

Armenia's Hermine Naghdalyan re-elected PACE Vice President



Hermine Naghdalyan, Deputy Speaker of Armenia's Parliament and head of the Armenian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has been reelected as Vice-President of PACE during its plenary session. Naghdalyan serves as PACE Vice-President

since January 25, 2016, and according to the regulations of PACE she will continue her tenure until the next sitting after re-election. This year, representatives of delegations from France, Germany, Italy, England, Spain, Moldova, Ukraine, Netherlands, Norway,

Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Andorra, Cyprus and Estonia have been elected to the posts of PACE Vice President.

Hermine Naghdalyan was also elected Deputy Chairperson of PACE Monitoring Committee.

In This Issue

New Opposition Bloc Takes Shape p.3

Armenian Ombudsman slams Belarus over blogger's arrest p.3

Yerevan to launch Tax-Free Zone on Iranian Border In 2017 p.7

Hrant Dink commemorated in Istanbul p.10

ASHGABAT STATEMENT ON COMMITMENTS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

1. As an integral part of the United Nations commitment and strategy to advance sustainable development and combat climate change, the Secretary-General of the United Nations convened the first-ever Global Conference on Sustainable Transport, held in Ashgabat on 26 and 27 November 2016.

2. The Conference — an initiative welcomed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 70/197, which was initiated by Turkmenistan and adopted unanimously by the Member States — builds on the outcomes of earlier intergovernmental deliberations, including "The future we

see page 8

Armenia's Ombudsman meets with European Court President

Armenia's Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan had a meeting with Guido Raimondi, President of the European Court of Human Rights.

Issues related to the cooperation between the Armenian Ombudsman's Office and the European Court were discussed.

In particular, reference was made to the mechanism of Armenia's intervention as third party in cases before the European Court. The SCHR President attached importance to this initiative of the Armenian Human Rights Defender, noting that it would be an example of best international practice and help raise the effectiveness of the European Court's activity.

The parties agreed to ensure cooperation towards the implementa-



tion of the European Court rulings and pursue the protection of human rights, in general.

Armenia, Russia FMs discuss bilateral ties, Karabakh peace process

The Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Russia Edward Nalbandian and Sergey Lavrov held a meeting in Moscow on January 19.

The Ministers discussed a broad range of issues on the agenda of the Armenian-Russian allied relations, the process of implementation of the agreements reached between the leaders of the two countries.

Edward Nalbandian and Sergey Lavrov referred to the preparations for the Armenian Prime Minister's forthcoming official visit to Moscow.

The interlocutors discussed issues related to the implementation of the agreements on the Karabakh issue reached at the Vienna and



St. Petersburg summits.

The Foreign Ministers of Armenia and

Russia exchanged views on urgent regional and international issues.

Issue of CSTO Secretary General to be solved at next summit: Shavarsh Kocharyan



It has been decided that the CSTO Secretary Generals will change according to a rotation principle. Naturally, if rotation comes into

force, Armenia should naturally be the first to hold chairmanship of the organization (according to the Russian alphabet), Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Shavarsh Kocharyan told reporters on January 19.

"The rotation had to come into force from January 1st, 2017, with Armenia's representative appointed as Secretary General. There was lack of consensus during the previous summit, because Belarus was absent," Shavarsh Kocharyan said.

"As a result, we have an acting Secretary General, because there had already been a decision, according to which Nikolay Bordyuzha could not retain office," he said.

"The issue should be solved at the next summit of the CSTO. The position belongs to Armenia, and the Secretary General will be appointed as soon as a consensus decision is made," the Deputy Foreign Minister said.

New Opposition Bloc Takes Shape

(Yerevan- RFE/RL) Three major opposition parties launched scathing attacks on Armenia's government over the weekend as they held the founding congress of their recently formed electoral alliance.

The leaders of the Hanrapetutyun (Republic), Bright Armenia and Civil Contract parties reiterated that they will jointly participate in the April 2 parliamentary elections in an effort to achieve regime change in the country.

The bloc named Yelk (Way Out) was set up in early December. In a declaration issued at the time, the three parties said that they will strive for a "European model of the democratic, rule-of-law and social state" in Armenia.

Hanrapetutyun and Bright Armenia have a pro-Western orientation, while Civil Contract advocates a more neutral Armenian foreign policy.

Contrary to expectations, the three parties did not release Yelk's list of election candidates as a result of the weekend conference. Nor did they clarify who will be their candidate for the post of prime minister if the bloc fares well in the upcoming elections.

Hanrapetutyun's Aram Sargsyan attributed the delay to "technical" issues. He said that he and his political allies are still negotiating with another opposition party, Zharangutyun (Heritage), in the hope of convincing it to join their bloc.

Zharangutyun's deputy chairman, Armen Martirosyan, attended the Yelk gathering. Speaking to reporters, Martirosyan said that his party headed by Raffi Hovannisian has not yet decided whether to team up with Yelk or another opposition alliance taking shape now. Among the leaders of that alliance is former Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian.

"The people of Armenia have a real chance of achieving victory by



means of us," Civil Contract's outspoken leader, Nikol Pashinyan, declared in his speech at the conference.

Pashinyan blamed the Sargsyan administration for lingering hardship in the country and accused the Armenian president of personally running oligopolies widely seen as a major hurdle to faster economic growth.

"In Armenia, the monopoly on [imports of] bananas, sugar, gasoline and everything else belongs to one person: Serzh Sargsyan," he charged. "He always organizes elections for a single purpose: to keep his exclusive right to banana imports untouchable."

"Armenia has become a country of discomfort where everything is being done to keep citizens on edge, to plunder, fine, suppress and disturb them day and night," said Bright Armenia's Edmon Marukyan. "And we are proposing a way out of this."

Marukyan said that Yelk will propose detailed solutions to the country's socioeconomic and other woes in its election manifesto that will be released soon.

Armenian Ombudsman slams Belarus over blogger's arrest

Armenia's human rights ombudsman on January 23 strongly condemned authorities in Belarus for arresting an Israeli travel blogger who is facing extradition to Azerbaijan because of his visits to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Arman Tatoyan raised the case of Alexander Lapshin with a senior Council of Europe official during a trip to Strasbourg.

Lapshin, who also holds Russian and Ukrainian passports, travelled to Karabakh in 2011 and 2012 and gave detailed accounts of the trips on his Russian-language blog.

The Azerbaijani authorities say that by visiting "occupied territories of Azerbaijan" without their permission Lapshin violated the country's territorial integrity. They also accuse him of promoting Karabakh as an independent state.

Israel asked Belarus not to hand over the 40-year-old to Baku shortly after he was detained in Minsk on December 15. Russian

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov similarly expressed concern over his arrest earlier this month. And the Committee to Protect Journalist (CPJ), a New York-based watchdog, demanded the blogger's "unconditional" release in a January 13 statement.

Nevertheless, Belarus's leadership appears to remain adamant in handing over Lapshin to Azerbaijan. A senior Belarusian prosecutor reportedly approved his extradition on January 17. Tatoyan discussed the matter with Philippe Boilat, head of the Council of Europe's Directorate General on Human Rights and Rule of Law.

A statement by the ombudsman's office said: "Arman Tatoyan pointed out that the decision to extradite [Lapshin] is politically motivated, directly jeopardizes freedom of speech and is an attempt to set an inadmissible precedent. It blatantly violates the European system of human rights protection."

The Armenian government has until now avoided publicly criticizing the authorities in Minsk over Lapshin's case. The Foreign Ministry in Yerevan has said only that it is "dealing with this issue."

Both Armenia and Belarus are members of the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

But more importantly, Belarus's authoritarian President Aleksandr Lukashenko maintains a warm rapport with his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev. Lapshin was arrested about two weeks after Lukashenko's official visit to Baku during which he received Azerbaijan's highest state award.

Aliyev's government has officially banned over 600 non-Armenian foreigners from visiting Azerbaijan because of their publicized trips to Karabakh. The blacklist includes 180 journalists.

Ohanian Set To Join New Opposition Bloc



Former Defense Minister Seyran Ohanian will join a newly formed opposition alliance to participate in Armenia's upcoming parliamentary elections, one of its leaders, Vartan Oskanian, said on January 20.

