



# NEWS BULLETIN

Embassy of the Republic of Armenia

## Bulletin # 6

### July-September News Digest and Embassy Events Bulletin

#### Referendum on Constitutional Amendments to be held on November 27, 2005

A referendum on amendments to the Armenian Constitution will be held in Armenia and all Armenian representations abroad on November 27, 2005. Citizens of Armenia currently residing in the United Kingdom have the right to participate and cast their votes at the polling station located in the Armenian Embassy in London. It will be open on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> of November 2005, from 8am till 8pm.

Please bring your Armenian passport with you.

For information concerning the changes to the Constitution, other issues related to the referendum and for registering to vote please contact the Armenian Embassy:

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#### In Brief...

**Yerevan, 20 July.** Augustin Carstens, Deputy Managing Director of the IMF visited Armenia and was received by Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian. Carstens visit aimed at a first-hand experience of Armenia's economic and political realities and to explore ways of further deepening cooperation between the IMF and Armenia. He declared that he clearly saw the positive effects of economic growth, the reduction of poverty and the stabilization of the national currency.

**Yerevan, 12 August.** Swedish Secretary of State Lars Danielsson visited Armenia and was received by Foreign Minister V. Oskanian

Armenia's involvement in European integration processes, particularly in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy was discussed. The Minister stressed Armenia's commitment to turning the European Neighbourhood Policy into an opportunity to further deepen existing cooperation with the EU.

**Yerevan, 12 August.** Consuelo Vidal, the new UN Resident Coordinator in Armenia and also the newly assigned UNDP Resident Representative, met with Foreign Minister Oskanian. Minister Oskanian welcomed Ms. Vidal and reaffirmed Armenia's satisfaction with the depth and breadth of cooperation with the UN. The Minister stressed that the nature of challenges have changed since independence, and therefore the nature of tasks will also change as progress is made, in order to make best use of available resources.

Ms. Vidal reiterated UNDP's readiness to work with the Armenian government to help implement the government's priorities.

**Yerevan, 19 August.** Governor Howard Dean, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee of the US, and former US presidential candidate was received by Minister Vartan Oskanian and later, by President Robert Kocharyan.

The Armenian leaders underlined that Armenian-American relations expand dynamically both in their scope and pace and highly appreciated the US assistance for the realisation of reforms in Armenia.

Armenia's views on regional problems, developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process, and on Armenian-Turkish relations were explained to the guest.

**Yerevan, 19 August.** Eric Garcetti, member of Los Angeles city council arrived in Armenia to declare Yerevan and Los Angeles sister cities. After discussions are held in Yerevan a relevant agreement is to be signed in the USA. Armenian parliamentarians approved of the proposal.

**Yerevan, 19-20 August.** Rene van der Linden, the President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) was on a

two-day visit to Armenia, as part of his visit to the South-Caucasus. The delegation was received by President Robert Kocharyan. Main issues of the discussion were the fulfilment of Armenia's obligations assumed at the time of entry into the Council of Europe, particularly those related to the Constitutional reforms. President Kocharyan highly valued the support provided by the Venice Commission and declared that the upcoming November referendum on Constitutional reforms is crucial for Armenia, and the leadership of the country is determined to conduct it successfully.

The delegation discussed these issues also with Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian who reaffirmed Armenia's commitment to meeting those obligations, and explained that the government was ready to work with the opposition and the civil society.

The delegation also expressed the Council of Europe's willingness to do what it can to help encourage dialogue on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, while supporting the OSCE Minsk Group process.

**Yerevan, 23 August.** Speaker of the National Assembly Artur Baghdasaryan received Johannes Sacks, President of the delegation of Austria-Armenia Inter-Governmental Committee. Baghdasaryan expressed his gratitude to Austria for the implantation of the economic programmes in Armenia and expressed readiness to promote the fulfilment of the inter-state agreements.

**Moscow, 23 August.** Foreign Affairs Minister Vartan Oskanian headed the Armenian delegation to the regular session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

As usual, ministerial conference prepared documents to be adopted at the CIS Summit in Kazan, Tatarstan on August 26.

