



Vartan Oskanian

**SPEAKING
TO BE HEARD**

A DECADE OF SPEECHES

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Edited by Salpi H. Ghazarian

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E. kneri *humilis* *peruviana* *Polak*

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*for
ara and arman
in lieu of time spent away*

thanks to
 krikor and christine jabourian
 of dubai
 for their friendship

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INTRODUCTION

In my decade of service as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, I crisscrossed the globe and spoke in dozens of capitals around the world, at more than 150 international and academic conferences and other venues. As the representative of an ancient people, new at statehood, I viewed each appearance as our opportunity to move from being witnesses or mere subjects of history to a new place on the world stage where we would participate in the making of history. This collection of speeches reflects that emergence and documents the evolution of Armenia's foreign policy.

As the international community was observing and analyzing the new world order and trying to prescribe guidelines for moving forward, I believed it was essential that we present our own perspective, describe our own experience, present our own explanations about our goals and our limitations, and focus on global occurrences that impact us. I knew I was addressing people who would influence the opinions and make the policies that would have a bearing on our development and our future. I was speaking to be heard.

I was also speaking to be heard by Armenians worldwide. Rare was the city that didn't have a slice of the Armenian Diaspora. Rarer still was the visit that didn't include a meeting with those local Armenians who needed messages of both realism and hope. They were removed from Armenia in time and space, yet their very existence re-defined Armenia even as the new Armenia re-defined their identity. I knew from my work in the diplomatic community that Armenia would certainly be perceived differently, were it not for the extensive, visible, influential Diaspora.

I was a part of that Diaspora when independence came in September 1991. By March 2, 1992, when I witnessed the raising of independent Armenia's tricolor at the United Nations, I already knew that my future lay in Armenia.

At the time, I was a student at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, where I had arrived circuitously, more than a decade after graduating from Yerevan's Polytechnic Institute. There, I had studied to be an engineer, and in 1980, I enrolled in the Tufts University graduate engineering program to continue my studies.

For a student born in Syria, with a college degree from a Soviet Armenian institution, the breadth, depth, fascination and challenges of university education in the United States were indescribable. Furthermore, the world was becoming very interesting politically and nowhere was that more evident than in the academic subculture of Boston. I was constantly distracted by the array of international speakers and programs offered by some of the world's greatest educational institutions. It didn't take long for me to succumb.

After the Tufts Engineering School, I enrolled in a government studies graduate program at Harvard University, and from there went on to the Fletcher School. The world was changing, and I wanted to be a part of that transformation, somewhere, somehow. For me, the shift from engineering to political studies had taken place years before there was even a glimmer of independence for Armenia. When independence did come in 1991, euphoria was mixed with trepidation. Armenia – with no resources, no experience of statehood, no natural allies, and plenty of historical and geopolitical limitations – was independent for the first time in nearly a century and only the second time in a millennium. My country was free but not secure.

The decision to move to Armenia was one of the easiest of my life. It was almost a non-decision, a default action. My education in and out of Armenia, my father's and family's continuous ties over the years with Armenia's cultural and intellectual life meant that Armenia, for me, always felt like home. Now it was to be home. Upon graduation in June 1992, I left for Yerevan with my family, and took up a post in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

FOREIGN POLICY

Our foreign policy agenda has not undergone significant change since the first days of our independence. Achieving physical and economic security for our people, striving for ever-deeper relations with neighbors near and far, reaching a peaceful and lasting resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, normalizing relations with Turkey, regional cooperation, European integration, as well as the global issues of disarmament, globalization and promotion of human rights and democracy – these are our challenges still.

Foreign policy is a tool for achieving national goals and defending national interests. National interest, however, is a broad concept. Ensuring the security and prosperity of a people is in the national interest of all countries. What sets nations apart is not so much their understanding and definition of their national interest, as it is the strategy, tactics and methods they choose to pursue and defend those interests.

It is that process of choosing, and choosing correctly, that confronts policy makers. While the possible choices are many, the plausible options – those that may lead to success or that will at least not backfire and cause harm – are limited. The magnitude of those restrictions is commensurate with a country's capacity and potential.

As with other countries, Armenia's geography, lack of natural resources, small population, history and even national character determine a great deal. There are also the global and regional considerations that affect policy choices as well as a leader's own perceptions, vision and diplomatic ability.

These were all in play in 1998 when the growing personal and policy differences between Armenia's first president, Levon Ter-Petrossian and his closest collaborators led to his forced resignation. While the complete circumstances under which he was obliged to relinquish power remain a subject of debate, foreign policy issues were certainly crucial, if not leading, causes. Among them were divergent views on resolving the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Both change and continuity follow any natural or regular assumption of office by a new administration. Although the transfer of power in Armenia in 1998 was neither natural nor regular, there was both continuity and dramatic change. When Robert Kocharian was elected president, and I was appointed foreign minister, we had our work cut out for us at home and abroad.

Internationally, the US-Russia honeymoon was already ending. Russia became more assertive in international relations and began to take stands on global matters. For a country like ours, these changes meant reduced flexibility and far less room to maneuver in order to be able to conduct an Armenia-specific foreign policy.

Regionally, conflicts were still simmering, not just in Nagorno Karabakh but also in Georgia. The international community now had a clearer position on conflicts, and articulated a preference for the principle of territorial integrity. This was what Azerbaijan wanted above all else, in order to justify its claim to Karabakh, a territory to which they had no ethnic, religious, legal or historic rights. Further, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline deal was almost sealed. This didn't just mean an emboldened Azerbaijan. It also meant an enhanced regional role for Turkey.

Domestically, while Armenia's economy had started to recover, the negative consequences of the post-Soviet transition were everywhere. In addition, there was the other transition – the complicated one from the first presidential administration to the second.

This was the context when I was appointed. It was essential to conduct a serious reassessment of strategies, tactics and methods being used to implement our foreign policy. Clearly, continuity was necessary in many areas. In others, change was required.

In the end, there were six policies which were either new or which varied in some significant way from what had come before: the policy of complementarity; the focus on multilateralism; a vigorous promotion of European integration; a more inclusive approach to Armenia-Diaspora relations; a new approach to Armenia-Turkey relations; and, most visibly, a different strategy for the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

COMPLEMENTARITY

Especially in light of the unprecedented military confrontation that erupted in the Caucasus in August 2008 between Georgia and Russia, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of a policy of complementarity in the Caucasus. This is more than a policy of balance or evenhandedness. It is a policy of maximal inclusion and broadest collaboration.

In 1998, in the first days of the Kocharian administration, we were obliged to rethink the older, and simpler, policy of balance that had guided decisions in the early days of the Republic. It had always been apparent that the new Republic of Armenia would and should have good relations with all three major power centers – the European Union, Russia and the United States. However, the sometimes perceptible, sometimes veiled competition among them made it necessary for us to balance our activities and interactions intentionally, to make sure that a relationship with one in one area was offset by an association with the other in another area. We had convinced ourselves that this would not be possible in the same sector, given the differences in outlook among our friends. The growing, albeit not overt, annoyance of each of them every time we did not take sides in their favor was another reason to review this policy.

Although such reactions were usually no more than irritations and therefore not hugely consequential in any one instance, accumulated misunderstandings can take a toll in any relationship, especially a political one, and so we had to find a suitable way out of such recurring predicaments while protecting our interests.

We needed a new concept – clearer, more persuasive and more bluntly articulated. That new direction was complementarity. The term had never before been used in the political context. This was a first. It required certain thinking, a firm commitment and a particular assumption.

The thinking was that we had to be bold and open with friends and foes. We announced that we are not obliged to choose among friends, that Armenia can be the place where the overlapping

interests of the European Union, Russia and the United States or any two seemingly adversarial, competing countries, can prosper and where their divergent interests will never be exploited or manipulated in pursuit of our own national interests. We rejected a return to a Cold War mentality, insisting that it is not in anyone's interests, including those of the big powers, to return to that era. Armenia adhered firmly to this approach for the sake of our own future, and to reduce global tensions. We preferred to be the country that found ways to conflate the others' conflicting interests, rather than exacerbate and use them, for short-term, local gain.

The commitment to be considerate of those friendly to Armenia was one we took upon ourselves. This is a pre-emptive way of choosing voluntary cooperation where desirable in order to avoid compulsory collaboration where objectionable.

Finally, to make the policy of complementarity work, we had to understand and assume that national interest is indivisible and that it's the big picture that counts. Small, seemingly insignificant cooperation in one area with one country may yield short-term dividends, but may backfire with serious consequences in the mid or long-term.

Thus, our adherence to complementarity and our rejection of adversarial and partisan Cold War categories offered us some flexibility. We ventured into collaboration both with the US and with Russia, or with the European Union and Iran, or with the US and Iran in the same sectors, in ways where interests did not clash. That was key to the success of this policy and it did not manifest itself better anywhere than in the complex area of security.

Without this policy, it would have not been possible to dare remain in a strategic partnership with Russia, continue as a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and at the same time bring our relationship with NATO to a level short of membership. Among the former Soviet republics, we are the only country with such multilayered alliances. We believed that both these organizations desire peace and security, and we went forward with what was in Armenia's interest, and in the large powers' own long-term interests, as we saw them.

MULTILATERALISM

The second area where we introduced change was in our heightened focus on multilateralism. Given Armenia's size, and the geopolitical challenges facing us, my professional choice was to advocate a multilateralist approach to our international engagement.

This was also somewhat born of my own upbringing. I was born and raised in the Middle East, spoke Arabic, knew the histories and appreciated the cultures of the peoples of the area. I attended college and traveled extensively in the Soviet Union. I had lived, studied and worked in the United States, and spent much time in Europe.

Although my multicultural background may have made it easier for me to promote active multilateral engagement, I remain convinced that this approach is obvious and necessary to address Armenia's challenges. Our relations with individual countries are very important, and multilateralism even reinforces those bilateral relations from multiple capitals. Each of our ambassadors in the multilateral centers – New York, Brussels, Geneva, Strasbourg – has a chance, daily, to talk to and inform dozens of ambassadors from around the world. Armenia's relations with each of them are reinforced from each of these capitals. Thus, active multilateral ties help create a favorable environment. They help form international opinion.

Multilateralism means a state pursues its interests and goals beyond its national borders, not alone, but in cooperation and in coalition with other states. No country's problems, let alone Armenia's, can be solved unilaterally, or in isolation. Even great nations, when acting alone, have seen failure and disappointment.

Indeed, multilateral diplomacy has and continues to have vast benefits for Armenia. Whereas our bilateral relations are informed by economic, political, geographic realities, our multilateral relations are limited only by our creativity and willingness to take part in the discourse shaping today's and tomorrow's world.

Thus, a heightened focus on multilateralism was our clear foreign policy goal of intentional, consistent engagement in global issues. A small country, with little to give in terms of commodities and natural resources, can get lost on the big international stage. On the other

hand, with Armenians living in every country on earth and with a long history and vibrant culture providing frames of reference, I believe that an Armenia active in the resolution of issues of global importance, engaged in the agendas of international organizations in matters beyond narrow national and regional issues, able to contribute conceptually and organizationally to the improvement and betterment of life would forge alliances, join coalitions, create friends and cohorts on new ground.

In this belief, we went ahead to form just such an agenda. This was a significant change and our multilateralism policy took Armenia to the world stage, and brought the world's issues to Armenia. The active contributions of our multilateral ambassadors were key to this approach. Each of them brought a great deal of energy and creativity, understanding and commitment to their often daunting challenges.

One of them, retired now, personified this policy. Jivan Tabibian, Permanent Representative of Armenia to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, from 1998 to 2008, was the first appointment I, as foreign minister, recommended to the President. A true renaissance man, Jivan's extensive, varied experience in academia, consulting and international relations, his deep well of knowledge, keen understanding of people and cultures, turned him into the senior statesman of the OSCE community in no time, although he'd never before held a diplomatic post. His colleagues in Vienna reported to their capitals on his weekly statements which, beyond reinforcing Armenian issues, ranged from OSCE reform to electoral processes, the war in Iraq, regional conflicts, women's and children's rights, economic justice, and every other issue of urgency. When he left, he was gifted with his ten years of weekly speeches on five kilos of paper. This was multilateralism at work.

INTEGRATION INTO EUROPE

Our policy on integration with Europe was a continuation of the ideology that had come before, but with a change in emphasis and speed. We worked hard to accelerate integrational processes with three institutions – the Council of Europe, the European Union and NATO.

When in the first days of our independence, our people and our leaders asked the natural question – where do we belong? – the obvious response was Europe. Historically, religiously, linguistically, culturally, we have been and are of Europe. It is the idea of Europe that became our ideal. Living within the European neighborhood, we understood the importance of common views, shared approaches and universal values. Europe, too, acknowledged the need to nurture that which we have in common, especially in such a tight, interconnected, densely populated neighborhood.

There was competition among the three Caucasus countries to enter the Council of Europe as soon as possible. Membership would come only when a minimal political and economic standard had been met, and commitments made to continue with the remaining reforms. When Georgia was accepted in April 1999, Armenia expected to be next. However, in order not to appear to be taking political sides in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the Council of Europe decided to link our membership to Azerbaijan's, although there was acknowledgment that we were further ahead in democratic reforms. Thus the process became politicized. Again, our work was cut out for us.

We had applied in 1992. In 2001, Armenia received full membership status in the Council of Europe. This however was only the first hurdle. Improved economic and political standards, democracy and stability are key requirements for deeper integration with both the European Union and NATO. Euro-integration remained a priority even as the process itself greatly accelerated our domestic reforms. As I have said to the Council of Europe leadership and to our own people, Armenians have been beneficiaries of the process of accession to European structures.

TURKEY

With Turkey, in effect, there was continuity of policy. It is difficult to imagine an Armenian leader who might say anything other than that we want normal relations with all our neighbors, including Turkey. This does not mean that we forget, dismiss or deny our past as the Turkish government does. At a speech at the UN General

Assembly in the first year of his administration, President Kocharian evoked the Genocide from that highest podium. This signaled that we had adopted genocide recognition as an element of our foreign policy agenda, but not as a condition for the establishment of bilateral relations with Turkey.

Our focus was on transcending and reconciling, and our approach was welcomed by other states that understood the moral and political dilemma facing us. We were vocal at times and places where it was appropriate to recall the Genocide, and at the same time, insist on the logic of normal relations.

Those relations were not formalized in my years as foreign minister. In my opinion, and as I have said on many, many occasions, Turkey missed several historic opportunities – not just to establish relations with Armenia, but to contribute to lasting peace and very real bonds and cooperation in this region. Instead, at different times, Turkey's messengers point to one of three "obstacles" for not establishing relations: First, they say that Armenia has territorial claims, although no Armenian official has ever raised such an issue, and no existing treaties have ever been rejected or replaced.

Second, they point to Armenia's support for the international processes for genocide recognition. But if Armenians, the very victims of genocide, do not condition bilateral relations on modern Turkey's recognition of the crimes of the Ottoman Empire, on what moral or political ground can Turkey expect Armenia to renounce or forget its past?

Third is Turkey's solidarity with Azerbaijan and their insistence that the Nagorno Karabakh issue be resolved quickly or that at least serious progress be demonstrated, in a direction that would clearly favor Azerbaijan.

We have explained that to make our bilateral relations subject to our relations with a third country is unrealistic. Still, Turkish opinion and policy makers have said that they are at Azerbaijan's mercy on this matter. And given the Nagorno Karabakh conflict situation, Azerbaijan does not want to see improved relations between Armenia and Turkey.

To try to address and satisfy all real and imagined concerns, when

we left office, the discussion with Turkish officials was that, if they were willing to de-link Armenia-Turkey bilateral relations from Azerbaijani pressures, then we could tackle a four-pronged approach, with all four steps to be taken simultaneously: (1) The signing of a protocol on bilateral relations, which, by definition, (2) affirms each state's internationally recognized current borders, (3) accompanied by the opening of borders, and (4) the establishment of an intergovernmental commission that could discuss all problematic and painful issues outstanding between our countries and peoples. This package would offer solutions, acceptable in form and substance, to difficult problems, and would allow the region to move on.

NAGORNO KARABAKH

On the policy of complementarity, on multilateral engagement, on a heightened focus on integration with Europe, and on relations with Turkey, the second administration's policies were changed, modified or accelerated variants of prior policies. But in our position on the Karabakh conflict settlement process with Azerbaijan, there was a clear-cut and dramatic break.

President Ter-Petrossian, daily reminded of the threat to our security and the damage to our economy, society and psyche by the continued closure of our eastern and western borders, was convinced that the country's viability was at stake. He believed that it would be possible to postpone a resolution of Karabakh's status, receive solid security guarantees for the people of Nagorno Karabakh including a land link between Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, and return to Azerbaijan those territories outside of Karabakh under Armenian control. This, he believed, would bring relations closer to some semblance of normalcy.

The leadership and people of Nagorno Karabakh were opposed to this, as were a majority of the people of Armenia. The thinking then, and I believe now, is that without assurance that the people of Nagorno Karabakh will be responsible for their own security and destiny, there can be no partial solution. In other words, without clarity about the status of Nagorno Karabakh, no one was, or

is, prepared to return the territories surrounding Karabakh which are under Armenian control and which ensure Karabakh's security.

This was certainly President Kocharian's firm belief. Having led the Nagorno Karabakh self-defense forces during the conflict, he was not about to relinquish the buffer zone without solid security and political guarantees. The territories provided physical security on the ground, and status would provide political security. In addition, he truly believed that Armenia's own resources were sufficient to ensure development even under conditions of blockade. After all, this was a blockade whose intent was to bring Armenia to its knees, to get maximal concessions from Armenia on the Genocide and on Nagorno Karabakh, and to weaken our negotiating position all around. Armenia had to demonstrate that this is not the case, that we do not doubt our own capacity. The Armenian economy can and indeed did grow. It had done so slowly even in the difficult early 1990s and faster in the last decade. Turkey and Azerbaijan could not suspect doubt on our part. Only when our adversaries understood that the blockade is not working and won't work, would they let normal relations prevail.

Thus, 1998 brought a clear change in policy. When we came into office, we inherited the consequences of the OSCE 1996 Summit in Lisbon, where, in a non-binding declaration by the Chairman, self-determination for Nagorno Karabakh was capped at the level of autonomy within Azerbaijan. This was untenable both politically and in terms of people's security. My task was to chip away at the legitimacy with which an emboldened Azerbaijan wanted to invest that concept. Indeed, the international community already had a reinforced perception of a restricted solution, a perception that was partially the result of President Ter-Petrosian's policies and actions between the 1996 OSCE Lisbon Summit and his resignation.

The dilemma was that, on the one hand, Armenian confidence and sense of security would not be restored with anything less than a comprehensive solution that addressed both the conflict's cause and its consequences. On the other hand, international thinking at the time assumed that any comprehensive agreement would only

be possible if Karabakh's maximal status were restricted to high autonomy within Azerbaijan. Otherwise, they advocated a step-by-step resolution, where the first step would be to address not the cause of the conflict – status – but its consequences – territories and refugees. It was this partial, and some said backwards, approach that Armenians found unacceptable, and President Ter-Petrosian's resignation was evidence of just how unacceptable.

It took months of active diplomacy, bilaterally and multilaterally, to rebuff this thinking and to make clear that only a comprehensive agreement that did not force Nagorno Karabakh to remain within Azerbaijan would be acceptable. Partial solutions that dealt with each element of the conflict separately and sequentially would be insupportable. This was the negotiating position of the Armenian side, which included both Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia. One of the consequences of the Lisbon declaration was that Azerbaijan's representatives refused to talk directly with the representatives of Nagorno Karabakh. To avoid a stalemate, Armenia agreed to continue to negotiate for Nagorno Karabakh, given that President Kocharian himself had been the leader of Nagorno Karabakh and the architect of its negotiating stance – especially the insistence on a comprehensive solution.

Even as we explained the security risk of an incomplete solution, we were careful not to alienate the mediators or the international community. Instead we adopted a non-conventional approach, and an unorthodox vocabulary. We advocated that the international community do the same in order to be able to find a creative, but just and lasting solution. We fought to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable principles of territorial integrity and self-determination. "De facto independent, de jure not part of Azerbaijan" was born of this effort.

We rejected the step-by-step solution that assumed a return of territories, a return of refugees, open borders, and an uncertain future for Karabakh.

We began speaking about a non-vertical relationship between Karabakh and Azerbaijan, and insisted on a geographic link between Karabakh and Armenia. Of course, security guarantees

had always been and continued to be part of the discussions, although over time, the levels and types of security forces considered acceptable have changed.

The Common State Agreement which the mediators proposed in the fall of 1998 was the result of this successful effort. It assumed horizontal relations between Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan, contiguity between Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia through the district of Lachin, and security assurances. Azerbaijan rejected that proposal and it was buried. Its contents were later made public.

We searched for a different approach and introduced the legal component in our arguments. We explained that this is not just self-determination, but self-determination on territory towards which Azerbaijan cannot have any legal claims, since Nagorno Karabakh at no time was a part of independent Azerbaijan. From 1918 to 1920 when Azerbaijan, like Armenia, enjoyed a short-lived independence, Nagorno Karabakh was not part of that republic. In 1991, when we all became independent following the collapse of the USSR, Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast held a referendum per Soviet legislation and voted itself out of Azerbaijan. Thus, in 1991, too, Nagorno Karabakh did not form part of independent Azerbaijan.

Active diplomacy and a surprising amount of audacity on the part of both presidents, especially Azerbaijan's President Haidar Aliyev, led to the Key West agreement. Developed in Key West, Florida, during a week of negotiations in April 2001, this document could have been the final resolution, dealing as it did with all issues comprehensively, leaving no loose ends. After giving his agreement in Key West, once in Baku, President Aliyev withdrew his consent. So, the Key West proposal, too, was rejected by Azerbaijan.

The process then stalled. In December, 2003, President Aliyev died and his son assumed the presidency. For the next year and a half, he tried to consolidate power. In some areas, he even tried to forge new policy.

In Prague, in April 2004, with a new Azerbaijani Minister of

Foreign Affairs, we embarked on a new path, with the active mediation of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs – the representatives of France, Russia and the United States. The international community invested a great deal in what came to be known as the Prague process. In two dozen meetings over four years, "A Document on Basic Principles" underwent various modifications. At the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Madrid in November 2007, the top diplomats of the three co-chair countries personally presented their own last version of that document to my Azerbaijani colleague and myself. They also formally submitted it to the OSCE depository.

When I left office, four years after the Prague Process had begun, the Nagorno Karabakh negotiation process was at a turning point. The Madrid document, as it came to be known, though far from perfect, was the culmination of successful multilateral diplomacy on our part. The right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination was clearly codified in that document. No amount of dismissal or negation from Azerbaijan would now change the fact that compromise solutions were realistic, sustainable and possible. Armenian diplomacy had succeeded in turning around public opinion and international thinking. Most importantly, we registered our willingness to compromise without conceding the security of the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

Everyone had become accustomed to Azerbaijan playing on three tracks. Publicly, they would make extreme and bellicose statements about only one possible future for Nagorno Karabakh – within Azerbaijan. Privately, they would continue to negotiate that status within the OSCE Minsk Group format. Simultaneously, they would attempt to move the Nagorno Karabakh process from the OSCE to the United Nations where they believed many factors worked in their favor: their alliance with Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova, the support of the Islamic Conference and Turkey's and Pakistan's unreserved solidarity and influence.

Most of all they liked the UN General Assembly's simple majority rule, where votes are not necessarily based on political and strategic choices, but on alliances and obligations. Over the

years, we had resisted this effort to transfer the Nagorno Karabakh resolution process to the UN General Assembly and thus dilute its sustainability and capacity to actually bring lasting peace. We were not interested in the feel-good value of a popular vote offering opinion and advice.

But 2008 was a different time. First, there was the Madrid document. Azerbaijan's top diplomats were an integral part of the process in which this document evolved. But with the placement in the OSCE depository of this document, where the right of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination was clearly codified, Azerbaijan sought ways to undermine both the document and the process. Second, 2008 was the year of Kosovo. The willingness of the international community's heavyweights to unilaterally recognize the independence of Kosovo, without the acquiescence of Serbia, gave Azerbaijan great cause for alarm, and they again sought ways to protect themselves from what could become a model. Ironically, the international community, too, was eager not to turn Kosovo into a precedent, and sought to reinforce the territorial integrity principle.

Finally, on March 1, 2008, Armenia's post-election instability ended in violence. Azerbaijan used the opportunity of a weakened and distracted Armenia and on March 14, they presented a resolution to the UN General Assembly which unequivocally reflected Azerbaijan's position and Azerbaijan's intentions for the resolution of the conflict, dismissing any room for compromise.

That resolution had been on the UN agenda for four years. Each time Azerbaijan attempted to bring it to a vote they calculated that the 'yes' count would be so low for even such a non-binding formulation that the minor victory would not be worth the humiliation of a majority rejection. In 2008, they believed that a combination of Armenia's domestic woes, and the international community's concern over a Kosovo precedent would combine to make more countries willing to listen to Azerbaijan's call to limit Nagorno Karabakh's people's rights.

In the end, of 192 countries, 39 voted yes. But at the UN, that's a pass. The Minsk Group co-chair countries of Russia, the US and

France, usually very careful not to take sides, denounced the intent of such a text and actually voted against the resolution. The countries of the European Union abstained. Azerbaijan did not seem to mind such trouncing. They needed the resolution language, albeit non-binding and unrealistic, to compensate for their sense of vulnerability and their fear of a compromise solution on the negotiation track, where those knowledgeable about the conflict, recognizing its real causes and consequences, were offering acceptable ways to recognize and respect the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination. Thus the serious political value of the Madrid document is in its formal documentation of compromise solutions.

The Nagorno Karabakh process continues as it has for so long – in a spirit of negotiation, privately, and in a spirit of resistance and belligerence publicly.

DIASPORA RELATIONS

Finally, the sixth area in which there was also a significant change in policy was the way in which the Armenian government interacted with the Diaspora, and particularly its institutions.

It can be said that relations during the Ter-Petrosian administration were neither defined nor realistic. It was an unreal time for the Diaspora for whom an independent Armenia had been a dream. The Armenian Republic and its leadership were expected to behave and evolve in ways that reflected the Diaspora's hopes and aspirations, as well as the stable, developed states in which most of the Diaspora lived. For Armenia, on the other hand, this was a time of very difficult political and economic choices, of undeveloped political institutions, of great needs and non-existent resources. It is fair to say each had unrealistic expectations of the other. But it is also fair to say that even the realistic expectations of either side that could have been met, were not.

On the contrary. In Armenia, the Diaspora tensions and partisanship continued. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Dashnaktsutyun (ARF), the segment excluded from the life of Soviet Armenia, came into the new independent Republic with a sense of

entitlement. In clashes with the Ter-Petrosian administration, for reasons many of which still remain unexamined and unexplained, the ARF was stripped of its right to operate in Armenia and its leaders were ostracized – some expelled, some jailed. The non-ARF communities became the new Republic's Diaspora friends.

This was a situation we inherited. When President Kocharian came to office, he reversed the decisions against the ARF leadership, freed their operations and very soon the ARF was even part of the government coalition. Although over the next decade, this resulted in a more open, normal relationship between Armenia's and Diaspora's elites, those who had stood by the new government in the days of Government-ARF tensions felt somewhat aggrieved at the dilution of their former privileged access.

Without offering or expecting any special relationships, during the Kocharian administration, there was an effort to institutionally engage the Diaspora. This was done through demonstrative, public, somewhat symbolic acts such as three massive Diaspora Conferences. Although the efficiency and value of such gatherings is limited, they are the first steps in the necessary process of establishing more purposeful and productive relationships with a Diaspora that is largely unorganized and uncoordinated.

There were two kinds of direct, concrete, productive relationships. One was with the Armenian lobbying organizations in the US and Europe, with whom our relations, and mine specifically, have been very open and useful. The other has been our relationship with individual Armenians or Armenian organizations that have had specific agendas, have needed particular forms of assistance in their work, and who found an open door at Armenia's Foreign Ministry.

The epitome of such a genuine and productive relationship was our work with the businessman-philanthropist Kirk Kerkorian. Beginning with my first meeting with him in 1998, I represented a government that was grateful for his benevolence in the past and was formally requesting his participation in Armenia's development, offering the highest levels of government transparency and collaboration. Mr. Kerkorian's generous and visionary engagements since that time will remain part of Armenia's history.

IMPLEMENTING POLICY

This collection of speeches should be seen in this international and domestic context. Many have been delivered to think tanks, academic institutions or local organizations. They influence global processes and I have found them to be a very useful sounding board, especially since their agendas are derived from those of the international organizations.

The majority, however, have been delivered in an official capacity at the periodic meetings of half a dozen major world organizations – the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. There are two other organizations whose meetings I regularly attended, but whose formats did not offer the opportunity for formal statements – the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

These organizations are all products of war – the hot Second World War, or the Cold War, or the post-Cold War world order. Each has its own dynamic, differs in terms of its mandate and scope of responsibility, and varies in its administrative and evolutionary process. But all welcome the committed participation of their members in finding solutions for the troubles of the world, and all are concerned with serious institutional reform.

I have made most of these statements at the annual meetings where the head of the country's foreign policy establishment speaks and addresses national and international political topics. The United Nations (UN) calls these annual conclaves General Debates, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) calls them Ministerial Councils. At the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the CIS and CSTO, they are Ministerial Meetings. NATO's Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) holds one annual meeting where the ministers of partner countries, such as Armenia, join their colleagues from NATO member states.

At each of their headquarters Armenia has permanent missions. At the foreign ministry, there are desk officers for each of these organ-

izations. Each of those annual meetings marks the culmination of a year's work by our permanent delegations led by our representatives. So when Armenia's foreign policy chief takes to the podium to state, explain, defend, question, challenge or support the global problems and international policies which have been under discussion, the content of those statements are the result of the combined effort of Armenia's entire foreign service establishment.

They are also the result of close cooperation with Armenia's parliament, with those in civil society and others who also work with and within these international organizations. The members and leadership of our delegations to the Council of Europe, OSCE and NATO Parliamentary Assemblies have also been a part of the policy implementation process. Without being a member of any political party, having worked in the administrations of two presidents, I used my contacts to maximize our effectiveness.

These annual meetings were our chance to present to the world our own report card on our domestic situation, including democracy building, legislative reforms, advances in understanding and protection of human rights and other basic freedoms, and the revitalization of our economy.

Finally, these organizations have provided the settings where ideas turned into guidelines, policies, standards and norms. For us, they also provided framework and guidance and introduced discipline. In other words, membership in these organizations taught us a lot, and that is exactly what was intended. I've often said, with the benefit of hindsight, it is more than clear that without the inclusion and vision that these organizations offered, we would no doubt have evolved differently.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe was the natural place to begin our process of Integration with Europe. This was the organization that in 1949 was formed to foster common values and principles among its members. It is seated in Strasbourg, the former Franco-German apple of contention, to demonstrate that a continent of

adversaries can transform itself into a community of neighbors.

The symbolism was not lost on Yerevan. The late 1980s and early 1990s brought a reaffirmation of the Council's mandate, as newly independent states emerged, ready to join European structures. This organization offered instruments for fostering and nurturing the basic principles of human rights, democracy and rule of law, especially in societies torn by war, weakened by a restrictive central authority, and devastated by collapsed economies. So, over ten challenging years, the process of Council of Europe accession provided us with the tools to democratize Armenia's institutions, legislation and society. It was our Europeanization accelerator.

I used every statement as an opportunity to reiterate our speedy and successful reform process and to encourage the Council to judge us on our own merits, delinking our membership from Azerbaijan's. In nearly every pre-membership speech, I looked for a way to say that membership in the Council of Europe would not mean that we would bring our conflict to Strasbourg, but that we would use the opportunities the Council offered to resolve our conflict within a broader cooperation platform, and begin to cooperate regionally as well, on the way to resolving the conflict. Thus, on the way to membership, I stressed our reforms, our unique path to Europe and the significance of that path. There was also room to talk about culture, science, human rights, media – the areas the Council of Europe actively supports.

Following accession, each of my statements became an accounting of sorts on domestic economic and political advancement, on progress made on the fulfillment of our obligations, as well as an update on our relations with Turkey, and on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Good neighborly relations are to be expected among Council of Europe members, and Turkey-Armenia relations are no exception. At the same time, finding a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict was a condition of membership placed on both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Thus, it was understood that these aspects of our foreign policy would be of particular interest to colleagues in Strasbourg.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND NATO

Integration with Europe is a three-pronged process. With the Council of Europe, we strived for membership and we achieved our goal. In the case of the European Union and NATO, for very pragmatic reasons, we focused on the process of integration.

European Union membership requires a minimal level of economic development and institutional standardization that we still endeavor to achieve, but that is still quite a distant goal for us. Yet, short of membership, there are a generous number of opportunities for institutional relationships, for economic ties, for political cooperation and Armenia made every effort to benefit from that process, without speaking about membership prematurely.

With the European Union, we signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in 1996, followed by membership in the European Neighborhood Policy in 2006, followed by an Action Plan in 2007.

Annual meetings with the European Union leadership took the form of an informal dinner with all three Caucasus foreign ministers, with no one making formal statements. Rather, we responded to questions or explained security issues – status of the unresolved conflicts, the European Union's role in conflict resolution, and regional cooperation. There also were no formal statements during the individual bilateral meetings that followed. There, we followed an extensive agenda on European Union-Armenia cooperation on everything from nuclear power to domestic politics and reforms. Both sides discussed and assessed progress in each area of our cooperation agreement. Thus, institutional relations between the European Union and Armenia proceeded according to a finely defined blueprint. A decade later, with the European Union's qualitatively new instrument, the European Neighborhood Policy, we devised an Action Plan that included economic integration processes and offered even greater opportunity to deepen relations with the European Union.

The situation is very similar with NATO. As members of NATO's Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, we were inducted

into various programs, beginning with Partnership for Peace, upgrading to our current Individual Partnership Action Plan, which is the last level before NATO membership. Our policy of complementarity made it possible for us to reach this level of association even as we maintained our CSTO membership.

At NATO EAPC ministerial meetings, there was only the occasional opportunity to make a specific statement on an agenda item. Generally, the format was such that participating ministers would comment or respond to current issues on the agenda, rather than deliver formal remarks.

Thus, this comprehensive process of integration with Europe in the context of global change is reflected in the statements that appear here.

CIS AND CSTO

The policy of complementarity is at the core of our foreign relations precisely because varied associations and memberships are not only natural, but mandatory for a country with our history and geography. Thus, we believe that our process of integration with Europe is supplemented, not contradicted as some have claimed, by Armenia's membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

Unlike in many other former Soviet republics, in Armenia anti-Soviet sentiment did not transform into anti-Russian sentiment. For us, friendly relations with Russia pre-dated the Soviet Union, and continued after its collapse. This history could not be ignored. Additionally, our geography was not about to change any time soon.

We viewed the creation of the CIS as simultaneously visionary and inevitable. Such connections as this organization provided were helpful for our transition from a rigid centralized, soviet system to full sovereignty and independence. Old economic ties and political associations were very much needed to ensure the sustainability of our independence in the early period. Some have called this a marriage of convenience. I agree, and believe that many such marriages have indeed been successful. In fact, with the benefit of hindsight,

we can say the CIS assured a smooth transition for many of us, avoiding the minefield that was the Yugoslavia breakup. Or, mostly avoiding it.

After all, there are many cracks in the CIS. The activities of GUAM – the association formed by Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova – as well as the conflicts between those countries and Russia have, of course, heightened tensions. Yet, the CIS continues to provide an umbrella for multilateral cooperation, albeit not on all issues. In addition, its regular meetings offer opportunities for effective, efficient, regular, multifaceted bilateral engagement. At CIS ministerial meetings, too, there are no formal statements. Instead, discussion revolves around agenda items.

Along with economic and political issues, security was an important CIS agenda item. Thus, the emergence of a security organization for the same geographic space was to be expected. The creation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization also satisfied Russia's own security interests and its need for broader Russian engagement in the Caucasus. Although the CSTO was supposed to be the security arm of the CIS, fundamental differences between many of those countries and Russia kept most CIS members away from the CSTO. It includes Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Russia and Armenia.

For Armenia, CSTO participation was desirable even though we already had bilateral security arrangements with Russia. Given our acute security consciousness, our vulnerabilities, our conviction that with security 'more is better,' the CSTO offered an additional layer of protection, especially after it adopted the principle that an encroachment against one is an encroachment against all. Thus, our inclusion in the CSTO remains important, although that is not reflected in this book, because the nature of participation in those meetings is not through formal statements.

BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Just as the CIS and the CSTO can be considered regional organizations, so is the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) that was

established precisely to serve as a body that would provide a single forum for all the regional players. There is no other organization (aside from the UN) where Turkey, Russia, Ukraine and Iran, as well as the Balkan countries of Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Serbia, and the Caucasus three – Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia – all are present. Among these 12, there are many areas of common interest and potential gain, as there are many serious issues of contention. The premise was that the former would override the latter and through economic cooperation, regional political and security threats would be minimized. This also mattered to the US and the European Union who would be immediately affected by instability and unrest in the region.

Armenia joined this organization precisely for that reason. This would offer a forum for economic, transport, cultural and other kinds of cooperation, especially with Turkey and even Azerbaijan, to begin to create an environment within which other more difficult political issues could be resolved. Instead, the opposite happened. Turkey and Azerbaijan clung to the extant political differences to block other kinds of cooperation. Similar obstacles hampered other BSEC programs as well. Thus, the regional stability issues remain unaddressed.

The standoff over BSEC's evolution in light of such regional entanglements was at the core of many of my statements. At the end, it seemed Armenia was alone in advocating for the original BSEC vision.

ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is a Cold War creation turned into a transatlantic forum for cooperation embracing the remnants of the Soviet Union. Its membership, both Eurasian and North American, operates on the principle of consensus – in effect giving each of its 56 participating states a veto. Finally, it is the organization that internationalized the Nagorno Karabakh conflict by passing a decision in 1992 to create the Minsk Conference for the purpose of convening a meeting to

determine the status of Nagorno Karabakh and resolve the conflict once and for all. That conference never took place. Instead, an OSCE Minsk Group chairmanship evolved. The chairmanship consisted first of one, then two, then three countries to address the Nagorno Karabakh status issue and the consequences of the conflict.

OSCE's engagement in Armenia is critical in various spheres, beyond the Nagorno Karabakh conflict mediation. For Armenia, where security and stability depend on egalitarian development, a respect for environmental resources, a trained civil police and defense force, the OSCE's active and far-reaching programs have been invaluable. One reason is the OSCE's definition of security. It addresses security non-traditionally, stressing the economic and social dimensions of safety and stability. This organization strives to ensure not just individual security but collective security, and not through the military dimension, but by strengthening and nurturing a human dimension. In other words, the participating states acknowledge that poverty of all kinds – in the marketplace, in values and principles – can also endanger a society.

This is a thoroughly different, more sustainable and far-sighted approach to security, particularly in an era when individuals, societies and countries must withstand serious energy, environmental, social and political threats that come not just from overt and self-declared enemies, but also from unlikely and informal adversaries.

OSCE's concern with improved electoral processes across its membership meant the engagement of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Armenia (ODIHR) where they have worked with government and civil society to improve the electoral code, and to monitor, assess and recommend reforms of the actual electoral processes. They do so in all countries that issue invitations to them. Armenia has done so since independence, and the assessments, although never expressing complete satisfaction, have, nevertheless indicated improvements, pointed to challenges and guided change.

These aspects of our OSCE engagement, together with updates on regional relations, especially those with Turkey, have been at the

core of my decade of statements at annual OSCE Ministerial Councils. In recent years, these statements have also included reference to another theme – that of OSCE reforms. Armenia can be proud of its contribution to revitalizing the organization, adapting it to today's world, and strengthening the role of all participating states. In 1994, we blocked a critical decision about doing away with the consensus rule. We used the rule to uphold the rule, and today, the consensus seems to be that we did well.

As extensive and varied as our OSCE agenda is and has been, it is the Nagorno Karabakh conflict that has been at the center of my statements before that forum. Besides the annual ministerial meetings, I also spoke before the OSCE Permanent Councils, held weekly in Vienna and attended by the ambassadors of all member countries. I felt the need to keep them well informed. I believed it was important to reflect the spirit and direction of the talks, without revealing the details of the contents, since, as negotiators know, nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. Also, this conflict is so complicated and contentious that a lasting solution will have to be complex and unorthodox. I worked to take it in that direction and tried to explain that in my statements. Without divulging secrets, without contradicting ethics and understandings, it was important to offer substance and content, independent of the interpretations of the press, the 'experts' and the various sides. Astute practitioners of international relations and those who followed regional developments could understand the essence of the closed negotiations process.

The OSCE statements in particular reflect the thinking that went into the various stages of Nagorno Karabakh negotiations and demonstrate our reasons for guarded optimism and hope.

UNITED NATIONS

Finally, there is the UN and its various bodies. Membership in this club is the single greatest expression of statehood. Armenia has been active at the UN General Assembly, the International Atomic Energy Association (where our involvement is largely the result of having a

nuclear power plant on our territory), the Economic and Social Council as well as the Human Rights Commission. In the last two, we have been elected to governing bodies, and we aspire to Security Council membership in the next decade. Such engagement has been reflected in our statements at the annual meetings and assemblies of the UN's various bodies – particularly, the Human Rights Commission (which became a Council in 2007) and UNESCO, as well as a few special sessions.

Our statements at the Commission on Human Rights had extra value because we had, twice, been elected members of that Commission. This was a particular honor and also a complicated responsibility. Each time there was a difficult ballot about a member's human rights situation, it meant remaining true to our policies and principles even as many fought for Armenia's vote. Such votes are, in the most basic sense, bargaining chips, but more than that, they are viewed as a sign of a country's alignment along various political associations and issues. On difficult issues such as Iran, Cuba and Palestine, it often meant choosing within gray zones, among various complex positions and between friends.

Membership in the Commission also placed two national responsibilities on us. One was the obligation to get our own house in order, to be more attentive to our own human rights issues and democratic development. The second was the moral obligation to remember the political reality of the phenomenon of genocide worldwide. Thus, we initiated a resolution on the 50th anniversary of the Genocide Convention. Further, I spoke at the 60th Anniversary of the closing of the Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz. We used these opportunities not to highlight our own experience with Genocide, rather to highlight the continuing threat and danger, by raising our own experience and calling for acknowledgement and recognition.

Just as the UN is the epitome of international legitimacy and belonging, so speaking from the UN high podium is the ultimate opportunity to speak to be heard, to speak to the world, to speak about universal truths and individual dreams. Each speech is a test of our ability to capture the attention of high level representatives of dozens of countries – some with interest in Armenia, others in the

region or in the region's conflicts, some in post-Soviet democratic and economic development processes, others in our neighbors Russia, Turkey and Iran, and some, frankly, with no interest in Armenia at all. The challenge is to use each chance in order to be heard by all – on issues that are ours alone and on those that are ours together.

Therefore, beyond presenting our own domestic report card, Armenia's statement each year included our stance on the international agenda. This was done to indicate to the international community that we, too, are impacted by international developments and have opinions on these consequential issues. For our domestic audience, this was a signal that Armenia must consciously strive to be a presence beyond our borders.

Over the years, I have spoken about conflicts close to us on the map as well as those close to our hearts, like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the bombardment of Lebanon. As East Timor gained independence, as small countries in the Pacific joined the UN family, we made clear that it was only geography that separated our dreams. At the conclusion of the statement, in typical UN tradition, the speaker stands behind the stage, and is approached by those who wish to comment on the speech. The appreciation expressed to me by the representatives of the countries mentioned, was an indication of how important it is to build bridges and more effectively fight universal injustice.

Darfur (and Rwanda before that) has been on the world's agenda the last several years. For us, it has been of immense, tragic significance and I've said so at each opportunity. Commemorating each anniversary (and the 95th is coming soon) of the Armenian Genocide weighs heavily on us as individuals and as a nation. To do so in the context of new genocides, of recurring attempts by states to resolve political differences by planned, organized use of violence against one's own people – state terrorism, in effect – that is an indication that modern nations still abdicate their duty to, in UN language, ensure a state's responsibility "to prevent and protect" from Genocide. Worse, they are permitted to hide behind a state policy of denial. The burden was mine to deliver that message.

Other issues such as disarmament, non-proliferation, globalization, and after September 2001, especially security, were also addressed, albeit more often with questions than answers. For Armenia, September 2001 was more than a turning point. If, for others, those attacks signaled a change in security policy, for us, this date changed alignments and tolerances, thereby reducing greatly our own political options. Ever since, we have worked with partners whose prisms and perceptions on regional and global issues have been altered. Thus, we have had to express and demonstrate our adherence and allegiance to very real security concerns, even as we attempt to navigate among friends, neighbors and allies with divergent perspectives, experiences and fears.

There are many examples. Armenia and Iran have excellent relations. Is Armenia perceived as a transit country for dual use materials? The Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty was challenged by Russia. How would Armenia, with Russian bases, and with serious security fears from Azerbaijan, be affected? Regarding balance and transparency in arms procurement, how should Armenia deal with Azerbaijan's baseless accusations about Karabakh, while diverting attention from their own transgressions? These questions and many more hanging on our heads were publicly addressed.

Of course, Armenia's relations in the region and with Turkey have been, arguably, the subjects of greatest interest for the international community. Although it can be said that there has been little movement in those relationships, I have understood the need to make clear Armenia's readiness to move forward, without pre-conditions, even as I have reminded the world of the Genocide's political and psychological wounds that have not been allowed to heal.

Still, there is no doubt that developments around Nagorno Karabakh have almost always taken the lion's share of space in my statements. This is because this conflict, its consequences and lingering impact are of huge significance to our own people. That cannot be overestimated.

There is also the UN's institutional interest in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, arising from the four Security Council resolutions passed in 1992 and 1993 calling, among other things, on

Armenia to use its influence with the local forces in Nagorno Karabakh to bring a halt to the hostilities. Of course the military phase had long ended when I took office, but as the conflict moved through new stages, explaining the process as much as possible, within the limits of negotiating rules and ethics, has been essential at the UN, as at the OSCE.

While adhering to the principle of confidentiality, my speeches never included falsehoods and never intentionally misled. Those able to read between the lines, those involved in the process looking for messages, were able to understand the essence of the discussions and Armenia's inclinations. It was always a shock to get back to Yerevan and read Azerbaijan's take on my statements (and even on the actual negotiations themselves, but that's for another book.)

LOOKING BACK

The evolution, not just of the Nagorno Karabakh negotiations process, but of the whole of our foreign policy, is reflected in these statements. One can follow the transformation of global events even through the international shorthand that is used. In 1999, Kosovo and East Timor referred to war and violence. In 2002, East Timor came to mean a self-determination movement that had succeeded. In 2007, Kosovo meant a double-edged sword: a successful self-determination effort, executed as an imposed solution by the international community.

These speeches were addressed to the rest of the world, but of course, they were of great interest to our people. Although talking to our own population, through interviews, talk shows, in speeches at universities and press clubs, was also part of my work – and I used and enjoyed those opportunities often – it was important that the international speeches also resonate at home. After all, they were as much about Armenia and our own development as they were about our international relations. Without attempting to overestimate or exaggerate Armenia's realities, I never hesitated to put the best possible face on our economic, social and political progress.

For Armenia, confidence and vision are critical. To underestimate one's accomplishments and potential is to waste a precious resource. This is the message I will bring as I continue to do what I can, as a citizen, within civil society and particularly through the political process, to further Armenia's prosperity and stability, and to work for a life of justice and dignity for all our people. I and my whole generation are fortunate to have this opportunity.

Vartan Oskanian
August, 2008

FAREWELL TO TEN YEARS

I asked that you all gather here today so I can say thank you – to all of you: To the diplomats who have worked with me for these ten years, and longer. To the technical staff who have made our work here and abroad possible. To our ambassadors who have worked hard, against great odds, to maximally promote our interests.

We can all be proud of our work, and we can all feel satisfied that we are performing a civic duty. We are all citizens of Armenia – you by birth, I by choice. For me, the decision to pack up and return to Armenia after independence was a default decision, a non-decision, an obvious choice. Having come, I'm not now preparing to go.

I've been here since almost the beginning, working with you, to create something out of nothing, to build a new institution and a new kind of institution. I have served as foreign minister since the beginning of President Kocharian's term. I had served as deputy minister and first deputy minister under President Ter Petrossian. In other words, I have served not a man, but a people and a country. Together, that's what we have done since independence – we have served the state, the Republic of Armenia. I am proud of the work we have done together.

During these ten years, I believe much has changed in the nature of our work. Of course the Republic of Armenia has changed and progressed such that many objective conditions have changed – we don't wait two, three, sometimes five months to get paid. We have paper on which to print treaties, conventions and documents. We are not hostage to irregular flights into and out of Armenia.

There are other differences, too. Diplomats, and all staff, are accepted solely on merit and not for any other reason. Diplomats are assigned postings solely based on professional circumstances and not for any other reason. This ministry has a reputation now for being the cleanest, the most professional, the best regulated, and not corrupt. And that's no small reason to be proud.

This ministry is a place where people are treated with dignity, with respect and with tolerance. I'm proud of that and I believe that that tradition, once begun, cannot be easily undone. On the contrary, it becomes contagious. I believe that to build a democratic society, we must begin, and we have begun, by building a transparent, accountable ministry, and by treating each other with dignity.

The world has changed too in these ten years. Russia is no longer in retreat. Europe is much closer than it used to be. The US is more insistent on having partners who are democratic. Azerbaijan is looking to oil for solutions to all problems. Turkey is living both in the past and in the future. Georgia is walking a fine line between beleaguered and bold. Iran is caught between the world's perceptions and its own self-image.

And Armenia? Armenia has demonstrated that we understand that diplomacy and defense do not replace each other, but work in tandem to secure a nation's future. Armenia has proven that economic growth is possible, even with the absence of natural resources and open transportation corridors. Armenia is living proof that one can be a respected member of the international community and at the same time swim against the global tide to assure self-determination and security for Nagorno Karabakh. Armenia has become a trustworthy and I can say, full partner in international organizations with a full agenda of reforms, insights and action items. Armenia has established good relations with all major world centers – Russia, the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Middle East.

But each of the successes I just mentioned has brought with it a set of new challenges and new problems. And that's our job – to make the best of each opportunity and minimize all threats.

Now, we must perform our job in the changed environment of the last several months. When we allowed the political tensions

and emotions of the election and post-election period to reign, they demonstrated that we sometimes imagine that revolution can be an alternative to reforms, and that revenge can take precedence over reconciliation. No one knows better than we in this building that that is false. No one knows better than we that our domestic strength, integrity, stability, morality and perseverance are our best – actually our only – calling cards in the international arena.

If those were our assets, today we work with a deficit. The capital we had accumulated internationally has been squandered. That means my successor, each of you, and all of us who live in Armenia, must work even harder to regain our respectability and our confidence in ourselves and our future.

I will continue to work with you. I don't intend to terminate my public engagement, but to enter a new phase. I don't intend to be foreign minister but I intend to work domestically to help the next minister to succeed internationally.

The weeks after March 1 were the most difficult of my entire career. On the one hand, I am part of an administration that, at the end of the day, is responsible for what happens in this country. On the other hand, from the beginning of their campaign, I disagreed, publicly and privately, with the tactics, methods and goals of the opposition.

Just as it is not in my nature to follow blindly, it is also not in my nature to be in bitter opposition. I believe in carrying out the responsibilities I have undertaken. I believe I have done so these ten years, sometimes before the TV cameras but more often behind the scenes.

My commitment to Armenia and its future did not begin when I became foreign minister. It will not cease now that I am no longer foreign minister.

Instead, it will change. I will undertake a new set of responsibilities that will focus on fashioning a relevant, inclusive civic and political forum and that will work with the public and with the existing political forces on mending the torn fabric of our society, on finding genuine paths to political consensus by reconciling our differences, not suppressing them. I will partner with those who wish to create the mechanisms that replicate the experience of other developed coun-

tries and offer serious, convincing political alternatives that are not destructive, extreme and self-serving. Most of all, or first of all, I will work to strengthen the institutions which will decrease our people's cynicism and readiness to believe the worst about ourselves, that will empower people to say what they believe and believe in what they say, that will educate adults and children to be neither bitter nor beholden, neither dependent nor expectant.

The work that you and I will do will be complementary. I feel a part of this family. And that's not going to change. I would like it to remain that way, although I know it will be hard to pass by this building, or through the Republic Square in general.

Thank you.

TO WORK HARDER FOR TOLERANCE, SOLIDARITY AND PEACE

I am honored to receive this award and feel privileged to be in the distinguished company of today's winners and the recipients of former years.

I thought long about the significance of the Dama Castellana conceiving of such an award, and thus creating the opportunity for an annual message about the importance of dialogue and peace. This respected organization takes very seriously its local heritage, and understands the need to recall and evoke the past in order to assure a well-grounded and meaningful life in the present.

So, it is because of the wisdom of the ages, that in a region synonymous with viniculture, you are focusing on peace-making. Wine is life and wine depends necessarily on a life of peace and stability. Making wine, sharing wine, enjoying wine all require time, a confidence in the future, and patience and faith in tomorrow. The world of wine takes peace for granted.

The original European dream, the glue that held together post-war Europe, was for peace and prosperity. Today, you in Italy and throughout Europe can take that peace for granted.

We in Armenia cannot.

We have lived under subjugation, have seen ethnic cleansing and genocide, even before the terms existed, and have lived as a minority without rights. We saw military aggression in response to peaceful calls for dialogue and tolerance.

As a small people, serving as the perennial buffer between empires, on the most trampled path on earth, Armenians have become living witnesses of the benefit of dialogue between and within cultures. We have been engaged in that international exchange for ages. Our Diaspora, living as it does across borders, is both the means and the beneficiary of international exchange. Today, we in Armenia are among its greatest promoters, especially in our neighborhood.

Twenty-first century Armenia belongs to a world where warring neighbors have found that they can accept new borders based on realities on the ground and move on. Europe's nation-states have found that they can transcend borders, without diminishing or ignoring cultural spaces, without expecting historical identities to vanish. Armenia sees the example of some of the West's oldest democracies, oldest developed economies, some of the most stable states, coming together several decades ago, voluntarily suspending some aspects of their sovereign political and economic rights in order to build structures which would enhance and consolidate their political and economic advantages, and diminish the threat of war.

Armenia has always said that we have already benefited from the process that you have gone through. We share history, values and civilization, we also share the goals of an integrated, interdependent, interrelated European political and economic community.

For me personally, the community that exists here in Conegliano, the political, social community that embraces visitors with a passion, that is proud of its accomplishments over a mere 50 years, that is ready to serve as example and partner, this community offers hope and inspires passion. From winemaking to tourism, there is much that we can learn from you.

Armenia is known as the motherland of grapes and winemaking. Armenia's viticultural history goes back at least to Biblical times, when Noah established the first vineyard in the Ararat Valley after the Flood. Excavations in this area have lent strong support to the theory that some of the very earliest systematic wine-growing did indeed begin here.

This is one of many connections between Veneto and Armenia. Last year we concluded a two-month long Days of Italy in Armenia.

This year, our ambassador in Rome is promoting several events that highlight the centuries-old connections between us of which there are many.

Let me use this opportunity to say thank you for the especially large and meaningful assistance Italians provided to Armenians in the devastating earthquake that destroyed so much exactly 19 years ago yesterday. This was not the cause but the manifestation of a special relationship that goes back much longer. It was in Italy in 1512, that Hakob Meghapart produced the first book ever published in Armenian. Venetians signed their first interstate trade agreement with Armenians, half a millennium ago. The renowned Briton, Lord Byron, referred to the Venetian island of San Lazzaro as a fortress of Armenian independence, since the Armenian monks of the Order of Mekhitar had found refuge there in the early 1700s. There you have it – cultural, economic, political – our ties are deep and broad.

Today, you point to the Mekhitarist congregation as an example of the wealth of Venetian culture and heritage. Armenians point to the Mekhitarist Congregation as Armenia's representatives from the ages when there was no Armenian state.

From them, and from you, we have much to learn. I will take away with me today the warmth of your friendship, the generosity of your hospitality, the wisdom of your age. And all of this offered with ease.

It is *sprezzatura*. I wish for a long and deep dialogue so that Armenians can discover this art of effortless creation that results in the 'studied carelessness' of Italian food and Italian wine. I wish to replicate the accessibility, the immediacy, the intimacy with the old, even as the elegant new is continuously created. I wish to appreciate the individual's resolve to enjoy the pleasures of life and the society's understanding that such enjoyment can only be had in a world of dialogue and peace.

I appreciate your trust in my own commitment to these values. The Dama Castellana has put additional responsibility on me and on all of us in Armenia to work harder for tolerance, solidarity and peace in our region and in the world.

EUROPEAN APPROACHES TO REGIONAL PROBLEMS

It's already the end of the day, so let me briefly address a few topics. The first, related to OSCE reforms. Second, the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and third, a little bit about Armenia's elections and finally about the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. But before all that, let me commend the Spanish chairmanship for the very good work they've done during the year.

Although the organization has been evolving ever since its inception, we have really changed in this last half-decade. Some of those changes, intended to enhance the effectiveness of the organization, appear sometimes to burden its structures, and sometimes even disturb the delicate balance among the various components of what we still believe is a correct premise – that security is indivisible.

The OSCE's three dimensions have provided each of us with something to hang on to. Today the equilibrium among our three pillars begins to wobble because of the centrifugal effect of so much criss-crossing of priorities and interests. There's an uncomfortable shift in balance.

This is why Armenia does not think reform should be taboo nor do we consider the reform process a wasteful exercise. The International Herald Tribune raised these same points this morning. No large, complex organization, private or public, can maintain its relevance and improve its performance simply by assuming that all is well. At the OSCE, our greatest challenge is to alter the experience of

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some delegations who find that the playing field is uneven. An organization based on consensus presumably believes in a level playing field. It is not a matter of being and feeling equal, rather of having an equal right to defend our interests.

Because this unevenness becomes more apparent and more problematic at the level of institutions and missions, believing in enhancing the effectiveness of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), we have attempted to seek in ODIHR greater evenhandedness, transparency, non-selectivity, and region-blindness particularly in its election-related activities.

As for OSCE missions, Armenia has already raised the issue, secure in the very satisfactory, beneficial and cooperative performance of the office in Yerevan. But we believe that as their numbers, mandates and operations evolve, the whole missions system needs an adjustment to reduce the perception of favorite tracks and sometimes quasi-permanent dependency. The ultimate benefit of any mission will be evident when that mission, having completed its work, makes itself redundant. That is why we emphasize capacity building as the next priority for the Yerevan office.

Mr. Chairman, as I reflect on the priorities of the organization as a whole, I must address the CFE, a foundational issue and one that plays an important role in the edifice of military strategic security for the area. Presently it is in trouble. We are a state party and the effective functioning of a treaty in full implementation is essential to our national security. Frankly, we are deeply concerned by our neighbor Azerbaijan blatantly and unapologetically exceeding by substantial numbers its holdings of its treaty-limited equipment. It is in this sense that the reinvigoration of the CFE and its adapted successor is vital for all state parties.

Mr. Chairman, it seems our whole region is getting ready for an electoral year. In Armenia, we concluded parliamentary elections in May and scored quite a satisfactory rating in the eyes of the international community. My government has every intention to maintain the momentum in the presidential elections coming in February. These, at a time when Armenia is socially and economically a new country, and we are seeing the return of hope and optimism.

Mr. Chairman, finally, something on the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

On the one hand, through successive meetings of presidents and foreign ministers, we have arrived at a working document that can serve as the basis for a preliminary agreement. Today, we met with the top diplomats of the co-chair countries whose concern is that we preserve what we have achieved and go further.

We understand and appreciate their special attention and their recognition of the progress made in this process.

That document addresses the core issue – the security of the people of Nagorno Karabakh, through self-determination – as well as the issues of refugees and territories that came about as a result of that self-determination struggle.

Unfortunately, outside of the negotiation process, there is another, contradictory and disheartening reality. First, there are militaristic calls ringing from the highest levels of Azerbaijan's leadership; second, Baku's systematic, organized hate propaganda has reached frightening levels within Azerbaijan. Third, Azerbaijan's willful obstruction of international envoys entrusted with monitoring the conflict and the region is threatening to upset the fine balance that we have sustained, and fourth, their active and aggressive search for alternative international forums in which to present their case, rebuffs their responsibility to compromise.

As hopeful as we are that a negotiated settlement is possible, this hostile atmosphere concerns us. Armenians believe there will be no new wars in our region. I know this because we won't start it, and they know they can't win it. There is no military solution for this conflict. The only solution is one based on compromise, and in that sense, this document denies each side their maximalist desires and focuses instead on a sensible, respectable, acceptable solution that can be explained to ordinary people, and will make it possible for ordinary people to reconnect over time and across political boundaries in a space split by war and hatred.

For this to happen, the extraordinary people, those endowed with the power to lead, must demonstrate vision and instill trust, re-create a Caucasus space and contribute to the region's stability and prosperity.

In this context and as members of this broad and inclusive European organization, we look enviously at the countries of Europe, all of whom, including those who were shaken to the core by the transformation of the world order, have found ways to place problems onto an agenda, without allowing those problems to abort the agenda. Perhaps we in the Caucasus will be next in adopting such European approaches to regional problems.

Mr. Chairman, as we prepare to welcome Finland to the Chairmanship, and hopefully soon after that Kazakhstan, perhaps I can even say the unmentionable: it's never been more true than today that this organization's annual meetings have never been just formal get-togethers. It is at times like this, when there are six or seven daily headlines about the real tensions in the OSCE space, that we can be thankful that we do have this forum and we can commit to continuing to work to adapt it to our ever-growing demands.

IMPACTING ARMENIA'S AND KARABAKH'S EVEN DEVELOPMENT

It's a pleasure to be here, again, with you on the eve of the tenth Armenia Fund telethon.

As I look around this room, I see the faces of an unwavering Diaspora supportive of an Armenia and Karabakh that are growing and developing. Today, you have welcomed the third elected president of Nagorno Karabakh. How improbable such a sentence would have sounded just a decade ago. Today, it is a welcome and momentous fact. And one that places a large obligation on us.

You are also welcoming a new executive director of the Armenia Fund, ready to take on Armenia's and Karabakh's new challenges – a Diasporan who has chosen to live in Armenia, and who will combine the best of Armenia's spirit and Diaspora's know-how. In a sense, Vahe Aghabegians represents that conscious willingness to take on this great responsibility that has been placed on our generation.

Dear Friends, I've always thought the Los Angeles audience is the hardest audience to address, because despite the fact that you are half a world away from Armenia, between television and frequent visitors and shared programs and of course, a large community from Armenia, you are in close contact and have strong opinions. I want to tell you that whatever goes on in Armenia, during this election year, or anytime, whatever complaints and accusations are heard, whatever disappointments are felt, whatever shortfalls and frustrations are recorded, don't dismiss the achievements.

Delivered in Los Angeles on November 18, 2007, at the Armenia Fund pre-Telethon Gala Dinner

Despite the most dire, most restrictive, most acute social and economic conditions, to everyone's great astonishment, not only have we survived, but we competed with our neighbors, and, in many areas, we came out ahead of them. Armenian statehood is consolidated. We are on the path of democracy. We do have an economy that is consistently rated open and liberal. Each of these is a source of pride.

Of course, there are some who see only the successes and achievements, and pay only lip service to the deficiencies. Others don't want and have not wanted to see anything positive, stressing only the deficiencies, the mistakes and the inadequacies.

One thing is certain: Our miracles, as well our failures, all of us are responsible for together. We have inherited them together, and like it or not, they will serve as the basis of the agenda we develop together for our country's development in the next period of our history. Just as the successes of today are built on the audacious reforms that began yesterday, at the same time, the ills that we all see would be much easier to eliminate if it were not for the grave shortcomings and mistakes of those first years. In other words, all that we have today – good and bad, positive and negative, hopeful and discouraging – are the consequence of all that our leaders have done since the beginning of our statehood.

Governments come and go, but the country and the people will continue to live and prosper by building on what we have today. We have worked hard to reach this day. We must work hard to consolidate what we have and harder still to go forward. Don't underestimate the wisdom and the determination of the Armenian people. They know this is not the time to squander our hard-earned stability for short-term political gain.

In other words, dear friends, you should neither take what we have for granted nor be satisfied with it. Our people deserve credit for what they have endured and at the same time, they deserve better. Most of all, do not underestimate your role in sustaining and deepening these great accomplishments. The telethons have become a public confirmation of the inextricable role of the Diaspora in Armenia and Karabakh and an affirmation of our shared historic opportunity to have a lasting strategic impact on a future of our own making.

I've said before our resources are not under the earth, they're around the earth. Our people have always inhabited lands that extend beyond our borders. Diaspora has expanded the geographic reach of our nation.

Today, for the first time in history, there is an inarguable conflation of interests between Armenia and Diaspora: Armenia wants stability, democracy and prosperity. The Diaspora needs a stable, democratic and prosperous Armenia through which it can see and assure its own stability, prosperity and reproductivity. The young generation's Armenian identity is tied not just to Armenia, but to a democratic and prosperous Armenia.

The Diaspora must participate in the creation of such an Armenia, and do this wholeheartedly and completely – not with conditional or partial use of its potential, but rally all its resources – realizing that it is doing so for its own survival, as well as Armenia's.

The Armenia Fund telethon has become a symbol of the strength of the Armenian Diaspora. It is cited by political scientists who want to explain the depth and reach of a country outside its borders. The Armenia Fund is also the institution that has helped to transform a self-determination movement into a stable political society.

What makes Nagorno Karabakh different among the world's many self-determination movements? One important distinction is that following the war, Nagorno Karabakh succeeded in consolidating and providing its citizens with the services they expect of a government – security, transportation, education, health care. How can Nagorno Karabakh do this? Because of Armenia and because of you.

How have the people of Nagorno Karabakh stayed on their lands despite the difficult social and economic conditions, despite the lack of employment and despite continuing belligerent talk from Azerbaijan? Because of Armenia and because of you.

How is it that Karabakh today lacks the visual reminders of half a decade of war and instead boasts of a small agriculture and tourism industry? Because of Armenia and because of you.

Indeed, the Diaspora built a road that turned an enclave into a linked, connected political and economic entity. The road from Karabakh to Armenia is not a highway. It's a lifeway. The road linking

Karabakh's northern regions to the southern regions is not so many kilometers of asphalt. It is the way to a new self-reliant existence.

Indeed, an independent Armenia and Karabakh offer the Diaspora new ways to engage. The Diaspora's generosity is not new. The Diaspora's charitable and philanthropic giving predates Armenia's independence. So, with independence, it was expected that this kind of engagement would continue in even more significant ways.

The telethon is one of those significant new ways and it is not mere coincidence that it was born here in Los Angeles.

Los Angeles is a different Diaspora. It is the transformed Diaspora. If Lvov and Calcutta were the 12th and 18th century Diasporas, and Aleppo and Beirut and Tehran gave birth to the 20th century Diaspora, then Los Angeles is the Diaspora of the third millennium, the 21st century. Here, different backgrounds, different histories, different languages even intersect, family and professional networks overlap, and all this together create a new Diaspora for a new Armenia. Today Los Angeles means an extension of the homeland – not a permanent dislocation, not a destructive dispersion, but life at a distance that can even be beneficial.

The Diaspora's engagement has been extremely beneficial. But in its current form, it does not bring long-term sustainability. Repairing individual schools, giving health care centers heat and water, installing water pumps and refurbishing community centers – each of these is a generous act, but lacks the impact that partnership would bring. Karabakh's Martakert region was the first place where the Armenia Fund looked at comprehensive, integrated development. With this telethon, we will be broadening this program throughout Karabakh and Armenia as well.

So, just as you built a road to bring Yerevan closer to Stepanakert, now we will bring drinking water to homes so that ten-year-olds can carry their books home from school, instead of pails of water. And we will do this together.

We will bring irrigation water to villages so that a family's income depends on their own hard work and not on the whims of a changing climate. And we will do this together.

We will build roads because without roads, there is no access to markets and without markets, there isn't sufficient income to pay for water or electricity. And we will do this together.

We will bring gas to Armenia's villages so that the next generation doesn't think that forests exist solely to provide firewood.

We will work with Armenia's business community to bring micro-financing to the grandmothers who are willing to knit when they're not milking and we will do this together.

We will bring Armenian television to villages so that Azerbaijani TV is not their window to the world. And we will do this together.

We will renovate schools and train teachers so that children will have a future.

We will bring hope and jobs to villages and fathers and uncles back home. And we will do this together.

What is this program? It is Nation-building – One village at a time. It is a first effort to institutionally combine our huge resources – Armenia and Diaspora – and together impact and accelerate Armenia's and Karabakh's even development, thus assuring our security and stability. And we can only do this together.

DESTROYING MEMORY, HISTORY, IDENTITY

UNESCO provides the platform where humanity's global challenges are addressed among equals, placing responsibility on each of us to pursue international cooperation in this organization's fields of competence – education, science, culture, communication and information. These are the areas of human knowledge that are essential for deep and successful, fair and equitable globalization, and that will lead to sustainable development and poverty eradication. Our hope, of course, is that this is the path to prosperity and peace.

That is why we have welcomed UNESCO's intention to expand its activities in Armenia. Armenia's high economic growth and positive macroeconomic environment have led to the alleviation of some of the more obvious social and economic ills. I have repeatedly said that our second generation reforms will be more difficult and more challenging to adopt and implement. This category includes essential but difficult reforms in education and science, culture and communication.

In a country with a proud and ancient record of education and science, we are deep in the throes of reforms. With the Bologna measures as guide, our students are prepared to undergo yet another period of transition – this time to ease their entry into the international educational arena.

