



visited the Tavoush region (marz) of Armenia, to study the prospect of twinning the two cities of High Wycombe and Dilijan, as well as to look at possibilities for cooperation. Among the delegation were representatives of the Wycombe District Council, the Chilterns University in Wycombe and the Chilterns Armenian Society.

The delegation was received by the Governor of the Tavoush region, the Mayors of the towns of Ijevan (the administrative centre of Tavoush), and Dilijan and had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the industrial, commercial, scientific and cultural potential of the region by visiting the Ijevan Wine Factory, the mineral waters factory in Dilijan, as well as cultural and educational establishments.

**Yerevan, 24-25 October.** HE Ambassador Vahe Gabrielyan participated in the meetings held in the framework of the visit of the UK EU Presidency's delegation to Yerevan and the EU Troyka's visit to Armenia.

### ***Armenia's First Ambassador to Ireland***

**Dublin, 05 December.** HE Dr. Vahe Gabrielyan presented his credentials to President of Ireland Mary McAleese, as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia (residency – London).



In his speech Ambassador Gabrielyan mentioned that it was a great honour for him to be the first Ambassador of Armenia to Ireland. He emphasised the existence of great potential for cooperation between the two countries and Armenia's interest in furthering relations with Ireland.



The President of Ireland spoke about similarities between the two nations and demonstrated awareness and appreciation of Armenia's history. She assured the Ambassador of her support in developing Armenian-Irish relations.



Ambassador Gabrielyan also met several key officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Head of International Trade & Affairs of the Chambers of Commerce of Ireland.



During his visit to Dublin, Ambassador Gabrielyan also visited the Chester Beatty Library, which reportedly has the largest private collection of Armenian manuscripts in the world. The Ambassador discussed the possibilities of creating an electronic reproduction of the collection, publication of a comprehensive catalogue, and the organisation of an exhibition of the manuscripts.



## Some Highlights of 2005

### January

Non-combatant unit of Armenian Armed Forces left Yerevan for Iraq on board a U.S. military C-130 Hercules transport plane.

### March

The European Commission published Country Reports on Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia prepared under the European Neighbourhood Policy and recommended an intensification of relations with these countries.

### March

Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian declined Turkish proposals for a joint study by the two countries' historians of issues regarding the Armenian Genocide. "We have frequently voiced our position. The historians have long ago said their word and Turkey should determine its attitude towards it. The historians have nothing else to do.", Oskanian stressed.

### April

Turkish PM Recep T. Erdogan sent a letter to Armenian President Robert Kocharyan suggesting "to establish a joint group consisting of historians and other experts from our two countries to study the developments and events of 1915 not only in the archives of Turkey and Armenia but also in the archives of all relevant third countries and to share

their findings with the international public."

### April

Armenians marked the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

### April

Armenian President Robert Kocharyan replied to the Turkish Prime Minister's letter and proposed to set up an "intergovernmental commission to discuss any problem, or all important problems existing between our two countries in order to reach mutual understanding."

### May

Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Robert Kocharyan and Ilham Aliyev held talks in Warsaw, where they were taking part in the Council of Europe Summit.

### June

The 6 Armenian pilots imprisoned in Equatorial Guinea since 2004 were pardoned by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema and returned to Armenia.

### June

Secretary of the Security Council, Defence Minister of Armenia Serzh Sarkisian officially submitted the Presentation Document of the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) to NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.

### June

Parliamentary elections were held in Nagorno Karabakh Republic.

## July

The new mobile operator K-Telecom (operating under the name Vivacell) started operating in Armenia.

## July

Interenergo BV, a part of the Russian RAO UES Group [United Energy Systems of Russia], acquired the right to manage the Electric Networks of Armenia (ENA) for \$73mln for the next 99 years.

## August

A Yerevan court sentenced Turkish researcher Yektan Turkilmaz to two years in custody, suspending the sentence for a period of one year for smuggling. He was, however released from the court hall. The books of high cultural and historical value that Turkilmaz had illegally attempted to take out from Armenia were confiscated on a court order.

