

Cabinet approves ratification of Armenia-EU Common Aviation Area Agreement



The Armenian Government approved at the Cabinet meeting the bill on ratifying the Armenia-EU Common Aviation Area Agreement signed on November 15, 2021 in Brussels.

The new agreement will replace the EU Member States' bilateral aviation agreements with Armenia and create a Common Aviation Area between Armenia and the EU. Armenia will progressively align its aviation legislation with EU rules in areas such as safety, security, air traffic management, economic regulation and the environment.

The Agreement will also gradually enhance market access to the benefit of consumers, provide new business opportunities for European companies and ensure fair and transparent market conditions, based on a clear regulatory framework. It will provide more connections and better prices for passengers. Global con-

nectivity is a driver of trade and tourism and directly contributes to economic growth and job creation.

Going far beyond traffic rights, the EU-Armenia agreement will provide a single set of rules, a level playing field with strong provisions for fair competition, and a platform for future cooperation on a wide range of aviation issues (safety, security, air traffic management (ATM), environment etc.).

The agreement ensures that new traffic rights will gradually be made available, provides new business opportunities for European companies, and ensures fair and transparent market conditions, based on a clear regulatory framework. Global connectivity is a driver of trade and tourism, and contributes directly to economic growth and job creation.

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Armenian Security Council Secretary, CSTO chief discuss situation on the border



Armenia's Security Council Secretary Armen Grigoryan had a telephone conver-

sation with CSTO Secretary General Stanislav Zas.

The situation on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border was discussed. Armen Grigoryan stressed that the border between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan has existed since the years of the Soviet Union.

The Secretary General of the Security Council also stressed that under the 1991

Agreement on the Establishment of Cooperation of Independent States, the parties recognized the border, ratified the Agreement in their parliaments and made it an integral part of the legislation of the two countries.

During the telephone conversation, the parties also discussed issues related to the presidency of the Republic of Armenia in the CSTO.

Armenian PM congratulates Iranian leaders on 43rd anniversary of the victory of Islamic Revolution

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan sent congratulatory messages to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei and President Sayyid Ebrahim Raisi on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The message addressed to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei reads as follows,

“Your Majesty,

I warmly congratulate you on the 43rd anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The smooth development of relations based on mutual trust and warmth with the neighboring and friendly Islamic Republic of Iran is of particular importance for the Republic of Armenia.

We can state with satisfaction that this year we mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries, the course of which has registered a steady path of development.

I am confident that the warm and neighborly Armenian-Iranian relations, firmly based on mutual respect and trust, will reach new horizons for the benefit of



the development of our countries and the welfare of the peoples.

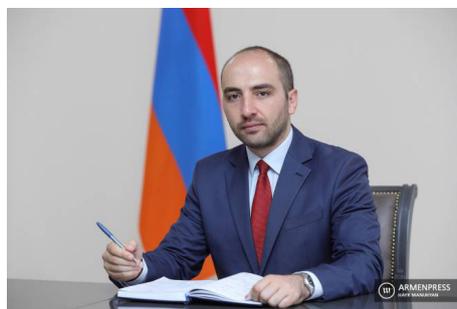
Taking this opportunity, I wish you good health and lasting peace to the friendly people of Iran.

Please accept, Your Majesty, the assurances of my highest consideration.”

Armenia considers implementation of UNESCO fact-finding mission in NK conflict zone “priority and urgent” – MFA spox

We consider the implementation of a fact-finding mission in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict zone, proposed by the UNESCO Director-General after the end of the 2020 Karabakh War, a priority and urgent, Armenian Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Vahan Hunanyan said in a statement released on February 10.

“Armenia supports the implementation of this mission as quickly as possible in line with the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two protocols.



The necessity of conducting urgently the UNESCO fact-finding mission arose for protecting the Armenian cultural and religious heritage in the territories under the Azerbaijani control from the danger of

elimination.

The cases of vandalism against the Armenian monuments, as well as the recent announcement of the Azerbaijani culture ministry on creating a working group aimed at distorting the identity of the Armenian historical-cultural heritage prove that such danger is more than real.

We view the proposal of the visit of the UNESCO delegation to Yerevan and Baku exclusively within the frames of the aforementioned mission proposed by the UNESCO Director-General”, the spokesperson said.

Armenia has handed over 108 bodies of missing after first Artsakh War to Azerbaijan – PM



Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on February 9 thanked French President Emmanuel Macron and President of the EU Council Charles Michel for their efforts in ensuring the return of eight Armenian captives.

The Prime Minister said that during the virtual meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev last week reference was made to the fates of the missing after the first Artsakh War and the 44-day war.

“Azerbaijan is constantly saying that they have about 4,000 missing after the first war,” he said, adding according to official data, 777 people from the Armenian side are also missing.

He informed that over the past year the Armenian side has handed over the bodies of 108 people considered missing after the first war to the Azerbaijani side. Two more

bodies will be returned in the coming days.

“Armenia started the work in this direction in the beginning of 2020, when we discussed the issue at the meeting of the Security Council and I instructed to solve these humanitarian issues,” the Prime Minister said.

“I hope that we will be able to establish cooperation on clarifying the fates of the missing after both the first Karabakh War and the 44-day war,” PM Pashinyan said, adding that 217 Armenians are missing after the 2020 war.

Belarus Ambassador summoned to Armenian Foreign Ministry, FM Mirzoyan confirms

The Ambassador of Belarus was summoned to the Foreign Ministry on February 8, Armenian Foreign Minister said at the Q&A session at the National Assembly.

He reiterated that the statement was meant to serve the domestic agenda and has nothing

“This is not the first time Mr. Lukashenko’s unique analysis becomes a subject of discussion among international partners, including Armenia,” the Foreign Minister said.

“The Ambassador was told that our statements about each other should be based on mutual trust and take note of each



other’s interests, sovereignty, as well as the legal framework on which the cooperation between our countries is based,” he said.

The Foreign Ministry added that Armenia is still ready to continue supporting Belarus in different international platforms.

The comments come in the wake of statements of Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko on the possibility of Armenia joining the Union State of Russia and Belarus.