"I can already confirm that he will definitely be involved [in the alliance,]" Oskanian told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am) in an interview.

Oskanian's Hamakhmbum (Consolidation) party and two other opposition groups announced the creation of their bloc on Tuesday. They said they will jointly seek to form "a new type of government" as a result of the polls slated for April 2. The bloc is open to new members, they said in a statement.

The statement followed a fresh meeting between Oskanian and

Ohanian. The latter said shortly before that meeting that he is continuing to hold consultations with various parties and individuals with the aim of setting up an election bloc.

Ohanian was dismissed as defense minister in October as part of a government reshuffle initiated by President Serzh Sargsyan. He said in December that he will "actively" participate in the parliamentary elections to try to bring about political and economic changes in Armenia.

"My and Seyran Ohanian's joint presence in the political arena should offer the people the kind of alternative which they want to see in the run-up to the elections," said Oskanian. The current Armenian authorities have "exhausted themselves," he said.

The Hamakhmbum leader, who served as foreign minister from 1998-2008, also admitted that Ohanian could top the list of the bloc's election candidates. "I don't exclude that," he said. "It's possible. But this issue has not been discussed yet."

Oskanian's bloc may also be joined by the Zharangutyun (Heritage) party, a more radical opposition force. The Zharangutyun leader, Raffi Hovannisian did not rule out such a possibility on Monday despite strong objections voiced by some senior members of his party.

The dissenters say Zharangutyun must not team up with Oskanian and Ohanian because both former ministers were involved in former President Robert 2008 deadly post-election crackdown on opposition protesters.

Tsarukyan to again lead party

Following his decision to return to politics, Gagik Tsarukyan will again lead the Prosperous Armenia Party (BHK) founded by him, a senior member of the country's second largest parliamentary force said on January 18.

"I think that Gagik Tsarukyan will be reelected as party chairman at the upcoming [BHK] congress," Lyova Khachatryan told RFE/RL's Armenian service (Azatutyun.am) shortly after he and other senior BHK figures met with the wealthy businessman.

The meeting came the day after Tsarukyan announced his political comeback in a televised speech. He said he will form an alliance to participate in the April 2 parliamentary elections but did not name any of his political allies.

Khachatryan likewise did not reveal non-BHK members of Tsarukyan's bloc, saying that there will be more clarity on the matter "in the coming days."

Tsarukyan resigned as BHK leader and retired from politics in early 2015

following a bitter confrontation with President Serzh Sargsyan. In his public statements made in recent months, he has refrained from criticizing the Armenia authorities.

BHK representatives have dismissed media speculation that Tsarukyan is now secretly collaborating with Sargsyan. They insist that their party re-

mains in opposition to the government.

Asked whether the BHK and Tsarukyan are indeed seeking regime change, Khachatryan said: "We believe that we would do a better job of managing the country's economy. If the people trust us, we will prove that. I don't care whether you call it regime change or use another tricky term."



Danish Parliament set to vote on Armenian Genocide bill on January 26



The Danish Parliament is set to vote on an Armenian Genocide bill on January 26.

The lawmakers had 2.5 hours of discussions on the issue on January 19. Danish Foreign Minister Anders Samuelsen said in his opening remarks he stands against adoption of the documents and urged

to leave the issue to historians, President of the National Press Club Narine Mkrtchyan reported from Copenhagen.

Part of the MPs backed the Foreign Minister's stance, urging not to put the bill on a vote at the plenary sitting.

Others agreed with the bill, but called to think about the consequences. A third group of lawmakers expressed their unequivocal support for the adoption of the resolution.

The Parliament is proposed to adopt the following text:

"The Parliament confirms its decision no. V 54 of 19 May 2015 on the tragic and bloody events that took place in eastern Anatolia in the period 1915-1923. The Danish Parliament finds that the best path to reconciliation will be an open dialogue about the story on the basis of a free and uncensored history research, including the release of all official documents from the period. The Parliament regrets that Turkish law prohibits citizens and media to use the term "genocide" about the events, and considers this to be an unreasonable restriction of both academic freedom as freedom of expression relates to the use of this term. Parliament maintains its parliamentary tradition not to issue judgments about historical events."

Armenia attends NATO's 176th Military Committee in Chiefs of Defense Session



The delegation headed by Lieutenant General Movses Hakobyan, Chief of the General Staff of RA Armed Forces, participated in

the 176th Military Committee in Chiefs of Defense Session at NATO Headquarters on January 17.

Two sittings in the format of states involved in the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan and the Interoperability Platform initiative were held within the framework of the session. The first sitting was dedicated to the exchange of opinions on commitments of coalition countries.

Issues related to the development of operational compatibility between the armed forces

of NATO member and partner countries were discussed at the second sitting.

On the sidelines of the session Lieutenant General Movses Hakobyan had a meeting with General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States. Issues related to the priorities of Armenian-American defense cooperation were discussed. Reference was made to the perspectives of their development, especially within the framework of international peacekeeping efforts.

Knesset Must Recognize Armenian Genocide says Israeli Speaker

Israeli Parliament (Knesset) Speaker Yu-li-Yoel Edelstein, received on January 19 Armenian delegation, led by Artak Zakaryan, the National Assembly's Foreign Relations Committee Chairman.

Edelstein during the meeting underlined the importance of interparliamentary relations and expressed readiness to improve cooperation in the cultural, economic, agricultural and tourism sectors, according to the press office of Armenian Parliament. Edelstein also highlighted the importance of de-



veloping ties between Armenian and Jewish communities.

Speaking about Armenian Genocide recognition in Israel, Edelstein stated the "that sooner or later, the Knesset should recognize the Armenian Genocide."

"I am not so proud of the fact that Israel had not yet recognized the Armenian Genocide," said Edelstein, mentioning that there has been recent progress in that direction.

Zakaryan during the meeting discussed implementation of mutually beneficial projects. He presented the situation on the region and Armenian position in respect to the settlement of existing conflicts.

Concluding the meeting, Edelstein wished the Armenian parliament success in the upcoming elections.

EBRD-Armenia cooperation priorities discussed

Prime Minister Karen Karapetyan received EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) Board of Directors Dutch team leader Frans Weekers.

Appreciating the ongoing effective cooperation with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which numbers several joint projects, the Prime Minister expressed readiness to deepen it on behalf of his government.

Highlighting the need to provide continued support for those projects intended for the private sector, the Prime Minister stated in part, "We are considering several projects during our visits to the regions of Armenia, which imply collaboration with the private sector and, as a tool, we would appreciate if the EBRD could take interest in cooperating in the proposed areas. The Government seeks to stimulate the business environment in different ways, and this process can change the business environment, since the ideas are being developed based on specific business logic."

Given the vast experience accumulated by the EBRD in working with investors, the Premier suggested considering the possibility of cooperation in the frame of the Government Strategic Initiatives Center and the upcoming Investment Fund. Karen Karapetyan said the Government would appreciate if the Bank could contribute to the development of public-private partnership-related legislation and the establishment of the Office of Business Ombudsman.

Frans Weekers said Armenia and the EBRD boast long experience



of successful cooperation that has led to numerous joint projects and initiatives. He welcomed the government's steps aimed at improving the business environment and promoting private investment, as well as the short-term and long-term action plans.

Frans Weekers described as quite promising the idea of establishing a center for strategic initiatives and an investment fund and went on to note that the EBRD is ready to develop cooperation in the areas mentioned by the Prime Minister.

The parties took the opportunity to discuss issues related to the current strategy of GoA- EBRD partnership. In this context, they referred to the programs implemented in different fields of activity mediating both the public and private formats.

8th round of Armenia-EU talks in Yerevan

The 8th round of talks on a new Armenia-EU framework agreement was held in Yerevan on January 18.

The Armenian team was led by Deputy Foreign Minister Karen Nazaryan.

Like Devin, Director of the EU Department for Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, Regional Cooperation and OSCE, led the European delegation.

Political issues, also as common institutional and final volumes of the agreement were discussed. The parties reached an agreement on a number of issues.

Summing up the negotiations, the parties exchanged information on the results of negotiations in different spheres, including trade and outlined the terms of the next round of talks in Brussels.