## August

A meeting of presidents of Robert Kocharyan of Armenia and Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan was held in Kazan. The Spokesman for the Armenian President later described the meeting as “a positive development in the negotiation process.”

## September

The government of Armenia made a decision to transfer 100% share of “Electricity Networks of Armenia” CJSC (ENA) to Interenergo B.V., which is the subsidiary of Russian RAO UES [United Energy Systems of Russia].

## September

The Armenian National Assembly passed in the third and final reading the draft constitutional amendments.

## November

The Armenian National Assembly adopted the state budget for 2006. Budget revenues are planned at 412bln 356mln drams, expenditures will be 482bln 193mln drams.

## November

The Constitutional referendum was successfully held in Armenia.

## November

Armenia and the European Union (EU) “are very satisfied” with the talks held in Yerevan and plan to finish the elaboration of the Action Plan within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy “as soon as possible”, Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Armen Baibourtian and Kurt Juul, Head of Southern Caucasus and

Central Asia Unit, European Commission, stated following the first round of Armenia-EU talks.

## December

Armenian National Assembly decided to prolong the stay of Armenian peacekeepers in Iraq for another year.

## December

Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian said that he considered further meetings with Turkish FM pointless if they are not aimed at the achievement of concrete results.

## December

The Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) between Armenia and NATO came into force.

## December

The U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation approved a five-year \$235.65 million compact with the Republic of Armenia.

The state commission for the elaboration of the draft Constitution of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) published the Conception of the NKR Constitution.

## **Yerevan-related events of the period in brief...**

**Yerevan, 06 October.** President Robert Kocharyan held a meeting with Bhairon Singh, Vice President of India. The two sides noted with satisfaction the efficient cooperation of the two states in international organizations.

*In Armenia Indian businessmen have invested in the areas of mining, diamond and gold processing. India has assisted Armenia in replenishing machinery for agriculture.*

**Yerevan, 06-08 October.** President of the Republic of Latvia Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga conducted an official visit to Armenia. The leaders of the two states signed a Joint Declaration, agreements on Mutual Encouragement and Protection of Investments, Cooperation in the sphere of Customs, as well as a document on Cooperation in the sphere of Culture.

**Sydney, Jakarta, Singapore, 09-14 October.** Minister Vartan Oskanian paid a regional visit to Australia, Indonesia and Singapore.

**Yerevan, 10 October.** At the 61-st Rose Roth Seminar 'Security in the South Caucasus', Serzh Sargsyan, Minister of Defense of the Republic of Armenia presented a report: *Defence reforms in South Caucasus*, in which he touched upon security threats peculiar to the region and possible solutions to them.

**Yerevan, 18 October.** President Robert Kocharyan received Adolf Birkhofer, Chairman of the Presidential Council for Atomic Safety, Director of the German Institute for Nuclear Safety. The parties exchanged views on the measures directed towards upgrading the safety level of the Armenian nuclear power plant and activities conducted in the period following the last meeting.

**Yerevan, 18 October.** IMF Executive Director Jeron Cremers and IMF Resident Representative in Armenia James McHugh said that the IMF-assisted poverty reduction strategic program in Armenia enjoyed quite a dynamic course of implementation.

Mr. Cremers expressed his appreciation of the Armenian side's readiness to host the meeting of the IMF group of 12 countries in Yerevan next June.

**Brussels, 19-22 October.** President Robert Kocharyan paid a working visit to Brussels and had a number of meetings at the European institutions, as well as with Belgian authorities.

At the meeting with Josep Borell-Fontelles, President of the European Parliament, the sides discussed issues relating to the regional and individual programmes of European integration. Issues related to the EU-Armenia cooperation and Nagorno Karabagh peace process were also discussed at the meeting of President Kocharyan and Xavier Solana, EU High Representative for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Robert Kocharyan also met with the President of the European Commission Manuel Barroso. The discussions covered issues related to the development of the EU-Armenia relations in the framework of the "New Neighborhood" initiative.

During the meeting between President Robert Kocharyan and Jaap de Hoop

Scheffer, NATO Secretary General, a detailed discussion on Armenia's Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO took place.