The science community, too, is undergoing restructuring to facilitate their integration into international scientific cooperation programs. The vibrancy and competitiveness of these fields are essential for their own sake, as well as for economic and social advancement.

But colleagues, UNESCO's calling card is its commitment to the World's Cultural Heritage – the concept and the content. Armenia attaches great importance to the organization's efforts to develop legal instruments aimed at the protection of the cultural heritage of humanity.

We are diplomats immersed in the world of culture, education and science. Diplomats and people of the arts and culture are the beneficiaries of dialogue, and perhaps because of that, we feel compelled to continually search for non-traditional ways to approach the overarching issue of our time: living at peace in a pluralist world. Diplomats and cultural workers, like the societies which we represent, live in neighborhoods that are not going to change, with memories that are not going to go away, and with experiences that are irreversible. Therefore, we look for ways to break the barriers of the past because we remain convinced that between cultures and countries, there must be dialogue and understanding.

As a people, serving as the perennial buffer between empires, on the most trampled path on earth, Armenians have become living witnesses of the benefit of dialogue between and within cultures. We have been engaged in that international exchange for ages. Today, we in Armenia are among its greatest promoters, especially in our neighborhood.

Today, Armenia is a co-sponsor of the Draft Resolution on "Proclamation of an international year for bringing cultures together" that will hopefully be adopted by the current session of the General Conference.

The UNESCO focus on "Demonstrating the importance of exchange and dialogue among cultures to social cohesion and reconciliation to develop a culture of peace" and "Sustainably protecting and enhancing cultural heritage" is welcome. But this sounds hollow if we only do so when it's easy.

When it's easy, cultural heritage is protected and exchange and dialogue take place on their own. When it is hard, undesirable and hopeless, that is when UNESCO, its instruments, its clout, its ability and

willingness to speak in the name of all mankind, that is when UNESCO is needed.

Mr. President, Armenia appreciates and respects the historical and cultural heritage of national minorities within its territory. The destruction of timeless monuments in the Soviet period – monuments belonging to all religions, not just our ancient Christian churches and monasteries, but also mosques – cannot be undone. We can only take pride in what we have survived and protect and preserve them. In fact, the Cemetery of Riataza, belonging to Armenia's Yezidi non-Christian minority, Armenian sites on the Great Silk Road and Yerevan's exquisite, recently restored Blue Mosque are on the waiting list for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

In our region, borders have changed frequently and peoples have moved and been moved repeatedly. Armenia's ancient civilization established settlements and left behind traces of living communities – fountains and bridges, churches and massive religious and artistic sculptures. The fate of those monuments is important for their own sake, for the sake of artists and historians, but even more so, for the sake of a world that must remember its history, must remember the legacy of peoples who have come and gone.

Our interest therefore in the world's cultural heritage is not just philosophical. It is very much personal. Our history is indeed intertwined with the history of our neighbors. We are dismayed at attempts to ignore this history. We are appalled at attempts to undo this history.

We are not the only ones who have said from this podium that the destruction of a people's patrimony is tantamount to destroying their memory, their history, their identity. Unfortunately, we have neighbors who have built today's identity on a less than real history. And we see the trauma and instability that results.

Once again, we urge UNESCO to send monitors to our region, specifically to Nakhichevan, to see and appropriately judge the intentional destruction in areas far removed from war and confrontation.

Prosperity and peace, those are the goals of all UN agencies. In UNESCO, we have a better chance of achieving our objectives because our fields of interest are those that cross borders and frontiers naturally, across differences and distances and across histories and memories.

THIRD PARTIES HAVE A HUGE ROLE TO PLAY

On behalf of the people and government of Armenia, and as a descendant of genocide survivors, I would like to express our appreciation for the efforts of those in the European Parliament who, 20 years ago, passed this resolution "to seek a political solution to the Armenian Question." It is an interesting coincidence that this anniversary comes at a time when the US Congress, too, is considering a resolution and there is much talk about the value, or danger, of third parties engaging in what are said to be old historic issues. In that context, I want to thank those who recognized the immense moral and political value of rejecting genocidal behaviors and criminal policies which are neither in anyone's national interest nor in humanity's international interest.

Let me say at the outset that the Republic of Armenia, the Government of Armenia, the Armenian people around the world would gladly have done without this distinction. It goes without saying that we would have preferred not to be the victims of Genocide, we would have wanted not to be sufferers who are often blamed for their own fate, but after having such a fate visited upon us, we would certainly have not wanted to have been swept aside by the pages of history, and today we do not want to be accused of having national aspirations which are at odds with international interests.

Delivered in Brussels on October 15, 2007, at the Second Convention of European Armenians

But the international community has the capacity for more than one message. The international community can indeed carry on its business, develop coalitions, fight off threats and dangers, including the threat of genocide, and none of this should come at the expense of recognizing and condemning genocide anywhere, anytime – in Darfur in the 21st century, or in the Ottoman Empire in the 20th century.

The value of the 1987 resolution is that it did more than recognize and condemn the Genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Believing as it did that the Armenian issue and the question of minorities in Turkey must be re-situated within the framework of relations between Turkey and the European community, the European Parliament extensively and thoughtfully laid out all the facets of this complex issue including recognition of the rights of the Armenian minority which still lives in Turkey, and recognition of the need to move Armenians and Turks towards understanding and reconciliation.

This resolution also demonstrated political common sense. The message of the resolution was: a country aspiring to join Europe must look like Europe, act like Europe, imagine and see like Europe. It must view history for what it is – the product of political and social tensions of the time – and it must accept its own role in that history, learn from it and move forward as Europe has done.

Turkey ignored that message. Worse, just half a decade later, when independence came to all the Soviet republics, including Armenia, Turkey ignored a huge opportunity for a new start. Turkey refused to establish diplomatic relations with Armenia, and two years later closed the border, hoping perhaps that Armenia's vulnerability and fragile statehood would force it to renounce its past and with it, any possible claims for compensation.

The country that could have been, should have been, the regional leader, the bridge between Europe and Asia, the bridge across the Black Sea, the bridge between the past and the future, that country abdicated its responsibility, because of unfounded fears.

What is it that Turkey is afraid of? We have asked that question often, and particularly this last week. We don't know. We are certain-

ly not the only neighbors in the world who have had, and who continue to have, a troubled relationship. Troubled memories, a tortured past, recriminations, unsettled accounts and the enduring wounds of victimhood plague the national consciousness of peoples on many borders.

Let's hear the Turks out. Their fears, their concerns, their excuses, their accusations, have been ringing loudly all week.

First, they insist that labeling the events of 1915 as genocide is an insult to the Turkish people. It seems to me that a mature society that believes in free speech is beyond insults. But be that as it may, it can safely be said that the Turkish state created its own image, its identity, its modern history based on something less than reality. They boast of a thousand years of statehood, but they choose to assume only the glory of the Seljuk and Ottoman periods and not the burdens. Their textbooks lack the context that explains what befell the Ottoman Empire's many minorities, the Greeks, Kurds, Jews and Armenians among them. Now, with that gap in public knowledge, they are afraid that their own people will be insulted by the truth. But they are not the only country or the only people that has had to come to terms with the undesirable contradictions at the base of its state-building process. The United States, France, Russia, Germany all have had to deal with the consequences of an unconscionable past. And all have survived and flourished. Turkey cannot be afraid of being insulted, afraid of being asked questions, afraid of looking in the mirror.

Second, Turkey insists that Armenians are trapped in the past. Actually it seems to us that the opposite is true. We do not forget the past, we do honor the victims and the survivors, but we don't make the past, the recognition of the past, a pre-condition for normalizing relations today and moving forward tomorrow. Turkey does. Turkey somehow expects that Armenians will renounce the past in order to appease Turkey and arrive at open borders. So who is living in the past? Who is making the present and the future conditional on the past? Who is allowing the dreaded past to confound, complicate and generally determine our collective future?

Third, Turkey fears that what will follow recognition will be even more costly and more damning. Turkey must de-link history from politics.

It is a political reality that both Turkey and Armenia exist today in the international community with their current borders. It is a political reality that we are neighbors and we will live alongside each other. It is a political reality that Armenia is not a security threat to Turkey. And finally, it is a reality that it is today's Armenia that calls for the establishment of diplomatic relations with today's Turkey.

Turkey's idea to resolve these issues about the past is to form a historical commission that it says is the best way to resolve our historical differences. Our answer is threefold.

First, really, let's face it: outside of Turkey, the question is not a historical one. The International Association of Genocide Scholars, the International Center for Transitional Justice, Raphael Lemkin, archives in countries the world over have established the historical veracity of the Genocide. Second, Turkish penal code restrictions and their discriminatory application, especially to minorities, and especially to Armenians and those who dare to explore Armenian issues, have become frightening, and would certainly prohibit an open, healthy discussion about what have come to be called the events of 1915. Even after crowds inside and outside Turkey stood up to protest the murder of Hrant Dink last January, the son of the slain Hrant Dink has now also been convicted, again under Article 301, again for publishing an interview of his father's, the same interview for which Hrant was convicted, and which created the atmosphere of intolerance that resulted in his assassination, an assassination that has yet to be persuasively and persistently investigated. The threat hanging over the head of Hrant Dink's associates and successors cannot be ignored. Third, there are no diplomatic relations between the two countries and the border is closed between us. A discourse under those conditions would be hard to imagine.

However, if Turkey indeed wants to discuss 1915, Armenia will be ready to do so at a governmental level, if relations between our two countries have a semblance of normalcy. At a minimum, with open borders. You see, we have experienced a decade-long series of efforts by Ankara to engage Armenia in a process, for the sake of showing the world that there indeed is some ongoing process, and that third parties need not engage. The most insignificant, inconsequential meetings are

held up as signs of progress. Let me be clear: short of movement on the border, there is no other measure of forward movement in our relations. Any other call will not be taken seriously.

Armenia believes there is simply no reason to keep the border closed. Closed borders are not normal. Countries not at war with each other do not maintain closed borders. There is nothing in the current history of Armenia and Turkey that warrants closed borders. It is the unsettled memories of the past against which Turkey has slammed shut the door between us.

Armenia believes that Armenia and Turkey must confront those memories and histories. Armenia believes that there is no history in a vacuum. Making it, assessing it and overcoming its obstacles the two sides have to do together. Armenia believes that Turkey must open the borders so that our people will interact to create new experiences to replace the old memories.

Armenians believe that today's Turks do not bear the guilt of the perpetrators, unless they choose to defend them and identify with them. Armenia believes that Armenians and Turks, together with the rest of the modern world, can reject the actions and denounce the crimes of the Ottoman Empire. Turkey and Armenia together must exorcise the demons of the past. Turkey itself must summon the deep force of humanity and goodness and must renounce the deed, its intent, its consequences. And we, the descendants of the victims must exhibit the dignity, capacity and willingness to move on.

Dear friends, if anyone thinks that genocide is only a matter for the past, that it is indeed to be forgotten, they are not only wrong, but they do not understand the security implications for living alongside a strong, unrepentant neighbor, and the safety implications for those living within that society that has not come to terms with its past.

I fear the ignorance that prompts those in positions of influence to label irrelevant the attempts of responsible leaders to bring some semblance of normalcy, morality and responsibility to relations between neighbors.

I fear the reactions of a world power that counts on an ally whose allegiance is conditional.

I fear there will never come a time that is the right time for the world to tell the government of Turkey, or any government for that matter – remember Darfur – that it has a responsibility to acknowledge such crimes.

Dear friends, genocide is the ultimate crime against humanity. It is the extreme abuse of power. The human rights challenge facing all of us is to be able to recognize that a government has the capacity for such immorality and inhumanity, and that particular governments have indeed committed genocide. The political challenge is to call things by their name, to acknowledge that genocide is not just mass murder, not just massacre and deportation, but the betrayal of the responsibility of custody by the very people entrusted with insuring the security of their own population. Thus it requires a different kind of response, a different level of reaction, an unorthodox solution commensurate to the extraordinary crime.

Twenty years after the European Parliament's call for condemnation and reconciliation, with even greater urgency, we repeat the call. The burden is on us all.

When next the Parliament discusses this issue, we can only assume that Europe will expect that a Turkey which is serious about European Union membership, which is indeed able to juggle the complex relationships that European Union membership entails, will have to come to terms with its past, and to open borders with its neighbors.

As you see, third parties still have a huge role to play.

Parliaments and congresses must continue to insist that there be morality at the starting line and the goal line of all our foreign policies and foreign relations. It is essential that administrations and executive bodies not bend the rules, nor turn a blind eye or lower standards. Instead, let the international community consistently extend its hand, its example, its own history of transcending, in order for us all, to move on to making new history.

NATION-BUILDING ONE VILLAGE AT A TIME

I have come here to this building every year for the last ten years to address my colleagues from around the world as we explore ways for the United Nations to achieve peace and prosperity for all our countries.

So, it is especially gratifying to be here this evening, in this same building, to talk to my fellow Armenians, about the Armenia Fund and our shared vision for peace and prosperity for our country, Armenia.

Last week, in my speech downstairs in the General Assembly hall, I said I wanted to break the unspoken rule and although I am the representative of a small country, I wanted to talk about what the big powers always talk about: the global, complex challenges of the 21st century – disarmament, arms control, climate change, tensions between powers, and even the price of oil – and how the disorder in the world, the new fragmentation, and new dangers affect us, the small countries, even more than they affect the great powers.

Here today, with you, I am going to break another unspoken rule, and do outright fundraising for the Republic of Armenia.

I am not a fundraiser. I am the foreign minister of a country that has managed to overcome obstacles, compete successfully and ensure our rightful place in our region. We are respected in international organizations as a capable partner. Today, we have the strong foundation required to build a secure and prosperous country of which all

Armenians around the world will be proud. We have an open economy and solid legislation. We have better social and educational conditions than any of our neighbors. Don't take my word for it, it's what the United Nations and the Heritage Foundation and the World Bank say.

But my message to the Diaspora always, and to you today, is, don't take this for granted. Don't take Armenia and Karabakh for granted, don't take our ability to survive and prosper for granted.

We have worked hard to keep the peace in Karabakh, we have worked hard to come out ahead of our neighbors in almost every important economic index, we have worked hard to relieve emigration and even achieve a modest level of in-migration. We have worked hard to reach this day. We must work hard to consolidate what we have and harder still to go forward.

But there are two problems. One is time, and the other is money.

First, the problem of time: If over these 16 years our neighbors were searching for ways to uncover and utilize their potential, today they have begun to reap the benefits of their resources. It will be harder now for us to compete. We must strive to strengthen Armenia's geostrategic and economic security. We must work to assure comprehensive and even development for our country. The urban areas are growing. The rural areas are not. Our growth is based on such a low starting point that even with our great improvements, more than one third of our population lives in poverty and half of Armenia's poor live in rural communities and have not benefited from Armenia's overall growth.

Don't get me wrong. Armenia will grow and prosper. Don't doubt that. Governments come and go, but the people of Armenia, those who have withstood difficulties that cannot be imagined, have and will survive and flourish. We always have.

But do we do this in two generations, or three generations, or five generations? Or do we capitalize on today's fast growing economy?

Do we have the luxury of waiting generations for hope to reach our villages? Or do we empower the villagers protecting our frontiers so they, too, feel protected, give them a hand up, help them build homes, earn an income, and live a life of dignity?

The answer is obvious. We don't have time to waste. To jumpstart rural growth, we need to talk about money.

I remember when Armenia's national budget was \$350 million a year. Ten years later, it's over a \$1 billion. That's amazing growth for us. But, by international standards, it's nothing. Even as we've almost done away with the earthquake zone, rebuilt Yerevan, financed rebuilding in Karabakh, begun paying our civil servants regularly, and invested heavily in our rural areas, Armenia's resources are not enough. That is why the Armenia Fund was created – to build on the resources of Armenians everywhere to provide basic infrastructure and development support that the Government can't afford.

In the 21st century, Armenians are not orphans and survivors looking for kindness and sympathy. Today, we are looking for philanthropy, not charity. The Armenia Fund is more than charity, it is more than helping people, it is building a country.

The Armenia Fund will utilize the generosity of the Diaspora to spur strategic growth in Armenia, starting with the villages.

Those of you here remember that the Armenia Fund's first years were focused on securing emergency assistance and fuel.

By 1996, the Armenia Fund began to take on strategic projects. First, the road that linked Karabakh to Armenia, then later, the road that linked Karabakh's different regions to each other directly, for the first time without dependence on Azerbaijani roads. That was the second phase of Armenia Fund's development.

Armenia Fund's 15 years of accomplishments have been possible because the Armenian people around the world have understood their responsibility to support state-building in Armenia and Karabakh.

Today, Armenia Fund is entering its third phase – away from emergency assistance, and toward complex, comprehensive development assistance. The next 15 years of good work will be possible because the Armenian people around the world will seize the opportunity to actually participate in nation-building and state-building.

This is the year, this is the decade when we must demonstrate that people are more valuable than oil. Oil in our region will peak in half a decade and wane in two decades. But systematic economic

growth and our people's commitment and strength will sustain us for far longer.

That is why the Armenia Fund has adopted the Rural Development Program for Armenia and Karabakh. Our villages will have decent roads, drinking water, irrigation water, gas and electricity, access to schools, to health centers, to telephone service, television and the internet. So that they can afford these services, we will work with the villagers to advance sustainable economic development.

This is nation-building, one village at a time. Give tonight, give to the telethon, give generously.

Give so that the villagers who wake up in the village of Azatamut and stare across the trenches at soldiers pointing in their direction, know that their back is covered.

Give so that the residents of Jrap village are too busy to be intimidated by the imposing Turkish flag arranged in stone on the hillside right across their border.

Give so that grandfathers and grandsons are no longer alone in our villages, and they can call their sons and fathers to come home.

Give, because your children's and grandchildren's identity is tied inextricably to a democratic and prosperous Armenia.

Give, because the children of those who prospered and thrived in other countries now want to come home.

Give, because for the first time in history, we have entered a new millennium successful militarily, politically and economically, secure in independent statehood.

Give, because Karabakh is ours and even as we work around the negotiating table to formalize the historic, legal, moral fact that Karabakh is Armenian, we must continuously demonstrate that Karabakh is a secure, democratic political entity and that it is viable.

Give, because our resources are not under the earth, but around the earth. You who inhabit lands beyond our borders are our limitless, self-perpetuating resource. You are Armenia. You must participate in its creation, and do this wholeheartedly and completely – not with conditional or partial use of your potential, but rallying all your resources, realizing that you are doing so for your own survival as well as Armenia's.

STRUGGLING FOR THE MOST BASIC HUMAN RIGHT

As an ancient people, serving as the perennial buffer between empires, on the most trampled path on earth, Armenians have become living witnesses of the benefit of dialogue between and within cultures. We have been engaged in that international exchange for ages. Today, we in Armenia are among its greatest promoters, especially in our neighborhood.

Our geography has compelled us to seek bridges with peoples and cultures different from our own. If we have an independent state today, it is because we succeeded in perpetuating our identity even as we interacted and exchanged with societies around us.

It is because of our experience that we feel compelled to continually search for non-traditional ways to approach the overarching issue of our time: living at peace in a pluralist world.

Not only have we lived in a pluralist neighborhood, we have, because of genocide and dispersion, had to set up homes and shops in nearly every country on earth. This began when Armenian genocide survivors were welcomed and happily integrated into the fabric of the Arab Middle East. Religious differences did not preclude inclusion. Our Diaspora, living as it did across borders became both the means and the beneficiary of international exchange and dialogue.

We are living witnesses then to the fact that religious and linguistic differences need not translate to enmity and exclusion. It is intolerance from its simplest form to its most complex, a rejection of individuals' human dignity that causes ruptures in and between societies.

Delivered in New York on October 4, 2007, at the United Nations Special High Level Intercultural and Inter-religious Dialogue

To build a peace atop pain and destruction, it is clear that solutions can only be found through the genuine and universal acceptance and application of basic, fundamental individual and collective human rights.

Those rights include the right to determine one's destiny, to live free of insecurity and oppression. The struggle of our brothers and sisters in Nagorno Karabakh is exactly that – a struggle for the most basic human right, the right to live free. It is not a struggle against anyone's religion or culture. The effort to seek support against their struggle by relying on ethnic and religious solidarity belies the universality of their claim – that people everywhere, whether Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh, Palestinians, or the people of Darfur, all deserve to live freely and in dignity.

As societies which had experienced pain and suffering at the hands of oppressors, we must teach and rely on the moral, ethical, social and political benefits of tolerance and cooperation, and not feed the fears of otherness and exclusion.

The frustrations, the resentments and the hostilities of victims of xenophobia and racism, should not be underestimated or dismissed. The security implications of pent-up anger, of daily humiliations and hopelessness cannot be exaggerated. These must concern us all, for reasons of principle as well as enlightened self-interest.

Our objective is a country and a world where the rights of individuals and groups are respected, where each neighborhood and each community, each city and country, each region and continent, are safe havens for all who live or travel there. Religion is used to tear people apart, as are economic disparities, language and ideology. But the frustrating and fascinating contradiction is that it is faith and humanity that also bind people together.

THERE IS NO QUOTA ON LIBERTY AND SECURITY

Each opportunity to speak from this podium is a humbling experience, knowing that every country in the world is listening to the other, trying to discern where common approaches and interests lie.

Those of us representing small countries have a sense that this is the forum where large states address the ills of the world, and we, smaller ones, ought to adhere to topics that are specific to us, to our regions. As if, addressing overarching, global issues would be pretentious, and they are best left to those with the power to do something about them.

This is my tenth year here, and I will risk breaking that unwritten rule. This year, as financial calamities have compounded political and natural disasters, it is so evident that although our common problems and challenges threaten us all equally, they affect us unevenly. Small countries, with less of everything – diversity, resources, maneuverability, options and means – are at greater peril, greater risk, greater vulnerability than those with bigger territory, a larger population, more potential.

At the same time, the major political, social and environmental issues on this Assembly's agenda – peace and security, economic growth and sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, drugs, crime, international terrorism – know no borders. None of us can tackle them individually if we expect to resolve them effectively. Their solutions are in our common interest. The problems are vast

Delivered in New York on October 3, 2007, during the 62nd United Nations General Assembly

and touch all of humanity. Because they cannot be solved within our borders alone does not mean anyone has the right, or the luxury, to abdicate responsibility for their consequences.

When the speculative market drives the price of a barrel of oil to \$80, those too small to have significant reserves are more quickly affected. And just as large countries with huge appetites for fuel make deals sometimes inconsistent with their politics, so do we. For us, energy security is much more than a matter of global arithmetic; it's a matter of life and death.

When climate change causes significant environmental transformation, it doesn't take much for prolonged droughts and excessive rains to harm our agriculture and damage our economy, or for rising shorelines to reach our cities. But we lack the diversity and the space to adapt and cope.

When it is news that there are no explosions in Iraq, and when large-scale destruction is a daily occurrence, we in small countries become more keenly aware of our vulnerability and susceptibility to the will and capacity of the international community, to their tolerance for distant violence and humiliation.

When development depends on an absence of bad weather, disease and war, and when the capacity to ward off at least two of those three ills lies in the hands of those with huge ability to heal and to make peace, small countries are at risk and helpless.

When disarmament and arms control cease to be the means to world peace, and instead become the means to score political dividends, small countries resort to their own means of self-protection. In other words, we become part of the problem, because the solution is neither straightforward, nor within reach.

When Darfur becomes shorthand for hopelessness, we in the small corners of the world realize that power has become a substitute for responsibility. The ubiquitous language of human rights cannot compensate for political will. Genocide must be prevented, not commemorated. Generation after generation, we find new names for man's appalling tolerance for what we think are inhuman machinations, new names for the places of horror, slaughter, massacre, indiscriminate killing of all those who have belonged to a segment, a cate-

gory, an ethnic group, a race or a religion. Nearly 100 years ago, for Armenians it was Deir-El-Zor. For the next generation, it was Auschwitz, then the killing fields of the Cambodians. And most recently, Rwanda. If in each of those cases, together with genocide, these names evoked ignorance, helplessness, wartime cover, today Darfur is synonymous with expediency, evasion and simple inconvenience. Darfur is synonymous with shame.

My appeal, on behalf of small countries, is that the international community tackles each of these problems in their own right, for their own sake, and not as pieces in a global power puzzle. When tensions among the world's great powers grow, there is an increase in polarization and a decrease in the effectiveness of small countries' hard-earned and costly policies of complementarity and balance. Our own room to maneuver, to participate in global solutions, diminishes.

But Mr. President and colleagues, let me say the obvious. We rely on the ability of global powers to put aside their own short-term conflicts and divergences and to recognize that their power and influence does not make them immune to the range of problems that afflict us. It also does not make them immune to the impact of the failure of appropriately using that power and influence for the good of humanity.

Mr. President, last year we celebrated 16 years of Armenia's independence. We have weathered sea changes, and been swept up in regional and global developments which daily affect our lives.

We can only be proud of what we've accomplished: an open, diversified economy, high growth, strong financial systems; also, improved elections, stronger public institutions, a population increasingly aware of its rights. This makes us more determined to solve the remaining economic ills – uneven growth, rural poverty and low wages – and further empower people and deepen the exercise of democracy.

We've done all this despite a still unresolved conflict and artificial restrictions, and in the absence of regional cooperation.

The Nagorno Karabakh conflict is included on the agenda of this General Assembly session under the topic of protracted conflicts. But Mr. President any resolution that places all conflicts in one pot is necessarily flawed. Each of these conflicts is different. The Nagorno

Karabakh conflict doesn't belong there. This issue should not be discussed at the UN, because it is being negotiated in the OSCE.

First, the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is not frozen. We continue to negotiate and we are inching towards resolution. Second, there is a well-developed negotiating document on the table, based not on wishful thinking, but on the core issue and the consequential issues. Together, they add up to a balanced solution. Third, at the core of the process lies the issue of the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to determine their own future. Indeed, the people of Nagorno Karabakh don't want anything that is not theirs – they want a right to live in peace and security and to determine their own future, they want to exercise the right that every people here has exercised at some point in their history.

Mr. President, we follow very closely developments on Kosovo. We hear the international community loud and clear: that Kosovo cannot be a precedent for other conflicts. We have no intention to use Kosovo as a precedent for our conflict, since that would contradict our own position that all conflicts are different. But at the same time, we don't understand and won't accept the reverse logic – that if Kosovo is given independence, no other people can achieve self-determination. No one should tell us that there is a quota on liberty and security.

Mr. President, at the end of the day, small countries' awareness of and place in global processes cannot, will not, substitute for those with extensive resources and the political will and ability to act. In this age of openness and inclusion, there is no room for the old instruments of coercion and exclusion. Instead, the new instruments of compromise and consensus are necessary to reach humanity's enduring goals of peace and prosperity.

THE SEARCH FOR PEACE IN A PLURALIST WORLD

Today I am proud to witness the Boghossian Foundation come forward as a catalyst for a serious exploration of common ground among people. The Boghossian story is the typical Armenian journey – from Armenia to Lebanon to Belgium and Switzerland. Armenia, an old nation with a new state, has been a champion and symbol of dialogue and cooperation through the centuries. As the Villa Empain becomes the center of shared creativity, the "embassy" of oriental cultures in the capital of Europe that you want to make it, you will have realized your dream, and all of us from Brussels to Yerevan will profit from your vision.

As a small people, serving as the perennial buffer between empires, on the most trampled path on earth, Armenians have become living witnesses of the benefit of dialogue between and within cultures. We have been engaged in that international exchange for ages. Today, we in Armenia are among its greatest promoters, especially in our neighborhood. Our Diaspora, living as it does across borders, is both the means and the beneficiary of international exchange.

As I started to think about Jean and Albert Boghossian and what they are daring to do here, I realized that diplomats and artists have much in common. We are both the beneficiaries of dialogue, and perhaps because of that, we feel compelled to continually search for non-traditional ways to approach the overarching issue of our time: living at peace in a pluralist world. Diplomats and artists, like the societies

Delivered in Brussels on September 13, 2007, upon the launch of the Brussels-based Boghossian Foundation's Villa Empain

which we represent, live in neighborhoods that are not going to change, with memories that are not going to go away, and with experiences that are irreversible. Instead, we look for ways to break the barriers of the past because we remain convinced that between cultures and countries, conversation must come first, in order for there to be any understanding at all.

To do our job, we rely on symbols and signals. We are both guided by rules, although we try to find creative, new ways of expressing and protecting universal truths. But finding the new, doesn't mean negation of the old, as you are showing us here.

This renovated building will embrace its history. The Villa Empain has seen empires come and go. It has witnessed the making of modern Europe. With the exquisite renovation that is planned for it, the diversity and quality of its materials, its refined details and the coherence of the whole will be underscored. But it is the programs and the exhibitions that will, like the Villa itself, become a part of the patrimony of our shared cultures, of our diversity and quality, while celebrating the coherence of our whole.

I look forward to returning in 2009.

THE AUDACITY OF OUR INTENT

You'll forgive me if I look at our mission here from a distance – both a geographic distance from Brussels, and the space provided by time, by the decades from the beginning of this integration process until today.

The Schuman-Monet dream was for peace and prosperity at a time when both seemed to be out of reach. Today, both can be taken for granted by Europeans who have begun to create a bond between human beings that transcends older boundaries and makes out of this new institutional form something that really is a community.

The first community was formed around coal and steel. Energy was the means to economic integration, and economic integration would be the safeguard, the guarantor, the catalyst for peaceful coexistence in a common search for prosperity.

That community flourished, proving that the formula of economic and political interdependence and sharing does work. Indeed, stability and prosperity were achieved. So, the success of the vision was sufficiently attractive and convincing that the community turned into a union.

Peace and prosperity remain the most critical items on the union's and the world's agenda. Solving energy and environment-related problems again provide the means to address this larger agenda.

Neither these problems nor their solutions recognize borders. At the same time, with distances shrinking, with national and domestic actions having international influence and impact, the Union, for its

Delivered in Brussels on September 3, 2007, at the European Commission's European Neighborhood Policy Conference, chaired by Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner

own sake and for ours, made the historic decision to welcome its neighbors to share its values, duplicate its economic successes and meet its democratic standards.

We in the neighborhood and in Armenia embraced this invitation. We appreciated deeply the farsightedness and the generosity of spirit. From where we sit, the results, even in the first year of this policy have been extremely gratifying.

First, there is the actual value of the development process itself. In preparing our Action Plans, we acquired the discipline to understand each other's expectations and limitations as we analyzed, assessed, summed up our accomplishments and our needs.

Then, most interesting and gratifying for me has been joining the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Not only does this make our political dialogue with the European Union more immediate, it brings us into the loop more frequently and gives us a reference point by which to regularly review our policies in light of international and European developments.

Of course, the onus remains on us to continue actively with needed political, economic and institutional reforms. This is more than a moral obligation. There is much that we have each done – in our case in the spheres of judicial and administrative reform specifically. Our Action Plan has been transformed into a clear blueprint of what needs to be done.

In another realm, those of us with conflicts in our areas each have a paragraph in our European Neighborhood Policy Action Plans providing a general vision for a resolution that we dearly need and want. What's most important is that this provides a context, an integrational context, within which to view this conflict anew.

And lastly, the guided and accelerated approximation of our legislation, norms and standards to those of the European Union is an invaluable benefit that opens the doors for many kinds and levels of economic integration. We will begin to have a stake in Europe's markets, Europe will have a stake in ours. We are committed to this process and we've formalized our commitment not just through the Action Plan, but also by formally adopting our list of priorities and measures to be taken by a government resolution.

This is the difference between the European Neighborhood Policy and everything else that we have done with the European Union over this last decade of transition. Within the Neighborhood Policy, the integrational elements are greater and therefore the relationship is now qualitatively different. In addition, if as European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and you Madame Chairman stated, there will be new financial resources, stronger economic integration, educational opportunities and visa facilitation, I believe we will have smoother sailing.

Madame Chair, again thank you for this invitation. Looking around the table, one can't but be impressed by the geographic breadth of this gathering. It is testimony that the European Union is an axis around which to rally our energies, rather than an exclusionary fortress.

In Europe's capital and in each of our capitals today, the echoes of this meeting will raise awareness that we are all working together, deliberately, seriously and productively.

Although the European Neighborhood Policy is individualistic in its implementation, the spirit and the vision are collective. It takes us all in the same direction. So the success of the program shall be measured not just by the extent and number of individual projects, but also by the audacity of our intent to work regionally together for a common goal and a common future.

DARE TO PREVAIL

I want to congratulate all of you, and especially Tony Moroyan and the committee that succeeded in attracting you here for what can only be described as a gathering of visionaries and futurists.

This is the second time in a week that I've had a chance to address a large, organized group of specialists from Armenia and the Diaspora, together. Last Saturday morning, in Yerevan, I spoke to 1700 health care professionals who were exploring ways of bringing their know-how to Armenia's health care institutions.

I'm not a physician. Nor am I an information technology professional, but I flew 20 hours to tell you what I told them: partnership among specialists and professionals is the way of the future for Armenia-Diaspora relations.

Fifteen years and more have passed since we gained, or re-gained, independence. Since we are living this history and not watching it from afar or reading about it, the full import of this transformational event is not yet fully clear for us.

Of course, there are already various assessments of this period. But there is one achievement that is unquestionable: despite the most dire, most restrictive, most acute social and economic conditions, to everyone's great astonishment, not only did we survive, but we competed with our neighbors, and, in many areas, we came out ahead of them. Armenian statehood is consolidated. We are on the path of democracy. We do have an economy that is consistently rated open and liberal. Each of these triumphs is a source of pride.

Our triumphs, as well our failures, were created by all of us, together, inherited by us all, together, and like it or not, will serve as the basis of the agenda we develop together for our country's development in the next period of our history. No group should take credit for our successes, no group should be blamed for our mistakes.

To move forward, we must acknowledge two important, new realities. First, domestically, all that we have achieved we owe to reforms that were the less controversial changes, particularly from the perspective of the economic and political elites and their interests. Let's not forget that those reforms were the most obvious. They succeeded first and foremost due to the resiliency of our people, their faith and commitment in the future, and their hard work. Now, we have completed and exhausted those initial, straightforward transformations. Today, we need additional, deeper, indispensable, second-generation reforms which are more difficult to identify, formulate and adopt.

Second, regionally, we managed to compete with and beat our neighbors in this decade and a half when our neighbors were still in the process of seeking their advantages. Today, the situation is strikingly different. Today, our neighbors' strengths are no longer just potential tools; they are already exploiting their real assets and reaping the benefits. Therefore, now that the nature of our competition has changed, Armenia must exercise the resiliency that is part of our national character to find or create new resources, in order to preserve our favorable position.

Some of those new resources will come from Armenia, some from the Diaspora. None of those are under the earth; our resources are around the earth. Groups such as this are part of those new resources. You represent nationhood without borders. Or, more accurately, across borders. For centuries, the idea of our nationhood was uncoupled from both statehood and from territory. Today, we have statehood and we have territory. But our traditions, history, identity and connections – and of course potential – extend beyond that territory. "You don't belong to a place," William Saroyan once wrote, "until one of your family has been placed into its ground." With that logic, we belong everywhere.

The Diaspora expands the geographic reach of our nation. It also expands our capacity. We thrive on synthesis. We soak up what others have to offer and adapt it for our own use. In turn, we create, innovate, contribute to the pool of knowledge that is modern civilization. In this increasingly knowledge-based global economy, the wealth of a nation is determined by its capacity for innovation.

Our challenge – Armenia's and Diaspora's – is to enhance our capacity for innovation. Let's use the occasion of this gathering to commit to nurturing the innovators of today and tomorrow.

First, we must invest thought and money in education: Capitalism has mutated in a way that puts a premium on a knowledge economy, on technologies, on individual skills and on flexibility in both labor and business. It is education that is going to produce self-reliant citizens and feed the knowledge-based economy that is the basis of the new capitalism. If our children used to learn for the sake of learning, now they must learn to survive. Our schools and institutions must do more than teach dates and figures, they must teach how to turn knowledge into an asset in order to enable us to compete in a globalized, shrunken world.

To talk about education today means talking about information technology and the internet, about bringing those resources to every school child in and out of Armenia. Yes, even out of Armenia, because the Diaspora, too, needs educational tools that will disseminate and reinforce our common culture. An online public sphere has already been created, thanks to Groong, and to a whole host of thoughtful, contentful sites, voluntarily maintained from Sweden to Orange County, which have managed to link our dispersed peoples, double and triple our population, and provide an easy, noncommittal, inexpensive avenue for action, without legislation, elections, taxation, transport burdens or costs. These, together with electronic media, offer new resources and new disciplines for the construction of our new modern selves. Together, we have the opportunity to imagine the world we want for ourselves tomorrow and to create it.

In Armenia, within the framework of the Rural Development Program which we announced at the last Armenia Diaspora Conference, we want to enable comprehensive development in our

vulnerable border villages. The borders of our country, today, are dependent on villagers who don't have water or gas, electricity or fertilizer. They also have never seen a cursor and can't speak English.

We have a lot of work to do. Information technologies must play a significant role in our program to bring sustainable rural development to Armenia. For that, we need you. Don't build school buildings or construct water pipes. There are already generous donors who will do that. You help to devise a program that will provide our village students with computer skills.

Second, to enhance our capacity for innovation, we must commit thought and money to research and development. This is a neglected area of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation. We have dozens of invaluable programs to help our orphans, but not nearly enough to support research and development. Institutionally, the cohesion, the linkages that are required between science, technology, education, economy and society are weak.

I ask you to develop partnerships with our scientists to enhance their ability to innovate. Let's harness our age-old capacity for individual creativity, feed it and channel it back into our society. Some of the best of Armenia's scientific and technological community are here today and they will tell you, as I will, that if we have brain circulation, we won't need to worry about brain drain. If we can support and nurture peer-reviewed, peer-selected researchers and partner them with those with a deep knowledge of the home country, advanced western education, exposure to western management practice, experience in business, good governance and ethical conduct – we will reap achievements disproportionate to our reality.

Armenia has come full circle. Two years ago, we surpassed the production capacity of the Soviet level. I'm sure you've been told by other speakers from Armenia that we've been, for seven years, experiencing double-digit economic growth. The prospects are promising and we believe this trend will continue. All this, as I said, was possible, because of our people's commitment, but also because of the domestic and regional stability that we were able to maintain all these years.

Indeed, despite the unresolved conflict that is a part of our reality, we have not and we will not allow that state of no-peace no-war to

guide our history. This determination has driven our growth of the last decade. Just as we will not allow an unrepentant Turkey to determine our agenda, we will also not limit our choices and options by the lack of a willingness on the part of Azerbaijan to enter into a lasting agreement. They do not want to acknowledge either the past, or the present. As a result, they are not interested in discussing a common future. The mental state of war persists in Azerbaijan. In Armenia and Karabakh, I am proud to say that our outlook is towards the future, towards an eventual peace, towards progress, stability and prosperity.

Dear friends, with determination, pragmatism and most of all, unity, we can develop and adopt the right policies to identify and utilize new resources for the common good, and to assure our continued and comprehensive development.

If yesterday, we dared to struggle and survive, today, we must dare to prevail.

SOMETIMES THE UNDERDOG WINS

Mr. Chairman, it's a pleasure to be here. Thank you for your hospitality.

Fifteen years ago, when the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) was founded, it was a visionary effort at a time when the world stood at a historical crossroads, when almost all of our member states were themselves living their own historical turning point, as a new or a re-organized state. Just as our organization was young, so were each of our states.

Fifteen years later, each of our countries and BSEC, too, have changed. I can speak for Armenia: Our economic growth is gratifying, its collapse at the time of independence is only a bad memory. Institutions are stronger, as evidenced by our recent elections, which I am proud to say were very positively assessed by the international community. People are more confident. That confidence comes not just from within, but is buttressed by the assessment of international indices. From economic freedoms to failed states to capital hospitality, we are significantly better off than all our neighbors. That gives us a solid basis on which to continue to grow.

So, just as our countries can't, neither can our organization hide behind the label of inexperience any more. If, in these 15 years, we could have ascribed our occasional hesitation to certain of our own quarrels and interests and alliances, today we see that by allowing ourselves to be led by our differences, we limit this organization's capacity to make itself felt in world politics.

Mr. President, broadening interaction between BSEC and the European Union is a measure of our maturity and one of our significant outputs. As the European Union considers the benefits of a Black Sea dimension for economic, social, environmental and energy cooperation, and as BSEC works to enhance its interaction with the European Union, we around the Black Sea, have much to learn from those around the Mediterranean, Adriatic, Baltic and North seas. Our need for deeper relations is not limited to the structural, technical and institutional expertise in the European Union space. Rather, we stand to benefit from the European ability to create a bond between human beings that transcends older boundaries and makes out of these new institutional forms something that really is a community.

We also have much to learn from Europe in trying to find new solutions to old problems. BSEC could have, should have, aided in creating an environment conducive to resolving conflicts in our region. Resolutions are only possible through compromise, compromise requires reciprocal trust between peoples, and cooperation is the obvious and proven way to inculcate such trust. Rejecting cooperation is a symptom of a misplaced desire to find one-sided solutions; this is unrealistic. The era of one-sided solutions is over.

In our case, in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, we have worked hard to produce a negotiating document that is indeed based on compromise, and has sufficient positive elements to justify our efforts to move forward to resolve the remaining difficult differences. We are cognizant of the irreplaceable role of the negotiating process, as difficult as that is, to lasting resolutions. In fact, the process itself is a signal to our populations and other stakeholders that we understand compromise and the concessions that compromise requires. Therefore, at this stage, to speak in the language of attack and absolute solutions is neither realistic nor helpful.

Nor is it useful to mistake cause with consequence. The people of Nagorno Karabakh were victims who won the military battle, successfully defending themselves in Karabakh against a government that attacked people it considered its own citizens. Not all victors are aggressors. Sometimes the underdog wins because he is defending his family, his home, his land. The people of Karabakh defended them-

selves, against great odds, and won. Today, they want nothing from Azerbaijan, except a willingness to live and let live.

Mr. Chairman, in the run-up to the anniversary summits to come, the effectiveness of this organization will be measured not just by the extent and number of its activities, but by the boldness of our aims, the foresight of our goals, the value of our achievements, and the audacity of our intent.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT DIRECTION AND THE RIGHT PATH

As I was heading to this hall this morning, it occurred to me that I haven't missed a single Ministerial meeting since our membership in this organization. I also remember the first Council of Europe ministerial to which I had been invited. It was in the run-up to our membership and I had tremendous difficulty finding a way to get to Strasbourg from Yerevan in time to deliver a speech and return that same evening. Those days we were still suffering from the consequences of the collapse of an era, which had also brought with it the collapse of our economic and transport connections to the world.

Yesterday, as I left to come to this meeting, I had a choice among six European carriers, and left a country that has been growing on average 12 percent a year. So survival is no longer a question. We, too, can now take survival for granted. That's a luxury we didn't used to have.

Indeed a lot has changed since the first days of our membership. The Council of Europe has evolved and grown and Armenia has changed greatly. Our economic growth is gratifying, it must become more distributed, must reach further into the rural communities and the sources of that growth must themselves become more refined and sophisticated.

Our political allegiance to the values that define our era – the rights of the individual over the rights of the state, the rule of law over

Delivered in Strasbourg on May 11, 2007, at the 117th Session of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers

the rule of man, the path of compromise over the path of confrontation – is also irreversible. These are values that Europe articulated and embraced.

Over this last half century, Europe has proven that not only are these ideals good ends in themselves, but they are the necessary means to stability and prosperity. We have understood that we don't need to choose between human rights and development, but that one is a means to the other.

Over this last half century, the Council of Europe has changed. Membership has grown, the Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner of Human Rights have become solid institutions. Thus, with overlapping membership with the European Union, and sometimes with overlapping processes, these two organizations are complementary. The Council of Europe is the organization where one hones these values, adapts them as tools to the conditions and demands of the day and place, perfects them, and makes it possible to take them, too, for granted. The European Union is the shop that turns these values into the instruments of reconciliation, prosperity and peace. Cooperation between these two institutions takes place by default. The decision is not whether to cooperate but, after the report by Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker on relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union, the question is the depth, specificity and institutionalization of that cooperation. The best organizational minds must fashion mechanisms which are not self-serving, which do not compromise the integrity or capacity of these institutions, but enable them to meet the noble goals of creating and bolstering bonds between human beings that transcend older boundaries and make of these new institutional forms a functioning, productive, peaceful community of nations. This is why, today, we can proudly point to a memorandum of understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union, and why tomorrow, we must put our credibility and resources behind the San Marino chairmanship in making this memorandum a reality. I would also like to commend the Chairman for making intercultural and inter-religious dialogue a priority on the agenda of the Council of Europe this year. Armenia also attaches great significance to these issues.

Mr. Chairman, I have frequently said from this podium that Council of Europe membership provided for Armenia a roadmap and a guidepost. It's not enough to decide which direction to take, it's important to choose the right path to get there. Our membership commitments pushed us along the path of reforms more quickly and more purposefully than we could have done ourselves, alone. Today, literally on the eve of parliamentary elections, we have a Constitution which better protects the rights of the individual citizen and better articulates the responsibilities of the government. These elections will be held under new conditions, new laws, new working mechanisms, all designed with the wisdom and experience of the Council of Europe and the Venice Commission, the OSCE, the European institutions, to encourage our citizens to suspend the decades of inbred cynicism and distrust, and believe in the power of their voice and their vote. The stakes are high. We hope that, next week, we will all be able to look at each other and say these elections are significantly better than any we've had. Thus, we will be well on our way towards the last of our Council of Europe commitments.

There is of course, Mr. Chairman, one commitment left which we made together with Azerbaijan, when we entered this organization – that we would achieve a peaceful, lasting resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Judging purely from the content of the negotiating document, the nature of the principles included there and the progress we've made on that document, we have hope that an agreement is possible. A major part of the progress comes from the fact that all involved have come to acknowledge and agree that at the end of the day, it's the people of Nagorno Karabakh which should determine their future status through a referendum, and through the exercise of their right to self-determination.

But there are some factors which dampen our optimism. First, I worry that the content and spirit of the negotiations are not matched by the public statements that are regularly heard from the Azerbaijani leadership. Second, the endless Azerbaijani references to a possible military solution are counterproductive, not to say dangerous. Third, Azerbaijan's actions do little to bolster confidence. On the contrary, intentional violence such as the organized

destruction of Armenian cross stones in the Nakhichevan region of Azerbaijan serve to further sow distrust between our peoples.

Still, this is a basic document on principles that is a balanced, fair set of tradeoffs and we will continue to work on it.

Mr. Chairman, let me say thanks to you for San Marino's leadership, and welcome Serbia to the presidency, and also congratulate Montenegro on their membership in this organization.

BEING PART OF THE PROCESS

Secretary General, Prime Minister, my friend Ahmed Aboul Gheit,

Thank you for your hospitality. And also, let me thank you for encouraging me to attend this meeting ten days ago when I was visiting you in Cairo. I am truly honored and happy to be here today, to be part of this tremendous show of support and sympathy towards the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government – support which I believe they fully deserve.

Armenia does not play a major role in Iraq. Our resources are limited. I wish we had more resources to contribute. We do have a small Armenian community in Iraq. They feel very much a part of Iraq and solidarity with the Iraqi people. They enjoyed the hospitality of the Iraqi people for decades. There is always a sense of indebtedness on the part of the Armenian people towards the Arab people in general, and, in this case specifically, towards the Iraqi people. That's why, a few years back, when we were asked to be part of the coalition, we agreed, fully understanding that our symbolic presence there – 50 people – would not make an impact on the security situation. Nevertheless the principle was the same: to be part of the process and bring our contribution to building Iraq.

The Compact that we will adopt today sums up very well what needs to be done. As we look in from our region, I would emphasize three things we believe are critical for making a difference in Iraq.

Delivered in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on May 3, 2007, at the launch of the International Compact with Iraq, co-chaired by the Government of Iraq and the United Nations

One is the inter-communal, inter-ethnic, inter-religious dialogue. I'm happy to see that as part of the Compact.

Secondly, the engagement of the neighboring countries. I'm happy to hear that tomorrow there will be a meeting between Iraq, the neighboring countries and a few other major players, because they are the ones that can affect most what happens in Iraq and they are the ones who can be most effected by the developments in Iraq. So, this is a two-way street, and I hope they will provide strong commitment to bring their contribution to peace and stability in Iraq.

And thirdly, strengthen the hands of the Iraqi government. And that is the purpose of this whole meeting. The Compact is on the table. Indeed, as the title says, it is a visionary document. And these are courageous people who are sitting here, the members of the Iraqi cabinet. They are indeed courageous. Given the circumstances under which they are operating, working and trying to make a difference for their country, they, I believe, deserve all the support that the international community can provide.

I wish them good luck and all the best.

HISTORY DOESN'T ALWAYS OFFER A SECOND CHANCE

Thank you Mr. Roelants du Vivier, for sharing this evening with us and conveying your message from the halls of Brussels. And thank you Sergey and Lusine. Sergey graciously accepted my invitation to join us this evening. I knew well that Sergey's "message" will resonate in this hall and stay with us as the context for an evening of commemoration.

This is an evening of commemoration, much like those that are being held in nearly every major city around the world this week. It's a day of remembrance much like those that have been held every year for the last half century.

But over these years, and especially since independence, the nature and the purpose of our remembering have changed.

I would like to speak with you today not just about our past, but about our future. I want to set the record straight about what we want for our people, our country and our neighborhood. And I want to do that here in this European capital that is the symbol of unity and not divisiveness.

Today, I want to talk about what we remember, how we remember and how the reasons for remembering have evolved, just as our communities, our country and the world around us have evolved. We have had a difficult, painful past that we will continue to remember and

Delivered in Brussels on April 25, 2007, at a Commemorative Evening at the Belgian Royal Conservatory featuring guest artists Sergey and Lusine Khachatryan, and Mr. Francois Roelants du Vivier, Chairman of the Belgian Senate's External Relations and Defense Commission

honor. But let me be clear: we don't want to live in the past. We want to reconcile with the past as we forge a future.

In Aleppo, Syria, where I grew up, remembering rituals consisted mainly of gathering to hear the stories of someone who had suffered things we could not really imagine. Aleppo was the end of the road for those who were deported and marched through the deserts. This is where those with no hope of returning to their homes set up ramshackle, flimsy refugee camps, trying to cope with enormous loss, with wounds that refused to heal.

I think back now at our naive efforts to lessen the grief of the survivors by encouraging them to forget and not to speak of their experiences. We did not understand that their lives and outlooks, memories and experiences were forever traumatized. That is how they lived, how they raised their children, how they interacted with the societies and countries in which they found refuge. This we learned years later, as we read about Holocaust survivors trying to cope.

Only when solitary memories were transformed into formal, community-wide tributes, did the survivors begin to feel that their own individual histories of horror had significance beyond the personal. Remembering became a shared activity, a commemoration. Decades later, programs such as Remembering the Cambodian Genocide, and the Remembering Rwanda Project served the same purpose.

For Armenians, commemorations became the outlet for the disbelief and outrage at how this historical event deeply affected our way of being in the world, our sense of personal and collective identity. This was a new generation, no longer victims, a generation that had come to understand that what had been done had been done not to 1.5 million individual Armenians who comprised two-thirds of a nation, but to an entire people who had been massacred, uprooted, deported and whose way of life, whose culture and history, had forever been altered. And all this, by government decree.

For a long time, we memorialized these events by ourselves. We were left alone because there were two versions of history – the official and the alleged, the acknowledged and the denied. The Ottoman Empire that fell was succeeded by a Turkish Republic with

an immaculate, almost divine, self-image. Such murderous acts and their tolerance could not fit within this self-definition. Therefore, a new history was invented in which these acts never happened. The crimes were never committed.

The records of their own military tribunals were ignored, the eyewitness reports of missionaries and diplomats were disputed.

Our history became the 'alleged' truth. Their history was the official truth. And since the official truth had the backing of the entire state apparatus, ours became the forgotten genocide.

Occasionally, some would raise their voices against forgetting, and for condemnation. In 1987, Mr. du Vivier and others introduced a resolution at the European Parliament, calling the events of 1915 'genocide'. Since then, a host of countries have joined us in recognition and in commemoration.

These commemorations are very critical in the face of a growing threat of genocide in the world today from Bosnia to Rwanda to Darfur.

Commemoration is a way of countering the distortion of history, countering the subversion of truth by power.

Commemoration is the victory of truth over expediency.

Commemoration is a condemnation of the violence.

Commemoration is a call to responsibility, and therefore to prevention.

Commemoration is an acknowledgement of the past, and even the present, but not an obstacle to the future.

And herein lies the irony – I don't want to say impasse – in our relations today, with Turkey.

We cannot build a future alone. But neither can we build a future together with a neighbor that is disingenuous about the past, our common past.

This Monday's International Herald Tribune carried an ad that also ran in many major newspapers around the world. It is a perfect distillation of Turkey's willful blindness to historical and political processes surrounding it. Just as it succeeded in creating a new history for itself, it wants the world and us to dismiss all other histories not in line with its own.

Turkey calls for Armenians to agree to a historical commission to study the genocide. Not because none have ever convened, but because Turkey does not like their conclusions. Reputable institutions such as the International Association of Genocide Scholars, the International Center for Transitional Justice have seriously studied these historic events, independent of political pressures, and arrived at the conclusion that the events of 1915 constituted genocide.

Does Turkey want to go shopping for yet another commission, hoping for different results? It has gagged its writers and historians with a criminal code that punishes free speech. What does it expect these historians to study? And with a closed border between our two countries, how does it expect these historians will meet to explore this topic? This is why we wonder about the sincerity and usefulness of the historical commission idea.

Despite these obvious obstacles to serious scholarly exchange, we have agreed to an intergovernmental commission that can discuss everything, so long as there are open borders between our two countries. If Turkey needs discussion, we are ready to cooperate. But we don't want discussion for discussion's sake; we don't want discussion of the past to replace today's vital political processes that are essential for us, for Turkey, for the region. Yes, we want to explore and understand our common past, together. But we don't want that past to be the sole link between our peoples and our countries. We don't want that past to condition the future.

We, the victims of genocide, have not made Turkey's recognition of that act conditional for our present or future relations. Turkey, however, wants Armenians in and out of Armenia to renounce our past, to understand their denial of our past as a condition for moving forward. Who is trapped in the past?

I welcome the words of a Turkish intellectual who has said, I am neither guilty nor responsible for what was done 90 years ago. But I feel responsible for what can be done now.

I, too, believe that we must distinguish between the Ottoman Empire and today's government of Turkey. But I must say that although that is possible to do when speaking of the events of 1915, it becomes increasingly difficult to do when speaking about the denial

of the Turkish state today. As Elie Wiesel said, the denial of genocide is the continuation of genocide. So, how do we distinguish between the two states, if the ideology that is put forth and defended is the same? This policy of denial is both intellectually and morally bankrupt. And it is costing us all time. The later they get around to making a distinction between their stand and that of their predecessors, the harder it will be to dissociate the two regimes in people's minds.

It is absurd that 92 years later, Turkey can say, in public, that the Armenian allegations of genocide have never been historically or legally substantiated.

Dear friends, Armenians were one of the largest minorities of the Ottoman Empire. Where did they go? Is it possible that all our grandmothers and grandfathers colluded and created stories? Where are the descendants of the Armenians who built the hundreds of churches and monasteries whose ruins still stand today? What kind of open and honest discussion is possible with a government that loudly and proudly announces its renovation of the medieval Armenian jewel of a church, Akhtamar in Lake Van, while it carefully, consistently, removes every reference to its Armenianness from all literature and signs? What is Turkey afraid of?

It is a political reality that Armenia is not a security threat to Turkey. It is a political reality that both Turkey and Armenia exist today in the international community with their current borders.

Today, as the foreign minister of the Republic of Armenia, as the grandson of genocide survivors, I can only say that Armenia and Turkey are neighbors who will remain neighbors. We share a border. We can only move forward together.

There is no national history in a vacuum. It can neither be created nor transcended in a vacuum. For France and Germany, England and France, Poland and Germany, in order to transcend their histories of conflict, they had to transcend the past together to transform their future. That, too, can only be done together.

Not always does history give mankind a second chance. In this neighborhood, with our neighbors, we do have a second chance. We can make history, again, by transcending boundaries and opening the last closed border in Europe and moving forward, together.

Europe – the premise of Europe and the legacy of Europe – is the distinct promise of our age. Europe is where one takes from the past whatever is necessary to move forward. Europe is where former enemies and adversaries can dismiss and condemn actions, policies and processes, but not peoples. Instead, people in Europe move from remorse to reconciliation, and embrace the future. This is precisely what we want to do in our region.

OVERLAPPING INTERESTS TO PREVAIL OVER DEEP-SEATED DIFFERENCES

Mr. Chairman, I join my colleagues in thanking the government and people of Serbia for their hospitality, and I would like to congratulate the Chairman-in-Office on the successful conclusion of a fruitful term.

The Summit being planned for June will mark this organization's 15 years.

Anniversaries are by definition significant, since they mark the recurrence of an event of historic importance. This anniversary marks the beginning of a visionary effort – to turn neighbors into partners, and thus turn geography into history.

For 15 years, a dozen of us have come together at various governmental levels to build bridges across the Black Sea, from west to east and from south to north. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation was conceived to provide concrete opportunities for cooperation, integration and support, to provide benefits for all, from a limitless pool of potential, or I should say, a limitless sea of potential. The need that was clear 15 years ago has only become more acute today, especially as we consider deepening our relations with the EU.

Mr. Chairman, the specific efforts aimed at broadening interaction between BSEC and the European Union and institutionalizing such interaction will be remembered as one of the significant outputs of this period. You have engaged all BSEC institutions so that they can help formulate the structure for such cooperation.

Delivered in Belgrade on April 19, 2007, at the 16th Meeting of the BSEC Council of Foreign Ministers

A Black Sea dimension within European Union policy will formalize the premise that was at the heart of the establishment of this organization – that as Europe grows and changes, the promise of economic cooperation within and around Europe will grow, and the countries of the Black Sea must be prepared to contribute to and benefit from such developments.

If today, we are signing the Belgrade Declaration, it is because we recognize, reaffirm, and emphasize that which our heads of state and government signed in June 1992 – that there are economic disparities amongst our members, that there are political hesitations caused by historical and other experiences, and finally, that none of these are reason to avoid cooperation. On the contrary, they are the rationale and motivation for enabling, encouraging, supporting cooperation, albeit slowly and in stages.

And we have done that. From the Black Sea Bank to the Black Sea Studies Center, we have built successful, functioning mechanisms for multilateral cooperation.

Despite differences among states, BSEC and its institutions have already proven their viability. BSEC tries to be the place where environmental, economic, social and even political differences are mitigated, keeping in view the future, and not the competitive, sometimes adversarial past.

None of us, here, in the Black Sea are here by invitation. We are here because we are here, in this neighborhood, in this region. And, here, in this region, we have transport systems that need to be united, not divided, energy systems that need to be shared not isolated, banking systems that need resources added, not subtracted, education systems that need to be broadened, not secluded, societies that need to be inclusive, not exclusive.

To accomplish this, it is our shared purpose and overlapping interests that must prevail over our sometimes deep-seated differences. As we plan to upgrade and refurbish water systems, we cannot allow existing rail lines to sit idle. As we work to ensure proper conditions for capital flow, we cannot prevent people flow. As we develop projects to share agricultural know-how, we cannot block trade across borders.

Mr. Chairman, this organization got its start because there was a vision. It continued to operate because those around the Black Sea needed that vision, and those outside the Black Sea region wanted to believe in the promise of that vision. We wouldn't need an organization such as this one if every country in the Black Sea area cooperated and shared. We need this organization precisely because this is a complex region with a variety of economic, social, historic and political experiences that require special conditions. That is why we are today launching the Black Sea Ring Highway Caravan as a symbol of the importance of communication networks.

The success and effectiveness of this organization will be measured not by the quantity of its projects, but by the audacity of their intent.

As we congratulate Turkey on assuming the Chairmanship, we note that it will carry the same challenges that lay on their shoulders at the time of the creation of this organization – to be not just the geographical anchor for cooperation in and around the Black Sea, but also the political rudder.

We wish them well and stand prepared to work with them to that end.

FOR EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

I thank you for this opportunity to address the OSCE Permanent Council. My previous appearances here have been gratifying to me and I hope that this Council itself found it useful to hear directly from me about Armenia's priorities and policies. I myself have found our meetings helpful because this is the opportunity to directly, clearly talk about our issues with an audience that is most knowledgeable, in a forum that is most relevant.

The discussions and reflections about OSCE's relevance continue. Although Armenia may see this organization as indispensable, there is no denying that its costs and benefits are being assessed very differently in various capitals. Some would like to further empower this organization, others are reluctant to do so.

Concern over OSCE's effectiveness in carrying on its relevant mandates gave us the Panel of Eminent Persons, who in 2005 looked rather comprehensively at the question of reform. We do not believe the organizational, operational challenges identified by the Panel and its recommendations have been fully addressed and embraced. We understand why those who resist further efforts see the present arrangements and methods as sufficient and satisfying. However, the frustration and restlessness of those who continue to see and experience the inequities, partisan approach, two-tiered distribution of Participating States continues. Therefore, it is essential that we persist in efforts to collectively adopt ways to make our organization more effective and coherent. As the OSCE pursues transparency,

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rule-based applications, inclusive participation, equality of opportunities and level playing fields inside the political systems of states, we believe it would be extremely appropriate if the same patterns of democratic conduct were practiced within the OSCE itself, among all members.

Our delegation is ready to fully engage in ensuring the robust viability of an OSCE that is very much a pillar of our foreign policy landscape, and also a partner in developing and instituting domestic democratic processes, including election reform.

Mr. Chairman, I know that the OSCE, its institutions and its members are watching as we embark on parliamentary elections next month. The long-term observer team sent by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) under the leadership of Ambassador Boris Frlec of Slovenia has already started its work. These elections, to be held on May 12, will also be observed by a large contingent of short-term observers deployed on election day. We welcome them and we would encourage OSCE member states to participate with observers.

Many of us in and out of government are deeply committed to improve our score, to strive for elections in line with international norms. While past mistakes are undeniable, we should not be presumed guilty for the future. We have changed our election law, we're moving from a strong presidential system to a system where the role of the parliament is being enlarged. This is a serious change, it means there are now new checks and balances in our government, it enhances the role of parliament and thus the role of political parties. Therefore, during these elections, each party will struggle for votes, defend its votes, and watch others in order to assure their share of power.

But fair and free elections require good will and good intentions from everyone: not only government, the elections commission, the ruling party, but the entire society, and also the opposition parties. Unfortunately, those with great doubt about their own electability are more than eager to convince outsiders that their political weaknesses are solely due to the machinations and insincerity of those in the majority. To avoid this, we need to make monitors vigilant and

aware of this fact, as well as generally aware of the Armenian reality. As I meet with members of the observation team, I have noticed that those now involved in observation missions in Armenia as well as in monitoring of the media situation are more aware than before of the problem of reliance on hearsay and mechanistic, quantitative methods, without an understanding of the cultural and political realities on the ground. Of course, in Armenia, as well as everywhere east and west of Vienna, incumbency has its privileges and advantages that cannot be reduced to simple calculations of candidates' airtime. And, in Armenia as elsewhere, there is a curious correlation between rising standards of living and the cost of financing electoral campaigns.

Of course, these elections are a serious challenge for Armenia to demonstrate its determination to consolidate through free and fair elections its progress towards democratization and the rule of law. Together, all of us – government and opposition, with the OSCE's help – will further Armenia's democratization process.

Mr. Chairman, OSCE's assistance to Armenia's democratization and the modernization of its political structures is of course not limited to the agenda of ODIHR and the Office of the Representative of Freedom of Media. The OSCE office in Yerevan has been a useful presence and partner for longer than six years. It has accomplished some projects, initiated others, and remains engaged in a variety of reform-related activities.

The OSCE-sponsored project to eliminate rocket-fuel component stocks, known as *melange*, is nearing its completion. Through the participation of our Defense Ministry, the expertise of the planners and the implementers and thanks to the generosity of donors, the *melange* project can serve as a model for implementing serious programs through collective efforts.

Among many other items, let me single out the elaboration and implementation of a regional economic and environmental development plan for the province of Syunik, our southernmost area and one facing multiple challenges. My ministry is deeply committed to make this initiative succeed both for its own sake and as a model for similar actions elsewhere in the country.

Mr. Chairman, Armenia's economy is doing well. This is the seventh year of double-digit growth. The inflation rate is low, around three percent, our exports are growing, foreign investment is increasing as are our foreign reserves. Such positive macroeconomic achievements allow us to address the more problematic issues in our economy – unemployment, low incomes, poverty. There's one other major problem we need to address and that is the gap between rural and urban areas.

Mr. Chairman, before I talk about the Nagorno Karabakh conflict negotiation process, let me continue on this economic theme and link it to the conflict. There is an ironic phenomenon that is connected to our economic development. It seemed to us that for about ten years after the cease-fire, Azerbaijan and its ally Turkey, expected Armenia to collapse under the weight of poverty, economic stagnation and despair. This hasn't happened and it will not happen. But no lessons are being learned from this experience. The blockade continues. And with new efforts: The evidence is the recent signing of a deal to begin construction of a new railroad that will circumvent Armenia. We never expected that new initiatives, the Baku-Çeyhan pipeline for example, would go through Armenia, but it's amazing to even contemplate that one might consider spending \$700 million to \$1 billion to build a new railroad where there are existing rail tracks that will perform the same function. All this, just to bypass Armenia. We've said to them – use the existing one, Armenia would be willing not to be a beneficiary of the running of the railroad, we won't transport our goods on that railroad, we won't even charge transit fees, just use it, instead of spending \$700 million. But Turkey and Azerbaijan have not met us halfway on this issue. No lessons have been learned obviously. We regret this. Let me repeat, Armenia will not be isolated, but we can be alienated. A new railroad will not make us succumb, it will not do more harm than the existing closed border. It's the political environment that will suffer, that's what we regret, not the missed economic benefits. We will continue to advocate that the existing rail line be opened. And we will go further, and ask that Turkey open the border and establish normal ties with Armenia. We have no pre-conditions to normal ties.

And we expect that Turkey, too, won't have pre-conditions. This is the last closed border in Europe, and it needs to open, so that Turkey can engage in the region more positively, and bring its positive contribution to the Karabakh conflict.

Regarding the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, I believe we could be close to a resolution. I have been minister for nine years now. Five years before being appointed, I was part of the team negotiating the Karabakh issue. I have seen all the proposals that have ever been produced by the mediators, and if I were to base my judgment purely on the content of the document on basic principles at hand, I can assure you that we've never been this close. What we have today is the most sensible, the most balanced. This is a trade-off among principles, this gives something to everyone, and denies every maximalist demand the sides might have. It is a balanced approach and we hope we will be able to continue to make progress on the basis of this document.

However, there are two other factors which affect the negotiations and need to be addressed: one is the militaristic ambition of Azerbaijan. Let me repeat: this conflict has no military solution. This must be ruled out so we can focus on compromise. Second, the public statements made by the sides should match the spirit and letter of the document. When the document is eventually opened up, the public will ask why the statements don't match the content. In the case of Baku's statements, there is a discrepancy between their statements and the content of the document. My guideline is to go by what we've been hearing, what the co-chairs have been hearing during the talks.

Mr. Chairman, let me say one thing about Kosovo whose ultimate fate will be decided by the United Nations Security Council if the formula meets both Serbia's and Kosovo's interests.

We are often asked what Armenia's position is on this matter. No matter how beneficial a certain solution may appear to us and to our case, we are firm believers in the distinctiveness of each conflict, its dynamics and its conditions. We have no problem expressing our views as to the limited value of precedents.

However, it is ironic that those who oppose "one size fits all" precedents are so disingenuous as to bundle together four "frozen" conflicts elsewhere.

Further, more than just arguing against precedent, GUAM – the alliance of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova – is attempting to prejudice the outcomes of other conflicts, specifically ours, by creating mechanisms, through resolutions and other actions, to block the natural progression of our negotiations process.

The international community must be alert to the disingenuousness of such efforts. This is not a zero sum process – where a successful self-determination process for Kosovo necessarily means that all other self-determination processes must be quashed, artificially.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman and distinguished colleagues, let me state unequivocally that Armenia remains committed to a negotiated solution, and we will continue to pursue a fair resolution that will guarantee the people of Nagorno Karabakh security and the right to determine their own future.

I will travel tomorrow to Belgrade, to conduct regular talks with my counterpart. I am going to Belgrade with the hope that we will be able to reaffirm our commitment to the principles agreed to heretofore, and attempt to make progress. We believe this is the best way to move forward.

VIOLATING THE SPIRIT OF THE DEAD AND THE TRUST OF THE LIVING

In this first year of this new Council, together with the human rights community, we have been refining the processes that will empower this body in order for it to meet our shared high expectations. The expectations of this Council were high at the outset. They would have remained high, even if the world were not embroiled in destructive explosive conflicts. It is no surprise that at the heart of most of those conflicts, lies an absence of a respect for basic human rights.

Our collective responsibility is to those individuals and groups, those millions represented through their governments here, as well as to those whose voices remain muted. They are not interested in our debates, they know little about the nuance and the detail, but their judgment of our seriousness and sincerity will be evidenced either by their trust and confidence or by their cynicism and disdain.

With this realization, the strengths of the Commission on Human Rights drove the need for an even more powerful body. The limitations of that Commission compelled the creation of a more effective structure with broader reach. The Universal Periodic Review process, if it lives up to its name, holds the promise of the impartiality and inclusiveness we seek and require, in order for the process to transform itself from a means to an end – from a way of investigating the human rights environment to enabling an environment where there are human rights.