Armenian Election Chief Downplays Planned Broadcasts



The head of Armenia's Central Election Commission (CEC) insisted on January 20 that the April 2 parliamentary elections will be transparent even if the authorities fail to ensure live online broadcasts of voting and ballot counting.

The Armenian government agreed to install web cameras in all 2,000 or so polling stations across the country as part of a September 2016 deal with the opposition aimed at preventing serious fraud. The chief of the government staff, Davit Harutiunyan, warned on Wednesday, however, that they may be unable to do that due to financial reasons.

Harutiunyan argued that only one private company has showed an interest in providing and operating the broadcasting equipment. The cost of these services set by that bidder is too high for the government, he

said.

A special multi-partisan commission handling the bidding still hopes to convince the potential broadcast operator to cut its asking price. "Of course, it will be very good if those cameras are installed in the polling stations," said Tigran Mukuchyan, the CEC chairman. "Will their absence have an impact in terms of transparency? I think that even without [the broadcasts] the Electoral Code contains provisions which enable all participants of the electoral process to monitor proceedings."

In particular, the recently amended code calls for an electronic verification of voters' identity and publication of the names of those voters who will have cast ballots on Election Day. These measures are meant to prevent multiple voting by government loyalists, an illegal practice which the Armenian opposition says was widespread in previous elections.

Harutiunyan insisted on Wednesday that the authorities will definitely install electronic machines for voter identification.

The European Union and the United States have promised millions of dollars in funding for the purchase of such equipment.

Yerevan to launch Tax-Free Zone on Iranian Border In 2017



The Armenian government said on January 19 that it plans to launch a “free economic zone” near Armenia’s border with Iran before the end of this year.

Hovannes Azizyan, a deputy minister for economic development and investments, said the tax-free zone will be set up in Agarak, a small town in the southeastern Syunik province located several kilometers from the Iranian border.

“This is an important opportunity to foster tourism and encourage people to buy goods there without any customs duties,” Azizyan told reporters. “We also expect that the Iranian side will show an interest in manufacturing in that free economic zone goods for other markets: the Eurasian Economic Union and Europe.”

“We are convinced that this will be a profitable enterprise for the organizer and a development opportunity for the beneficiaries [of the

zone],” he said.

The plans for the tax haven were first revealed by Yerevan in late August. Then Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamian said Iranian entrepreneurs will be able to open manufacturing firms there and engage in duty-free exports of their products to Russia and other EEU member states.

Azizyan confirmed that Iranian firms setting up shop in the zone will have tariff-free access to the EEU markets. Some of them have already expressed a “preliminary interest” in doing that, he said.

He said he also hopes that the project will help to boost Armenia’s trade with Iran, which stood at a modest \$220 million in January-November 2016.

Despite upbeat statements made by officials from the two neighboring states, the lifting of international sanctions against Iran in 2015 has yet to have a positive impact on the volume of bilateral commerce. According to Azizyan, one of the main reasons for that is lingering restrictions on banking operations between Armenia and Iran.

“If two companies cannot transfer money between them, it’s hard for them to do business. We hope that this problem will also be solved,” the official said, adding that Armenian exports to Iran could quickly rise by 30 percent. He also expressed hope that the Iranian government will lower import duties for Armenian goods.

Armenia mainly exports electricity as well as meat, soft drinks and confectionery to the Islamic Republic at present.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said his country would like to deepen economic ties with Armenia when he visited Yerevan late last month. “We must do everything to utilize the full potential of Armenian-Iranian relations in the coming months and years,” Rouhani said after talks with President Serzh Sargsyan.

Azerbaijan Seeks More Russian Arms Supplies

Azerbaijan wants to buy more Russian weapons and is now negotiating with Russia for that purpose, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said on January 19.

“We are holding negotiations on new [arms] purchases,” Aliyev told the Russian news agency RIA Novosti. “You know better just how developed the Russian defense industry is.”

“We are mainly interested in the most advanced defense weaponry, new equipment,” he said. “This includes helicopters and defense systems, the whole complex. It’s a permanent process.”

Russia has already sold around \$5 billion worth of tanks, artillery systems and other weapons to Azerbaijan in line with defense contracts signed in 2009-2011. Armenian leaders renewed and stepped up their criticism of those arms deals following last April’s Azerbaijani offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev rejected the Armenian criticism after visiting Yerevan later in April. He said that that Russia delivers weapons to both Armenia and Azerbaijan and thereby sustains the “military balance” in the Karabakh conflict.

In August, Russian President Vladimir Putin similarly dismissed a widely held belief in Armenia that Moscow has only increased the risk of another Karabakh war with its large-scale arms sales to Baku.



Speaking after talks in the Kremlin with his Armenian counterpart Serzh Sargsyan, he implied that oil-rich Azerbaijan could have purchased offensive weapons from other nations.

Putin also argued that Russia has long been providing substantial military aid to Armenia, its main regional ally.

Armenia demonstrated new weapons recently acquired from Russia during a September military parade in Yerevan. Those included Iskander ballistic missiles. Serzh Sargsyan subsequently described the state-of-the-art missiles as a further deterrent against Azerbaijan’s possible attempts to achieve a military solution to the Karabakh conflict.

ASHGABAT STATEMENT ON COMMITMENTS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

from page 1

want”, the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, the Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

3. The Conference brought together important stakeholders from Governments, the United Nations system, multilateral development banks, the business sector and civil society in a series of forward-looking and action-oriented dialogues that emphasized the enabling power of sustainable transport and its multiple roles in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The Conference addressed all modes of transport — road, rail, aviation, ferry and maritime, including both passengers and freight — and accorded priority attention to the concerns of developing countries, particularly those of Africa, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

5. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing the role of sustainable transport in connecting people and communities to jobs, schools and health care and in the delivery of goods and services to rural and urban communities, thus providing all with equal opportunities and leaving no one behind.

6. Deliberations at both plenary and thematic sessions demonstrated that sustainable transport drives inclusive growth and access to local, regional and global markets, and powers the growth of trade and tourism. The transport sector also makes a significant contribution

to national gross domestic product, employment and local and national revenues.

7. For transport systems to fully fulfill their multiple enabling functions in advancing sustainable development, all stakeholders need to work together to ensure the availability of safe, universally accessible, reliable, secure, affordable, fuel-efficient, environmentally friendly, low-carbon and climate-resilient transport services, systems, infrastructure and operations, with due attention to local, national and regional circumstances.

8. While there are various transport challenges facing the world today, including safety and security challenges, there are also tremendous opportunities to rethink the current, largely unsustainable, transport policies and to fast-track best practices to a new paradigm of sustainable transport in particular in developing countries.

9. All stakeholders need to work together to put in place integrated multi-modal transport and transit systems and corridors that optimize the comparative advantages of each mode of transport to achieve sustainable transport of passengers and freight within and between countries, including through regional and subregional connectivity, integration, and harmonization of transport systems and frameworks. In this regard, there was recognition of the need to revive the ancient Silk Road with modern technology and advanced management of transit corridors. The “One Belt, One Road” initiative was welcomed.

10. In developing multimodal transport systems, it is necessary to take into account road, rail, maritime, ferry and air transport, as well as non-motorized transport such as cycling and walking, and emphasis should be placed on low-carbon-based modes of transport and

an increased reliance on interconnected transport networks, including public transport systems, for seamless and “door-to-door” mobility and connectivity of people and goods.

11. In this regard, there is a need to assist developing countries, in particular African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, to “leapfrog” to sustainable transport, including in strengthening policy planning, standard-setting and regulatory frameworks.

12. Participants further reaffirmed the commitment to support efforts to provide communities in rural areas in developing countries with access to major roads, rail lines and public transport options that enable access to economic and social activities and opportunities in cities and towns and that unleash productivity and competitiveness of rural entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers. Addressing these circumstances will be among the essential steps needed to fulfill the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its promise to “leave no one behind”.

13. Participants also underlined the commitment to expand the public transport sector, which requires a shift that takes into account multi-modal transport systems, cooperation among stakeholders and transport authorities, policy integration, digital mobility, capacity-building and a redirection of finance.