**Yerevan, 24 October.** Members of the EU Troika, headed by Sir Brian Fall, UK Special Envoy to the South Caucasus, visited Armenia on the first leg of a regional trip. Armenia's Action Plan within the EU New Neighborhood initiative was discussed with Armenian authorities.

**Washington, 26-29 October.** Defence Minister Serge Sargsyan paid an official visit to the United States, by the invitation of his counterpart Donald H. Rumsfeld. In the course of his meeting with Minister Sargsyan, the Pentagon leader reaffirmed the US Government's intention to cooperate with Armenia in military and technical fields. He appreciated Armenia's participation in the fight against terror. Minister Sargsyan reiterated Armenian Government's readiness to strengthen military cooperation with the US.

The Armenian delegation also met with Maj. Gen. Gerald Minetti, Director of Coalition Operations at U.S. Central Command and General Michael Dunn, President of the National Defence University of Washington.

**Yerevan, 01 November.** Ms. Anne-Marie Lizin, President of the Belgian Senate, paid an official visit to Armenia, and met with Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian.

**Yerevan, 08 November.** Foreign Minister Oskanian received US Congressman Alcee L. Hastings, the president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

**Athens, 09-11 November.** A delegation headed by President Robert Kocharyan paid a state visit to Greece.

President Kocharyan met with President Karolos Papoulias, Prime Minister Kosta Karamanlis, President of the Parliament Mrs. Anna Psarouda Benaki, as well as with the leader of PASOK party Georgiu Papandreu and Mayor of Athens Mrs. Dora Bakoyiannis.

The President also opened the new building of Armenian Embassy in Athens.

**Yerevan, 15 November.** President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmonov arrived in Armenia on a brief visit.

At his meeting with the President of Armenia issues pertaining to the bilateral relations were discussed.

**Yerevan, 18 November.** President Robert Kocharyan received a group of participants of the International conference on **“Organic food and organic agriculture in Armenia”** headed by Eduardo Ernekian, an Armenian-Argentinean businessman. President Kocharyan said that Armenia would do her best to gain a share in the EU market in reasonable time. Implementation of a comprehensive plan of production of organic food would provide new opportunities to reach that goal.

**Strasbourg, 17 November.** Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian delivered a keynote report at the 115<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The session focused on a number of political priorities, which became the theme of four main reports. Among three other ministers, Minister Oskanian reported on one of these themes, namely the enhancement of the COE Human Rights Protection system.

**Yerevan, 18-22 November.** Joe Hockey, Australia's Minister for Social Security paid a working visit to Armenia. The aim of the visit was to discuss with Armenian authorities several projects financed by World Bank in Armenia's health care sphere. Meetings with Armenia's Prime Minister and Minister of Health Care were held within the framework of this visit.

**Ljubljana, 21-23 November.** A delegation headed by the President of Armenia Robert Kocharyan paid a state visit to Slovenia.

President Kocharyan met with the President of Slovenia Janez Drnovsek, Prime Minister Janez Jansa, President of the National Assembly France Cukjati, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia and the OSCE Acting Chairman Dimitrij Rupel, and Jelko Kacin, President of the largest

opposition Liberal Democratic Party and member of the European Parliament.

**Yerevan, 28 November.** Minister Oskanian received the European Commission's Delegation headed by Kurt Juul, Head of Unit for Central Asia and Caucasus, Director-General of the European Commission for External Relations. Welcoming the launch of the project, Minister Oskanian assured the delegation of Armenia's readiness to be involved in elaboration of the Action Plan.

The meeting was followed by a full day of negotiations. At the end of the day, both sides expressed great satisfaction at the progress made. This process is expected to continue for a few more months until the Action Plan is completed.

**Moscow, 30 November.** Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian participated in the regular meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of member states of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

**Ljubljana, 05-06 December.** Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian participated in the 13th annual Ministerial Council of the OSCE. The agenda included issues relating to organizational reforms, global security, migration, economic development and democratic and human rights in the OSCE region. The OSCE Council adopted an OSCE Ministerial Decision on the Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE and a document on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination in the OSCE area.