The key themes of the agenda were issues relating to enhancing the efficiency and improvement of the activities of Commonwealth bodies, draft statements of heads of CIS states on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the UN and the Agreement for Humanitarian Cooperation of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

**Moscow, 24 August.** Foreign Affairs Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan Vartan Oskanian and Elmar Mamedyarov met to discuss the

resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, in the special residence of the Russian Foreign Ministry with the participation of OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs Yuri Merzlyakov (Russia), Steven Mann (USA), Bernard Fassier (France) and Andrzej Kasprzyk, personal representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-office.

Within the framework of the Prague process, the Ministers discussed all aspects of the peace process, which were presented during the meeting of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan on 27<sup>th</sup> August in Kazan, Tatarstan.

Informal discussions of the Foreign Ministers continued during lunch in presence of the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

**Yerevan, 25 August.** Minister Oskanian received a delegation from the US House of Representatives International Relations Committee and discussed Armenia's inclusion in the Millennium Challenges. He presented the basic features of the draft proposals submitted to the Millennium Challenges Corporation Board of Directors. Members of the delegation noted that Armenia's draft proposals are quite realistic and well revised.

Both parties expressed satisfaction with the current level of US-Armenian relations and agreed that developed interactions should be aimed at enhancing bilateral relations in all areas.

**Kazan, 27 August.** A two-hour meeting between President of Armenia Robert Kocharyan and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliiev took place at the margins of the CIS Summit.

The meeting started with the participation of the Foreign Ministers of the two states and Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group; later the meeting was continued face to face between the two presidents.

*This meeting was preceded by a regional visit of OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to Yerevan on 15 July, and the meeting between the Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers on 24 August, in Moscow, to discuss possible solutions to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the framework of the Prague process.*

**Yerevan, 28 August.** President Robert Kocharyan received a delegation headed by

Mohammad Al-Baradei, Head of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

President Kocharyan expressed satisfaction with the level of cooperation between the Government of Armenia and IAEA and expressed interest in deepening this cooperation, which would also include the safety issues of the Metzamor Nuclear Plant.

Robert Kocharyan noted that Armenia attaches great importance to the upgrading of the safety of the nuclear plant. The operations of the Metzamor plant are constantly monitored by the Presidential Council on Atomic Energy safety, which comprises renowned international and highly-qualified Armenian experts.

The parties also exchanged views on the problems and future development of the energy sector of Armenia and diversification of its energy sources. The President of Armenia said that the strategic program for the development of the Armenian energy sector was already being implemented.

**Yerevan, 29 August.** Leaders of the most prominent churches in Canada arrived in Armenia on the occasion of the 1600th Anniversary of the Creation of the Armenian Alphabet.

Following their four-day tour of Armenia, and visits to holy sites, the delegation met with Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian.

**Yerevan, 30 August.** Rafael Antonio Bielsa, Argentinean Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade headed a delegation to Armenia to discuss Armenian-Argentinean relations and the perspectives of future developments. Both Bielsa and his counterpart, Vartan Oskanian expressed the need for continuous political dialogue on the issues of bilateral interests and for holding regular high-level visits.

In strengthening the existing friendly relations, between the two nations emphasis was put on the essential role of the Armenian community of Argentina. In this context, Minister Oskanian appreciated the increase of Argentinean investment in the economy of Armenia especially in regards to the renovation of Zvartnots International Airport by E. Ernekian, the director of "Corporacion America".

An inter-governmental agreement was signed on cooperation in the field of plant protection and phytosanitary quarantine.

**Yerevan, 30 August.** Minister Vartan Oskanian received Kim Traavik, Norwegian State Secretary.

Stressing his country's interest in settling existing conflicts in the South Caucasus region, the Norwegian State Secretary presented the cooperation projects of Norway and the UNDP, according to which Norway is to invest in the implementation of development programs in South Caucasus region. The programs would be in the field of management, energy and the protection of the environment.

**Yerevan, 5 September.** A Statement of Cooperation in the spheres of culture, education and science was signed by Minister Vartan Oskanian and Prof. Dr. Jan-Hendrik Olbertz, Minister of Culture and Science of State of Saxony-Anhalt, Germany.