14. Participants further reaffirmed the commitment to increasing investment in hard and soft infrastructure development and in multimodal transport in the least developed countries, including in railways, roads, waterways, airports, warehouses, port facilities and logistics services, and to supporting partnerships designed to strengthen infrastructure building in these countries.

15. Also highlighted was the importance of addressing the special needs of landlocked developing countries, inter alia, by establishing and promoting efficient transit transport systems that link them to international markets, by developing, upgrading and maintaining all modes of transit transport infrastructure, by promoting and harmonizing an enabling environment, regulatory frameworks and institutional arrangements for transit, and by forging genuine partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners at the national, bilateral, subregional, regional and global levels.

16. Participants reaffirmed the commitment to enhancing inter-island connectivity and linking the economies of small island developing States to regional markets and global supply chains, including by integrating them into existing and emerging maritime and multimodal transport and economic corridors, and to encouraging sustainable transport initiatives in the context of the Small Island Developing States Partnership Framework. The importance of effective climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction for critical coastal transport infrastructure in small island developing States was highlighted, as was the related urgent need for capacity-building and financing.

17. Participants re-emphasized the need to promote harmonization, simplification and standardization of rules and documentation, including the full and effective implementation of international conventions on transport and transit as well as bilateral, subregional and regional agreements. The benefits of harmonized international regulatory frameworks for transit cooperation include, among others, more efficient and effective border and customs controls, simplified and standardized procedures and enhanced cooperation, which will lead to faster, cheaper and more reliable cross-border trade and transport, especially for landlocked developing countries.



— GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE —
TRANSPORT CONFERENCE
— ASHGABAT, 26-27 NOVEMBER 2016 —



18. Participants further resolved to renew efforts to reshape transport networks and planning by optimizing operations through smart hubs, organizing routes and schedules to reduce empty mileage, improving land-use planning, and harmonizing regulatory frameworks across the transport sector.

19. Bearing in mind that close to a quarter of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions come from transport and that these emissions are projected to grow substantially in the years to come, participants reaffirmed their commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector and to accelerating progress in the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

20. Given the potential for climate-related damage, disruption and delay across closely interconnected global supply chains, participants resolved to take multi-pronged strategies to accelerate transition to low-carbon energy sources and technologies, increase investments in climate-resilient transport infrastructure, and encourage uptake of new and innovative technologies, including information and communication technology-based solutions, in support of intelligent multimodal transport systems.

21. Participants acknowledged the decision of the thirty-ninth session of the International Civil Aviation Organization's Assembly to implement a global

market - based measure to address the increase in total carbon dioxide emissions from international civil aviation above 2020 levels, taking into account special circumstances and respective capabilities of States.

22. Participants noted that international maritime transport plays an essential role in facilitation of world trade and that the International Maritime Organization, following the adoption of mandatory energy efficiency measures for ships in July 2011, which entered into force on 1 January 2013, is also developing a strategy to consider further measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from ships, including implementation schedule.

23. It was also highlighted that air pollution caused by transportation is a growing public health risk, contributing to several millions of premature deaths, predominantly in developing countries. There is a need to improve vehicle and propulsion technology, encourage electric mobility, enhance end-use fuel efficiency in transport, improve and upgrade public transportation, reduce road congestion, encourage vehicle sharing and integrated charging systems, and shift to more compact city planning. In addition, it was emphasized that renewed efforts should be made to support industries in energy-efficient and low-emissions vehicle manufacturing.

continued on page 10

ASHGABAT STATEMENT ON COMMITMENTS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

from page 9

24. Participants underscored concerns over traffic deaths and injuries, which have overwhelming effects on families and livelihoods. Every year around 1.25 million people are killed, mostly in developing countries, and between 20 and 50 million are seriously injured on the world's roads. It is imperative that the international community redouble efforts to reach the target in the Sustainable Development Goals of halving the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020 and to make renewed efforts to implement the relevant United Nations conventions on road safety. In this regard, participants also highlighted the need for adequate pedestrian and public spaces in cities and the importance of improving street design to ensure road safety and integration with mass -transit modes.

25. It was emphasized that public transport services and infrastructure were critical to enable the mobility of people and goods, in particular taking into account the needs of vulnerable groups (women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants). This is particularly important for cities, because by 2050 the share of the world population living in cities is expected to rise to about 67 per cent, with much of the urbanization happening in developing countries. Sustainable public transport provides enormous benefits for cities, reducing air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions, while contributing to the economic vitality of cities.

26. Governments, local authorities, business and civil society must work together to launch public-private partnerships to develop innovative, smart, forward-looking and people-centred sustainable transport systems. In this

regard, a representative of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Transport presented a summary of the discussion at the Ashgabat Transport Business Forum and its outcome document.

27. Mobilizing finance for sustainable transport will be an enormous challenge, especially given the strain on public finances that exists in many countries. In this context, participants reaffirmed the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and underscored the vital role of public finance, both domestic and international, in meeting sustainable transport needs and in catalysing all sources of finance, including traditional official development assistance, domestic resource mobilization, direct private investment and a wide array of partnership models, including public-private partnerships.

28. Participants further stressed the need to promote the integration of science, technology and innovation into sustainable transport systems by tapping into technological opportunities in the decades to come to bring about fundamental, transformative changes to transport systems, including energy efficiency technologies as well as the information and communication technologies and called for strengthening capacity-building support to developing countries.

29. Participants welcomed stakeholders who have developed and launched sustainable transport initiatives, and called on all stakeholders to continue to seek collaborative partnerships for new, innovative, sustainable transport paradigms. The United Nations Secretariat will organize effective follow-up on the implementation of these initiatives.

30. Participants emphasized the need for improved reporting and data collection systems to ensure effective imple-

mentation of low-carbon, sustainable and resilient transport systems. Adequate and quality data is key for setting baselines and benchmarks as well as for measuring performance and tracking and monitoring progress.

31. It was also emphasized that States that have not yet done so should consider acceding to or ratifying United Nations legal instruments relating to transport. Member States and other relevant stakeholders are also encouraged to further strengthen their participation in United Nations intergovernmental deliberations on sustainable transport, including through specialized platforms convened by the United Nations system.

32. Participants expressed appreciation for the contributions of the High-level Advisory Group of the Secretary-General on Sustainable Transport. The United Nations system entities resolved to strengthen their follow-up networks and interagency cooperation, including monitoring and evaluation arrangements, for sustainable transport initiatives launched in the lead-up to and during the Global Sustainable Transport Conference, linking tracking frameworks, targets and indicators, where appropriate, to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

33. Participants expressed profound gratitude to the President, Government and people of Turkmenistan for their warm hospitality and generous support for the preparation and organization of the Global Conference on Sustainable Transport. They reiterated their commitment to continuing to working on sustainable transport issues and keep them high on the global sustainable development agenda.

*Embassy of Turkmenistan
to the Republic of Armenia
Yerevan, January 2017*

Improved Russian-US relations may be helpful to Armenia



**Harut
Sassounian**

Last November, Americans elected the unlikely presidential candidate, Donald J. Trump. He is not your typical politician. As a successful and prominent businessman, he is used to making off-the-cuff remarks and not subscribing to any particular direction. Given the controversial nature of the Trump Presidency, domestic and international relations may drastically change. President Trump has already revised his position on some major campaign promises: expelling illegal aliens, building a wall between Mexico and the United States, and not allowing immigrants from Islamic countries to visit the United States. President Trump has also altered his position regarding serious, international issues. President Trump may not be sure himself what positions he would take on a variety of foreign policy issues.

Here is a short list of major international de-

cisions President Trump will have to make.

1. The most important realignment of relations will be between Russia and the United States. If these two major countries can get along, there is no reason to be at odds risking the stability of the world. Furthermore, cooperation between Russia and the United States will have a positive effect on reducing terrorism in Syria and Iraq. Many of the major international figures who are opposed to the prospect of the improved relations between Putin and President Trump are reverting back to the Cold War Era mentality. The biggest issue that has arisen in recent weeks was the accusation that Russia had hacked the US presidential election. However, Russians have not done anything extraordinary. China, Russia and even US allies have always tried to steal each other's secrets.

