidents of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies the main topic of discussions was the need of invigorating bilateral political and economic relations as well as issues pertaining to the Armenia's integration in Europe. The Italian side showed great interest in the relations between the neighbouring countries of our region, NK peace process and reforms currently underway in Armenia.

Prospects of economic cooperation were discussed in detail at the Armenian-Italian Business Forum at the Italian Foreign Trade Institute, which was concluded by signing a Memorandum on Small and Medium Enterprises.

President Kocharyan met also with the President of the International Fund for the Development of Agriculture and Director General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. They highly praised cooperation with Armenia and assured that it would be

enhanced even further.

In Vatican Robert Kocharyan was hosted by Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Angelo Sodano. The President met also with the Catholicos of the Catholics, Patriarch T. Nerses-Poghos and observed the newly installed statue of St. Gregory the Illuminator.

In Venice President Kocharyan met with the Mayor of Venice and visited the Mourad Rafaelian School and the Mkhitarian Brotherhood on the island of San Lazzaro. He met also with the representatives of the Armenian Diaspora.

### **Parliamentary News**

**Yerevan, 11 January.** Strengthening and development of the cooperation between the higher education and scientific institutions was discussed during National Assembly's Deputy Speaker Vahan Hovhannisyan's meeting with a delegation headed by Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria Igor Damyanov.

Issues related to educational reforms in both countries, aimed at meeting the criteria of the European education area were also discussed.

**Yerevan, 19 January.** President of the National Assembly Artur Baghdassaryan received representatives of national minorities of Armenia. A variety of legislative, cultural, social and economic issues related to the community lives of minorities was discussed with the representatives of 11 communities. It was decided to create a council of national minorities. accountable to the National Assembly President. Each ethnic community will be represented at the Council by two participants.

### **Governmental News**

**Prague, 10-11 January.** Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian met his Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Mammadyarov within the framework of the second stage of the Prague Talks held under the aegis of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs.

Minister Oskanian expressed cautious optimism about the meeting. He reiterated that all elements of the conflict's causes and consequences are on the table, and in order to achieve a lasting peace an agreement on all these issues has to be reached. Armenia's Foreign Minister said the meeting with the participation of Ambassadors Yuri Merzlyakov, Steven Mann and Bernard Fassier took place in a positive atmosphere and he looks forward to the next round of the meetings, which will take place probably in two months.

**Yerevan, 13 January.** Foreign Minister Oskanian announced the decision of the Armenian government to provide short and long-term assistance to the victims of the South East Asian tsunami disaster.

The Government decided to allocate funds to provide Sri Lanka with blankets and mobile generators as requested by the officials of that country. The Armenian government will provide the same amount of aid to Indonesia, whose government has requested medical and educational personnel and materials.

Deputy Foreign Minister Armen Baibourtian, who recently concluded his term as Armenia's Ambassador to India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Nepal, said, "We are calling for volunteers from Armenia and the Diaspora who are ready and willing to offer their professional services to those who have suffered so much.

Professionals in the health and mental health fields are needed badly and could be of great help in offering post-traumatic assistance. Armenia has been the recipient of such generosity and Armenians are eager to do their best to contribute to the recovery efforts."

The Foreign Ministry is cooperating with the Armenian communities of Australia, India and Thailand in order to provide additional support and works closely with the appropriate Armenian agencies to transport materials and personnel.

According to Armen Baibourtian, the Indian-Armenian community, too, has mobilized its resources and provided help to the tsunami victims of India. The Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth has already sent the equivalent of \$210,000 to the India's Prime Minister's National Relief Fund.

**Cairo, 19 January.** Armenia has signed a memorandum of understanding with the League of Arab States. Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian and Secretary General of the League, Amr Musa, signed a Memorandum on regular political consultations and cooperation in the fields of science, education and culture.

**Vatican, 19 January.** Deputy Foreign Minister Armen Baibourtian and Armenia's Ambassador to Vatican Edward Nalbandian, were among those who participated in a ceremony of installing a statue of St. Gregory the Illuminator outside St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican in recognition of the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conversion of the Armenian people to the Christian faith.