“Armenia has nowhere to escape. Do you need anyone needs them? They have already seen it, Nikol Vovayevich has already seen it,” Lukashenko said.

PM Pashinyan chairs consultation on the draft strategy in the field of education

A consultation chaired by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan took place, during which the draft strategy in the field of education was discussed, Noyan Tapan was informed from the Office of the Prime Minister.

Referring to the draft, the officials in charge noted that it presents the vision and goals of the development of education until 2026 and 2030. In particular, the draft strategy addresses the services provided from pre-school to higher education. The

document also presents the main targets that the Government will pursue in this area during the above-mentioned period.

Reference was made to the educational content, standards, programs and events envisaged in the field of pre-school, general education, secondary vocational and higher education, as well as infrastructure development, harmonization of universities with international standards and establishment of an academic city.

An exchange of views took place over the draft, a number of observations and suggestions were presented.

Summing up the consultation, the Prime Minister noted that the ideas on resolving the raised issues should be enshrined in the strategy. Nikol Pashinyan instructed to put the draft into circulation, at the same time to amend it, taking into account the presented problems and proposals.

US administration will continue supporting the development of Armenia's democratic institutions. Ambassador

The Prosecutor General of the Republic of Armenia Arthur Davtyan received the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Armenia Lynne Tracy on February 10.

She was accompanied by Alexis Haftvani, Head of the U.S. Embassy's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and Cristina Hansell, Human Rights Officer at U.S. Embassy, Noyan Tapan was informed from the press service of the Prosecutor General's Office.

The Prosecutor General praised the efforts of the US Government and personally the US Ambassador to Armenia, aimed at deepening bilateral cooperation in the legal sphere, developing the capacity of the Prosecutor's Office in specific directions.

Special importance was attached to the introduction of the institution of confiscation of property of illegal origin in Armenia, as well as to the consultative and technical assistance provided for the training of Armenian prosecutors in the areas of protection of human rights, illicit enrichment, the fight against hyper-crime and other areas.

Arthur Davtyan noted that the Prosecutor's Office of Armenia is persistent in the fight against corruption, especially in returning the stolen assets to Armenia which had been embezzled from the state budget, and stressed the importance of deepening cooperation with the United States within the framework of mutual legal assistance.

Ambassador Tracy thanked for the opportunity to discuss issues of interest. She stressed that the 30th anniversary of the



Armenian-American partnership is being marked and conveyed the US administration's readiness to continue supporting the development of democratic institutions, the strengthening of human rights protection structures, and the efforts of the Armenian authorities in the fight against corruption.

During the meeting, the parties expressed their views and expectations on the issues of mutual legal assistance, conducting investigative inquiries, extradition, implementation of new programs based on the assessment of the needs of the Armenian Prosecutor's Office and other issues.

An interesting discussion took place on certain legal issues raised by Ambassador Tracy.

19 arrested, as Armenia's National Security Service reveals spying plot



Nineteen people were arrested as the Armenian National Security Service (NSS) revealed a spying network in Armenia.

The National Security Service has uncovered a spying network established by foreign special services that acted to the detriment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of the Republic of Armenia.

The NSS says that as a result of the investigation, irrefutable evidence has been obtained that foreign special services set up a spying network in the territory of the Republic of Armenia, which includes persons serving in different subdivisions of the Armed Forces.

To carry out their activities unhindered and reduce the risks of disclosure, the persons who carried out espionage activities created fake personal accounts on social networks with the data of females and photos of Armenian women.

After that, the representatives of the foreign special services, who are fluent in Armenian, established acquaintances with

people holding various positions in the Armenian Armed Forces and offered them to cooperate for money, provide information on the locations of military units, personnel, weapons, ammunition, number and type of military equipment, military units, their command staff, defense zones, engineering structures, equipment, etc.

The identity of the mentioned persons has been revealed, the volume and content of other military information provided by them to foreign special services has been established.

A total of 19 people have been arrested on suspicion of high treason, some have pled guilty.

U.S. Envoy reveals meeting with Armenian opposition lawmakers



(RFE/RL) - The U.S. Embassy in Yerevan said on February 11 that Ambassador Lynne Tracy met with Armenian opposition lawmakers earlier this week to “hear their concerns regarding recent judicial and political developments.”

“The Ambassador stressed U.S. support for Armenia’s democratic trajectory,” the embassy wrote on Twitter.

It did not name the deputies who met with Tracy. It said only that they are affiliated with the main opposition Hayastan bloc.

The bloc headed by former President Robert Kocharyan did not issue any statements on the meeting held on Wednesday.

Hayastan and the other parliamentary opposition force, Pativ Unem, issued a joint statement on February 3 strongly condemning criminal proceedings launched against a judge who freed a well-known opposition figure on January 26.

The judge, Boris Bakhshiyanyan, was arrested on Monday on charges stemming from another decision made by him recently. He rejects them as government retribution. Armenia’s Union of Judges and outgoing human rights ombudsman, Arman Tatoyan, have also deplored Bakhshiyanyan’s arrest.

In their statement, “Hayastan” and “Pativ Unem” demanded that the international community react to the “collapse of democracy in Armenia” and be “conscious of their share of responsibility.”

In recent months, representatives of the two opposition groups have repeatedly accused Western powers of turning a blind eye to what they see as government crackdowns on opposition figures and indepen-

dent-minded judges.

U.S. and European Union officials have not publicly echoed the Armenian opposition concerns. They regularly voice support for “reforms” promised or implemented by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s administration.

On Thursday, Tracy met with Armenia’s Prosecutor-General Artur Davtyan. She stressed, among other things, “the importance of judicial independence and integrity,” according to the U.S. Embassy.

The ambassador’s meeting with Davtyan came the day after Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party pushed through the Armenian parliament last-minute legal amendments that will make it easier for law-enforcement authorities to indict and arrest judges.

Opposition lawmakers denounced the amendments as another blow to judicial independence.

High Commissioner for Diaspora visits Esplanade of Armenia in Paris



High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Zareh Sinanyan is on a working trip to the Republic of France for the first time.

The agenda in Paris began with a visit to the Esplanade of Armenia, where the High Commissioner and the Armenian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to France Hasmik Tolmajian laid flowers at the Komitas Monument.