Delivered in Geneva on March 13, 2007, at the Fourth Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Our objective is a world where the rights of individuals and groups are respected, where each neighborhood and each community, each city and country, each region and continent, are safe havens for all who live or travel there. Religion does tear people apart, as do economic disparities, language and ideology. But the frustrating and fascinating contradiction is that faith has also bound people together, prosperity has been a common goal, language and ideology have been shared.

Mr. President, this universal truism is also true in our region. Unfortunately, the human rights record in our whole region during the past 15 years is nothing to be envied; it is a case study in how human rights abuses lead to conflict and how conflicts worsen human rights abuses. From pogroms to ethnic cleansing, from destruction of spiritual markers to vilification of ethnic groups, we have lived through the worst that man can do to man. It is no wonder that the region has been mired in conflict since the first days of independence. As we search for ways to build a peace atop this pain and destruction, it is clear that solutions can only be found through the genuine and universal acceptance and application of basic, fundamental individual and collective human rights. There is the formula for peace: The violation of human rights brought us to this quagmire; the respect for human rights will get us out.

Indeed it is an entangled web of human rights abuses of varied scope, nature and depth that has brought our region to this situation. First, there is the total disrespect of the cultural values of other people. When a government intentionally plans and executes the destruction of centuries-old monuments of profound cultural, artistic and religious significance, that government has violated the spirits of the dead and the trust of the living. Five thousand Armenian monuments have been destroyed by the Azerbaijani government in the region of Nakhichevan in the past few years, simply to eliminate the trace of a whole nation from that territory.

Second, there is the violation of the right of people to self-determination. In the waning days of the USSR, the people of Nagorno Karabakh opted for self-determination. The Azerbaijani authorities decided to attack their own citizens to suppress those calls. And by doing so, they lost the political and moral right to govern people they considered their own citizens.

Third, there are the negative consequences of the double denialism of the Turkish government. The denial of the right of their own people to freely discuss and debate their common past with Armenians, and the denial to both Armenians and Turks to forge a common future, by keeping borders closed. Hrant Dink, the Turkish-Armenian journalist who fell victim to an assassin's bullet, was the embodiment of both Turkishness and Armenianness. Hrant Dink had two missions in his life – to break all taboos within his own Turkish society, and to forge a dialogue between Turks and Armenians to reach understanding and reconciliation.

Indeed, that's exactly what we want today. There needs to be an open society within Turkey so that their people can, without the fear of persecution, freely debate the past, and there has to be an open border between us so that our two peoples can interact and engage. Only in this way can we transcend our differences and reconcile.

Now, Mr. President, a word about our own commitment to human rights and democracy. In this, our 16th year of independence, our people will be going to the polls to elect a parliament whose powers the people chose to enhance, to invest it with broad authority for social and economic advances. The task of our next government is clear: to stay the course and more aggressively promote human rights, alleviate poverty and build effective governing institutions, to enable our society to embrace democracy individually and collectively.

But the cruelties inherent in the massive economic readjustment that we have been undergoing have led to a sense of powerlessness on the part of ordinary citizens. As a consequence, they are cynical about the value of expressing their voice. This means we must work harder to strengthen democratic institutions and processes, including elections, because they are not just ends. They are also means to creating the necessary political and economic environment which lead to distributed growth and dignified development.

Finally Mr. President, this Council and each of us, its members, have a responsibility to promote the human rights we hold so dear in the world, in our regions and in our own societies. There is nothing new in this formula. Our challenge is to commit to it and make it work.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING ONE'S OWN HOUSE IN ORDER

The agenda before this 14th Meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has far-reaching implications. In some cases, it extends and deepens our past commitments. In others, it expands the scope of our overall pre-occupation with security, and its complex, multidimensional components.

The decisions we are about to adopt on the exploitation of children, hate crimes, human trafficking, trafficking in small arms and illegal weapons are extensions of existing domains. The important decisions on organized crime, transportation and energy security are clearly additional new directions, claiming distinct attention.

It has been an arduous process addressing the issues with which we were tasked at last year's Ministerial Council meeting in Ljubljana. Regrettably, the search for a middle ground has inevitably led to the weakening of some modest but substantive proposals, inspired by the Eminent Persons' approach. Mr. Chairman, the Belgian Chairmanship under your guidance, succeeded to keep up the momentum, look for solutions, cajole, pressure and produce this package of decisions to enhance the effectiveness of our organization.

Allow me to point to what I wish were also included. I wish, for example, that the role of host countries, their prerogatives and interests were more fully reflected in the decision regarding the enhancement of the effectiveness of the OSCE Secretariat, the institutions and the field missions. After all, the ultimate benefit of the field office

in Yerevan, and elsewhere, is in their efforts to make themselves redundant.

Additionally, regarding the utility of the work being done by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. As effective as ODIHR's priorities and practices are, it would be misleading to conclude that it can no longer adapt, improve or become more responsive and transparent. Its operational autonomy should not insulate it entirely from the judgment and appreciation of participating states.

This 'reform' process has been trying to find its way toward a satisfactory conclusion for more than five years. Today, the participating states face a crucial dilemma – terminate the process because it is incomplete, or continue work on at least some elements, hoping the next round will be more fruitful. Armenia is clearly inclined towards this second choice. Otherwise, we will expose our inability to achieve convergence on how to get our own house in order before we keep expanding our agenda to cope with the world's ills.

Mr. Chairman, in Armenia, we understand the importance of getting one's own house in order, in order to successfully navigate the myriad regional and global challenges. Thus, we have focused on strengthening our economy and consolidating our democratic reforms. We continue to register double-digit growth, we remain highest in the region on the United Nations Human Development Index. To empower the residents of rural Armenia and enable the sustainability and viability of Armenia's villages, we have embarked, together with the Diaspora and with public and private partners, on a rural poverty eradication program, because this segment of our population has benefited only modestly from Armenia's overall economic growth.

In addition, we have taken on additional political reform commitments, especially in the run-up to two important election years. I believe we must also take special steps to engage our public in setting the agenda for these elections, and through them for the next decade of stabilization and prosperity. A public that believes in its role in the development of our society will be a public that is ready to take ownership of the election process and its outcomes. We will invite ODIHR to observe the process and we hope to meet the standards and expectations of a watching world.

Mr. Chairman, we know that the world is watching our region for other reasons as well. No one wants a lasting settlement to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict more than we do. The last meeting between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan gives us hope that agreement may yet be found even on those principles around which we still don't see eye to eye. We know that a lasting solution will depend on the security and status of the people of Nagorno Karabakh. That is how this conflict began – when their security was violated, and their right to self-determination trampled over. The principles under discussion seek to satisfy the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination while at the same time eliminating the consequences of the conflict. We anticipate that indeed Azerbaijan will find the will to acknowledge and respect the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to determine its own future, its own status, its own security arrangements.

In just a few days, Nagorno Karabakh will hold a referendum to adopt a constitution. During this decade and a half, they have built political institutions, through elections they have selected their own authorities and developed a legislative framework. They recognized the need for a basic law, and recognized that a referendum is the only acceptable way to collectively adopt that basic law. For the international community to dismiss their democratic aspirations and blame them for choosing to behave democratically is counterproductive. Azerbaijan claims that exercising a vote is an obstruction to the peace process. It can't be further from the truth. What really obstructs the process is their overreaction to Karabakh's democratic activities, their refusal to engage Nagorno Karabakh in peace talks, their repeated militaristic calls and their persistent efforts to sidetrack the Minsk Group negotiations process.

Finally Mr. Chairman, we wish the Spanish Chairmanship well.

WITH INDEPENDENCE, A DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

I am pleased, honored, and still a little awed by the fact that I can stand before you, as foreign minister, at the official celebration of 15 years of Armenia's independence. The fact that we are celebrating in this important capital, with the representatives of a strong, active, prosperous, proud and engaged Diaspora, in the presence of several US ambassadors to Armenia, is still the stuff of dreams.

It has been 15 years since our independence. This came at the end of a difficult century and an even more difficult millennium. Armenians take great pride in their millennia of history. The leit-motifs that run through our recollections of our past are fraught with a search for silver linings.

We have outlived the empires of the Babylonians and Assyrians, the Hittites and Medes, the Byzantines, the Mongols and the Ottomans. We shared the gods of the Greeks and the Romans, until St. Gregory illuminated the path to Christianity. We translated the Bible not just into Armenian, but also into Chinese. We recorded the history of Armenians and of Western civilization in beautifully illuminated manuscripts. We welcomed the Crusaders to our Kingdom in Cilicia, and accompanied European traders to the exotic East. Instead of fortifications, we built monasteries and centers of learning that have withstood invaders and earthquakes.

Delivered in Washington DC on October 21, 2006, at the Armenian Embassy's 15th anniversary celebration of Armenia's independence

In the 18th century, when first the American colonies, and later the people of France were upholding liberty, equality and fraternity, our students and merchants in Europe, were watching and learning. They knew that they had rights and liberties as subjects of three different empires, and used the formulations and vocabulary of the leaders of the Western enlightenment to articulate them. It wasn't that they wanted to overthrow the governments that abused or usurped their rights, but to reform them. It didn't work.

The Sublime Porte, which ruled over the majority of Armenians, made its Armenian minority the scapegoat for its own inability to govern. The Genocide followed. The remnants of the Armenian people who emerged following the Genocide had independence hoisted upon them in 1918. A population of refugees, insufficient resources with which to govern and protect, an elite that did not live in Armenia, and an army composed of well-meaning patriots – that was Armenia's first modern attempt at independence. It was a valiant effort to first wrestle with the social and existential dangers from within, and later to fight against the direct physical threats from without. The First Republic of Armenia survived independently long enough that, when it fell, it fell as a legitimate, independent, political entity. That entity was subsumed into the Soviet Union as the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.

That was the journey that brought us to today and to the improbability of our independence – the improbability that this surviving nation would witness the fall of yet another empire – this time Lenin's. And that the homeland would be born again, free and independent.

In Armenia, and in the Diaspora, too, where you are still surprised by Armenia's independence, you sometimes suffer from the reverse: because we've never really had independence, we sometimes believe that we don't deserve to have it or that it will necessarily be taken away again. I want to tell you that Armenians are not only worthy of independence, we are also capable of independence, aware of the demands of independence, responsive to the expectations of independence and accepting of the burdens of independence.

But we were ready. Armenia's Democratic Movement, the Environmental Movement, the Karabakh Movement were not just the product of a changed Soviet Union, but they also accelerated the transformation of the USSR.

Independence is born of high ideals. We believed that freedom is the secret to a prosperous nation, a healthy nation, a fair and just nation, and a stable future. We believed that freedom isn't just the right to do what you want, it's the opportunity to do what you want, it's the opportunity to make choices, the right choices.

We made the basic choice – we chose the way of a liberal society – open markets and democratic institutions. That was the first choice.

And today, as we celebrate independence, we are celebrating that choice. We are celebrating in Washington, the capital of the country that proved that a liberal economy in a democratic republic is a winning combination. Americans are the people who set out to design a political system that is built around the individual, his liberties and capacities.

In other words, the American Declaration of Independence is about rights. It is a testament to the rights of individuals, of peoples, of society. But no man was ever endowed with a right without being at the same time saddled with a responsibility.

We are privileged to be the generation that is consolidating independence. We do have wide and generous opportunities to turn a dream into a country, a stable country with a promising future.

And to that end, I want to propose a declaration of responsibilities. Our responsibilities. This generation's responsibilities. The responsibilities of Armenia and Diaspora, of all those who call themselves Armenian.

- We have a responsibility to empower our people to confidently participate in building their democracy.

- We have a responsibility to create an even playing field for every Armenian citizen.

- We have the responsibility to continue on the difficult but necessary path of political and economic reforms.

- We have a responsibility not to take Armenia for granted, but to work to create an Armenia that makes real the promises of democracy and freedom.

- We have a responsibility to remember our past, without being bound by it, because the future is ours.

- We have a responsibility to reach a just and lasting resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict based on mutual compromise.

- We have a responsibility to make the Diaspora an extension of the homeland – not a permanent dislocation, not a destructive dispersion.

- We have a responsibility to welcome and embrace every Diasporan who calls himself or herself Armenian.

- We have a responsibility to rally every bit of our resources – individual and collective, private and public.

- We have a responsibility to stand united, to work united, to go forward united in the face of new challenges, so we can win together, and not lose separately.

These responsibilities come with independence, with freedom, with liberty. Demanding freedom means recognizing the responsibility to ourselves, for ourselves. Freedom is also the right to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes. It remains for those who have greater experience in freedom to be patient as we sort out the options and freely choose the one that is right for us.

We believed that independence may be bestowed, but freedom must be achieved. Independence meant rights. Liberty means responsibility.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT: ROLES OF DIASPORAS

In this conference of experts, I feel right at home. I am, by default, an expert on Diaspora. I was born in Syria, the heart of the Armenian Diaspora, came to the homeland for the first time as a diasporan student, and today, I am foreign minister of that homeland which has more of its nationals living in Diaspora, than at home.

I appreciate the fact that this panel is to tackle the challenges and opportunities of transnational identities. We are in fact transnational as a consequence of today's homeland-diaspora relationships. It is not just those living in diaspora who have this multiple identity, but it is also those in the homeland whose identity alters, ever so slightly even, because of the diaspora and its perceptions and expressions of who we are. I believe the opportunities that this new, multilayered, identity produces are greater than the challenges.

Diaspora is an old concept that has just come home, that has found itself. In these days of easy, quick and inexpensive air travel, easy, quick and inexpensive telephone calls, easy, quick and inexpensive internet access, being in diaspora no longer means permanent disconnection, distance, inaccessibility and alienation from the memories and experiences of childhood, from a homeland and a home. Today, diaspora means an extension of the homeland – not a permanent dislocation, not a destructive dispersion, but life at a distance, that can even be beneficial.

Delivered in Toronto, Canada on October 19, 2006, at the University for Peace Conference

On the one hand, the Armenian Diaspora experience is the archetypal example of diasporas. The very first studies of diaspora were quick to mention Armenians, Jews, and soon after the Africans, as the quintessential examples.

On the other hand, ours is not the traditional duality. Our history, our reality, and therefore, the diaspora-homeland relationship is more complex than that.

Let me explain. The Armenian Diaspora, historically, began as those who permanently left the traditional Armenian homeland. That's how the Armenian community of Lvov, Ukraine, and Transylvania, were established in the 12th century. That's why there are thousands of Armenian graves throughout south and east Asia from Macao to Bangladesh. That is how it came to pass that that an Armenian translated the Bible into Chinese. That is why Martin the Armenian was living in the Plymouth Colony of Massachusetts in the 1600s.

There were also those who left unwillingly, due to political circumstances. The Shah of Iran, in the 16th century, moved tens of thousands of Armenian craftsmen, forcibly, to northern Iran. They lived there for hundreds of years, and left behind incredible historical, cultural, religious monuments.

Until the early 20th century, the Diaspora was the appendage, while most Armenians lived on the historic homeland, under some combination of Russian, Ottoman or Persian domination. It was the Genocide of 1915 that resulted in a mass exodus from the traditional homelands. The size of the Armenian Diaspora today is due largely to that wave of settlement. They were pushed out of their homes, and if they didn't die along the deportation route, then they made it to the countries of the Syrian desert. From there, they emigrated to Canada, to the US, and elsewhere. Today, the independent Republic of Armenia is based on the sliver of land that was under Russian, not Ottoman, domination and that managed to declare independence in 1918, consolidate as a political unit that then was absorbed into the Soviet Union as one of the 15 republics, and then emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union as an independent republic. The size of

the Diaspora has grown during the last 20 years as a result of out-migration from the Soviet Armenian Republic, and until very recently, the independent Armenian Republic. Today's transnationals are this segment of diasporans – born into the USSR, resident in a third country, while feeling emotionally tied to the new, independent republic.

Thus, Armenians of the Diaspora have three sources of identity. One, the host countries in which they live today; two, the homeland I represent regardless of whether that was their place of origin or not, and three, their country of origin – the place that offered refuge between the homeland and today's host countries.

That is just one characteristic that makes our situation a bit unusual. The second is that our numbers are the opposite of the traditional balance – we have five million and more Armenians living outside Armenia, and three million in the homeland. Thus, the Diaspora is both larger and older, than the homeland. The Diaspora is also not monolithic. There are two million Armenians in Russia, more than one million in North America. The experiences, capacities and expectations of these groups are very different. Yet, in some ways, they are the same.

The impact of all this on the Armenia-Diaspora relationship is multilayered. Let me try to describe some of those layers, including economic ones, and then finally talk about the reality and the potential for homeland-diaspora relations in the context of political stability and peace.

First, we have multiple identities, not just dual identities. Our homeland, the host country, and our country of origin all have a place in our hearts. The networks, the experiences, the know-how, that come with intimate knowledge and deep contacts in three places are invaluable. From the perspective of the homeland, this means that we benefit from even greater contacts, ties and links. On the other hand, our foreign relations, our bilateral relations are sometimes complicated by the diverse and wide-ranging circumstances in those communities. This complication arises partly from the reality that we may be an old nation, but a very new nation-state. Our assumptions and actions are based on our experiences as a nation. The nation-state is, for us, a new phenomenon, with new, unknown, rules.

Second, a diaspora as old as ours is highly structured. For centuries, our communities have been forced to regulate their social and cultural life, and as a result, churches, organizations and even political parties have a long tradition of community self-governance, especially considering that this was a diaspora whose homeland was not a sovereign state for most of its history. Therefore, having such structures and institutions with which the homeland can interact allows for more productive and predictable relations. At the same time, because the Diaspora is highly structured, new mechanisms for new kinds of interaction are difficult to create.

Third, you are a member of the diaspora only when you say you are. In order to say you are, you must identify with the homeland which defines it. One wants to identify with that which is strong, beautiful, proud. Our Diaspora is no longer suffering or starving. Neither should Armenia be. A developing country, an emerging democracy – these are concepts difficult to understand. Armenia is Number 82 on the United Nations Human Development Index – high by regional standards, but not high compared to most of the host countries where Armenians live. Canada is ranked fifth, for example. Diasporas want homelands in their image. The challenge is to channel that yearning in a way that brings the aspiration closer to reality, rather than leading to unfulfilled dreams and frustrations. It's the thin line between taking what you have for granted and having grandiose expectations. Diasporas cannot, should not, take for granted that which is happening in the home country. Those difficult processes of political and economic institutional development are not always transparent processes. And impatiently comparing them to the stable institutions in their host countries can and doubtless will produce dissatisfaction.

Finally, the size of the Diaspora leads to high expectations all around – on the part of the Diaspora itself, the homeland and the international community. With such a large number of Armenians living abroad, and with most of them comfortable, professional and settled, it is easy to hope for investments in large numbers, massive and significant Diaspora involvement and engagement, and resettlement perhaps.

The Diaspora's charitable and philanthropic giving predates Armenia's independence. Refugees and survivors living in the Middle East received help and assistance from the Western Diaspora throughout the 20th century. The Soviet Republic was the recipient of aid and know-how, especially in the cultural sphere. Following the earthquake of 1988, professionals, young people, everyone pitched in to help. So, with independence, it was expected that this kind of engagement would continue in even more significant ways.

And it is true that there are large amounts of humanitarian assistance from individuals and organizations. I know that scholars are constantly trying to put numbers on this kind of assistance. I don't have them. But that kind of generosity and largesse is visible throughout the country. Renovated schools, improved infrastructure, educational and training programs, health care assistance – all made possible by donations from the Diaspora. The Diaspora's humanitarian engagement is more visible, has quick impact and is easier to accomplish. The donor feels good, quickly, and is not overwhelmed or bound by long-term obligations.

Individual remittances, too, continue to be significant for Armenia's economy. Funds sent regularly to families by individual Diasporans are often the difference between survival and destitution for many in the homeland. The numbers are very high – nearly half a billion dollars a year – but they are from individuals to individuals. They are indispensable for immediate relief, but not long-term sustainability.

It's economic investment that fuels long-term sustainability. Diaspora engagement in information technologies, tourism, diamond and jewelry production all have Diasporans at both ends of the process. The significance of this kind of networking is obvious.

The challenge for homelands is how to increase such high-impact participation. Helping the homeland in the humanitarian sphere is comparatively easy. The challenge is to find ways to use diaspora networks and know-how to bring in lasting cooperation, making that as satisfying as the easy, quick donation.

Now let me talk about homeland-diaspora relations in the context of political stability and peace. The Armenia example may be a bit

extreme in that our foreign relations challenges are many. We live in a difficult neighborhood, and we are faced with problems that Armenia alone cannot solve. We must wait for our neighbors to want solutions as well. Therefore, Armenia's and Diaspora's maneuvering space is unusually limited. On the other hand, exactly because we live in a difficult neighborhood, where Russia, the US, Europe and other countries have very clear interests and agendas, the Diaspora factor has been critical.

If I can somewhat oversimplify and quickly summarize our foreign relations challenges in three key policy areas, the mostly complementary, sometimes differing views and needs of homeland and diaspora become clear.

First, on the Resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, Armenians in Diaspora and Armenia see the opportunity to right a historic wrong.

Second, on Genocide recognition, Armenians in Diaspora and in Armenia see the opportunity to right a historic wrong.

Third, on relations with Turkey, again, in Diaspora and in Armenia, Armenians see the opportunity to right a historic wrong.

We agree with them. But as authorities responsible for people's security and prosperity, we also know that all three of these painful, complex challenges have to be resolved with the future in mind, not the past.

On the Nagorno Karabakh situation, we want a lasting resolution. That must be based on a respect of the Nagorno Karabakh population's right to self-determination, the right to choose their own future. It must be based on compromise by all parties. It must be done with an eye to Europe where borders take on less importance as formerly acrimonious neighbors have found ways to live side-by-side in peace.

On Genocide recognition, for Armenians in Armenia and Armenians in the Diaspora, there is no difference, although Turkey sometimes likes to project that there is. All Armenians are convinced that Armenians and Turks need Genocide recognition by Turkey in order to achieve closure on this still painful, still open wound. Armenians are able to distinguish between the perpetrators and today's government of Turkey. Armenia and the Diaspora are willing

and ready to enter into dialogue with Turkey and Turkish society at all levels, without pre-conditions. We need and want, above all else, normal relations with our neighbor. For this to happen, Turkey will have to come to terms with its past.

Armenians, the very victims and descendants of victims, are the ones extending their hands. But unfortunately, Turkey has made give-and-take between our peoples and our states, impossible. In addition to the restrictions on speech, our borders remain closed. They are the only closed borders in Europe. Nor are there diplomatic relations between our countries. In other words, there are no opportunities for new experiences, new memories, new interactions to build up alongside the old. Instead, there is a lingering security concern about a neighbor that has not repudiated state violence.

These are the complex foreign relations issues that the Diaspora has the opportunity to explain to the world. Diaspora involvement, albeit at a distance, in the resolution of these conflicts and in the search for lasting understanding is necessary and useful. It is a way for all of us to make the past work for the future.

CONCLUDING A YEAR OF TURMOIL

It is a pleasure to congratulate you and to wish you a year that is relatively free of crises and catastrophes. In other words, a year not like the one we've just had during which my good friend Ian Eliasson successfully navigated through troubled waters.

The year of turmoil, as he called it, included conflicts, as well as man-made and natural disasters that required our collective response. These challenges to our united will are becoming more numerous, more dangerous and more complex.

Of all the events last year, the most tragic was the war in Lebanon. There I believe we lost a great deal of credibility in the eyes of the peoples of the world who had a right to expect that political expediency would not prevail. We watched with great disappointment and dismay the political bickering within the Security Council and the reluctance to bring about an immediate cease-fire, even as the bombs were being dropped indiscriminately. When any world body or power loses moral authority, the effectiveness to undertake challenges which require collective response is undermined.

In other areas, a united international community has succeeded. It has played a supportive role in the civilized process which brought Montenegro to this day and this body. Together, we created and empowered the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council – two bodies which hold great promise in delivering deeper and more purposeful engagement by a world community committed to building peace and protecting human rights.

The most insipid and threatening challenges in the world remain those of poverty and hopelessness. When the world's leaders met six years ago, they decided that the United Nations was the ideal mechanism to confront the social ills facing our societies, they publicly accepted their combined responsibility in achieving accelerated and more even social and economic development. They said to the world that, together, we will channel international processes and multinational resources to tackle the most basic human needs. Thus, they placed the principle and potential of united action on the judgment block. Six years later, the world continues to watch in earnest to see if individual and regional interests can be rallied in striving for the common good.

Madame President, we are faced with the same challenges locally. In Armenia, we are encouraged and rewarded by our extensive reforms. These reforms are irreversible and already showing remarkable results. We are going to move now to second generation reforms in order to continue to register the successes of the last half decade: legislative and administrative strides forward, an open, liberal economy, double-digit growth.

Encouraged by our own successes, this year we have determined to build on our course of economic recovery and target rural poverty. We are reminded of the remarkable promise made to the victims of global poverty in 2000: "To free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty." To do this at home, we will leverage the philanthropy of international organizations and friendly governments with the traditional generosity of our Diaspora to build and repair infrastructure, which is essential to facilitate and enable economic development.

But infrastructure alone does not reduce poverty and remove unjust inequalities. Creating economic opportunities, teaching the necessary skills – these are essential to erase the deep development disparities that exist today between cities and rural areas.

Madame President, we will begin in our border communities, because unlike other countries, where borders are points of interaction and activity, Armenia's borders to the east and the west remain closed. As a result, regional economic development suffers.

But with Turkey, it is more than our economies that suffer. It is the dialogue between our two peoples that suffers. Turkey's insistence on keeping the border closed, on continuing to prevent direct contact and communication, freezes the memories of yesterday instead of creating new experiences to forge the memories of tomorrow. We continue to remain hopeful that Turkey will see that blocking relations until there is harmony and reciprocal understanding is really not a policy. On the contrary, it's an avoidance of a responsible policy to forge forward with regional cooperation at a time and in a region with growing global significance.

Madame President, let me take a minute to reflect on Kosovo, as so many have done. We follow the Kosovo self-determination process very closely. We ourselves strongly support the process of self-determination for the population of Nagorno Karabakh. Yet, we don't draw parallels between these two or with any other conflicts. We believe that conflicts are all different and each must be decided on its own merits. While we do not look at the outcome of Kosovo as a precedent, on the other hand, a Kosovo decision cannot and should not result in the creation of obstacles to self-determination for others in order to pre-empt the accusation of precedence. Such a reverse reaction – to prevent or pre-empt others from achieving well-earned self-determination – is unacceptable.

Efforts to do just that – by elevating territorial integrity above all other principles – are already underway, especially in this chamber. But this contradicts the lessons of history. There is a reason that the Helsinki Final Act enshrines self-determination as an equal principle. In international relations, just as in human relations, there are no absolute rights. There are also responsibilities. A state must earn the right to lead and govern. States have the responsibility to protect their citizens. A people choose the government which represents them.

The people of Nagorno Karabakh chose long ago not to be represented by the government of Azerbaijan. They were the victims of state violence, they defended themselves, and succeeded against great odds, only to hear the state cry foul and claim sovereignty and territorial integrity.

But the government of Azerbaijan has lost the moral right to even suggest providing for their security and their future, let alone to talk of custody of the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

Azerbaijan did not behave responsibly or morally with the people of Nagorno Karabakh, who it considered to be its own citizens. They sanctioned massacres in urban areas, far from Nagorno Karabakh; they bombed and displaced more than 300,000 Armenians; they unleashed the military; and after they lost the war and accepted a ceasefire, they proceeded to destroy all traces of Armenians on their territories.

In the most cynical expression of such irresponsibility, this last December, a decade after the fighting had stopped, they completed the final destruction and removal of thousands of massive hand-sculpted cross stones – medieval Armenian tombstones elaborately carved and decorated.

Such destruction, in an area with no Armenians, at a distance from Nagorno Karabakh and any conflict areas, is a callous demonstration that Azerbaijan's attitude toward tolerance, human values, cultural treasures, cooperation or even peace, has not changed.

One cannot blame us for thinking that Azerbaijan is not ready or interested in a negotiated peace. Yet, having rejected the other two compromise solutions that have been proposed over the last eight years, they do not want to be accused of rejecting yet another peace plan. Therefore, they are using every means available – from state violence to international maneuvers – to try to bring the Armenians to do the rejecting.

But Armenia is on record: we have agreed to each of the basic principles in the document that's on the table today. Yet, in order to give this or any document a chance, Azerbaijan can't think, or pretend to think, that there is still a military option. There isn't. The military option is a tried and failed option. Compromise and realism are the only real options.

The path that Nagorno Karabakh has chosen for itself over these two decades is irreversible. It succeeded in ensuring its self-defense, it proceeded to set up self-governance mechanisms, and it controls its borders and its economy. Formalizing this process is a necessary

step toward stability in our region. Dismissing, as Azerbaijan does, all that's happened in the last 20 years and petulantly insisting that things must return to the way they were, is not just unrealistic, but disingenuous.

Madame President, Nagorno Karabakh is not a cause. It is a place, an ancient place, a beautiful garden, with people who have earned the right to live in peace and without fear. We ask for nothing more. We expect nothing less.

ARMENIA AND DIASPORA A TWO-WAY STREET

You have already been in Armenia for a few days. For some of you, this is your first visit. But I know that for the majority, this is not your first time in Armenia. I'm certain that each of you is noticing Armenia's accomplishments and deficiencies, you are observing both the positive and negative.

I don't know what expectations you brought with you, but I'm sure you had them. Expectations not of this conference, but of Armenia, of what you were assuming you would see. All of us in our consciousness, in our minds, in our dreams, we imagine our own Armenia, and we strive to reach it. But in order to see the real Armenia, to perceive it correctly, I think we must find the right correlation, the right balance between our expectations of Armenia and Armenia's capacity.

If we are able to do that, then we will better understand Armenia and will avoid disappointment.

It is not easy to build a state. I have been here since the inception and I've seen the ups and downs. It's true that one can have expectations, but they must also be realistic expectations.

Let's look at what we have. We have built a state that is, I believe, quite stable, and advancing economically. Today, if we compare Armenia to other similar countries, we see that despite our limited potential, despite the war, despite the blockade, we are competitive with our neighbors and perhaps ahead of them. Economically, and in terms of political stability, too, we're ahead. We're ahead in our

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reforms. But the greatest question facing us today is, will we be able to maintain this competitiveness? This is the issue. Can we transfer to our children, to the next generation, an Armenia that is competitive in this region, that is more developed, more democratic than its neighbors?

Today we're ahead. But will we be able to maintain that edge?

For me, it is an interesting coincidence that this conference overlapped with the annual meeting of Armenia's ambassadors. We just spent one and a half days identifying the challenges facing Armenian diplomacy and assessing them. The situation in our region today is changing very quickly. The challenges are not the same today as they were ten years ago, five years ago, or even one or two years ago. And they are many. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline is operational and prospects are improving for the construction of the Trans-Caspian pipeline. These will seriously enhance Azerbaijan's influence and leverage over Europe and the US. The Turkey-Azerbaijan relationship is becoming deeper and broader, with Turkey more openly and overtly assisting Azerbaijan militarily, politically and economically. Every day, we see new manifestations of Turkey's state policy of denial and non-recognition of the Genocide. Those countries in our region facing self-determination issues have united and created a common front. The punitive posturing towards Iran, our strategically important neighbor, is growing. Finally, the likelihood of the creation of divisive lines in our region is also increasing.

These are a few of the problems which we discussed in our meeting. They are our foreign policy challenges. We also have domestic challenges.

We must heal our political environment, must succeed in eliminating corruption, in doing away with nepotism, we must manage to eradicate poverty, we must make our government institutions more effective, we must hold free, democratic elections. We must be able to create jobs, assure our citizens a life of dignity, and change the psychosocial and moral environment in which we live.

These are challenges, not just for Armenia, but for Karabakh and the Diaspora, too. I agree that in this, as in all other things, we are together. There is no Armenia without Diaspora, no Karabakh with-

out Armenia, there are no divisions. We all belong to one nation, have one identity, one past. Today, there are no conceptual divisions among Armenia-Karabakh-Diaspora.

The Diaspora was imposed on us in the distant past, with the fall of Ani, then the fall of Cilicia, of course the Genocide, more recently the period of Soviet injustices, and by the war unleashed by Azerbaijan in the first years of our independence. This is the reality of the Diaspora imposed on us.

Today we must do everything we can to return our emigres, if not physically, then emotionally and mentally, to bring them back by their dedication to Armenia. That's why the dual citizenship issue has become a priority today. I am proud to announce that we are hopeful that by the end of the year our Parliament will pass a law based on a very liberal approach to offering dual citizenship.

This is essential for our people, our nation, our future. This is essential for the critical mass about which Constitutional Court President Gagik Harutunyan spoke earlier at this conference. That mass is essential for us. Three million is too small a population, we need to be five million, ten million; we must have enough numbers to have the capacity of 20 million so that we are able to meet our challenges effectively.

Of course Armenia-Diaspora relations, the Armenia-Diaspora rapprochement is complex. We must examine those issues openly, not avoid them but talk about them. When we were organizing this forum, we approached an artist who had come to live in Armenia in the 1940s and asked that he participate in the discussion of repatriation. He said to us, that period is so painful for him that he can't talk about it. "Even on stage I will cry," he said and refused to participate. Let's face it. Those who returned did live a difficult life. This is something we must talk about. We must honestly assess that period so that we avoid the complications of repatriation, and do it right this time, so that Armenia attracts and draws in our compatriots, and not simply as state policy.

As much as the Diaspora shares Armenia's challenges, Armenia must share the Diaspora's. It can't be a one-way street. It must be two-ways. The Diaspora, our most important segment, is essential for

Armenia in every way. It must be strengthened. The Diaspora too has lots of problems – alienation, preservation, political divisions, distrust, internal conflict – all of these are significant problems and Armenia must contribute to their resolution. How to do that? That's a subject for discussion and some ideas were presented here. We must find the optimal way to make our cooperation more effective.

The most important challenge facing the Diaspora, Bedros Terzian says, and I agree, is our young people's issue of identity. To what do they link their identity? To genocide? To earthquake? To Nagorno Karabakh? Or to today's Armenia, to independent Armenia, to a prosperous Armenia?

It is only Armenia to which they can connect. But that Armenia must be the Armenia of their imagination, the one they have heard about from their grandfathers, the Armenia their parents have dreamt about. If we can't give that generation that Armenia, then in the years to come, we will lose them.

These are our problems. The challenge is to unify Armenia, Diaspora and Karabakh.

Noubar Afeyan quoted William Saroyan, citing the lines we all have heard: "If two Armenians meet each other anywhere in the world, see how they create a new Armenia." He gave it his own specialized, scientific interpretation. I will give my political, national interpretation: If Armenia, the Diaspora and Karabakh join hands today, see what miracles we will work. I'm convinced that the 21st century will be ours.

DEMOLISHING CULTURE AND HISTORY, DESTROYING TRUST AND PEACE

I congratulate the new Council on this, its inaugural session. The third pillar of the United Nations – human rights – is now on a par with the other two – peace and security, and development. Humanity's stake in each of these interdependent aspects of life has been affirmed by the creation and mandate of this council.

Securing protection and respect for human rights will, arguably, continue to be the most tortuous and contentious of the UN's three challenges. This principle assumes for each member state responsibility for one's neighbors as well as for oneself. And this, in a world where distance does not determine who your neighbor is.

Globalization and the electronic media enhance our knowledge and increase our liability. It is as easy to look into our neighbor's living room as our own. To hear the screams next door and do nothing will be as difficult as ignoring uproar at home. We are now the first generation who simply cannot afford to do so. And ironically, we are the first generation that can afford to systematically, fundamentally address the problems and even the crises. We can muster the time, skills and resources to construct a new pro-active, daring, spirited international system that not only has the moral authority but also the tenacity to protect the powerless.

This, combined with national programs and institutions with resolve and muscle, can work wonders. After all, the world is held together, however precariously, by the vision, leadership and struggle

of its leaders. If we are committed to a world of justice, equality and rule of law, then each new institution, each new decision, each new mandate will move us toward that end.

Mr. President, I know that the struggle to empower individuals so that they believe in their individual and collective civil and human rights, has as much to do with economic and social progress, as it does with education. I know that it is only when the pre-conditions for a full and free life of dignity are in place, only then are markets powerful engines of development, only then is critical infrastructure sustainable, and only then do individuals stand up to demand and protect individual and collective human rights. I know that prosperity and stability depend on collective decisions, critical infrastructure and united action. I know that by helping raise productivity and escaping endless cycles of poverty, we will have done more to provide individuals with the tools to defend their human rights than all the declarations and conferences combined.

In Armenia, we are tackling this greatest challenge through a public-private partnership that will engage the government of Armenia, Armenia's business community, the international community and individual countries, as well as our generous Diaspora, to embark on eradicating rural poverty through a comprehensive, integrated approach. Our intent is to meet the Millennium Development Goals, and to replace hopelessness and desperation with a sense of self-worth and security.

We will do this within our borders, to the extent that we can. For regional and global security, however, we count on this new body to demonstrate a new readiness to react promptly to prevent serious human rights abuses. This is imperative at a time when technology makes each abuse and vulnerability immediately felt and shared, yet politics prevents societies from doing for each other what trusting friends would automatically do – reach out, defend, protect, pressure and rebuff.

Armenia continues to promote stronger international mechanisms to prevent and eradicate the crime of genocide, and all of its precursors – including efforts, too often successful, at not just cleansing a region of its indigenous people, but also erasing their memory.

Armenians have survived and gone on to live through each of these attempts. Even today, in the 21st century, we have watched helplessly as the spiritual and cultural markers of our people are decimated. This violation of the memory and spirit of centuries of Armenian existence on lands which are today Azerbaijan's is cynical and dangerous. Huge, exquisite, unique stone crosses which were both sculpture and tombstone are now gone – 2,000 of these medieval markers were destroyed just a few months ago. The gravemarkers are gone, and Armenian and international fears that Azerbaijan's authorities might in fact not be serious about peace have been reinforced. After all, their organized, violent, armed response to peaceful calls for self-determination two decades ago, was the first attempt at ethnic cleansing in the Soviet space and ignited the conflict which remains unsettled today. This most recent manifestation of organized violence, in a place where no Armenians live today, and far from the Nagorno Karabakh conflict area, tells us that neither Azerbaijan's methods nor its intent has changed. Such unambiguous, callous demolition of culture and history also destroys trust and peace.

If Azerbaijan's one step forward, one step back approach in the negotiations was simply alarming, their recent, desperate offers of autonomy are clear examples of a retreat from the letter and spirit of these talks, and clearly not in line with international trends. Offering autonomy to a people who have for nearly two decades been in control of their lives on their own historic lands is at the very least, self-deception. We hope the talks will go forward in a way to provide everyone involved with a real hope for lasting peace.

Mr. President, we are proud that over the last decade and a half, we have served as members of the Human Rights Commission, we have acceded to significant conventions, and have created a variety of institutions, including the Office of the Human Rights Defender. We have issued an open invitation to special procedures and are open and ready to cooperate with the United Nations Human Rights mechanisms. This is good for each country, as it is for a vigilant world.

OUR IDENTITY DERIVES FROM ARMENIA

I want to thank you for the invitation to speak here today and to address a group such as this. I know that you have each had your own specific, special, commitment to Armenia and Armenians, and that this commitment predates Armenia's independence even. I know that this is a way of life for you – living two lives: one in your profession, another in the Armenian community. We should thank Charlie and Julie Ghailian for inviting us into their home and giving us all an opportunity to commit once again. This time, to commit to the Armenian National Committee with its good track record and with a vision that we all share. Let me say at the onset, the ANC's new venture to expand its operations in Washington DC with a new headquarters, is the right decision at the right time.

The existence of a free, independent republic redefined our challenges and responsibilities. Further, it also shaped a new relationship between the Diaspora and our host countries. That is especially true here in the US, a welcoming country where Armenian dreams have been fulfilled for more than a century. I think it's fair to say that the US, too, has been fortunate in having a community of immigrants who shared the aspirations of the founding fathers and with ambition and hard work transformed a refugee community into a success story.

We can't forget that the first Armenians who arrived in the US, came here, escaping what they imagined would happen; the next wave came having in fact escaped the unimaginable. The later immigrants came – no longer escaping but seeking – seeking new vistas, new horizons, new opportunities.

Fortunately for us, as they sought the new, they still protected, even worshipped the old. America courageously and publicly champions the idea of universal justice. America is an advocate of individuality and difference and uniqueness. These American ideals reinforced in Armenian-Americans' their right to feel entitled to a place and a way of life that had been taken from them. This belief, in more than just Armenianness, but in an Armenia, fed the soul for decades, and eventually, reduced the implausible into a mere improbable. It's fair to say that the Armenian Revolutionary Federation - Dashnaktsutyun championed this dream. They defended the Armenian right to dream of being a people with a future, not just a people with a past.

Incredibly, the improbable happened. Armenia became independent. And today, this fundraising event is not for a new community center for a thriving Armenian Diaspora. It's to build an advocacy center for a prosperous and secure Armenia. I'm here today – a son of the Diaspora and the foreign minister of Armenia – to induce you to utilize the new Washington building, this new center and these additional resources, to be passionate and relentless in your promotion of Armenia's rights and interests – in our region and in the world.

I have frequently said that we are fortunate that despite the huge geographic distance between Yerevan and Washington, we are partners in the war on terror, in supporting the non-proliferation of weapons, in searching for global peace through regional security, in supporting the rule of law, as well as democratic and economic freedoms.

As a result, since independence, Armenia and Armenian-Americans have indeed registered successes together – significant US assistance to Armenia, trade privileges, military assistance parity, progress in Genocide recognition and education efforts, a better understanding by opinion and policy makers of Armenia's geographic, historic and economic limitations.

I've also said, and I can't say this enough, I don't know where Armenia would have been without the Diaspora. You keep us on the US agenda, you are the daily linkage between Armenia's interests and US interests. You have been vital in assuring that there is consistency and evenhandedness in US engagement in the region. And, of course, you've done immeasurably important work in ensuring that technical, democratic and other kinds of support to Armenia have been significant and continuous. Our next task is to strive for diplomatic support to match the kind of material support that we have received.

After all, all of the items on your and our agenda have only one intent: to ensure the security and sustainability of the Republic of Armenia. This is true of our efforts to reach a lasting, peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. It's true of our struggle to achieve a normal relationship with a democratic, repentant Turkey. And it's especially true of our focus on economic development.

I don't have to convince a house full of successful businessmen that economics drives most everything, including politics. I am saying that Armenia and Diaspora should decide that we want every Armenian to be able to live in dignity, to be able to have hope, to be able to believe in the future, to know that his children will be educated, that her family can reach a doctor. That is the path to a democratic society. Hopeless people don't believe in themselves or their leaders, they don't protect or defend their votes, they don't care who wins or who pays them to win. We want a population that has hope in the future, that believes in itself, and that has the will to take on responsibility and hold its leaders accountable, that is willing and able to secure its borders and defend its country.

That is why at the next Armenia-Diaspora Conference, this September, we are going to launch a broad-based ambitious program to eradicate rural poverty in Armenia.

Why now?

First, we want to build on the international momentum that already exists. Over the next five years, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) will build roads and bring irrigation water to Armenia's rural areas. In addition, there is Kirk Kerkorian's generous new Lincy Foundation program that will build roads and schools

within and outside Yerevan. There are massive programs throughout Armenia, sponsored by the World Bank, the US Agency for International Development, the UK Department for International Development, the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development, and others. The Armenia Fund, too, has programs throughout Armenia, as well as Karabakh, of course. We want to leverage these programs and locate additional funds in order to bring comprehensive development to the villages.

Imagine that a village will, in a few years, have irrigation water and roads, thanks to the MCC, for example. But imagine that there will be no drinking water, no health care, no school, no gas or electricity in that village. Imagine children growing up in a 21st century rural community that has roads and water and electricity, but is without access to telephone, television or internet. We can't let that happen. Now imagine what we could do together if the Armenian government, Armenia's business community, international organizations, and the Armenian Diaspora came together to leverage the MCC contributions and to build on the MCC momentum. Imagine a country where development is comprehensive, even, fair and just.

The second reason to do it now is to sustain the pace of economic development. We've had high growth, at least in part because our point of departure was low. Our economy had collapsed. But the more the economy grows, the harder it will be to maintain double-digit growth. Additional infusion and intervention is necessary and why not target that infusion towards the areas that need it most?

Finally, Armenia has, over these 15 years, held a leading role in this region. This may sound surprising, but it's true. Georgia has a more favorable geographic position and access to the sea, Azerbaijan has already been pumping massive amounts of oil – more than 300,000 barrels a day over the last several years, yet, according to the World Bank, per capita income is still higher in Armenia. This is something to be proud of, but it's also something we must work on. We have to keep that edge even with the prospects of additional oil revenues expected for Azerbaijan. We can do that only if we aggressively mobilize our resources and clearly set

comprehensive economic development as our goal. We will do this at the Diaspora Conference.

This conference will be held in the midst of the celebrations of Armenia's 15th anniversary. We've come a long way over this decade and a half. We've survived against great, great odds. Over the next 15 years, we must work to transform Armenia into the land of your dreams. That can happen if Armenia's expectations of the Diaspora and the Diaspora's expectations of Armenia are more evenly matched. This conference will also focus on those issues. In other words, with independence comes the need to succeed economically. The rural development plan addresses that concern and makes it possible for the Diaspora to participate. At the same time, with independence come questions about identity, about homeland-diaspora relations, about language and religion, about political parties and diaspora institutions. And if our traditional organizations used to look at these questions one way, today's youth approaches these issues very differently. They are looking for answers. That is why the second half of the conference will focus on exactly that – New Answers to Old Questions – A Nation-State in the 21st Century.

This way, we will have addressed the two fundamental issues facing a people and a country – identity and development – who we are and who we want to become.

The second issue we've spoken of. Economic strength is the only way to get us to what we want to become.

The first one – who we are – we have to admit has changed. Vartan Mamikonian and Aram Khachaturian no longer define us. Today we are Armenians, our identity derives from Armenia. We have no choice but to turn Armenia into the land that makes us proud. We can do this by promoting targeted economic development, by active diplomacy and effective advocacy.

Our diplomatic work is complicated. We live in a tough neighborhood. Imagine – Iran and its problems in the world today, closed borders with Turkey, no-war, no-peace with Azerbaijan, Georgian-Russian tensions to the north – all these have their immediate effects on Armenia. We must navigate around them, and try to help unravel these knots through a balanced policy of complementarity.

That policy of complementarity must be extended to the Diaspora. Complementing our efforts with yours, working together in coordination, turning the massive material support we receive into diplomatic support, the work of our diplomats must be complemented by your work and your dreams must be complemented by our actions.

MESSAGE OF DEMOCRACY, PEACE AND COOPERATION

Let me join the others in expressing our appreciation to the Lithuanian and Polish presidents for organizing this conference and for inviting Armenia. It's been an illuminating and inspiring day. I also would like to thank Lithuania's President Valdas Adamkus and the Lithuanian government for the wonderful reception and also for everyone's expression of sympathy with regard to the tragic Armenian Airlines accident yesterday morning.

Mr. President, your visit to Armenia is still fresh in our minds, and the message that you brought – the message of democracy, peace and cooperation – still reverberates in my mind. We've always appreciated the leadership that Lithuania has shown with regard to bridging our two regions – the Baltics and the Caucasus – and making your experience available to us to develop our region and to develop cooperation among our countries. Your efforts fall within a similar, and broader, effort by transatlantic organizations. With the benefit of hindsight, we wonder where we, the countries of the Caucasus, would have been had there not been the vision demonstrated by the leadership of these structures to make their knowledge and practice available to countries like ours in the post-Soviet space. Organizations like the OSCE, the Council of Europe and others shared their experiences. Even more, there was the foresight to create new structures, such as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council within NATO, to embrace these countries and provide a framework for our development.

Delivered in Vilnius at the European Union Conference on 'Common Vision for Common Neighborhood', May 3, 2006

We, the countries which have been the beneficiaries of those organizations and the processes created around them, want you to know that this guidance has been very helpful and useful.

Still, each of us in the post-Soviet space, has chosen a different way to benefit (or not benefit) from the varying options made available to us. Those different options fall into three categories:

First, there are those who have chosen the more abrupt and revolutionary path to reform; then, there are those who have chosen the more incremental and evolutionary path, and third, there are those who have dug in their heels and are not moving in any new direction.

Armenia has chosen the second path – the evolutionary, incremental approach – because we believe in two principles.

Firstly, as the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana said, democracy is not a one-shot deal, it does not happen overnight. We know that, and we believe that as long as you know that you are on the right track and are confident that you are moving forward and not backtracking, then the evolutionary and incremental approach to democracy is more effective and enduring.

Secondly, we understand that democracy is a tool for development, that there is clear linkage between democracy and prosperity. As much as democracy is a tool for development, we know that economic development is a facilitator of democratization. I want to highlight the European Union's enhanced role in these interconnected processes through the creation of a new program and a new instrument – the European Neighborhood Policy and the Action Plan. We are currently negotiating the Action Plan, the process will be concluded soon, and it will elevate the level of our relations with the European Union to new heights. It will reinforce reforms and make them irreversible. Further, it will increase the integrational options and make available new possibilities.

Now Mr. Chairman, my second topic: Unresolved conflicts. First, let me address the charges leveled at Armenia by the Azerbaijani Prime Minister. He basically called Armenia an aggressor, and called the Armenians inhabiting Nagorno Karabakh terrorists and drug traffickers. Given the overall spirit of the talks which are taking place at the highest level, between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan,

and given the positive elements that exist at this moment, such inaccurate and inflammatory comments are incomprehensible and not justified, especially since territories under Armenian control today are the consequences of Azerbaijan's aggression toward people it considered its own citizens. I don't think that Javier Solana was overly optimistic when he said there are positive aspects in this process, but Mr. Solana, those positive elements can be transformed to encouraging developments only if the Azerbaijani side is clearly told and finally understands that they don't have a military option here. With their oil resources and with high oil prices, they have unfortunately come to believe, or at least they publicly proclaim, that there is a military option available to them. With that kind of thinking, it will not be easy to compromise. But they need to be told very clearly by the European Union and others, that there is no military option, so that they make the necessary compromises, as Armenia has already done, to reach a peaceful resolution. Only then, Mr. Chairman, do we stand a chance of making further progress this year, eventually bringing peace and stability to this region.

ARMENIA AND DIASPORA COOPERATION, NOT COMPETITION

I want to thank you for the invitation to speak here today. I especially appreciate the fact that in this hall are members and activists from the Armenian Assembly of America, the Armenian Church, the Armenian General Benevolent Union, and various individuals – all of whom are here to plan together, to work together, to register success together.

Since independence, we have indeed registered successes together: significant US assistance to Armenia, trade privileges, military assistance parity, progress in Genocide recognition and education efforts, a better understanding by opinion and policy makers of Armenia's geographic, historic and economic limitations.

If I think back, I don't know where Armenia would have been without the Diaspora. The dedicated, focused efforts of the Armenian Assembly of America have resulted in a support base that is essential for Armenia. We know we can always depend on the real, sincere, deep commitment of the Assembly leadership and the dedicated work of the Assembly staff.

In Yerevan, we are very aware that for you to be able to promote Armenia, its policies, its future, Armenia must be the kind of place that you can and want to promote. The Diaspora will promote and support an Armenia that reflects its own best dreams, values and ambitions. The Armenian-American Diaspora will promote and support an Armenia that is a friend of the United States.

And we are. Despite the huge geographic distance between Yerevan and Washington, we are partners in the war on terror, in supporting the non-proliferation of weapons, in searching for global peace through regional security, in supporting the rule of law, as well as democratic and economic freedoms.

Not only are we ideological partners, but we share the values that have made America. We want those values to be not just aspirations for the citizens of Armenia but solid realities, to be comfortably taken for granted.

The US is the country that makes it possible for individuals to reinvent themselves – to relocate, to take on new careers, to pursue new challenges and new directions.

Armenians have been a people who have reinvented themselves throughout the centuries on every continent. The challenge in this century is: for the first time in history, will we be able to reinvent ourselves on our own land?

Do we want to become a country where every man and woman assumes they have a right to speak their mind, to cast their vote, to affect change? Of course we do.

Do we want to become a country where we can take the impartiality of judges, the decency of policemen and the ethics of teachers for granted? Of course we do.

Do we want to become a country where you pay taxes to the system rather than fees to the official? Of course we do.

Do we want to become a country where the difference in rich and poor is only a matter of time and not a matter of destiny? Of course we do.

Do we want to become a country where each person believes that he or she can individually reinvent him or herself? Of course we do.

That is the Armenia we want. That is the Armenia you want.

How do we get there? You are blissfully unaware of the difficulties and travails of the process of becoming a democracy because Americans live in the only country to have been born democratic. America was built from the ground up, democratic institutions were defined and created as you went along. As such, you have the good fortune to be able to take this system for granted.

The entire process of nation-building has been different for us, since we had to undo an existing system and build a new one. That is why we have welcomed American programs which have supported our institutional, democratic and economic reforms. We also appreciate that in anticipation of the elections of 2007 and 2008, the US has proposed additional, targeted assistance so we can hold normal elections and rise to the next level of democratic development.

But democracy is more than elections. Democratic institutions and processes are not just ends. They are also means to creating the necessary political and economic environment which lead to distributed growth and dignified development. The cruelties inherent in the process of massive economic readjustment which we have been making have led to a sense of powerlessness on the part of ordinary citizens. So, democracy is a tool for development, just as economic development is a facilitator of democratization.

This afternoon, I will be attending the signing of a visionary instrument that drives both economic development and democratization. The Millennium Challenge Compact (MCC) is intended to bolster development in countries where the society and leadership comprehend their political responsibility to nurture and sustain democratic practices. This is the single largest government investment in Armenia's economy. It consists of \$235 million over 5 years. Before I tell you what we're going to do with the money, let me tell you why we were fortunate enough to receive this grant.

The US government chose Armenia as one of the potential recipients because Armenia is needy. That's no secret. But there are lots of needy countries in the world. Why Armenia? Because the US government determined to contribute to the budgets of those countries that are themselves attempting to grow in the right direction – to govern justly, to encourage economic openness and to invest in people.

Armenia is. And being made eligible for the MCC is evidence of this. Simply put, Armenia is a part of the MCC because not only is there plenty about our society that needs to be put right, but because we are on a path that is right. This farsighted program provides a generous push in the direction that we have chosen for ourselves.

I said to the MCC Chief Executive Officer, Ambassador John Danilovich, when the decision was made, and I say this to you now: Armenia has the honor and the obligation to build on the confidence that has been placed in our government and our people. And so, even as we spend these funds to turn mud into asphalt and to give farmers the irrigation water that is their lifeblood, we will work to make sure that good governance and the principles of an open and fair society take root in our homeland.

In the 21st century, philanthropy is more than charity. It is about finding lasting solutions to deep-seated social and economic problems. That is what the MCC intends to do. And so I am going to use this opportunity to say to the Diaspora loudly and clearly that that is what the Diaspora should do as well.

Before I ask you to do more, and I'm going to do just that, let me thank you for all that you have done. The Armenia-Diaspora collaboration has been invaluable in this decade and a half of upheaval, confusion and learning. The value of the Diaspora is in its ingenuity, non-conformity, its belief in a dream, its access to networks, its ability to be international and national all at the same time, and its tremendous resources.

I am now going to ask you to partner with Armenia – even more deeply and broadly and seriously than you have already done – to address Armenia's domestic and international challenges.

Look, most of you have been to Armenia. It is clear that not all Armenians have been able to share in the double-digit growth of which we are justifiably proud. As soon as one leaves Yerevan, the statistics become reality: One out of every two Armenians still lives in poverty, mostly in Armenia's rural areas. Half of those living in poverty, live on less than one dollar a day. Yet, these rural men and women represent a critical portion of Armenia's economy.

If we want to ensure that these rural communities are not destined to remain stagnant, permanent pockets of poverty, that Armenians are not born into a cycle of poverty, then we cannot allow development to simply take its course. Even at this current fast pace, it will take decades before we reach the average European level of prosperity. We must take practical steps to intervene, to take a short-cut towards an improved quality of life for our rural citizens.

This is the first time that I am announcing from a podium that at the next Armenia Diaspora Conference, we will be launching a Rural Poverty Eradication program – a kind of Diaspora Marshall Plan for Armenia.

The Millennium Challenge Account has indeed taken on the renovation or construction of two of the most expensive infrastructure sectors – roads and irrigation canals.

Imagine that a village will, in a few years, have irrigation water and roads.

But imagine that there will be no drinking water, no health care, no school, no gas or electricity in that village.

Imagine children growing up in a 21st century rural community without access to telephone, television or internet.

Now imagine what we could do together if the Armenian government, Armenia's business community, international organizations, and you, the Armenian Diaspora came together to leverage the MCC contributions and to build on the MCC momentum. Imagine a country where development is comprehensive, even, fair and just.

Imagine an Armenia whose borders are secure because its border communities are stable, where cross-border interaction is possible, where out-migration is minimal. Imagine a day in a village filled with pride and satisfaction, rather than tears and frustration.

As investments and growth spread through Yerevan, this program will coordinate information about the many wonderful, generous programs that are already being implemented in rural Armenia by Armenian and international organizations and individuals. This program will work to remove the real and artificial obstacles to productivity, and will help identify access to markets and finance to make the village economically sustainable.

If you are wondering whether those with personal interests will allow this kind of access and transparency, join me in challenging those who obstruct. Rally the forces of the Diaspora and the international community and see if we can't replace obstacle with opportunity.

Through this program, we will approach every individual, organization, parish, family and business in the Diaspora and will solicit participation. Your time, your money, your expertise, your contacts – they are

all needed so that the infrastructure is rebuilt and a village is reinvented. This program will strive to bring a new look, a new ethic, new hope to each rural community in Armenia, starting with the border villages first.

In plain language, by eradicating poverty you will be eradicating hopelessness. You will bring prospect and possibility to the most vulnerable in our society. Hope, faith and confidence transform economically empowered citizens into politically empowered citizens. And it is they who will be the best defenders of their votes, their voices and their rights in meetings, elections and throughout the governing process.

These are the major domestic challenges that Armenia faces today. But our foreign policy challenges are no less difficult and complicated. Fundamental among them are relations with our neighbors, transportation, energy diversification and conflict resolution.

Our agenda with the US today is very broad and diversified. We have transcended from being a one-issue country and our relations today are built on mutual respect and interest. Armenia needs America. And America needs Armenia as a reliable partner in the region.

This year we'll be celebrating the 15th anniversary of Armenia's independence. Fifteen years of independence, 15 years of statehood, 15 years that Armenians around the world have had an Armenia that is theirs, to which they belong, that they represent.

No longer are we just Armenian-Americans, but now, we are, whether we want it or not, whether we feel it or not, perceived as being a piece of that country, that place. Our identity has changed.

The Diaspora exists, it will continue to exist, and you will need Armenia, not to substitute but to complement what you have.

The Republic of Armenia exists, it is independent, and it is ours. It still needs its Diaspora, more than ever. We must cooperate, not compete, in order to turn the Armenia of our dreams into the Armenia of our future.

DEMOCRACY: THE BEST TOOL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I am here today, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Armenia and my colleagues here from the Armenian government, to thank President George Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Chief Executive Officer, Ambassador John Danilovich, the US government and the American people, for including the Republic of Armenia in the Millennium Challenge Compact.

President Bush's visionary approach to development, which complements the invaluable assistance that has already been provided to Armenia through USAID and other US programs, continues the best tradition of American missionaries, from whom Armenians had benefited greatly.

The MCC is a natural extension of their practice – doing good born of one's own convictions, but with the intent to nourish the recipient's sense of self-worth and ability. In the 21st century, when philanthropy is not about charity but about finding solutions to deep-seated problems, we welcome the US government's decision to assist and support directly those countries who have determined to rule justly, to invest in people and to promote economic freedom, in order for their citizens to live in dignity and security.

I see here our colleagues from other recipient countries, and I am certain that they join me in saying that with this grant, the US

is recognizing the reality and duality of our lives – persistent poverty in the face of progress.

On the one hand, one third of Armenia's population continues to live in poverty, two-thirds of our rural communities are not directly connected to a central water distribution system, and most of our secondary and tertiary roads do not provide the necessary access.

On the other hand, Armenia has managed, against great odds, with an unresolved conflict and with closed borders, to be ranked first in the world in best utilization of foreign assistance, we have managed to privatize and to legislate such that our economy is ranked among the world's most liberal, and to register the highest economic growth in the region, without the benefit of extractive resources.

That is why a long consultative process concluded that for significant poverty reduction, we would request MCC funds to be spent in two critical areas of infrastructure. Our program has been consciously designed to complement the work of other donors.

With this signing of the Millennium Challenge Compact, Armenia is aware that we have the obligation to build on the confidence that has been placed in our government and people. Just as economic development is a facilitator of democratization, so is democracy a tool for further and deeper economic development. We understand that the US Government has chosen to use these funds for economic development, only when a society and its leadership comprehend their political responsibility to nurture and sustain democratic practices.

Armenia is among the world's youngest democracies and our democratic and economic reforms are irreversible. Our significant progress notwithstanding, we recognize that much remains to be done to make these reforms comprehensive. We know that corruption must not be tolerated and that the law must rule, that the principles of democracy must be transformed to traditions of democracy in our country.

Madame Secretary, the elections of 2007 and 2008 will test our democratic practices. Our task, until then, is to partner with the US and European governments to implement the necessary corrective steps to improve the conditions necessary for an honest and fair expression of people's voices.

In this regard, we welcome the American proposals for certain structural reforms and education and public outreach efforts. We've already begun the process of verifying voter lists, we're making progress in reforming the electoral law with the active participation and agreement of all political forces in parliament. As in years past, OSCE monitors will be present and will monitor elections.

In other words, Madame Secretary, Armenia and Armenians are determined to benefit from the intent and content of the Millennium Challenge Compact. Because our people deserve no less.

ASSESSING THE DEPTH AND DIRECTION OF THE STATE-BUILDING PROCESS

As we prepare to mark our 15th year of independence next year, I look at these opportunities as occasions to assess the depth and direction of our state-building process. It is particularly useful and interesting to conduct this kind of analysis with an audience whose experience with nation-building has been so different from ours.

In a sense, the collapse of the USSR and the emergence and sudden birth of new republics has been a great civics lesson for the world.

Those of us who lived within that collapse were faced with many questions which some countries never had to ask. You, too, did not have the luxury of taking democracy, as a system, for granted. And, you are more aware than many of the difficulties and travails of the process of becoming a democracy. You know that the structures of political democracy can be present, but the political attitudes and values that must be supportive of these structures need time to take root.

For us, the entire process of nation-building has been difficult since we had to undo an existing system and build a new one.

We in the Caucasus – Armenia, as well as our neighbors Georgia and Azerbaijan – have at one time or another since independence been faced with decisions in three major areas:

The first and most basic question that required answering was our choice of political and economic systems. These were followed by questions about our orientation. Who are we and where do we belong?

Delivered in Berlin on February 27, 2006, at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation

Let me explain how we answered each of these three questions.

The first and most fundamental was the question about the kind of political system of governance we would choose. It's clear that we all assumed, just as political scientist Francis Fukuyama did, that by leaving behind an authoritarian, centralized system, there was no choice but to move on to its opposite – a liberal, democratic system. That this was indeed the end of the road, that history was complete here, since we had arrived at the best of all possible systems.

In other words, at the end of the 20th century, these were the only acceptable choices. They were natural and easy choices. But what came next was not easy.

We have spent this decade and a half creating, learning, adapting, refashioning our thinking, our actions, our objectives. We've had, all of us, many ups and downs; often it's been two steps forward, one step back. And we're still not there yet. There are traditions, customs, assumptions, practices which must be changed and altered to correspond to the speed and quality of changes taking place around us in the rest of Europe.

So, today, how democratic is Armenia? That's a question I'm frequently asked. I don't know the answer, but I do know that the process is irreversible. It is not a fast, revolutionary process. Our strength has been our stable, incremental, evolutionary development. In that process, our next step is to adopt second generation reforms which will more deeply implant democratic processes and strengthen our institutions.

Democratic institutions and processes are not just ends. They are also means to creating the necessary political and economic environment which lead to distributed growth and dignified development. Democracy then is becoming a tool for development.

The cruelties inherent in the process of massive economic readjustment which we have been undergoing have led to a sense of powerlessness on the part of ordinary citizens. Stable, consistent, transparent, strong democratic institutions empower each citizen. Democracy is more than elections. Democracy is institutions which are egalitarian and predictable and constrain the actions of the elite thus preventing uneven playing fields. In other words, we need strong democratic

institutions and legislation to guard against the weaknesses of human nature.

In the nation-building process, the questions of how to push and how quickly to push economic reforms were answered easily. First, because we knew we were committed to moving to a free market economy. Second, because the absence of financial resources is a great incentive to move quickly to privatization. When you see that a large enterprise, such as an airport, is costing the budget millions of dollars each year, selling it off is an appropriate remedy. Today, 80 percent of our Gross Domestic Product comes from the private sector. A new index called Capital Hospitality Index – which rates a country's investment friendliness – has Armenia way ahead of all its neighbors in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Today, Armenia's rate of growth is in the double-digits, and it's been that high for five years. Our macroeconomic indicators are stable and positive. In hindsight, this is nothing short of miraculous.

A country with no natural resources, huge energy dependence, blockaded on the east and the west by neighbors Turkey and Azerbaijan who mistakenly thought they could use economic pressure of the most extreme kind to elicit political concessions – no one would have thought Armenia would be ahead of its neighbors economically.

But we are. Today, even before the Baku-Çeyhan oil pipeline coming on line, Azerbaijan already exports 300,000 barrels of oil a day. They've been doing so for four years and the revenues are accumulating. Yet today, per capita income in Armenia is equal to that of Azerbaijan.

Georgia, with their access to the sea, their more favorable geography, able to reap transit fees from the Supsa pipeline today, and from the Baku-Çeyhan pipeline tomorrow – their per capita income is two-thirds of Armenia's.

On all international economic indices and assessments, Armenia's rankings are higher than those of our neighbors.

You ask how. Let me cite four reasons.

First, our reforms started earlier, went deeper and are more successfully implemented. Armenia's economic reforms began early,

immediately following independence. Armenia was the first former Soviet republic to aggressively and comprehensively privatize land. As a result, the agriculture sector accounts for a good one-third of our Gross Domestic Product.

Second, our economy was flexible and adapted quickly to new, even overwhelming circumstances, including the blockade. In the process of this adaptation, it became more diversified, putting the emphasis on exportable items less dependent on transportation. As a result, our information technology sector has grown to its current three percent of Gross Domestic Product. This is close to the European average. The jewelry sector is now responsible for a large part of our exports.

Third, we have received generous foreign assistance, in the forms of technical assistance and financial investments. This is only half the story. We have also used this assistance in the right way. The World Bank report assessing countries' institutional performance capacities places Armenia second in the world, and we're first in efficient use of foreign assistance.

Finally, Diaspora involvement and infusion has also led to job creation, importing of new thinking and new technology, and economic development that flies in the face of our closed borders.

Our challenge today is to sustain our high economic growth so that we can more effectively address our high poverty rate and high unemployment. In order to do this, we must embark on the second generation of reforms, economic reforms. We need to eliminate the remaining monopolies, fight cronyism and remove the disbalance that results from unfair tax collection.

The third question was that of our orientation. At the end of the 20th century, the Caucasus had suddenly been transformed into a region, and this region had to decide where to belong – to Europe, to the Middle East or to Asia. Our region is too small to live in isolation, too small to be a viable unit in a globalized world. During the Soviet years, Russia clearly had a major impact on our region. But throughout the centuries, there have been layers of influences – Roman, Byzantine, Mongol, Arab, Persian, the Crusaders, the Turks and the Russians. Therefore, after the collapse, the choice was not an

obvious one. Some said we belong with the Middle East, historically and religiously. Some said we belong with the West, historically, culturally, religiously and politically. Some said we belong with Asia, because of the continuing impact of the last 100 years.

Armenians, and our neighbor Georgians and Azerbaijanis, chose Europe as the direction that would be most beneficial, most natural, most likely to lead to integration.

It was a policy of realism, not optimism that led Armenia to join the Council of Europe, and later, to embark on a cooperation agreement with the European Union. These associations encouraged us to undertake the political and social commitments necessary to make the kind of transition that would ensure the building of a viable, functioning democratic state. We often say that the process of trying to become a member of the European Union will benefit Armenia greatly. Let me be clear: it is not the promise of European Union membership that guides us, but the prospect of such deep integration. We will be beneficiaries of the process.

Now let me come back to Turkey and Karabakh.

Unfortunately, our border with Turkey is still closed and we have no diplomatic relations. In the days immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a vacuum had been created in our region, and Turkey could have stepped in with a regional approach. But it didn't. Thus, it lost the opportunity to rise to the occasion, de-link history from politics, and become a regional player.

Today, Turkey has a second chance to take on the role of regional player. It is now a candidate for European Union membership. It is a NATO member. Turkey can be a political bridge between Europe and the Caucasus. It is in fact a geographic bridge. Thus, Turkey has the obligation – and the opportunity – to truly serve as a connector, as a neighbor. The three countries of the South Caucasus are members of the European Union's Neighborhood Policy. That neighborhood physically includes Turkey. Turkey will be required to behave as a neighbor.

Normal relations with all its neighbors is a requirement of European Union membership for Turkey. Freedom of speech and expression are requirements of European Union membership for

Turkey. Therefore, Armenia would like to see Turkey become a European Union member so that our borders will be open, so that our compatriots and Turkish scholars will speak more freely about Genocide. We would like to see Turkey as a member so that our churches and properties will be protected and restored.