**Yerevan, 6 September.** Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian received Slovenia's Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel in his capacity as OSCE Chairman-in-Office. After an exchange of views on the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process, and the efforts the Slovenian chairmanship for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Minister Rupel expressed the hope that during the annual OSCE Ministerial Meeting, this year in Ljubljana, there may be a paragraph noting positive progress in the peace process.

**Strasbourg, 13 September.** Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian met with Bruno Haller, Secretary General of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, and Ago group members headed by Ambassador Roland Wegener.

The parties discussed the progress of the constitutional reforms in Armenia and, in that context, the pace of Armenia's fulfilment of its commitments to the Council of Europe.

**Yerevan, 16 September.** President Robert Kocharyan signed a decree awarding Baroness Caroline Cox, Vice Speaker of the

House of Lords of the UK Parliament with the “Mkhitar Gosh” medal. The high award was bestowed on the Baroness for strengthening British-Armenian relations and her long years of productive and devoted humanitarian activities.

At the ceremony of handing over the state honour to Baroness Cox, President Kocharyan highly praised her persistent and purposeful work. In the framework of the “Pilgrimage to Artsakh” mission Caroline Cox was on her 60<sup>th</sup> visit to Nagorno-Karabakh. She shared with President Kocharyan her impressions of Artsakh. Caroline Cox said that during each of her visits both to Armenia and Artsakh progress was evident.

**Yerevan, 16 September.** National Assembly President Artur Baghdasaryan met with Henrik Kroner, Secretary General of the International European Movement.

The opening of the Yerevan office of the Movement was discussed. Its aim would be to contribute to the formation of the civil society and deepening of democracy in Armenia.

**New York, 15-18 September.** Prime Minister Andranik Margaryan headed Armenia's delegation to the 60th anniversary of the UN General Assembly.

In his address the Prime Minister focused on terrorism, the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, Millennium development goals and UN reforms:

*“...Terrorism remains the biggest scourge facing humanity. The terrorist acts of September 11, 2001 in the United States, then in Beslan, Madrid, London and other parts of the world testify that states should unite their efforts to commonly address this evil. Armenia strongly condemns terrorism and all its manifestations.*”

*We commend measures undertaken by the Secretary-General aimed at prevention of possible acts of genocide in the future. In this connection I would like to underline the importance of inclusion in the Outcome Document of the High-Level Meeting the concept of responsibility to protect populations against genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.*

*The international community should redouble its efforts to prevent possible*

*genocides. Armenians, as a nation that survived the first genocide of the 20-th century, know well the horrible consequences of the policy of genocide.*

*... One of the guarantees for security and stability in our region is peaceful settlement of regional conflicts. Armenia remains committed to the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. The people of Nagorno Karabagh used its right to self-determination in accordance with the principles of international law, just as some countries present at this session have recently done. We are confident that only in conditions of mutual respect, in an atmosphere of tolerance and with the will to recognize historic truth can we secure peaceful and good-neighborly coexistence in our region.”*

Foreign Minister Oskanian, who was part of the delegation, also made a Statement at the General Debate of the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNGA, focusing on Armenia's economic performance, democracy, human rights, self-determination and UN reforms:

*“... The founders of the United Nations knew that security, development and human rights go together.*”

*Self-determination is a human right. The people of Nagorno Karabakh fought for and earned the right to self-determination. To do that, they resisted the political and military aggression of a government not-of-their-own-choosing that tried to violently, fiercely, brutally, suppress them. Fighting for their rights was not a matter of choice. Their rights were neither abstract nor excessive. What they wanted is what most of us have the right to live peacefully on our lands, in our homes, safe from violence. Against all odds, they succeeded. Since then, they have demonstrated the ability to govern themselves, to develop democratic institutions and sustain their independence.”*

**Yerevan, 21 September.** President Robert Kocharyan addressed the nation on the Independence Day, stating that:

*“The Republic of Armenia celebrates its fourteenth year of independence as a steadily developing country. We continue to successfully implement pervasive programs of reforms...”*

*For the last four years Armenia's economic growth has been showing double-digit*