The Esplanade of Armenia is located in the heart of Paris between the Pont de l’Alma and the Pont des Invalides on a spacious territory adjacent to the Seine River.

The space also includes the monument to Vardapet Komitas, opened back in 2004, and Yerevan Park opened in 2009.

Afterwards, the High Commissioner visited the residence of the French Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church and toured the church. He met with the head of the diocese, Bishop Vahan Hovhannisyan, and representatives of the deputy assembly of the Armenian Diocese of France.

The head of the Diocese noted that they have 27 churches now. “The church is a mission, not a building,” the spiritual leader emphasized. He presented the Diocese’s activities, active work with youth to the High Commissioner.





Armenian Ambassador to the Czech Republic Ashot Hovakimian paid a working visit to the Olomouc Region where he was received by the Governor (hejtman) of the Region Josef Suchánek and the Mayor of Olomouc Miroslav Žbánek.

Reference was made to the general agenda of relations between Armenia and the Czech Republic, especially the existing experience between the parties within the framework of decentralized cooperation.

The sides discussed the possibilities of transferring onto a tangible level the dialogue launched years ago and aimed at establishing and promoting the partnership between the Olomouc Region and the Lori province of Armenia.

The parties touched upon the develop-

Czech companies consider establishing small aircraft production in Armenia

ment of interregional ties in the economic, cultural and educational spheres, as well as the prospects of possible exchanges in the near future.

The Ambassador briefed his colleagues on the latest developments in the region and their consequences, as well as the current challenges.

During the visit the Ambassador was hosted by Martin Procházka, Rector of Palacký University Olomouc. The Rector and Vice-Rectors presented the history of the University's activity and the description of its professional specializations, as well as the University's experience in international cooperation.

The parties discussed the perspectives of inter-university cooperation and the possibilities of future joint endeavors in the fields of science, education and culture, not only in bilateral format, but also within the framework of the EU and the European common space in general.

During the visit, Ambassador Hovakimian also visited the "TechProAviation"

and "Balus" companies based in Olomouc, to get acquainted with their projects aimed at establishing a small-aircraft production in Armenia.



Extensive discussions took place with the founder of the "TechProAviation" company Martin Plachy, the management of "Balus" company – Ivo Baláš and Vladimír Němec and the visiting representative of their partnering Armenian company "AM Pro Avia" Grigor Babayan, about the possibilities of further promoting the already launched business plan.

Deputy PM chairs meeting of North-South Road Corridor management board

Deputy Prime Minister Hambarzum Matevosyan chaired the meeting of the management board of the North-South Road Corridor investment project on February 10 to discuss the launch of the tender for the construction of the Sisian-Kajaran section.

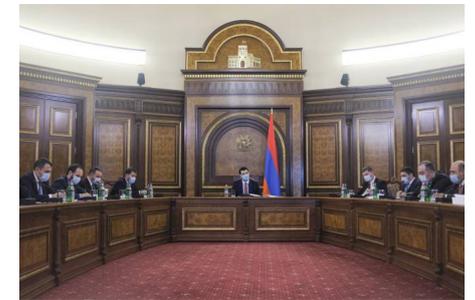
Speaking about the importance and expected results of the project, Deputy PM Matevosyan noted that the construction of the Sisian-Kajaran section is among the government's priorities.

"The implementation of this project will enable to increase interest for transit through Armenian territory, to ensure the

security of Armenia's southern regions and to contribute to their economic development and improvement of the population's standard of living," he said.

According to the project, it is planned to build a Technical Class II, 60km long new road section (100km/h), including bridges with a total length of 4,7km and tunnels with a total length of 12,5km, the longest of which is the Bargushat tunnel – 8,6km long.

As a result, the road distance between Sisian and Kajaran will be reduced by approximately 58km, and the current average 50km/h speed of travel for vehicles will be



increased to around 100km/h, to reduce the driving time by approximately 1,5-2 hours and increase comfort and safety.

The project is included in the EU Economic and Investment Plan Guideline 2 and the Armenian government is effectively cooperating with the EU, the European Investment Bank and EBRD.

Balance of electric-energy production, export, import volumes in Armenia is positive

The electric-energy balance in January-December of 2021 compared to 2020's same period is positive, the Armenian Statistical Committee reported.

Electric-energy production volume in the reporting period totaled 7 billion 674,9

million kWh, which is a 0,6% drop compared to 2020's same period.

995,2 million kWh of electric-energy was exported, a 25,3% drop compared to 2020.

Imported volume of electric-energy

increased 15% and totaled 368,5 million kWh.

Thus, the electric-energy balance of 2021's January-December totaled 7 billion 048,2 million kWh, a 5% increase against 2020's same period.

Armenian economy shows signs of activation – Eurasian Expert Club

The indescribable efforts made by Armenian businessmen last year have significantly contributed to the recovery of the Armenian economy following the huge economic depression of 2020, Coordinator of the Eurasian Expert Club, political analyst Aram Safaryan said at a press conference, presenting the results of the new research of the Eurasian Expert Club on the Armenian economy.

The Expert Club, with the help of its leading economists, has presented a new, the 7th study on the Armenia's economy in the context of Armenia's membership to the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

In particular, Doctor of Economics, Professor Tatul Manaseryan found out in his research that after a severe 8% decline in 2020, the Armenian economy is showing signs of recovery.

According to the coordinator of the Club Aram Safaryan, Manaseryan singles



out 4 main factors that contributed to the 5.8% economic growth in 2021. The first of them is the efforts of the Armenian businessman.

“Armenian businessmen have made indescribable efforts to rectify the situation after the 8% economic downturn in 2020, to record growth, thus providing a huge moral and financial benefit to our country. That is why we would like to express our words of praise to the representatives of the Armenian business field, who mainly produce finished goods and export them abroad. This is really a bravery,” the coordinator of the Eurasian Expert Club

stressed.

The second important factor was the ban on the import of goods from Turkey in 2021, which stimulated the development of local products to replace imports.

“That one year was enough for the local producers, who replaced the import, to breathe and try to stand on their own two feet. You also noticed a lot of small and large household goods in stores, which have started to be produced in Armenia when the Armenian consumer got the opportunity to buy local products instead of those imported from Turkey,” says Aram Safaryan.