2. Due to his discontent with current international agreements, President Trump will want to re-negotiate the terms, previously approved under the Obama administration. One of the most important changes President Trump wants to do is re-negotiate the nuclear deal with Iran, which involves several other countries besides Iran and the US. It remains to be

seen if the Iranians will go along with any of the changes proposed by President Trump.

3. A major realignment desired by President Trump is the settling of the Israeli-Arab conflict. If President Trump goes along with his plans in moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, this could result in a major clash between the US and the Arab states leading to highly undesirable consequences.

4. The final issue that President Trump will confront is the newly improved relationship between the United States and Cuba. It remains to be seen whether Cuba will go along with any changes proposed by President Trump.

There is no guarantee that President Trump's ideas will improve the previously negotiated agreements or if they be accepted by the rest of the world. Consequentially, there is a lot of uncertainty where the new world order is headed, and whether relations between various countries will improve. The entire world hopes that countries will get along better with each other and peaceful solutions will be found. Positive relations between Russia and the US will help recent challenges faced by the Armenian Republic.

Naira Karapetyan speaks about Hrant Dink and Garo Palyan at PACE's session

Member of Armenian Delegation to the PACE, MP Naira Karapetyan has delivered a speech at plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Panorama.am reports. Karapetyan's speech is as follows:

"As at the heart discussions of this session is the issues of attacks against journalists, let me express my deep concern about any attempt against journalists doing their work. The hard work done by them should be respected much, as the civil society and media is the main chain to make pluralism and have democracy in state. Freedom of expression is the value we are to be proud for.

I want to draw your attention that January 19th marks the 10th anniversary of the assassination of Hrant Dink, prominent Armenian-Turkish intellectual, chief editor of the Armenian newspaper Agos.

Dink was assassinated in Istanbul in 2007 by a 17-years-old Turkish nation-

alist. This was shortly after the premiere of the genocide documentary *Screamers*, in which he is interviewed about Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the case against him.

The trial of the assassin did not identify the masterminds behind the murder and bring them to justice. Throughout long years of investigation there has been an impression that certain revelations happened along shift of political landscape and yet clear cut question who and why remained unanswered.

We remember that Hrant Dink was repeatedly stigmatized and even tried for his position and statements regarding the Armenian Genocide.

Unfortunately, same environment of silencing voices seeking truth and justice prevail in Turkey after a decade of his murder. The suspension from parliamentary sessions of MP Mr. Garo Paylan as a punishment for his reference to the historic

persecutions of the religious groups is the most recent example in this regard. There are reports that certain political parties are even attempting to initiate a criminal case against him equalling reference to the Armenian Genocide to a hate speech.

I strongly believe that failure to address violence and killing of journalists, community leaders, and intellectuals creates a climate of impunity, thus encouraging intolerance towards any idea, which runs counter to official narratives.

Today we have refused the topic of Turkey to be discussed in the frame of urgent debates, but believe me; we give more time for new violations, new attacks, new arrests, and new repressions, let the God me be mistaken. Member state of the Council of Europe should certainly honor the obligations taken, and such examples of silencing journalists, MPs, anyone, who has opposite point of view to government, is extremely unacceptable."

Donald Trump sworn in as 45th US president



Donald Trump was sworn in as the 45th president of the United States on Friday, succeeding Barack Obama and taking control of a divided country in a transition of power that he has declared will lead to “America First” policies at home and abroad.

At Trump’s side was his wife, Melania Trump.

The transition from a Democratic president to a Republican took place on the West Front of the domed U.S. Capitol before a crowd of former presidents, dignitaries and hundreds of thousands of people on the grounds of the National Mall. The crowd stretched westward on a cool day of occasional light rain.

ANCA congratulates President Trump, calls for decisive new leadership to strengthen US-Armenia relations



In marking the inauguration of the 45th president of the United States, the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) congratulated President Donald Trump and Vice-President Pence, urging the new President to bring “new ideas and energy to U.S. policy on Armenian issues, further strengthening the robust U.S.-Armenia relationship, and reinforcing the enduring bonds of friendship that have long connected our two peoples.”

In a statement issued on January 20, the ANCA outlined three key policy areas including:

- Properly commemorating the Armenian Genocide as a clear case of genocide challenging Turkey’s obstruction of justice for this still unpunished crime and more broadly rejecting Turkey’s efforts to control U.S. policy on Armenian issues and
- Advancing a durable and democratic peace in the Caucasus by recognizing and supporting the independent Republic of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh and;
- Growing the U.S.-Armenia economic military and polit-

ical partnership and supporting a secure prosperous and democratic Armenia.

An ANCA grassroots write-in campaign was launched in conjunction with the statement – anca.org/Trump – calling on supporters of Armenia to share their views with the new President.

A similar effort was launched in 2008, with the election of then President Barack Obama.

The full text of the ANCA statement is provided below. Click on each of the 3 points listed for additional information.

Armenian National Committee of America Statement on the Inauguration of President Donald J. Trump January 20, 2017

The ANCA extends congratulations to Donald Trump upon his inauguration as President and welcomes the opportunity to work with him and his incoming Administration to advance shared American interests and ideals.

On behalf of America’s citizens of Armenian heritage and friends of Armenia from across the United States, the ANCA looks to President Trump – at a pivotal moment in the history of our nation’s global leadership – to bring new ideas and energy to U.S. policy on Armenian issues, further strengthening the robust U.S.-Armenia relationship, and reinforcing the enduring bonds of friendship that have long connected our two peoples.

Armenia, the world’s first Christian nation, shares America’s devotion to democratic values, human rights and religious liberty, embraces our aspirations for global peace and prosperity, and actively partners with the United States on a broad array of regional and international challenges.

It is in this spirit that the ANCA encourages President Trump to start his Administration with strong and decisive American leadership by.

Hrant Dink commemorated in Istanbul 10 years on

On the 10th year of the murder, Hrant Dink was remembered where he was shot dead, Agos reports.

For many in Turkey, the 10 years that have passed since Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was murdered in broad daylight have not lessened the pain, according to Agence France-Presse (AFP).

"Whenever I pass through this street, I am trembling. It's very painful. How dare they kill such people?" Turkan Arslan told AFP on the street where Dink was killed by an ultranationalist outside the offices of his Agos newspaper in Istanbul.

Ogun Samast, then a 17-year-old jobless high-school dropout, confessed to the murder and was sentenced in 2011 to almost 23 years in jail.

However, mystery lingers over who orchestrated the killing, which sent shockwaves through Turkey and became a scandal after it emerged that the security forces had known of the plot but failed to act.

Arslan joined thousands of people including Dink's wife Rakel and his colleagues who turned out to pay tribute to the journalist who founded the bilingual newspaper.

"It looks like the perpetrator of this murder was the state, at all levels," said Rakel, whose speech was interrupted by the crowds shouting: "The murderer state will be brought to account!"

"This case is one of the keys to Turkey's democratization," she declared.

Under the grey sky, a huge banner with a picture of Dink and the words: "We've been missing you for 10 years" hung from the building that housed the Agos offices.

"We are all Hrant, we are all Armenians" the crowds shouted, some people laying red and white carnations on the street where he was gunned down.

Yervart Danzikyan, who holds Dink's former job of Agos edi-



tor-in-chief, said: "We are still feeling his absence but we know that his words are still echoing."

Asli Erdogan, one of Turkey's celebrated novelists who was released from jail last month after being held on charges of terror propaganda, said: "It is a luxury to talk about justice in this country."

"But we are still here 10 years on. We will also be here 20 years later. Maybe it is the only justice that we are here," she told AFP.

But Arslan said she was optimistic that justice would be served in Dink's case.

Although his assassin was rapidly arrested and sentenced, dozens of former public officials, including former police chiefs, have been on trial on charges of negligence over the killing, with Dink's supporters losing confidence on the ability of Turkey's justice system to shed light on the plot.

"There is the sun rising after every dark day... The sun will rise again," Arslan said. "One Hrant is gone, one thousand Hrant will come."

Garó Paylan appeals to Constitutional Court



Garó Paylan, an Armenian member of the Turkish parliament, has appealed to the Constitutional Court for interruption of his January 13th speech and his further suspension from Parliament, Agos reports.

Paylan labels the incident as "the violation of the right to immunity and the freedom of speech."