Armenia believes that, at exactly this time, when Turkey is having to reconsider human and civil rights, freedom of expression and religion, it must be encouraged, and persuaded, to acknowledge its past. Such encouragement and persuasion must come from outside, from Turkey's friends in the US – and more importantly, from within Turkish society.

And finally, Karabakh.

Over the course of the last decade, the content and focus of the negotiations on Karabakh have changed dramatically. For us, the basis of resolution is the affirmation of the right of the people of Karabakh to self-determination and international recognition of that right.

Since the conflict began in 1988, international developments and self-determination processes in different parts of the world have led to fundamental changes in international thinking on this issue. Relationships between states, new and old, are evolving. We have witnessed East Timor's independence through a referendum and the signing of an agreement in Sudan concluding a decades-old conflict on the basis of a referendum to be held in one part of the country. There are serious deliberations about the possibility of a referendum to determine Kosovo's status. Among political, legal and academic experts, there is a growing awareness of the possibility and reality of recognizing the right of self-determination in certain circumstances.

Those circumstances nearly exactly describe Karabakh today. Azerbaijan has no control whatsoever over Karabakh, which has achieved the attributes of complete sovereignty in the last 15 years. In addition to the duration and depth of its self-determination, Nagorno Karabakh's situation is further reinforced and made complete by the following facts. First, it seceded legally, according to the laws of the day. Second, the territory in question has never been within the jurisdiction of independent Azerbaijan. Third, Azerbaijan, in perpetrating violence against people that it considered its own citizens, has lost

the moral right to custody over those people. And, finally, there is the de facto political reality of Nagorno Karabakh's proven ability to hold elections, govern its people, protect its borders and conduct international relations.

The only way to a solution is to demonstrate political will and embrace realistic positions. The solution will not be found either through military action or international resolutions, and no solution can be imposed from the outside. This conflict is not about territories. When this conflict began, there were no territories outside Karabakh under Armenian control. Those territories came under Armenian control not only because there was disagreement about Karabakh's status, but also because Azerbaijan attempted to suppress the self-determination attempts, militarily.

Today, this conflict can be resolved if Azerbaijan affirms the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to determine their own future, through some internationally recognized instrument, albeit in the future. That is sufficient for Armenians to begin the process of undoing the consequences of the military conflict. Refugees and territories are consequences. At the heart of the issue is the future and security of the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

This is a huge compromise for Armenians. The expectation was that, last month in Paris, around the negotiating table, the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan would create the turning point in these decade-long negotiations. They couldn't. Neither did they put the nail in the coffin, however. We remain hopeful that Azerbaijan will join us in meeting our compromise.

PURSUIING THE PROMISE OF THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT

It is 30 years since the Helsinki Final Act was signed. The world and the purposes for which it was enacted are no longer with us. Yet the principles, norms and values of that document have endured the test of time, although the vehicles and instruments that have articulated and politically promoted and protected those fundamental principles of human rights and the rights of people, have adapted and changed.

Or perhaps they have endured because they have transformed themselves.

After all, the participating states, too, are not what they used to be. Though still in transition, Armenia, for example, is less fragile, less vulnerable, less inexperienced with the ways of an open society. Independence is already 14 years old. Our institutions are more democratic, our economy more private, our markets more liberal, our trade more diversified, our diplomacy unconstrained and free to interact with North and South, West and East.

Of course, our transition is not complete. But, frankly, everywhere in the OSCE region, economies are in some stage of transition, the rule of law is a work in progress, the movement from citizen rights to human rights still a difficult challenge.

Mr. Chairman, we all know these things. The essential task before us is to make sure the rules, methods and practices of the OSCE adapt sufficiently and appropriately to remain effective and beneficial and

not exacerbate the inevitably uneven power and influence among this group of 55 – where Armenia, San Marino, Monaco and Liechtenstein are members together with the United States, the Russian Federation and the European Union.

It was in a search for such prudent adaptation that in Sofia, at the last OSCE Ministerial Council, we opted to seek the assessments and recommendations of a Panel of Eminent Persons. Indeed, seven wise persons conferred and saw the need for modification.

Mr. Chairman, Armenia remains ready to work further, to participate fully and try to make the OSCE, as an organization, more resilient, more effective and more capable to meet the challenges ahead of us: containing terrorism, the consolidation of democracy, respect for human rights, the expansion of economic opportunity, managing migration in all its manifestations, the resolution of existing and emerging conflicts and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of areas affected by those conflicts. These challenges can only be met if all Participating States avoid seeing the world through the narrow prism of their own domestic political imperatives.

Mr. Chairman, today and 30 years from now, the integrity of the Helsinki Final Act will be protected and preserved only if the integrity of the document is respected. The Helsinki Decalogue is just like the Ten Commandments. Their functionality, appropriateness and efficacy depend on a unified approach, not an expedient and selective one.

That is why when the right of self-determination of the people of Nagorno Karabakh is callously dismissed, we insist on reminding the world that this is not a conflict between principles; this is a people's struggle for self-determination.

Since the conflict began, international developments and self-determination processes in different parts of the world have led to fundamental changes in international thinking on this issue. Relationships between states, new and old, are evolving. We have witnessed East Timor's independence through a referendum and the signing of an agreement in Sudan concluding a decades-old conflict on the basis of a referendum to be held in one part of the country. There are serious deliberations to determine Kosovo's status. Among

political, legal and academic experts, there is a growing awareness of the possibility and reality of recognizing the right of self-determination in certain circumstances.

Those circumstances nearly exactly describe Karabakh today. Azerbaijan has no control whatsoever over Karabakh, which has achieved the attributes of complete sovereignty in the last 15 years. In addition to the duration and depth of its self-determination, Nagorno Karabakh's situation is further reinforced and made complete by the following facts. First, it seceded legally, according to the laws of the day. Second, the territory in question has never been within the jurisdiction of independent Azerbaijan. Third, Azerbaijan, in perpetrating violence against people that it considered its own citizens, has lost the moral right to custody over those people. And, finally, there is the de facto political reality of Nagorno Karabakh's proven ability to hold elections, govern its people, protect its borders and conduct international relations.

In other words, actually in Helsinki language, they are exercising their right to "without external interference, pursue as they wish their political, economic, social and cultural development." This is their right. This was the world's promise to the peoples who lived on the other side of the Iron Curtain, some of whom, like us, are sitting around this table, today. The people of Nagorno Karabakh are no less deserving of that promise.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me express Armenia's appreciation for the work done by the Slovenian Chairmanship. The proof of Slovenia's hospitality and generosity is evident throughout this Ministerial Council. We congratulate Belgium for assuming the Chairmanship next.

BUILDING A MORE HUMANE EUROPE

I am privileged to speak on one of the four political priorities on which the heads of state and government had said they would like to see concrete progress for this ministerial session.

Building a more humane Europe – this has been Europe's intention all along. Assuring the well-being and dignity of human beings is the European dream. The values we call European – democracy, human rights, rule of law – these are values which are upheld by all current and aspiring members of the European community for the obvious reason that we are convinced that these values, if promoted, can provide the framework for a dignified, humane existence for all.

This is what we have said for half a century. What the heads of state and government said in May, however, is that these values must be not pronounced but implemented, not adopted but applied, in order for European values to find a home throughout Europe.

This is a huge expectation of the Council, but this expectation is justified because the Council of Europe has already made major contributions towards these goals.

But just by looking at today's Europe, we see that the job is half-done. If in the 21st century, we need conventions to legally outlaw the morally repugnant and intolerable acts of terrorism and trafficking, that means that in the 20th century, we didn't do enough to break boundaries and make communities.

If we need to allocate funds, resources and experts to develop intercultural dialogue, then, all this time, we have been talking more than listening, we have been speaking more than hearing.

On the other hand, we have done more in this half-century than had been done at any other time in history. We changed the rules, moved dividing lines and raised expectations. Those who claim historical, cultural, religious, geographic membership in Europe now want economic and political membership, too. As a result, those who call Europe a voluntary empire are right. Those who say that in fact it is possible to have regime-change, European style, are right.

Mr. Chairman, following the Summit Meeting in Warsaw and prior to this ministerial follow-up session, much work has been done and we owe this to your leadership. I want to refer to certain specific goals which the Committee of Ministers has identified, and which my country, too, holds dear.

The first is strengthening the long-term security of Europeans. The right to life assumes safety and security. It is a good thing therefore that many countries, including my own, have acceded to the three conventions opened for signature in Warsaw.

The second is the review of the Council of Europe's strategy for social cohesion to seek protection of vulnerable groups and ensure equal access to social rights. The social and political risks of persistent and excessive inequality have come knocking on our door. Successful globalization without successful integration means we have put development before people. As a result, globalized societies together with modern technologies can and have transformed diversity and alienation into antagonism. This goes counter to the idea of Europe where the search is on for security and prosperity through unity.

The third is the campaign to combat violence against women and for the protection of children. A task force has just been set up for the first, and a summit is being planned in Monaco, for the second. We endorse the objective of 'building a Europe for and with children' fully cognizant that protecting women is a necessary prerequisite.

Finally, there is a need for the development of intercultural dialogue, within European societies and between Europe and the rest

of the world. This is a major challenge and one on which the long term cohesion of our democratic societies and international stability depends, especially in a climate in which cultural and religious divides are threatening to override the traditional and familiar political and ideological differences of the past. But, this too, can be done, since Europe has had a deep tradition of consistent, continuous, institutional dialogue dating back to the Middle Ages. The strategy on intercultural dialogue adopted in Faro, Portugal, clearly sets out the vision, the courses of action and the instruments. These include a multi-institutional platform, greater focus on cultural diversity and improved international cooperation to highlight the core values and universal rights that are our best response.

Mr. Chairman, let me speak now about Armenia and state the obvious: these universal democratic and economic challenges come against a background of national and regional concerns as well. This is true for all of us, and as we build our state and nurture our society, our greatest task is to build democratic institutions which will serve us consistently and faithfully.

We are struggling with this in Armenia. In ten days, we will hold a nationwide referendum on a package of constitutional reforms. This reform package is fully endorsed by this organization. These propose to modify the Constitution's provisions regarding human rights and at the same time create the necessary mechanisms to protect those rights, to promote the democratic processes which are based on those rights, and to reinforce the democratic institutions which will protect those rights.

The reforms introduce serious checks and balances among the three branches of our government. The powers of Parliament are enhanced, thus so are those of political parties and, necessarily, the voters. The Constitution also mandates the independence of the judiciary. Finally, by strengthening the role of local governing bodies, the democratic rights of the individual are protected and reinforced. In other words, the powers of the president are abridged and the powers of the other branches are strengthened. That's regime change, European style.

Mr. Chairman, the focus is on the strengthening of institutions, because more than elections, it is the existence and capacity of democratic institutions that define and facilitate a society's ability to function democratically. That is why Armenia co-authored the proposal to create the Forum on the Future of Democracy; that is why we supported the Center for Local Self-Governance Reforms.

The passage of our constitutional referendum will mean that we have nearly completed all of our Council of Europe commitments. Only one major commitment remains. That is the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. This one obligation remains incomplete. But we are hopeful that 2006 will bring us closer to fulfilling that obligation as well.

The negotiations of the last year have in fact brought us to a point that makes us think that the process is moving in a positive direction. We can only hope that now when we resume negotiations, that there will not be any straying from the commitments and agreements that have been reached thus far.

It is also very important at this critical stage, that there be an end to calls for a military solution, because that runs counter to commitments to this organization, and also adversely affects the favorable atmosphere that exists today.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, I took part yesterday in the discussion at the Secretary General's home, with Luxembourg's Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, on the issue of elaborating a framework for more effective cooperation between our organization and the European Union. This discussion must continue because the effective cooperation between these two, on common priorities, will greatly contribute to building a more humane Europe.

ON THE URGENCY OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

Thank you for giving me this opportunity today to speak with you.

There is no more current theme today, in Armenia, than constitutional reforms. I'm pleased to be addressing this theme with this audience today, because it is you students who will be affected by the changes proposed, and it is you who can become the advocates of these changes.

This campaign is both a political campaign and an educational campaign. It is important that we, the voters, truly understand what these changes mean. This issue ought to be objectively, honestly, openly discussed so that everyone can in fact reach the right conclusion. That's what I want to do here today.

I have followed the discussions surrounding the constitutional changes – both the discussions in the parliament during the three readings before this package was passed, and the discussions that have followed – in the press, and in various forums.

What is clear is that those opposed to these changes do not have any logical, grounded objections. The most vocal opponents voice objections that are really excuses with no underpinnings. Why these excuses? We can speculate about that. But first let me talk about the excuses themselves.

These excuses fall into two categories: Those that are general and ideological, and those that ostensibly address the content of the reforms, the actual changes.

Among the ideological excuses for opposing the reforms, there are three fundamental and often-repeated accusations: One is that the political environment is not right today for such a serious discussion. The second is that today's authorities are not legitimate, therefore they do not have the right to propose constitutional reforms. And the third is that today's authorities have violated the Constitution, and therefore have no right to discuss constitutional reforms.

All three of these excuses give more importance to the opposition's quarrel with the authorities, than the Constitution and its needs. They presume that a power struggle is more important than what Armenian society needs to move forward socially, politically, even economically. After all, that is what a Constitution does. In Armenian, the *sahmanadrutyun* does what the word says – it identifies the limits, defines the parameters, establishes perspectives on individual rights, society's rights and the responsibilities of the state and the government to its people. It defines this most important relationship. In English, the word 'constitution' means this is the document that defines who we are as a people, what our values are, what constitutes our ideology and our value system. This is what a constitution is, and to oppose the idea of it, or our opportunity to define it and improve it, means opposing the right of a society to grow, to evolve, to flourish.

So, why should the people be punished as a result of what the authorities may or may not have done? If the authorities were illegitimate, wouldn't international organizations have made some statement in that regard? If the political environment is not right today, when will it be right? Who is to say when it's right? There will always be political forces, in opposition, which will consider the environment not appropriate for something.

Was the environment suitable in 1995, when the Constitution was first passed? Imagine if we had fallen victim to similar excuses then and had not adopted this Constitution. What if we didn't have a Constitution in 1998 when there was an unexpected change of

administration? What kind of chaos would have reigned in 1999, after October 27, had we not had a Constitution? Good or bad, this Constitution has worked for this republic at this time. Now, we need to modify it in order for it to keep pace with our changing needs.

It is ironic but those in opposition are rejecting the very reforms which will in fact go a long way toward facilitating the improvement of the political climate.

The opposition to the content of the changes is also ill-thought and unreasonable. There are certain myths which are thrown about in order to try to prove that these changes can adversely affect the life and well-being of this country and its people.

Myth 1: the reforms make possible changes in Armenia's borders without requiring a referendum.

Myth 2: non-citizens will have limitless opportunity to buy up land.

Myth 3: by removing the obstacle to dual citizenship, Armenia's domestic politics will be controlled by those living outside Armenia.

Myth 4: these changes will make the president immune from criminal prosecution, and in addition, he will be able to run again for two more terms.

Each of these truly is a myth.

Regarding our territorial integrity: the proposed change in the Constitution is simply procedural. The requirements remain the same – that any changes in borders must be approved by the National Assembly; that is, by the people's direct representatives.

Regarding the purchase of land by non-citizens: The Constitution continues to preclude the purchase of land by non-citizens. Even if the obstacle to dual citizenship is removed, land ownership can continue to be defined by legislation that limits the privileges of non-citizens.

Regarding dual citizenship itself: These changes simply propose that the obstacle to dual citizenship be removed from the Constitution and that the status be defined by legislation. It is assumed that such legislation will address the most problematic aspects, including voting rights, military service and tax responsibilities. These rights will not be freely and indiscriminately given away. On the other hand, we will not ignore the majority of Armenians who

today are not and cannot become citizens of Armenia, or worse, who must resign from their Armenian citizenship because life forces them to live and work elsewhere.

So, if we do away with the myths, we can spend the remaining days actually exploring the real issues at hand. We can do this with two important considerations in mind.

First, the constitutional referendum must not be seen as a matter of life and death; if the voters say no, it's not a fatal blow. No one is going to blame us or punish us for exercising our democratic right to free expression. But we must understand that if we say no, then the country loses out, and we lose a big opportunity to promote our economic and democratic processes. If we say no, it will be years before we have another opportunity to change the Constitution to fit our needs: certainly not for four years at least. In 2007, we have parliamentary elections; in 2008, presidential elections. The new administration – whoever they may be – will need at least two years before they will be able to address such an issue.

And secondly, we must see constitutional reform as a natural thing. A constitution is a living, vibrant document. It evolves with a society and a people, over time. Haven't our society and country changed dramatically in these ten years? It's natural that we would want our primary legal document to change with us. It's an expected process. There is nothing unusual here. The US Constitution has been amended 27 times. The German Constitution, adopted in 1949, has also been changed 27 times. The Italian Constitution, passed in 1947, has been modified 11 times. France's 13 times. Austria's 12 times. Slovakia, which adopted a Constitution in 1992, has already made three changes. Our neighbor Georgia, has already changed theirs five times. In 2002, Azerbaijan made fundamental changes to its Constitution.

Thus, a constitution is, must be, a dynamic relevant live guidepost. In our region, we are lagging behind in this process.

For a moment, imagine if our Constitution had provided for Parliament to amend the Constitution, itself, by its own two-thirds majority. Such is the case in many countries, including Georgia and Russia. If that were the law in Armenia, today, we wouldn't even be

having this argument. The reforms would have already been accepted, passed, adopted, and that would have ensured our country's normal development.

Having spent this much time trying to understand the unreasonable, disingenuous objections of the opposition – objections which really have nothing to do with the Constitution at all, let's look at some of the important proposed changes and their significance.

First, these reforms introduce serious checks and balances among the three branches of our government. Parliament receives new powers, at the expense of presidential power over that body, and the prime minister, who represents the parliamentary majority, also receives new powers, again at the expense of the powers of the president. As a result of both these changes, Parliament's role and power are clearly enhanced. This means that the role of political parties too will grow, and this will make it easier for a genuine political environment to develop. Finally, the balance of powers is made possible since the Constitution broadens and enables the independence of the third branch, the judiciary.

Generally, then, this means that if the original Constitution defined and developed the rights of the single leader, these changes broaden and enhance the rights and strengths of the institutions, so that the institutions can compensate for whatever this or that individual leader might lack.

Second, the new changes strengthen individual human rights. It brings them more in line with European demands, values and standards. A new concept, a new term is introduced into our Constitution for the first time: human dignity is upheld as a basic right. This is an ideal which lies at the base of American, French and other constitutions and human rights documents – a man's right to live in dignity. With these constitutional changes, Armenian society will be saying that we, too, comprehend and uphold the value of human dignity.

I can understand that despite these improvements, there will nevertheless be those who would disagree on solid political and ideological grounds and prefer a strong presidential system, or a completely parliamentary system. But, at this time in our history, as we decide how to vote in this referendum that is being observed by so many,

there is the big picture to keep in mind. This document must be viewed from a larger perspective: the future of the country, deepening democratic processes and economic development, and the need to mobilize the greater Armenian potential.

Let's look at the big picture, from three perspectives: First, from Armenia itself. Second, from Europe. Third, from the Diaspora.

First, at the level of the Republic of Armenia, today we find ourselves in the midst of a constitutional crisis. The legal-constitutional foundation of this and any country, a most important pillar of statehood on which are built the state and society, that foundation, the Constitution, must be a living, developing, evolving organ, which in order to remain vibrant and relevant must be nurtured in five ways, through five arteries: a. constitutional reforms themselves, b. constitutional law, c. periodic legal interpretations of constitutional provisions, d. national judicial precedents and e. international judicial precedents.

We've had our Constitution for ten years; it has seen no changes. So, that one artery is closed. The Constitution we now have does not make any provision for constitutional law, so that second avenue, too, is closed. We don't have the opportunities for periodic interpretation since access to the court is limited narrowly in this document. During these ten years, there have been thousands of government decisions, and only six have reached the court to require constitutional interpretation and determine their constitutionality. In the same time period, from 1996 to 2004, the Austrian Constitutional Court has reviewed 2863 decisions; 2340 in Croatia; the European average is over 2000. Even in Russia and Georgia, the frequency is much higher than ours: 144 in Russia. 102 in Georgia. This is a necessary process which is missing in our current system.

Judicial precedents – national or international – don't exist. Without a real independent judiciary, there is no reliable or consistent case law. International precedents don't exist because no Armenia-relevant issues have been heard in any European court and no decisions reached. So, those two avenues, too, are closed.

Therefore, simply by passing these constitutional reforms, we open the main artery. And more. Those reforms include enough new provisions so that the other avenues too will be opened: Our citizens will

be able to take their cases all the way to the constitutional court. An independent judiciary will help create precedents, there will be more frequent interpretation and use of this document. All of these are important for the development and maturation of our statehood.

At the second, European, level, first let's affirm that as members of the Council of Europe, we have taken on many commitments. Most have been completed. There are a few which are still outstanding and without constitutional reforms, they simply cannot be completed. We can't adopt laws on the judicial system, on judges, on the status of the city of Yerevan, on the ombudsman. We can do none of these without changing the Constitution to allow us to make changes in these areas. In other words, we are committed to reforming the Constitution, if for no other reason than to make these changes.

But as far as Europe is concerned, the issue is much bigger. We, Armenia, Armenians, voluntarily, all of us together, made the political decision to join the European family. Today, all of Europe, even risking criticism about interference in our domestic matters, is saying aloud that these reforms are good for Armenia and that Armenians must pass these reforms.

In the end, it is finally up to us to go through with this. Of course, we can say no to Europe. And by voting no, we would be doing just that, but what would we gain? We would be limiting the areas of interaction with Europe. We would be countering Europe's interests and our own national interests. In this decade and a half of our independence, this is one of the most important areas where Europe's interests and ours overlap completely and directly.

And finally, the effect of this vote with regard to the Diaspora. Unfortunately, this too has fallen off our discussion agenda. The Diaspora is an indivisible part of our nation. Our compatriots live outside Armenia not voluntarily, but because history and destiny has taken them there. We have a moral responsibility as a state to rally the Diaspora around Armenia, to make them connected, to make them feel a part of this country. Not just its past, but its present and future too. Not with additional or special rights, but with rights, nevertheless. And responsibilities. We can't turn that segment of our nation away and lose the value and benefit they would bring.

Let me be specific. We are not talking about providing Diasporans with citizenship. We are talking about the daily loss of Armenia's own citizens. Our embassies receive applications daily, from those who are forced to turn in their Armenian citizenship, because for economic, work, or other reasons they are in foreign countries, they must take on foreign citizenship, and our Constitution requires that they therefore resign from Armenian citizenship. We have no choice, we must remove the obstacle to dual citizenship as quickly as possible. That will make it possible for all forces to sit down and develop wise, appropriate, responsible legislation for making dual citizenship possible without harming our national interests.

It is these individual, national and international concerns that must drive us to work to pass these constitutional reforms. We need them for our own progress as a state and as a society.

CULTURAL TERRORISM A NEW KIND OF VIOLENCE

At a time when the world is faced with new types of violence and must therefore seek new ways to find peace, UNESCO is faced with the hardest challenge of all: to create the defenses of peace in the minds of men. For 60 years, this organization has promoted education, science and culture because we know that it has been through education, science and culture that all our civilizations have been nurtured and have flourished. Education, science and culture cultivate peace and are its fruits.

Each of us recognizes this in our own lands, in our own countries.

In Armenia, education gave us our first university eight centuries ago. Today, our school enrollment and literacy rate is among the best in the world.

Ten centuries ago, science provided us the tools with which to study medicinal herbs under our feet, and the stars over our head.

But it is culture that saved us. My people have lived in diaspora for far longer than we have had a state, and we have contributed to and learned from cultures across the globe.

In Singapore, we have a church which is 200 years old. The Armenian church in Dhaka is even older. In Macao, the cemetery markers are memorials to Armenian merchants from the 1600s. In Bangkok, the cemeteries are newer, but only slightly. The local governments all protect and maintain these cultural monuments consciously and generously, because they understand that these monuments of a culture long gone are theirs as much as ours.

Delivered in Paris on October 7, 2005, at the 33rd UNESCO General Conference

There is a similar cultural heritage in Europe and the Middle East. From the tombs of Armenian medieval kings here in Paris to ancient communities in Poland and Ukraine, the traces of a continuous Armenian presence in Europe are guarded.

No better example exists than the Armenian island of St. Lazzaro, in Venice, claimed equally by Armenians and Italians as part of their cultural patrimony.

In Jerusalem, the old Armenian Quarter is an integral part of the Biblical city's past and future.

Throughout the various Arab countries of the Middle East, it is only the age and quantity of Armenian structures that differs. The care and attention which Armenians have enjoyed is pervasive.

In our immediate neighborhood, Iran is home to cultural and religious monuments built by Armenians over the last millennium. The government of Iran itself takes responsibility for their upkeep, and facilitates their preservation by others.

Against this background then, we can only wish that our other neighbors were equally tolerant and enlightened. In Turkey, Armenians have been forced to stand by as centuries-old churches were transformed into mosques. Today, those structures which serve as striking evidence of centuries of Armenian presence on those lands, those structures are turned into barns, shooting targets, and increasingly become fodder for bulldozers. This cannot be anything but a campaign to wipe out a minority community and its identity. How else to explain why even a modern structure and institution like a hospital is systematically denied the right to acquire gifts of land? Istanbul's large Armenian hospital complex has been forced to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights to reassert its right to land ownership and therefore, sustainability.

On the other hand, as of a few months ago, Turkish authorities have not only allowed, but are actively encouraging and facilitating the renovation of a medieval jewel – the monastery of Akhtamar. We can only hope that what is happening on this small island not far from our border will not be a lone public relations effort, an exception to the rule, but the first example of a new set of European standards.

But Mr. Chairman, if we are to wait for our other neighbor Azerbaijan to be fully integrated into Europe in order for ethnic cleansing to stop there, then it may be too late. In Azerbaijan, the effort to do away with Armenians, which began even before Sovietization, continues unabated. But now that there are no Armenians left in Azerbaijan, it is religious and cultural monuments which remain under attack.

In the Balkans and Afghanistan, experts have documented the historical, political, psychological effects of the destruction of cultural monuments. We have all learned that indeed, the destruction of a people's culture is an essential element in ethnic cleansing. Ethnic cleansing involves more than killing and dislocation. The destruction of a people's cultural and architectural legacy effectively separates them from their past and their place, destroys their identity, memory and history.

Mr. Chairman, there was no war in 1922 when massive hand-carved stone cross tombstones, older than Europe's oldest churches, began to disappear in Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan region. There was no war in the years between 1998 and 2002 when 4000 of these giant sculptures were knocked over, piled onto railroad cars and carted away under the Azerbaijani government's watchful eyes. There was no war in 1975 when a seventh century church was completely demolished in the center of Nakhichevan.

Cultural destruction can be a potent weapon in campaigns of political oppression and tyranny. This is cultural terrorism, Mr. Chairman, in an era when new kinds of violence with new names are used in political and ideological warfare. And it must be combatted, the perpetrators must be punished with the same resolve and determination as those who use terrorism as a tool against man.

Mr. Chairman, Armenia benefits hugely from UNESCO's Memory of the World program, thanks to which our the holdings of our depository of ancient, unique manuscripts is being digitized. We benefit from the Remember the Future program as well, and we are honored that some of our ancient monuments are included in the World Heritage List. We are set to ratify the Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage, and are pleased that the tra-

ditional Armenian reed instrument – the duduk – may be included in the Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. What we want to work on next, Mr. Chairman, is the elaboration of a UNESCO legal instrument which will hold accountable those involved in the "Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage."

Armenia attaches great importance to all of UNESCO's initiatives in the region. We welcome them for what they try to do directly, as well as their overall intent to foster regional cooperation and development. That is, for obvious reasons, our priority as well. We remain committed to work with this organization in finding ways for our common human values and cultural, scientific interests to take precedence over our individual differences and divisions.

ARMENIA COMING BACK HOME

I am privileged to receive this prestigious award, il Grosso d'Oro Veneziano. This is a special day for me. And this is, of course, a special place, a special foundation and a special family with a glorious history of 650 years stretching all the way back to one of the greatest poets of all times, Dante Alighieri.

Dante's descendants valued their heritage and helped pass on his legacy. This legacy clearly manifests itself in modern Italy and the region of Veneto.

Italy and Veneto also share a legacy with Armenians. There is much symbolism in the fact that Armenia's coming back to Europe is being noted and celebrated here, in Italy.

Armenian-Italian connections are based on rich and ancient traditions. It was in Italy in 1512, that Hakob Meghapart published the first book ever in Armenian. The *Urbatagirk* (Book of Days) was followed in 1513 with the first published Armenian calendar. The renowned Briton, Lord Byron, referred to the Venetian island of San Lazzaro as a fortress of Armenian independence, since the Armenian monks of the Order of Mekhitar had found refuge there in the early 1700s. For the last three centuries, that haven has turned into a scientific and cultural locus.

Today, if you ask the Mekhitarist fathers whether they are Venetian, they will say yes. If you ask them whether they are Armenian, they will say yes. One can say that they were pioneers in establishing a common European identity, about which we speak proudly, yet with some apprehension.

Delivered in Veneto, Italy on September 24, 2005, upon being awarded the Grosso d'Oro Veneziano Award by the Masi Foundation

If it used to be religion that bound Europe together a millennium ago, it certainly isn't any longer. Nor is it the economic advancement that was specific to Europe two centuries ago. It isn't ideology either, which was both adhesive and encumbrance for decades in the last century.

Europe is more than its common history, more than geography, more than a club for members. All those who have said Europe is an idea are right. It is the idea of a Europe that is the common, if unattainable ideal.

Even those living outside this space have imagined and desired a Europe which can be addressed collectively, a partner which can be enlisted conveniently, a Europe to which they yearn to belong.

Armenia is Europe. This is a fact. It's not a response to a question.

The collapse of the USSR brought us to a point of economic and political crisis. I remember our discussions in Armenia, before our entry into the Council of Europe. There were many questions about the choice of path to take.

Dante once said that the hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in a period of moral crisis maintain their neutrality. I'm happy to say I won't be going there because I was among the loudest advocates of the European path.

The choice was clear. Armenians believe in the values of the European enlightenment, of European civilization. The moral, ethical and existential choices that bring individuals and societies to select democracy over other forms of government, rule of law over rule of man, human rights over selective rights – those choices have been made.

A people who have lived under subjugation, have seen ethnic cleansing and genocide even before the terms existed, have lived as a minority without rights, now belong to a world where warring neighbors have found that they can accept new borders based on realities on the ground and move on. Europe's nation-states have found that they can transcend borders, without diminishing or ignoring cultural spaces, without expecting historical identities to vanish.

The European Neighborhood Policy brings Armenia back home since Armenia's foreign policy priority is the gradual integration of Armenia into European institutions.

In his presentation, my good friend, Senator Demetrio Volcic, Member of the European Parliament, described in ponderous detail my country's foreign policy priorities. I must admit that he is well aware of them not as a common bystander, but as a caring and thoughtful professional, who has proven to be instrumental in helping to integrate Armenia into the modern European architecture.

The double-digit Gross Domestic Product growth, which Armenia achieved in each of the last five years, the successful admission into the World Trade Organization, the spirit of free enterprise, the changing political system and society are promising signs that we are on the right track. However, it is too early to say that the European standard is around the corner. It is not as close yet as Europe itself, as Venice, as Verona, as the shared cultural and religious values of the past and present.

To highlight and share those values, we will be launching a two-month long Days of Italy in Armenia, beginning in early October. This project has received the blessing and patronage of Italy's President Carlo Ciampi, Armenia's President Robert Kocharian and Veneto Governor Giancarlo Galan. The centerpiece of these important events will be an exhibition of the riches from the *Isla Armena*, the island of San Lazzaro.

In light of all this, then, the Fondazione Masi has, in bestowing upon me this award, put a great stamp of approval on Armenia, its foreign policy directions, its European orientation, its future.

UNITED RESOURCES, UNITED RESPONSE, BY NATIONS UNITED

When the Millennium Summit was held in 2000, in another New York, in another era, before unspeakable security challenges overtook our agendas, it was the lack of universal economic development that was our supreme security challenge.

That is why the Millennium Development Goals were born. It took the will and determination of nearly 200 world leaders to put forward eight straightforward, obvious objectives which can be summed up in Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen's eloquent postulation: Development is Freedom.

In these five years, these goals have become no less imperative. Pretending that anything less will do in this era of huge wealth creation is disingenuous, dangerous and unfair.

If global security is our focus, and we are convinced that the road to security is through democracy, then we must remember Eleanor Roosevelt, who nearly 60 years ago, in working on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, articulated the obvious: men in need are not free men.

It is only through the achievement of these goals that man will live "in greater freedom".

Mr. President, in Armenia, where economic resources are limited but our people's will is not, we have been able to register high economic growth. Yet, the challenge – ours and the world's – is to turn economic achievements into human development advances.

Delivered in New York on September 18, 2005, during the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Armenia looks forward to each year's United Nations Human Development Report because it's like a report card. Fortunately, each year, we have received a good report card, we have recorded forward movement, we have recorded improvement. This year, we have placed number 83, ahead of all our neighbors.

We should not underestimate these gains. But if we're going to be fair and forward-looking, then neither should we exaggerate them. We must look at the promise of this index and see in it that there are gaps we must close.

First, we must target ways to accelerate poverty reduction. A society is judged by how it deals with those most vulnerable. In Armenia, poverty is concentrated in the rural areas. We must ensure that our high economic growth trickles down to the individual families outside cities and in the regions. So, economic development for us means integrated rural development, it means identifying and encouraging the conditions which favor development and enable unleashing production capacity. Just as the Millennium Development Goals require a partnership between rich and poor countries, we must foster partnership between the rich and poor in our country, thus stepping up the pace of development.

Second, we are turning democracy into a tool for development. Democratic institutions and processes are not just ends. They are also means to creating the necessary political and economic environment which leads to distributed growth and dignified development. The cruelties inherent in the process of massive economic readjustment which we have been undergoing have led to a sense of powerlessness on the part of ordinary citizens. Stable, consistent, transparent, strong democratic institutions empower each citizen. Democracy is more than elections. Democracy is institutions which are egalitarian and predictable and constrain the actions of the elite thus preventing uneven playing fields. In other words, we need strong democratic institutions and legislation to guard against the weaknesses of human nature.

We will not continue to be satisfied at being ahead of our neighbors, in the middle tier of all of the countries of the world. Being there today is satisfactory only because we have demonstrated that against all odds, despite geography, in spite of history, we know how to survive.

Armenia is a small landlocked country with few natural resources. We've become accustomed to saying that our greatest natural resource is our people, because indeed all the other resources which exist in the countries around us – oil and gas – are not to be found on our territory.

But, Mr. President, I can tell you that if we did have oil, we would use oil revenues to double our education budget, because education is essential for change, because education creates new dreams and the ability to fulfill those dreams.

We would use those oil revenues to double our social security budget because there are still painful gaps between our people's dreams and prospects.

We would use the money to double our environmental protection effort, because it is the surest investment plan that a country can have.

Mr. President, what we would not do is double our military budget. What we would not do is create an imaginary external threat to legitimize our inactions. We would not pretend that there are simplistic, zealous remedies to complex social, economic and political challenges. In other words, we would not presume that military force is a tool either in domestic or foreign policy. Military force is not an option in ruling people.

Mr. President, when it comes to regional conflicts, advocating military solutions is not only unrealistic, but it demonstrates a patent lack of understanding of democracy, human rights and rule of law. The founders of the United Nations knew that security, development and human rights go together.

Self-determination is a human right, Mr. President. 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.

Mr. President, countries like mine come to these annual meetings with huge expectations. We come wanting to participate, contribute, give and take.

If the foreign minister of a country that is obviously small and, frankly, imperfect, doesn't have the right to moralize about our collective future, then allow me just for a moment, to dream as a citizen of the world.

The prospect of United Nations reforms has been the beginning of a promise of a world that looks a bit more like our world today. Mr. President, we may not agree here, now, this week, this year, but we will have to agree on reforming this institution some time. We cannot pretend that we don't know our history, that we don't clearly see the realities facing us, that we don't know that the world has changed. It is not 1945 any longer.

Still, it is reassuring that the principles enshrined in the United Nations charter written three generations ago remain significant. That's because the spirit of San Francisco in 1945, the global compact that was forged, was a revolution. It affirmed that generations are accountable to future ones, that states are accountable to each other, and that together, states can, must, guarantee peace in the world. The formula by which they agreed to achieve that goal worked.

Today, we need to rework the formula, to reaffirm the responsibility and accountability of states to their citizens and to one another, of international institutions to their members. We need the democratization of international relations, of international institutions, and we need fair representation, earned representation around the decision-making table.

Earned representation Mr. President, where states engaged in promoting and protecting human rights and rule of law have the right to be presented on the Human Rights Council, states serious about democratic and economic development have the opportunity to be part of the Economic and Social Council, and where states committed to the progress and dignity of the international community have the opportunity to be part of the leadership of the world community.

There is nothing ambitious about these goals. It is natural that national interests will differ. That is why this international institution must step in to fill that gap by assuring participation and cooperation, in exchange for commitments and action.

It's all about being accountable to our children. What if we don't achieve the Millennium Development Goals even as the world economy continues to create wealth, and half the world's population continues to find the fruits of that wealth out of reach? How do we explain this to our children?

What if we, in our region, don't take this opportunity to make peace and leave behind war, its memories, its consequences, its social, economic, emotional legacy? Then, what are we leaving our children?

What if we don't learn from the past, reject our collective "responsibility to protect" and allow yet again and again governments to plan and carry out torture, ethnic cleansing, genocide against their citizens? How will we face our children?

When the United Nations was formed, following two great world wars, it gave the people of the world hope and faith in their leaders, in their future, for the lives of their children.

Today, following huge catastrophes – man-made and natural – it seems that the peoples of the world need again to have their faith restored. Devastation like that caused by the tsunami and Katrina, violence such as that being perpetrated in Darfur, carnage that we witnessed in London, make us question ourselves, our neighbors, our assumptions.

Our answers to ourselves and our children must be about united momentum, united resources, united responses, by nations, united. The United Nations can still be that answer.

ARMENIA AND LEBANON UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S DREAMS

It is a pleasure and an honor to speak at the commencement ceremony and the 50th anniversary of an institution whose life parallels and reflects the history, experiences and transitions that have made Lebanon. Armenians are proud to be an inextricable part of that history.

As a representative of the Armenian government, I am pleased that today, the links between our two states – the Lebanese Republic and the Republic of Armenia – are as warm and friendly as those between our peoples. Armenia and Lebanon understand each other's dreams and are willing to act together in the name of a shared, prosperous future.

Armenians lived through Lebanon's difficult years in the last century, just as Lebanon had welcomed Armenians in the century's complicated first years.

The survivors of the Genocide, wandering refugees, orphaned and dislocated, reached these shores and cities, where a most hospitable host welcomed the remnants of a traumatized population trying to reconstruct lives and construct communities. Homeless and destitute, they recognized that they needed support institutions – church, school, newspaper, and association.

This was the need in all Diaspora communities, but nowhere did this pattern prevail and succeed as it did in Lebanon. The large numbers of newcomers relative to the local population, a country

accustomed to confessional identities, a dynamic economy, multiethnic and pluralist – this was and is the Lebanon where Armenians put down roots and thrived.

I never lived in Lebanon, but I feel as if I have, because I was here often, having been born and raised in Syria. The birth pangs and growing pains of the modern Middle East form my memories and my outlook.

I remember 1967 and my father's disappointment over the Palestinians' loss. We knew first-hand the aspirations for a homeland, and we could imagine the frustration and pain.

I remember 1970 and being sent home from school when Gamal Abdel Nasser died and with him died the dream of Arab unity.

I remember 1975 and my summer in Beirut, on the way to college in Armenia, when shots were fired as part of what became a civil war. And from a distance we followed with agony as whole cities and neighborhoods went up in flames.

I remember being here in 1986, after a decade of absence, only to be devastated by the devastation.

I remember 1999 and my first visit as foreign minister, to discover a rebirth, a new Lebanon, and a new era of survivors. Today, as I drive, I see a resurrected capital with a people committed to their own vision of their country's future.

Today, there is a new vision for Lebanon and the Middle East. Those for whom this is the center of the world, as well as those who still see this part of the world as the land of the Arabian Nights, are looking for the prudence, wisdom and the traditions of the East to be transformed into egalitarian opportunities for a stable region on which the world depends for much more than oil.

Armenians in and out of Lebanon want this no less than anyone else. We, too, live in a part of the world that was fashioned according to individual visions and not in reflection of the region's realities or requirements. For us, what happens in the Middle East is a guideline for what we can expect in our region.

After all, this isn't far from our own backyard. Even without the inestimable benefit of an active, mobile, cosmopolitan Diaspora, Beirut is

only 600 miles from Yerevan, as the crow flies. With globalization no longer a theory but a way of life, there really isn't much separating us.

On the contrary, much connects us. Number one among them is education. Armenia's educational institutions have become the alma maters for many young men and women from the Middle East. And the educational facilities of Lebanon are part of the life and legacy of the Diaspora.

That legacy is visible, tangible and appreciated in this educational institution. The 50 years of excellence, relevance, and perseverance of Haigazian is the kind of legacy and vision we must protect, cherish and nurture, not neglect and dismantle.

These institutions, whether in Beirut, Cyprus, and Venice or, Jerusalem, or Istanbul, these are the symbols and proof not only of a people's determination to survive but also to prosper and to ensure continuity no matter where. I saw this first as a Diasporan who benefited from the vision and largesse of the educational institutions of the Mekhitarist Fathers and the Armenian General Benevolent Union. Later, as a young adult, I profited from the serious regard in which the Soviet Republic of Armenia held its educational institutions when I studied at the Yerevan Polytechnic Institute. As a former engineer and now a diplomat, I know that education is what comes first, last and always in the life of any community, any people, any polity, any nation, any country that is serious about its future.

Life is about learning. Life is learning to live as a member of a society. Education is the transmission of civilization and common values and a common memory. Without these, there is no shared future. When people are well-informed, they can govern and be governed. Aristotle said, "All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth."

I'm not here to talk about empires. I'm talking about things within your reach – about rebuilding Lebanon, about moving Armenia out of transition.

When we had a fatherland – inaccessible, inhospitable, withdrawn into itself, with its politics and identity decided and shaped by forces outside its borders – it was natural that our communities throughout

the world, large or small, new or old, often thought of themselves as substitutes for the real country, as a virtual fatherland.

There is no longer any need to live a substitute or virtual reality. The Republic of Armenia exists, it is independent, and it is ours. It still needs its Diaspora, more than ever, not to substitute but to complement. We must cooperate, not compete. The challenge is to succeed together, not to fail separately, not to be led by indifference and complacency. If Armenia's policy of complementarity has succeeded in our foreign relations, perhaps it's time to announce a policy of complementarity with our Diaspora – a One-Armenia policy, where the Armenia of our dreams turns into the Armenia of our future.

Haigazian is a building block in that dream. It is here and must stay, by all means possible. It is well-received, it is respected and it is loved. Its alumni are everywhere, and we want you to become the builders of that dream – in Lebanon, or wherever you choose. Come to Armenia and participate in Armenia's efforts to grow, to bloom and to yield the fruits.

Haigazian has succeeded because it knew when and how to adapt. This is the ultimate Armenian skill, it is also the characteristic that put Lebanon at the heart of a transforming Middle East. Dear graduates, in this century, you and those who come after you will learn more than how to read and write, you will train for more than one career. You will learn that there is no end to learning – for those who can't learn, relearn, unlearn and learn again will not be able to keep pace with the personal, professional, national and international challenges that face us.

I am convinced the hundredth anniversary is around the corner, and may we celebrate it in a country, in a region, in a world of peace and prosperity.

BELIEVING IN THE PROSPECT OF PEACE, THE PROMISE OF DEMOCRACY

We commend and appreciate the simple act of convening this conference. It was important for everyone. It was significant for those in Iraq who need to know that the world continues to remain engaged, and it is reinforcing for those involved in the effort to re-build Iraq.

The people of Iraq need and deserve the persistent political and economic involvement of all of us around the world. Even countries like Armenia, with modest resources, can continue to maintain a small, symbolic presence there.

Armenians know well the value of moral support and the driving force of concerned onlookers. Further, as the foreign minister of a country and a people still living through the difficult and trying period of transition, I can tell you that it is only through sustained economic support, through long-term investment of serious economic resources, that a society will begin to believe in the prospect of peace, in the promise of democracy.

There is a tendency to ignore or neglect problems for which one has no immediate answer or prospect for solution. Some problems appear too difficult, too exotic, too unknown, too uncertain, too different for immediate solutions. It is when these are ignored that the social and political risks become insurmountable. The Iraqi people have demonstrated a readiness to move ahead, to risk today for the promise of tomorrow. The world community cannot desert them on that road.

Iraq is blessed with natural resources. Those include not just those in the ground, but also the wealth that is derived from its ethnic diversity. A sizable and old Armenian community makes up part of that mix, and we know that together with the other citizens of Iraq they look forward to contributing to Iraq's prosperous, peaceful future.

Armenia, in turn, looks to the day when it will be able to establish bilateral relations with our neighbor. It is only 200 miles, as the crow flies, between our two capitals, and the possibility to easily communicate and cooperate is an exciting prospect for all of us.

21ST CENTURY VISION SHOULD OVERTAKE 19TH CENTURY POLITICS

I am pleased to join you in this remembrance of the first genocide of the last century. Since then, the millennium has changed, but man has not. That tragedy, that crime against humanity, was followed by a dozen more such politically motivated murders of entire nations. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, in Darfur, we are again witnessing a world caught up in condemnation, but lacking the political will to name and stop the perpetrators of genocide. It is history repeating itself.

This year, on and around April 24, we marked the 90th anniversary of the Genocide of Armenians. British political life kept you from doing so here, and so today in June, this conference reminds us that remembering and condemning are not limited to anniversaries.

I appreciate that this commemoration is taking place in Great Britain, the home of Arnold Toynbee and James Bryce – one a historian, the other a diplomat who examined documents about the treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Today's Turkish government wants to review and rewrite their work.

That is what Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a letter addressed to the British Parliament earlier this year. It's not enough that they have spent a good part of this century rewriting their own history, now they want to rewrite yours. In the year 2005,

Delivered in London on June 15, 2005, at the Commemoration of the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide organized by the British - Armenian All-Party Parliamentary Group, at the House of Lords, Moses Room

in a world that no longer has empires and colonies, in a world where it is lofty ideals which unite countries and nations in alliances and guide their policies and engagements, it is at the very least disheartening that a modern Turkish government – hailed as a democratic beacon, as an example of the victory of universal ideals over sectarian beliefs – can continue to cynically deny their history, and ours.

When a government plans to do away with its own population to solve a political problem – that's genocide. At the turn of the 20th century, the Ottoman Empire was shrinking, it was losing its hold over its subjects along the periphery of the empire. For fear that in Anatolia, too, the Armenian minority would agitate for greater rights and invite foreign powers to exert pressure, the Ottoman leadership used the cover of World War I to attempt to wipe out the Armenians.

US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau called what he witnessed, "the murder of a nation." Others called it "race murder." They did so because there was no term 'genocide' yet. When the word was finally coined in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin, it was done with clear reference to genocidal acts prior to that date, the Armenian Genocide included. There is no doubt that if the word genocide had existed in 1915, every one of the hundreds of articles would have used the term.

In the face of this, Turkey's continued insistence on rejecting and rewriting history costs them credibility and time. Just last month, Prime Minister Erdogan wrote a second letter. It was addressed to my President – although they gave it to the press before they gave it to us. The letter said, let's set up a joint historical commission and let them study what he called this "disputed period in history." He said it would constitute a step towards contributing to the normalization of relations between our countries.

We would like nothing more than normalization between our countries. But we think he has it backwards. We need some normalization between our countries in order for a joint commission to be able to work on this or any other dispute. There is nothing normal about our relationship today. Within Turkey, there is not a normal environment in which to discuss these issues. In the two months since this letter was issued, Turkey has ratified a penal code which makes the use of the word 'genocide' a punishable crime. In the two months

since this letter, Turkey has put on trial several writers and historians for using the word 'genocide,' and most recently even for use of the term 'massacre.' In the two months since this letter, Turkish authorities forced the cancellation of an academic conference co-sponsored by three Turkish universities, with the very politically correct title: Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire.

One does not knock on Europe's door by blindfolding historians and gagging writers. In this kind of environment, what are the members of the commission supposed to discuss? In the absence of relations between the two governments, who is to appoint them and who are they to report to?

Denial and rejection have taken deep root in Turkish society. They've been justified by accounts of Armenian treachery, aggression, criminality and territorial ambition.

The political consequence of this rationale has been a unilateral closing of the Armenian-Turkish border. There have been no normal exchanges, interactions or relations across our borders – not in Soviet times, and not since our independence. Does Turkey wish to spend the whole of the next century obstinately cementing the memories and reproaches of the past? When will we move on to creating a new context within which these two neighbors will be able to share a common space, create new experiences and grow to live together without acrimony or hostility? Armenians need recognition not just in the interests of historical justice but for very tangible security reasons, as well.

Consigning these difficult issues to a few academics and experts, in such a vacuum, is not a genuine attempt at creating a dialogue.

The massive resources and reputation of the Turkish state have been invested in evading history and avoiding the term genocide. It will take the engagement of that same Turkish state to begin a dialogue. We are not the only neighbors in the world who have had, and who continue to have, a troubled relationship.

That is what Armenia's President Robert Kocharian said to Prime Minister Erdogan in his response. He also said that Armenia is ready for a political dialogue. Under the rubric of a political dialogue, all other kinds of discussions – about today's borders and yesterday's

history – can take place. Under the rubric of a political dialogue, those responsible, committed and empowered to act can be engaged in the healing.

Today's Turks do not bear the guilt of the perpetrators, unless they choose to defend and identify with them. Armenians and Turks, together with the rest of the modern world, can reject the actions and denounce the crimes of the Ottoman Empire.

Some Turkish writers and academics have begun down that difficult road to introspection and study. Some are doing so publicly and with great transparency. In this context, it is essential that the international community doesn't turn a blind eye, but instead consistently extends its hand, its example, its own history of transcending.

Every nation edits its own past – just as it edits visions of its future. It has been the selective amnesia of the Turkish establishment which is the stumbling block to efforts to reckon with our common past. We continue to hope that Turkey's 21st century vision of a future in Europe, and Europe's vision of a Europe with Turkey, will overtake 19th century politics.

ULTIMATE CRIME, ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

On behalf of Armenia's National Commission for the Commemoration of the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, I wish to publicly express our sincere appreciation to everyone who has participated in this conference. I want to thank the Zoryan Institute for their professional and organizational counsel. I especially wish to thank the scholars, writers, professors – all with serious work and time commitments – who traveled to Armenia to be here with us at this time, this year. The symbolism is not lost on anyone. We are here 90 years later calling for recognition and prevention so that in 2015 we can gather together only for remembrance.

Over these two days, each of our speakers has found various eloquent ways of saying the following: Genocide is the ultimate crime against humanity. It is the extreme abuse of power. It is a betrayal of the responsibility of custody by the very people entrusted with ensuring the security of their own population. The human rights challenge facing all of us is to be able to recognize that a government has the capacity for such immorality and inhumanity, and that particular governments have indeed committed genocide.

There is no national history in a vacuum. No nation can escape its history entirely, it can only transcend it. But to transcend, one must confront history, both internally and in relation to others. And those others, too, must also jointly confront theirs.

In other words, Armenia and Turkey must confront their histories. Individually and together. Armenia believes Turkey must put excuses aside and enter into normal relations with a neighbor that is neither going to go away nor forget its history.

We are not the only neighbors in the world who have had, and who continue to have, a troubled relationship. Troubled memories, a tortured past, recriminations, unsettled accounts and the enduring wounds of victimhood, plague the national consciousness of peoples on many borders. In our case, some distance between our two countries might have allowed us to put distance between our past and our future. But we have no such luxury. There is no space, no cushion, between us. We live right here, close by, reminded at all times of the great loss that we incurred. Yet it is because we live right next door that we must be willing and prepared to transcend the past.

But we can only do so if the demons of the past have been rejected by our neighbor, too. You notice, I didn't say 'by the perpetrator.' Armenians are able to distinguish between the perpetrators and today's government of Turkey. Two-thirds of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire were massacred or deported between 1915 and 1918. Today's Republic of Turkey must be able to condemn these acts for what they are. The evidence is overwhelming, clear, unavoidable.

Armenians were one of the largest minorities of the Ottoman Empire. Where did they go? Is it possible that all our grandmothers and grandfathers colluded and created stories? Where are the descendants of the Armenians who built the hundreds of churches and monasteries whose ruins still stand in Turkey? Is US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's account of the atrocities that he witnessed a lie? Why was a military tribunal convened at the end of World War I, and why did it find Ottoman Turkish leaders guilty of ordering the mass murder of Armenians? How does one explain the thousands and thousands of pages in the official records of a dozen countries documenting the plans to exterminate the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire? If it wasn't genocide and they were simply 'war time deportations' of so-called rebellious Armenian populations near the eastern border with the Russian Empire, as Turkish apologists sometimes claim, why were the homes of Armenians in the western cities looted and burned? Why were

the Armenians of the seacoast towns of Smyrna and Constantinople deported? Boatloads of people were dumped in the sea – is that what deportation is all about? Could rounding up scores of intellectuals on a single night and killing them be anything but premeditation?

When a government plans to do away with its own population to solve a political problem – that's genocide. At the turn of the 20th century, the Ottoman Empire was shrinking, it was losing its hold over its subjects along the periphery of the empire. For fear that in Anatolia, too, the Armenian minority would agitate for greater rights and invite foreign powers to exert pressure, the Ottoman leadership used the cover of World War I to attempt to wipe out the Armenians, beginning with the leadership, following with the men, and finally deporting women, children and the elderly.

This fits neatly into the definition of genocide: The perpetrator did cause a multitude of deaths; these persons did belong to a particular national, ethnic, racial or religious group. The perpetrator intended to and in fact did destroy, in whole or in part, that national, ethnic, racial or religious group, and this destruction followed a consistent pattern. In fact, Ambassador Morgenthau called what he witnessed 'the murder of a nation.' Others called it 'race murder.' They did so because there was no term 'genocide' yet. When the word was finally coined in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin, it was done with clear reference to genocidal acts prior to that date, the Armenian Genocide included. There is no doubt that if the word 'genocide' had existed in 1915, every one of the hundreds of articles in the NY times or elsewhere, would have used the term. Look how frequently the word 'genocide' is used today to describe events and cases, even when the scale and depth of the atrocities are incomparable.

Armenians continue to live with the memory of suffering unrelieved by strong condemnation and unequivocal recognition.

On the contrary, Turkey spends untold amounts to deny, dismiss, distort history. Not just money, either. Today, their continued insistence on rejecting and rewriting history costs them credibility and time. One does not knock on Europe's door by blindfolding historians and gagging writers. Especially when the subject at hand is one as grave and consequential as genocide. The Turkish parliament's recent call to revisit, review, revise the documents gathered by Arnold Toynbee and James Bryce for

the British Blue Book series brought the revisionist efforts to a new low. Turkey has moved on from trying to rewrite its own history to thinking it can convince others to rewrite theirs. This only frustrates the process, exacerbates the emotions and refuels the fury. Worse, such cynical moves embolden those who do not believe in reconciliation, understanding its great risks and costs.

Elie Wiesel has said that denial of genocide is the final stage of genocide because it "strives to shape history in order to demonize the victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators." That is what Turkey – not the people but the government – is trying to do. Today's Turks do not bear the guilt of the perpetrators, unless they choose to defend and identify with them. Armenians and Turks, together with the rest of the modern world, can reject the actions and denounce the crimes of the Ottoman Empire.

Turkey must also de-link history from politics. The excuses about what might follow genocide recognition are just that – excuses. Why are they surprised that Ararat is on our state seal? Armenians have lived on these lands for thousands of years, and Armenia's borders have changed a great deal over the millennia. That's a historical fact. The Armenian kingdom stretched from sea to sea. That's a historical fact. The last change came at the beginning of the 20th century. That, too, is a historical fact. By the provisions of the Treaty of Sevres, the territory of Armenia was ten times what it is today. That is a historical fact as is the fact that Turkey defied the treaty which had been signed by its own government, and by force, created a new *de facto* situation, which led to the signing of another agreement, without the same signatories. This new agreement delineated, more or less, today's borders. That too is historical fact.

But it is a political reality that both Turkey and Armenia exist today in the international community with their current borders. It is a political reality that we are neighbors and we will live alongside each other. It is a political reality that Armenia is not a security threat to Turkey. And finally, it is a reality that it is today's Armenia that calls for the establishment of diplomatic relations with today's Turkey. For these reasons, anything beyond genocide recognition has not been and is not on Armenia's foreign policy agenda.

Yesterday, I was being interviewed by a Turkish television crew. I was surprised at the amount of misinformation that they had. They were surprised that the Armenian-Turkish border is open from the Armenian side, that it is Turkey that keeps it closed. They were surprised that Armenia has no pre-conditions for establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey. They were highly surprised that even the recognition of Genocide is not a pre-condition. They were also surprised that the Kars Treaty has not been denounced or revoked by the Government of Armenia. Now I'm surprised that official Turkish propaganda has taken over and blurred the views of so many.

There's another misunderstanding. By default, people assume that we're opposed to Turkey's membership in the European Union. They're wrong on this one too. Of course we would like to see Turkey become a European Union member. Of course we'd like to see Turkey meet all European standards. We'd like to see Turkey resemble Belgium, Italy and others. We'd like to see Turkey become a European Union member so that our borders will be open, so that our compatriots and Turkish scholars will speak more freely about Genocide. We would like to see Turkey as a member so that our churches and properties will be protected and restored.

Armenia believes that, at exactly this time, when Turkey is having to reconsider human and civil rights, freedom of expression and religion, it must be encouraged, and persuaded, to acknowledge its past. Such encouragement and persuasion must come from both outside – and more importantly, as Hrant Dink stressed yesterday – from within Turkish society.

Turkish writers and politicians have begun that difficult process of introspection and study. Some are doing so publicly and with great transparency. We can only assume that Europe will expect that a Turkey which is serious about European Union membership, which is indeed able to juggle the complex relationships that European Union membership entails, will have to come to terms with its past.

In this context, it is essential that the international community does not bend the rules, doesn't turn a blind eye, doesn't lower its standards, but instead consistently extends its hand, its example, its own history of transcending, in order for Armenians and Turks, Europeans all, to move on to making new history.

A HISTORY OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

I welcome this opportunity to discuss aloud and together the history, development, present situation and future prospects for the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh issue. I believe the idea is both good and timely. I believe that such joint, public explorations are useful and should facilitate a healthy civic debate on premises and prospects, always with the purpose clearly in mind that what we seek is a peaceful, lasting resolution to this conflict.

I've looked at the agenda of these two days; the topics and speakers are very diversified and reflect varying political perspectives and political forces. Such a diversified spectrum will provide us with a better picture of the range of opinions in our republic on this issue.

I hope that those who speak will freely express their opinions, honestly, and that no one will use this opportunity to settle political scores. There are dangers in using the Nagorno Karabakh issue to obtain individual political dividends.

I will try to be as open as possible, to present not just Armenia's position, but also our take on those international situations and events which may effect the Nagorno Karabakh process, our perception of the adversary's views, and also the evolution and dynamics of the resolution process.

Let me start with the last.

Really, we must understand the dynamics and evolution of the process if we are to understand our situation today and the choices before us.

Let me break down the Nagorno Karabakh process into stages during which both the format and nature of the negotiations evolved, as did the content of the discussions.

This most recent phase became a conflict, when, in 1988, Azerbaijan used force to respond to peaceful demonstrations and demands, thus resulting in military action. During those early years, there were various incongruent, uncoordinated, random, impulsive efforts at mediation from within the former Soviet space. These efforts did not turn into a coherent process, however, and no documents were produced.

In 1992, the resolution process became internationalized. The Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) of which both Armenia and Azerbaijan were members, took a decision to resolve the issue of Nagorno Karabakh's status through a conference in Minsk. As a result, the CSCE Minsk process was born, with the participation of Nagorno Karabakh. The Russian Federation continued to remain engaged, often competing with the Minsk Group. At the same time, the conflict itself extended beyond the borders of Nagorno Karabakh, when as a result of Azerbaijan's aggression, Armenian forces were compelled to bring certain territories under Armenian control, for the purpose of assuring Nagorno Karabakh's security. By May 1994, there was a mutually agreed upon ceasefire, and therefore, a halt to military activities.

As military actions ceased, the OSCE, at a Summit in Budapest, harmonized the various negotiation tracks. They created the Minsk Group co-chairs structure, formalized the negotiation process, and put an end to competition among the various mediators. Thus the end of militarization coincided with the creation of a mechanism for serious negotiations.

This cycle of negotiations that has now gone on for over a decade, can be divided into four stages.

The first stage began with the OSCE Budapest Summit, December 1994, and ended with the OSCE Lisbon Summit, December 1996.

The second stage covered the post-Lisbon period through the change of presidential administration in Armenia, March 1998.

The third stage stretched to the death of Father Aliyev in December 2003.

And the fourth stage is the one we're in now, that started with the change of administration in Azerbaijan.

In the first stage of the formal process, negotiations revolved around a document which dealt with eliminating the consequences of the conflict, but didn't address the issue of political status of Nagorno Karabakh. During this period, for the first time, direct negotiations began to take place between Armenia and Azerbaijan. That is where the process of clarifying Nagorno Karabakh's political status began. The decision to commence direct talks was made at a regular Minsk Group meeting in Bonn, in November 1995. These talks were also expected to produce an agreed-upon text on the Nagorno Karabakh issue, to be presented for inclusion in the Lisbon Summit's Political Document. Two weeks prior to the Summit, the Azerbaijani side retreated from this agreement. Further, they went to the Summit, with the threat of a veto and held all Summit documents hostage until the Chairman-in-Office was forced to agree to present the Azerbaijani position in its own Chairman's statement. This statement outlined principles under which Nagorno Karabakh was to receive the status of high autonomy. This document had no legal value, since it was only a chairman's statement. Nevertheless, Armenia rejected it.

The significant change in the second stage was that after Lisbon, and as a result of Lisbon, the Minsk Group process was suspended. The Lisbon Summit was in December 1996. The first Minsk Group meeting to follow Lisbon was held in March 1997 in Moscow. It was a very short meeting. Azerbaijan insisted that all further negotiations must be held on the basis of the Lisbon principles. Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh walked out. What must be noted here is that when the Minsk Group process was thus suspended, Nagorno Karabakh's official participation, too, ceased. I want to stress this: official participation in the plenary Minsk Group sessions ceased at that time. In all other ways, Nagorno Karabakh has continued to be an active participant.

Following the disruption of the Minsk Group process, two distinct proposals were presented to the sides: In May 1997, a package solution was offered, dealing with all issues, including status, but

based on Lisbon principles. Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh naturally rejected that proposal. In September 1997, the co-chairs, thinking that it would be impossible to reach an agreement on status based on the Lisbon principles, went off in another direction, and proposed a step-by-step solution that assumed the return of territory without addressing the question of status. The Armenian President's serious consideration of this approach led to dramatic divisions within his administration, and contributed to his eventual resignation.

In the third phase, partly as a result of this serious turn of events, partly as a result of Armenia's new approach, and partly as a result of the renewed emphasis on a comprehensive solution that cannot be solely based on Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, the co-chairs made a successful effort in reconciling the principles of territorial integrity and self-determination. The result was the Common State document which was rejected by Azerbaijan in 1998.

Direct meetings between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan followed Azerbaijan's rejection of the Common State. All together, during the third stage the two presidents met nearly two dozen times. They came to share an awareness of the need for a comprehensive solution. Father Aliyev, accepting the inevitable, tried to negotiate in a way as to reap such dividends that would make the whole package acceptable to his people.

The result, in April 2001, was the Key West document, the second important document created during this third stage. The Key West document clearly affirmed the fact of the self-determination of the people of Nagorno Karabakh. Thus, in the four and a half years from Lisbon to Key West, there had, in our opinion, been fundamental, radical changes in thinking on this issue – changes in sync with contemporary international developments and self-determination processes in different parts of the world.

In the fourth stage, the stage we have been in since Azerbaijan's new authorities came to power, there is a clear intent to attempt to reverse the wheel of history. The presidents do meet, although not with the former frequency. There is a parallel track of foreign ministers meetings. During those talks, the issue of Nagorno Karabakh's status is always on the agenda. Azerbaijan is part of those discussions.

Despite Azerbaijan's engagement, and the efforts of the sides to search for an acceptable resolution of the issue, Azerbaijan continues to attempt to simultaneously introduce the Karabakh issue in those international forums which continue to abide by a traditional, conservative approach to the issues of territorial integrity and self-determination. The approach of those organizations is that when the principles of territorial integrity and self-determination clash with each other then the first receives preference, that all conflicts should be treated within a single resolution framework, regardless of the degree of legitimacy of grievances and gravity of the issue, and that if a deviation is allowed and self-determination is recognized, it will become a precedent and a domino effect will result.

Their answer to claims of self-determination is simply greater human rights and certain economic benefits. This approach ignores a great many factors including the role of history in shaping of one's identity and destiny.

Today, everyone recognizes that these principles cannot be universally applied, that there are places in the world where more acceptable solutions can and are being found, and states – new and old – continue to live in new relationships with each other. In our time, we have witnessed East Timor's independence through referendum, we witnessed the signing of an agreement in Sudan putting an end to a decades-old conflict on the basis of the notion of referendum to be held in one portion of the country in six years. We are all following serious deliberations about the possibility of a referendum to determine Kosovo's status. Among the political, legal, academic experts working in and around those places, there is a growing awareness of the possibility and reality of recognizing the right of self-determination in certain circumstances. Even the new United Nations reform proposals which have to do not just with institutional reform, but also reform in approach and thinking when dealing with threats and with intra-state ethnic conflict, even those proposals are not built around an assumption of territorial integrity as an overriding principle.

In all cases, one must judge existing self-determination struggles each on its own merits, each in terms of its own historical, legal circumstances, as well as the realities on the ground.

As such, we can divide today's self-determination conflicts into four types determined by the combination of degree of control the state exercises over its entire territory (including the territory occupied by those striving for self-determination) and the degree of self-determination achieved by them.

Quebec, for example, falls in Category I. In this case, the territorial integrity of Canada is preserved, while the province of Quebec has voted to remain part of Canada; that is, they have exercised their right to self-determination.

The overwhelming majority of today's secessionists fall in Category II, where the movements struggle without any degree of self-determination and the state continues to fully control the territory under question. The Kurdish people's struggle in Turkey falls into this second category.

Those in Category III are the borderline cases where the state is not able to control those desiring self-determination, while they themselves are not strong enough to maintain control over their territory with any certainty of permanence, and the outcome can go either way.

Today, Nagorno Karabakh falls in a completely different, fourth, category. Azerbaijan has no control whatsoever over those territories, as Nagorno Karabakh has, for the last 15 years, enjoyed all the attributes of complete sovereignty. In this case, to attempt to win over the people of Nagorno Karabakh by enticing them with human rights and economic advantages in order to attempt to return them to Azerbaijani jurisdiction, is simply a senseless exercise. Furthermore, Nagorno Karabakh has not only been in a category of its own in terms of the length and depth of its self-determination, its situation is further reinforced and made complete by the following legal facts.

First, the self-determination component: It seceded legally, according to the laws of the day.

Second, the territorial component: Its people have self-determined on those territories that have never been within the jurisdiction of independent Azerbaijan.

Third, the human rights component: Azerbaijan, in perpetrating violence against people that it considered its own citizens, has lost the moral right to custody over those people.

Finally, the de facto political reality of 15 years of proven ability to hold elections, govern its population, protect its borders and conduct international relations.

Azerbaijan's new authorities are having a hard time coming to terms with these indisputable realities. Clear-cut, categoric changes are obvious in their approach to negotiations and the search for a resolution. Worse and more worrisome, there are new myths and premises – public and official – on which their positions are being constructed.

First, they have convinced themselves that the essence of the issue is their territories. When this conflict began, there were no territories outside Nagorno Karabakh under Armenian control. Those territories came under Armenian control because not only was there not an agreement on Nagorno Karabakh's status, but also because Azerbaijan saw the solution in cleansing Nagorno Karabakh of all Armenians. Therefore, the solution today necessarily revolves around the determination of Nagorno Karabakh's status, and continued control over those territories guaranteeing the security of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh.

Second, Azerbaijan wants to believe that if they do not receive their maximum demands through negotiations, they can always resort to military solutions. It is obvious that it has not been and will not be possible to conclusively resolve this issue militarily. In order for a successful military solution, arms and munitions are not sufficient against the people of Karabakh who are defending their own homes and hearth. Azerbaijan must succeed in ethnically cleansing Nagorno Karabakh of all Armenians. Under today's circumstances, that is simply not possible. This has been proven impossible in Serbia, for example, where the former authorities nearly succeeded in their efforts at ethnic cleansing using military might. But today, they are standing trial for their crimes, and the right of the people of Kosovo to self-determination is on the table.

Third, Azerbaijan thinks that time is on their side. Of course, the obvious reason for this is their confidence in future oil revenues to enhance their military capacity. This is the greatest deception, because time is not guaranteed to work in favor of any one side.

Further, international tendencies today are moving towards reinforcing the right to self-determination. The longer that Nagorno Karabakh maintains its de-facto independence, it will be that much harder to reverse the wheel of history.

Fourth, they think that an isolated Armenia will be economically unable to sustain its positions, and will sooner or later agree to serious concessions. This is in itself a faulty assumption, because it is the people of Nagorno Karabakh who must first agree to concessions. Additionally, a people who lived through the deprivations and hardships of the last decade and a half have demonstrated that they can do so again if it is life and liberty that is at stake. On the contrary, both in Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, the societies have gone past survival, and are recording economic growth.