The third factor contributing to economic growth, according to the economic study, is Armenia's membership to the EEU, and the fourth was the removal of many restrictions initiated by the government, which were introduced in 2020 to fight the coronavirus.

PM Pashinyan convenes consultation on preliminary fiscal framework of 2023-2025 Medium-Term Expenditure Program



Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan chaired a consultation on the preliminary fiscal framework of the 2023-2025 Medium-Term Expenditure Program.

Minister of Finance Tigran Khachatryan presented the summary analysis made by the Ministry, the purpose of which is to provide information to the state

agencies on the assessment of the current and capital expenditure limits of the fiscal space. The Minister referred to the main indicators of the fiscal framework, the opportunities for the implementation of the Government's targets in terms of current and capital expenditures, the risks of the fiscal framework and the forecasted trends in other directions.

In this context, an exchange of views took place, issues related to the activities envisaged by the Government's Action Plan were touched upon. The current and capital projects, the reform process initiated in various spheres and further actions were discussed.

The Prime Minister stressed that it is necessary to work actively and effectively in order to achieve the social, infrastructural and other targets in all the directions, and gave specific instructions to the officials in charge.



Science funding in Armenia grew 83% in 2022 compared to 2021. In 2021, government funding for science was 13,7 billion drams, but in 2022 it reached 25,1 billion.

“Today, the science sector in Armenia is more attractive than two years ago,” the Deputy Chairman of the Science Committee of Armenia Artur Movsisyan said at a press conference. “Along with funding increase, the number of scientific grant tenders also increased, therefore the participation of scientific groups has become more active. The funding for procurement of equipment used for scientific projects

Scientists from abroad willing to live and work in Armenia to be offered grants

also increased, meaning the opportunities have increased and interest for science grew.”

Further progress will be ensured, however in the long-term perspective the objective is to ensure the kind of environment and development that would make science have its contribution to economic development.

The Science Committee plans to implement a number of themed projects in several directions. Opportunities will be created for Armenian scientists to travel abroad and train in the best scientific organizations.

The next project envisages support to a scientific group formed in Armenia whose team leader will be from abroad. The team leader must put specific scientific objectives before the group, select specialists through a competition, monitor the work and work in Armenia for several months

during the year.

The next project is the “repopulation” grant, which envisages work with ethnic Armenian or foreign scientists abroad who want to live and work in Armenia, create scientific groups and laboratories.

“At this moment I find it difficult to say what specific criteria will be used to select the scientists, but I can confirm that the branch of science will be significant. The projects must be aimed at strengthening the directions of science which are either non-existent or weak in Armenia, for example jurisprudence, political science, economics and others,” he said.

He said the sector has serious staffing problems because over the years the number of scientists dropped. The average age of scientists is high, while the number of young scientists entering the sphere is low. This is why the government is taking measures to involve specialists.

Armenia is regional leader in EIU Democracy Index 2021

The Economist Intelligence Unit, the research and analysis division of the Economist Group, published its Democracy Index 2021, which also has a data on Armenia.

In the report titled “The China Challenge”, Armenia, like in the past several years, is in the “hybrid regime”, however, with democracy index it is the highest among the countries of the region, passing Georgia, Turkey, Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran.

The Democracy Index is based on five categories: *electoral process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties*.



Based on its scores on a range of indicators within these categories, each country is then classified as one of four types of regimes: “full democracy” (8-10 scores), “flawed democracy” (6-8 scores), “hybrid regime” (4-6 scores) or “authoritarian regime” (4 or lower score).

According to The Democracy Index 2021, Armenia improved its index of 2020 by 0.14 points and is currently ranked 89th with 5.49 score. Armenia’s score in 2020 was 5.35 and in 2019 – 5.54.

Among the regional countries, Georgia is the closest one to Armenia, with 5.12 score, and is ranked the 91st. Turkey is ranked 103rd with 4.35 score, Russia is 124th with 3.24 score, Azerbaijan – 141st, 2.68 score, and Iran – 155th, 1.95 score.

The leading countries are Norway (10 score), New Zealand (10 score) and Finland (10 score).

North Korea, Myanmar and Afghanistan have the worst scores in The Democracy Index 2021.

Azerbaijani forces violate rights of Armenia’s border residents on daily basis – Ombudsman

Human Rights Defender Arman Tatoyan had a meeting with acting UN Resident Coordinator in Armenia Lila Pieters Yahia, the Ombudsman’s Office said in a news release.

Arman Tatoyan highly valued the level of cooperation with the UN Resident Coordinator, the Office, and the UN agencies in Armenia, particularly UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, as well as the effectiveness of joint programs.

He said that in the past 6 years programs have been implemented relating to freedom of speech, the professional work of journalists, the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities, etc.

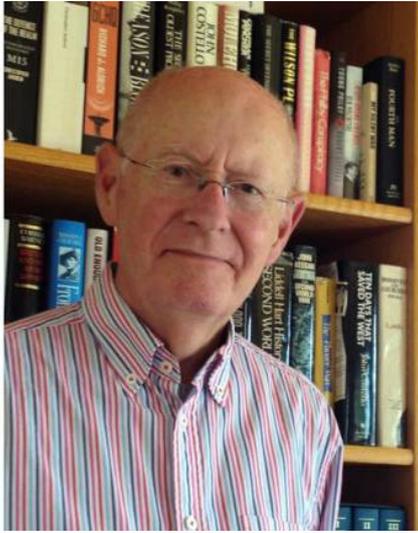
Human rights-related issues were discussed during the meeting. Arman Tatoyan presented the problems registered in detention sites and the judiciary.

The Armenian Ombudsman also said that the Azerbaijani armed forces are vio-

lating the rights of the border residents of Armenia on a daily basis, by grossly violating the UN demands, therefore, he emphasized that the Azerbaijani troops must be withdrawn in order to guarantee people’s normal life.

Lila Pieters Yahia thanked Arman Tatoyan for the work conducted during his tenure and for the important mission aimed at protecting human rights.