Garó Paylan has also applied to the Grand National Assembly, de-

manding to overturn the decision on his suspension, as it "contradicts the Parliament's rules of procedure."

Garó Paylan representing the People's Democratic Party (HDP) on Saturday was suspended from parliament for three days after speaking about the Armenian Genocide during the legislature debate of a new Turkish constitution.

In his speech, which angered the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) members, Paylan said that from 1913 to 1923 the Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and Jews registered in the country, were "exiled from these lands or subjected to tortures as a result of large massacres and genocide".

"At one time we comprised 40% of the population," Paylan said despite an uproar by AKP members. "Today we are one among 1000. Something happened to us, and I call it genocide whatever you call it. The Armenian people know very well what happened to them. I know very well what happened to my father, grandfather. Let's face [history] together," he added.

AKP member Metin Külünk demanded that Paylan "correct the word genocide." The legislative session ended, with parliament members condemning Paylan's statements.

American Armenian Ken Nahigian to head Trump transition team

Vice President-elect Mike Pence has appointed Ken Nahigian to replace Rick Dearborn as executive director of the Trump-Pence presidential transition, the transition team said in a press release on Wednesday.

Nahigian, who served as the head of strategic planning and support for President-elect Donald Trump, will now support Trump's nominees through their confirmation hearings.

"In the days following the election, [Nahigian's] role evolved to not only manage President-elect support, but also prepare our great cabinet designees for their hearings," Dearborn was quoted as saying in the release. "The transition is in capable hands with Ken Nahigian, who has tirelessly supported it from day one and will carry it through the finish line."

"Ken has been a tremendous and critical asset to the Transition," said Mr. Dearborn. "In the days following the election, his role evolved to not only manage President-elect support but also prepare our great cabinet designees for their hearings. The Transition is in capable hands with Ken Nahigian, who has tirelessly supported it from day one and



will carry it through the finish line."

Throughout the pre-election and Transition periods, Mr. Nahigian served as the head of President-elect support, the body that oversees all strategic planning and support to the

President-elect, Vice President-elect, their families, and nominees, where pre-planning is critical to ensure a strong foundation is built for a successful transition minutes after the election is called. In this role, Mr. Nahigian and his team led the organization of critical functionality of the Transition pre-election, which included the creation of GreatAgain.gov, the structuring of a communications strategy post-election, the building of the resources infrastructure to be ready on day one, and creation of a network for public engagement during the Transition period.

"I'm honored that the President-elect, Vice President-elect and Rick Dearborn have entrusted me with this responsibility and it is my honor to continue my service to this new administration," said Mr. Nahigian. "It has been a tremendous honor to be part of this historic and successful process of building our government."

While not working on the Presidential Transition, Mr. Nahigian serves as a principal in a 17-year old public relations and communications planning and strategy firm.

Dearborn is leaving the post to assume his role as White House deputy chief of staff.

Australian Armenian Gladys Berejiklian expected to become next NSW Premier



ABC – New South Wales Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian confirms she will stand for the state's top job, as outgoing Premier Mike Baird says: "I haven't backed anyone".

Mike Baird announced his resignation, citing the need to support his family.

A partyroom meeting is planned for Monday and a leadership spill is expected to happen on Tuesday, but it is unlikely there will be a ballot, as the ABC has been told the leadership positions will be decided by the partyroom earlier.

On ABC News, Mr Baird said he had not backed anyone.

"Gladys Berejiklian would be outstanding,

no doubt about it," he said.

"There is an incredible, talented group of ministers; many have huge potential both short-term and long-term."

In a statement confirming she would run for the top job, Ms Berejiklian said she was "deeply saddened" by Mr Baird's decision to retire.

"Mike has been an inspiring leader and a man of enormous integrity who has left an outstanding and indelible mark on the state of NSW," she said.

"Today is Mike's day — but I would like to make it clear that I will be standing for the leadership."

It is likely that Dominic Perrottet will be the deputy leader of the NSW Liberal Party.

The ABC understands Transport Minister Andrew Constance is also considering running.

While it was expected that Planning Minister Rob Stokes would also run for the leadership, he has since confirmed he will bow out of the race.

These are the likely frontrunners who may contest the leadership positions:

Treasurer and the Deputy Leader of the

NSW Liberal Party, Ms Berejiklian is considered the frontrunner to be the next Premier.

Ms Berejiklian is part of the Liberal Party's moderate faction and was elected unopposed as Mr Baird's Liberal deputy in April 2014.

The 46-year-old former Commonwealth Bank executive was elected the Member for Willoughby, on Sydney's lower north shore, in 2003.

She was appointed transport minister after Barry O'Farrell led the Coalition to a landslide win in 2011, a position she held until Mike Baird appointed her Treasurer after the 2015 election.

She is NSW's first female Treasurer.

In October 2016, Ms Berejiklian declared the state debt free with a final surplus for the 2015-16 financial year of \$4.7 billion.

Labor attributed the debt-free status to the sale of infrastructure assets including the partial sale of Ausgrid, but the Government pointed to investment in other projects such as Sydney's WestConnex and the light rail.

Ms Berejiklian is the daughter of Armenian migrants and a granddaughter of victims of the 1915 Armenian genocide.

Cem Ozdemir, German Bundestag awarded for 'commitment to Armenia'

European Armenian Federation for Justice and Democracy (EAFJD) also known as ANC-Europe Chair Kaspar Karampetian and EU Affairs Officer Heghine Evinyan visited Berlin to personally deliver the Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region (ANCA-WR) 2016 Freedom Award to German Parliament Member Cem Ozdemir and the entire German Bundestag. Also delivered were congratulatory certificates of support and solidarity from various American federal, state and local elected officials and bodies, including the California State Legislature, and the County and City of Los Angeles. Ozdemir and the Bundestag were honored during the 2016 ANCA-WR Annual Gala back in October for their courage in resisting pressure from the government of Turkey to introduce and pass a resolution formally recognizing the Armenian Genocide as well as Germany's complicity in this crime against humanity.

In her remarks introducing the award in front of a crowd of over 1,000 elected officials, supporters and activists at the Gala, ANCA-WR Board Member Souzi Zerounian-Khanzadian stated, "630. That's the number of members of the German Bundestag. Mr. Ozdemir attained a majority of votes out of 630 members of Parliament, standing up against threats

both to his government and himself, and relieving his government of the gag rule Turkey had imposed on them. The U.S. Congress is comprised of 435 members, 195 less than the Bundestag, yet the Speaker of our House of Representatives and speakers before him have cowered at the idea of bringing the Armenian Genocide to a floor vote. Our Presidents have cowered behind cheap excuses, refusing to address the issue of the Armenian Genocide.

"When the coup took place and President Erdogan used excessive force, the White House did not reprimand or comment. When Turkey provided assistance to ISIS, the U.S. still stood by Turkey. For fear of what? That the Ambassador to Turkey will be recalled? It only took 127 days before the German ambassador was returned; France and other countries have gone through the same routine," continued Zerounian-Khanzadian.

Ozdemir, who was unable to attend the Gala due to election season back home, accepted the award and expressed appreciation for the recognition with a video message.

In his remarks, Ozdemir noted, "The fight for minority rights has been a cornerstone of my career in the past. ... Since then we have seen commemorations of

the Genocide and academic conferences on the subject in Turkey. What we have not seen, unfortunately, is any movement on the political level. Instead, the Turkish government is putting more and more pressure on the Turkish civil society that so bravely started the debate about the genocide. This is why we, as members of the German Bundestag, wanted no longer to wait for movement in Turkey. However, the most important motivation for us to act now was the fact that Germany was guilty too. The German Kaiserreich was the closest military ally of the Ottomans at that time. Through diplomats, through missionaries they were well informed about what was going in Turkey at that time. Yet they decided not to intervene and let over one million innocent people die.

"The resolution clearly recognizes co-responsibility of Germany, even speaking of guilt. The fact that the Bundestag almost as a whole embraced the Armenian Genocide resolution shows that Germany is ready to accept this dark chapter of its history. The award you are giving me means a lot to me. It will serve as a reminder that we need to learn from the past in order to do what's right in the present. Unfortunately, we still live in a world full of conflicts and violence. When I think of Syria, I also think of how places like Aleppo and Deir el-Zor — one hundred years ago these were the destinations of those Armenians who survived the death marches. Now Christians and countless more people in the Middle East have to flee again. So we still have a lot of work to do to make this world a better place for all of us," concluded Ozdemir.