*numbers. It is important that the results of this progress are channelled predominantly into the social sphere. The economic growth should have a direct impact on the well-being of our citizens, and we are resolute to fully implement the plan on Reduction of Poverty...*

*Very soon a referendum of Constitutional changes will be held in Armenia. ...This will provide for an opportunity to have a balanced and up to date Constitution. ... It will also be the best guarantee of the irreversibility of the reforms which are currently underway.*

*In foreign policy we will continue to work for Armenia's deeper international involvement by our active participation... We consider cooperation of all the countries of the region to be the best way for the gradual solution of the existing conflicts. We are committed to a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh issue, which must be built on the actual existence of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh and the right of people to self-determination."*

**Yerevan, 22 September.** National Assembly President Artur Baghdasaryan received Jack Scott (Rep), Senator of the US State of California, and members of RUK US Western Regional Department.

Mr. Scott was in Armenia in order to open the California-Armenia trade office – a decision passed by a resolution in the Californian Senate in 2001.

**Verona, 24 September.** The Grosso d'Oro Veneziano award was bestowed on Armenia's Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian by the Masi Foundation of Italy's region of Veneto. The prize is a special award on an international level for individuals who have contributed to the cause of peace and brotherhood among nations. It was conferred on Minister Oskanian for his contribution to Armenia's integration into European structures, to the deepening of Armenia-Italy ties, and for his active involvement in peace talks.

In the 8th century St. George Cathedral in Verona, before several hundred Italian intellectuals, artists and businessmen, the Masi Foundation held its 25th awards ceremony.

After receiving the award -- a sculpture in silver, decorated with grapes as well as designs from ancient khachkars, and topped

with a gold medal, the Minister spoke about Armenia's determination to pursue the path of European integration. He also spoke about traditional Armenian-Italian ties and the upcoming Italian-Armenian Days in Yerevan.

The only other recipient of the Grosso d'Oro Veneziano has been Slovenia's former President, Milan Kucan.

*The Masi Foundation was created and is run by the descendants of the Italian poet Dante Alighieri.*

**Yerevan, 26-28 September.** President Finland Mrs. Tarja Halonen paid an official visit to Armenia.

Presidents Kocharyan and Halonen discussed ways to bolster interstate relations, deepen the cooperation between the two states, and examine prospects of economic relations. They also discussed EU-Armenia cooperation and regional issues.

The President of Finland also met with other Armenian leaders and was hosted by Catholicos of All Armenians Garegin II at the Holy See of Saint Echmiadzin.

The delegation headed by Mrs. Tarja Halonen visited the Genocide Memorial and laid a wreath at the monument of the victims of the Genocide of 1915.

## **Embassy News**

**Portsmouth, 20 August.** The modern replica of the medieval Armenian merchant vessel Cilicia moored at the historic "Gunwharf Quays" harbour of Portsmouth, where a welcoming ceremony was held.



*Captain Karen Balayan flies the Armenian flag*

The crew were dressed in medieval Armenian garments, making the sight of such an interesting vessel docked in the port of Portsmouth even more unique.



*Zori Balayan and Baroness Cox raise flags*

Welcoming speeches were delivered by His Grace Nathan Hovhannisian, the Primate of UK Armenian Church, Dr. Karine Khudaverdian, Charge d' Affairs of the Embassy of Armenia, Robin Sparshott, Mayor of Portsmouth, and the Baroness Caroline Cox, Chair of the British-Armenian All-Party Parliamentary Group (BAAPPG).



*Cilicia at the dock*

A Thanksgiving Dinner organised by the Armenian Community and Church Council followed.



*Ambassador Vahe Gabrielyan and Zori Balayan*

Also present at the welcoming ceremony were representatives of the Portsmouth municipal authorities, mass media, and members of the British Armenian Community.



*With Captain of Cilicia, Karen Babayan*

*The ambitious idea of constructing a ship in landlocked Armenia was realized by the efforts of the members of "Ayas" Nautical Research Club. Cilicia set sail on its historic voyage on July 14, 2004 from Poti, Georgia. Flying the Armenian flag, the vessel followed the route of medieval Cilician Armenian merchants in two stages: the first included sailing from Poti to Venice, where the vessel moored for the winter; the second part of the voyage covered the distance from Venice to Amsterdam and then to Portsmouth.*

**London, 21 September.** The Embassy of Armenia in London held its annual reception on the occasion of the Independence Day—the National Day of Armenia.