Masdar, Bigger and Better, and Armenia, Charting a New Course: Partners for a Better Future?



The year 2022 got off to a resonant start through the well-attended Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, and, having, over these past few years, come to engage with and understand somewhat that ancient, but land-locked, civilization, Armenia, I was particularly glad to learn that Armenia fielded a strong delegation which was present and active at Sustainability Week. The driver for this has been Armenia partnering with Abu Dhabi's Masdar renewable energy company to help it "go green", embrace Decarbonization - which is so necessary if Humanity is to put a brake on the warming of the planet.

The unlamented year of 2021 has been a trial for much of Humanity, which has confronted both the Covid-19 Pandemic and the harsh impact of Climate Change.

On a personal level, I spent the year working from home, not in travel by airplane, but interacting via Zoom, or Skype. It never used to be like this! In earlier years, I traveled widely.

In 2010, I paid my first visit to Abu Dhabi. As the President of Cape Breton University, I was accompanying the Premier of my Canadian Province, Nova Scotia, on a "trade mission" to the region. We two were privileged to meet with the Executive of ADNOC, the national oil and gas giant which has recently joined with Masdar, the globally recognized power in renewable energy.

I well remember one particular interaction. The CEO of ADNOC told us that the company now met all appropriate interna-

tional standards, for the industry and for responsible companies.

In response, I offered the hope that before too long, ADNOC would not only meet international standards but would play a key role in developing the standards. To me, developing standards, meeting them, and imagining more and better, this is the core of innovation, whatever the industry, oil and gas, solar energy, or wind power. And Innovation can be "social" as much as it can be "technological".

When I became a university president, I was aware of the need to contribute to the strengths, values, and traditions of the local community, and foster its engagement with the world around it, through innovation wherever possible.

Throughout this time, I traveled extensively, including visits to Abu Dhabi. Much of the travel was related to a development of great significance to me.

The university had on its staff key individuals with experience in the oil and gas industry. This we built into a vibrant partnership with ExxonMobil, who then asked that we create a private company with which Exxon could develop formal ties. We did, and our company became Exxon's "Go-To" provider for LNG training. And it was this skill set which led to my meeting with ADNOC.

I was, at the time, not only handling the partnership with ExxonMobil, but busy establishing a centre on sustainability in energy and the environment, and I was able to introduce its key people to faculty at the then Masdar Institute, uniquely a Solar-powered facility initiated by the Masdar company, which is now operating in Armenia, in Greece, and in a number of other countries. I know little about developments in Greece, but became quite familiar with Armenia in recent years, and will shortly comment on the experience.

My interaction with the Masdar Institute led, when I retired from the university, to my being invited to Abu Dhabi to lead Masdar's 2014 BP Seminar on Innovation.

My interest in renewables and innovation has continued and is very much on my mind today. Our university was the first in Canada to install its own full-size wind turbine, and I find it hard to imagine a future without the best-informed use of all Re-

newables, particularly those readily available, such as Wind and Solar, and those under rapid development, especially Green Hydrogen.

Concerning Armenia, I am on record as advocating that the linkage between Renewable Energy and Innovation should be central to achieving government's stated intention to foster a "high tech" economy for Armenia, which would have to be partnered by an embrace of education and training.

I am convinced that Masdar, the company behind the creation of the Masdar Institute, could stimulate this.

And hopefully this would stimulate a necessary engagement with ESG across the Armenian economy, and, indeed, globally.

My abiding commitment to ESG, full regard for the Environmental, Social, and Governance impacts of action, is what propels me to pen these thoughts. And prompts me to admit that, unlike some corporate figures, I do not think of ESG as simply advanced Risk Management, but as the opening up of prospects for "purposeful dialogue" between and among "stakeholders" which can enable companies and communities to achieve great things, to the benefit of all.

Garnering perspectives is always useful, and can be vital. Real ESG can help, fostering innovation, and necessary change, while, yes, sustaining "tradition", established ways profoundly necessary in society.

This was starkly underlined recently when a teenage high school student in the US embarked on a "summer camp internship" at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, and was assigned the task of examining data, searching the universe for solar systems with two stars. Three days into the programme, he spotted a blip in the data, which indicated the presence of a previously unknown planet.

It reminded me of an earlier experience at my university. We had initiated a programme of delivering our courses not just on campus but on-site in communities which were home to Canada's "First Nations" or indigenous peoples.

A professor took her class to the Art Gallery in Halifax, the capital of Nova Scotia. There the

page 9 students were asked to look at a piece of art, and be prepared to discuss it. Among the exhibits were a number of sculptures created by the French artist Auguste Rodin.

The professor noticed one young student peering intently at a bronze Angel, about twelve inches tall. He looked annoyed, and she asked him why.

“This Angel”, he said, “could never fly; it has two left wings”.

Well, our professor was intrigued, enough to contact the foundry in Paris where the Angel had been cast in bronze one hundred years earlier.

The foundry management checked, and checked again. The student was correct, the Angel was cast with two left wings. And though it had been on tour across the world many times, and viewed by perhaps one hundred million people, no-one ever had noticed the error.

That was left to a student from an isolated, poor community, where reviewing art was not a common occurrence. Real ESG, propagated and genuinely deployed alongside education and skills training for Humanity’s engagement with the challenges confronting it, can and must figure strongly in our common future.

Energy companies are obviously key to overcoming great challenges, and will hopefully guard against compounding them. Communities the world over have suffered in this past year, from floods and fires, droughts and disease, and, very often, conflicts and confusion between communities and companies.

I began to realize the importance of genuine interaction between companies and communities quite some time ago, and felt its salience in difficult situations from Africa to Latin America. My experiences in Armenia added to this, and sharpened my understanding of the interaction of issues which arose as major projects were undertaken.

And it was while I was in Armenia that my engagement with China re-emerged. In 2018, while I was leading a panel reviewing the ESG commitment of an extractive company in Armenia, I was privileged to be called on to draft guidelines on Labour rights and relations to be issued by China’s Ministry of Commerce for Chinese extractive companies operating abroad. And in the same year, I visited China at the invitation of the China-Europe Association for Trade and Economic Co-operation. I

took part in a fascinating conference on Automotive development, which in turn led to my writing in the China Daily.