Finally, Azerbaijan has convinced itself that by presenting Armenia as aggressor, it will become possible through resolutions in international organizations to force Armenians to capitulate. However, Armenians have succeeded in consistently demonstrating that Azerbaijan is a victim of its own aggression and that today's situation is a consequence of that aggression. If those territories must be returned to assure Nagorno Karabakh's security and future, that is possible. If those territories must be kept in order to assure Nagorno Karabakh's security and future, that too, is possible. The purpose is security and self-determination and not territories.

Today, we believe that Azerbaijan's thinking seriously obstructs negotiations. This is combined with Azerbaijan's cheap propagandistic imagination and warmongering statements. And today, two additional circumstances complicate the negotiation process. First, the exploitation of the OSCE Fact Finding Mission Report, and second, the violations of the ceasefire on the Line of Contact and the Armenian-Azerbaijani border.

An OSCE Fact Finding Mission was created and sent to the territories surrounding Nagorno Karabakh in January because Azerbaijan claimed, through a resolution they wished to present at the United Nations, that there was a deliberate, massive, coordinated settlement policy that would harm the negotiations process. Armenia agreed to facilitate a fact-finding mission and Azerbaijan agreed in return not

to take any action on its United Nations resolution and suspend the initiative.

The OSCE Fact Finding Mission found neither settlement policies by Armenia nor any serious settlements. We believe Azerbaijan can now seriously embark on negotiations within the Minsk Group framework, since the Mission dispelled its concerns, noting that there is no manipulation of the situation on the ground, and that indeed, all decisions can be made at the negotiating table.

However, Azerbaijan appears intent on creating a new situation, simply by repeating its thoroughly dis-proven allegations.

Secondly, the unusually high number of clashes which have taken place recently on the Line of Contact between Azerbaijani and Nagorno Karabakh forces, as well as on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, is cause for alarm.

I don't need to tell this audience that Armenia has no interest in initiating any irregular or unusual activity on the Line of Contact or at the border. Each of these violations has been of Azerbaijani instigation. This is evidenced by the fact that they have moved forward their positions on their territory. These Azerbaijani actions combined with increased war-mongering, heightened rhetoric and militaristic statements at the highest levels have their negative impact on the negotiations. The option of resolving the Nagorno Karabakh conflict militarily is not in the Armenian toolbox. However, if Azerbaijan were to take such a step, the Armenian side is completely prepared not just to respond in equal force, but to make Azerbaijan's third such mistake its last.

To conclude, the point is the solution will not be found through military action, it will not be found through the creation of documents and resolutions in international forums, nor can there be a solution imposed on the sides from the outside. The only way to a solution is to demonstrate political will, to sit and discuss openly and honestly, by embracing realistic positions.

Armenia remains faithful to its initial premises that there cannot be a vertical link between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh, that it must have a geographic link with Armenia, and that the security of the people of Nagorno Karabakh must be assured.

Today, for us, the basis of a resolution is the affirmation of the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination and the international recognition of that right.

Azerbaijan's simply accepting and formalizing this fact in an agreement will make possible the beginning of a solution, and the elimination of the consequences of the conflict.

GOVERNMENTS, TOO, LOSE THE MORAL RIGHT TO CUSTODY

This is a special year for multilateral diplomacy as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the United Nations. This is also a critical year as we contemplate the reforms necessary to bring this institution, the United Nations, in line with the various evolutions and revolutions that the world has seen in this past 60 years. The United Nations is the place where we have built security structures on the foundations of human freedom and economic access. Here, we both take from and give to a more interdependent world. With the future in mind, this is the place where we will eventually look to find ways to avoid threats as we broaden and enlarge human rights and civil liberties.

It is noteworthy that the Commission on Human Rights is the only non-principal United Nations body which has been mentioned in the High Level Panel Report and for which far-reaching reforms have been recommended for this commission. That is because I believe all of today's biggest challenges affect and are affected by the absence of or adherence to human rights. This makes the nature of the report very important. How and with what instruments and mechanisms those rights are to be protected is the concern addressed by the report and by each of us. Everyone in the international community needs to become engaged as we contemplate that report.

The international community's increased focus on shared responsibility for promoting human rights and freedoms at the national level requires open and enhanced international cooperation. To justify the

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need to make new decisions about old problems, do we need to constantly remind ourselves that our world is not the same as it was 60 years ago, or even 15 years ago? Then, local human rights abridgements were local or domestic tragedies. Today, such abridgements are the first step toward international catastrophes. Hiding behind national sovereignty in order to avoid responsibility for providing protection to human rights risks proliferation of injustice, insecurity, misery and conflict, internationally.

Mr. Chairman, Armenia's membership in the Commission on Human Rights is as much a function of our sense of responsibility as of our deep belief and conviction that the basic human rights of a society, and individual and collective security are all inextricably, inarguably, expressly interconnected. For Armenians, the human rights principle, the concept of man's inalienable rights touches a raw nerve. We lived the greatest part of the last century under a regime that endured solely because of the absence of human rights, civil liberties and freedoms. Immediately prior to that period, we had the dubious honor of being the century's first victims of genocide. At the end of that century and today still, we are fighting to secure the right of self-determination for the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh.

Let me reflect on each of these.

After living, as I said, under an ideologically different helmet only 14 years ago, our domestic experience has been difficult and sometimes bumpy. We have learned to believe less in snap changes, we have our reasons to be skeptical of revolutions, we know that smooth public relations do not last as long as decent human relations. Therefore, as last year, so next year, we will continue to build on our successes, through evolutionary, incremental ways: poverty reduction, protecting the rights of conscientious objectors and religious sects, reforming the judicial system, strengthening political diversity and free expression, protecting and promoting the rights of women and children, and fighting human traffickers.

As for genocide, Mr. Chairman, it is the ultimate manifestation of the violation of human rights. This year marks the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. Two-thirds of the Armenian population perished between 1915 and 1918. As a minority, living in the

Ottoman Empire, their call for the application of the lofty principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, led to their death sentence. Today, their survivors, living within and outside the Republic of Armenia, expect that the world's avowal of the universality of those same noble principles will lead to recognition that Genocide was committed against Armenians.

Ninety years after the event, we still live with the memory of suffering unrelieved by strong condemnation and unequivocal recognition. In this we are not alone. The catharsis that victims deserve and societies require in order to heal and move forward together, obliges me to appeal to the international community to call things by their name, to remove the veil of obfuscation, of double standards, of political expediency.

Very recently, at the highest levels, the Turkish leadership called for a historical debate. They suggested that historians from Turkey and Armenia go through archives and sort out this issue. My immediate response that Armenia would not participate in a historical debate was interpreted as rejection of dialogue.

Let's not confuse the two kinds of dialogue. One is a debate about history. The other is a political discussion. Periodic calls by various Turkish administrations for historical debate simply delay the process of reconciling with the truth. The facts are clear. The historical record is clear. We know well what happened to our forebears. Even in the first days of the Turkish Republic, the local Turkish authorities who had actually carried out the genocidal acts were tried and found guilty by their own Turkish courts. The Turks themselves, for their own reasons, put aside that historical record and moved away from that honest, dignified approach to one of denial and rejection. Turkey owes the world that recognition so we move forward.

Mr. Chairman, this slice of our history is even more reason for the international community to denounce genocide, once and for always, as a political tool. We commend the Secretary General's five-point action plan, we believe in strengthening the capacity and mandate of his Advisor on Genocide, and we believe that governments who commit genocide must be persecuted and prosecuted.

Inability to continue down this path means we have failed structurally and institutionally. It also means we have failed to make the difficult policy choices because of short-term political costs, even though we know well that there will be long-term human and international consequences. A financially bankrupt government is turned over to international organizations until it reforms and renounces its wrongs. Can we tolerate any less of a government which is morally bankrupt? Do we want successive generations to believe that genocide is inevitable in each generation, on each continent? Can we allow governments to commit such massive violence against their own people? How can we explain why a report on Threats Challenges and Change must consider genocide a threat, even at the beginning of the 21st century?

Finally, the third human rights issue is that of the self-determination of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh.

Ironically, Mr. Chairman, even as societies have learned to support the victims of domestic violence, we have not yet graduated to offering the same support to victims of international or government violence. At best, the world watches silently as the victims attempt to defend themselves, and if somehow, against great odds, they succeed, then the world quickly pulls back, as the state loudly cries foul and claims sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Just as the perpetrator of domestic violence loses the moral right to custody, so does a government that commits and promotes violence against its own citizens lose its rights. It is in such instances that the notion of self-determination is significant and legitimate.

This is exactly what happened to the people of Nagorno Karabakh during the days of the collapse of the USSR when they opted, peacefully, for self-determination. The government of Azerbaijan not only rejected peaceful dialogue but resorted immediately to forceful suppression of those aspirations. Azerbaijan continued to militarily respond. At one point, the people of Nagorno Karabakh were on the verge of annihilation had there not been the last minute mobilization and their determination to fight for their lives, homes and their homeland. Today the government of Azerbaijan has lost the moral right to even suggest providing for their security and their future, let alone to talk of custody of the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

Mr. Chairman, for us, defense and protection of human rights is not an abstract principle. It is the difference between survival and annihilation. We believe it is the same for many in the world. Yet, our individual and collective tendency is to ignore or neglect problems for which we have no immediate answer or prospect for solution. This is even more true in situations which defy belief, surpass common norms, and shake our very assumptions and values. For these very reasons, in our ever-shrinking world, what is required is resolve on the part of the committed in order to expand the engagement of those still hesitant.

WHAT KIND OF COUNTRY DO WE WANT FOR OURSELVES AND OUR CHILDREN

It is only appropriate that I begin by apologizing for having had the bad judgment to get seriously sick – for the first time in my adult life – this week. I've had to cancel several important trips, including, unfortunately, this one. Boston is a city near and dear to my heart. I lived there for several years, studied there, learned what it means to be modern, to be Western, to be a futurist. It suited my optimist persona.

I can say the same about Armenia 2020. It, too, matches my optimism. I've spent many interesting hours talking to members of the Board, to those from McKinsey, talking about what it means to be modern, to be Western, to believe in the future and to be Armenian, all at the same time. I believe in the vision of Armenia 2020, because I believe that in 15 years, we can indeed become a normal country. I remember one of my first conversations about this with Nubar Afeyan and Ruben Vardanyan. Nubar said, if you don't know your destination, you can't build a bridge, at best you can build a pier. Look how far we've come in the last 15 years. Our base is solid, our progress is steady. We need to focus on where we're going.

Let me say how much I appreciate the approach that Armenia 2020 has taken. As President Kocharian has said, Armenia is one thing with its Diaspora, and another thing, entirely, without its Diaspora. Armenia 2020 is not simply a tool that will help the Armenian government to study and choose among various paths of development.

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First, in the most global sense, Armenia 2020 is an excellent example of the kind of tangible, concrete, deep, long-term involvement that the Diaspora can and should have in Armenia's development. It is also a template for the Armenian Diaspora – and for all diasporas – looking for ways to effectively, efficiently, purposefully and successfully engage with and contribute to the homeland's development.

The other aspect of Armenia 2020 that is very useful is the nature of the project: strategic thinking, reliance on good information, encouraging wide input and participation, researching alternatives, possibilities, scenarios, trying to put together the best possible information package on which to make the best possible decision. It is this kind of thinking and planning that makes Armenia 2020 a very good model.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Armenia 2020 forces us to publicly ask and explore the most important question that we must all ask – what kind of country do we want for ourselves and our children? Who do we want to become? What are our strengths and our weaknesses? Are we prepared to make choices and the right choices? This is indeed the kind of public discourse we should be having and we thank Armenia 2020 for leading us there.

Armenia 2020 takes the long view. Armenia 2020 – in its name and in its methodology – clearly expresses optimism and faith in Armenia's future. It assumes that healthy, meaningful, lasting development cannot be arbitrary, amateurish, emotional. And it has adopted the detailed, tricky, slow-going approach that is likely to lead to the best, lasting, most meaningful outcomes.

In other words, it's chosen to do things the hard way. Armenia 2020 is doing what Armenia and Armenians, as well as their friends in the international and donor communities, will have to do in order for Armenia to become a safe, secure, comfortable, democratic country.

I believe that in the year 2020 we can become such a country. This isn't my optimism talking. Had there not been our history of the last 14 years, I would have been far more skeptical. But in less than 15 years, we are ahead of our regional neighbors in many areas, aware of our potential, with a great, solid base to build upon.

There are many elements working in our favor.

First, vision. We know we want a prosperous, safe, secure, democracy. We know it will be difficult to get there. But we know we are willing to do what it takes.

Second, our record. Where we were and where we are gives us reason to believe we can reach our goal.

Look at how far we've come. We have left behind a war and its consequences, an energy crisis that was paralyzing, an economy that had collapsed. That's all behind us. What is also behind us is the initial painful period of reforms, from which we are reaping rewards today. Armenia was the first among the former Soviet states to privatize. We privatized almost everything and very quickly. Three quarters of Armenian agriculture was already privatized by 1993, just two years after independence. Don't take these numbers lightly. None of our neighbors can report numbers close to that. It was a painful process, but everyone agrees, that it was those privatized farms that saved us during the difficult, dark years of war and blockade.

It's not just our agricultural land that is privatized. Eighty percent of Armenia's Gross Domestic Product is produced by the private sector and 40 percent of that comes from small and medium size enterprises. This is no different from Italy, and a host of other European countries, where it is the small and medium size businesses that drive the economy.

As a result, today, our macroeconomic foundations are surprisingly, and reassuringly, healthy.

Over the last several years Armenia has achieved double-digit economic growth. This would not have happened without the productivity and efficiency of our market economy – such as it is.

The Wall St. Journal - Heritage Foundation found that Armenia's economy is among the most liberal in the world – number 42, right up there with France. This means that we have built the necessary structures which can nurture and feed growth. We've tackled the thorny problem of legislation that supports and nurtures economic growth. We have markets in Europe and the West. Poverty has decreased, unemployment has decreased, confidence in the national currency has steadily increased, inflation is low. In the Media

Freedoms Index, Armenia placed significantly higher than any of our neighbors. In the Transparency International Corruption Perception index, again, we placed highest.

Third, the resources available to us are significant. Armenia receives meaningful assistance from the World Bank, IMF, the United Nations Development Program and other United Nations agencies, the European Neighborhood Policy, various US programs including the Millennium Challenge Account, contributions by Diaspora foundations, as well as foreign investments from Russia, the Middle East and Europe. Belgium is our largest trading partner – now that says something about the network of resources available to Armenia.

Fourth, our domestic stability is an asset that should not be taken for granted. Some in our region take pride in their revolutions. We take pride in our steady evolutionary progress. Even with the political upheavals that we have had, we have managed, as a society and a country, to come through it peacefully. Internally, whatever the claims or demands of the various political segments, the country is at peace with itself.

Fifth, our European integration processes provide us with huge potential for deeper reforms, broader learning, more varied networking and interaction. In other words, our Council of Europe membership, our Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union, our inclusion in the European Neighborhood Policy, our active role in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, all bring small, landlocked Armenia into the center of Europe.

Sixth, the Diaspora's untapped potential. We have a Diaspora. And it is not mobilized yet.

The seventh thing that we have going for us is our readiness to continue to live in peace in our region and find harmony with all our neighbors.

Armenia's foreign policy revolves around the pursuit of multidirectional complementarity. That is, Armenia maintains strong, active relations with all and does not believe that any of those relations are exclusive or contradictory.

In our two problematic relationships, we will remain pragmatic in pursuing compromise and understanding with both Turkey and Azerbaijan. In light of possible Turkish membership in the European Union, the normalization of Turkey's relations with Armenia, too, should also be both a condition and a consequence.

Open borders with Turkey will also directly and immeasurably affect the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and its resolution. The status of Nagorno Karabakh and the security of its people must be addressed, in order to be able to resolve with any finality the issue of territories and refugees, and reach a lasting settlement.

So I am not merely being optimistic when I say that there is reason to believe that Armenia in 2020 will be a safe, secure, prosperous, democratic country. We've come through some difficult years. Still, we've only just scratched the surface. I've laid out the aspects that we have going for us. This outline is not intended to say that we've done it all; rather that we have much with which to keep going forward. We've identified the goal: a country that in 2020 will be the best that it can be. With active, committed partnerships between the government and international organizations and the government and the Diaspora, we can build that bridge.

Thank you for gathering here today with Armenia and its future in mind.

REMEMBERING ALL THE "LIEUX INFAMES DE MEMOIRE"

On behalf of the people and government of Armenia, and as a descendant of Genocide survivors, I feel impelled to be here today, to join other survivors and descendants, of both victims and perpetrators, to take part in this commemoration. I am also duty-bound to urge us all to confront more effectively the threat of genocide anywhere, at any time, regardless of cost and political discomfort.

The liberation of Auschwitz is, indeed, cause for commemorative celebration. However, in this commemoration, with each uttering of the name Auschwitz, we are forced to reflect: to look back, look around, look deep, look at the other, but also look inward, at ourselves.

After 9/11 and reacting to the unusually high number of victims of a singular event, an editorialist proclaimed "We are all Americans." Sympathy, solidarity, anxiety, and indignation bound us together. How much more intense our feelings about Auschwitz and the singularity of its horror, its synonymy with the technology of death-making, its eerily ordinary commitment to efficiency, to pragmatic, effective, result-oriented administration.

After Auschwitz, we are all Jews, we are all Gypsies, we are all unfit, deviant and undesirable for someone, somewhere. After Auschwitz, the conscience of man cannot remain the same. Man's inhumanity to men, to women, to children, and to the elderly, is no longer a concept

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in search of a name, an image, a description. Auschwitz lends its malefic aura to all the Auschwitzes of history, our collective history, both before and after.

In the 20th century alone, with its 15 genocides, the victims have their own names for places of infamy. What the French call 'les lieux infames de memoire' are everywhere. Places of horror, slaughter, of massacre, of the indiscriminate killing of all those who have belonged to a segment, a category, an ethnic group, a race or a religion. For Armenians, it is the desert of Deir-El-Zor, for Cambodians they are the killing fields, for the children of the 21st century, it is Darfur. For the Jews and Poles and for a whole generation of us growing up after The War, it is Auschwitz.

Mr. President, just as we all were, or are, or might be victims, we all were or are or might also be guilty. It is only through the engagement of those who have seen and done the unimaginable, and who have had the dignity, the grace, the sensitivity, the decency and courage to acknowledge wrongdoing, that we may achieve the requisite collective political will and its expression.

This is not as naive, unrealistic, idealistic as some might wish to label it, perhaps in order to dismiss it. Genocide is not about individuals who act insanely, do evil, commit crimes, perpetrate irrevocable wrongs. Genocide is the undertaking of a state apparatus, which must, by definition, act coherently, pragmatically, with structure and organization.

Thus, this is not a plea to reform human beings, but an appeal to take conscious account of the role our national institutions and international institutions must play to insure that no one can expect to enjoy impunity.

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

Mr. Chairman, following the Tsunami-provoked disaster, we have become painfully aware of a paradox. On the one hand, multilateral assistance efforts were massive, swift, generous and without discrimination. But, when compared and contrasted with today's other major tragedy in Africa, it is plain that for Darfur, formal and ritual condemnation has not been followed by any dissuasive action against the perpetrators.

The difference with the Tsunami, of course, was that there were no perpetrators. No one wielded the sword, pulled the trigger or pushed the button that released the gas. Recognizing the victims and acknowledging them is also to recognize that there are perpetrators. But this is absolutely not the same as actually naming them, shaming them, dissuading or warning them, isolating or punishing them.

If these observations signal a certain naivete that overlooks the enduring structures of our political and security interests, then, on this occasion, when we have gathered to commemorate this horrible event, then allow me this one question: if not here and now, then where and when?

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

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

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

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

Third parties, indeed, can make the difference between life and death. Their rejection of the behaviors and policies that are neither in anyone's national interest nor in humanity's international interest, is of immense moral and political value.

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

Auschwitz signifies the worst of hate, of indifference, of dehumanization. Remembrance of Auschwitz and its purpose, however abhorrent, is a vital step to making real the phrase "Never Again."

IN THE SPIRIT OF A COMMON HISTORY OF FRIENDSHIP

The signing of a Memorandum of Mutual Understanding between the Foreign Ministry of the Republic Armenia and the League of Arab States is certainly a historical event. This opens an important new page for further improving and deepening Armenian-Arab relations.

Signing this document is the natural consequence of the centuries-old historical and cultural links between Armenians and Arabs. It is also the result of the persistent implementation of Armenia's foreign policy.

Armenians are among the region's oldest nations, with a historical and cultural past that is strongly interlinked with other peoples in the region, including Arabs. For centuries, Armenians have had a great input towards the development of culture, economy and science in the region. In turn, throughout history, Armenians have come under the influence of neighboring peoples.

Our common history is full of pages of friendship and cooperation with thousands of examples of instances of reciprocal support.

At the beginning of the last century, Armenians, victims of genocide in and by the Ottoman Empire, lived the most tragic years of their history. There is a popular saying, in Armenian as well as Arabic, that essentially means "a friend in need is a friend indeed." During those dreadful days, when Armenians were either killed or forcefully deported from their ancestral homes, Arabs rendered assistance to the

Delivered in Cairo on January 19, 2005, to the League of Arab States

Armenian refugees, supplied them with shelter and provided them the urgent assistance they needed. Armenians not only survived in Arab countries but they were given the opportunity to rise and become full citizens in their new homes, while preserving their national identity by establishing schools, culture and sport clubs.

Grateful Armenians will never forget the humane approach of the Arab people. This historic reality naturally influenced the foreign policy of newly independent Armenia.

Since gaining independence, the Republic of Armenia has been committed to improving relations with Arab states and, in the Middle East peace process, always expressed its solidarity with the Arab position.

We highly appreciate the mediation efforts of the Quartet and the work done in that direction. We consider very important both the Road Map and the development of constructive dialogue between the parties in the conflict resolution process. The establishment of an independent Palestinian state is at the core of the process for establishing regional security and stability. It would directly eliminate regional tensions, change the existing sociological trends and create new opportunities for mutual cooperation.

I am confident that the election of Mahmoud Abbas to the position of President of the Palestinian National Authority will have a crucial impact on this process.

Events in Iraq remain under the constant attention of the international community. It is our desire to see Iraq a sovereign, united, stable and democratic state and we are ready to take part in the realization of these goals.

We cooperate with Arab states on various issues within international organizations.

Within a short period of time, we have achieved tangible successes in our relations with Arab states: we have signed a number of bilateral documents in various fields, we have created intergovernmental commissions, we have frequent exchange visits and we've established working ties at all levels. We also conduct joint cultural events.

Armenia adheres to the policy of complementarity, which means that we build our international relations not on the basis of competi-

tion and rivalry between powers but rather on the basis of cooperation and complementarity. We are doing our best to develop mutually beneficial relationships with all regional parties and powers with interests in our region.

Touching upon the Nagorno Karabakh issue, I should stress that we are committed to a negotiated settlement of the conflict and international recognition of the right of self-determination for the people Nagorno Karabakh.

Since 1994 the truce has been observed by the conflicting parties. Regular meetings between the presidents and foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group are aimed at finding a mutually acceptable solution to the conflict. We highly appreciate the mediation efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group and we consider it to be the best international format for the settlement of the conflict.

I wish to particularly stress that the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is purely a matter of self-determination and has no religious component whatsoever. Azerbaijan's efforts to attach religious motives to the conflict are not only groundless, but they are unacceptable and dangerous. We flatly reject Azerbaijan's attempts to characterize this as a religious conflict.

We also reject their ill-intended efforts to draw parallels between themselves and the Palestinians, in an attempt to present themselves as victims of the conflict. Those steps by Azerbaijan are intended to gain the sympathy of the Islamic world. Any conflict is unique in nature, but if one wishes to draw parallels, then in this case it is the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh who, like the Palestinians, strive for free determination of their own destiny in their historical homeland, without foreign domination.

Armenians have lived in Nagorno Karabakh from time immemorial and, with the exception of the Soviet period, this land has never been part of Azerbaijan. The only desire of the Armenians of Karabakh is to correct Stalin's unjust decision to forcibly attach Karabakh to Azerbaijan.

Your Excellency Mr. Amre Moussa, we highly appreciate the role of the League of Arab States in strengthening the sovereignty of Arab

countries and in ensuring Arab solidarity. Despite difficulties, the League did not lose its significance and continues to prove its vitality and importance. We are confident that with its immense potential, the League is able to play a decisive role in establishing regional stability, ensuring the natural development of Arab countries and broadening cooperation among them.

I would like to particularly acknowledge your efforts in making the League more viable and in introducing new qualities to the organization. We are well aware of the commitment that you always display in safeguarding the interests and rights of Arab countries, and supporting unity and solidarity among them. Taking this opportunity we would like to express our support of your efforts and we wish success to all your initiatives.

I wish to congratulate all of us on the occasion of the signing of this historical document and express our confidence that the Arab League will contribute to the further development of mutually beneficial Armenian-Arab relations and to strengthening the friendship between our peoples.

In conclusion, I would like to sincerely thank you, Mr. Amre Moussa, for the warm reception and support that you and your staff have kindly provided in the course of preparation of this document and our visit.

LOOKING FOR A SHARED VISION FOR REAL PEACE

Allow me first to express the appreciation of my government to Bulgaria for its generous hosting of this 12th Ministerial Council and extend its appreciation for an effective Chairmanship-in-Office.

We also wish to welcome Mongolia to this organization which is as inclusive and broad-reaching as any in today's world.

On the threshold of the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act and the tenth year of the OSCE as an organization, we are compelled to look back, evaluate the present and reflect on the future.

We should all recognize how well the Helsinki Final Act has endured as a foundation of European security through three decades of momentous changes. The political landscape of Europe has been redrawn. The founding principles have demonstrated their continuing relevance and resilience. Yet, the political arrangements underpinning the political dynamics within the OSCE are in flux, and lead often to tensions or paralysis. Within the organization, there are several poles of power. While Armenia shares values and experiences with all, it cannot be subsumed as part of any. Instead, we can be allies, partners, neighbors and friends. The OSCE was conceived as an experiment in pluralistic, multilateral, cooperative diplomacy to enshrine security and stability in a formerly divided Europe. The premise and the objectives are still valid and need to be continuously reinvigorated.

Delivered in Sofia on December 7, 2004, at the 12th OSCE Ministerial Council

It is in this light that we see calls for reform. This issue has been subject to various interpretations, not all of them accurate or fair. We cannot on the one hand advocate flexibility, and on the other resist adaptation. The fairest systems are rule-based, and should ensure the equal access of all to decision-making bodies. That is the essence of consensus, and that is what makes the OSCE effective. There is much less wrong with our structures than with our practices.

The government of Armenia, given the present context of affairs in the OSCE, proposes and advocates vigorously "Pluralistic Equilibrium" as a new motto, a goal, an objective and an operational concept. In its essence it is not a new idea, it is simply a determination to revive an old ideal. We shall do all we can to achieve this goal, important to all of us and for the long-term relevance and effectiveness of the OSCE. We are particularly hopeful that the incoming Slovenian Chairmanship will spare no effort to realize this "Pluralistic equilibrium." We are confident they are up to the task, and more.

We have high hopes for the very useful work of the proposed panel of eminent persons to take an in-depth and broad view of OSCE at this moment facing structural challenges. However, we think the usefulness and the reliability of their work will be enhanced if they are eminent in their own right, as individuals of distinction, and not simply country-based appointees.

As to the many decisions we will adopt and endorse at this Sofia Ministerial, our support goes without saying. May I simply highlight some as particularly important to us: terrorism and combating it with various tools – of course, this is an international priority; the 2004 Action Plan for Promotion of Gender Equality, the Forum for Security and Cooperation package on better control of arms trafficking. And finally, I congratulate us all on our work to promote tolerance and fight discrimination without creating a hierarchy of victims of intolerance.

Mr. Chairman, this is my seventh ministerial, and each year I hope that next year the Nagorno Karabakh conflict will come off our agenda. This year we had, and I would say we still have, serious prospects for making that happen. As a result of four meetings between foreign ministers and a lengthy meeting between presidents in Astana, we had

real reasons to assume that a resolution could be near. But, regrettably, Azerbaijan raised the issue of so-called Armenian settlements and took this matter to the United Nations. Thus, we have been faced with the reality that Armenia's willingness to keep the peace process alive has received a miscalculated and non-constructive response.

It was Azerbaijan's shortsighted, miscalculated responses of 15 years ago that brought us to today's situation. The historical, political, media records witness how peaceful Armenian claims for freedom and self-determination were met by armed aggression. Armenians defended themselves, just as international forces defended others in similar situations around the world. Each of Azerbaijan's red-flag issues – refugees, territories, settlements – are a result of the military conflict that they created.

Don't take my word for it. A group of Council of Europe parliamentarians, as neutral observers, were present in Nagorno Karabakh during the eruption of military activities. The following is part of what they cited in 1992. "Recent Azeri offensives into Nagorno Karabakh have resulted in entire villages being destroyed, with civilians massacred and children raped. The clear superiority of the Azeri forces in terms of manpower, arms and equipment, supplies of fuel and food, missile launching and aerial bombing capabilities compared with those of Nagorno Karabakh means that it can only be a matter of weeks – if not sooner – before the enclave is overrun. Without any evidence of effective international restraint on Azerbaijan to date, the fear of genocide and/or expulsion that would follow is entirely understandable."

The result of Azerbaijan's military response and Armenians' fierce determination to survive was hundreds of thousands of refugees. Unlike my colleague, I will tell you that those refugees are on both sides. There are indeed more than half a million Azerbaijani refugees. But Mr. Chairman, there are nearly half a million Armenian refugees from distant cities like the Azerbaijani capital, as well as from the immediate conflict zone. All refugees are waiting for a resolution.

As to settlements, we've repeatedly said there is no state settlements policy in either Armenia or Nagorno Karabakh. But there is in Azerbaijan. By presidential decree, the Azerbaijani State Committee

on Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons was instructed to organize the settlement of refugees in the formerly completely Armenian populated regions of Shahumian and Getashen, as well as Northern Martakert which is part of Nagorno Karabakh and occupied by Azerbaijan. By the same decree, the State Oil Fund allocated about \$18 million to resettle Azeris there. Yet the former Armenian residents of those regions are in and around the conflict zone, waiting for a resolution so that they can return to their homes.

A United Nations report just last month recommended that Azerbaijan take corrective measures to ensure that Armenians whose properties are illegally occupied by refugees and internally displaced persons be offered alternative accommodation.

This is the state of refugees and settlements. In other words, there is no new humanitarian crisis. There is the same difficult situation for both sides. It should not be exploited, but should be addressed as part of the difficult process before us. Despite these diversionary tactics, this process today still holds promise. We remain fully committed to the Minsk process as carried out by the three co-chairmen and we assume a similar and reciprocal commitment by Azerbaijan.

This conflict between the people of Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan will be concluded when Azerbaijan shares our vision for a real peace. Our vision of a peaceful region is strategic. This vision should not be endangered by cunning moves and countermoves. This will only succeed in handicapping or postponing serious negotiations.

GREAT UNMET POTENTIAL TO PROPEL THE REGION FORWARD

It's a pleasure to be here in Tbilisi and congratulate our old friend Tedo Japaridze on his new position with this organization. I want to thank my colleague Salome Zourabichvili for hosting us here on our side of the Black Sea and look forward to working with our Greek colleagues next year.

This now mature organization, BSEC, was set up in a way, almost to prove that countries with different and sometimes even conflicting histories, different religions, different languages, different political and social systems can indeed, in this new age, cohabit, coexist, cooperate and prosper. In that spirit of teamwork, but never forgetting that we come from different teams, we built a great structure. BSEC today, thanks to its well-developed institutions, its established legal framework, its Parliamentary Assembly, active working groups, its secretariat, its Project Fund and Trade and Development Bank, and think tank even, is an international economic organization able to pull its weight. With donor community support to the Project Development Fund, it can focus on implementation of projects of common interest for the member states.

All of this is testimony to the seductive function of shared economic interests. Our countries came together specifically to benefit from the Black Sea environment, its commonalities, its opportunities. We have indeed, despite many doubters, created a favorable situation for addressing economic challenges.

We have also, in our great consideration to sidestep political problems and differences, created an institution that is perhaps too sensitive to the internal politics of this region. As a result, we know, and we keep saying we know, that BSEC has great but unmet potential, that BSEC member states have economic and development needs that are specific to the region and, if met, can propel the region to the next economic and social plane.

The European prospect can be and actually is a catalyst for many of our member states individually. The proximity of the European Union is a stimulus for the whole organization, and can activate that potential and turn it into creative energy for regional development and prosperity.

We need Europe's help in prioritizing needs, defining programs to meet those needs and designing the projects that bring those programs to life. What makes this region unique is its wealth of tradition and deep historical roots. This does not always translate to relevant, transparent organization in either government or business, however.

We must continue to make the necessary structural and social reforms to achieve the higher effectiveness and efficiency needed to compete and thrive. This region's readiness to adapt is also part of history and has characterized its ability to learn from and contribute to Western civilization. BSEC's support in transforming the region's traditional small and medium size enterprises into viable players in a market economy, for example, builds on the region's capacities while providing contemporary tools.

Just as we need Europe's structural, technical and institutional expertise in our countries, Europe needs security and prosperity at its borders. BSEC should become a pillar in the new European architecture and hope that the European Union will consider it as such. We hope to see the European Union devise a clear BSEC-oriented policy that includes the strengthening of BSEC, the institutionalization of European Union-BSEC relations, the promotion of economic development and intra-regional cooperation among BSEC states, as well as between BSEC and the European Union and finally, promoting democracy and political stability in the BSEC region.

We highly appreciate the contribution of BSEC to security and stability in the region. Soft security measures, in the framework of BSEC, will make it possible to overcome trafficking in persons, money laundering and other urgent issues facing BSEC member states. Cooperation at all these levels will diminish the threat of terrorism in all its manifestations.

This process can be undertaken country by country. But it would be more productive if implemented regionally, to both drive regional development, and also to scare away the demons that continue to haunt our region and scare us into inaction.

Not much more than a decade ago the Black Sea divided the countries that today make up BSEC. But thousands of years before that the Black Sea actually linked the two ends of the known world. From the Mediterranean Sea to the Caspian Sea this was all one basin. Here, too, the proximity of Europe is an example and a lesson. The countries of Europe have built bridges among themselves and with those of us who surround them. It remains for the countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation to build bridges amongst ourselves. For all of us, a common sea and functioning bridges are essential for two-way traffic to flow from our past to our future.

YESTERDAY'S ADVERSARY NEED NOT BE AN ENEMY FOREVER

Last year, we marked our concern for the restoration of sovereignty in Iraq, and the reinvigoration of the Middle East peace process. This year we wish to especially note the critical need to end the tragedy in Darfur. Armenians, victims of the 20th century's first genocide, know well the long-lasting effects of victimization and homelessness. This is no way to begin a new millennium. The benefits of globalization should be utilized to defeat this newest global crisis.

We comprehend all too well that peace and security abroad and at home are clearly correlated with social and economic dignity today, or faith in their possibility tomorrow.

Neither self-satisfied smugness on the one hand, nor self-righteous violence on the other, are solutions to the great inequalities around the world, and within each of our countries, even those most developed. Terrorism, in all its manifestations, affects security, political and economic stability in our neighborhoods and on our planet. Terrorism from Madrid to Beslan, in all its manifestations, is inexcusable and unacceptable.

Cognizant that the success of counter-terrorism efforts is conditional on collective measures, Armenia has readily joined the global fight against international terrorism. This fight must go beyond effective regional and international cooperation. It must include the very goals of the Millennium Declaration – replacing deprivation,

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poverty and injustice by a universal respect for human rights and democracy, economic development, equality and social justice.

In Armenia, we have had a year in which economic growth went hand-in-hand with increased participation in international organizations, particularly the United Nations. Our position in the Human Development Index gives us the confidence to continue on this path of economic development.

We will also work hard to bolster public-private partnership. We are proud that Armenia's major enterprises are each finding ways to contribute to art and culture, to invest in public life, and become partners in our society's pursuit of happiness and quality of life.

In 2005, the international community will review the progress that's been made in the implementation of the global development agenda. It would be most useful if we could focus our resources on implementation of that agenda rather than on restating our collective good intentions. In other words, we must find the political will to make the political and financial commitments necessary to overcome the outstanding obstacles.

Mr. President, the Millennium Development Goals are guidelines for Armenia. To this end, empowerment of women, child protection, fight against poverty are not just goals for us, but they are indeed building blocks for a prosperous, healthy, stable society. The government of Armenia has approved national action plans for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, on Improving the Status of Women and Enhancing Their Role in Society, and for Prevention of Trafficking in Persons. In addition, a broad anti-corruption strategy, developed with the participation and counsel of the international community, will complement the Poverty Reduction Strategy Program that is already beginning to yield results.

We continue our effective and useful collaboration with United Nations bodies on a number of important issues including use of information and communication technologies to improve governance and institutionalize public-private interactions. With donor community support, focused institution building and good governance, we expect that the human rights and democratic reforms of the last decade will go beyond the solid legislative framework that's been

developed, and take root, psychologically and socially, in our society.

Armenia, as an active member of the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights, will remain involved in international development cooperation. At the same time, we will participate in the effort to improve the consultation and coordination mechanisms that are essential for the effectiveness of the collective security system and we look forward to the assessment of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

We stand for broader cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations as a measure for ensuring broader involvement and commitment by countries in decision-making and implementation processes. Reform is necessary within these valued organizations, if we are to effectively address today's realities and challenges, and resolve tomorrow's problems. For this, we cannot work with yesterday's mechanisms. In the UN, a revitalized General Assembly is indispensable for effective action. We would also support India, Germany and Japan joining countries from Africa, and Latin America as permanent members of an enlarged and more representative Security Council.

Mr. President, in these short years, we have done away with the false proposition that we must choose between East and West, between the old world and the new. We have done away with the myth that our neighbors can control the pace of our economic growth and shape its direction. Now, we want to do away with the dangerous suggestion that yesterday's adversary is an enemy forever.

Armenia is ready to compromise and collaborate with neighbors who are ready to join us in making history, not rewriting it. We want to work with an Azerbaijan that understands its place in a rule-based international order, not one whose policies, practices and statements threaten the fragile peace and stability of our region.

Azerbaijan was first in introducing ethnic cleansing to the Soviet space, first in engaging mercenaries and international terrorists in its own defense, first in discarding the rules of engagement in international organizations.

Let me explain. The Armenian presence in the Caucasus has been long and extensive. Denying or revising this history requires

systematic planning, energy and resources. Unfortunately, the government of Azerbaijan has not spared such resources. Azerbaijan succeeded in eliminating the Armenians of Nakhichevan who comprised more than half the population. There are none there today. In Baku and Sumgait, and throughout Azerbaijan, there were over 400,000 Armenians in the Soviet years. There are none there today. The Azerbaijani experiment in ethnic cleansing worked.

A decade ago, Azerbaijan retained the services of some of our region's most notorious mercenaries and international terrorists – the same names that you hear again and again – to fight against the Armenian men and women who were defending their lands and their lives against aerial bombings and proximate shelling. The terrorists lost, Armenians won.

Finally, Azerbaijan's leadership dismisses the opportunities offered by membership in international organizations to build bridges and seek solutions. Azerbaijan rejects mediation by those who wish to help halt drug trafficking through its territory. Azerbaijan also dismisses efforts by Council of Europe and other monitoring groups to come to the region to see first-hand the destruction of thousands of irreplaceable historic and cultural markers. It crows about its desire for NATO membership even as it repeatedly prohibits an alliance partner's participation in NATO exercises. Worse, Azerbaijan not only does not rebuke, it champions the Azeri military officer who decapitated a fellow Armenian officer in a NATO training course in Budapest. It maligns the Minsk Group of the OSCE in order to hide its own refusal to consider proposals that have grown from the discussions and negotiations in which its own leadership has participated. For more than half a decade, it has rejected every proposal placed before it from the Common State Proposal in 1998 to the Key West document of 2001.

Mr. President, Armenians prevailed in the military confrontation unleashed by Azerbaijan as a response to the peaceful demands of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh for self-determination. Contrary to the assertion of Azerbaijan's president, Armenians have occupied those lands for over 2000 years, and not just in the last ten. Today, Nagorno Karabakh has reversed the injustice of the Stalin years and is

free and democratic, tolerant of minorities. Nagorno Karabakh holds regular elections, has state and security structures, complete control over its territory, and a growing economy.

If in the last century, Armenians and Azeris were forcibly linked together, in this next century, where we have earned the right to our own destinies, we can determine to live together peaceably. If we are serious about becoming full, deserving residents of the European neighborhood where borders don't matter, but intentions and tolerance do, we will have to come to terms with our past, with our history, with the realities that have gripped our region.

SEARCHING FOR A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE CAUCASUS AND EUROPE

History is moving so quickly that nearly each one of these summits can, without great exaggeration, be said to be a meeting which will appear in the annals of history as a most important one for the development of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership. This summit marks the tenth anniversary of the Partnership for Peace program. We can, in hindsight, congratulate ourselves on a well-designed, well-thought out, useful, successful program.

Within this program, and in response to the Alliance's policy shift towards our region, Armenia has undertaken a number of steps aimed at enhancing and deepening our relations. Today we can surely state that Armenia is actively engaged with NATO in all those spheres of cooperation which the Allies consider main priorities and objectives of the Partnership.

First, let's speak of the future. Armenia has officially presented its intention to continue and deepen relations within the framework of the Individual Partnership Action Plan. Armenia has also offered to host a NATO Partnership for Peace Exercise.

As for what we have accomplished: First, political consultations with the NATO leadership are held on a regular basis, and are considered by both sides as important components of Armenia-NATO relations. Second, Armenia actively participates in the Partnership for Peace programs on developing interoperability and undertakes appropriate steps aimed at the reforming of its defense system. Third,

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Armenia is a member of NATO-led peacekeeping operations. The positive experience that we have gained from this encourages us to examine new ways and possibilities of increasing the overall volume of our engagement in international peacekeeping. Fourth, Armenia successfully hosted the NATO Partnership for Peace Cooperative Best Effort 2003 exercise, and also greatly benefited from improved peacekeeping capabilities. This cooperation also made it possible for Turkish troops to participate in that exercise. Ten years ago who would have thought such a thing possible – that Turkish troops would take part in NATO exercises on Armenian soil, and the Turkish flag would fly in Armenia?

Mr. Secretary General, the benefits of our participation in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, which is really a unique forum unifying all states of the Euro-Atlantic region, continue. That we are here, today, with a large delegation, is evidence. That we are here, today, at all, in Istanbul, is evidence of our further belief that Turkey has a role to play in that integration path, not just for Armenia, but for the entire South Caucasus.

Turkey's choice of a logo for the NATO Istanbul summit is a bridge, probably signifying the link between East and West. This bridge could and should also signify the link that Turkey can be between the Caucasus and Europe. Turkey, by geography, is the bridge between the Caucasus and Europe. Turkey is the only NATO member with which the three countries of the Caucasus share a border. Further, now that the Caucasus is part of the European Union's Neighborhood initiative, our links with Europe go through Turkey. With Turkey itself on a path toward Europe, ahead of the Caucasus, this whole area is truly on its way to becoming neighbors of Europe, and eventually a European neighborhood. Armenians believe that just as Turkey has normal relations with Azerbaijan and Georgia, it must have ties with Armenia as well, in order to draw the whole region together into a real neighborhood.

Such a move would have an immeasurable impact on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict as well. Nothing can compensate for our people's deep feelings of insecurity so long as neighbors are not a source of comfort, but a reminder of recent and old grievances. In this new era,

with new challenges, and new alliances, Turkey's evenhanded regional policies would go a long way to convincing the Armenian public that a Nagorno Karabakh resolution – something we all want – must be fashioned for a region at peace, and not for neighbors at war. Turkey is a neighbor whose words, actions, interactions – or their absence – influence the environment in which security concerns must be addressed.

It goes without saying that Nagorno Karabakh is a serious security problem. The president of Azerbaijan, however, addressed this issue from a purely narrow, ethnocentric perspective. The conflict is deeper, broader than the simple terms in which it was presented here. The allegation of terrorism in Nagorno Karabakh is so absurd that I won't even bother to try to respond. But, I will speak about the other issues he raised: territories, refugees and the status of Nagorno Karabakh. These are serious problems that we do need to confront. The fact of the matter is that territories and refugees are the consequences of a serious core issue: the status, the future status, of Nagorno Karabakh.

This conflict started peacefully when the people of Nagorno Karabakh opted for self-determination. Azerbaijan rejected that decision, and resorted to military operations to suppress that right to self-determination. So, what we have today are the consequences of Azerbaijani aggression against the people of Nagorno Karabakh. In addition, and as my president said recently, Nagorno Karabakh has never ever been part of independent Azerbaijan. These realities need to be factored into our future negotiations. As President Ilham Aliyev made his perspective known, let me say, too, that we have long been ready and willing to make the necessary compromises to reach a peaceful solution to achieve long-lasting peace and stability.

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

It's an honor to be here at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I recall my first appearance here. That was almost four years ago, and since then, the world has certainly changed. Armenia has changed, our region has changed, and new challenges have emerged.

The question that I usually am confronted with, in Armenia and in the Diaspora too, is the following: what does Armenia want, where is it heading, what's the vision of Armenia's leadership today for Armenia? To respond to such questions, you can either be philosophical and try to provide all sorts of long answers going into history and try to project a vision, or you can be very simple and direct. That's what I try to be, and the answer usually is the following: we want to create, establish, build a country which is democratic, prosperous, which lives in peace and security. This is very simple and of course, could be true for every country, and every leader would certainly wish the same.

Where countries differ is in the way they pursue this goal, and Armenia, in these past ten to 12 years since independence has certainly made a lot of progress in all three of those directions: democracy, economic development which will lead to prosperity, and peace and stability not only in Armenia but also in the region.

Those three goals have a few things in common. One is that we've made progress in all three directions. Second, that in all three cases, our departure point was very low. We began building democracy from communism. When the Soviet Union collapsed there were no traditions and we basically began from scratch, and anything you do from a zero base will appear pretty impressive.

We understand the road to democracy will be very long, will be tortuous, but it is a promising road and Armenia is determined to continue on that path.

The same can be said for prosperity and economic development. The last four years in particular have been very promising for Armenia. We've had double-digit growth for the past three years: in 2001, we moved to 12.3, last year it was 14.9. And this year, almost halfway through, we're close to ten percent growth, and traditionally the early months of the year are the slowest in our economy, so if the trend continues we will certainly have another double-digit year. But again, we began from a very, very low point of departure. We are not alone, though. All the other Soviet Republics saw similar collapse. They too began from a zero point. Our advantage in all this has been that we've made serious progress compared to our neighbors, although our point of departure was more or less the same.

And thirdly, peace and security. Again, if we look back ten years, we began building peace and security in our region basically after a war.

Armenia's first years of independence were marked by war with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and in 1994 we reached a ceasefire agreement, and that's been holding these past ten years. This year we celebrated the tenth anniversary of that ceasefire. Again, we do have relative peace and stability, but again our starting point was very low.

When you're beginning to build peace from a state of war and you reach relative stability, that is positive but certainly not the desired end result. We understand we have to demonstrate a lot of political will in the coming months and years, so that we reach long-term and permanent peace and stability in our region.

So in all those three directions, although we've made progress and we're happy with it, we understand that the challenge is not to sustain

what we have but to further deepen and strengthen them. Regarding democracy, for example, I think – and I will always admit this – we've only scratched the surface in our country. We have a long way to go. Our membership in the Council of Europe was very instrumental. The Council provided us with a clear blueprint as to where the country should be heading, what kind of political reforms must be implemented, and since our application to that organization we've made a lot of progress, and with full membership three years ago we've assumed new responsibilities and obligations which we will fulfill. The end of 2004 is a clear deadline to complete the first phase of those obligations, and I must say we're at 90 percent in terms of fulfilling them, and we are pretty confident that we will be able to complete them by the end of 2004.

This will not be the end. We will enter a new phase, a more difficult phase where we will try to go deeper and deeper in democracy building. Here we will require assistance from abroad. The United States has been extremely helpful and instrumental in the democratic processes in Armenia. The National Democratic Institute is bringing its contribution and the United States, through its Millennium Challenge Account, is making Armenia focus on good governance, democracy building, rule of law, and respect for human rights.

So all this and the Council of Europe's commitments certainly will make Armenia move faster in that direction. But there is one caveat here that we need to be aware of, that after a certain point, once you do and complete the easy phase of democracy building – and we've learned this through our own experience – to move to the second phase will be much more challenging and will require further political will. To be able to complete that successfully, the country requires a constructive opposition. Without partnership with your opposition domestically you will have a difficult time to make that next move and deepen democratic institutions.

I'm sure people who are in this room and have an interest in our region have been following events in Armenia. You're aware of the political problems with the opposition. The opposition, through its very aggressive attitude towards the authorities, does not contribute to democracy building. There's a lack of partnership between government and opposition.

So we think, through the international organizations, through the American government, through the Council of Europe we'll be able to patch up the relationship between the opposition and the government, be able to bring the opposition back to its normal course, back to parliament, to become a true partner with the government in those areas which are critical for Armenia's democracy building.

Moving on to the topic of our economy, which has been, as I said, very positive in terms of its development in these past three years. This puts us in a very challenging situation. To have double-digit growth over two years and to continue this will be extremely difficult.

You simply cannot sustain it if there is no additional foreign direct investment, no continued export growth, import substitution, and continued economic reform in the country, and also peace and stability in the country and the region.

So these elements need to be there so that we'll be able to sustain economic growth in Armenia, which will be extremely important so that we'll be able to tackle the more problematic issues that we face, such as high poverty rates in the country, high unemployment. These, we believe, are the two evils that the country is still facing. The other macroeconomic fundamentals are pretty strong. Our currency has been stable these past six, seven years. Growth is high. Inflation is low. Our reserves have been growing every year. We now have four months of import reserves, which puts us in a very stable situation in terms of exchange rates, and growth is continuing. So the challenge is to be able to sustain this.

As we now look back, the reasons for the success of the past three, four years were the reforms that we adopted beginning in 1992. Those reforms began to yield positive results, first through the climate that was created. The Wall Street Journal and Heritage Foundation assessment of economic freedom of the countries in the world puts Armenia at 44, ranked at par with France. Indeed, our economy is very liberal. Our laws are extremely liberal. That's why we rank along with France and Singapore at 44 as liberal economies.

Secondly, the continued flow of foreign and direct investment. This is growing each year, although our economy is rather small, but the trend is very positive, and we're seeing more and more interest in

Armenia's economy by foreign companies, other countries, and our own Diaspora. With the Millennium Challenge Account's further injection of cash – about \$100 to \$150 million, even perhaps \$200 million – if we are able to provide the right programs and projects for their sponsorship, then there will be this additional cash injected into Armenia's economy. This coupled with the investments from our Diaspora – last year we had about \$150 million – means another \$300 million in Armenia's economy over the next four or five years. This will certainly sustain double-digit growth.

Finally, the third aspect, which is peace and stability and security in our region, is extremely critical. Without it, the other two could not have been achieved. Peace is essential. Security is essential. And Armenians in general are extremely security conscious. Our history, our past has made us extremely sensitive to security matters. In addition, we are bordered by Turkey and Azerbaijan, with which we don't have any diplomatic ties, and on top of that, with Azerbaijan we have the Nagorno Karabakh conflict – all this means an even more difficult situation in security terms. That's why in this area we've been implementing multi-layered security measures based on our policy of complementarity to provide maximum security for Armenia.

Our security measures are indeed multi-layered. They begin with our bilateral security cooperation with Russia and continue with the Collective Security Treaty of which we are a member along with six other former Soviet republics. There is also the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty and other disarmament treaties, European and global. There is our cooperation with NATO, which is increasing and deepening every day. Almost a year ago we were lagging behind our two neighbors. We caught up with them. Today Armenia is a member of the Status of Forces Agreement, is a member of the Planning and Review Process. We're now beginning our individual partnership program with NATO, and that puts us at par with our two neighbors. We believe this is extremely important when it comes to NATO cooperation so that no dividing lines are created in our region. Just imagine if our neighbors moved way ahead in terms of their cooperation with NATO

and Armenia stayed behind. That would create dis-balance in the region, and would even lead to some sort of a dividing line, something that we don't want to see happen.

So our moves forward on this NATO matter have to be in tandem, and we believe all three of us now are moving in unison, and we hope this will continue in the future. We also appointed an ambassador to cover NATO full-time, something we didn't have before. Our ambassador at the European Union with a bilateral portfolio for Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg was also covering NATO. Now we have an ambassador that specifically covers NATO for Armenia, and we're very much looking forward to take part, at the ministerial level, in the NATO summit in Istanbul.

The other layer is our bilateral security agreements. Because of our policy of complementarity, we have entered into bilateral military cooperation with Russia as well as other countries. The two with which we have good cooperation are Greece and the United States.

With the United States, the cooperation began only recently. The Section 907 restriction in the US Freedom Support Act prevented any administration from providing military assistance to either Armenia or Azerbaijan. That has now been waived and so we have the opportunity to have military cooperation with the United States, and that is extremely helpful. It comes as an addition to the layers of security that we already had, and all taken together indeed provide a strong security shield for Armenia, in a very delicate and problematic region.

Our region is problematic for Armenia for two reasons. One is the consequence of the other. The source of the tension is the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, as a result of which Turkey has demonstrated unequivocal support and solidarity with Azerbaijan. Since Armenia's independence, Turkey has totally disregarded its own geostrategic interests. They chose ethnic solidarity with Azerbaijan and adopted a very uneven and one-sided policy towards Armenia.

Since then, no movement has been registered in Turkish-Armenian relations despite the fact that Armenia has not and will not set any conditions for normalizing ties with Turkey, although Armenia has more reason to set conditions. But because of our

strategic vision, because of our willingness to have a peaceful region and good neighborly ties with all our neighbors, we've never put any conditions before Turkey. We regret that Turkey has not met us halfway and they continue to make the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, which is a conflict that Armenia has with a third country, a pre-condition for normalizing relations with Armenia.

We've been working on these relations. Last year I had three separate meetings with my counterpart from Turkey. The first meeting was very promising but since then we've basically backpedaled because Turkey came to realize that their intentions are one thing but their capabilities are another. And they are indeed hostage to Azerbaijani pressure when it comes to normalizing relations with Armenia. When I began to talk with Abdullah Gul, he said, we certainly want to separate the two and move forward with our bilateral ties. In the second meeting he said, you know, that linkage is there but does not bear much weight. Let's continue to work on our bilaterals. In our third meeting, he simply apologized and said, no, we can't do much because that issue is there.

Unless Armenia does something about Karabakh, we cannot do much with Armenia bilaterally, he explained.

So that's where we are – back to zero. At this moment, no progress has been registered, but we're still hopeful that we can do something about this especially with the possibility of Turkey's membership in the European Union, with the United States' insistence that Turkey actually does something and opens the border – possibly beginning with opening the railroad, then moving on to other issues. We believe Turkey has a responsibility and obligation to change its policy towards Armenia. Eventually Turkey must be the bridge for the Caucasus to NATO and the European Union.

The three countries of the Caucasus have a border with Turkey. Azerbaijan has a very small one through Nakhichevan where it's only eight, nine kilometers. We have a long border with them. Georgia has a long border, too. And Turkey indeed is the only NATO and future European Union country with which the three Caucasus countries have borders. We are a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace program. We're a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council as is

Turkey. When we became a member of these two NATO organizations, we thought, Turkey would take leadership and serve as a bridge. The same obligation falls on Turkey now. The European Union processes should be additional burden on Turkey to feel that now they have a dual obligation, not only to NATO but also to the European Union. Since everyone expects that Turkey will get accession negotiation rights early next year.

Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan only last month were included in the European Union's New Neighborhood initiative, which is a step in the direction of possible future membership. Pay attention to the word 'neighborhood.' The only neighborhood possibility we have is our border with Turkey. No other Caucasus country has a border with any other European Union member or potential member. Turkey is the only one, and they need to feel the responsibility that they've got to change their policy towards Armenia and engage Armenia.

Turkey is now being asked by the European Union also to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Recently, at the very highest level, the chairman of the French Socialist Party made that declaration, and now there are repeated calls on Turkey to demonstrate the political will, come to terms with their past and history, and get beyond this issue.

Speaking of genocide recognition I should – so that I do not appear to contradict my earlier statements – say that recognition is not a pre-condition from the Armenian side. The recognition issue is an agenda item. We will pursue that with other countries, in international organizations, even with Turkey, but we haven't and we will not in the future, make that a pre-condition for normalizing ties with Turkey. In other words, if Turkey decides tomorrow to normalize relations with Armenia and the genocide has not been recognized, that will not be an obstacle for Armenia to go ahead with normalization. We don't see a contradiction here. It is our moral obligation to raise the genocide issue, to have it on our foreign policy agenda, but having it on the agenda and making it a pre-condition, these are two separate things. So it is not a condition and we are willing to move forward on our bilaterals with Turkey.

Now this brings me to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, which is an important component in that last dimension, which is peace and stability. We can't have long-term, lasting peace and stability in the Caucasus without resolving the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. This is very clear, everyone understands it, and we really are working hard to reach an agreement on this issue. We came very close with Ilham Aliyev's father, Haidar Aliyev a year and a half, two years ago. At Key West, Florida, a document was produced which basically provided a package solution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. It took a lot of courage by both presidents, by President Aliyev and President Kocharian, to agree to the terms of that agreement, because both sides were making serious compromises, and that allowed a serious framework for the resolution of the conflict to emerge.

Unfortunately, now, Ilham Aliyev's situation has changed. Ilham Aliyev is saying he cannot continue on the same path that his father had embarked on, and the conditions and terms included in the Key West document are not acceptable. The word 'acceptable,' I would use with some reservation. It's not that it's not acceptable but it's not doable given the political circumstances. He's a new president, he's young, he doesn't have the moral authority that his father had. We understand that. That's why we think we've got to give time to the new leadership in Azerbaijan, work with them, and try to even reach a compromise agreement, even some other interpretation of the Key West document. Does it have to be the exact wording? It doesn't have to be the same, it could be a variation of what we had as long as long as we stick to the basic principles.

Unfortunately, now, Azerbaijan's policy differs greatly from Haidar Aliyev's policy. Today, Azerbaijan basically is trying to focus on the consequences of the conflict rather than on the cause of the conflict. The conflict started because the people of Nagorno Karabakh, during the collapse of the Soviet Union, opted for self-determination. They wanted to have their status changed from autonomy to something else, so that they would have more say in their lives and future. Azerbaijan rejected that call and they suppressed the peaceful demonstrations.

So the cause of the problem is the status of Nagorno Karabakh but the suppression by Azerbaijan in 1992 of those peaceful calls led to military conflict, which resulted in consequences, such as territories now under Armenian control. It generated a lot of refugees from both sides. There are other negative consequences, too, that eventually need to be addressed. Azerbaijan's approach is to ignore the cause, focus on the consequences and try to unravel them. Armenians also would love to unravel those consequences. We would have loved to go back in time and undo the pain and suffering. We would have wanted for Azerbaijan not to victimize its own population. We would have liked to see Azerbaijan not try to provide a military solution to a political problem. And still today, we would prefer that the Azerbaijani rhetoric be less militant, more realistic, forward looking and more hopeful.

But such is not the situation. Their insistence that those territories that are Armenian-controlled be returned in exchange for beginning of talks for possible high autonomy within Azerbaijan doesn't really make much sense because that would simply take us to the status of 1988, as if nothing has happened in the intervening years, as if no war was fought and won, as if no new generation of Armenians were born oblivious to Azerbaijani claims, as if the political and historic rights of Nagorno Karabakh as well as the realities on the ground can be ignored. These things simply cannot be ignored. The focus today should be on the status of Nagorno Karabakh. We've got to address that.

Certainly those who've heard the representation of the positions of the sides will come to the conclusion that the views are so different, so divergent that there's absolutely no hope that any progress can be made. Not at all. We think we can make progress despite the divergence of our views and positions because there's always a middle way. There is a compromise solution. The word 'compromise' you'll hear from Armenia, but we never hear it, especially recently, from the Azerbaijani side. But there is a compromise solution. We think we can agree on a timetable during which all those consequences can be addressed, meanwhile providing the people of Nagorno Karabakh the opportunity to decide their own future by using internationally

accepted norms and instruments. During our talks, which are now two-track talks – one at the presidents' level, one at the foreign ministers' level – we are addressing these kinds of issues: how to try to reconcile these two views when one insists on return of territories, the other side insists on status. We think a concoction of the two could provide a new opportunity, can produce some new elements which would serve as the hinge around which this whole conflict can be resolved.

There's one other element that we need to be cognizant of and that is our future goal, our aim to be part of Europe, to become more integrated in European structures. There is a clear intention by Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia which we do not hide that, yes, indeed, we would like to be a member of the European Union sometime down the road, as long as it takes, that's our strategic vision. We're moving in that direction. If this is true for all three countries, we've got to try to put these conflicts in that broader context: try to look at borders not as something that will formalize political divisions but simply will define our cultures and identities, not as obstacles to cooperation in the future. If that context and understanding is embedded in our thinking, we may begin to look at issues differently, and that certainly will provide the broader context within which we can address differences and reach a solution.

A EUROPE WITHOUT BORDERS AND BARRIERS

Each year, the focus of this organization and its member states remains the same: to enhance democratization and rule of law so that governments can nurture healthy societies and healthy economies.

Together with the OSCE and the European Union, the Council has worked hard to institute programs which protect human rights, promote environmental and economic progress, and advance democratization agendas. Armenia supports deeper cooperation among these three European institutions, and advocates the creation of mechanisms to increase effectiveness and minimize duplication especially in light of the new definitions and relationships that are appearing with an enlarged and widening Europe.

Unfortunately, some of what has emerged presents a quandary for mankind. We thought human slavery was behind us. But Europe of the 21st century has been stained by the scourge of human trafficking. With the dangers of terrorism, too, and its threat to break up the international order as we've known it, we recognize even more that the only real defense against these mass challenges to the principles and precepts that guide us is the deepening of the rules of democracy and civil society, so that each individual gains from that system and thus becomes more willing to defend and propagate that system.

In order to provide the necessary attention and focus that these issues require, we would hope for a third Council of Europe Summit, where at the core of the agenda would be the new menaces and new

challenges which occupy our attention and demand our resources. An enlarged European Union, an enlarging NATO, evolving transatlantic interactions, this is the context against which our heads of state should meet and carve out a new vision for a Council of Europe that was born in one era, and now must lead in another.

Our search for deeper relations with Europe has, for us in the Caucasus, become both cause and effect. This process is a continuum that began when we targeted Council of Europe membership as a goal. We benefited from that process, as we continue to benefit from membership itself which jumpstarted and quickened legislative, judicial and other reforms. Today, we are looking forward to becoming part of Europe's New Neighborhood and creating our own cooperative and integrated neighborhood.

It is the same with democratization. The decision to transition to a democratic, rule of law system of governance was a significant step. The process of accomplishing that goal is an ongoing one, for all countries.

Armenia is a telling example, where we are proving year in and year out that the farther down the democratic path a country goes, the more energy and resolve it takes to keep moving forward rather than running in place. That process has been the same for all democracies sitting around this table. Some have had to wage civil wars before moving forward, others have seen multiple revolutions. Some waited 50 years to give everyone the right to vote, others were repeatedly obliged to demonstrate their resoluteness in the march toward fuller, greater, deeper democratic values.

Mr. Chairman, I recall my first statement here, immediately after Armenia's membership. I said then that we have become members not so that we would bring our problems to this Council, but to use the Council to address our problems. This is the first time that my Azerbaijani colleague and I are both using this forum to meet in the sidelines and seek common ground, from which I hope we can defend the rights of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination, while resolving the consequences of the conflict which continue to cause pain and suffering for both Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

Exactly ten years ago today, the leaders of Nagorno Karabakh, Armenia and Azerbaijan demonstrated the necessary political will to put a stop to years of fighting, and to institute what is the world's longest lasting, and today, its only self-monitored ceasefire. Now, as we meet under the aegis of the Minsk Group co-chairs, we have a chance to exhibit political will yet again, and in this second decade, take our peoples forward toward a lasting resolution.

I will use the opportunity today of meeting here with my new Azerbaijani colleague to call for a de-escalation of the rhetoric of war, and the war of rhetoric. Both sides stand to benefit from the suspension of charges and accusations. The Europe of which we are a part is a Europe without borders and barriers. This Europe presents us the opportunity to take advantage of the mechanisms and institutions that have been developed and have proven themselves in defending, promoting, implementing European ideals and European norms.

Mr. Chairman, we hope to return to this forum, proud of our accomplishments not just in establishing a vibrant democracy, but also in making possible prosperity and cooperation in our region.

POLICY OF COMPLEMENTARITY A CHOICE AND A BURDEN

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you here today. I look forward to what is always an interesting dialogue.

In preparing my thoughts for this evening, I looked over my talk here at Chatham House in 1999. I suppose I knew, but those notes, black on white, drove home the point that the world is a different place today. It is not only international geopolitical relations and calculations which have changed, but so has Armenia and our region.

I don't know why I can't remember who, but someone important said, show me a country's location on a map and I'll describe to you their foreign policy. Armenia is in the middle of the Caucasus, which itself is at the center of three continents, and just north of the Middle East. You can probably guess that our capacity to contribute to regional stability depends very much on our success in managing our relations with disparate and seemingly incompatible actors. Philip Marsden, the perceptive British author of one of the most engaging books on Armenia and Armenians, titles it *The Crossing Place*. No matter what type east-west, north-south trade, exchange and migration one talks about, for 3000 years, Armenia has been at the intersection of millennial traffic.

It is therefore natural that the foreign policy choice, and sometimes burden, of this young republic is to pursue a policy of multi-directional complementarity.

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It is no secret, that given our geopolitical situation, the conflicts or hostilities we face and the limited resources we command, our room to maneuver is rather small.

It is important therefore for Armenia, that our actions, intents and relations are understood correctly and in their context.

Today, our future depends on how well we handle each of the following four challenges:

Security, Development, European integration and Nagorno Karabakh.

Let me start with security. Given our history and the current realities in the region, security is a number one priority for Armenia. Armenians are extremely security conscious, that is why we have entered into layers of security guarantees compatible with our policy of complementarity. Those layers are comprised of our bilateral security arrangements with Russia, our membership in the Collective Security Agreement, our extensive engagement in disarmament treaties, most particularly the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty which provides balance and transparency in our region, our extensive relations with NATO, and finally other bilateral arrangements, such as with Greece, and most recently with the US.

Let me start with Russia with whom the scope and range of our connectedness is extensive – economically, militarily, politically, and not unlike our relations with the US and the European Union, influenced more and more by the presence there of a very large and increasingly more active Armenian Diaspora. Armenia does have a military pact with Russia. There are Russian military bases in Armenia. All of this leads to a myth about the degree of Armenia's dependence on the Russian Federation. There exist differing assumptions about Armenia's absolute margin of maneuver and, more significantly, our relative margin of flexibility in defining and pursuing our interests, more particularly with other countries.

Actually, the truth lies elsewhere. The larger, more crucial and geostrategically more contingent relationship between the US and Russia, and the European Union and Russia, is what will shape the role, significance and performance of Armenia in that triangle. And that is no myth.

Before the war on terrorism, America itself was hesitant to engage Armenia in military matters, given its desire not to offend or irritate regional proxies, friends or rivals. Today, we have entered into substantive military cooperation with the US.

Further, while neither invited nor self-invited to be a candidate for NATO membership, Armenia, through the Partnership for Peace program is active and interested in the process. We have just begun our accession process to the Individual Partnership Action Plan. In this and other instances, we have never been offered more than we have been willing or able to accept. We are therefore somewhat realistically concerned that if Armenia's and our neighbors' engagement with NATO proceeds unevenly, there is the danger of new dividing lines being created in the Caucasus, and that's not helpful for anyone's security interests.

Turkey, too, has a role to play in Armenia's security. Not as a partner, unfortunately, but as a neighbor whose words, actions, relations – or absence of relations – creates the environment in which security concerns must be addressed. Turkey missed a historic opportunity a dozen years ago, to use the event of Armenia's independence to begin a new era of relations. Turkey is a major regional player with the potential of significantly impacting the regional environment. Its continuing insistence on pre-conditions to normal relations creates a breach in confidence. The absence of normal relations creates a fear of unexpected actions and complicates an already tense security environment.

Fortunately, Iran, our southern neighbor has been much more evenhanded and farsighted in its relations with Armenia. By experience and necessity, our engagement with Iran is not and cannot be superficial and on-and-off again. What we have is the cooperation of two neighbors, each resisting different forms of isolation and marginalization.

Our second challenge is sustainable and rapid development. In the dozen short years since independence, we have secured Armenia's borders in an inherently unstable region, we have defended our people by creating a strong army, we have begun to build state structures where none existed, we have stopped the eco-

nomic collapse and begun the climb toward prosperity, we have resolved the energy crisis and converted energy into a commodity, and in these last three years have sustained double-digit economic growth.

Clearly, more crucial challenges are waiting for us still. This growth, which admittedly began from a very low point of departure, will be difficult to maintain. We must continue to create rewarding jobs, elevate people's standard of living and eradicate poverty and indignity, we must fight and win the war against nepotism and corruption, we must dispel the shadow economy, we must protect the socially vulnerable, advocate for the rights of women and children, allow entrepreneurs to dream and create, bolster the vital mission of educators and shape a society where people believe in their abilities to live up to their dreams.