A Ministerial Statement on the Nagorno Karabakh peace process read:

*We take note with satisfaction of the progress in the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations through the “Prague Process” in 2005, and in particular the two meetings of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Warsaw and Kazan under the auspices of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. We believe that the Parties are now poised to make the transition from negotiation to decision and that there are serious*

*benefits within reach for all. We encourage the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to use the current promising window of opportunity in order to attain within the coming year significant achievements in the settlement of the conflict in the framework of the OSCE Minsk process.*

In his address to the assembly, Minister Oskanian stressed that Helsinki Final act principles must be taken as a whole, and that no principle, particularly and including the principle of self-determination of peoples, should be accorded secondary status.

Foreign Minister Oskanian also met with OSCE Chairman in Office, Dimitrij Rupel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, the Secretary General of the OSCE, Marc Perrin de Brichambaud, and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Terry Davis.

**Brussels, 08-09 December.** Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian participated in the annual session of the Foreign Ministers of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) of NATO.

On 8<sup>th</sup> of November Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Kirakosyan presented to the representatives of the 26 NATO states the final version of the Armenia-NATO individual partnership Action Plan. After a discussion, the NATO Committee approved the programme and agreed to send it to the North-Atlantic Council for final confirmation.

**Yerevan, 08 December.** President Robert Kocharyan received the Chairman of the Federation Council of the RF Sergei Mironov and his delegation.

**Brussels, 11 December.** A meeting of Armenia's Ambassadors posted to European capitals took place. Also attending the meeting were Armenia's Ambassadors to Washington and Moscow, as well as those heading missions to multilateral organizations, such as the

United Nations, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and NATO.

The agenda focused on Armenia's foreign policy agenda for the coming year, in particular issues of Armenia's euro-integration.

**Brussels, 13 December.** An Armenia-European Union Cooperation Council meeting was held in Brussels. The Armenian delegation was headed by Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian who mentioned that the ENP AP consultations had successfully begun, Armenia's NATO IPAP had been concluded, and Armenia was a member of IPAP. Armenia is glad that there is broad consensus on the priorities identified in the Action Plan and views the ENP Action Plan as a tool for enhanced political and economic reforms.

**Yerevan, 14 December.** President Robert Kocharyan received Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group Yuri Merzlyakov (Russia), Steven Mann (US) and Bernard Fassier (France), who arrived in Armenia in the framework of a regional trip. Present at the meeting was also the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Andrzej Kasprzyk.

**Yerevan, 14 December.** On the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the United Nations, President Robert Kocharyan visited the UN Representation in Yerevan and met with the directors of the Armenian programs.

**Sochi, 14 December.** President Robert Kocharyan met with President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin.

Robert Kocharyan assessed the dynamics of the Armenian-Russian cooperation in the passing year as productive. The opinion was shared by Vladimir Putin who also expressed his gratitude to the President of Armenia for the attention toward the Year of Russia in Armenia.

**Nakhichevan, 15 December.** A major act of vandalism took place in Nakhichevan, Azerbaijan: a group of Azerbaijani

soldiers, supported by arms and equipment, destroyed the historically and religiously significant headstones of the medieval Armenian cemetery in Old Jughha, at the bank of river Araks, in Nakhichevan. The headstones were the remnants of those which survived similar Azerbaijani vandalism in 2002.

The planned act of vandalism threatened the complete destruction of historic monuments belonging to Armenian, as well as world cultural heritage. After being smashed to pieces, the Armenian monuments were loaded on trucks and dumped in the river Araks.

This area, which is situated between Armenia and Iran, has been home to a majority Armenian population for generations before they were ousted by successive Azeri governments. The cemetery held more than 10,000 individually carved, artistically unique headstones called Stone Crosses – khachkars. The Azerbaijani government began their destruction in the 20th century, continued with great force in 2002, and in December 2005 resumed with a vengeance attempting to wipe out traces of Armenian presence in the area.