The Armenian National Committee of America-Western Region is the largest and most influential Armenian American grassroots advocacy organization in the Western United States. Working in coordination with a network of offices, chapters, and supporters throughout the Western United States and affiliated organizations around the country, the ANCA-WR advances the concerns of the Armenian American community on a broad range of issues.



Grüne im Bundestag @GrüneBundestag · 10h
@cem_ozdemir erhält Freedom Award von @anca_wr für Engagement für #Armenien. "Fühle mich geehrt. Leid der Armenier wird nicht vergessen."

Aurora announces Short Film Competition jury

Aurora Humanitarian Initiative announces the jury of the Aurora Short Film Competition launched on December 20, 2016. The diverse panel of professionals will select the best short films featuring humanism, courage and selflessness.

The Aurora Short Film Competition Jury is comprised of 5 members chaired by Edgar Baghdasaryan, famous Armenian director and partner of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative.

"Every generation has an illusion that they live in a special time. We are not an exception. And we can merely convey culture to the next generations after us and nothing else. The base of culture is humanism and love in its comprehensive sense. This is why we are part of this very special competition," said Edgar Baghdasaryan.

The members of the jury are Diana Kardumyan, film director, Aren Malakyan, film director, Marine Ales, composer, member of the Aurora Prize Creative Council and Ar-

and US\$1500 award respectively. The deadline for submissions is March 20, 2017.

Competition Jury

Edgar Baghdasaryan (Chairperson) – Edgar Baghdasaryan is well known Armenian film director. Since 1988 he has worked for ArmenFilm studio, in 1990 he debuted with "Games" movie. Until 2009 he was the director of Armenian-American film studio "Armenia Film Studios". He directed award-winning documentary "From Ararat to Zion". Edgar Baghdasaryan is a laureate of a number of international film festivals.

Marine Ales – Marine Ales is a famous Armenian composer and theatre critic. She is the author of 300 songs in Armenian and Russian. Her songs were released in 5 albums: I'll Leave You (1999), My Poplars (2001), Thoughts (2003), With and Without You (2007), Barefoot in the Sky (2010). She was jury member of the 2016 Golden Apricot International Film Festival.



Marine Ales is co-founder of Gift of Life Foundation. She is the laureate of numerous awards for lifetime achievements. In 2010, Marine Ales published the collection of her poetry Shards. Marine Ales is the member of the Aurora



Prize Creative Council.

Arman Jilavian – Arman Jilavian leads Aurora Humanitarian Initiative as CEO. He is a member of the Board of Directors at RVVZ Foundation, Member of the Board of Trustees of UWC Dilijan, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of MEDIACRAT. In 2011, he was named the Media Manager of Russia in the Printed Media / Magazines category. Arman Jilavian graduated from the Lomonosov Moscow State University with a PhD in philology. He has held various positions in Russia's leading media groups (Nevzavisimaya Gazeta, Eurasian Media Group) and managed the Time Inc.'s business in Russia (FORTUNE and Popular Science



magazines).

Diana Kardumyan – Diana Kardumyan is a film director and critic. She was a jury member for «ReAnimania» (2011) and «One Minute, One Shot» (2012, 2015), «WebApricot» (2014) festivals, also worked as the pre-selection jury at the «Golden Apricot» (2011, 2014, 2015, 2016) and «ReAnimania» (2010, 2013, 2015) international festivals. She directed a number of documentaries and fictions including "Endless Melody", "Dialogues", "Eh Dima, Dima."

Aren Malakyan – Aren Malakian is a young Armenian film director. He graduated Yerevan State Institute of Theater and Cinema. Aren directed a number of fiction and documentary films including "Voldemar", "Snow". In 2015 he received presidential award for his "Girl on the moon" film. He is a laureate of many Armenian and international film festivals.



man Jilavian, CEO, Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. The detailed bios of the jury members are presented below.

Aurora Humanitarian Initiative will award US\$4000 to the director of the best film. Second and third places will receive US\$2000

FT: The Italian conductor who moved to Armenia after falling in love



Italian composer Gianluca Marcianò has lived across the Caucasus but is now settled in Yerevan with his violinist wife, the *Financial Times* reports.

Marcianò, 40, has spent most of his professional life outside his home country, hopping between opera houses in the Middle East and across the Caucasus. In late 2015, he settled in Yerevan, Armenia's capital, as guest principal conductor of the state opera house.

Yet even if he is based in Yerevan, Marcianò remains global in outlook and persuasion. Next month he will spend five weeks in Beirut, at the Al Bustan Festival, where he is artistic director. In March and April he will conduct at the inaugural White Nights festival in Dubai.

Marcianò was born in Lerici, a town on the Italian Riviera that was popular with Romantic poets in the 19th century; Shelley died in a storm while sailing there in 1822. Marcianò does not come from a musical family. Rath-

er, he was a "very excited kid", and when a teacher suggested he channel his energy into learning an instrument he chose the piano. "At first I didn't like it, but for me it was very easy to learn," he says. "Then I became a fanatic," Marcianò said in an interview with the *Financial Times*' Nicola Davison.

He set out to become a professional pianist, but became disillusioned. "It was a very lonely kind of life," he says. "The dialogue was between me and the instrument." With conducting, he would be able to make music yet also be part of a communal experience.

Marcianò left Italy, taking a job as an assistant conductor in Ljubljana, Slovenia. He made his debut in Zagreb, Croatia, soon after, conducting Verdi's *Nabucco*. "The first time I approached the orchestra was strange because I was coming from touching the instrument, which produces sound, and going into feeling the sound when my hands were not touching anything," he says. "It was

strange, like walking on air... Then all this disappeared and I was just inside the music and I just remember the beginning and the end." Marcianò feels at home in the Caucasus; a previous post was at the Tbilisi state opera and ballet theatre in Georgia. "I like these countries because they have a little bit of Europe — Armenia is Christian — but they are also Asian," he says. "There are two mentalities."

He moved to Yerevan because he "fell in love with a wonderful girl", a violinist in the Youth State Orchestra of Armenia, whom he met at the festival in Beirut. (The wedding ring is new; they married last summer.) He adapted to the city's languid rhythm and the generosity of Armenian hospitality. "We lost it a little bit in Europe," he says. "We have so many deadlines. In London, if you want to meet a friend, you have to book the schedule." Marcianò plans to learn Armenian, though admits it is a difficult language, with its own alphabet and uncommon grammar.

The opera house where Marcianò works is located on a square right in the centre of the city, and the streets radiate from the building like spokes on a wheel. Armenians, he says, love opera, especially the classics by Puccini or Verdi with dramatic endings "because they are very passionate".

"It is a public that can give you a lot of satisfaction," he adds. "If they are happy, they really show it — you can really hear them screaming 'Bravo!'" Most encouraging is the enthusiastic attendance of many young people. "In Italy you see normally only pensioners. In Yerevan, the youth is going to performances, and this is amazing."

Photo: Jodi Hilton

Armenia placed 65th in Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2017

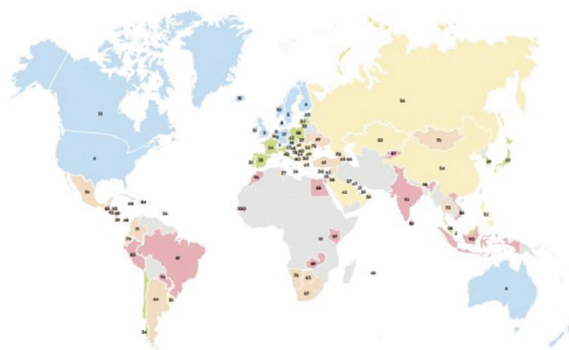
Armenia is placed 65th in the Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2017. Launched for the first time in 2013, the Global Talent Competitiveness Index (GTCI) is an annual benchmarking report that measures the ability of countries to compete for talent. The report ranks 118 countries according to their ability to grow, attract and retain talent.

Other countries in the region are placed as follows: Georgia 70th, Turkey — 61st, Azerbaijan 66th, Iran — 103rd.