We must also fashion a government of believers and believers in government. We often say that the steps we've taken toward democratic processes and democratic institutions have been the easy steps. Now, we need to do the hard work that results in the absorption and realization of these values in personal and public life. The recent demonstrations in Yerevan, by an opposition determined to come to power at all cost, even as they've publicly said, by force, is indication that we have a ways to go. For Armenia or for any country in transition, what is needed is not just a government willing to set the rules and play by them, but also a constructive opposition that is willing to do the same, without brazenly, aggressively abusing the new opportunities that a democratic system offers. Only thus will there be the kind of stability that is as necessary to empower a citizenry, as it is for a businessman to take risks.

Taken together, all of these efforts – economic and political – will in turn create the kind of confidence necessary for direct foreign investments to increase and exports to find markets. It is the combination of these two pillars around which our economic growth will be sustained. Towards this end, we envision the creation of a Caucasus free trade zone, as Presidents Robert Kocharian of Armenia and Mikhail Saakashvili of Georgia have advocated. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Commonwealth of

Independent States can provide serious opportunities for unhindered economic cooperation among member states if political obstacles do not interfere. For such an enterprise to succeed, for foreign investors to engage in Caucasus projects, we need open communication lines. The closed border with Turkey has resulted in a gap in operating rail links from Turkey through Armenia to Georgia. Within Europe's Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA) route, this constitutes the only missing link from Europe to Asia. Doubtless, re-commissioning this existing line is of value to those beyond our immediate region as well, thanks to waves of regionalization and globalization. Thus what is good for Armenia's development is also good for our neighbors near and far.

From a common security policy to a free trade area, all are achievable and workable. Civil society, interstate cooperation, human rights reforms, legislative compatibility, economic cooperation – these are the agenda items that will drive the development of our region. In the Caucasus, where we live with unresolved conflicts, a signal that the Caucasus belongs in Europe, will influence and determine how conflicts are resolved. This is our third challenge: Euro integration. This would not be a simple affirmation of cultural and religious affinities. This would be the framework within which we would view our futures, our borders, our neighbors. The Caucasus in Europe means a Caucasus where all neighbors quit trying to settle scores, where borders are no longer viewed as barriers. The countries of Europe and the European structures talk to the Caucasus, visit us, consider our problems and progress, our needs and accomplishments, all together, in one breath. This means that in time, we too, will see our future together.

We appreciated the request by the Council of Ministers of the European Union to the European Commission to make recommendations about the Caucasus inclusion into the European Union Wider Europe initiative during the Irish Presidency. We hope for and expect such a positive recommendation.

But let me make a clear distinction, so we do not have any false

illusions. The European Union offers us the prospect, not the promise. This is clearly understood by Armenia, and I have no doubt that it is understood by our neighbors. It is we in the Caucasus who will turn that prospect into a promise.

Europe's standards force us to reexamine our own conduct and behavior. We are working to build functional, responsive, responsible societies in this neighborhood not through an imposition of force, but because we want to be a part of a greater Europe. Europe's experiences in regional cooperation, regional conflicts, regional compromises, influenced by the successes of the last 50 years can provide examples and guidance.

The prospect of European Union membership has already had positive effects for our neighbor Turkey, which is being forced to revisit its relations with at least one of its neighbors. In light of possible Turkish membership in the EU, the normalization of Turkey's relations with Armenia, should also be both condition and consequence. After all, this will be Europe's eastern border, and the prospect that it might be a closed border sounds improbable given Europe's standards and ideals.

As you can see, Turkey is a factor in all the major challenges facing Armenia today. Whether we consider security interests, development directions, or European integration, the role that Turkey plays in the region is of consequence.

Armenia repeats at every possible opportunity that we are prepared to continue dialogue, to work, without pre-conditions, for diplomatic relations, for open formal sovereign communications, without which regional imbalances, instability and even hostilities cannot be righted, mitigated, or anchored in reciprocal understanding. The simple fact is that neither our past nor our geography is going to change.

To ignore this truth means that perhaps we do not want them to go away. If we do, then their legacy must be transcended together. We are not the only neighbors in the world who have had, and who continue to have, a troubled relationship. We know that evil ghosts on the Franco-German border were exorcised. We know that ours can be as well.

I believe that Turkey's current government is also interested in working towards normalizing relations. But I also know that Turkey has fallen hostage to Azeri pressure. Azerbaijan's new President Aliyev recently acknowledged, publicly, that closed borders between Turkey and Armenia is a huge bargaining chip in Azerbaijan's hand, and the opening of the border will impact negatively on the Nagorno Karabakh peace process. He's wrong on both counts.

Open borders are in everyone's interest, but it would not be unfair to say that Turkey's role in Iraq, with Israel, with NATO and with European Union defense policy, not to say anything of the Baku-Çeyhan pipeline, are all too critical for Europe to risk jeopardizing by pushing a positive Turkish-Armenian agenda in the face of Turkish resistance.

We believe that the facts show that the utility of sealed borders has diminished. On the contrary, their continued existence tends to lessen Turkey's credibility as a positive, active, regional player.

This brings us to our fourth challenge: finding a lasting, peaceful resolution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

I've just returned from a meeting in Prague with the new Azerbaijani foreign minister, called by the Minsk Group co-chairs. I must admit that there are many uncertainties today in the negotiation process and I think that wittingly or unwittingly, rather than focusing on finding answers to the causes of this conflict, Azerbaijan is focusing on the consequences, and looking for ways of unraveling them.

If the stages of this conflict are viewed one frame at a time, and the analysis is based on a single frame – the way the conflict appears today for example – then we will have a distorted view and will apply inaccurate labels and propose inappropriate solutions. It is 2004 and the current phase of this century-old conflict, which resurfaced in 1988, has not yet ended. It has gone through a period of peaceful demonstrations by Armenians, followed by pogroms in Sumgait and Baku, sanctioned by the Azerbaijani authorities. This armed response was followed by a full military escalation, then a ceasefire, then many stages of negotiations, and that brings us to today.

The refugee issue is a consequence of the military conflict, and affects us all. One million refugees Azerbaijan says. That's true. But more than one-third of those refugees are Armenians. There were 400,000 Armenians living in Azerbaijan before this conflict began. If Armenia, with far less resources than Azerbaijan, has found ways to settle those refugees into some semblance of normal life, rather than keep them in tents and barracks as a showcase to the world, that does not mean that they do not exist. There are refugees from both sides just as there is suffering on both sides. Both sides have certain rights that need to be addressed.

Second, it is simplistic to assume that Armenians will relinquish control over territories under their control as some sort of confidence building mechanism. Whose confidence are we building? Certainly not the confidence of the population of Nagorno Karabakh which fought for its basic civil and human rights, but which would be left with no prospect of long-term status and security to ensure that it will not have to fight again. The conflict is not over, and we've never claimed anything beyond what we think we deserve – that the international community look at this from the point of view of the rights of the people who live on those territories. We are both victims. We have to work towards a solution which allows us both to become victors.

This year, on the tenth anniversary of this, the only self-imposed and self-maintained cease-fire in the world, what we want for Armenia, for Nagorno Karabakh and for our neighborhood are visionary, creative, tolerant responses based on good will. The formula we seek for our conflict and for our region is one that assumes that tomorrow we will live next door to a neighbor and not an enemy. Our dream is to create a country that will live in peace within itself and with its neighbors, a country that will provide security and comfort to those who wish to return. We dream that there will be no dead-end roads leading out of Armenia, that they will all be avenues of opportunity linking neighbor to neighbor, country to country, civilization to civilization.

Our borders defining our territories will identify our cultures and identities, not serve as obstacles to free exchange and cooperation. In

other words, putting this conflict within the context of European integration, finding solutions that are appropriate to the new geopolitical context is what will move all of the Caucasus to a new level of peace and prosperity.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE PAST FOR THE SAKE OF THE FUTURE

The freedoms enjoyed in many countries, the freedoms that make some societies the envy of the world, are the right of each individual man, woman and child. As societies and governments represented here, we gather to reaffirm our commitments and to continue the search for ways to make those ideals real.

This 60th session epitomizes all our hard-learned lessons. The struggle to articulate, explain, codify, legislate, impose, and ensure human rights in each society has been both international and local. We wish to achieve universal access to and guarantee of human rights for all the world's citizens. Whether motivated by altruism or enlightened self-interest, we want the same civil liberties for the old and new democracies, the big and small powers, the developed and developing nations. As a new democracy, a small country on a path to development, we know that what happens inside countries – large or small – can have and has had, a huge effect on the rest of the world.

While symbols should not be mistaken for substance, they should not be dismissed as insubstantial, either. The gains that we have made are testimony to the truism that what is right is also good. Many of today's social ills, and the economic ones, too, will be well on their way to disappearing if human rights are accepted, absorbed, respected and implemented as inarguable, inalienable, unalterable rights.

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This is why older democracies – having suffered the risks of civil societies which do not extend human rights protections – are determined to instill good governance mechanisms around the world. That is why international organizations include the human dimension as a significant component of their security concerns. That is why the terror of terrorism has imposed discussions on the elimination of human rights violations as solutions.

The driving force is not just philosophy and idealism but also politics and pragmatism. Societies that respect the human rights of their own people, are more likely to respect the rights of their neighbors. Countries that acknowledge that national aspirations can be given their just dues without resorting to violence or aggression, are the kinds of societies in which we ourselves wish to live, and which we all want at our borders. Those among us who can confront remembered wrongs without committing new ones will have earned the right to call ourselves modern, inclusive, tolerant, neighborly. That is what we want for our neighborhood.

From the Caspian to the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the South Caucasus or the Northern Middle East is a cauldron of constant dynamic change, geopolitical fermentation, domestic and sub-regional threats, and multi-power interest and competition. An uneven distribution of resources, mixed with a bumpy path to regional development and cooperation makes good governance based on a respect for individual rights even more critical for the interests of governments and citizens alike. We know that this requires a determination generated inside our societies. It necessitates intellectual and practical conversions that go beyond our international commitments.

Towards this end, the comments, observations and even admonitions of various countries and international organizations on our human rights accomplishments and goals is acknowledged, and appreciated. We know that this is a win-win struggle, where what is good for Armenia is also good for the region. But we also know that preaching democracy is no substitute for the sustained efforts essential to create a healthy society, which in turn will guarantee the health of the state. We are ready to work with all those who comprehend the

natural process of maturation needed for these changes to be authentic and deep-rooted, not cosmetic and short-lived.

In Armenia, where human rights has been on our collective agenda for just one sixth of this organization's 60 year history, changes have already begun to take root. This year, the death penalty was abolished. The inherent right to life is now guaranteed for all our citizens. Just a few months ago, an ombudsman was appointed to hear grievances and facilitate solutions.

Armenia's minority populations, although small in number, continue to enjoy the government's attention and equal protections under the law. Trafficking, an emergent global evil, is the object of an interagency plan to eradicate the local conditions and mechanisms that enable this crime.

The National Plan of Action for Children was approved to coordinate Armenia's obligations and programs for children – a vulnerable group whose basic quality of life indicators are paradoxical, just like those of their parents. Our kids are the victims of drastic and still incomplete economic and social transitions. Their access to nutrition and medicine is sometimes in jeopardy. Not so their access to culture and education. This same dilemma is at the root of our implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, which when met, will go farther than any declaration to protect the basic rights of each individual citizen.

Just as those goals are still not completely fulfilled, neither are programs to grow an independent judiciary. The road plan is there, but we still have far to travel. We are working with the Council of Europe on judicial and electoral reforms. The same is true for a fully participatory transparent legislative process. The existence of laws does not mean that their implementation is full and comprehensive. Our laws on press freedoms continue to be reformed in line with Council of Europe standards. We are committed to arriving at improved legislation. However, we also know that legislatively facilitated press freedoms have still not resulted in an intellectually and fiscally free and responsible press.

That we can even make these lists, and slowly cross off some of the items listed there, is ample indication that we are fully engaged in one

of society's hardest tasks: to equally and broadly allocate the rights, privileges, benefits of human civilization.

Mr. President, we tolerate atrocities, massacres, ethnic cleansing so long as they happen in distant lands. We tolerate their memories and endure the deniers. We tolerate historians who claim that there are circumstances in history that justify ethnic cleansing and its logical progression, genocide. Armenians have experienced these inexplicable human wrongs for a hundred years. We who have suffered these crimes have declared that the best way, the only way to restore faith and confidence is for perpetrators and victims to acknowledge the past, and move on to the future. Ironically, it is we the victims who have and who continue to make these unconditional offers. The perpetrators, old and new, do not. We do so, moved by a need to restore relations between peoples who have been and will continue to be neighbors. It is not for history's sake alone that we insist on acknowledging the past, but for the sake of the future. The political obstacles, the economic blockade that exist today are left over from an unfinished and unreconciled past. We want to move on to a collaborative and cooperative future. For that, our neighbors must sit with us today, in the present, with a will to recover that which the past has erased. In our neighborhood, the past is not buried in history. Today's grievances in our region are the consequences, expressions and manifestations of human rights abuses, not their causes.

There were no refugees and no territorial issues when the people of Nagorno Karabakh, legally, in accordance with the legislation of the time, followed all necessary steps, to opt for self-determination. The state abrogated its responsibility to provide safety and security for its population. Instead, the response was military aggression.

It is very telling that a sovereign government responded to its people's democratic calls for self-determination with military means. Moreover, the violent, military response was not directed against the population of Nagorno Karabakh alone, but also against Armenians in Sumgait and Baku, miles away from the territory and population of Nagorno Karabakh. This was ethnic cleansing – the first time that 'solution' was brought to and utilized in the former Soviet space – even before it showed its head in the Balkans. The

Armenians who were driven out were the first refugees in the former Soviet Union.

Despite Armenians' continuous victimization, despite recent memories of pogroms and deportations, despite the current fragile defensive, protective position of Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh, Armenians continue to express readiness to arrive at some compromise settlement. This is not diplomatic talk. The Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh have held legitimate elections, are building a civil society based on legislation which protects human rights, and are preparing for the day when their own right to self-determination and a life of peace and dignity will be recognized.

Unfortunately, the past is not behind us. Earlier this month, in Budapest, in a North Atlantic Cooperation Council training program, the concept of cooperation was shockingly shaken by the murder of an Armenian soldier by an Azerbaijani officer. This expression of ethnic hatred is more than disturbing in the face of our ongoing search for solutions that will allow us to coexist in peace in this region.

That is why we continue to call on our neighbors to join us in seeking ways to go forward. In a complex, problematic neighborhood, heavily burdened with history, we know full well that human rights, when equally and indiscriminately protected, will mean the ability to protect the safety, security and dignity of entire populations, whole countries and regions. It truly does start with each country, one person at a time.

We wish to join in welcoming Justice Louise Arbour to her new position as the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We would have wished her good luck even had this meeting taken place a week ago. But, in the wake of the shocking, frightening, unexplainable horror that hit Spain and the world just a few days ago, I must repeat that which we all know: there is a way to beat the terrorism, to defeat those who are bent on destroying a way of life. That way is to unite in implementing the ideas which we all hold dear, in making possible the democratic systems which breed stability, in protecting the human rights of all mankind so that we never again need to protect ourselves from ourselves.

REPLACING CONFRONTATION WITH COOPERATION

The list of decisions and common statements we have gathered to adopt or to endorse speaks for itself. Of particular significance is our Economic Strategy. It achieves balance between the economic and the environmental, it relates gaps in economic performance between states and within states to emerging security risks and recognizes the role of public and corporate governance in consolidating reforms, particularly in the context of global and regional trends and challenges. More important still is that other strategy document we are adopting here: the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Stability and Security in the Twenty-First Century.

Of course, looking a whole century ahead, today in 2003, is a rather difficult undertaking. Imagine if a similar exercise had been undertaken, a century ago, in the year 1903. Surely such a probe would not have seen the horrors and challenges of modern totalitarianism, genocide, total war – twice, nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, technology-driven globalization, and the attempts at international law and order.

We must accept the limits to our ambition, and admit that an assessment of future threats remains very much rooted in our present concern, and reflects our most recent threats and fears and trauma.

My delegation would have wished a somewhat bolder attitude in this respect. Given our most recent experiences, where the unthinkable has become commonplace, we would have wished to explore our

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ability to look and see beyond the immediate horizon. We should not accept with complacency the notion that the invisible is unknown and that the unknown is unknowable.

As we will, by necessity, update this strategy document, let us if possible remain sensitive to the uncertainties and surprises of our future security environment.

Let me now turn to that other very important item on our agenda: Human Trafficking. Recently in Kishinev, at the Ministerial Meeting of the Council of Europe, I had the privilege to be the Rapporteur on this issue. I have become convinced that no other issue poses a greater challenge to us all. It confronts us with ourselves, with our innermost values and conventions, and with our public professions about human rights and civilization. A Europe that can tolerate this form of slavery in its midst, at the dawn of the 21st century, must answer to the charges of hypocrisy, double talk, complicity, callousness, or at the very least indifference and ineffectualness.

Therefore, the action plan on combating trafficking in human beings that this Ministerial Council has just endorsed is a credit to our organization.

However, from the outset, our delegation remained convinced that this action plan deserved a similarly vigorous mechanism to ensure its implementation. We would have preferred a more robust mechanism, with greater independence, a wide range of initiative, and able to go, both literally and figuratively, wherever the ravages of human trafficking would take it. No other threat or crime cuts as much across all borders, and unites in some obscene embrace, origin countries, destination countries and transit countries.

I have dealt at some length with the institutional issues that concern all of the OSCE, because they are the backbone of an organization which indeed has direct existential significance to my country and the challenges we face.

These days our challenges are regional, not just local. The news coming from our region is never dull. And they definitely have not been uninteresting lately.

In this last year, all three neighbors in the South Caucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia had presidential and/or parliamen-

tary elections. In addition, our three immediate geographic neighbors – the Russian Federation, Iran, Turkey – and further afield the European Union and the US, have created a matrix within which questions of energy, security, military alliances and sub regional conflicts must be addressed, while the societies directly concerned must pursue their transitions towards democratic and free market systems.

The Government of Armenia believes that stability is a basic precondition to allow these tensions to work themselves out without additional dislocations and confrontations. We are committed to that stability and believe that the interest of all can be accommodated without creating further cleavages. Cooperation among neighbors, open borders, the peaceful resolution of pending disputes, and at all times, the maintenance of constitutional, democratic legitimacy can go a long way to prevent explosions or implosions.

We want for Georgia that which we want for ourselves. Georgia is our good neighbor and friend. It is home to half a million ethnic Armenians. Georgia is our major conduit to Europe and to the world. So, at the end of the day, we are no less interested in the stability of Georgia than are Georgians themselves. We are pleased that there have been no major interruptions in our political or economic relations. We are therefore ready to welcome and work closely with any government that expresses the aspirations of the people of Georgia.

Armenia is committed, Mr. Chairman, to bring about a region where cooperation will replace confrontation, where confidence of trust between people will underpin agreements between governments, where borders are bridges not walls and obstacles. We believe everyone has a role to play in making our region one of stability, peace and prosperity. Including Nagorno Karabakh.

Whereas the unresolved conflict in Nagorno Karabakh is being presented as an element of instability in the region, Nagorno Karabakh itself is a stable, established entity which can contribute to peace. Let me explain. Next spring, we will mark the 10th anniversary of the world's longest lasting, and today, its only self-monitored ceasefire. There are two reasons for this success. One is the balance that had been achieved and recognized. The other, perhaps more important, is the political will on all sides, to avoid

bloodshed, to allow people to continue with their lives as their elected leaders work towards a resolution.

During these ten years, the people of Nagorno Karabakh have indeed tried to live normal lives. This summer, Mr. Chairman, the people of Nagorno Karabakh marked a decade of life of their own making, with the freedom to determine their own future and with functional, independent institutions. These institutions not only have provided them with security within their borders, but also serve as the foundations for a vigorous society, an active economy, a democratic public life and popular culture. In these ten years, they have held three presidential elections, a similar number of parliamentary elections and they have developed supportive infrastructure. They have, in a word, tasted peace and focused on economic development. This is a polity that recognized that its strength and legitimacy is derived from its practical, demonstrated commitment to a way of life for which it has fought – and won.

Perhaps on the anniversary of the ceasefire this spring, their leaders and the international community can find the political will to codify the common desire for a realistic and just resolution of this conflict. A cease-fire is a temporary peace Mr. Chairman. Perhaps we can turn the world's longest lasting self-monitored temporary peace into the world's first self-monitored permanent peace. In all this, the OSCE has its own important contribution to make. And in the case of Nagorno Karabakh, the OSCE is in a unique position. For more than ten years, from Minsk Group to its co-chairmen, the Minsk process has been at the center of a search for a negotiated, peaceful solution between the parties to the conflict. With elections both in Armenia and in Azerbaijan, understandably, 2003 has been a year of inactivity and the very useful and productive presidential dialogue was interrupted.

We believe the co-chairs are ready to help the sides resume the talks and we will continue to support the essential and central role of the co-chairs in moving things forward. It would be a historic opportunity lost, if the talks, when they begin, return to a tabula rasa, rather than take advantage of the principles and frameworks which have already emerged.

Let me conclude Mr. Chairman, with a few words of heartfelt appreciation for your chairmanship which was the manifestation of the best of cliches about the Dutch work ethic, pragmatism and tolerance.

We are looking forward, with great expectations to the Bulgarian chairmanship as well as the Slovenian contribution, and the enthusiastically selected Belgian chairmanship. We are confident the next several years will further consolidate the OSCE's place among important European structures.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS FOREIGN POLICY CREDO

One of our reporters asked me last week what our foreign policy credo is, as we prepare to enter a new calendar year, and at the beginning of what is a new five-year term for President Kocharian. My answer was economic development. And if today, you are asking me what the prospects are for resolving the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, my answer again revolves around regional economic development.

In Armenia, the debate about our future no longer spins on Karabakh. Instead, it focuses on the task ahead: raising the population's standard of living to a level worthy of Europe by the year 2020. Last month, Armenians from all over the world – economists, analysts, financiers, government officials – gathered in Yerevan to study the various scenarios which might help us reach the goal by sustaining today's double-digit rate of growth.

Armenia is proud of this pace. We know we started from a very low point of departure. Nevertheless, we weren't the only ones at rock bottom. We are however, the only one moving at a rate that, if maintained, can by the year 2020 provide our population with a stable, respectable lifestyle. The pillars of growth are not economic alone. Such consistent and deep-seated expansion demands a renewed focus on education and on social and moral values.

It requires that democratic processes take deep root in our everyday life and develop in parallel to the economy. And of course,

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significant, sustainable economic development for us means an export-led economy, access to markets, even greater economic liberalization, high rates of investment in infrastructure, relatively inexpensive but productive labor and the strong driving role of the private sector.

Economic growth is our guiding light and we believe it should be the region's as well. After all, globalization begins with regionalization. The countries of Europe and the European structures talk to the Caucasus, visit us, consider our problems and progress, our needs and accomplishments, all together in one breath. This is not just because of our geographic proximity to each other, but because we also share economic and social commonalities.

It is as if we are all on a cruise, together. We are all on the same boat, going in the same direction. The songs we each like to sing, the way we pray to our common God, the history we remember and retell may all be different.

Some may have more money in their pockets than others, but in the end, if the boat sinks, rich and poor will all drown together.

As far-seeing, visionary, bold leaders, we must see to it that the boat does not sink. Azerbaijan's oil will not be its salvation, nor will Georgia's sea ports. We can list a number of oil-rich but otherwise poor countries. And the world's continents are full of countries with coast lines, whose peoples stand in bread lines.

What is required for each of our three countries in this region is to adopt the right all-inclusive economic, social and political policies which will lead to a life of dignity for our peoples. We can each go it alone, or we can journey together.

Of course, there is the third way and that is that each of us can obstruct the other's path. But that is suicidal. That path won't lead towards any kind of prosperity – individual or regional – nor will it usher in European integration.

Here, Europe has a huge role to play. Europe's standards force us to re-examine our own conduct and behavior. We will build functional, responsive, responsible societies in this neighborhood not through an imposition of force, but because we want to be a part of a greater Europe. Europe's experiences in regional cooperation, regional con-

flicts, and regional compromises, influenced by the successes of the last 50 years can provide examples and guidance.

Europe has a responsibility to signal that the Caucasus belongs to Europe. In the Caucasus, where Armenia and her neighbors live with unresolved conflicts, such a signal will influence and determine how conflicts are resolved. This would not be a simple affirmation of cultural and religious affinities. This would be the framework within which we would view our futures, our borders and our neighbors. The Caucasus in Europe means a Caucasus where all neighbors quit trying to settle scores, where borders are no longer viewed as barriers.

The matter of closed borders is one that our western neighbor, Turkey, must also confront and overcome as European structures consider its integration into Europe.

We believe that the facts show that the utility of sealed borders has diminished. On the contrary, their continued existence tends to lessen Turkey's credibility as a positive, active, regional player.

The promise of European engagement can serve to defuse the old conflicts and prepare the ground for new relationships, new patterns, new attitudes, new perspectives.

We want to make the leap into Europe. We want to live alongside the three, four dozen countries among which there is hardly a pair of neighbors who don't have some border issues between them.

Are Spain and France without any disagreements? Spain and Britain? Italy and Austria? France and Germany? Germany and Poland? Poland and Ukraine? The list is long. Yet all of them have relations with each other, trade with each other, cooperate in various degrees in international forums, even as they continue to talk through their serious differences.

At some point, each of these countries, and each pair of countries together, made the conscious, difficult, serious political decision to move on – not to ignore, dismiss, minimize or trivialize differences, but to prevent those divisions from becoming the defining aspect of their relations.

It is probably fair to criticize us all and to say that since the cease-fire established in 1994, we did not take advantage of the absence of bloodshed and gunfire to actually work on healing the wounds.

We allowed time and distance to naturally develop scar tissue. But there was no active engagement to try to bring Armenians and Azeris into closer proximity, nurture at least some of the tolerance of the Soviet years, and to create the environment which would lead to a lasting solution.

I think my Azerbaijani colleagues feared that such interaction would justify or legitimize the status quo, and would lead to a conclusion that was not of their making.

But, we have no choice. Armenians and Azeris must move on. Somewhere, sometime, we have to draw the line on our differences and our past, and move on to a future that is ours together.

The obvious question is at what point do we all say: what we have is our starting point, and we will move forward from this ground to normalize relations.

The outstanding dispute between us is the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Let's look at the facts. Nagorno Karabakh's population has always been and is today overwhelmingly Armenian. Linguistically, religiously, culturally, the population of Nagorno Karabakh is Armenian. And legally and historically, too, Nagorno Karabakh has been Armenian for centuries.

At the point of the collapse of the Soviet Union, within the provisions of the law, it took advantage of its legal right to self-determination and resolved its own Armenian future. For the last decade and a half, they have been masters of their own destiny. Except for the 75 years of Soviet Azerbaijan's imposed dominance, Nagorno Karabakh has never been associated with Azerbaijan.

Therefore, expecting that Armenians will give Azerbaijan authority over Nagorno Karabakh itself, when it has never legally nor historically belonged to Azerbaijan is unrealistic. Expecting Armenians to live alongside Azerbaijan in peace, without a military buffer zone is fully realistic and worth pursuing.

Next year, on the tenth anniversary of this, the only self-imposed and self-maintained cease-fire in the world, perhaps we can present our peoples and those concerned around the world with a scenario for a region of peace and prosperity.

That is, we can advocate bold new initiatives, within the European context, with a common vision for our region. That I believe is our salvation. The images, values and experiences of Europe allow Armenians to conclude that we can indeed resolve our conflict, put behind us the period of war and animosity, and address our present and our future not with the war-ravaged eyes of today's sometimes jaded leadership, wounded in its pride and bent on revenge, but through the cool eyes of future generations.

EUROPE – NOT A PLACE BUT A DEFINITION

Today, I am pleased to be speaking before you, comfortable in the knowledge that Armenia is well on the way to fulfilling the commitments we took on readily and voluntarily when we applied to the Council of Europe. Less than two months ago, we abolished the death penalty, and we did so as a society which believes in human rights, in the rule of law, and in the processes of European integration. We are grateful to the Council of Europe for walking with us down this path of significant reforms. We are also aware that the European Union, too, was ardently wishing and waiting for this step.

This is more than symbolic. It illustrates perfectly the unity of the idea of a Europe of common values. It reaffirms that the two institutions share a vision of Europe and European society.

Part of this vision is a common foreign and security policy. The reason that Europe acknowledges the need for such a policy is that it is obvious that in such a tight, interconnected, densely populated neighborhood, the absence of common policies, common views and shared approaches would lead to certain insecurity.

This really is a neighborhood. We live in close proximity to each other. We exchange favors and services across fences and over time. We see each other's dirty laundry. We observe skirmishes and try to break up street fights. We participate in marriages and business deals even when they are sealed between partners from opposite sides of the railroad tracks. In a word, we are neighbors.

Delivered in Kishinev on November 6, 2003, at the 113th Session of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers

Of course, the meaning of neighbor and neighborhood has changed. Western Europe was the neighborhood, Eastern Europe was home to distant cousins. Today, Eastern Europe has moved to Ukraine, Moldova and the Caucasus.

So, geography is changing and names are changing. What is the Council of Europe, after all, if not a definition of Europe?

If it used to be religion that bound Europe together a millennium ago, it certainly isn't any longer. Nor is it the economic advancement that was specific to Europe two centuries ago. It isn't ideology either, which was both adhesive and encumbrance for decades in the last century.

Europe is more than its common history, more than geography, more than a club for members. All those who've said Europe is an idea are right. It is the idea of a Europe that is the common, if unattainable ideal.

Even those living outside this space have imagined and desired a Europe which can be addressed collectively, a partner who can be enlisted conveniently, a Europe to which they yearn to belong.

Unless the Council of Europe decides to change its name, its broad, inclusive format continues to define today's and tomorrow's Europe. How fast and how big the European Union will grow are legitimate questions for the European Union to ask, but who or what is Europe are old questions that have been asked and answered.

An affirmation of that broader, larger, future Europe will be a signal to all those in this neighborhood that Europe's rules apply to us as well. We can play by those rules, and win – or lose – by those same rules.

Europe's rules force us to re-examine our own actions and activities. Contemporary views of regional cooperation, regional conflicts, and regional compromises are strongly influenced by the experiences and successes of Europe after the two world wars and the Cold War. Warring neighbors found that they could accept new borders based on realities on the ground and move on. Europe's nation-states found that they could transcend borders, without diminishing or ignoring cultural spaces, without expecting historical identities to vanish.

In the Caucasus, Armenia and her neighbors live with unresolved conflicts. It is obvious then that Armenia believes in and participates

in efforts at regional cooperation and the utilization of confidence building measures in order to create an environment in which European conclusions can be found to entrenched conflicts.

This is what we want for Armenia, for Nagorno Karabakh and for our neighborhood: visionary, creative, tolerant responses based on good will. The formula we seek for our conflict is one that assumes that tomorrow we will live next door to a neighbor and not just an enemy. Our borders defining our territories will identify our cultures and identities, not be obstacles to free exchange and cooperation.

Given the Council of Europe's and European Union's serious interest in seeing that each of our countries becomes the society that can support and nurture such tolerant and inclusive politics, we propose that the Council play a greater role in monitoring and assessing the reforms in the South Caucasus countries. We believe it is useful and necessary for the Committee of Ministers to include this on the agenda of our next meeting. This would present us with the opportunity to determine the future contribution of our organization toward the consolidation of democratic stability in the South Caucasus. I believe this ought to be done in the context of preparations for the Third Summit, during which issues of monitoring reforms and issuing human rights alerts can be examined and proposed.

Mr. President, in the early 20th century, Europe was dominant. It aggressively initiated shifts, it was forceful enough to impose its presence around the world.

In the mid-20th century, Europe came home, it transformed itself to a beacon of hope, a healer of the wounded, an evangelist for a peaceful, secure Europe.

In the early 21st century, Europe has ceased to be a place and has become a definition. Today, Europe means democracy, human rights, rule of law. Europe is the Helsinki Final Act and it's security and cooperation. Europe is both council and union. Europe is all of us who wish to live without borders or fences, without fear or aggression, in peace and prosperity.

CONTINUING ETHNIC CLEANSING IN NAKHICHEVAN

I welcome East Timor to the UNESCO family. I would also like to welcome the US delegates. Their return reinforces this organization's embodiment of the international will to either support or condemn those national policies which impact a society's cultural and scientific development. Armenia wholeheartedly supports UNESCO's importance as the guardian of those values which are not mine or yours but ours – those cultural values that are truly universal and shared, those that are worthy not just of national but international attention. What will be left of our world if it is the ills of terrorism, violence, hunger and poverty which draw our combined attention, to the exclusion of the depth, breadth, permanence and intensity of culture, education and science?

Armenia is proud that since 1996, we are a part of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. During these years, three outstanding Armenian medieval monastic complexes have been entered in the World Heritage List. The nomination of another monastery, Noravank, has been submitted to the World Heritage Committee. In addition, the Horse-sculpture Cemetery of Riataza, belonging to Armenia's Yezidi non-Christian minority has also been submitted. On the waiting list are the nominations of Armenian sites on the Great Silk Road and of Yerevan's exquisite Blue Mosque, recently restored with Iran's generous support.

Delivered in Paris on October 1, 2003, at the UNESCO 32d General Conference

Thus, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and our commitment to its protection and promotion is for us very real. Both cultural diversity and the protection of monuments are especially significant for nations which have monuments beyond national borders – indeed all around the world – and particularly in our neighborhood.

We are pleased that with the government of Iran, our centuries-long coexistence continues to be evident in our collaboration on the safeguarding of Christian and Islamic monuments on either side of our border.

We cooperate with the Georgian government to promote the reconstruction and prevent the deterioration and disintegration of countless cultural masterpieces.

We are hopeful that through culture, we can work with the government of Turkey, too, to together maintain those monuments which they also recognize to be of universal value. The churches in Ani, Armenia's medieval capital, are architecturally important and also significant for their near-border location. They offer a prime opportunity to work together to restore not just monuments, but also mutual trust and confidence.

The Armenian presence in this region has been long and extensive. Denying or revising this history requires systematic planning, energy and resources.

The government of Azerbaijan has allocated such resources to do just that. And the area of Nakhichevan is the ultimate example. Over the decades of the 20th century, Nakhichevan's Armenian population dwindled to a fraction of what it used to be. Azerbaijan succeeded in eliminating the Armenians of Nakhichevan. There are none there today. However, even when Armenians were gone, memorials of their centuries-long past remained.

The wealthy trading town of Jugha in Nakhichevan had an enormous cemetery with large, delicately carved, red sandstone head stones, dating from the 9th to the 16th centuries, uniquely, individually artistically crafted. These khachkars or cross stones numbered 5,000 in 1903. By 1973, half were gone. In 2003, there are none left standing.

Witnesses on the other side of the border observed what could only be government-sanctioned operations. Photos shot from a distance show systematic, individual destruction of each huge monolith. The remains were hauled away on state-owned rail cars on a state-owned railway. Photos registering the process of destruction have been submitted to UNESCO.

Despite Armenia's repeated calls in various international forums, and with UNESCO, and despite UNESCO's offer to send monitors to assess the damage, Azerbaijan has persisted. It ignores international bodies and protective mechanisms, instead proceeding in bad faith and with a clear political agenda. It fabricates its own counter-allegations to draw attention away from its own internationally condemnable actions, as we heard today. To UNESCO, I once again repeat, with full responsibility and with a clear conscience, our request to send monitors to the region to see the destruction where and as it is happening.

The disappearance of these irreplaceable historic and cultural markers means more than the disappearance of a bit of Armenian history. It demonstrates short-sighted, isolationist thinking in the face of global insistence on shared values and tolerance. Azerbaijan is a country living in fear of its past.

It is obvious that we hope that the Draft UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage will enhance the mechanism of protection already embodied in existing cultural conventions.

UNESCO's effort to encourage tolerance and respect for human rights, to reduce mutual mistrust between communities in conflict, is an ongoing effort. Today that effort is expressed through the promotion of dialogue among civilizations. We certainly need such a push in our region. So, as a follow-up to the "Dialogue among Civilizations: Caucasus" Round table held in Vilnius, we have submitted, along with Caucasian and Baltic countries, the Draft resolution with concrete proposals in various fields.

Armenia attaches great importance to all of UNESCO's initiatives in the region. We welcome Culture and HIV/AIDS in the Three Caucasus Countries Project which will foster regional cooperation

against a virus that knows no borders. We wish to take advantage of the very slow rate of HIV/AIDS growth in Armenia to promote even greater awareness of this huge societal danger.

Mr. President, Armenians are an ancient people with a new country. There is much that we have to celebrate in our country, and with the world. Three years ago, we marked the 1700th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity as a state religion in Armenia – the first country to do so in the world. In two years, we will be celebrating the 1600th anniversary of the Armenian alphabet. The date is in this organization's Draft Calendar, and we urge the General Conference to endorse its inclusion, both as a nod to the value of cultural diversity, and to the significance of languages and cultures as the live evidence of human and civilizational development and advancement.

THE EVIL OF TERRORISM HAS CAUSED US TO RALLY TOGETHER

At the beginning of this millennium, a summit of the world's leaders produced a set of development goals aimed at protecting life and promoting dignity for all peoples. This seemed an appropriate way to begin the third millennium of our modern era.

Each year since then, however, we have been reminded that this millennium started very differently and has forced us to address profound challenges to our assumptions, our relationships and our way of life.

Beginning with September 11 and continuing with the violence and political crises around the world, each of our societies, nations and regions has been transformed by the intensity of these threats to our way of life and security.

These crises are forcing a transformation of this organization, too. Today, reform has become essential not just in the way we decide, act and operate, but in the way we think. Reforms cannot be delayed if this General Assembly and this organization are to be truly relevant as facilitators of world peace.

If the United Nations is for the peaceful, prosperous and democratic development of today's world, then it must undergo its own democratization, so that it will have the increased moral authority to direct others through reform and democratic transition.

An organization which espouses dialogue and negotiation as alternatives to violence and conflict, ought to find ways through dialogue

and negotiation to arrive at a consensus on how to resolve the critical, universal issues facing us today.

This General Assembly has the chance to go down in history not as an undermined, inadequate but well-meaning giant, but as a viable instrument of world peace. The Secretary General's goals – from United Nations budget and finance reform to recomposing and enlarging the Security Council – are the necessary building blocks to make the United Nations the relevant, responsive, comprehending world forum for international cooperation that it can be. We applaud his decision to empower a commission to give concrete form to the wishes of many.

Each year we speak of the need for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, never believing that next year, the region can become even more volatile and explosive. We believe the United Nations and all member states must continue to support the renewal of the full-scale peace process. In Israel and Palestine, Armenia hails the Quartet's efforts, recognizing that the endangered Roadmap remains the only viable option for peace in a long-suffering region.

The situation in Iraq makes the debate about the hows and whys of this conflict irrelevant. The world's small countries are accustomed to making the political compromises to join the international flow. In Iraq, the principal powers, too, must compromise so that a more engaged and empowered United Nations can rally a broad range of countries from the immediate region as well as the rest of the world to take on responsibility in bringing democracy and stability to a critical piece of the Middle East.

It is ironic and in many ways lamentable that the evil of terrorism is what has caused us to rally together. We are fully aware that no single government can effectively fight this danger alone. Unfortunately, the necessity for coherent measures and cooperation at national, regional and international levels is often stalled, as for example in our region, where a common threat that knows no borders is not only being addressed individually and in isolation, but also exploited for political reasons.

In our region, there is much political exploitation. The new Azerbaijani Prime Minister made plain from this podium yesterday

that in their election year, they are willing, at their peril, to ignore the realities which are self-evident. Nearly a decade of negotiations brought us, two years ago, to Key West, Florida, where hosted by the US government, and under the watchful eyes of the Minsk Group co-chairmen, the President of Armenia and – whether the Prime Minister of Azerbaijan likes it or not – the President of Azerbaijan did in fact reach an understanding which reflected those realities.

There are two myths in Azerbaijan – both of them faulty, miscalculated, and risky.

Since 1992, Azerbaijan has convinced itself that if they just hold out long enough, Armenia's economy will capitulate, and leave Nagorno Karabakh unprotected and defenseless. Their calculations that a blockade of Armenia would mean that our economic and social conditions would plummet while their oil-based economy would grow have proven misguided and misinformed. Not only has Armenia's economy not succumbed to political pressures, our rate of growth is greater than Azerbaijan's – and not only Azerbaijan's.

Nevertheless, they continue to cling to a second and related myth. Dreaming of future oil sales whose revenues will be used to buy armaments, Azerbaijan is anticipating the day when it will have the resources to pursue a military solution, again. This is self-deception, too. Azerbaijan has forgotten that similar fantasies led them to respond militarily to the peaceful demands of Nagorno Karabakh's population for self-determination in 1992. The military balance was hugely in their favor then, in proportions far greater than what they might hope for in the future. Still, the moral, historical, legal, psychological balance favored the people of Nagorno Karabakh who were fighting for their homes, their families, their security, their lives, their futures. The armaments of Azerbaijan did not then and cannot ever break the will of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to live freely on their own lands.

Indeed, Azerbaijanis are victims, but of their own aggression. They started the war. They began massacring Armenians, citizens of Azerbaijan's cities: Sumgait, Baku, Ganja – the most irresponsible reaction that a government can have, using the most inhuman methods associated with pogroms. The war that followed changed the

world for two generations of Armenians who have never lived under Azerbaijani rule. Azerbaijan's old and new leadership, rather than remaining prisoners of a Soviet era which they themselves rejected as historically illegitimate, can look to a future of compromise, peace, regional cooperation and prosperous, stable development. Armenia intends to go forward.

Indeed, we already have. 2003 has been a very good year for Armenia.

On the economic front, our steady, double-digit growth rate is the fastest in the CIS and Europe. This had lead some to calling Armenia the Caucasian Tiger. We are pleased with the name, and the challenge. We know that with economic growth comes an even greater responsibility: to confront the social gaps which can lead to social inequality and domestic instability. The shortest path to the eradication of such transitional ills as polarization of society, the urban-rural gap, uneven access to higher education, is to sustain this high level of economic growth.

That's why, with the help of the UNDP, we embarked on the Sustainable Economic Development Program. That's why the government has approved and launched a Poverty Reduction Strategy. That's why achievement of the Millennium Development Goals of poverty eradication, awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS, and empowering women is an important part of Armenia's development strategy.

In Armenia, the United Nations plays a key role in promoting synergies directed at expanding the development impact of information and communication technologies. As we prepare for the World Summit on the Information Society in December in Geneva, Armenia is living a hopeful paradox. On the one hand, less than half of our 1000-plus schools are connected to the Internet; on the other hand, information and communication technology comprises a significant proportion of Armenia's exports today. Still, too many in our country, just as the majority of the world population, still remain untouched by this revolution and its potential.

We recognize, of course, that information technology can be central in economies like ours, especially given the continuing blockade.

Our economic growth has been high despite a continuing blockade, which goes against the spirit of the recent UN-sponsored International Ministerial Conference on Transit Transport Cooperation which reaffirmed the right of access of landlocked countries to and from the sea and freedom of transit through the territory of their neighbors by all means of transport, in accordance with applicable rules of international law. For us, this means a condemnation of the practice of unilateral coercive economic measures intended as political pressure.

This was also a good year for our legislative reform process. The Armenian Parliament has ratified the 6th Protocol of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms thus unconditionally abolishing the death penalty. We also adopted the Draft Law on the Ombudsman thus empowering our citizens, investing them with the faith necessary to govern with justice and be governed with dignity.

On another matter, important for us and for all humanity, Armenia continues to engage countries and governments around the world to recognize and condemn the first Genocide of the 20th century. The survivors of the Genocide and their descendants are helping build a democratic Armenia, committed to the future, without forgetting the past.

When Sergio Vieira de Mello was in Armenia several years ago, he came looking for ways to minimize the pain and suffering of Armenian refugees forced to flee their homes in Azerbaijan's Baku and Sumgait. This year, as he worked to minimize the pain and suffering of the people of Iraq, to help them in rebuilding their country and their government, he and too many of his colleagues lost their lives.

His death, and that of Anna Lindh of Sweden, remind us that it is ideas, more than people, that are scary and threatening. These two brutal murders also suggest to us louder than any demonstrations, that the leadership of the world has much to do still to engage the rejectionists, the extremists and the cynical.

Our positive, forward-looking, determined steps here in this hall will go a long way towards convincing them.

EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW IS A GOOD PLACE TO START

It is not only a pleasure and a privilege to address this gathering but it is also a challenge. The challenge of course is that tolerance, intolerance and discrimination, racism and xenophobia are complex phenomena, with legal, ethical, cultural, social and economic dimensions. They are, at the same time, real human experiences, often of pain, suffering and exclusion, of persecution, isolation and ostracism, of the denial of access and opportunity, of the denial of equal protection of the law. At the end then, intolerance from its simplest form to its most complex is a rejection of individuals' human dignity.

For people unfamiliar with the OSCE's history and the foundational principles of the Helsinki Final Act, or unaware of the organization's evolution, of its multidimensional approach to comprehensive and indivisible security, the idea of venturing into the social and political pathologies of racism and xenophobia may appear indulgent or presumptuous. However, at the Porto Ministerial, we collectively stated that we do not believe so. I supported then, and believe still, that this conference as well as the previous one on Anti-Semitism is justified, appropriate and timely.

Let us admit at the outset that instilling tolerance – that is, making people more receptive of diversity – is neither easily achieved nor particularly within the competence of states and their governments. Let us also admit that although the pursuit of tolerance as norm and goal is both noble and admirable, unfortunately, it also serves to

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deflect our attention from reducing or mitigating the real damage caused by intolerance.

Our challenge, as an organization of governments, is to fight the concrete, specific ways in which intolerance manifests itself in laws, practices, activities, policies. These laws encourage discrimination, condone exclusion, leave unpunished xenophobic and racist violence, institutionalize marginalization, and help perpetuate or even propagate images and symbols of the outsider. These laws are embedded in fears that the alien, the heretic or the intruder, as subhuman and inferior, threatens the purity or the integrity of the dominant group, ethnicity or religion, race or culture – fears that grip us all, to use the worn out cliché, from Vancouver to Vladivostok. To make matters worse, after having experienced pain and suffering at the hands of others, rather than forswearing forever such practices themselves, sadly, the opposite happens: victims also victimize, the abused are likely to abuse, the excluded regroup and exclude others, and ghettos keep as many people out, as they keep in.

The names and designations of these "indigestible marginals" are well known to all of us. They are refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, clandestines, Jews, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists. Alternatively, they may simply belong to a minority, born and raised in the countries of their residence. They may look different, eat different or worship different. In answer to all this, spiritual leaders simply say: "Love thy neighbor."

For us, as representatives of governments and of civil society, the challenge is to figure out what to do when people do not love their neighbor, or when they don't even want them as neighbors.

In principle, equality before the law is a good place to start, to meet the challenges. However, from principle to applied reality, to a daily, sustained practice, one requires responsible legislation, an independent judiciary, and law enforcement that pursues, and prosecutes.

Let's look at just one of these: legislation. At its worst, legislation consecrates discrimination and intolerance. The law cannot and should not be used to justify or exonerate selective discrimination, to legitimate abuse, exclusion or the denial of fundamental rights. Yet that is exactly what happens with laws that forbid the use of the

other's language, limit the political rights of certain groups, create uneven or unequal conditions for participation in economic or social activities and formalize exclusionary criteria in education and the media.

Fortunately, such blatant, explicit or formal legal expressions of discrimination, xenophobic and/or racist intent or motivation are becoming rarer in the OSCE area. However, they have not disappeared entirely. What has remained is the less blatant, but no less pernicious, deliberate, convenient silence of the law in defining discrimination and prescribing its elimination, when there is every evidence that a society and a political order are rife with xenophobic and racist practices. We must address the failure of the law to explicitly address these issues, to identify unacceptable conduct, to provide for reparative measures, to positively empower the voiceless stranger or the minority and, to threaten with the full power of the law the practitioners of discrimination.

Silence is not good enough since it can be interpreted as acquiescence or connivance. Silence must also not be allowed to serve as a fig leaf to argue that the absence of anti-discrimination laws is a proof of the absence of discrimination, or at the very least of the absence of its pervasiveness.

What is really needed everywhere therefore is positive law against discrimination, explicit, comprehensive, consistent, unambiguous, and prescriptive, dissuasive in intent and in application. There are some models of anti-discriminatory legislation. Though none may be perfect, some are clearly more imperfect than others.

Here at the OSCE we must move towards a common level of legislative standards in this field. Together with the Council of Europe and the European Union, the institutions of the OSCE, the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the High Commissioner for National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, all have a role to play. Their analysis and evaluation of legislation and judicial practices, must explicitly address discrimination as a very specific instance of abuse of human rights. The frustrations, the resentments and the hostilities of victims of xenophobia and racism, should not be underestimated or dismissed. The

security implications of pent-up anger, of daily humiliations and hopelessness cannot be exaggerated. They must concern us all, for reasons of principle as well as enlightened self-interest.

It is OSCE dogma to believe in indivisible security. So many of our activities, projects and mission work are based on the assumption that threats to democracy, rights and freedoms in one member state are of legitimate concern to all. In the same spirit, we can unfortunately assume that xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism are not phenomena that afflict some societies exclusively, but not others. No one is immune, it is only the profile of the outsider, the inferior, the impure that varies. It is dangerous and unwise therefore to assume that issues of overt and covert discrimination, of subtle and unsubtle ways of silencing, isolating, humiliating, handicapping, even criminalizing the strangers, the newcomers and the minorities, are limited to where fragmented histories, ethnic conflicts and religious diversity have been the recent norm.

No less insidious have been the sources of racism and xenophobia in societies where the last 50 years have been more peaceful and more prosperous. The great and distinguished American writer, James Baldwin said about the complexities of the momentous civil rights struggle in the US in the 1960s, that "Northerners seem to feel that because they fought on the right side of the Civil War and won," they can ignore what is happening in northern cities, because what is happening in Little Rock or Birmingham (in the South) is worse.

Of course, my intention is not to reminisce about that struggle, to singularize it, or to remind us how recent it was. To the contrary, I would like to draw our attention to a common phenomenon. Replace North by West and South by East, and you have already the significance of Baldwin's insight for all of us here at the OSCE. We have a lot of work to do together, North, South, East and West.

STOPPING A TRANSNATIONAL PROBLEM

For all of the world's recorded history, Armenia and Armenians have found themselves on the crossroads of civilization, on a most trampled path which over the centuries has taken the civilizations of Asia west and south, Europeans east, and everyone else across the Eurasian continent and beyond. This process of give-and-take has resulted in invaluable trade and integration of values and traditions.

Today, those same crossroads serve to promote not just legitimate, essential, vital, reciprocal economic trade and development, but also the transport of illicit drugs throughout the Eurasian continent. This production – a significant sector of the economy of certain developing states – travels to consumer states across borders that are often porous.

Central Asia and the Caucasus is inarguably the region through which drugs are transported from east to west. Although Armenia lies on this route, in our case, there is an irony that cannot be ignored. For nearly a decade, Armenia has been subjected to a blockade from our neighbors to the east and the west. This has been a major hindrance to the development of our economy and to the advancement of regional cooperation. This same blockade, however, has served to block the trafficking of illicit drugs. From neither Turkey nor Azerbaijan, can the distribution chain pass through Armenia. Nor can terrorism and other threats often associated with the narcotics trade affect us easily. Unfortunately, the blockade can do little against the unfounded, propagandistic accusations sometimes hurled our way

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by those very neighbors responsible for the blockade, accusations such as the kind that we've heard here from Azerbaijan. Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh would welcome international fact-finding missions to the region. In fact, we've been advocating such visits to Nagorno Karabakh to dispel such politically motivated accusations.

Still, Armenia remains a socially and economically vulnerable country. As a government, we are aware of the need to adhere to the many conventions we have acceded to, in order, jointly with the international community, to prevent the scourge of drugs and its derivative dangers. But so long as in so many of our societies, the basic human needs of so many of our citizens go unmet, we must acknowledge that the temptation to engage in the illusion of profitable drug sales is great.

Of course, the truth lies somewhere else. The truth is that neither producer nor user nor even the average middleman is the actual beneficiary of this economic cycle. On the contrary, a few large, organized entities benefit from a crime with immense and tragic social consequences for a population and a country.

Today, our concerns as a global society are for the health of our citizens, and the security of our countries. Porous borders facilitate the travel of infectious diseases, as well as illicit drugs. They also enable the laundering of funds derived from this trade. Armenia is committed to obstructing the north-south flow of drugs through our country, whatever their point of origin.

This commitment is reflected in the allocation of resources at our borders. It is also reflected in our political will to work bilaterally with all the countries affected to strike a functional, realistic, mutually beneficial collaboration among neighbors along these routes.

We believe that fundamentally, it is political will, again, which must be invoked if the production problem is to be resolved. Today, in Afghanistan, for example, there is sufficient international presence coupled with the articulated intentions of the leaders of Afghanistan to do away with this global economic, social, health and security threat. All of those in leadership positions in Afghanistan today are on the same side of this battle. The growers themselves, too, can be brought into our camp, if they are offered economic alternatives to what is otherwise the most lucrative agriculture option available to them.

From Afghanistan to Iran, Armenia lies on the route north to the large and attractive Russian market. The bulk of the illegal trafficking through our territory follows this route. Our commitment to reducing this traffic is reflected in the Memorandum of Understanding we signed with Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the United Nations International Drug Control Program to exchange experience and information, train personnel, and take steps to control the manufacture, trade, use and demand for narcotics.

We are fortunate that in Armenia, despite the many social and economic needs, the numbers of those who use and abuse drugs are comparatively low. In 2002, there were less than 500 recorded criminal cases of drug use, and a slightly larger number of lesser offenses. A similar number of individuals have been charged with drug-related crimes. The number of crimes associated with illegal sale of drugs was under 100.

Still, in a population as small and homogeneous as ours, even these numbers can threaten the health of our population. In Armenia, half of all HIV patients have been infected through needle sharing. The potential threat of this is enormous. Our public awareness efforts are aimed at curbing these practices and such dependence.

Finally, acknowledging the transnational nature of the problem means looking for transnational solutions. The problem is ours together. The solution, too, must be jointly arrived at and jointly pursued.

OVERCOMING THE PAINFUL GAP BETWEEN PROSPECTS AND DREAMS

I welcome you wholeheartedly to Armenia on the happy occasion of this Eighth Meeting of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Council of Foreign Ministers.

As Armenia prepares to hand over the Chairmanship of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, we can all look back to what continues to be a steady path of growth and increased effectiveness.

The past inspires optimism in the future of our organization. BSEC is already perceived as a viable mechanism for cooperative efforts towards sustainable economic development around the Black Sea. What started out as a group with much good will but limited practical levers has now evolved into a serious organization.

The establishment of the BSEC Project Development Fund represents the strong determination of member states to move seriously towards implementation of joint economic projects and programs.

During our term in office, we continued to build on recent achievements by implementing BSEC's collective strategy – our Economic Agenda. Through close cooperation with all member states, as well as with the Secretariat and related bodies, we achieved many of the goals we had set out six months ago.

Working group meetings have been held in the fields of banking and finance, energy and emergency assistance and combating organized crime. Here in Yerevan last month, we held the first BSEC workshop

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on strengthening states' capacities in international relations. At that conference, we embarked on a new field of cooperation for BSEC: institutional renewal and improvement of governance. These constitute a difficult challenge for most BSEC countries given the tough, often tumultuous transitions that our region has seen during the last century.

As a result, building on both our specific and similar experiences in strengthening and modifying our institutions to fit the demands of today's world and tomorrow's societies can only help in the task of fair, just, good, effective governance. This in turn strengthens our hand in international relations and enhances opportunities to secure optimal cooperation in the form of technical and financial investment and input into our region.

We have already made progress in our relations with various international organizations including the European Union and the United Nations system, and to that effect we welcome the presence of United Nations Undersecretary Sergei Ordzhonikidze here with us at this meeting.

During its Chairmanship, Armenia has maintained continuous contact and exchange of views with the European Union Hellenic Presidency and with the European Commission. As a result, upgrading existing BSEC-European Union relations was discussed substantively with the European Commission for the first time at BSEC headquarters during a Coordination Meeting of the Chairmanship-in-Office and Related Bodies. The Meeting provided the European Commission with detailed information on recent developments in the Black Sea cooperative process.

The adoption of the resolution on UN-BSEC cooperation during the 57th session of the United Nations General Assembly further enhanced BSEC's role in the international arena. The International Center for Black Sea Studies, too, has become a great resource for all of us. The Center's proposal on organizing a meeting of the President of the World Bank with the BSEC Troika and heads of the organization's institutions during the Conference of the World Bank parliamentary network is a promising initiative, and it should be pursued, as should the project on "Institutional Strengthening to Facilitate Intra- and Inter- Regional Agricultural Trade of the BSEC Member

States" which has been initiated in cooperation with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

In an entirely different direction, and in implementation of a mandate by the BSEC heads of state, a group of experts charged with exploring ways of bolstering security and stability in the Black Sea region has conducted its first meeting.

These are all positive and promising developments. With the invaluable cooperation of the Member States, the BSEC Secretariat, especially Ambassador Valery Chechelashvili, huge strides can continue to be made in the months and years to come.

There can be no avoiding the reality that one of the chief challenges facing us all individually and collectively will be the new developments in the Middle East. The quickly changing situation in and around Iraq is a source of concern, consternation and hope. It is obvious that we are anxious over the potential long-term instability that such a conflict augurs. Peace in the Middle East is not a cliché. It is an essential prerequisite for peace in the world.

The roadmap to peace, if drawn wisely, will be a roadmap to a peaceful coexistence not just for Israelis and Palestinians, but for all those living in that biblical region, which neighbors ours.

Therefore, the repercussions and echoes of transformations in the Middle East are felt by all of us. Our reaction must be to enhance that which we all have in common, those principles and values that we all hold dear, those ideals which our peoples expect us to protect and preserve.

In what is becoming a makeover of the world order, begun on September 11, the ancient civilizations and peoples of the Black Sea region must demonstrate the depth and wisdom to acknowledge that events have histories, that political relations have causes and consequences. We would wish that in our region – full of both ancient and modern complications, we would all look to finding solutions which promote inclusiveness and diminish hostilities.

Thus, I am pleased that at this eighth Ministerial, we are witnessing two significant and memorable events. One is the historic moment when this organization, founded 11 years ago by 11 member states, is enlarging its membership and expanding its area of coverage.

We welcome the decision to include Serbia-Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and note that with their presence among us, we turn into a truly inclusive regional body ready to take on new obligations and responsibilities. We recognize also that these obligations include the necessity to act more efficiently as an organization, less driven by political differences, and more directed towards economic teamwork as a means of cooperation. Our vision for a free trade zone, for effective and mutually beneficial economic gains, will only be realized through the political will to sidestep the elements that divide us and strengthen the substance that we have in common.

Here in Yerevan, at this eighth BSEC ministerial, Armenia welcomes the Azerbaijani chairmanship of BSEC. This is the second event which is symbolic of the true potential of this organization: to act as an international umbrella under which we can develop prosperous societies able to transcend differences and build on common aspirations and shared prospects.

The painful gap that currently exists between the prospects and the dreams of so many of our peoples can be overcome if we reduce the dispensable gaps among our governments and officials. We have joined around the Black Sea with a vision that is built on a future that can be shared. May an expanded, strengthened, matured BSEC take us there.

AN OLD NATION REBORN IN A NEW AGE

You all come from countries where there are Armenian communities – most of them large ones. When Armenia speaks of peoples and capitals where Armenians live and thrive, where there is significant involvement and engagement with the Republic of Armenia, we list your countries.

As a diplomat, I should probably tell you that I agree with the well-known adage: in politics, there are no friends, there are just common interests.

However, as an Armenian diplomat, I must confess that we have been lucky to have had both: we have had good friends who have done the right thing and defended our human rights and our dignity. And they have been friends with whom our interests have indeed overlapped. But not just our interests. With you, our friends, we share memories, experiences, and most importantly, values and expectations.

At the turn of the last century, Armenia and Armenians were in need of friends because we were victimized, persecuted, and outright killed. And *Pro Armenia* was the slogan under which Armenians' aspirations for security, for the freedom to continue to speak, create and live was protected and defended. Allow me to formally thank you for the help your peoples and governments provided to our genocide survivors and refugees. Because of your assistance – and our instincts – the Armenian story is not just of persecution and massacre, but of survival. Survival at the end of the century, too, when with your help, we made it through earthquake, war, and economic collapse.

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As a result, at the turn of this century, Armenia is at another level. Today, ours is more than a story of survival. It is a story of growth, of hope, of prosperity, of stability, of victory.

Today, we look forward to working with you not as poor victims whose hearts and minds are in the right place, but as rightful partners committed to resolving together our common ills and realizing together humanity's hopes.

Today, we have the ability, the capacity, the history that gives us the confidence to act in concert with international developments, within international norms and according to international laws, to meet our own national goals and to fulfill our own national dreams.

Even as we recognize that we have a longer way to go still, we ask you to recognize that we have indeed come a long way.

In the dozen short years since independence, we have liberated Nagorno Karabakh and reversed history, we have secured Armenia's borders in an inherently unstable region, we have defended our people by creating a strong army, we have begun to build state structures where none existed, we have stopped the economic collapse and begun the climb toward prosperity, we have resolved the energy crisis and converted energy into a commodity, we have elected our leaders in the absence of electoral traditions, and we have established our rightful place in the family of nations.

But more crucial challenges are waiting for us still. We must continue to create rewarding jobs, elevate people's standard of living and eradicate poverty and indignity, we must fight and win the war against nepotism and corruption, we must dispel the shadow economy, we must protect the socially vulnerable, advocate for the rights of women and children, allow entrepreneurs to dream and create, bolster the vital mission of educators and shape a society where people believe in their abilities to live up to their dreams. We must fashion a government of believers and believers in government. We must achieve international recognition for the Genocide of 1915 as well as for Nagorno Karabakh's right to self-determination, and achieve lasting and irreversible peace and stability in our region.

We have a dream for our nation. Our dream is to create a country that will live in peace within itself and with its neighbors, a country

that will provide security and comfort to those who wish to return. We dream that there will be no dead-end roads leading out of Armenia, that they will all be avenues of opportunity linking neighbor to neighbor, country to country, civilization to civilization. Even if history made us realists, our geography forces us to be idealists.

As a small people, serving as the perennial buffer between empires, on the most trampled path on earth, we have become living witnesses of the benefit of dialogue among civilizations. We have ourselves been engaged in that dialogue over the ages. Today, we are among its greatest promoters, especially with two of our neighbors who must be dragged along, because they still think that dialogue is supposed to follow agreement. We look around at a neighborhood that is not going to change, at memories that are not going to go away, at experiences that are irreversible, and try to convince them that dialogue must come first, in order for there to be any understanding at all.

With our neighbor Iran, we both comprehend and value the need for dialogue. We recognize that we both need each other. For Iran, Armenia is the gateway to the north and the west. For Armenia, Iran has been a reliable opening from a potentially fatal blockade.

Iran's and Armenia's shared cultural and historical memories are certainly no greater than those shared by Iran and Azerbaijan. They further share ethnic and religious affinities. Iran's visionary, geostrategic outlook however, has made it possible for our ancient neighbor to peacefully coexist with both of us – Armenia and Azerbaijan, despite the conflict, which divides us. This stands in obvious contrast to Turkey's myopic, inflexible approach.

We are fortunate that our relations with our neighbor to the north are equally warm and two-sided. Georgia is the country in the region with whom Armenia is most integrated. Tbilisi's large, significant Armenian community and presence, the huge Armenian influence on Tbilisi's life and architecture, Tbilisi's major role in the formation of Armenian political institutions, the historic friendship between our peoples, the contiguous ethnic presence of Armenians, to our north, in the Southern Georgian region of Javakhk – all these and more are binding factors that cannot be underestimated. Today, they enable us to resist the enormous and persistent divisive forces from left and

right. It is that cement which today guarantees the region's peace and stability, and prevents the creation of new dividing lines – all this, despite many and obvious differences in our foreign policy directions and relations.

The scope and range of our connectedness with Russia is extensive economically, militarily, politically – and influenced more and more by the presence there of a very large and increasingly more active Armenian Diaspora. It is in Armenia alone where anti-Soviet sentiments did not translate to anti-Russian attitudes. Instead, the influence of historic ties transformed old periphery-to-center relations to those of sovereign equals.

Armenia has various, significant economic agreements with Russia, as well as a military pact. Armenia's own interests motivate this pact, as a defense against some vocal and demonstrated threats. Old institutional ties in the educational, sports and cultural spheres continue to link our societies. All our agreements are driven by mutual respect and understanding of each other's place in the larger scheme.

Our policy of complementarity, based on open dialogue and cooperation with all parties, has been effective on both sides of the Atlantic. With the United States, we have an equally extensive portfolio of economic, social and military agreements and projects. The activism of our Diaspora together with the positive engagement of governmental and non-governmental organizations has resulted in programmatic and institutional backing in democracy building. Armenia-US relations are based on our commitment to learn from the longest-living democratic republic and accordingly transform our market and our society.

The path we have taken to democratization and a free market economy is irreversible. We adhere to the principles embodied by the Council of Europe, which we proudly joined two years ago, because we believe that long-term security and stability will be based on the application and implementation of these values. Indeed, Armenia has been the first beneficiary of its own efforts trying to meet Europe's standards. Armenia sees itself firmly in Europe, where we will participate in its evolution, contribute to and benefit from its values, practices, as well as its institutions.

Our rich, warm, brotherly relations with the countries of the Middle East enhance Armenia's relations with our immediate neighbors as well as with those with interests in our region. I myself, as so many others here, was raised with the hospitality of the Arab peoples who made way for our grandparents fleeing from sure death elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire. Aleppo, Syria, my birthplace, is also the birthplace of the modern Diaspora. There, as elsewhere, our Arab neighbors provided us the space and the environment in which to pick ourselves up from doom and possible oblivion. We did, and in the process contributed to the making of the modern Middle East. Today, those older people-to-people bonds born of necessity and kindness condition our official interstate links not in a small way. Our political, economic and cultural links are strong, and we anticipate that our geographic and historic proximity will lead to even deeper cooperation, especially given the presence of a grateful Diaspora.

Our relationship with the countries of North and South America is based on similar relationships. Armenians found refuge and an open field in Canada and Latin America. There they did what they have done elsewhere: became successful professionals integrated in their host countries. Today, their positive interaction has translated into beneficial relations between each of these countries and the Republic of Armenia.

I have spoken of the concentric circles of our foreign relations. And if you're beginning to think I'm ignoring the elephant in the room, let me reassure you, I'm not.

Nagorno Karabakh remains at the core of all our regional and global relations, including those having to do with each of the countries I've spoken of, and, of course, with Turkey.

Turkey insists on a resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict prior to the establishment of any dialogue with Armenia. This insistence has resulted in the loss of a golden opportunity. Turkey has wasted the historic occasion of the disappearance of the Soviet Union to invoke tolerance, neighborliness and statesmanship and engage Armenia in regional relations. Instead, it has acted in a short-sighted manner unnecessarily.

Armenia is quite interested in the continuing political debate in Turkey about the nature of its government, its place in Europe, and its relations with its neighbors. I am frequently asked what will happen with this new government, and I repeat that we are ready to begin to talk. The rhetorical question is always, but who shall take the first step? We believe we have. Although Armenia is not willing to renounce its national memories nor dismiss the historical injustices it has suffered, there is ample room for dialogue about issues over which we disagree.

That leaves us with the core problem over Nagorno Karabakh. The flow of events is well known: The people of Nagorno Karabakh opted for self-rule according to the laws of the USSR and within international norms. Azerbaijan rejected their right to self-determination with a military response. The people of Nagorno Karabakh, against great odds, won that war. Today, they ask that the world respect their history, their legal rights and their *de facto* independence.

History is usually dictated by winners. In this case, the people of Nagorno Karabakh have made history and won on all fronts, not just militarily. Legally and historically, they can claim the land on which they live, and which has never belonged to an independent Azerbaijan. If Azerbaijan does not continue with crude delusional manipulation and naive wishful thinking, with hopes of returning to a military and political situation that went the way of the Soviet Union, we can all join the international community's efforts, through the offices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmen, to continue with the hard search for peace.

Based on the very hopeful meetings which have been taking place regularly between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, we have reason to be positive about a peaceful, lasting solution to this conflict. Those who consider themselves friends of Armenia or Azerbaijan, or both, must hold our feet to the table, help us look for the solutions that will last and the formulas that will allow peace to take root.

Through history, through geography, through Diaspora, Armenians have built bridges. Today, too, given our successful track record in a very fragile, volatile, problematic, complex region, we are successful as interlocutors, partners, engaged in dialogue. In interna-

tional organizations, from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to our candidacy for the United Nations Economic and Social Council, we will continue to be engaged in the political and economic globalization movements that affect us all.

Our Diaspora is our bridge. Through a series of long historical processes and events, and especially the forced dispersion following the Genocide of 1915 and the dismemberment of our historic lands, the contours, the components, the physical and cultural manifestations of the Armenian nation transcend the state boundaries of Armenia.

Given the size of our communities and the years of history, it is not unreasonable to think we should have assimilated long ago, into our bigger more powerful neighbors or our vibrant, welcoming hosts. We didn't.

Given the resources of our neighborhood today, it is not unwarranted to believe we should have been the first to become a client state, dependent on larger neighbors, unable to defend our own unique agenda. We haven't.

So Armenia, with a population of three million, in a volatile region, and with limited natural resources, must make use of its Diaspora to double its potential and critical mass, must expand its horizons so that its neighborhood stretches beyond the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian and the Black Seas. And, most importantly, we must compensate for our nonexistent natural resources with human resources – ours and yours.