An Armenian catholic mass was conducted by Catholicos Patriarch Nerses-Petros XIX, immediately prior to the unveiling of the 5.64 meter-high Carrara marble statue by sculptor Khachig Ghazanchian.

Pope John Paul II blessed the statue prior to his weekly public audience. The Very Reverend Monseigneur Claudio Gugerotti, the Nuncio of the Holy See to Armenia, participated in the ceremony, together with the Archbishop Mesrop Krikorian, who represented Garegin II, Catholicos of All Armenians.

Deputy FM Baibourtian met and spoke briefly with the Holy Father and they spoke of their pleasure and satisfaction over this historic event. "The founder of the Armenian church, the first official Christian church in Christendom, found his place among the other apostles and saints of Christianity," said Deputy Minister Baibourtian.

Representatives of various Diaspora communities and groups were present at the ceremony.

**New York, 24 January.** Armenia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Vartan Oskanian was among a select group of foreign ministers who addressed the UN 28th Special Session, on the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps.

In his message delivered to the session, Minister Oskanian stressed that Armenians have the moral right and responsibility to speak out at such forums:

*"On behalf of the people and government of Armenia, and as a descendant of genocide survivors, I feel compelled to be here today, to join other survivors and descendants of both victims and perpetrators, to take part in this commemoration...."*

*...In the 20th century alone, with its 15 genocides, the victims have their own names for places of infamy. What the French call 'les lieux infames de memoire' are everywhere. Places of horror, slaughter, of massacre, of the indiscriminate killing of all those who have belonged to a segment, a category, an ethnic group, a race or a religion. For Armenians, it is*

*the desert of Deir-El-Zor, for Cambodians they are the killing fields, for the children of the 21st century, it is Darfur. For the Jews and Poles and for a whole generation of us growing up after the War, it is Auschwitz....*

*...After Auschwitz one would expect that no one any longer has a right to turn a blind eye or a deaf ear. As an Armenian, I know that a blind eye, a deaf ear, and a muted tongue perpetuate the wounds. It is a memory of suffering unrelieved by strong condemnation and unequivocal recognition. The catharsis that the victims deserve, which societies require in order to heal and move forward together, obligates us here at the UN, and in the international community, to be witness, to call things by their name, to remove the veil of obfuscation, of double standards, of political expediency....*

*...Recognizing the victims and acknowledging them is also to recognize that there are perpetrators. But this is absolutely not the same as actually naming them, shaming them, dissuading or warning them, isolating or punishing them....*

*...The Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana admonished us to remember the past, or be condemned to repeat it. This admonition has significance for me personally, because the destruction of my people, whose fate in some way impinged upon the fate of the Jews of Europe, should have been more widely seen as a warning of things to come.*

*"Jews and Armenians are linked forever by Hitler. 'Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?' said Adolf Hitler, days before he entered Poland.*

*...Hitler's cynical remembrance of Armenians is prominently displayed in the Holocaust Memorial in Washington because it is a profound commentary about the crucial role of third parties in genocide prevention and remembrance. Genocide is the manifestation of the break in the covenant that governments have with their peoples. Therefore, it is third parties who become crucial actors in genocide prevention, humanitarian assistance and genocide remembrance.*

*..We are commemorating today, because the Soviet troops marched into Auschwitz 60 years ago. I am here today because the Arabs provided sanctuary to Armenian deportees 90 years ago.*

*..Third parties, indeed, can make the difference between life and death. Their rejection of the behaviours and policies which are neither in anyone's national interest nor in humanity's*

*international interest, is of immense moral and political value.*

*..What neighbours, well-wishers, the international community can't accomplish, is the transcending and reconciling which the parties must do for themselves. The victims, first, must exhibit the dignity, capacity and willingness to move on, and the perpetrators, first and last, must summon the deep force of humanity and goodness and must overcome the memory of the inner evil which had already prevailed, and must renounce the deed, its intent, its consequences, its architects and executors."*

**Yerevan, 25 January.** Deputy Foreign Minister Ruben Shugarian received the European Union's Special Representative for the South Caucasus Ambassador Heikki Talvitie who was in Armenia in the framework of a regional visit. The EU's New Neighbourhood policy for the South Caucasus was discussed and confidence was expressed that the Armenia – EU Action plan would be finally drafted in 2005 and adopted by both sides in 2006. It was agreed that along with the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Armenia and the European Union, the Action plan would become a useful tool for Armenia's further European integration.