Armenia's partners in the Eurasian Economic Union Russia and Kazakhstan are ranked 56th and 53rd respectively, Kyrgyzstan is 87th, no data is available for Belarus.

Switzerland tops the ranking followed by Singapore and the United Kingdom. The 2017 GTCI study focuses on how technology is affecting talent competitiveness and the nature of work, exploring both significant challenges and opportunities, and important shifts away from traditional working approaches.

GTCI 2017 TOP 100



Zodiac Weekly Forecast



Aries (March 20–April 19)

Mars, your ruling planet, is in a tiff with Saturn. This is much like pushing the accelerator to the floor while the other foot is on the break. It is a challenge to make anything happen.

Your reflexes may be affected by the stress. Use care with your body and also with mechanical equipment.



Taurus (April 20 – May 20)

Activities that involve higher education, publishing, travel and/or legal interests are favored. People at a distance will be helpful. This may be via conference calling or the internet. Relationships in general are smoother. This is a good time to enjoy your friendships and be social.

joy your friendships and be social.



Gemini (May 20–June 20)

You may need to concentrate in order to avoid critics, whether they are internal or external. Instead of blame, use the discipline to tackle a project that requires concentration. Avoid contracts and business negotiations right now because misunderstandings may develop.

tations right now because misunderstandings may develop.



Cancer (June 21–July 21)

Although you may wish it, this is not the best of times to communicate with your partner. There is interference due to circumstances or someone's intractable frame of mind. Save your piece for a better time later. You'll know when to initiate the subject.

time later. You'll know when to initiate the subject.



Leo (July 22–August 21)

For the next month much of your attention will be on "others" in your life. Partnerships of any type are generally favored by this arrangement, because you will be searching for the "fair" solution in any dilemma. It is a good time to seek consultation from professionals if you need it.

tation from professionals if you need it.



Virgo

(August 22–September 22)

This is a good time to communicate with your partner. It is very important that you set the Critic aside and engage in a conversation about feelings, even if you think it is about things. For example, if this person

did not do something that was expected, avoid the blame game. Ask what was happening on the interior that kept him/her from completing the plan.



Libra (Sep. 23–Oct. 22)

Your work and daily routine are given a boost at this time. You are more able to fend off the Inner Critic who is always lurking behind you. It lies, by the way. Co-workers are

amiable and cooperative. If you have a fluctuating income, it will improve this week.

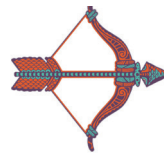


Scorpio

(October 23–November 21)

Give special attention to the lead paragraph this week. It appears that your struggle may be financial at this time. Make the effort to look, but if you don't see a resource on your

radar screen right now, give it a break until the last few days of the month. Life becomes a little easier at that time.



Sagittarius

(November 22–December 20)

It may be hard to move forward this week, due to challenges concerning property, equipment, health, or family issues. Your reflexes and

normal muscle control are out of sync right now, so use special caution and listen to your body. If it says "don't," then pay attention and stop immediately. Take a deep breath and then concentrate on what you are doing.



Capricorn

(December 21–January 19)

At this time you may become aware of how your self-talk interferes with your forward motion. Give careful attention to the lead paragraph. The challenger is your

Inner Critic. This is not a good time to accomplish a major task or to go after what you want. Rest on it for another couple of weeks.



Aquarius

(January 20–February 17)

Beware the liar. The probability is high you will encounter one this week, someone who believes his own story, thus making it unclear if

he is telling the truth. Check out the sources and ask other people who may know something about the situation. Don't accept anything of importance at face value.



Pisces (February 18–March 19)

This is not a time to challenge the powers that be. They are bigger than you right now. Later it may not be important, anyway, because you are on your way out. Give careful attention to your car and also to any machinery you may be handling. Equipment breakdowns are possible. Your reflexes are off. Use caution in the world of the physical during this period.

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Poll: Kim Kardashian and Cher top the list of most recognized Armenian celebrities

Aurora Humanitarian Initiative's 2016 Opinion Audit is concluded and results reveal the degree to which a global audience is aware of Armenia, Armenians and the Aurora Prize.

The research, conducted by London-based New Place Consultancy with consultations by Brussels-based TNS Opinion, Kantar Group, shows that attitude towards the Aurora Prize is overwhelmingly favorable among those who have heard of it. Among reasons cited for the favorable attitude is that the prize recognizes people whose work wouldn't be recognized otherwise, and, in the process, it promotes a positive image of Armenians.

The Opinion Audit explores global awareness and knowledge of Armenia and Armenians, as well. Responses show that the general public mostly knows about Armenian communities,

Armenian food and history.

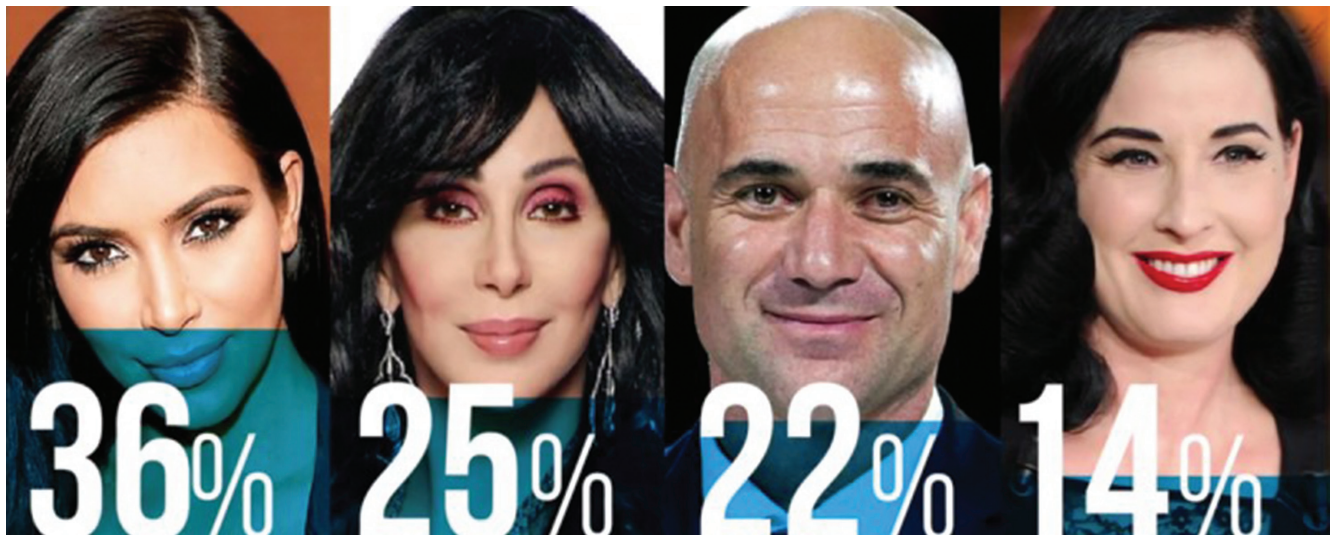
The survey also tracks similar metrics – knowledge, awareness, familiarity, engagement — within the global Armenian Diaspora. Responses show that there are certain similarities between how Armenians see themselves and how the general public perceives Armenians. The most frequently mentioned positive attributes are “proud, friendly and respectful.”

Interestingly, while almost a third of respondents think Armenian communities are important in their countries – whether at the national or local level – most respondents find that Armenian communities play little role in the life of their country. Rather, Armenian communities are seen to have the biggest impact in the intellectual, cultural, social and economic spheres. Kim Kardashian and Cher top the list of most recognized

celebrities, and celebrities who are most recognized as Armenians, both among the general public and among Armenian respondents.

Questions about the Republic of Armenia generated a fair amount of interest in Armenia as a country and as a travel destination. However, among the general public, that interest does not translate into interest in the country as a place to do business. Armenians, on the other hand, are quite eager to learn more about Armenia as a place to do business. One in seven general public respondents, and one in two Armenians say they are likely to visit Armenia in the future.

The survey was carried out in two waves in March, 2016 and June-July, 2016, in 10 countries — the US, Canada, Australia, France, Argentina, Denmark, Norway, Greece, Germany and Russia.



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