Given our history of navigating regional and global waters, working with friends old and new, we will achieve our own unique place in the world, a symbol of inventiveness and resourcefulness, a champion of dialogue and cooperation, an example of an old nation reborn in a new age espousing eternal values and universal rights.

RIGHTS AND VALUES ARE NOT CONDITIONAL OR PROPRIETARY

This Porto Ministerial of 2002 coincides with the tenth anniversary of Armenia's membership as a participating state in the OSCE. For us, these ten years of our history have been, in significant ways, intertwined with our relations with the OSCE. From the beginning, we have looked at the OSCE to play the double role for which it was designed: A mechanism to help in the resolution of conflicts to achieve peace, security and prosperity in our area, and to assist the process of reform and democratization within our country. In this respect, we have not been disappointed.

We consider the OSCE the preeminent Euro-Atlantic institution. No other union, organization or association combines the OSCE's unique characteristics of inclusiveness, its multi-dimensional range of concerns and its flexibility for cooperative action.

When the horrific events of September 11 forced all of us to wake up to terrorism as a threat aimed at the security of all, the OSCE was able to respond and mobilize its resources. The Charter on Combating Terrorism we are to adopt here at Porto will join with the Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism and the Bishkek Program of Action in expressing our collective commitment to confronting this danger. The ministerial decision to pursue a systematic examination of enduring and emergent threats in the new century is an urgent task. The reliability of such threat assessment and risk analysis will very much determine the quality and credibility of the

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strategy we will develop to counter those threats and to reduce those risks. We share therefore the proposal of those who think analytic capability is an ongoing competence in a fast moving environment. It is not a once-for-all exercise.

It is not enough, however, to add new obligations to our agendas if we do not take stock of our actions and implementations. We support therefore the decision to hold an annual Review Conference on Security. Such reviews and implementation meetings have demonstrated their value in other areas, particularly in the human dimension, and we think that they can also be helpful in the field of security. These meetings may provide a reality check to the strategy document, which should set the parameters for our future direction.

No matter how critical the political-military components of our security agenda, the human dimension remains central. While their comparative importance and interdependence can be traced to the comprehensive framework of the Helsinki Final Act, today, nothing illustrates this interdependence better than the question of trafficking in persons. The Ministerial decision about human trafficking is a comprehensive document, and we commend those who through diligence, dedication and determination have shepherded it through. For our part, we note the equilibrium it has tried to achieve but wish it had gone further in proposing concrete operational instruments. Our delegation has advocated such an instrument: a thematic, non-place based task force or mission that can pursue a problem wherever that problem is manifest or rampant. The trafficking in persons could have been a very appropriate issue where a task force specifically set up for this purpose would have assessed and addressed this transnational phenomenon.

Our Ministerial decision on tolerance is a brave and necessary attempt to operationalize our broad moral and humanistic commitment to the idea of tolerance. It is a hearts and minds issue not easily legislated or decreed. Sadly, we have witnessed the inadequacy of simple exhortation. Nevertheless, we believe it still worthwhile to express our common convictions, our common worldview and our common determination to fight those manifestations of discrimination and intolerance that are within a state's capacity to fight.

Mr. Chairman, Armenia, which has registered impressive economic growth and internal stability in the recent years, is seeing light at the end of the tunnel. Not that the tunnel hasn't been long and dark. It has indeed and not simply because one world collapsed before another could be constructed. But also because in our neighborhood, Armenia's commitment to peace and stability, to human rights and democratic values, has not always been shared. Armenia's attempt to transcend the past together with our neighbors and to reach out for mutually beneficial regional cooperation has still not been reciprocated. As a result, Armenia's own security and development have been threatened. Today, as our neighbor makes belligerent, war-mongering statements, disavows laboriously negotiated understandings, and continues to implement economic blackmail against us for daring to defend the people of Nagorno Karabakh, Armenia continues to stand firm in defense of all the rights and values which are at the core of this organization's existence.

These rights and values are not conditional or proprietary. They are common to all peoples, among them the people of Nagorno Karabakh.

What the people of Nagorno Karabakh have sought peacefully, then fought to defend, and now are pursuing through a negotiated compromise, is the right to live freely, secure and unmolested, with dignity, on their own land. Azerbaijan rejected their peaceful, lawful appeals a dozen years ago, and continues to reject proposals for a peaceful, lawful resolution today. Yet their reasons for doing so have nothing to do with realities on the ground today, or with legal or historical facts. Rather, they continue to cling to yesterday's map, arbitrarily drawn, and to an old world whose games and rules have changed.

In today's world, the unimaginable has become acceptable, and the impossible has become undeniable. In today's world, new countries are being formed in Asia, new borders are being drawn and re-drawn in Europe, and divided countries are becoming reunified in different form. In this new world, a Karabakh that did not belong to Azerbaijan in the non-Soviet years and that isn't controlled by Azerbaijan today will not be part of Azerbaijan tomorrow. Instead, in

this new world, the Caucasus neighborhood can, like the rest of the European family, co-exist with new realities and move forward with a shared vision. We call on our neighbor to join us in living the founding principles of this organization and putting an end to divisive forces and the frictions that have confronted us.

The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group have demonstrated great flexibility and wisdom in moving this process forward. They have received no help from an Azerbaijan which scandalously and ungratefully denigrates any initiative or solution proposed by any international entity that does not correspond to its maximalist rhetoric. This, together with Azerbaijan's bellicose and shrill saber-rattling, and desperate and reckless regurgitation of deliberately distorted numbers and unfounded allegations, makes it the obstacle to an otherwise possible and reachable peace.

We hope that in the year to come, when the peoples of Armenia and Azerbaijan will have expressed their will through presidential elections, we will be able to move forward with a comprehensive peace plan, finally removing Nagorno Karabakh from the OSCE's agenda of suspended conflicts.

Before I conclude, allow me to make some general remarks about the OSCE's most consistent challenge. It has been suggested that since September 11, 2001, we have entered globally, and in the OSCE area in particular, the post-post-Cold War era. With the Helsinki Final Act as a beacon, throughout the whole process from conference to organization, by using every instrument possible, this organization has adapted itself in order to play a positive role. This adaptation has required flexibility, pragmatism, the longer view and the broader perspective. We will continue to need those same attributes if we want to remain relevant in this post-post period. The neutral and non-aligned have played a great role in that geopolitical and conceptual transformation. Today we are aboard the same ship, but new clusters and configurations can cause, even if inadvertently, new divisions, hierarchies, categories of privilege and exclusion. It is this challenge we must meet, this new adaptation we must perform, in order not to have wasted the vision of a peaceful and prosperous Euro-Atlantic area.

THE BLACK SEA REASON TO WORK TOGETHER

It seems we've been celebrating our ten-year anniversary all year long. The Istanbul Decennial Anniversary Summit was an important marker for an organization that started out as a sub-regional network. Today BSEC is perceived as a viable mechanism for achieving sustainable economic development around the Black Sea. By a mandate of the organization's heads of state, the BSEC is now also charged with exploring ways of strengthening security and stability in our region. The September 11 terrorist attacks on the US exposed our common vulnerability and opened the gates for joint responses both to the perpetrators, and also to the causes of the incomprehensible violence. What they also made clear is that one action can have many varied consequences. In our region, the commitment to facilitate the battle against terrorism has meant that neighbors must act cooperatively. At the same time, this is a reason to work together to bolster regional cooperation for its own sake. States that lacked the benefit of shared experiences and shared history now have a shared purpose, and therefore a new opportunity to make politics work for us, rather than against us, to design and implement policies of cooperation rather than confrontation.

During these next six months of our chairmanship, Armenia plans to put into operation exactly these kinds of specific policies, particularly in the information technology sector. The economic and social dividends for societies such as ours are well known. For the countries

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in the Black Sea region, computers and the internet are the cheap and easy fuel necessary to jumpstart economies and fast-forward social, educational and civic engagement. That much is obvious. It should be equally obvious that in the Black Sea community, where political differences all too often displace common interests, information technology can be the elixir that will strengthen the hand of those in business, society and government who are interested in transcending borders and problems to achieve personal and common goals. BSEC has been instituting the mechanisms to make such deep cooperation possible. The Black Sea Trade and Development Bank is one example of a working tool that can be used to run the engine of information technology.

Over the last few years, Armenia has worked with and through the European Union to spearhead information technology initiatives in the Caucasus. We have succeeded in convening two well-attended, productive conferences, as well as establishing a training center, starting a specific Caucasus Information Technology Initiative web site, and developing regional working groups. All this with the support and assistance of the European Union.

As the European Union embarks on the road to enlargement within the upcoming months, the European Union and BSEC will become more than just neighbors. With enlargement will come even greater common problems in need of common solutions. We look forward to utilizing this geographic and political rapprochement to engage the solid scientific and technological potential of the Black Sea community. Armenia hosted the first meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Science and Technologies in Yerevan in 1994. To give a new impetus to cooperation in this area, Armenia intends to convene the First BSEC Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology at the end of March 2003. Among other issues, the conference may address effective application of international scientific and technical achievements and utilization of the scientific potential of BSEC member states to ensure their sustained economic development and future prosperity. We will rely upon the International Center on Black Sea Studies, another successful mechanism, for the implementation of this conference.

It is fortunate that during these next months, the Hellenic Republic, our only European Union member, will assume the presidency of the EU. Given the considerable frequency with which discussions at different BSEC fora have been dedicated to the development of the BSEC-European Union relationship, this is a perfect historic moment to consider the creation of some institutional links between BSEC and the EU. We confirm our readiness to cooperate closely with the Hellenic Republic, in elaborating further ways to increase the BSEC-European Union partnership.

Armenia attaches no lesser importance to partnership with the United Nations system, particularly with the Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Environment Program, as well as other regional cooperation structures in Europe. The adoption of the resolution on UN-BSEC cooperation during the 57th session of the United Nations General Assembly will further enhance BSEC's international role. In this context, we welcome the convening of two coordination meetings of the regional initiatives during this year and support the continuation of this useful practice in the future.

Mr. Chairman, each of these steps, especially if undertaken together, will strengthen our organization, enhance the economic development and prosperity of each of our countries and peoples and empower our region. The ancient cultures of the Black Sea area were responsible for trade and civilizational development across three continents, centuries before globalization described that movement. We look forward to being integral and active participants in the trade and development of the third millennium.

ARMENIA, THE CROSSING PLACE

It is not very often that a practicing foreign minister has the opportunity to talk to such a distinguished gathering both of mythmakers and myth-busters. But as you know, with every opportunity comes a challenge. Tonight, the difficulty of the task is to distinguish between the two categories. Here in the US, the problem is compounded by the mediation of think tanks, their revolving doors and the usual traffic between governmental policymaking establishments and the academic community that is supposed to keep us intellectually honest.

I must be fair of course and admit that the blurring of lines can only occur where and when there are lines to blur. In my country, Armenia, we have no such lines, since autonomous institutions and civil society with distinct and discrete divisions are still evolving. Historically, we all know, there never was a single Silk Road. Perhaps, if Stalin and Mao had not blown their marriage, a single, modern Silk Road of a sort could have been conceivable, from the center of Satellite Eastern Europe to China – fully under Communist rule. But that was not to be, just as it never was before. The Silk Road had never come under the dominance of one centralized authority to maintain it, manage it, exploit it and monopolize it.

Today's Silk Road is a conceptual construct – the product of the convergence of multiple opportunities. It is predicated on the assumption that all intermediate points on the map, through pure self-interest, unhindered in their rational pursuit of maximal trade

benefits, will coalesce into a new network. In so doing, the theory goes, they will accelerate their own transition into market economies, their evolution toward interdependent cooperation, democratic governance, and ultimately as participants in the mostly western-dominated larger global politico-economic system.

If the logic of the construct were as natural and self-evident as the advocates would have it, Armenia's place and role in the middle of the route would be uncontested. Philip Marsden, the perceptive author of one of the most engaging books on Armenia and Armenians, titles it *The Crossing Place*. No matter what type east-west, north-south trade, exchange and migration one talks about, for 3000 years, Armenia has been at the intersection of millennial traffic. And yet, look at the difficulties our full, equal and active participation in this scheme is encountering today.

In principle, we have no doubt that the US – the designer and promoter of this initiative and its implementation – has conditioned its perception of Armenia's place in the Grand Design at the virtual intersection not of geographic or economic variables and criteria, but rather of geopolitical and geostrategic considerations.

It makes simple sense that a conference on the Silk Road includes a consideration of the prospects for stability in our neighborhood, for the successful implementation of this initiative requires peace in the Caucasus. Those geostrategic considerations, in order to be effectively applied, must accurately gauge the situation and relationships on the ground. The existence and dominance of misperceptions does not positively impact the development of the Silk Road, or the progress of any of its component members.

It is important therefore for Armenia, that our actions, intents and relations are understood correctly and in their context.

Since Armenia's independence in 1991, US-Armenia relations have been filtered through four variously intersecting and overlapping circles. Of course, this is not to overlook the bilateral domain where the US has played a very positive and supportive role. In the fields of economic and cultural exchange, macroeconomic reform and technical assistance, and most importantly, democracy building, US assis-

tance, often encouraged by the significant influence of our important Diaspora, has been very valuable. The bilateral dimension has been neither problematic nor, incidentally, significant enough to affect substantially the more critical aspects of our strategic, regional, security or existential interests.

Instead, it is fair to say that our significant relations with the US fall in the overlays of the following four circles: Armenia's relations with the Russian Federation; Armenia's relations with Turkey; The Nagorno Karabakh Conflict; Armenia's relations within the region as a whole, especially with Iran.

Obviously, trying to analyze any of these circles separately from the others is for convenience only, and they are and remain profoundly and intricately interwoven. Equally obvious to us is that the clear path to peace in the Caucasus is an accurate reading of our relations with Russia, a push towards a desired level of Armenian-Turkish relations, a fair resolution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and a positively engaged Iran.

Let me start with our relations with Russia where the scope and range of our connectedness is extensive – economically, militarily, politically – and not unlike our relations with the US, influenced more and more by the presence there of a very large and increasingly more active Armenian Diaspora.

There is of course a myth about the degree of Armenia's dependence on the Russian Federation. There exist differing assumptions about Armenia's absolute margin of maneuver and, more significantly, our relative margin of flexibility in defining and pursuing our interests, more particularly with other countries.

The assumptions are many: Years ago, it was said we were winning the Nagorno Karabakh military conflict because of Russia. Then, Armenia was Russia's bastion in the west, made to be an obstacle to NATO expansion or Western penetration into the region. Today, it is sometimes still said that Armenia is a fore-post for Russia.

These are myths. They probably arise from the fact that Armenia does have a military pact with Russia. This pact is motivated, however, by Armenia's own interests, as a defense against some of the vocal and demonstrated threats by our neighbor to the west.

In reality, our military arrangements with Russia have not hindered either a dialogue or actual cooperation with the US. Before the war on terrorism, America itself was reticent to engage Armenia in military matters, given its desire not to offend or irritate regional proxies, friends or rivals.

For example, if the US believed that through their co-chairmanship of the Minsk Group, the Russians have strictly represented the Armenian position, or vice versa, we would certainly have heard about it by now, and such an impression would clearly have caused the process to collapse long ago.

Further, while neither invited nor self-invited to be a candidate for NATO membership, Armenia, through NATO's Partnership for Peace Program, is active and interested in the process. In this and other instances, we have never been offered more than we have been willing or able to accept. Nor has Armenia tried to posture, as some have, as an eager host and partner to NATO or the US, in the hope that through such military entanglements, we would expect the US or NATO to come to our rescue in Nagorno Karabakh, as in Kosovo. We have always seen Azerbaijan's strategy to provoke a reverse Kosovo in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict as nothing more than crude delusional manipulation or naive wishful thinking. In the region and elsewhere, they are not the only ones promoting the myth that Armenia's military cooperation with Russia makes Armenia a potential enemy or actual regional threat.

Actually, the truth lies elsewhere. The larger, more crucial and geostrategically more contingent relationship between the US and Russia is what will shape the role, significance and performance of Armenia in that triangle. And that is no myth.

Within the Armenia-Turkey circle of relations, the US-Turkey-Armenia triangle is far less equivocal. Or perhaps it's the reverse and the Armenia-Turkish interaction lies within the US-Turkey-Armenia triangle. It remains for the observer to guess which is reality and which the myth.

The way it looks from Yerevan and probably from many other places, is that Turkey's relations with many countries, whether neighbors or not, are filtered through the special Turkey-US relationship – whether it is

Turkish candidacy to the EU, or the strategic partnership with Israel, or its role in Afghanistan or Iraq. There is nothing unusual with this kind of partnership except that the web of reciprocal IOUs becomes so intricate between the two, that in a paradoxical way, options are narrowed on both sides. For us, this poses certain difficulties and frustrations, even if we understand perfectly well why certain promises cannot be kept.

Armenia believes that given American regional strategic and economic interests – from stability to trade to energy supplies – the US should welcome the normalization of Turkey's relations with Armenia, for many obvious reasons. And some less obvious ones, too, such as deflecting the pressures of the Armenian Diaspora lobby in the US, and removing the irritant of Armenia's reticence or veto wherever international forums permit, thus reducing the frictional cost of Turkish-Armenian contentions that antagonize European institutions, therefore making it easier to rehabilitate Turkey's human rights record or at least shift attention from its reluctance to come to terms with that record including its denial of the Genocide of 1915.

It is no secret to many of you in this room that over the last four years at least, the US has promised to try to convince Turkey to take concrete, incremental, sometimes significant, sometimes symbolic steps toward cooperative relations with Armenia. Well aware of Armenia's readiness to unconditionally establish diplomatic relations with Turkey, the US has tried for Turkey to at least start with such gestures as the reopening of railways or the opening of land borders for trade. Strobe Talbott himself was involved in some of these efforts. Four years later, there is still no railway, no diplomatic relations, and no open borders. Armenia is well aware that this is not because the US has failed to encourage Turkey in this direction, since, as I said before, it would obviously be in the US interest to do so. The explanation rather is in the fact that for the US, Turkey's role in Iraq, with Israel, between NATO and European Union defense policy, not to say anything of the Baku-Çeyhan pipeline, are all too critical to risk jeopardizing by pushing a positive Turkish-Armenian agenda in the face of Turkish resistance.

The reasons for that Turkish resistance are many, and not all that mysterious. First, it is the resentment of what it claims are unfounded

Armenian accusations of Genocide. Then, there are the twin factors of Nagorno Karabakh and Turkish domestic politics. But, in Armenia, the US inability to bend its junior partner's Turkey's policies towards greater cooperation with Armenia, look more like bias or partiality, than the result of limitations caused by a complex interdependence. This myth, in turn, burdens our bilateral relations with you.

This brings me to the third circular ring of Armenia's foreign policy configurations that intersect substantially our relations with the US: the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

From Armenia's point of view, this zone is probably the central one. This was doubtless the reason the organizers titled my talk here *Prospects for Peace in the Caucasus*. I wish I could tell you conclusively what those prospects are. Indeed, what I can tell you is that much of that answer lies with the US.

While Nagorno Karabakh is not the only unresolved conflict in the area, it is the conflict where the US, together with Russia and France, is the most actively, formally and patiently involved. Everyone expects that larger issues of US-Russian competition or cooperation, globally and more particularly in the region, will affect every aspect of the process of dealing with this conflict and the search for its eventual resolution.

It is true that the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is, at heart, a struggle for self-determination. But there are oceans of difference in the de-facto status of some of today's long-term conflicts. In fact, I think there are four different categories of self-determination movements determined by the combination of the extent of control the state has over its entire territory (including the territory occupied by the insurgents) and the level of self-determination achieved by a secessionist movement.

Quebec and Northern Ireland, for example, fall in Category I. In both cases, the territorial integrity of Canada and the United Kingdom is preserved, while the provinces maintain self-determination to such a high degree that they conduct referendums and even decide their own legal and political status.

The overwhelming majority of today's secessionists fall in Category II, where the movements struggle without any degree of

self-determination and the state continues to fully control the territory under question. The Kurdish people's struggle in Turkey falls into this second category.

Those in Category III are the borderline cases where the state is not able to crush the insurgents, and the insurgents themselves are not strong enough to maintain control over their territory with any certainty of permanence, and the outcome can go either way. East Pakistan, later Bangladesh, was in a similar situation in the 1960s prior to its recognition as an independent state by the international community. So was Nagorno Karabakh prior to Azerbaijan's acceptance of an unconditional cease-fire on May 12, 1994, following Azerbaijan's failure to crush Karabakh's declared independence.

Today, Nagorno Karabakh falls in Category IV. Azerbaijan has no control whatsoever over those territories as Nagorno Karabakh enjoys complete sovereignty.

Mediators pursue two policy goals in all of these conflicts. One is to resist the break-up of the state. The other is to search for a peaceful resolution. This is done by simultaneously protecting the state's territorial integrity while arguing for full political, civil and human rights for all citizens, including the insurgent minority. Regarding the dozens of such struggles around the world, the international community repeats the same chorus. Sometimes it goes so far as to even suggest some autonomy. The hope is that the offer of such rights will dampen the pressures to secede. The problem, however, is that the two goals are not simultaneously achievable in all conflicts. This is especially true when a national self-determination movement is being offered rights which it has already achieved and sustained. In the US, there is a frequent suggestion "to combine the promotion of democracy on the part of the central government with an effort to help would-be breakaway areas benefit from cross-border economic development and political cooperation." To prescribe this bromide in the case of Nagorno Karabakh is to ignore the decades-long evolution of this conflict and its legal and historical foundations. Nagorno Karabakh already has political, civil and human rights under its own elected government. To offer it the same rights within Azerbaijan, while expecting that Karabakh will

give up its self-determination claims is neither logical nor acceptable. That would work for Category II conflicts, not for Nagorno Karabakh.

Finally, there is the fourth and more diffuse circle of Armenia's relations and activities from the South Caucasus to the Middle East and South East Europe. Historically, economically and in terms of trade and with widely dispersed minority communities in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and politically shifting alignments and allies, we can neither ignore nor disengage from this wider political habitat. Not are all our friends friendly with each other nor are our foes the adversaries of our partners. Our capacity to contribute to regional stability depends very much on our success in managing our relations with such disparate and seemingly incompatible actors. While it is our choice and our burden to pursue this multidirectional complementarity, we don't find it helpful when we are occasionally compelled to choose, to take sides. It is no secret, that given our geopolitical situation, the conflicts or hostilities we face and the limited resources we command, our room to maneuver is rather small.

Our border with Iran, though short and mountainous, has offered us practical alternatives, even though our views on this are distinctly divergent at the moment at least with those of the US. By experience and necessity, our engagement with Iran is not and cannot be superficial and on-and-off again. Nor does it really pose any real or substantial security threat to anybody. It does not tilt any strategic balance. Even its economic significance is minimal on the scale of global, even regional, trade. What we have is the cooperation of two neighbors, each resisting different forms of isolation and marginalization. Thus, we each hope that the other can provide a bridge to the rest of the world to which they are better connected. Armenia would want, in its relations with the US, to explore its bilateral relations with Iran and make Armenia a useful channel for any dialogue. As to trade and transit specifically, if anyone is prepared to propose other avenues, we are eager to listen.

We believe Armenia's ability to engage Iran can and ought to be put to good use as a factor of stability and cooperation in wider and

wider constructs of regional structures and institutions. Our security depends on it, our prosperity depends on it. We want the legitimacy of these policies recognized, supported, positively utilized by all our friends who have a stake in the peace and development of our region. That Armenia must or, worse, has, made a choice among friends or directions is a myth that deserves to be busted.

You can see how this brings me full circle to the Silk Road. Given the way Armenia looks at its place in the bigger picture, manipulations to keep Armenia out or in the margins can only undermine the full potential of that Silk Road. As an instrument of peace and stability, it must not become an instrument of coercion in the hands of some, to punish by exclusion those with whom they want to maintain a state of hostility and confrontation.

My comments about US-Armenia relations in the regional context are not meant to imply that we are naive enough to wish those relations should move to the center of America's foreign policy agenda. To the contrary, we are very aware of what else occupies that agenda. On the other hand, you can see how central Armenia's relations with the US are to its own foreign policy preoccupations.

BRINGING PEACE AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY TO THE CAUCASUS

Standing here before you today, I'm living a dream come true. I had sat there, amongst you, a decade ago, listening to a lot of interesting people speaking from this podium over a period of two years. And I remember thinking and wishing that I would stand up here myself one day and speak to curious, eager students. Now, that day is here.

The Fletcher School itself, of course, has had a huge role to play in that process. This school hasn't just provided an education to thousands of us who formulate, practice and study public policy. It has also provided an incredible networking system from which I benefit continuously, a not-so-secret society of political junkies who enjoy the political game and want to have a part in the decision-making process which influences all our lives. Fletcher's multidisciplinary program, its broad-based curriculum, have provided me with knowledge and tools which are indispensable in carrying out my job in today's complex, interrelated world, especially from a neighborhood as intricate and complicated as Armenia's.

I left Fletcher in 1992 and joined Armenia's Foreign Ministry. At that time, the ministry staff consisted of a handful of Soviet-era diplomats, an even smaller handful of Western-trained law and diplomacy experts, and a building full of eager, untrained young people.

Today, thanks to Fletcher, 30 of our young diplomats have received training at Fletcher. They have studied here, taken in this atmosphere, heard the wisdom of these professors and brought back with them a sense of the culture that Fletcher tries to impart to its students. My thanks to

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Dean Steven Bosworth and to all those who worked with our students for doing their part to increase our ministry's capacity. Of course, none of this would have been possible, had it not been for the vision, the commitment and the generosity of Aso Tavitian who lives what he preaches. Aso is himself the archetypical American who achieved his dream through his own hard work, his ingenuity, and, as he is the first to say, to a first-rate education. So, when he wanted to help Armenia, he chose to do it by supporting the continuing education of Yerevan's best and brightest, and doing it at an American institution with a proven record. It's obvious, I wasn't going to argue with the choice of Fletcher.

Tufts and Fletcher have a long-standing relationship with the Armenian community. In addition to the two professors of Armenian studies here at Tufts holding two endowed chairs, there are also two very special Tufts trustees: John Baronian, someone we all love, and Professor Joyce Barsam, herself a committed educator, and the greatest fixer-planner-negotiator of all time. They have been extremely helpful to all of us and our students, and we're grateful.

I'm sorry Aso couldn't be here today, but I believe it's worth paying tribute to him, who, in the tradition of self-made Armenian immigrants giving back to American society, and particularly American education, follows in the footsteps of Stephen Mugar whose name is familiar not just on this campus, but on several campuses in the Boston area. Each time I would pass the plaque downstairs in the corridor connecting to the Mugar building, I would read and marvel at the foresight of men like Mr. Mugar, and now Mr. Tavitian, who leverage their personal success to make possible a successful future not just for young people, but now, through them, a young country.

Armenia is an old nation but a new state. And it is a dream come true. Many Armenians, many of your friends and neighbors here in Massachusetts who grew up dreaming about a homeland and the identity and security that comes with belonging, could not believe it would be possible in our lifetime.

It did happen in our lifetime, and tomorrow, we will be celebrating the 11th anniversary of our independence and for me, nothing is more rewarding and fulfilling than being present at the creation, watching and participating in the state-building process.

This past decade has been indescribably challenging and truly difficult. Often, we have made decisions that have been crucial turning points and none of this more so than in the development of foreign policy.

And don't forget, all this in a chaotic world, following the collapse of what we thought was an indefatigable USSR. That breakdown didn't just mean the end of an empire, it also meant the disappearance of a world system with if-not-predictable, at least understood and assumed, rules and parameters.

The new world order was a fashionable term then. A dozen years later, is there such a new order? The answer is no. I just came from New York where Iraq was high on the United Nations agenda and we can clearly see that the situation is in flux as world powers jockey for position and try to come to terms with a professed desire for multilateralism.

The reason for this is that unlike previous turning points in world history, with the end of the Cold War, there were clear victors, but not clear losers. As a result, terms of a new order could not be dictated directly, overtly, quickly. In all previous cases, the victors tried to do two things: totally dismantle, dismember the loser's resources, and put in place new structures and systems to avoid the repetition of the conflict. A good example is the end of the Napoleonic wars, when France was totally weakened and the Concert of Europe emerged with its security systems such as the quadruple alliance and the Holy Alliance. Then, we saw World War I when the victors dismantled Germany and created the League of Nations as a mechanism for collective security. After World War II, at Yalta and again at Potsdam, a truly new world order was created, with new institutions, such as NATO and new economic structures such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. After the end of the Cold War, there was no such abrupt, quick evolution of a system, and no new ones were created, because the very institutions – NATO, OSCE and others – which in part led to the collapse of the old system were used in new ways to satisfy new needs. So, this whole accommodation process – on one hand trying to subdue Russia, on the other hand, trying to keep it engaged and in certain ways accommodate them – led to this situation of flux and the continuing evolution of a new world order.

In this context, it's been interesting to observe US-Russia relations over the past ten years. Unfortunately, we in Armenia haven't just been observers, but have also been effected by the changing and evolving nature of this relationship still being defined.

However, one change is clear: the world is no longer divided into two clean halves. That division disappeared with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Instead, several systems have emerged, free to evolve and develop their own game with their own rules.

One such system emerged in the Caucasus, comprised not just of the three Caucasus countries: Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, but also our neighbors: Russia, Turkey and Iran. To make matters a bit more complicated, major global powers also have an interest in this region, although they are not, strictly speaking, a part of the Caucasus. You can believe that the activities of the US, the European Union and China affect the Caucasus system.

What makes a geopolitical system a system? Its parts, like any kind of system are linked to each other. In this case, the residents of the Caucasus neighborhood are tied to each other sometimes historically, sometimes ethnically, sometimes linguistically. There are shared memories, traditions, and cultures. There is a common infrastructure, including communication and transportation.

Just as in any system, in this system, too, there are factors and elements that contribute to its stability and instability.

In the Caucasus, which is an inherently unstable system, there are new and old destabilizing elements. The destabilizing elements prevail and cause conflict and friction.

There are many such elements including historical rivalries, ethnic conflicts, the uneven distribution of wealth, particularly oil, superpower rivalry played out in the region, underdeveloped economies, an absence of deep-rooted democratic practices and institutions.

Given this environment, as we in these past years pursued our own national interest, we also tried to reconcile those with the bigger goal of achieving peace and stability in our region. The pursuit of these dual goals led to our adoption of the following policies vis-a-vis our region.

First, Complementarity. We firmly believed that with the end of the Cold War, Cold War thinking must end as well. As a result, we refused to

make choices between sides, powers, poles, interests, and continue to reject the notion that that is necessary. We want the Caucasus to be the place where the interests of the powers converge and not collide.

An effort to democratize not only Armenia, but the region, is a second policy goal. For obvious reasons. It is a truism that democratic states are less likely to go to war than non-democratic ones. It is also apparent that democratic states treat their citizens more fairly and equitably, thus creating stable societies. Both of these are necessary in our region.

The other three goals are advocating regional cooperation, a resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and securing Turkey's positive engagement in the region.

I would like to dwell on these in greater detail since these are the most crucial and indeed, each of these situations has its spillover effects for the region and the great powers with interest in the region.

On regional cooperation, let me say that it is no secret, that given our geopolitical situation, the conflicts or hostilities we face and the limited resources we command, our room to maneuver is rather small. That is why we've determined that it is neither necessary nor prudent to choose among friends in our neighborhood.

On the contrary. Our capacity to contribute to regional stability depends very much on our success in managing our relations with different and seemingly incompatible actors. Our border with Iran, for example, though short and mountainous, has offered us practical alternatives, even though our views on this are distinctly divergent at the moment at least from those of the US. Our engagement with Iran does not pose any real or substantial security threat to anybody. It does not tilt any strategic balance. Even its economic significance is minimal on the scale of global, even regional, trade. What we have is the cooperation of two neighbors, each resisting different forms of isolation and marginalization. Thus, we each hope that the other can provide a bridge to the rest of the world to which they are better connected. Armenia would want in its relations with the US to explore its bilateral relations with Iran and make Armenia a useful channel for any dialogue. As to trade and transit specifically, if anyone is prepared to propose other avenues, we are eager to listen.

We believe Armenia's ability to engage Iran can and ought to be put to good use as a factor of stability and cooperation in wider and wider

constructs of regional structures and institutions. Our security depends on it, our prosperity depends on it. We want the legitimacy of these policies recognized, supported, positively used by all our friends who have a stake in the peace and development of our region.

Now let me address the Nagorno Karabakh issue which is significant not only for the existential interests of the protagonists, but for regional stability and the political and security concerns of the Russian Federation, Turkey, Iran and of course the US. While Nagorno Karabakh is not the only unresolved conflict in the area, it is the conflict where the US, together with Russia is the most actively, formally and patiently involved. Everyone expects that larger issues of US-Russian competition or cooperation, globally and more particularly in the region, will affect every aspect of the process of dealing with this conflict and the search for its eventual resolution.

It is true that the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is, at heart, a struggle for self-determination. But there are oceans of difference in the de-facto status of some of today's long-term conflicts. In fact, I believe there are four different categories of self-determination movements determined by the combination of degree of control the state exercises over its entire territory (including the territory occupied by the insurgents) and the degree of self-determination achieved by a secessionist movement.

Quebec and Northern Ireland, for example, fall in Category I. In both cases, the territorial integrity of Canada and the United Kingdom is preserved, while the provinces maintain self-determination to such a high degree that they conduct referendums and even decide their own legal and political status.

The overwhelming majority of today's secessionists fall in Category II, where the movements struggle without any degree of self-determination and the state continues to fully control the territory under question. The Kurdish people's struggle in Turkey falls into this second category.

Those in Category III are the borderline cases where the state is not able to crush the insurgents, and the insurgents themselves are not strong enough to maintain control over their territory with any certainty of permanence, and the outcome can go either way. East Pakistan, later Bangladesh, was in a similar situation in the 1960s prior to its recognition as an independent state by the international community. So was

Nagorno Karabakh prior to Azerbaijan's acceptance of an unconditional cease-fire on May 12, 1994, following Azerbaijan's failure to crush Karabakh's declared independence.

Today, Nagorno Karabakh falls in Category IV. Azerbaijan has no control whatsoever over those territories as Nagorno Karabakh enjoys complete sovereignty.

Mediators pursue two policy goals in all of these conflicts. One is to resist the break-up of the state. The other is to search for a peaceful resolution. This is done by simultaneously protecting the state's territorial integrity while arguing for full political, civil and human rights for all citizens, including the insurgent minority. Regarding the dozens of such struggles around the world, the international community repeats the same chorus. Sometimes it goes so far as to even suggest some autonomy. The hope is that the offer of such rights will dampen the pressures to secede.

The problem, however, is that the two goals are not simultaneously achievable in all conflicts. This is especially true when a national self-determination movement is being offered rights which it has already achieved and sustained. In the US, there is a frequent suggestion "to combine the promotion of democracy on the part of the central government with an effort to help would-be breakaway areas benefit from cross-border economic development and political cooperation." To prescribe this bromide in the case of Nagorno Karabakh is to ignore the decades-long evolution of this conflict and its legal and historical foundations. Nagorno Karabakh already has political, civil and human rights under its own elected government. To offer it the same rights within Azerbaijan, while expecting that Karabakh will give up its self-determination claims is neither logical nor acceptable. That would work for category II conflicts but is not appropriate for Nagorno Karabakh.

That is our challenge now. And we are at a point where the international community has come to see this reality: That Nagorno Karabakh has never been, and can never be a part of independent Azerbaijan. That the people of Nagorno Karabakh are ready for, and in fact, have already begun, through elections and other democratic processes, to build their own societies and their own lives.

Of course, the process of finding a peaceful resolution is not being made easier by the fact that Turkey acts as Azerbaijan's big uncle on the world stage, and provides blanket support for their claims. At the same time, Turkey does not have formal relations with Armenia.

It is not for Armenia to judge Turkey's friendship with Azerbaijan. Shared ethnic, cultural, linguistic, economic or even strategic interests are understandable. But that is no reason to isolate others or hold captive one set of interactions for the benefit of a third party. We do not hold Turkey's moral, political, economic, even military assistance to Azerbaijan against it, although we may not always like that closeness, or appreciate its implications for our own security.

However, Azerbaijan has succeeded in convincing Turkey that blockading Armenia will diminish Armenia's economic capacity, undermine its self-reliance and force Armenia to negotiate from a weaker position and hence compel it to consider concessions it would not otherwise be willing to make in the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh.

Turkey's and Azerbaijan's sustained closures of the borders with Armenia are based on the demonstrably false premise that Armenia's weak and collapsing economy will force it to accept any solution imposed by friend and foe alike. Perhaps, Azerbaijan, for a variety of reasons, including domestic consumption, world public opinion, and the need to justify clinging to a politics that so far has been ineffectual, needs to create and perpetuate the myth of Armenia's utter vulnerability, and being on the verge of economic collapse. Others who are not in that situation and who can think otherwise, do not have to buy into that mythology and do not have to invest in politics and strategies based on false assessments.

Armenia and its economy are not collapsing. In fact, the opposite is true. Against all odds, Armenia's economy is growing. Last year, we had 9.6 percent GNP growth; in the first half of this year, we've achieved ten percent, and hope to finish the year at that rate. Our ranking on the United Nations Human Development Index is ahead of both Turkey's and Azerbaijan's.

Nonetheless, we are ready for dialogue and we advocate full diplomatic relations with Turkey without pre-conditions. This does not mean Armenia is willing to renounce its national memories nor dismiss the

historical injustices it has suffered. We notice with satisfaction that in Turkey there has been a movement away from a monolithic, undifferentiated rigid approach concerning the Genocide to a more pluralistic and varied debate. This debate within Turkey may have not moved forward official policy, but Armenia is gratified to see that the subject is no longer taboo, and there is a debate.

Armenia believes that given American regional strategic and economic interests – from stability to trade to energy – the US should welcome the normalization of Turkey's relations with Armenia, for many obvious reasons. And some less obvious ones, too, such as deflecting the pressures of the Armenian Diaspora lobby in the US, removing the irritant of Armenia's reticence or veto wherever international forums permit, reducing the frictional cost of Turkish-Armenian contentions that antagonize European institutions, thus making it easier to rehabilitate Turkey's human rights record or at least shift attention from its reluctance to come to terms with that record including its denial of the Genocide of 1915.

However, the way it looks from Yerevan and probably from many other places, is that Turkey's relations with many countries, whether neighbors or not, are filtered through the special Turkey-US relationship – whether it is Turkish candidacy to the EU, or the strategic partnership with Israel, or its role in Afghanistan or Iraq. There is nothing unusual with this kind of partnership except that the web of reciprocal IOUs becomes so intricate between the two, that in a paradoxical way, options are narrowed on both sides. For us, this poses certain difficulties and frustrations, even if we understand perfectly well why certain promises cannot be kept.

So it is clear why a talk that is essentially about Armenia's foreign policy is entitled the Effect of Great Power Politics. We're in a complex neighborhood, where domestic situations and inter-country relationships are complicated. Russia-Georgia relations affect us, US-Iran relations affect us, Russia-US relations affect us of course, and we were therefore very pleased that at the last meeting between Presidents George Bush and Vladimir Putin, in Moscow, the two made a statement indicating their intent to cooperate in the Caucasus. We believe that such policies, together with greater political will on the part of each of the countries involved, can bring the Caucasus peace and economic prosperity.

ADVOCATING MULTILATERALISM AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY

This time last year, new states and old, were thunderstruck by terror that is still indescribable. We were reeling from the enormity of what terrorism had wrought, even as we looked for a place from which to begin to understand why. Millennia of experience with the devastation of war had not provided us with the tools necessary to diagnose this new form of combat.

Today, a year later, as we persevere with the arduous endeavor to eradicate the affliction, we also continue to search for causes. We distinguish, certainly, between comprehending and concurring, awareness and acquiescence, understanding and justification. At the same time, we recognize that diagnosis does not always bring its own cure.

We cannot go back to where we were a year ago, in either our assumptions or our actions. The fundamental question we must all answer is: What is it that we can and cannot, should and should not do to other human beings? The answer must include a rejection of plain injustice and abject poverty. This will go a long way towards alleviating the hopelessness that perpetuates those same societal ills.

It is with this in mind that we welcome the targets and timetables adopted to spur action on a wide range of issues at the just-concluded Summit on Sustainable Development. Critical among these goals is the need to provide and manage water, as a basic element of life, and a basic requirement of dignified living. Without them, neither economic nor political stability is possible.

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The other two major United Nations events of this year – the Conference on Financing for Development and the Special Session on Children – also demonstrate that social and economic development must be tackled in tandem, for global peace and security.

In Armenia, too, we are focusing on both aspects of development. The Armenian government's Poverty Reduction Strategy aims to establish an umbrella for formulation and implementation of sustainable human development strategies in areas damaged by earthquake and conflict. We shall do this by building domestic capacities for governance, restoring social services in education and health, agricultural development, reforestation, and disaster preparedness.

Armenia's response to the very Special Session on Children is the elaboration and implementation of our National Plan of Action for Children. The National Plan of Action sets ten year goals for the protection of the rights of the child, outlines principal strategies and establishes indicators and mechanisms for monitoring progress toward the enumerated goals.

The decades of summits and forums on the variety of social and economic ills which face modern societies have amply demonstrated that committed partnerships are necessary for serious progress. At home, government and civil society have to work together to implement the decisions of these forums, but at the global level, governments and international agencies must also provide together the resources and impetus for these universal agendas.

Economic prosperity hinges on internal, regional and international stability. That stability in turn depends on cooperation and goodwill. In our region, despite the existence of various conflicts, we continue to be hopeful that democratic processes will create civil societies with responsible leaders committed to a resolution of political issues.

In Armenia, we look forward to a year of elections: presidential elections – the fourth since independence – will be followed by parliamentary elections, which in turn will be followed by a referendum on constitutional reforms. We are proud that we have had a working Constitution for more than seven years, and that Constitution has seen us through difficult periods without leading to domestic turmoil.

Nevertheless, as with any evolving society, we recognize the need to make some changes in order to more accurately reflect our commitment to becoming a society that respects the rule of law and the rights of individuals.

We are equally proud that the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh, too, in the midst of their ongoing struggle for self-determination, have also completed another presidential election cycle. Indeed, the people of Nagorno Karabakh deserve to be commended for adopting the rule of law, despite continuing adverse social and economic conditions.

As the OSCE and its Minsk Group co-chairs continue to work with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh towards a settlement that will wisely, with an eye to the realities on the ground, determine Nagorno Karabakh's final status, it is self-evident that only a democratically elected leadership, which enjoys a popular mandate, will be able to actively and legitimately participate in the final negotiations that affect the status of their own people.

It was with this in mind that in 1992, in Helsinki at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe Ministerial Council, it was decided that elected and other representatives of Nagorno Karabakh will be invited to the OSCE Minsk Conference entrusted with determining the final status of Nagorno Karabakh. Therefore, while elections and democratization do not presume any status, self-determination is always more legitimate when accompanied by democratic processes.

The international community seems to understand, often welcomes, and sometimes assists in electoral democratic processes in areas whose international legal status is still in flux and ostensibly subject to the sovereignty of an existing state. We do not understand why such wise and non-prejudicial approaches or strategies should be denied to Nagorno Karabakh where *de facto* self-rule is already in place for almost ten years.

And, democratization and self-determination together become both necessary and inevitable when the formation of the new independent entity takes place inside states which are deficient in democracy and their respect of human rights and the applications of all the principles of the United Nations is unsatisfactory.

Nothing demonstrates this more than East Timor's upcoming membership in this body. So it is with pleasure that we extend to them the heartfelt congratulations of the Armenian government. East Timor's presence here is proof that a blanket rejection of all self-determination claims is not valid, and does not take into account the very real fact that these movements are, by their nature, not all alike or even similar. Different self-determination struggles have evolved in decidedly different ways. Therefore, each ought to be treated individually.

The international community's challenge continues to be to adopt policies that will contribute to the peaceful solution of each conflict. In order to adopt correct policies, criteria must be found to characterize and judge each case on its own merit, realistically taking into account the real situation on the ground, in order to reach lasting peace.

What the people of Nagorno Karabakh and the whole region are still waiting for is lasting peace.

And I would have thought that this is what the leadership of Azerbaijan would want, as well. Based on the very hopeful meetings that take place between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, we have reason to be positive.

However, having followed the comments of my colleague from Azerbaijan made from this podium, I'm not just shocked, I'm also dismayed that he is not keeping pace with the progress being made in the region by his and my presidents.

It's been almost two years since the meetings in Paris, and in Key West, when the international community put forth their views on the issue. Since then, some Azerbaijani officials, out of desperation or ignorance, use every means at their disposal to discredit the initiatives of that international community, looking for ways to artificially link them to the critical issues of the day.

After September 11, the talk of the threat of international terrorism caused Azerbaijan to make accusations which came full circle to damage its own reputation, when according to Western sources, Azerbaijan's own ten-year-long relationship with terrorists came to the surface, and it was demonstrated that indeed Azerbaijan had served as a regional terrorist hub.

So, that didn't work. Today, since the international community speaks of countries' responsibilities towards Security Council resolutions, Azerbaijan frivolously makes the same accusation about Armenia, without considering that indeed, Armenia has done exactly what the international community expected: use its good offices with the leadership of Nagorno Karabakh to help find a peaceful solution to this conflict.

Azerbaijan has a choice: To continue with crude delusional manipulation and naive wishful thinking, and hope for a return to a military and political situation that is long gone. Or, join the international community, through the offices of the OSCE's Minsk Group co-chairmen, to continue with the difficult search for peace. The people on the ground, on all sides, have demonstrated their readiness for peace, for political and economic stability. The leaders at the very top persist with the honest dialogue that will chip away at the political obstacles. We who are entrusted with transforming these efforts and desires into a just peace must approach our task honestly and responsibly.

Let me say the following: Nagorno Karabakh has never been a part of independent Azerbaijan. Whether we consider history or geography, whether we adopt a long-term political perspective, or whether we face the reality of the facts on the ground, the men, women and children of Nagorno Karabakh have earned the right to live peacefully on their historic lands.

Mr. President, I wish to take the opportunity this podium provides to reiterate President Kocharian's statement before this General Assembly two years ago to work for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and to prevent the repetition of such human atrocity. We extend our profound appreciation to all those governments, legislatures, and international bodies that have recognized the Armenian Genocide, and pledge our cooperation to all those who are currently in the process of reaffirming the facts of this crime against humanity. As a signatory of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Armenian government places a high priority on the struggle to prevent future genocides and to stand up against all attempts to deny past genocides. We support all initiatives that reinforce the international consensus behind this landmark treaty.

It is becoming clear that this millennium, too, will not be violence-free. Today, when global peace appears a distant hope, Armenia observes the volatility in the Caucasus, the Middle East and elsewhere with trepidation.

To face such challenges, Armenia supports proposals by the United Nations Secretary General aimed at the strengthening of the organization so that it can face new challenges in a more satisfactory way. Additionally, Armenia is in favor of more equitable representation at the Security Council, as well as more transparency of its activities.

The situation in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and around Iraq, remains a continuing example of the need for a vibrant and strengthened United Nations, able to assert the will of the organization's membership, and empowered with greater authority to implement its decisions.

As states and governments continue to search for new ways to deal with emergent internal conflicts and increasingly complex interrelationships, Armenia is of the belief that the United Nations must stand for all the easy-to-orate but difficult-to-deliver principles of economic and political justice and equality among people. Given our uneven history and problematic geography, it is no surprise that Armenia is an advocate of multilateralism and collective security. From the vantage point of a country with our resources and limitations, we realize that peace is not possible without social justice, sustainable development and respect for the rights of all individuals and peoples in the community of nations.

So, that didn't work. Today, since the international community speaks of countries' responsibilities towards Security Council resolutions, Azerbaijan frivolously makes the same accusation about Armenia, without considering that indeed, Armenia has done exactly what the international community expected: use its good offices with the leadership of Nagorno Karabakh to help find a peaceful solution to this conflict.

Azerbaijan has a choice: To continue with crude delusional manipulation and naive wishful thinking, and hope for a return to a military and political situation that is long gone. Or, join the international community, through the offices of the OSCE's Minsk Group co-chairmen, to continue with the difficult search for peace. The people on the ground, on all sides, have demonstrated their readiness for peace, for political and economic stability. The leaders at the very top persist with the honest dialogue that will chip away at the political obstacles. We who are entrusted with transforming these efforts and desires into a just peace must approach our task honestly and responsibly.

Let me say the following: Nagorno Karabakh has never been a part of independent Azerbaijan. Whether we consider history or geography, whether we adopt a long-term political perspective, or whether we face the reality of the facts on the ground, the men, women and children of Nagorno Karabakh have earned the right to live peacefully on their historic lands.

Mr. President, I wish to take the opportunity this podium provides to reiterate President Kocharian's statement before this General Assembly two years ago to work for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide and to prevent the repetition of such human atrocity. We extend our profound appreciation to all those governments, legislatures, and international bodies that have recognized the Armenian Genocide, and pledge our cooperation to all those who are currently in the process of reaffirming the facts of this crime against humanity. As a signatory of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Armenian government places a high priority on the struggle to prevent future genocides and to stand up against all attempts to deny past genocides. We support all initiatives that reinforce the international consensus behind this landmark treaty.

It is becoming clear that this millennium, too, will not be violence-free. Today, when global peace appears a distant hope, Armenia observes the volatility in the Caucasus, the Middle East and elsewhere with trepidation.

To face such challenges, Armenia supports proposals by the United Nations Secretary General aimed at the strengthening of the organization so that it can face new challenges in a more satisfactory way. Additionally, Armenia is in favor of more equitable representation at the Security Council, as well as more transparency of its activities.

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As states and governments continue to search for new ways to deal with emergent internal conflicts and increasingly complex interrelationships, Armenia is of the belief that the United Nations must stand for all the easy-to-orate but difficult-to-deliver principles of economic and political justice and equality among people. Given our uneven history and problematic geography, it is no surprise that Armenia is an advocate of multilateralism and collective security. From the vantage point of a country with our resources and limitations, we realize that peace is not possible without social justice, sustainable development and respect for the rights of all individuals and peoples in the community of nations.

TURKEY IS ARMENIA'S NEIGHBOR, AND ARMENIA IS TURKEY'S

First in the spirit of regional solidarity, let me congratulate Turkey in its football triumph in yesterday's FIFA match. There are some victories that we can all applaud and delight in.

Let me express my appreciation for the opportunity extended to me by the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) to address this group. Anyone interested in the significance of political debate in Turkey, as it faces important choices and tough challenges, cannot but recognize TESEV's role in the maintenance of a consistently high quality of discourse and the effort to be comprehensive and open to a wide range of ideas and positions.

I am sure you will all understand if I tell you that Armenia is quite interested in the substance of political debate in Turkey. After all, for the last half millennium, the destinies and the lives of our countries and our peoples have been intertwined. Not easily, not always for the best, but given that history and geography have thrown us together, we are neighbors.

We are not the only neighbors in the world who have had, and who continue to have, a troubled relationship. Troubled memories, a tortured past, recriminations, unsettled accounts and the enduring wounds of victimhood plague the national consciousness of peoples on many borders. In our case, some distance between our two countries might have allowed us to put distance between our past and our future. But we have no such luxury. There is no space, no cushion, between us.

Delivered in Istanbul on June 26, 2002, at the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV)

As we left Yerevan Monday morning, we could see Mount Ararat ever so clearly, both from the ground and from the air. We could almost reach out and touch it – almost. Ararat – and Turkey – are only 45 miles from my own ministry. But we cannot go there. As such, Ararat symbolizes both our pride and our frustration. It is a constant reminder of Turkish-Armenian ties, relations and history. They are all there in that mountain.

We know that evil ghosts on the Franco-German border were exorcised with the construction of the European Union. But we also know that elsewhere, as in the Balkans, the last ten years have seen the convulsions of settling the unsettled scores of centuries of accumulated resentment, domination and repression. To redress their deep-rooted antagonism, new structures, new frameworks are emerging, with the help of the hard-won experiences and models of Western Europe. Tolerance, mutual respect, the admission of past excesses as well as the security of each entity and cooperative interdependent economics all contribute to implementing alternatives to interminable feuding.

It should not surprise anyone if we suggest that we in the South Caucasus should look carefully at such efforts to take solid steps to seriously address the challenges born of historically rooted conflicts, centenary in their origins, embedded in the collective memories of peoples. Nor can these conflicts be simply resolved or cosmetically reformulated by those who believe that the past is an irrelevancy. History is as much the foundation of a neighborhood as geography, a common landscape of plateaus, majestic mountains or shared river basins.

In this neighborhood, Turkey is Armenia's neighbor, just as Armenia is Turkey's. This fact can be self-servingly ignored, manipulated, marginalized or resisted. But it cannot be denied or changed, except with bloodshed and further conflict.

I am sure you, too, remember the wisdom of your grandparents. My grandmother – from Marash – used to say that neighbors are more important than even family, and those relations must be nurtured. It is no different for states. No matter what else, we must talk to each other, deal with each other, visit each other, trade with each

other, and do so within the framework of our own sovereign equal identities. This is true for each and all of our neighbors. It is not for Armenia to judge Turkey's friendship with Azerbaijan. Shared ethnic, cultural, linguistic, economic or even strategic interests are understandable.

But that is no reason to isolate others or hold captive one set of interactions for the benefit of a third party. We do not hold Turkey's moral, political, economic – even military – assistance to Azerbaijan against it. We may not always like that closeness, or appreciate its implications for our own security.

Nevertheless, we are ready for dialogue, for diplomatic relations, for open formal sovereign communications, without which regional imbalances, instability and even hostilities cannot be righted, mitigated, and anchored in reciprocal understanding.

Where there are no open channels or constant dialogue and exchange, old ghosts will keep rattling in everybody's closets. To wait for them to go away before beginning dialogue and exchange means waiting forever. It means that perhaps we do not want them to go away. If indeed we do, then the demons which are poisoning our air must be attacked together, their legacy must be transcended together. They relate to all of us, and they will only disappear when we tackle the abyss of experience and memory that separates us. To do this, Armenia advocates full diplomatic relations with Turkey without preconditions.

This does not mean Armenia is willing to renounce its national memories nor dismiss the historical injustices it has suffered. We notice with satisfaction that in Turkey there has been a movement away from a monolithic, undifferentiated rigid approach concerning the Genocide to a more pluralistic and varied debate. This debate within Turkey may have not moved forward official policy, but Armenia is gratified to see this debate occur, where the subject is no longer taboo.

After all, memory does not heal by denial. The truthful assuming of responsibility is a pre-condition for the rebuilding of trust. Open relations between our two countries can further contribute to the slow but steady improvement of mutual confidence.

Ironically – and being the huge optimist that I am, I would say fortunately – your resistance to open relations with Armenia is not based on the existence of our shared historic problems. Rather, relations between Turkey and Armenia are being held hostage to Armenia's own conflicts and tensions with Azerbaijan.

Quite honestly, Armenian and Azerbaijani relations, too, are being held hostage – hostage to Azerbaijan's own reluctance to recognize incontrovertible facts on the ground, its tendency to confuse stubbornness for principles, its desire to build policy on myths and fables, and its denial of the reality that a future must be built on a real past and a viable present.

Let's look at those realities: Nagorno Karabakh has never been part of an independent Azerbaijan – either before Soviet rule, or since the fall of the Soviet empire. Except for the Soviet period, Nagorno Karabakh had never been under Azerbaijani control. The men, women and children of Nagorno Karabakh seceded from Soviet Azerbaijan legally in accordance with the constitutional framework of the very Soviet Union which had incorporated Nagorno Karabakh into Azerbaijan, admittedly arbitrarily, in 1923. During the Soviet years, its population was oppressed, their rights systematically denied. Hence, they repeatedly sought redress. Since the legal separation more than a dozen years ago, a whole generation has grown up in Nagorno Karabakh, free of Azerbaijani control.

The world has acknowledged that the Soviet era has ended. Let us then not consent to continuing to define our regional relations and determining our people's futures based on conditions created by a Stalin long dead. His empire is dismembered, his construction of arbitrary political and ethnic borders is collapsed, his control has long ended, and we do not have to be saddled with implementing his unrealistic, unjust vision. Armenians, Turks and Azeris together can transcend what history has wrought to reach a peace and prosperity that our peoples deserve and that reflect their own free choices.

Or, we can keep coming up against a lack of flexibility, a lack of courage to accommodate change and to try new solutions, and a lack of genuine vision in order to embrace the change.

Azerbaijan has succeeded in convincing Turkey that blockading Armenia will diminish Armenia's economic capacity, undermine its self-reliance and force Armenia to negotiate from a weaker position and hence compel it to consider concessions it would not otherwise be willing to make in the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh.

Turkey's and Azerbaijan's continued closures of the borders with Armenia are based on the demonstrably false premise that Armenia's weak and collapsing economy will force it to accept any solution imposed by friend and foe alike. Perhaps, Azerbaijan, for a variety of reasons, including domestic consumption, world public opinion, and the need to justify clinging to a policy that so far has been ineffectual, needs to create and perpetuate the myth of Armenia's utter vulnerability, and its being on the verge of economic collapse. Those who are not in that situation and who can think otherwise, based on their own national self-interest, do not have to buy into that mythology and do not have to invest in politics and strategies based on false assessments.

Armenia and its economy are not collapsing and its rank in the United Nations Human Development Index is ahead of some unexpected rivals. On the Index of Open Economies, too Armenia, in 45th place, is way ahead of our neighbors in the region. Last year, our Gross National Product grew 9.6 percent; in the first half of this year we've achieved ten percent, and hope to finish the year at that rate of growth. Our macroeconomic indicators have been consistently promising. As you can see, fables are born when things cannot be said accurately.

Of course, while we have a way to go to fully fulfill our potential, it is evident that we are not as fragile as some would wish us to be. On the contrary. Certain hardships can harden the resolve of people who are unfairly besieged. And we are no exception. It is not too soon for our neighbors to realize that the last decade's politics of pressure, discrimination and blockades have not achieved their intended goals. Instead, they may have added to our determination to solidify and strengthen relations with those of our neighbors who value our friendship and share with us common interests both bilaterally and in the region.

They have had another effect as well. They have done nothing to soothe the sense of suspicion and resentment. If Turkey is going to live up to its role as regional leader, and is committed to being a fair, effective and positive actor in the stabilization and peace of the South Caucasus, it cannot pursue a policy of explicit, unabashed partiality, a politics of exclusion and one-sidedness, of insulating Armenia, or surrounding it with military and economic alliances that look like they intend to contain and strangle.

It is worth for a moment to remember that Armenia does not have the capacity to damage, contain or strangle Turkey. Indeed, this fear can, realistically, only be one-sided. And provocations by one's neighbor can feed such fears.

When alliances and assistance can leap borders, it is more and more difficult to successfully carry out unilateral, partial policies. Today, both Armenia and Turkey see their future in Europe. This gives us one more reason to cooperate, to seriously implement the reforms that are as important to us as they are to a watchful Europe. TESEV's invitation to change mentalities, to embrace change and to see the world in a way that recognizes the primacy of the individual human being substituting for the mechanical impulses of domineering *realpolitik* and intrusive statism is a welcome corrective. Accepting the full implications of a change in mindsets, which is both cause and effect, is a step in the right direction for all of us. We welcome the challenge and the opportunity of dealing with a historic neighbor whose europeization is in our common interest.

Indeed, TESEV's general focus on the need for active cooperation between the governments and the peoples of the region for the region's future peace and prosperity is very much in line with Armenia's thinking. The riches of the region, both in terms of natural and human resources, as you say, are indeed important assets for the welfare, solidarity, and cooperation of the region's people. However, we call on you to consider that waiting for the problems to be resolved before such cooperation begins means no cooperation at all. Today, Turkey and Armenia have a chance to base their future in this region on peace, on future stability, on economic and social parity, and mutual understanding.

OVERCOMING POLARIZATION AND BENEFITING FROM REGIONALIZATION

At the outset I would like to express our gratitude to President Ahmet Sezer and the Turkish government for organizing this historic reunion, exactly a decade from the day when the decision was made to establish the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Today it is difficult to imagine our region without this mechanism with its huge potential for multilateral cooperation. Indeed, despite differences among some member states on certain issues, the BSEC has already proven its viability.

BSEC was formed because we realized that by maximizing and combining our resources we would be able to compete and benefit from a globalized society. We also recognized that although we have some political and even more economic interests in common, our varied political systems, orientations and interests lead to grave differences and sometimes incompatibilities. Therefore, we wisely chose the path of economic cooperation, believing that our common stake in improving the quality of our citizens' lives would override the divisions among us.

In the years to come, we will have many opportunities to demonstrate that this was an intelligent choice. The politicization that sometimes blinds us to today's opportunities for shared prosperity and a bright future can still be set aside in favor of enlightened self-interest. We can agree to disagree because we know that we can thus tackle together the regional challenges that we cannot tackle alone. We need

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only realize that the risk involved in setting aside differences is worth it, given the benefits to be gained by true cooperation.

The questions that face us as a region are a microcosm of the issues that face the world: How can we create effective partnerships in a diverse region? Which comes first – economic collaboration or political cooperation? What is necessary for the formation of common interests and values? Where does cultural dialogue fit into international relations? How can we close the recurring gap between objectives and programs? What happens when natural resources are unevenly distributed in the same geographic area?

These issues are very compelling in our neighborhood. No one doubts that in the search for answers, we must deepen our cooperation in the BSEC framework and accelerate BSEC's evolution into a fully-fledged international organization.

We have completed BSEC's formative stage. And, in working to better utilize the promise of this organization, we have established the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank. Today, we are looking to establish the BSEC Project Development Fund which will stimulate cooperation on specific regional projects. We are looking to increase effective partnerships and cooperation with the European Union, and Armenia hopes we will further expand cooperation between BSEC and other international and regional organizations, in particular the United Nations system, bolstered by the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Throughout, we are also working to improve the effectiveness of the organization itself.

Since BSEC's establishment, these organizations, and the world are facing even more complex challenges. The events of September 11 demonstrated that in this new world, groups and individuals more and more often interact directly across frontiers, without involving the state. In a region such as ours, where interstate relations are uneven, this can be a useful activity. However, the absence of rigid frontiers also brings with it such dangers as terrorism, narcotics, pollution, disease, weapons, refugees and migrants.

Armenia attaches special importance to cooperation in combating organized crime, in particular terrorism, illegal drug and weapons trafficking and illegal migration. We are pleased to acknowledge that since

the first meeting of the ministers of interior, which took place in Yerevan in 1996, such cooperation is well underway and has already achieved notable results.

This successful track record is evidence that our whole is greater than the sum of our parts. The 11 member states that make up BSEC have varied geographies, histories, governing traditions, resources and prospects for development. What we have in common are the basic elements for mutually beneficial cooperation across the lands that are influenced by the Black Sea and its wealth and potential.

The other thing we have in common is the opportunity that is waiting at our door – to collectively transform this region into an active constituent part of the emerging global landscape rather than remaining spectators to the development of the world that is forming around us.

SEEKING NEW RELATIONSHIPS IN A POST 9/11 WORLD

I am honored to address this assembly again, and this time, as the minister of a member country. We are most encouraged by the trust of the United Nations community in electing Armenia to the Commission on Human Rights. We are determined to pursue the promotion of international cooperation in this field if for no other reason than because Armenia's presence here is evidence of the great benefits of such cooperation. Armenia, as the signatory of over 40 human rights-related international legal instruments, and as a member of the Council of Europe, has repeatedly committed to all necessary measures to implement the norms and provisions that try to bridge the gap between what people preach and what they practice.

Today, it seems that gap is more visible, and ironically, also acknowledged more than ever before. And this is true the world over. Perhaps this is because the goals for which we strive are loftier. Our task now is to see that universal human rights – the social and economic, as well as the political and civil – are not just preached globally but within reach, locally.

In Armenia, we have adopted and implemented numerous legislative measures targeted at our social and political infrastructure. Towards this end, Armenia cooperates with, among others, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, not only to raise public awareness on human rights and related issues, but also to work with its international experts on developing

Delivered in Geneva on March 22, 2002, at the 58th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission

compatible legislation, and an impartial, independent and prepared judiciary.

Armenia is modifying its laws on mass media, political parties and non-governmental organizations and working towards the abolition of the death penalty which in fact has not been invoked since independence. Indeed, this year again, Armenia will co-sponsor the resolution before this body on doing away with capital punishment.

We are also very close to establishing the institution of Ombudsman, and have functional commissions on women's and children's issues, on the rights of the disabled and the poor, as well as working groups under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF.

Further, the Constitution of Armenia, and amendments proposed to it, protect the rights of all citizens, including minorities, regardless of their national, ethnic, religious and linguistic affiliations.

Finally, despite limited financial resources, the Armenian government allocates funds to refugees in Armenia to provide them with shelter and jobs. Nevertheless, that population requires more assistance both from the Government and from international refugee organizations. This, because we believe it is in the best interests of our state and our security to provide the hundreds of thousands of refugees in Armenia with social and economic resources, rather than leave them without shelter and recourse just so they can serve as tragic props for display to the international community.

Thus, in such key areas as political freedoms and an independent press, in minority rights and children's rights, in the rights of the disabled and the rights of the disenfranchised, in the assessment of the Council of Europe and other independent experts and monitors, Armenia is meeting all expectations. We expect that this positive record will be accurately, fairly and publicly reflected in future United Nations reports.

Mr. Chairman, proud as we are of our real and prospective successes in the field of human rights law, we are not so presumptuous as to believe that human rights can be imposed from the top down. That is why we work with local and international non-governmental organizations to teach and preach from the bottom up. Only through a joint

effort, will we be able to measure real advancement on what Secretary General Kofi Annan called the yardstick of human progress: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As important as it is for our membership in the European family, this measure of progress is, above all, for the good of our country and our people. It is self-evident that the stability and security of our state and our neighborhood is, for us, of paramount interest. And although some say that concern for human rights competes with a nation's political, strategic and even economic interests, Mr. Chairman, we disagree. For Armenia, respect for and adherence to human rights will only buttress our interests. And we can only hope that all our neighbors are similarly enlightened in the pursuit of their interests. For, a society or government that mistreats its own people cannot be a reliable or safe partner for others. Human rights are vital tools for promoting individual and collective security. Healthy, democratic institutions, equitable legislation and viable economic systems are also important determinants of stability.

Mr. Chairman, if we say that we are worried about the stability of our region, it is because these basic freedoms which are the hallmarks of modern society and which decrease the likelihood of violent social and political solutions are not universally guaranteed in our neighborhood.

With Turkey, our neighbor to the west, Armenia has no formal relations. Armenia remains hopeful, especially in this post-September 11 world, where erstwhile adversaries have found reasons to put aside ideology and establish partnerships, that perhaps Turkey will put aside pre-conditions in the interest of regional and world peace. Armenia would like to have normal good neighborly relations with Turkey with a hopeful eye to the future, rather than an unforgiving eye to the past. But if the crime of genocide, the ultimate expression of the infringement of people's human rights by a state, was a national tragedy in the last century, its continued denial in this century places international cooperation and peace at risk. We look to Turkey to join us in transcending our past in order to allow our region to truly become again what it was for centuries: a crossroads, a gateway, a Garden of Eden. History and geography are the great givens.

Our future is also linked with that of Azerbaijan. And here, although we're not optimists, we are realists. And it is out of a sense of realism that we call on Azerbaijan to acknowledge that the Armenians of Karabakh are not going to become Azerbaijanis against their will. They were Azerbaijani subjects for the seven Soviet decades, and the experience of those years is still with them. They were the second class citizens in the classless Soviet system: excluded, exploited, neglected.

As a result, the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh utilized all available legal channels to protest their condition, during the Soviet years and in its final days. Hundreds of thousands of people in Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia took to the streets to create democracy in what appeared to be an unbelievably risky move.

But the people of Karabakh knew that the greater risk would have been not taking one. They took the risk in the conviction that the world believed self-determination is not just an abstract principle but a real right. They took the risk and expressed the political will to determine their own political future, consistent with their right to secure their own physical safety and social and economic survival. The very existence of the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh was threatened by an Azerbaijani government unwilling to provide for that population's right to development and stability. When Armenians rose to call for that right, they received a response that included massacre and deportation. A peaceful, lawful orderly call for self-determination turned into a military conflict replete with aerial bombings and missile attacks.

This otherwise unnecessary and wasteful war was imposed, initiated and conducted by those without any legitimate claim to Nagorno Karabakh's territory. The evidence is clear. Azerbaijan's legal claim to Nagorno Karabakh is deficient since Nagorno Karabakh has never been a part of independent Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's moral claim to Nagorno Karabakh is equally weak given its intolerant and even violent response to Nagorno Karabakh's calls for self-determination. Our call today is what it has been for the last decade: with the help of the international community, to search for a just and lasting peace for our region which takes

into account the realities on the ground and the historical context which brought us here.

Mr. Chairman, the consequences of September 11 bring us face to face with more new realities on the ground. The injustice, poverty, hopelessness that do not justify terror but serve to validate it, legitimize it, guard it, must be addressed and eradicated. These deep problems must be replaced by equality, education, social justice, human rights including women's and children's rights, civil liberties and democracy.

This is an opportunity to recognize the value of this Commission, applaud its aims, goals and methodologies and hope that it will be emulated as a legitimate, long-term, committed way to further the cause of human rights and the rule of law. I invite all of you to think for a moment what might have been the history of Europe and the world in the last century if this Commission on Human Rights existed and functioned effectively. Perhaps so much suffering and conflict might have been averted. Today and tomorrow the opportunity exists not to miss our chance. Let us seize it.