The fact of soldiers taking part in the act of vandalism testifies to the Azerbaijani authorities' involvement in yet another attempt of disguising history with the aim of completely eliminating any trace of Armenians and historic Armenian presence in Nakhichevan.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia has expressed frustration and deep concern over the issue and has called upon Baku and Nakhichevan to stop these acts immediately. In the meantime, the Ministry has urged UNESCO and other international bodies to send experts to Nakhichevan without delay, so that the fact of vandalism can be recorded and urgent measures be taken.

**Yerevan, 16 December.** The Millennium Challenge Corporation approved the Millennium Challenge Compact with Armenia. The Compact is aimed at reducing rural poverty and fostering economic development in Armenia's rural regions. The Millennium Challenge Corporation's decision to allocate \$235.65

million to Armenia for that purpose confirms the continuous assistance of the US government for Armenia's economic and democratic development.

The significance and essence of the Millennium Challenge program is to support those countries which demonstrate good governance, and unwavering commitment to invest in human resources and in the principles of democracy and a liberal economy.

### **Other**

**California, 27 October.** A lawsuit against French insurer Axa for \$17 million was settled in a California court. The company was accused of failing to pay death benefits for the insurance policies purchased by Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire prior to the genocide in which up to 1.5 million people were killed. Descendants of victims of the 1915 Armenian Genocide soon will be able to use a searchable website to check whether any of them are eligible to make a claim to a French insurer.

*The Axa settlement follows a similar agreement with New York Life Insurance Company in early 2004 under which it agreed to pay \$20 million.*

**Brussels, 16 November.** A civil court in Belgium has returned a verdict finding Emir Kir (Socialist Party), the State Secretary of the Brussels region of Belgium, a "liar" and "denier" in connection with his statements and actions concerning the Armenian Genocide. Kir has said that he will appeal the verdict.

The court proceedings began after Kir lodged a complaint against the administrators of the website [www.suffrage-universel.be](http://www.suffrage-universel.be), Messrs Mehmet Koksal and Pierre-Yves Lambert, on the grounds that the website misrepresented him.

The accusations, among others, included the charge that Kir had taken part in demonstrations denying the Armenian Genocide, and that he had articulated positions denying this crime against humanity.

The Court found that the authors of the website were "by no means wrong" in applying the "denier" characterization to Kir, and went on to note that this type of clear labeling of deniers serves the common good and advances the purposes established by Belgian law to penalize Armenian Genocide denial.

**Edinburgh, 18 November.** The City Council of Edinburgh adopted a resolution on recognition of the Armenian Genocide. The Resolution reads:

" This Council notes that a number of Parliaments around the world have recognised, as genocide, events that began in Anatolia in 1915, including most recently, an 82% vote in favour of recognition in the European Parliament on 28th September 2005. Council also notes that recognition was acknowledged when Edinburgh hosted the UK's Annual Holocaust Memorial Day in 2003.

Council recognises that atrocities and tragedies occurred on all sides in the conflicts which began in 1915, but supports the view that the Ottoman actions against the Armenian community did constitute genocide.

Council welcomes Turkey's application for membership of the European Union and supports dialogue- and reconciliation between the Turkish and Armenian peoples. Council does not support the view that genocide recognition should be made a condition for membership of the European Union. "

**Yerevan, 22 November.** "It is impossible to remember without tears what has happened to Armenians in Turkey," Israel's chief rabbi Yona Mezger said on Nov. 22 when paying a visit to the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan, Noyan Tapan reported.

When asked why Israel has not recognized the Genocide so far, Mezger said, "As a clergy representative, I recognize the fact of the Genocide, the rest is up to the political and international relations." Israeli Knesset Member Yuir Stern, in turn, said that Turkey itself will admit to the Genocide. "Personally I recognize that historic fact and I am sure it is necessary for Turkey to come to terms with its own history," Stern said.

**Vilnius, 15 December.** With an overwhelming vote, the Sejm of Lithuania

adopted a resolution condemning the 1915 Armenian Genocide perpetrated in the Ottoman Empire.

The Lithuanian lawmakers qualified the Armenian massacres as genocide and called on Turkey to recognize that historic fact.

*Seventeen countries as well as over 30 US states have recognized the Armenian Genocide to date.*

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