*With the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, the Ambassador of Kuwait, HE Mr. Khaled A.A.S. Al-Duwaisan*

Among the guests were diplomats, representatives of the UK government and local governments, various non-governmental organisations, businesses, as well as members of the Armenian Community.



*With HMA-designate to Armenia Anthony Cantor and spouse*



*Ambassador Gabrielyan talks to actor Peter Barker*

As usual, the event was organized with the help of the UK branch of the “Hayastan” All-Armenian Fund.

**London, 24 September.** Under the auspices of the Embassy of Armenia in London, the Armenian Community and Church Council of Great Britain (ACCC) held a commemorative celebration of the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of Armenia.

H.E. Dr. Vahe Gabrielyan, Ambassador of Armenia to London, and Mr. Ara Palamoudian, Chairman of the ACCC, delivered congratulatory speeches. Works of European and Armenian classical music including Spendiarian, Khachaturian, Babajanian and Komitas, as well as Armenian folk music, dance and poetry were performed by young Armenian performers.

The event was held at the St. Yeghiche Armenian Church in Kensington and was attended by members of the British Armenian community and guests.

Since 2003 similar celebrations of the Independence Day have been organised by joint efforts of the Embassy of Armenia and the ACCC.

**London, 24 September.** Another event to celebrate the Independence Day of the Republic of Armenia was organised, with the collaboration of the Armenian Embassy, by the UK branch of the “Hayastan” All-Armenian Fund. The “Barekamoutioun” dance ensemble performed to the delight of the packed Logan Hall.

HE Ambassador Gabrielyan addressed the audience, congratulating them on the anniversary of the Independence and praised “Hayastan” Fund’s activities booth worldwide and in Great Britain. The proceeds of the concert will be spent for the Fund’s charity programs in Armenia.

### **Other News**

**Yerevan, 3-18 September.** Armenia participated in the European Heritage Days.

This year European Heritage Days officially began on September 3 in Prague, the Czech Republic. In Armenia, they were held under the title **“Book for Path, Path for Book”**. Several exhibitions, conferences as well as movie screenings were dedicated to the 1600th anniversary of the creation of the Armenian alphabet.

*European Heritage Days Initiative was officially instituted by the Council of Europe in 1991. Since 1999 this Initiative has been run in co-operation with the European Union under the slogan “Europe, a Common Heritage”. The basic aim of this pan-European campaign is not only to throw open the doors to historic monuments and sites to the public, but also to bring citizens of Europe closer to their cultural heritage, to protect that which is threatened, and to increase public awareness of the importance of heritage. By respecting cultural diversity, the programme also successfully fights against racism, xenophobia and intolerance.*

**Washington, 15 September.** Following almost three hours of remarks by a bipartisan group of 24 Members of Congress, the United States House International Relations Committee voted in favour of two measures

calling for proper U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide and urging Turkey to end its decades-long denial of this crime against humanity.

The votes clear yet another hurdle toward full House recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Both H.Res.316 and H.Con.Res.195 were adopted by overwhelming margins of 40 to 7 and 35 to 11, respectively.

**Brussels, 22 September.** A conference organized by the European Armenian Federation on the theme "December 2004 - October 2005; Has Turkey changed?" was held.

This conference was supported by the EPP-ED parliamentary group and by Dr. Ingo Friedrich, Vice-president of the Parliament.

**London, 21 October,** "85<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration", a concert in honour of Alexander Harutiunian, the renowned Armenian composer and pianist took place in the Wigmore Hall, London.

Works by Alexander Arutiunian, Benjamin Britten and Edward Elgar were performed by the Orchestra of St. John's; John Lubbock (conductor), Anna Saradjian (piano), Jack Liebeck (violin), and the London Orphean Brass.

A welcoming address was delivered by HE Dr. Vahe Gabrielyan, Ambassador of Armenia to the Court of St. James's.

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