Ambassador Talvitie suggested that Armenia would benefit from opportunities offered by the New Neighbourhood policy by proposing various regional cooperation initiatives. In the initial stage, such programs could cover Armenia and Georgia and, if successfully implemented, would establish a new momentum of regional cooperation.

### **Embassy News**

**London, 24-30 January.** Four representatives of the Finance Officers of the Armenian Communities Association took part in the study visit to UK organized by the International Bureau of Local Government and the British Association for Central and Eastern Europe. They were received at the Armenian Embassy by HE Ambassador Vahe Gabrielyan.

**London, 26 January.** NGO leaders Aghavni Karakhanian and Artush Mkrtchyan from Armenia and Valery Balayan from Nagorno Karabakh participated in the seminar on "Economic Development and Conflict Resolution in the South Caucasus – Challenges and Prospects" organised by Caucasus Policy Institute, King's College London and International Alert. Being among

the authors of the *From War Economies to Peace Economies in the South Caucasus* publication, they were key speakers to the discussion on the findings of the project.

**London, 29 January - 6 February.** A delegation representing different agencies of the Armenian Government participated in a study tour to UK in a framework of the national e-Government program, supported by the EC TACIS program. During the week-long visit the Armenian delegation was introduced to the implementation of e-Government program in various UK institutions, including the Office of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Office. They were received at the Embassy by HE Ambassador Vahe Gabrielyan.

### **Other News**

**Stepanakert, 30 January** Stepanakert is "ready to create all necessary conditions" for the work of the mission of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and "provide a possibility for visiting any region of interest to the monitoring group," President of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) Arkady Ghukassian said receiving the OSCE mission members who arrived in Stepanakert. Ghukassian said that Nagorno-Karabakh authorities are open for cooperation with the OSCE mission "in collecting of facts about Armenian settlements in the occupied Azerbaijani territories.

Gukasyan also expressed the hope that the OSCE mission report will promote the establishment of a constructive atmosphere around the Karabakh conflict peaceful settlement.

According to the mission head, director of the OSCE department in the German Foreign Ministry Emily Haber, the mission was rather of technical nature and did not pursue the goal of giving political assessment to the situation.

The OSCE mission visited each day one of the seven regions of Azerbaijan that came under the control of the Karabakh Armenian defence forces as a result of combat operations of 1992-1994.

Along with experts from Germany, Italy, Finland and Sweden the monitoring group also comprised co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group of Russia, France and the United States.

The observers interviewed at length the seldom inhabitants they came across in the territories but refused to make comments to accompanying Armenian journalists. The final report is expected in March or April.

**Strasbourg, 25 January.** British parliamentarian David Atkinson's report on the Nagorno Karabakh issue was heard at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) winter session. The report was written in 2004 by the then rapporteur on Nagorno Karabakh, now Council of Europe Secretary General, Terry Davis. Unlike his predecessor, Atkinson had not visited Nagorno Karabakh and didn't make any basic changes in the text of Davis' document. As a result of the discussions of the report, the PACE winter session adopted a resolution on Nagorno Karabakh, which calls on the Azeri authorities "to develop contacts with political representatives of both communities of Nagorno Karabakh regarding the future status of the region." Characterizing the events in "the Nagorno-Karabakh region" as something very reminiscent of "ethnic cleansings", the Assembly calls for continuation of control over the peaceful settlement of the conflict and for the discussion of the issue at the PACE winter session of next year.

During the discussion of the report the Armenian delegation proposed three amendments to the draft resolution, however only one of them was accepted.