In it I proposed the creation of an “Electric Vehicle” highway between China and Europe, which would itself call for the experience and ingenuity of the world of Masdar, and perhaps its Armenian partner.

A new Silk Road indeed, and thinking of it takes me back to my first visit to Armenia, when I was lucky to stop at a fourteenth-century “caravanserai”, built to house the intrepid travelers between China and Europe, building global trade and economic co-operation!

I hope that the partnership between Masdar and Armenia will, in fact, impact positively on not only development in Armenia, but also on international co-operation, so vital today.

And partnerships such as this will surely multiply in coming years; witness, for example, the entry of ADNOC itself into part-ownership of Masdar, alongside the founding entity, Mubadala, the sovereign wealth fund of Abu Dhabi, and TAQA, the country’s national energy company. Powerful entities capable of meeting the target of 100 GW by 2030, and going beyond it. And also impressive is the news that Saudi Aramco is to invest almost US\$1 billion to acquire 30% of the Sudair 1,500-megawatt solar project which is due to come on line in 2022, a pivotal year for us all.

A recent study undertaken by university researchers in the UK, Europe, and the US established that Solar panels installed on half the world’s rooftops could, in fact, meet our planet’s entire electricity demand. And reduce our carbon footprints.

Responsible companies in the Solar power universe, particularly those also engaged with water issues, such as desalination and the achievement of Green Hydrogen, with are going to be essential to meeting the challenge of Climate Change, and they will very likely have major impacts on necessary innovation, including those in education and social progress.

They could also impact on Humanity’s response to disease, including, of course, Covid-19 and its variants.

Research has shown that, in Africa, great volumes of vaccines are wasted due to unreliable power for storage. In 2020, the vaccine alliance, Gavi, supported the provision of solar powered refrigeration in the DRC, and this had an immediate im-

pact on the vaccination rate.

Though Covid-19 might soon recede, we know that other coronaviruses will likely be in our future, and low-cost solar PV, a strength of Masdar, will be essential to defeating them.

Renewables are essential now, let alone in the future, and without a determined focus on how to manage them, and avoid the negative relations between companies and communities which, for example, too often cripple developments in mineral extraction, will we achieve the Sustainability which was the beacon shining in Abu Dhabi just a few weeks ago?

And this approach would, will, necessitate skills development with many “spin-offs”, among them Innovation in every sense of the word. At my university, and in my community, I fashioned an exhortation: We must Sustain Tradition and Foster Innovation.

Since my visit to the Masdar Institute, I have always thought this suited Abu Dhabi just as much as it suited Cape Breton, and it certainly suits Armenia! The pathway for Sustainable Development would be strengthened if the recently expanded Masdar, a hugely important partner to an Armenia that also has much to contribute to just how humanity meets the challenges facing it, works to meet and define international standards in both the broad world of Renewable Energy AND the needed world of Purposive Dialogue through the embrace of ESG.

John Harker

John Harker is a world-renowned conflict resolution, social engagement and international development expert. He was Nelson Mandela’s special advisor and helped him set up South Africa’s National Development Agency. He has served as Executive Director of the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers, representing Canada’s diplomats and trade commissioners as well as Advisor to the Chair of the International Labour Organization’s (ILO’s) Governing Body. More recently he has served as president of Cape Breton University, where, among other things, he created the Centre on Sustainability in Energy and the Environment, a campus in Cairo and an office in Beijing, in partnership with China’s National Development Research Council (NDRC). Here is a fuller biography: <https://developmentcorridors.org/team/john-harker/>

Deputy Chief of Police of Armenia hosted at Europol headquarters



Europol’s Executive Director Catherine De Bolle welcomed Ara Fidanyan, Deputy Chief of Police of Armenia to Europol’s

Headquarters on February 10.

This is the first visit since the strategic cooperation agreement to combat cross-border criminal activities came into force in Sept 2021.

On 16 September, Europol and Armenia signed a strategic cooperation agreement to expand cooperation to combat cross-border criminal activities.

The agreement will enable both partners to work on some key areas such as migrant smuggling, cybercrime, drug traf-

ficking, asset recovery, money laundering, organized property crime and trafficking in human beings.

The agreement allows for the exchange of general strategic intelligence as well as strategic and technical information and operational information with the exception of personal data, and will lead to the secondment of a Armenian Liaison Officer to Europol.

Aliyev continues efforts to erase Armenian history – Rep. Pallone

Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev continues his efforts to erase Armenian history, says Congressman Frank Pallone.

“Aliyev continues his efforts to erase Armenian history, despite an International Court of Justice ruling that Azerbaijan must not desecrate or destroy Armenian cultural sites,” Rep. Pallone said in a twitter post.

“The international community must

halt his actions and hold him accountable for these blatant violations,” he added.

Azerbaijan’s government has announced plans to erase Armenian inscriptions on religious sites in the occupied territories of Artsakh.

It justifies the move by arguing that the churches in fact were originally the heritage of Caucasian Albania, an ancient kingdom once located in what is now Azer-

baijan. The theory has long been



Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression directed against entire civilized world – Artsakh FM



During his recent visit in Brussels, Foreign Minister of Artsakh Davit Babayan discussed various issues with the European partners, stressing that Azerbaijan’s aggression and cultural genocide against Artsakh and Armenia is directed against the

entire civilized world.

Babayan told reporters on February 12 in Yerevan that his meetings in Brussels were important, but their results will be clear within the course of time.

Babayan’s delegation in Brussels raised

the humanitarian issues caused by the 2020 War, the problems of captives, hostages, Azerbaijan’s continuous cultural genocide and many other issues.

“Of course, there are healthy forces in Europe which are concerned by the situation caused by the Turkish-Azerbaijani-terrorist criminal unity. We have stated there that the aggression of 2020 was not only directed against Artsakh and Armenia, but also the entire civilized world. Time is the only problem: we were just the first ones; others will be the next ones. But the time will show when this happens. But if the civilized world closes eyes on all these actions, the cultural genocide that is happening in the occupied territories of Artsakh, if there is an indifferent attitude to such policy of Azerbaijan, that time will come earlier”, he said.

“We are honest to everyone, we do not play games, we say what

French PM, lawmakers attend annual dinner of Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France



On February 8th the annual gala dinner of the Coordination Council of Armenian Organizations of France (CCAF) in France took place in Paris.

The Prime Minister of France, the President of the Senate, Ministers, the Mayor of Paris and other politicians and public figures, as well as representatives of the Armenian community participated in the event.

Co-chair of the CCAF, Franck Papazian, talked in his speech about the war in Artsakh, relations between France and Armenia and actions that have to be taken for long lasting peace.

Co-founder and Chairman of the Az-



navour Foundation, Nicolas Aznavour, and CEO of the Foundation, Kristina Aznavour, also attended the event.

California establishes sister state relationship with Armenia's Syunik

On February 10, 2022, the California State Senate passed ACR 105, a resolution backed by the ANCA-WR, that establishes a sister-state relationship between the State of California and the Province of Syunik. ACR 105 was first introduced by Assemblymember Chris Holden and was passed by the CA Assembly on September 2, 2021.

The resolution is jointly authored by Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian and lists Assemblymembers Lisa Calderon, Vince Fong, Laura Friedman, Jesse Gabriel, Christina Garcia, Mike Gipson, Kevin Mullin, Luz M. Rivas, and Senators Bob Archuleta, Andreas Borgeas, Maria Elena Durazo, Robert Hertzberg, and Anthony Portantino as principal co-authors. Additionally, 62 CA legislators have been listed as co-authors.

The resolution declares California's solidarity with Syunik, the southernmost province in Armenia, and will facilitate mutually beneficial educational, economic, and cultural exchanges. Armenia and the United States are strategic partners, bound by historical kinship and shared values of democracy, freedom, and prosperity, and the passage of this resolution reaffirms this fact.

"Today, we are grateful to Assemblymember Chris Holden for spearheading the effort in the State Assembly and to Senator



Anthony Portantino for seeing it through in the State Senate by establishing a Sister State relationship between California and Syunik province of Armenia. At such a critical time when Syunik's sovereignty is at great risk under the grave threats posed by Azerbaijan and Turkey, this bold move by the State of California is a declaration of solidarity which in turn will strengthen the resolve of the people of Armenia to stand strong against the ongoing threats they face from belligerent and aggressive Azeri and Turkish actors in the region," remarked Nora Hovsepien, Chair of the ANCA-WR.

"Strengthening the relationship with Syunik comes at a critical time as regional powers like Azerbaijan and Turkey pose a threat to its existence and livelihood. This resolution reaffirms California's solidarity with Armenia and our 1-million-strong community of California- Armenians," said Assemblymember Chris Holden. "There is power in our solidarity and there is even more when we acknowledge the

wrongs committed and urge for justice. We set precedent for the future with our action or inaction and today, we are creating long-lasting ties to thread forward a better tomorrow," he continued. "I am proud that the State Senate Passed ACR 105 this morning to formalize a sister state relationship with the Syunik region of Armenia," said CA Senator, Anthony Portantino. "It is important that given the aggression on the border from the Turks and Azeris that California speaks out against those unprovoked horrendous violent actions against a peaceful people and shows that we stand in solidarity and our love are with the people of Syunik and the Armenian people both here in California and back in Armenia and Artsakh," he continued.

Syunik is one of the original provinces of the ancient Kingdom of Armenia and is currently bordered by Artsakh or Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijan, and Iran. Syunik is home to the Armenian Stonehenge, Karahunj, that dates back to the bronze age; The Ughtasar Mountain petroglyphs that are 7,000 years old; the 9th Century Tatev Monastery that served as a center of scholastic and spiritual activity. The most populated town in the province is its capital, Kapan with 43,000 residents.

In the aftermath of Azerbaijan's renewed war against the Armenians of Na-

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Artsakh's Tsovategh village celebrates opening of renovated community center and clinic

On Feb. 8, the residents of Tsovategh, a village in Artsakh's Martuni region, celebrated the opening of their new community center. The building, which includes a town hall and medical clinic (*buzhket*), was renovated thanks to a partnership between the Armenian Medical Fund (United States), the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) of Switzerland, and the Tufenkian Foundation.

The opening of the center was attended by the village mayor Samvel Abrahamyan, chief physician of the Martuni Regional Hospital Dr. Robert Baghdasaryan, Armenian American Medical Association (AAMA) representative Dr. Anush Sahakian, mayors and representatives from neighboring villages, as well as representatives of the Tufenkian Foundation's Stepanakert and Yerevan offices.

"The center is home to the Tsovategh town hall, the village's community center, as well as the *buzhket* (clinic) since the early nineties. The building needed substantial repairs and renovations to meet the needs of our citizens," explained Mayor Abrahamyan. *Buzhkets*, or community medical clinics, are often the only places that villagers across Artsakh have access to immediate medical care. "We are thankful for the support of our diasporas compatriots for their generosity and willingness to help the people here," he added. The renovated clinic was also outfitted with new equipment and other necessities thanks to



the partnership.

The residents of Tsovategh and its surrounding villages came under heavy bombardment during the 44-day war against Azerbaijan in 2020. Early in 2021, thousands of families who had fled the region during the intense battles returned to their homes, many of which had sustained substantial damage. Many of these villages are now only a few kilometers from the Azerbaijani border.

Last year, following comprehensive consultations with the Artsakh authorities, the Tufenkian Foundation assembled an integrated plan composed of complementary initiatives that contribute to meet the educational, health, economic and other needs of several villages in the Martuni region, including Tsovategh and the adjacent villages of Kherkhan and Herher. Various aspects of the plan also include the nearby villages of Sos and Machkalashen. The Foundation partnered with the Los Angeles-based JHM Foundation (John and Hasmik Mgrdichian Foundation) last year, to construct a similar center in nearby Herher

village.

"About a year ago, we visited Tsovategh—this storied village—to pass out desperately needed food assistance packages. Today, we are happy to see that the village and its people are able to support themselves and live and work on their land," said Tufenkian Foundation director Greg Bedian. In early 2021, the Foundation distributed packages, which included flour, rice, buckwheat, pasta, oil, and other staples, to more than 400 families across Martuni's various villages.