Commenting on the contents of the resolution itself, Tigran Torossyan, head of the Armenian delegation to the PACE singled out the positive points for the Armenian side. In his interview to the Public TV of Armenia he particularly pointed at the fact that Nagorno Karabakh appears in the resolution as a separate entity. He also paid attention to the fact that "the Assembly confirms that the separation of a region from the state and its sovereignty can be achieved only as a result of a peaceful and legal process based on the democratic support of the inhabitants of the given territory. And this fully applies to the pre-war Nagorno Karabakh."

Hence, the resolution does not exclude the possibility for the recognition of the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to political self-determination, and excludes the possibility of resolving the issue militarily. The latter circumstance, in Torossyan's opinion, is another positive piece of the document adopted in Strasbourg. He did not agree that the document had anti-Armenian or pro-Azeri nature as widely believed in Armenia and as proclaimed in Azerbaijan.

**Washington D.C., 15-16 January.** A conference on Armenia's economy organized by the Armenian International Policy Research Group (AIPRG) was held in the capital city of the US.

Representatives of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, US State Department and other agencies, US and Armenian NGOs, research and expert groups participated in the Conference, entitled *Income Distribution and Social Safety Net*.

Speakers included WB experts, economists, representatives of Armenian Diaspora involved in education, commercial and state institutions of the US, students. The Conference discussed prospects of Armenia's economic growth and development, the country's macroeconomic policies, poverty level and income distribution, reforms in the healthcare and social security sectors, services provided by public and private sectors, Armenia's foreign trade and regional cooperation issues and Armenia-Diaspora economic cooperation.

Armenia's Ambassador to the US H.E. Arman Kirakossyan, AIPRG Executive Director David Grigoryan, President of the American University of Armenia Harutyun Armenyan welcomed the Conference participants in their opening remarks. The keynote address was delivered by Vahram Nersissians, Chief Economic Advisor to the President of Armenia, who introduced Armenia's current economic and political developments, reflected on causes of certain drawbacks in the country's economic performance and solutions proposed to overcome these problems.

#### **Yerevan, 14 January.**

On the invitation of British Council office in Armenia, renowned British conductor Paul MacAlindin conducted pieces from Weber, Beethoven, Vaughan Williams and Stravinsky in a unique concert with the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra in Yerevan.

**Etchmiadzin, 23 January.** His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of all Armenians, offered a requiem mass at the Holy See of Etchmiadzin in commemoration of the innocent Armenian victims of tragic events in Baku in 1990.

"The heinous and horrific pogroms of Baku followed the Sumgait and Kirovabad atrocities. These events have been accompanying our nation for 15 years now and these wounds are not healed yet. That day, on January 13, hundreds of Armenians were tortured and killed. I cannot help comparing these events with those of 1915 and call it genocide", said Archbishop Arshak Khachatrian addressing the congregation and appealing to people to learn from the sad lessons of the history and unite, not underestimate all persecutions and

tragedies that accompany the nation on its way to independence and freedom.

**Yerevan . January 25 .** The Burns Supper in Yerevan raised \$25,622 dollars this year. The funds will be allocated to NOVA, the NGO which is currently provides training and development to the Ijevan hospital. They will order and install an incubator and an ultrasound scanner in the Ijevan hospital and will train the staff to use it. Any leftover funds will be added to the total raised at next year's event.

Fund-raising at the Burns Supper in January in 2004 made it possible to purchase an incubator for the treatment of newborn babies for the Agarak hospital. The purchase of the incubator was arranged by Mission East and the incubator was installed in April 2004. Babies from that and the surrounding regions were successfully treated in the incubator last year.

**Cardiff, 26 January.** A Holocaust Memorial Day event entitled "A Commemoration of the Jewish and Armenian Holocausts" took place at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff, Wales, on the evening of Wednesday, 26 January 2005.

The event consisted of an introduction by Professor Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok and was followed by invocations from Welsh Christian and cultural representatives.

The main talk by the journalist, researcher and playwright Mike Joseph focused on the theme 'Left to History'. There were also observations by political party representatives in Wales as well as musical interludes from Cor Aelwyd Hamdden Caerdydd.

The 90-minute event ended with a general Reflection by Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister, Welsh Assembly Government.

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