"We will continue to invest in these often-overlooked villages, and in other parts of Artsakh, by rebuilding and renovating homes, clinics, and schools; by implementing educational programs; and by carrying out targeted health and economic development programs. This is how we can ensure a vibrant future for generations of Armenians in Artsakh," Bedian commented.

As part of its 2022 development program, the Tufenkian Foundation will work in partnership with the Boston-based AAMA on a program to strengthen primary health care in Artsakh. Addressing guests and dignitaries at the Feb. 8 opening, Dr. Sahakian explained that the program will start its work in the villages of Martuni. "Our program will bring highly qualified physicians from the diaspora to provide practical training and continuing medical education to the local medical staff, while also providing care to patients in the region on a continuous basis," Dr. Sahakian said.

page 12 ➔ gorno Karabakh Republic, the Azerbaijani military crossed into the Republic of Armenia and moved 3.5 kilometers into Syunik Province, seizing the entirety of Sev Lake. The next day, the Azerbaijani military breached two other sections of the border and occupied more areas of Armenia. Azerbaijan's

illegal presence remains in Syunik, threatening Armenia's sovereignty and the people who live there.

The Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region is the largest and most influential nonpartisan 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 in pursuit of the Armenian Cause.

Armenian Physics Professor Levon Pogosian wins 2021 Buchalter Cosmology Prize

Armenian physicist, professor of Simon Fraser University of Vancouver (SFU) and foreign employee of Byurakan Observatory Levon Poghosyan has won the 2021 Buchalter Cosmology Prize. Pogosian and his collaborator Karsten Jedamzik from the University of Montpellier will share the First Prize award for their research on relieving the Hubble tension with primordial magnetic fields, featured earlier in the SFU's Scholarly Impact of the Week.

The award committee recognized the work as "a novel and original framework to naturally resolve the Hubble tension via additional baryon inhomogeneities induced by primordial magnetic fields, which if



confirmed, would have significant impact on our understanding of the Universe and to future of cosmology."

The Hubble tension is one of cosmology's greatest puzzles that concerns the apparent difference in the Hubble con-

stant, or how fast the universe is expanding today, determined using different types of observations. Pogosian and Jedamzik showed how accounting for magnetic fields in the early universe can help to reconcile the difference.

The Buchalter Cosmology Prize established in 2014, recognizes "ground-breaking theoretical, observational, or experimental work in cosmology that has the potential to produce a breakthrough advance in our understanding of the origin, structure, and evolution of the universe." This year's winners were announced by the American Astronomical Society.

Armenians celebrate the Feast of St. Sarkis, Patron of Love and Youth

By the order of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, the Feast of St. Sarkis the Captain and his soldiers-companions is proclaimed day of blessing of the youth.

Captain St. Sarkis is one of the most beloved saints among the Armenian nation. Together with his 14 soldiers-companions he was martyred for the sake of Christian faith.

During the period of reign of the king Kostandianos the Great (285-337) St. Sarkis, being very courageous, was appointed the prince and General in chief of the region of Cappadocia bordering Armenia. When during the period of reign of the king Julianos the Betrayer (360-363) the persecutions against Christians started by God's will St. Sarkis and his only son – Martyros, came to live in Armenia, and the Armenian king Tiran, grandson of Tiridates, received them very well. From Armenia St. Sarkis and his son went to Persia, and started serving in the army of



the Persian king Shapouh as the captain of regiments.

Learning that Sarkis was Christian the king Shapouh ordered him to worship the fire and offer sacrifice to the heathen gods. But the captain immediately refused to obey the order saying, "We should worship one God – the Holy Trinity, which has created the earth and the heaven. Whereas fire or idols are not gods and the human being may destroy them."

After these words the saint destroyed the temple. The annoyed crowd fell on the saint and his son. First the son of the saint was martyred. The saint was put into prison and remaining unshaken in his faith

was beheaded. After the martyrdom of the saint light appeared over his body. 14 soldiers-companions of the saint also were martyred for the sake of Christian faith.

For the Armenian nation St. Sarkis is one of the most beloved. St. Mesrop Mashtots brought the relics of the saint to the village Karbi (Ashtarak Region) and the Church of St. Sarkis was built over his relics.

St. Sarkis, Patron of Youth and love

In Armenia it is accepted to celebrate the Feast of St. Sarkis not only according to church rites and prayer, but also according to various folk traditions. St. Sarkis the Captain is the patron of youth. Many miracles are believed to happen thanks to his intercession. On the day of the feast young people pray the saint asking him to make their prayers audible to God. St. Sarkis is the realizer of the love longings. Loris-Melikov's steel tombstone with Armenian letters is in the yard of St. Etchmiadzin Church and is kept as a relic.

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Armenian Identity Card

The goal of the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) non-profit organization is to unify Armenians worldwide in a common platform so that through contacts, queries and referenda they can express their views and positions regarding issues of general interest to Armenians around the world and issues of particular interest to Armenian communities in various countries.

Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) also makes it possible to establish business networks, the cardholder can participate in various charitable projects, and can obtain discounts from Armenian and non-Armenian businesses all over the world. Armenians should feel themselves to be full-fledged "citizens" of a reborn Armenia and the Armenian Identity Card is the «passport» for all Armenians.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID)

network is an effective environment where Armenians can implement various projects and pan-Armenian programs. At the heart of HyeID is the creation of an Armenian database which will become the reliable and objective basis to realize the potential of all Armenians around the world. Based on that database, it will be possible to implement various permanent and temporary initiatives through the Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) organization.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) worldwide network enables cardholders to elect and get elected to the leadership of The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) network structures.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can benefit from the possibility of discounts intended for HyeID cardholders when shopping for products and services in various countries of the world.

- The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders can participate in queries and referenda initiated by the HyeID network and vote on issues of national interest to Armenians.

- Ensure the security and privacy of The Armenian Identification Card (HyeID) cardholders.

The Armenian Identity Card (HyeID) cardholders who live in the Diaspora intend to utilize the possibilities made available through HyeID to form a Diaspora representative body — Diaspora Armenian Parliament — through democratic elections.

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