THE WORLD HAS CHANGED AFTER SEPTEMBER 11

It has become a commonplace to say that the world, more particularly international relations, have changed since that tragic Tuesday, September 11, 2001, when thousands of innocents paid, with their lives, the price of a handful of zealots' fanatical hatred and of their murderous intent to ensnare the democratic progressive world into a battle of attrition and mayhem with the forces of obscurantism and reactionary intolerance.

First, let me in this respect state unequivocally my government's ongoing engagement in the battle against terrorism. We have made our national commitment known, and taken every step consistent with the international community's, and in particular OSCE's plans of action in combating international terrorism. Our actions and initiatives have been recognized for what they are, and their utility appreciated.

However, while indeed the events of September 11 did have their impact and continue to do so on even the OSCE, its priorities, its operations and its challenges, the evolution of other relations and the realignment of regional forces preceded the preeminence of the fight against terrorism as our new battleground. It would not be an exaggeration to say that through its involvement in the various crises in the Balkans, the OSCE itself was transformed. Hence involvements also transformed its relations with the European Union, and NATO, even as these institutions themselves were undergoing profound changes due to local, regional and global forces.

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In the face of all these, it would have been naive to expect the OSCE to remain unchallenged about its role, about its structures, about the effectiveness of its methods, its tools, its modalities, its internal dynamics, as well as its intra-organizational equilibrium.

The present impasse on the budget, coming so soon after a year of intensive efforts by the Romanian Chairmanship to reform the organization, is evidence that our difficulties are not simply managerial. The OSCE is being buffeted by the whirlwind of forces around it, and the desire of many member states to position themselves vis-a-vis the various components of what have come to be known as European and Euro-Atlantic structures. There are of course pessimists and naysayers that predict the eventual demise of the OSCE, or its atrophy as a residual appendix of this or that more effective or more muscled group. We neither wish, nor wish to predict, the sidelining of the OSCE. For us, it is not easily replaceable, for many reasons.

Let us first take the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. There are those that look at OSCE's last ten years of involvement as a failure. There is no doubt we also wish that through the Minsk process, its derivatives and today's co-chair arrangement, peace were at hand. But it is not, and for that, we cannot continue to blame the messengers. My government appreciates the coordinated efforts of the co-chairmen, who continue to look for creative solutions and we were gratified last year when the co-chairmen and through them the leadership of France, the Russian Federation and the US, moved the process forward in Paris and Key West. By framing the bilateral direct talks of Presidents Haidar Aliyev and Robert Kocharian, the Minsk Group's co-chairmen tried to establish benchmarks, which came to be known as the Paris principles, as a basis, an understanding, on which to build further progress.

In Bucharest, we all saw Azerbaijan's concerted efforts to remove from the statement on Nagorno Karabakh any reference to Paris, to regional cooperation or to confidence building measures. To pursue discussion about cooperation or confidence building assumes a willingness to compromise, to find a solution acceptable to all.

Such a solution must keep in mind that Azerbaijan's legal claim to Nagorno Karabakh is itself deficient. In 1920, the League of Nations

refused to recognize independent Azerbaijan's claim of sovereign control over territory including Nagorno Karabakh, and on that basis rejected its membership application to the League. As for the second and current Azerbaijani Republic, its separation from the Soviet Union coincided with Nagorno Karabakh's own separation from Azerbaijan along constitutionally prescribed steps by the Soviet Constitution. Azerbaijan cannot base its claim on Nagorno Karabakh on Soviet laws and acts, while simultaneously denying the validity of the Soviet Constitution in providing for mechanisms for the independence of Nagorno Karabakh from Azerbaijan – mechanisms which were scrupulously followed by the people of Nagorno Karabakh. Ironically, it was these same mechanisms which Azerbaijan used for its own independence.

It is against this background, Mr. Chairman, that we want to evaluate and appreciate the work and commitment of the co-chairs: their quiet, tenacious, patient activities to keep the process alive, reactivate it, give it another chance, and most importantly, not assume that the set-back is a fatal blow in this pre-electoral campaign year in both countries. We find the ongoing criticism and vituperations at the ten-year-supposed-failure of the OSCE in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict both disingenuous and unfair. In the absence of peace, the OSCE, its presence, its monitoring, the Chairman's Personal Representative, the co-chairs' frequent visits and continuing engagement, as well as the Chairman-in-Office's recent tour of the South Caucasus all contribute to a relative calm. There is no shooting war. There is constant interest. There is even, now and then, hopeful and anticipatory planning. For instance, you have all seen the co-chairmen's press release, detailing their latest proposals to keep the process active. By introducing some new procedural steps such as the appointment of presidents' personal representatives to keep conversations going in between presidential encounters, the co-chairmen have clearly signaled their ongoing engagement. They will convene and chair these new sessions of presidential representatives and in so doing explore additional items for mutual examination or discussion.

My government welcomes and appreciates this continuing OSCE role, and intends to fully support the co-chairs' latest efforts. We are

unable to easily identify alternate mechanisms or substitute organizations, though we also recognize, that in different phases of conflict resolution, especially in the post-conflict rehabilitation phase, the European Union, together with certain countries may play an important crucial role. However, we are not there yet.

When the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, who were in Vienna last week, were recently in the region, they briefed both presidents. They also briefed the leadership of Nagorno Karabakh because there has long been an understanding that the peace process cannot proceed without ultimately the participation of the legitimate authorities of Nagorno Karabakh. Based on OSCE's own norms and principles, nothing can substitute for free and fair voting to confer leaders legitimacy through democratic elections.

The population of Nagorno Karabakh cannot forever live in uncertainty and economic isolation. It has a yearning not only for peace but also for democracy and prosperity. For their legal and constitutional right for self-determination, as well as for their very self-preservation, they have fought, and won.

But the irony is that today, that same population is willing, ready and convinced that only a negotiated settlement that is just and fair will bring them what they fought for: the right to peacefully and securely live on their lands. Armenians are voluntary members of the OSCE because we believe in its principles: our individual security is indeed dependent on our collective security. We want to achieve the stability and progress that security brings, and we know there is no security without cooperation. We know also that this is as true for our neighbor as for ourselves. We hope we will be able to achieve such cooperation and security through this forum, together.

Our independence, this second one, is now ten years old. In these very short years, like many others emerging out of the same old discredited belly, we have been through a lot: the initial collapse of an economy, the collapse of regional trade and exchange networks, armed conflict on our borders, the influx of Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan and the war in and around Nagorno Karabakh. Of course there was and still is the blockading of our borders on the east by Azerbaijan, on the west by Turkey, and the precariousness of our

northern borders with Georgia, where civil strife raged in the early years and where total calm has not yet returned.

In spite of all this, Armenia has made substantial, observable, lasting progress. Our economy is on the rebound. We have had a constitutional, orderly transmission of presidential power, open and fair parliamentary elections, and great strides towards an institutionalized free market. Reforms are under way in all domains, though the job is not yet finished. And improving human rights and the strengthening of a civil society remain at the center of our preoccupations and our government's priorities.

In all of our endeavors through this difficult transition, our membership and participation in various European structures play a crucial role. Whether the Council of Europe, or the OSCE, or various forms of associations and cooperation with the European Union, we are guided, prodded, assisted and judged in our performance and our progress. We appreciate their role. Our perspectives are European and our actions are designed to match our prospects to our perspectives.

Allow me Mr. Chairman, to express here my government's appreciation for the work that the OSCE office in Yerevan has undertaken, and pursues with great success. Let me particularly mention the very constructive leadership of the Head of Mission, Ambassador Roy Reeve, who in just two years has engaged the cooperation and the participation of both the authorities and of civil society. In all areas, from combating corruption, to reform, to environmental policy or civic participation, the Yerevan office has been consistent and persistent. Recently, its efforts with other missions in the South Caucasus have added the dimension of regional cooperation to its agenda, which we find timely and potentially very fruitful. We intend to fully support these initiatives, and are willing to examine every proposed project for cooperation with all our neighbors with utmost seriousness and good will. We also expect the OSCE and our partners to be similarly active in persuading all our neighbors, including Azerbaijan, to be cooperative, and to explore every opportunity for possible joint actions, to build confidence, to overcome hostility and build trust.

We especially encourage cooperation in the field of trans-border water management and look forward to a preparatory seminar in

Baku, provided our neighbor, as host, together with the economic coordinator's office, make sure that a meeting tasked to investigate cooperation does so.

On a more positive note, let us also praise the enormous contribution of which we believe the OSCE is capable, through some of its other institutions, namely the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the High Commissioner for National Minorities. They are uniquely qualified as instruments of democratization and conflict prevention. They are the evidence of this organization's comparative advantage. They must be given all the support and resources necessary for the conduct of their activities. Their reach and presence must touch every corner of the OSCE, without favoritism or discrimination. In order to operate fully, and speak with the moral authority that should be theirs, they must be backed by the moral authority of the organization that empowers them: that is the whole of the OSCE, its Permanent Council, its Chairmanship in Office and its Secretariat. Endowed by the practice of consensus, our organization must continue to realize that this principle is not just a burden, but it constitutes the guarantee of the OSCE's uniqueness and its strength. Sacrificing or compromising that principle for the sake of expediency is a temptation that must be resisted. Instead, we must avow that nothing contributes more to the workings of this organization as do transparency, openness, consultation, balance and a determination to practice what is preached.

All of us here, engaged in a battle against terrorism, new and old threats of national and ethnic frustrations, transnational crime, enduring economic marginalization, and persistent patterns of democratic deficit and human rights abuse, can clearly conclude that the work of the OSCE is not yet done. The vision of Helsinki remains unfulfilled.

My government remains committed to carry on its unwavering participation and support. May I thus conclude by quoting Seneca, that wise old Roman: "It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; rather it is because we do not dare that things are in such a difficult state."

TO WORK TO REMOVE THE ROOTS OF TERROR AS WELL

This Ministerial meeting of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) begins just as the Organization for Security and Cooperation ended its own Ministerial Council meeting in Bucharest a few days ago. Here, as there, we stand together to reaffirm our commitment to our common values and to a collective response to the security challenges which emerged in the face of the terror of September 11.

We acknowledge that those events in New York were an attack on us all and that they fundamentally transformed the security environment in the Euro-Atlantic area. Just as the end of the Cold War mandated changed relations, the impact of such international terror has brought its own mandates. Foremost among these, and most gratifying, is the true end of Cold War thinking. Coupled with that is the forward movement in NATO-Russia relations. This bodes well for our region, especially, where it will mean less polarization and competition. It further means that the principle of complementarity that Armenia adopted several years ago, and which was met with skepticism, has been vindicated. It is indeed possible to conduct equal relations with all countries that have a political or economic interest in the Caucasus. In the absence of such competition and conflict, regional stability in the Caucasus has a real chance to take root. This is important for a world looking to minimize security concerns and to enhance peace and cooperation at all levels.

Delivered in Brussels on December 7, 2001, at the NATO Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Foreign Ministers Meeting

It is also and obviously important for Armenians seeking an end to the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh. The intensified efforts of the co-chairs of the Minsk Group appeared to be producing results in Paris and Key West, during the meetings of the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, backpedaling by Azerbaijan has now put that process on hold. The main impediment to the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is Azerbaijan's fixation on the notion of autonomy or self-rule. Nagorno Karabakh's autonomous status during the Soviet period was exclusively Stalin's creation as part of his divide and rule policy. That status has no historical precedence. In fact, Nagorno Karabakh has never been part of independent Azerbaijan.

Mr. Chairman, the events of September 11 reaffirmed the importance of a political link between NATO and Partner countries, increased reciprocal understanding and trust, underscored the importance of the abolition of dividing lines, and opened new opportunities for cooperation in the resolution of common security problems.

The Southern Caucasus is the border of a common European security space. It is a bridge between Europe and the Middle East, West and East, Christianity and Islam. The Southern Caucasian states are at the forefront of containing the spread of international terrorism. That is why, with the changes in Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act of the United States, we anticipate military assistance which can allow us to deepen our cooperation with EAPC partners. At the same time, our expanded participation in activities organized within the Partnership for Peace program means that in 2003, military exercises will be hosted by Armenia. We would like to thank the NATO leadership for accepting Armenia's offer.

This follows on the heels of an EAPC Seminar, hosted by Armenia in November, on the "Impact of Economic Difficulties on Security in Transition Societies." Other seminars on international terrorism, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, trafficking of small arms and light weapons, humanitarian mine action and emergency planning have been proposed, keeping in mind the importance of those issues for states in this region.

Armenia believes in EAPC as an indivisible part of the European security architecture, which takes into account and complements the

activities of other international institutions. We welcome the EAPC role, especially these days, as a forum for the exchange of experience in Euro-Atlantic security and cooperation. For Armenia, participation in EAPC provides opportunities for the promotion of regional cooperation and the strengthening of mutual trust among states.

The principle of engagement and the expanding framework of activities undertaken by Individual Partnership Programs allow the partner states to fully and effectively implement the purposes of partnership. Armenia's implementation of the 2000-2001 Individual Partnership Program is evidence that Armenia's participation in the activities organized within the Partnership for Peace program and by various EAPC working groups has increased. Among them is the EAPC open-ended ad-hoc Working Group on the Caucasus which has identified defense economics, civil emergency planning, security-related science and environmental cooperation, and information and public relations as areas in which to develop practical regional cooperation. We strongly believe in the idea of security through cooperation and in the role of the EAPC in the improvement of relations in the region specifically through enhanced confidence-building measures.

Mr. Chairman, after the September 11 events when it became obvious that the whole Euro-Atlantic region is facing the threat of a common enemy, a unique opportunity arose in the Euro-Atlantic area, for the strengthening of the Partnership for Peace. It is now up to us to take up this new challenge and opportunity in the spirit of constant engagement and cooperation. Immediately after the September 11 attacks, Armenia stated its commitment to join the international coalition combating international terrorism and its willingness to provide its air corridor and facilities to the anti-terrorist coalition. But Armenia is committed to doing more. Armenia stands ready to do what it can towards the eradication of disagreements, contradictions, polarization, competition, animosities and misunderstandings in order to remove the roots of terror as well. The EAPC is a valuable forum for that noble purpose.

IN THE SHADOW OF SEPTEMBER 11

This annual gathering of the Ministerial Council in Bucharest demonstrates that the OSCE is alive and well. Through its various incarnations, the OSCE has overcome not only radical transformations in the international and particularly European security environment, but it has survived the greatest challenge of them all, skepticism. Over these 25 years, there have been uncertainties about its capacity to adapt, doubts about its flexibility, cynicism about the continuing relevance of its mission. Last year's difficult Ministerial Council, with a meager harvest of consensual documents did not do much to re-instill confidence.

We must admit that the Romanian Chairmanship was given the very difficult task of putting us back on track this year. We wish to express our appreciation for their efforts and for the plan on the Reform of the OSCE adopted here. We hope the measures contained therein will successfully address some of the problems that had gradually hobbled our organization: a lack of equilibrium between the dimensions of our foundational pillars, a gradual marginalization of certain delegations due to the disproportionate weight of new groupings, the problem of credibility which arose from the contradictions between de facto opacity combined with ritual references to transparency, a lack of balance in the geographic distribution of our field operations, implying an unjustifiable tendency to exclusively stigmatize only certain societies.

As a way of tackling this last problem, our mission has presented a comprehensive proposal on New Types of OSCE Missions. One in particular calls for setting up special task forces which are non-place-based, roving, with a time-limit on operations, pursuing a problem or threat no matter where it takes it. Transnational crime, including drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings, and even terrorism, are all perfectly suited candidates for such a working group, no matter where trails lead across the whole OSCE area. We believe it is worth trying this new model, to address the enduring imbalance we refer to, despite the unsettling resistance of participating states unwilling to have field missions on their territory.

The world has changed since last year's meeting. We are neither the first nor the last delegation to observe that this OSCE Ministerial Council is convened in the shadow of September 11. We must repeat that no level of anger or frustration can justify the violence perpetrated against the psyche of all mankind on US soil that day.

The terrorism of September 11 made clear that if the US could be vulnerable, then, we are all vulnerable. The solidarity born of the real threats to our security was and is genuine. Dangers that do not discriminate between rich and poor, big and small, powerful and weak, East and West or in between, made it necessary – and easy – for us to bind together.

The OSCE's Decision on Combating Terrorism and the Bucharest Action Plan is evidence of such solidarity. Nothing less would have done justice to the credibility of our organization. But as we watched the dedicated efforts of those entrusted with the burden of crafting this crucial document uniting us all in the fight against international terrorism, we could not help but notice how hard it is for many of our partners to accept that these new strains of old diseases need new thinking, new attitudes, new tools, new priorities, new paradigms.

Humanity has often suffered by shunning explanations of 'evil' for fear of justifying it, thus losing its battle against it. We should not be afraid to understand. Nor should we, determined to fight international terrorism together, be reluctant to examine with a cold eye, the mysteries and the mechanisms of its virulence.

The threat of terrorism is too real to allow cynical opportunism to take over and ascribe to every political, social or economic adversary the damnation of "terroristic practice". Terrorism is the callous taking of innocent life, indiscriminately and recklessly. Armed insurrection against tyranny is no terrorism – nor is it always separatism. Neither democracy, nor the rule of law, nor the protection of people's right to freedom and freedom from repression is served by insuring the immutability of oppressive regimes in the name of stability or status quo.

A more reasonable, accurate, differentiated and therefore effective response is necessary for the other kinds of conflicts, too. I have in mind those conflicts which arise from a people's exigent need to mount a battle for self-defense against military suppression, against a denial of their peacefully sought right to self-determination.

One such conflict in need of peaceful settlement is the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the resolution of which is one of the OSCE's important mandates through the Minsk process.

Mr. Chairman, no amount of ambiguous diplomatic language can mask the fact that the men, women and children of Nagorno Karabakh have earned the right to live peacefully on their historic lands, free of alien domination and foreign occupation. Nagorno Karabakh's secession from Soviet Azerbaijan was legal, peaceful, and just. During the twilight of a crumbling Soviet Union, a population long oppressed, its rights systematically denied, sought redress. Just as Azerbaijan was no longer willing to accept the Soviet legacy, and withdrew from the Union, Nagorno Karabakh was no longer willing to live under conditions imposed arbitrarily by Stalin decades earlier. The resistance of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to arbitrary and repressive measures brought about further repression and an attempt at military suppression of their legitimate desire and actions for self-defense and self-protection. The present stalemate is the consequence of the war that followed. An uneven battle pitted a state trying to re-impose its rule and its sovereignty over a people who refuse to re-submit to the authority of those they do not trust.

Azerbaijan's claim on Nagorno Karabakh has been legally invalid. Its absolute and blind adherence to the principle of territorial integri-

ty will do it no good, since Nagorno Karabakh has never been a part of independent Azerbaijan. The League of Nations did not accept Azerbaijan's territorial claims then; we do not accept them now. Its claim of sovereignty over the people of Nagorno Karabakh is morally invalid as well. For decades, it denied them basic social and economic rights, and attacked them violently and repeatedly.

Here lie the difficulties of the negotiation process. Here lie the difficulties confronting the co-chairs of the Minsk Group in their relentless – and much appreciated – efforts to push the process forward. Here lies the logic of confidence building measures in the latest phase of stalled negotiations, since once more this year, confidence and trust seem to be the main victims of the seesaw of Azerbaijan's positions and ambivalence about peace and the temptations of war.

Those changing positions, undependable at best, are reflected in the documents produced – and not produced – at this meeting. The final statement (which, by the way, we still cannot be sure will be adopted) is significant, as it stands, not so much for what it includes, but for what is left out. Its limited scope, and its questionable fate, is the result of Azerbaijan's unwillingness to sanction the basic, fundamental premise of mutual compromise. So short is Azerbaijan's memory and so shallow its commitment to peace, that it is even unwilling to accept any reference to the Paris and Key West meetings in this statement.

Mr. Chairman, what are we to understand if Azerbaijan cannot acknowledge the last round of negotiations as a stepping stone to the next round? If our negotiating partner cannot make room for compromise on paper, how are we to expect that it can create it on the ground?

Azerbaijan's revisionism is rampant as it applies labels, invents numbers, creates history, confuses discussion, redefines terms and manufactures charges. It is to address these accusations that the democratically re-elected president of Nagorno Karabakh has issued a blanket invitation to those who wish to assess the veracity of Azerbaijan's unfounded accusations for purposes of propaganda. His letter has been made available to you.

Armenians continue to be ready to engage in serious give-and-take, ready for mutual compromise, because we understand that the region is a place where we live together, and not a place where we can stand alone, unwavering and intransigent in an illusory world. We believe that with the help of the co-chairs, even tentative, incremental, forward movement can be registered, sustained and consolidated.

We must also avoid the subversion of this opportunity by Azerbaijan and others who believe that the battle against terrorism allows them to wear the mantle of aggrieved victims of terrorists, hence entitled to one-sided compensation. Such delusions make realistic compromises hard to achieve. The international community and the OSCE most particularly, must try hard not to encourage this kind of fiction. Most of the conflicts that have confronted the OSCE in the last decade have had their share of old, enduring, national myths in fueling animosity and hostility. It would be a pity, if present, tragic circumstances were to carelessly contribute to the manufacture of new myths and self-styled martyrs.

This year represents the 100th anniversary of Alfred Nobel, remembered for two achievements: the invention of dynamite – an instrument of destruction – and the establishment of the Peace Prize that bears his name. Today, he is remembered equally for both seemingly contradictory accomplishments. If the international community, through its various international organizations, including and especially this one, genuinely and persistently addresses the many challenges of September 11, that date too, will be marked for two similarly opposite yet monumental occasions: not just for the terror it wreaked on all mankind, but also for the wisdom demonstrated since that day by a humanity which chose the tough path of understanding and security over the obvious path of cynicism and violence.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SEPTEMBER 11

Since the September 11 acts of terrorism, each of us, as individuals and as leaders responsible for the future of the planet, has been trying to understand what happened, why and how. The universal condemnation of the arrogance and fascist mentality that conceives and implements such terror could not have been more justified. The immediate determination that the perpetrators must be punished and its bases eliminated was necessary and prudent. The awareness that this is a long and manifold process remains evident.

Scholars and analysts have attempted to explore and explain the Day of Terror, its causes and its ramifications. This is a necessary process that will, if we are patient, begin with more questions than answers. It will, if we listen, unavoidably lead to dialogue. Not just this year but every year. If we are honest, this dialogue will reflect the fact that although we all see quite plainly that there is a change, we don't agree on what this change is and how it affects each of us.

There are those who believe that the world has been taken off the path of economic globalization and democratization. There are some who insist that the nature and course of international relations has irrevocably changed, that the world order, as it existed, has come crashing down. That may be the illusory inescapable initial reaction. It may appear that bilateral and multilateral relations have been fundamentally and involuntarily re-tailored.

Yet, if this perception becomes more than a temporary, natural, reaction, if the terrorists succeed in intimidating us, forcing us to take

actions that are not in our best interests, causing us to abandon principles and agendas, then the terrorists will have succeeded. They will have terrorized their way to setting agendas and determining policies. But, Mr. President, just as New Yorkers have vowed a continued allegiance to their city and their way of life, the international community, too, must remain true to its structures, traditions and agenda.

That is not to say, however, that life has or can return to business as usual. It certainly cannot return to thinking as usual. Our allied approach to the problems and realities that we collectively face requires genuine, radical, rethinking. The deep dissatisfaction, injustice, poverty, hopelessness, that does not justify terror but that serves to validate it, legitimize it, guard it, must be addressed and eradicated, too. They must be replaced by equality, education, social justice, human rights including women's and children's rights, civil liberties and democracy.

Armenia readily joined the global struggle to abolish the terrorism network because the success of this effort is as important for us as for the coalition leaders. However, Armenia asks that in our effort and responsibility to neutralize this enemy, we are careful of our own definitions and labels. Just as it is crucial that there be solidarity in the united battle against fighting the evil of terrorism, a divergence of interpretive opinion or varied agendas should not be construed as lack of solidarity.

Just as the coalition leaders are concerned about the effects of terrorism on their countries, peoples, lifestyles and values, Armenia is concerned about how the advent of such terror, and the extended battle against it, will affect our region and our country. The war on terrorism has added a dimension to our domestic and foreign policy agenda, not tapered it. The economic and political conditions which make this a volatile region have not gone away. Indeed, they have become exacerbated by the new alliances and priorities. Worse, they can be provoked if they are ignored and allowed to lie latent while all attention focuses on the immediate danger. By focusing on the hatred of thousands, we do not want to dismiss the frustration and needs of millions, many of whom stand at the brink of war.

That is why even as Armenia has offered unreserved assistance to the global coalition, signed the United Nations and Council of Europe anti-terrorism conventions, and offered military and strategic assistance, we continue to insist that the fundamental, developmental, short and long-term issues facing us also be dealt with. We are worried about the stability of our region, because the basic freedoms which are the hallmarks of modern society and which decrease the likelihood of violent social and political solutions are not consistently guaranteed in our neighborhood.

Security and peace around the world depend on stability in each region. If we are committed to world peace and security, each of us in our own regions must take on the responsibility to address the outstanding issues in a new light, guided by new thinking. It remains for the leaders to abandon the expediency of *realpolitik* for the efficacy of *justpolitik*. This is nothing that hasn't been said before, but perhaps in this new searching environment, our call will not fall on deaf ears. Our region has the wealth, the traditions, the opportunities, the links that can make it flourish and thrive.

As for Armenia's contribution to peace and stability in the Caucasus, there are two intertwined issues with two of our neighbors. One is the absence of relations with Turkey, to the west. The other is the Nagorno Karabakh conflict which affects our relations with Azerbaijan.

From this podium, for the last ten years, representatives of my government have affirmed that the basic freedoms of thought, belief, conviction, ethics, traditions, values, culture belong equally to the men, women and children of Nagorno Karabakh. This is at the base of the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh. Azerbaijan's insistence on inventing numbers, redefining terms, creating history and obfuscating discussion are part of the problem, and not a search for a solution.

Mr. President, in response to the charges made by my colleague from Azerbaijan with regard to Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, let me say the following: Nagorno Karabakh has never been a part of independent Azerbaijan. Whether we consider history or geography, whether we adopt a long-term political perspective, or whether we

face the reality of the facts on the ground, the men, women and children of Nagorno Karabakh have earned the right to live peacefully on their historic lands. For decades they have been denied this right. Today, a dozen years after the re-eruption of the conflict, the children of Nagorno Karabakh have completed an entire school career free of alien domination and foreign occupation.

Justice for the people of Nagorno Karabakh has been at the core of Armenia's policies and actions, not just because we believe it is right, but also because we believe that to achieve lasting peace, economic cooperation and political development, this conflict will have to be resolved fairly and fully. Azerbaijan's empty calls for a military solution that arises from an adherence to old clichés, rather than new realities, are not acceptable among neighbors serious about peace.

As for our relations with Turkey, perhaps in today's post-September 11 world, when the Cold War has truly and finally ended, where erstwhile adversaries have found reasons to put aside ideology and establish partnerships, perhaps Turkey will put aside pre-conditions in the interests of regional and world peace. Armenia would like to have normal good neighborly relations with Turkey and is hopeful that Turkey will establish diplomatic relations with Armenia, open the borders and engage in constructive cooperation.

But the obvious must be said. The memory of the Armenian Genocide continues to haunt and obstruct Turkey's relations with Armenia. However, we are confident that this issue can be addressed between the two governments, through dialogue. The events of the last two months reminded Armenians that man is indeed capable of immense, indescribable evil and that mass violence is not a thing of the past. Yet, if we, as the victims of genocide, are unwilling to permit our own tragic past to define our actions in the future, we can confidently call on Turkey to do the same, and join us as equal participants in a dialogue between our two peoples.

There is no doubt that the United Nations is the most overarching, most inclusive umbrella for creating the conditions that will make states and peoples prefer peace to war. The United Nations, together with various multilateral and regional organizations where possible, should identify the comparative advantage and specificity

of each institution and each country as potential victim, as potential fighter, as potential instrument in the war for peace.

The United Nations did not need September 11 to acknowledge economic development and poverty eradication as the strategic battlefields in the war against terrorism. Donor countries can contribute to the success of this war, not only by providing military forces but also with greater financial and technical assistance.

Such assistance must be coordinated. The new challenges call for the consolidation of existing mechanisms of international dialogue, cooperation and security. The United Nations can contribute much to this process, especially if it more equitably reflects the political and economic realities of today's world. We believe that the real reform of the Security Council lies in the expansion of both categories: permanent and non-permanent. We support the desire of Germany and Japan to acquire permanent membership in the Security Council. Armenia also attaches great significance to the issue of equitable geographic representation and, hence, supports the increase of representation for under-represented regions, specifically Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. In this regard, Armenia is equally supportive of India's permanent membership in the Security Council. We are convinced that any increase in non-permanent membership should also ensure an enhanced representation of the Group of Eastern European States through the allocation of one additional non-permanent seat.

"Modern life has shaken up static societies: and the salvation lies not in any particular faith but in healthy, democratic institutions, legislation and viable economic systems." V.S. Naipaul made that formulation, and this year, he, together with Secretary General Kofi Annan received the Nobel Prize. The choice of recipients provides much room for thought. They have both been not exclusivists, but inclusive in their ability to mix their deep traditions with the challenges facing our global society. While Naipaul the writer teases and provokes, Annan the diplomat challenges and soothes. They both do so with grace, from positions of strength. They can both afford to be more extreme in their pronouncements. They are not.

THE GLOBAL CRISIS OF SEPTEMBER 11

The global crisis set in motion on September 11 has caused each of us in our capitals around the world to reexamine our policies, our assumptions and our projections. We have realized that the better, fairer world we thought we were creating at the end of the Cold War has not yet come to pass. That 5,000 and more innocent civilians could be killed in one day, in two of the world's greatest cities, in the absence of a declared war, meant that terrorism has reached a new qualitative level.

As a result, international alliances and national policies have also attained a new quality. We are all in this together. The global coalition formed to counter terrorism depends on the civilized world's united condemnation of such blind terror, and its determination to fight it to the end.

Mr. Chairman, this is an opportunity to recognize the value of this organization, applaud its aims, goals and methodologies and hope that it will be emulated as a legitimate, long-term, committed way to further the cause of human rights and the rule of law. Armenia supports the Secretary General's Report on terrorism and the recommendations he has made. We also welcome the communique we are adopting today which highlights some of the actions we need to take, focusing on legal cooperation, safeguarding fundamental values, and investing in democracy. Indeed, it is our strong conviction that more democratic a state is, the more peaceful it is.

And this is why the Council of Europe is indispensable for its members, particularly for the new ones.

Mr. President, a year after receiving membership in the Council of Europe, Armenia is already enjoying the benefits of this relationship. We welcome the opening of a Council of Europe information center in Yerevan. The necessary judicial and legislative reforms have begun to bring Armenia's institutions in line with European norms. In some areas, such as the removal of the death penalty provision, we will proceed according to our commitments. In other areas, such as transferring the penitentiary system from the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry to the Ministry of Justice, changes are already implemented. In some other important areas, such as political and press freedoms, Armenia has, in the assessment of the Council of Europe monitors, met all expectations. Our record is clean, and we hope that future reports will publicly and fairly reflect these accomplishments and judge Armenia and its path to full completion of membership requirements on its own merits, and on the public record.

At this meeting, Armenia will join in signing the six conventions on terrorism. And we do so with the conviction that the civilized world must condemn and fight against the kind of horror that threatens life and security, and that in no way helps promote any cause or any issue. On the contrary, we reject the efforts of some who use the current climate to pursue narrow national political interests, and fuel existing hostilities. We specifically regret the manipulative use of the word terrorism to distort and misrepresent the decades-long struggle of people for self-determination.

While the events of September 11 and what followed have created new complications for our region, it is our belief that at the same time it opens new opportunities for regional cooperation. A lot will depend on our future actions and political will.

Each year we come to reaffirm the commitment to defend and reinforce the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and to find solutions to the major problems facing society: racism, intolerance, discrimination, corruption and organized crime. Following September 11, we affirm these Council of Europe principles more than ever.

DIALOGUE: MORE ESSENTIAL AND MORE DISTANT THAN EVER

As we convene this conference only a month after the horrific events of September 11, it is even more obvious that UNESCO plays a critical role as a proponent of the basic intellectual and moral values which characterize modern societies. UNESCO has become even more consequential as an organization that can develop and promote the tools which are needed for this "Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations." Recent events have demonstrated that this dialogue is more essential than ever, but, unfortunately, more distant than ever as well. We cannot ignore, minimize or forget these recent acts of terror, but we can reaffirm our commitment to the age-old truth that education, art and science are direct paths to better individual lives and the tools needed for a better collective existence through dialogue and mutual understanding.

That the Task Force on UNESCO in the Twenty First Century has identified "the humanization of globalization" as one of its goals is welcomed by Armenia. The benefits of globalization must be accompanied by the social safeguards that will prevent the deterioration of the social fabric that makes for stable societies. The danger to world order comes not from the ruling elites who are increasingly integrated into the global market order, but from the excluded. Globalization should welcome diversity, should bolster the enhancement of human rights, and should support active capacity building towards the creation of a global knowledge society.

Delivered in Paris on October 16, 2001, at the 31st Session of the UNESCO General Conference

None of these objectives can be easily achieved. Or achieved alone. Governments of member states should assist the organization in this difficult task, especially by more actively involving National Commissions, a unique structure, which may be considered one of the organization's best achievements.

The implications – and possibilities – of globalization affect our organization as well. UNESCO's mission to execute its mandate globally can and should be implemented through active collaboration with other international, especially European, organizations. Europe not only cannot but, in fact, does not distance itself from the rest of the world. European states and structures are actively involved in establishing democratic societies and common European values in all parts of the globe. UNESCO's decades-long experience in helping build the societal and educational structures which provide the underpinnings for intellectual and spiritual growth in democratic societies can be utilized optimally. It is time to consider the possible means and modalities of collaboration between UNESCO and the Council of Europe, the European Union, OSCE, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and NATO in areas of common interest.

I should express my satisfaction with regards to Document 31 C/5 Program and Budget for 2002/2003 to be adopted by the General Conference. This document contains a more pragmatic and concrete approach in achieving the goals emphasized in the fields of education, culture, science, human rights.

Armenia fully supports the organization's policy in the field of education. The building of a knowledge society through quality learning and teaching coincides with my country's strategy for education in the coming years. In restructuring education systems to meet contemporary international standards, the crucial point is to provide society with access to information and communication technologies. This access is still limited in our country, although Armenia has a tradition of active initiation and involvement in high technology research and software development. In Armenia, we are working both on developing public awareness of the potential of this sector, while at the same time resolving such issues as regulation, capacity creation and training.

For us, the follow-up to the Dakar Framework for Action for Education for All lies in promoting the use of information and communication technologies in education. In particular, such technologies can play a significant role in the field of special education, as well as in retraining certain groups of the unemployed. To this end, Armenia, together with the UNESCO Institute on Information Technologies in Education, has initiated an international Expert Meeting on "Utilization of Information and Communication Technologies in Education of People with Limited Physical Abilities." This Experts Meeting will be held in November in the newly established center of the same name. Through the work of this center, we intend to provide ways to effectively integrate persons with physical disabilities in Armenian society. The percentage of this segment of our population is high, due to the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh, and even more, the effects of the 1988 earthquake. Education is the best way to turn what was a tragedy for the country, into new energy for a new era.

UNESCO has come to be known, above all, for its achievements in the field of culture, and in particular in the protection and preservation of the World's Cultural Heritage. Armenia attaches great importance to the organization's efforts towards the elaboration of already existing legal instruments and its initiatives toward developing new instruments aimed at the protection of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

UNESCO's insistence that states recognize cultural monuments as representing our common global heritage, and not just the legacy of a specific culture, is an important prerequisite toward this end, and is especially important for Armenians. Throughout the three millennia of our history, Armenia has witnessed its cultural monuments damaged or destroyed. Throughout the Soviet period and the ensuing years, there was a clear policy to destroy Armenian monuments under Azerbaijan's control. Today, wherever these monuments exist under Armenian jurisdiction, their cataloging, care and renovation is considered a priority.

Also important is the Armenian commitment to respect and protect the places of worship of other faiths. In Yerevan, the capital of

Armenia, an 18th century mosque has been completely restored, through the cooperative efforts of the Armenian and Iranian governments and specialists. Reciprocal efforts are under way in Iran to preserve and restore Armenian monasteries.

We would like to see similar cooperation with Turkey, where there are thousands of Armenian historic monuments, many of them damaged or near-destruction and elimination. Armenia is committed to turn the maintenance and appropriate renovation of those historical sites into opportunities for collaboration with Turkey so that the peoples of the world can benefit from these universal treasures. The medieval Armenian capital city of Ani, the Armenian Church on the island of Akhtamar in Lake Van are just two places which continue to be a reminder of our deep roots in that area and are worthy of special attention. Just as they served the spiritual needs of our predecessors centuries ago, we remain hopeful that they might serve as the spiritual links for all our descendants for centuries to come.

Born of this concern, the Interregional Conference on "Implementation and Coordination of UNESCO Conventions on Protection of Cultural Heritage and Other International Instruments" took place at our initiative, in Armenia, with the participation of representatives from Georgia, Greece, Italy, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation, Turkey as well as representatives from UNESCO, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law. The resulting Draft Resolution is to be presented for adoption by the General Conference. The idea is to establish cooperation among the countries of the region and our neighbors – the Russian Federation, Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Although some countries are still hesitant about establishing groups of collaborating experts, we remain convinced that there is no better way of overcoming political tensions, than to start working together to preserve our common heritage.

This effort to preserve and promote the culture of the past and the present has its economic rewards as well. As a country which has been called an open air museum, we understand and heartily endorse

UNESCO's effort to eradicate poverty through promoting culture. To that end, the Republic of Armenia is organizing a Donors' Conference entitled "Regeneration through Culture." The Conference will coincide with the visit to Armenia by the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Koichiro Matsuura. I would like to encourage my colleagues to participate in this conference which can provide a huge impetus to local and regional development by fostering partnerships between central and local governments, as well as between government and the private sector in rural areas.

Mr. President, Armenia attaches great importance to all of UNESCO's initiatives in the region. We welcome them for what they try to do directly, as well as their overall intent to foster regional cooperation and development. That is, for obvious reasons, our priority as well. We remain committed to work with this organization in finding ways for our common human values and cultural, scientific interests to take precedence over our differences and divisions.

RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE

My government would like to join in the warm congratulations addressed to the South African authorities on the occasion of convening this conference. The choice of South Africa – where right triumphed over wrong – is evidence that, in this new century, the world is ready to acknowledge its responsibility and announce its solemn commitment to battle racism and genocide, as well as the xenophobia and discrimination that give rise to them.

If we do our jobs effectively, this conference will be recognized as one of the most important United Nations gatherings. For that to happen, we must stand firm in our conviction that humanity, as one family, is committed to prevention, education and protection aimed at the eradication, once and for all, of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We all share this heavy responsibility, if for no other reason than that, throughout history, each of our nations has been impacted by such fanaticism, either as victim or as aggressor. And more significantly, in a world where such horrors are eradicated, we all stand to thrive.

International human rights law has long prohibited state-sanctioned violence against individuals and has imposed obligations upon states to protect individuals from violence. The absence of similar international restraints on state-sanctioned violence against groups,

in effect, constitutes an intervention on the side of the aggressor. Condemning such behavior would not only permit the victims of aggression to defend themselves, but could help pre-empt such violence by letting the perpetrator know that assaults will be met with resistance. Effective international resistance could help deter the spread of extreme discrimination which can unchecked, result in irreversible horrors. We see such horrors even today in different parts of the world, including our own Caucasus, and I am sure we are not alone in our disappointment that the promise of diversity and global integration has not been fully realized and that innocent civilians continue to be persecuted for no other reason than their ethnicity, religion or national origin. The ultimate culmination of such persecution, in the case of the Armenians, was genocide.

Armenia and Armenians have become aware of the profound linkage that exists between this ultimate evil expression of racism, which is genocide, and the right of a people to self-determination. These two seemingly different phenomena are fundamentally connected.

It is not surprising that the determination of a ruling political or national group to dominate – by oppression if necessary – another group, will eventually lead the oppressed to revolt, to seek freedom, to want emancipation; in short, to be the master of their own destiny. It is this instinct of a people to secure its own physical, cultural and collective survival that is often used as the justification for the ultimate form of repression: active, concerted, planned actions for the physical annihilation of that people – genocide. If you dare to want to be free, to be independent, to determine your own fate, to be the master within your own ancestral home, you deserve to die.

Armenians were subjected to genocide perpetrated by Ottoman Turkey in 1915, because they had wanted to be free from harassment, arbitrary rule, denial of rights and physical threats. They had, in fact, dared to declare themselves deserving of protection, security and freedom. They were, therefore, punished, persecuted and driven to annihilation as disloyal troublemakers. Still today, the Armenian Genocide is being dismissed as nothing more than the justifiable, understandable, larger scale massacre of rebels and renegades.

Delivered in Durban, South Africa on September 1, 2001, at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Read by Mr. Vahram Kazhoyan, Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Organizations Department)

Armenians also understand that genocide as a political tool continued to be utilized at the end of the last violent century, as well, exactly because of such denial and dismissal. And if the international community was not responsible for the crime itself, the international community is responsible for not condemning the crime.

That is why I believe this is an excellent opportunity to salute those individuals, countries and parliaments who have had enough courage to acknowledge and condemn the first modern experience of genocide. I salute not simply the ethical and moral bravery of their act, but also their understanding of their obligation to acknowledge past wrongs in order to overcome them and face the future.

In particular, I would like to name France and Uruguay, the Russian Duma, the Greek, Cypriot, Argentine, Belgian and other parliaments. I would also call upon others to recognize and acknowledge the crimes of the past, including the Genocide of Armenians in 1915. The historical record shows that the absence of timely recognition and denunciation of this injustice resulted in untold suffering for millions of others during and after World War II.

Today, in our world, we continue to combat the consequences of past wrongdoings. Armenians living in Nagorno Karabakh have been fighting for over a decade to be free of harassment, arbitrary rule, and denial of rights and physical threats that had begun in the days of the Soviet empire. A vivid example of the consequences of bigotry and xenophobia is the history of subjugation of Nagorno Karabakh to the authorities in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 1921.

Exactly one year earlier, in 1920, the League of Nations refused to recognize Azerbaijan because of its claims over the Armenian-populated territories in Eastern Transcaucasia, namely Nagorno Karabakh. The Secretary General of the League of Nations in the Memorandum on the Application for the Admission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the League of Nations stated "it may be interesting to note that this territory [i.e. Azerbaijan], occupying a superficial area of 40,000 square miles, appears to have never formerly constituted a State."

And it was to that "territory that had never formerly constituted a State" that the Armenian-populated, Armenian-ruled and historically

Armenian Nagorno Karabakh was granted by the Soviet rulers. Armenians were subjected to massacres, deportations, segregation, discrimination and other expressions of intolerance in the ensuing decades.

The only way to escape Azerbaijani discrimination and oppression was to achieve self-determination for Nagorno Karabakh. Armenians sought this continuously during the seven decades of Soviet rule, and continued to expect this basic human right with the advent of perestroika, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Azerbaijan's rejection of the human rights of Armenians and others living on the territory of Karabakh, continued, however.

Massacres and pogroms were organized against the Armenian population in the Azerbaijani towns and cities of Sumgait, Kirovabad, Baku, as recently as a decade ago. In turn, this resulted in the exodus of the Armenian population from Azerbaijan. Armenia became home for some 500,000 refugees, between the years 1988-1994. Since then, the Armenian government has done everything to ease the burden of the refugees. Refugees in Armenia have been granted all the rights and privileges of Armenian citizens. In Azerbaijan, on the other hand, the Azerbaijani government continues to use refugees as pawns, leaving them in refugee camps.

Armenia is a democratic state whose citizens – Armenians, Yezidis, Kurds, Jews, Russians, Greeks and Assyrian-Syriacs – enjoy equal rights and protections under the law. In our own neighborhood, we stand ready to practice tolerance and enjoy its fruits. It is Azerbaijan that has shown no ability to practice democracy or multiculturalism vis a vis its own citizens. Armenia regrets such ethnically discriminatory practices and urges that they be addressed, but does not call such discrimination racism, because we would not trivialize a word about which our hosts in Durban know so much and from which they have suffered so profoundly.

Secretary General Kofi Annan recently reminded us that the United Nations itself was created in the belief that dialogue can triumph over discord, that diversity is a universal virtue, and that the peoples of the world are far more united by their common fate than they are divided by their separate identities.

Today we have reached a critical point in our attempts to free the world from all forms of racism and racial discrimination, and to ensure that the fate which binds us is hopeful and promising. This conference has the unique capacity to lay down a solid framework for new partnerships between states and civil societies stressing the growing importance of combating traditional forms of racism as well as its contemporary manifestations. The regional meetings, seminars and work done at national levels have contributed considerably in convening this conference where the voice and appeal of all victims is widely echoed and can be heard by everyone.

There is a lot to be accomplished by governments in order to reflect clearly their political will to combat racism in the Final Declaration. A dialogue of tolerance and of mutual understanding is also required to guide us towards the implementation of the Program of Action.

I would like to assure you that my government is fully committed to the realization of the aims of this Conference. We do this for moral and practical reasons. We have suffered extreme intolerance and fervently desire that such a fate does not befall another nation. We have also been the victims of pseudo-evenhandedness and understand that this only strengthens the hand of the oppressor. At the same time, the world has become too small to solve the social and economic challenges facing us all at each other's expense. As the combined powers of technology and media diminish fallacies and fears due to race, ethnicity, color, descent, national origin, religion, language, culture, class, and other status, rather than trying to eliminate such variety and diversity, we see a universal opportunity to benefit from them and build a healthier and brighter society for generations to come.

COMPLEMENTARITY AT WORK

I would like to provide some information about two processes or events which, I think, should interest the Council, and which fit the overall topic of cooperative security. One is about the Nagorno Karabakh process, the other one is the recent summit meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization with Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. All six countries are members of the EAPC and the topics that we discussed there certainly fit the geographic boundaries of the Trans-Atlantic space.

But let me do the second first. That summit took place in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, and two significant agreements were signed: one on creation of a rapid deployment force for Central Asia, which will be ready to be deployed upon request of the country that is concerned and for the purpose of fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and extremism. That mechanism was pretty much set in place, and the forces have been created for future deployment, if need be. The second was the decision to make the chairmanship of the Council of the Collective Security Agreement on the basis of rotation, and Armenia did assume the chairmanship of the Council for the next six months. And as a member of the EAPC, we will be happy to continue to provide information and more transparency about the activities of the Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

The other issue is the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Recently, there were heightened expectations about a speedy resolution of the conflict. Those expectations were not unfounded – they were based on

the very positive assessment of the three co-chair countries, based on the most recent meetings which had taken place between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Paris and, later in Key West, Florida. US Secretary of State Colin Powell was present at the opening ceremony.

I am surprised that my colleague from Azerbaijan did not mention anything about that process, as if those meetings had never taken place. We thought that a lot of progress was made in the two rounds of Paris talks and that progress later continued at Key West. But some new problems were created during the most recent visit of the co-chairs to the region. Some new complications had emerged during their meetings in Baku and Yerevan which, we think, were somehow in contradiction to the general framework that had been set between and by the presidents during the two Paris talks and the Key West meeting. Armenia remains committed to that framework, to the peace process, and we will continue to adhere to the progress that had been made and to what the presidents had agreed to as a basis for the resolution of the conflict.

The most recent visit of the co-chairs led to the conclusion that the next meeting between the presidents should be postponed for a while. But the co-chairs will continue, I believe, to work with the parties to resolve the differences and try to reconstruct the framework that was established during the previous meetings. And we very much hope that this process will continue and we will be able to provide a peaceful resolution to this long-lasting conflict.

A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY OF DEMOCRATIC NATIONS

First, let me say that we're very happy and honored to be present here today. This is a very important moment for us. This is our first meeting as a full member of the Council of Europe. And we're very happy to be a member of the family of democratic nations. Since Day One of our application to the Council of Europe, we have become the beneficiary of that process because there were certain requirements that we have had to meet in order to become a member. That process took several years, but during that period Armenia truly made a lot of advances. Now we are a full member.

Yet, we understand, that despite our membership in the Council, we're still not a fully democratic state, we have a long way to go, and so we consider this a process from which Armenia will continue to benefit. There is a whole list of obligations and responsibilities that we have assumed with full membership. And I would like to report to the Council that Armenia takes very seriously not only the obligations, but also the timeframe for implementing those responsibilities. I would like to report that under the president's immediate supervision, a committee has been created, so that we can follow the process. There is a clear timeframe as to when each obligation will be met.

This morning, I was happy to sign six new European conventions with the Secretary General. That process of our accession to European conventions will also continue, even as we proceed domestically on the path of both economic and political reforms. The

Delivered in Strasbourg on May 11, 2001, at the 108th Session of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers

Council of Europe recently sent to Armenia a committee to investigate the situation of political prisoners in Armenia. We were happy to hear from the group that there was only one name on their list. They met with government officials, with the Prosecutor's office, with the Minister of Justice. They also met with that particular individual, and with his lawyers. And I can say that the government is quite convinced that the charges are not politically motivated, and we hope that Armenia's slate of political prisoners will be clean as the committee makes its final judgment and conclusions. We're very much looking forward to receiving the Council of Europe Monitoring Group for Armenia and Azerbaijan, headed by Ambassador Pietro Ago of Italy. We're willing to work very constructively, together, to make Armenia's human rights and democracy record as clean as possible.

Our membership has not only domestic implications, it also has regional implications. We became a member with our neighbor Azerbaijan. Georgia had already joined. We were hopeful and we still are hopeful that our membership together in one forum, here in this Council, will contribute to regional cooperation on a great many matters, including addressing and resolving the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh. But I regret the fact that on this very day, during our first meeting and presence here in the Council, my colleague from Azerbaijan used this forum for narrow domestic political purposes.

There is a total confusion of cause and consequence. We heard today from my colleague about the consequences of a conflict. The consequences, as he presented them, were misrepresented and exaggerated. Yes, there are problems, but not on the scale that we've heard. Still, that's not the main issue. The problem is that those consequences have deep causes and Azerbaijan continues to refuse to address them. Once they begin to address the cause of the conflict, that's when we believe we'll be closer to a resolution.

However, having said that, I would also want to report some positive developments, despite the pessimism that we heard from my colleague – which really surprises me, and not just me. If you followed the three co-chairs' briefing at the conclusion of our meeting in Key West, Florida, the optimistic note with which they concluded that meeting was very promising. The optimism was based on the fact that

now they have enough at their disposal to be able to develop a formal proposal, a document that will be presented to the conflicting parties. And that truly gives us a lot of hope that indeed, during our next meeting in Geneva, which is set for June 15, the co-chairs will be able to produce a document which will become a basis for our future negotiations.

Let me make a very sweeping general statement here, and I know it is a serious statement which I say with all responsibility, because it is something which we truly believe: if the two presidents do not backtrack or retreat from the commitments that they made during the two Paris meetings and at Key West, and if they do not retreat from the agreements that they have reached, we believe that we may have something to cheer about in the coming months. But I must repeat: this is if the two presidents do not retreat fundamentally from their original positions and the commitments that were made. I simply hope that during the Council's next meeting, we will be able to speak very favorably and positively about this process.

TRANSFORMING KARABAKH FROM A CHASM TO A BRIDGE

The coincidence of multiple anniversaries is cause for more than simple celebration. It is true; there is much to celebrate since the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris. The first was crafted during the Cold War, to defuse the antagonism and bring the sides around common values when in fact the perception was that values were what divided the protagonists. We are all the beneficiaries today of that paradox; the veneer has become the substance, and the OSCE is the expression of that transformation.

The Charter of Paris continued the vision that to ensure security and cooperation among sovereign states, there must be respect for such basic principles as human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

Furthermore, the Charter for European Security adopted by the heads of states in 1999 makes it very clear that denial of such rights can result in threats to security. To shield such political or administrative abuses by labeling them as strictly in the realm of "internal affairs" rings hollow. Security can be endangered as much from what goes on inside states as from what goes on between states. But compliance with foundational norms and principles is no easy task for anybody. And therein lies the greatest challenge facing the OSCE: To find a reasonable balance between providing remedial assistance to countries where these norms and principles have had a deficient history of implementation while at the same time, not losing sight of the more

essential, core problems which need addressing as we try to build a coherent, compatible, cooperative, secure Europe.

There is no doubt that the Nagorno Karabakh conflict is a serious threat to stability in our region and therefore in all of Europe. Despite the commitment of the parties to reach a compromise solution, not much success has been registered in that direction. Whatever the final form of that compromise, we believe it will be found by striking the right balance between the principles of self-determination and territorial integrity. At no time in history has Nagorno Karabakh been a part of Azerbaijan, with the exception of the Soviet period. Despite this reality, and the realities of the past ten years – orderly and legal secession, full control of its territory, a government duly elected by its population – despite all these, Armenians in Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh are willing to sit around a negotiating table and agree on a status which is also acceptable to Azerbaijan so that we can reach and maintain the goal of long-term peace and stability in Karabakh and in the region.

Unfortunately, on this aspect, we have not been met halfway by Azerbaijan. We often hear Azerbaijan's many accusations about today's situation without reference to Azerbaijan's own attempts, just a few years ago, to resort to force, ethnic cleansing and a military response to the root political causes of the conflict. We do not believe such language and thinking is helpful to the process. We believe there is no alternative but to put the rhetoric behind us and pursue a resolution by finding the right balance. And this is where the OSCE can be very instrumental.

We should not wait for renewed war, new bloodshed and further fragmentation before finding imaginative and effective strategies to help our region emerge from its stalemate. Unsettled conflicts are also festering conflicts. Crisis management and conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation must be contemplated simultaneously. Linear approaches will not do, and it is time for the OSCE to look at a new set of tools and initiatives, unorthodox though they may sound, to unblock so-called frozen situations.

It is the attempt to artificially prevent adaptive change that leads to pressures that erupt in violence and explosion. In Nagorno Karabakh

as elsewhere we have been more concerned with reconstruction than developing the design rules for new structures. Perhaps this lack of initiative to explore new rules comes from a pervasive sense of fear, an apprehension that tinkering with the existing rules may endanger the whole edifice, challenge the assumptions of our existing architecture.

On this issue, we are not as convinced that the edifice, whose foundations are almost 350 years old, cannot use some retrofitting, some judicious, well-reasoned, selective tinkering. After all, in the last 50 years, Europe has been a great laboratory, a bold experiment in exploring and institutionalizing new concepts of association, integration, complementarity and subsidiarity that test the limits of sovereignty and national identity, community interests, borders and territoriality and collective decision making. The OSCE must take on the challenge of managing change, not preventing it, if it is to maintain its relevance in the face of old and new challenges. Competing and conflicting principles in the Helsinki Final Act, such as self-determination and territorial integrity, must not be seen on a linear continuum, as either/or, as the two variables of a zero-sum game. New, dynamic ingredients must be sought, weighed, introduced to enrich the range of options, to allow for adaptation, to defuse pressure and to reinforce solutions.

We are confident that the OSCE is distinctly qualified to undertake this exploration as another milestone in its pursuit of political tools, for a more resilient architecture of security and cooperation in Europe. There are some who will undoubtedly argue that unconventional solutions are best explored on an ad hoc and case-by-case basis. True. Eventually, every solution must be responsive to the specificity of each conflict. Nevertheless, general rules, flexible rules, adaptive rules, enabling, empowering rules rather than strictly restrictive principles that proscribe deviance, make it easier to customize settlements that threaten the dogma of even uninvolved member states.

For us, peace in Nagorno Karabakh is of course the promise of transforming the situation of hostility and confrontation with our neighbor into one of cooperation and mutually reinforced security. We would like to think of the day when Nagorno Karabakh is transformed from being a chasm separating our countries to being a bridge built for the benefit of all the populations concerned.

EUROPE: THE MODEL HAS PROVEN ITSELF

First let me say I'm truly honored and privileged to be here today, and take this invitation for Armenia's membership back home. It is indeed a historic moment for all Armenians.

I left Yerevan at 5.30 this morning, and I arrived here just 30 minutes ago. I will leave in a few hours via Zurich, back to Armenia. As I was kissing my two boys good bye early this morning, while they were still in bed, my wife wondered whether it was worth traveling all the way to Strasbourg for only three hours. In my two and a half years as foreign minister, I have crisscrossed continents for a great many reasons; some worthy, some not so worthy. But there is no doubt that this one trip is most worthy. And it was worth taking for the sake of our children.

Our generation is entrusted with the very difficult, challenging and responsible task of calling the shots at a very critical and precarious time in our nation's and state's history. We are not only at a geographic crossroads but also at the crossroads of political and economic developments. Every decision counts. Our decisions and actions today will determine our children's future. We cannot afford to make mistakes, we have to make the right choice. For Armenia, the choice was very clear from the first day of our independence: democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights.

Delivered in Strasbourg on November 9, 2000, at the 107th Session of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, during which Armenia received the official invitation to become a member of the Council of Europe

Indeed, a lot has been done since that day. And in the past few years we have attempted to maintain a steady course in preparation for our Council of Europe membership. In doing so, we have continued to look at the way in which those before us have attempted to embody the values of the Council of Europe by making those values a significant part of the conduct of their own affairs. The steps required in making critical transitions from non-democratic political systems to more open societies cannot be reduced to a mechanical recipe. Sometimes they require legal and constitutional formulas and devices. At times what is necessary is nothing less than the recasting of the entire political culture.

Under normal circumstances, these transformations, these adaptations can and should take a very long time. Some might say it took Europe more than three centuries to evolve to its present institutional incarnation. It is our desire however to make sure that we do not have to repeat the same waiting period. We must accelerate the process. The model has proved itself and delays can be counterproductive. Europe is no longer an experiment and we ourselves want to move from experimentation to institutionalization.

This invitation for Armenia to join the Council of Europe justifies our efforts on the path of democracy. What follows our membership will be our firm commitment not to deviate from this path. As we have done before in writing, today I will reiterate in person on behalf of the government and the people of Armenia, our commitment to democracy, rule of law and the principles and provisions of this organization.

Our democracy, we understand, is still in its infancy. We have a long way to travel. And today we have a clear blueprint which will guide us, lead us on this path. We have problems, shortcomings and flaws not only domestically, but also in our region. We have differences with our neighbor Azerbaijan over Nagorno Karabakh. We have differences with our other neighbor Turkey on how we interpret history and our common past. We will not bring these problems to the Council of Europe; we want to use the Council of Europe and its values to address these issues. We believe that the more democratic, open and transparent our societies become, it will be that much easier for us to address those most contentious political problems. We believe we can, together with our neighbors, transcend these problems.

HUMAN DIGNITY AND FREEDOM ARE NOT NEW IDEAS

Truly, this is a moment for rejoicing, congratulations, and even self-congratulations. Fifty years of Council of Europe activities in Europe have changed it a great deal. Today, Europe is a much better place, with greater respect for human dignity, human rights and there is widespread democracy. Of course, democracy, human rights, human dignity and freedom are not new ideas; they are certainly older than 50 years. But what is new is that we can pursue and advocate these values through appropriate institutional arrangements. Indeed, what the Council of Europe has done is to put in place the mechanisms, the institutions through which we can pursue these values.

As we celebrate this moment, during these two days we indeed have been self-critical of both the organization and our own individual countries. We have taken a stake in the past, we have talked about our mistakes and shortcomings and we have also looked to the road ahead, the challenges and opportunities. But let me add one more element that is cause for rejoicing for all of us. And that is the example of the countries that only recently gained their independence, countries that were under a totally different regime, with no respect for human rights, with customs deeply embedded in society. Now, we are fighting to shed some of that legacy. Through the Council of Europe we have been really successful in taking the first very important steps. And that is something of which the Council of Europe and all the member states should be proud.

Delivered in Rome on November 4, 2000, at the 50th Anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights

Indeed, in these past nine years Armenia and the rest of the former Soviet republics and eastern bloc countries, have been blessed by the assistance, by the vision and contribution that the Council of Europe has made in changing our societies, in putting in place the mechanisms, helping us to build institutions. I believe we have been very successful. Today, Armenia is a totally different place than it was ten years ago. And truly, we have been the beneficiaries of that process. Becoming a member of the Council of Europe is not an end in itself; it is the process that has been truly beneficial. And as we look forward to our membership in the coming weeks, we are eager also to sign the Convention on Human Rights, so that we make the processes that we have begun in the past ten years irreversible. So regardless who comes to power next, they will be obliged and mandated by these provisions and values that will have been embedded in our societies and we will embrace them as values that we would like to see our societies build upon.

Europe, as I said, is a different place today, but certainly, it is far from being perfect in terms of human rights and democracy. As Lord Russel-Johnston, the president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, elegantly articulated in his statement, besides most obvious violations of human rights on this continent that we see everyday on our TV screens, there are a great many hidden violations, there are thousands of appeals and applications from individuals and institutions, whose rights are being violated every day. Indeed, the system is not perfect yet, but we hope and believe that as we enter a new phase in these processes, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Council of Europe, we can all together make Europe a better place in which to live.

ENSURING STABILITY

It is always a pleasure to be here and to exchange views with you. As the president said, I am not a stranger here. I have been here several times, and if the number of my appearances here had been directly proportional to our chances to become a member of Council of Europe, I would have been sitting on the other side now. But we are still working with you, so that by the end of the year, Armenia will become a full member of the Council of Europe.

I was here only a few months ago, and I addressed several issues that concern Armenia. Primary among those were our domestic stability, economic reforms, democratic processes and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Three months have passed, but not much has changed in our country: our stability is being maintained and it's becoming stronger with each passing day. Recently, there were some differences of opinion in our National Assembly with regard to its president; that was the result of disagreement between the two parties in the majority coalition. That majority was weakened after the assassination of its leaders and now there are many disagreements on major policy issues. As a result, one of the coalition parties has demanded the resignation of the president of Parliament. We view this as a normal process; there is nothing unusual here. At this moment, there are still some uncertainties, discussions and debates as to whether to accept the president's resignation or keep him in his post. That issue was referred to the Constitutional Court, and we hope that the decision will come soon.

Besides that, our domestic situation is quite stable. We do not foresee any major problems in the coming months and years. As our membership in the Council of Europe becomes a reality, our democratic institutions will be further strengthened, and all these processes certainly will become irreversible.

Another matter which is directly related to the Parliament is what transpired after the assassinations last October. Many of you had expressed a great deal of interest in the legal proceedings which followed. I recall at the time, I said that within two months, the military prosecutor would present the case to the court. Now, I can inform you that the judicial process has begun and we hope that the actual trial will begin soon. We also hope that we will have a judgment in this case, so that we can put it behind us. This issue is of interest to you, but you can imagine it is of even greater interest to us, the people and government of Armenia, and of course, to the victims' families who are very carefully following this case. They, too, are very eager to hear the final judgment on what happened on October 27.

On the economic front, the government has articulated a plan for the coming years. Privatization, which is part of that economic development plan, is progressing very rapidly, and we hope that by the end of the year we will have privatized the strategically important sectors such as the energy distribution network. That should certainly put us – as far as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are concerned, as far as privatization is concerned – qualitatively, at a totally new level. That should certainly enhance our relationship in terms of meeting their obligations so that we can improve our balance of payments and also improve the budgetary situation which is critical for the overall development plan.

As far as the other main issue – the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict – I recall that last time we met I reported that we had had several opportunities for high-level meetings between the two presidents and also between the co-chair countries' heads of state. The two presidents have met twice: once in Yalta, the other time in New York. Unfortunately, at this moment I do not have much news with respect to a major breakthrough in this process. That can be interpreted as a stalemate or deadlock. That, certainly, is not the case. The

presidents will continue to meet, a lot of ground has been covered and the foundations have been laid for progress in the coming months.

There are several factors affecting the speed of the process: President Haidar Aliyev's health, the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan and also, the presidential elections in the United States which are now slowing down this process, since the US is one of the important mediators along with Russia and France. Nevertheless, the commitment of the two presidents is there, as was reiterated several times to the Council of Europe and most recently, in my response to the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, Minister Lamberto Dini's letter, where we clearly said that there is strong commitment by the two presidents, the two sides as well as the Nagorno Karabakh side, to reach a compromise solution through negotiations. I think this may now sound a little bit abstract, nevertheless, it is an important principle, given our track record of the past years when each side was adamantly insisting on its own extreme position as to how it sees things being resolved. But since the beginning of the dialogue between the two presidents, that situation has changed, and it seems like the presidents are meeting each other halfway, and they are reiterating their commitment on every occasion to reach a compromise solution that will be acceptable to all the parties involved in this process. We still believe that there will be occasions where the two presidents will meet during this year, although probably not many since there are no multilateral gatherings which the two will attend.

We do not think that they will plan a special bilateral meeting on this issue. But once the Azerbaijani elections have been held, and President Aliyev is fully recovered, we have great hopes that early next year this process will gain speed, and during the year we will make every effort to achieve a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. The foundations are there, the commitments are there, and with a little political will and determination, we do hope that we will make serious progress during the next year.

THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM FROM FEAR

Here in this great city, less than two weeks ago, an unprecedented number of heads of state gathered and outlined the challenges facing the world in the new millennium, together with their nations' achievements and their visions for the future. It is true that the myriad views expressed differed in perspective, focus, attitude and outlook, but it is also true that the leaders of the world departed from the summit having renewed their common commitment to universal values and principles and a more peaceful and prosperous world. All these were clearly reflected in the Secretary General's Report and the Millennium Declaration which provide us with a blueprint for a common agenda in the years to come.

This is a global agenda to meet global goals, but as is often said, all politics is local and everything begins at home. Therefore, in the final analysis, it is each individual state which must take up the responsibility on its own land and in its own region to make a difference that will cumulatively have an impact on the quality of the world in which we all live. Armenia is cognizant of its own responsibility and is committed to doing its part to enhance regional peace and security and elevate the quality of life for everyone involved.

The Secretary General's Millennium Report groups our global challenges under three blunt headings – freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom of future generations to sustain their lives on this planet.

Globalization is expected to drive economic development around the world in order to allow future generations to sustain their lives and make possible the kind of economic self-sufficiency we all want for our societies. The major task of governments around the world today is the pursuit of sound policies and appropriate structural adjustments to meet the challenges that globalization presents, take advantage of the opportunities it offers, without falling victim to its hazards.

At the same time, the revolution in communication and information technologies has opened up the global market to new players. Information technology and the internet have become the moving engine for economic growth, and, at the same time, if used appropriately, the great equalizers. They hold the promise of unlimited progress and allow even small and landlocked countries to take advantage of global access in almost every area of their lives. Armenia is fully cognizant of this and has made information technology development the axis of its economic growth. We have already taken concrete steps toward bolstering the development of information technology and telecommunications, and, together with foreign investors, have begun preliminary work toward an IT industrial park at the outskirts of the capital.

At the same time, well aware that Armenia's educational system must be up to matching this call for infusing the existing intellectual capacity and talent with new skills, we will ensure that educational curricula include the goals of computer literacy and internet familiarity. By 2005, all our schools will have computer capability with unlimited internet access.

Freedom from want and freedom from fear go hand in hand. Without a free, democratic, open system at home and peace and security in our neighborhood, it is not possible to achieve economic prosperity. During these nine years, since the establishment of Armenia's independence, we have made great strides in anchoring democratic values, the rule of law and a respect for human rights in our society. This year, with Armenia's membership in the Council of Europe, these processes will become irreversible. The responsibilities associated with membership will strengthen and reinforce all that has been achieved to date.

Delivered in New York on September 18, 2000, during the 55th Session of the United Nations General Assembly which followed the UN Millennium Summit, attended by President Robert Kocharian

Economic prosperity also hinges on regional stability. At the same time, long-term peace, security and prosperity in our region depend on equitable economic development and the development of multifaceted economic arrangements among countries and regional organizations. It is apparent that the new environment of co-existence requires new approaches from international organizations. Regional and sub-regional integration has become politically and economically expedient. This is especially true in the Caucasus, which is emerging as a region where various political and economic interests compete.

We look at our security not only bilaterally, but also regionally in the broader European context. We are convinced that in the long run, our national security must be anchored in regional stability.

We are confident that economic cooperation will help us transcend political problems and will facilitate the resolution of political issues. A stable and democratic Caucasus is a work in progress. Still, the promise of democracy in the region must not shroud the fragility of the emergent equilibrium. We recognize and we welcome the constructive role that the United Nations and other international organizations, such as the OSCE, the Council of Europe, BSEC and the Commonwealth of Independent States, can and must play to consolidate this regional equilibrium. Armenia intends to expand its cooperation within these organizations and more actively participate in various regional institutions. But these diverse bodies must not, by uneven or inconsistent application of their principles, exacerbate the existing regional disparities.

Armenia is convinced that the Caucasus is in need of a regional system for stability and security, and we stand ready to work towards its formation. We were the first to propose, last year during the OSCE Istanbul Summit, the beginning of a process toward comprehensive regional security leading to a stability pact for the region. Armenia has adopted and will abide by its policy of complementarity – engaging in relations with all countries which have political or economic interests in the Caucasus. This approach has worked quite effectively over the last several years, and we believe it has contributed to the reduction of polarization and tension in the region.

However, the region continues to remain adversely affected by the lack of formal relations between Armenia and Turkey. Although

Armenia, from the first days of independence, opted for normalization of relations and establishment of diplomatic ties, Turkey insisted and continues to insist on certain conditions related to Nagorno Karabakh and the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Ten days ago, at the Summit, President Kocharian addressed this issue and extended a hand to our neighbor in order that we may together find a way to live with the truth of the past, without jeopardizing the promise of the future. Unfortunately, Turkey's response indicated they continue to let the fear of history limit their freedom to act.

But there is no national history in a vacuum. For France and Germany, England and France, the US and Japan, in order to transcend their histories of conflict, war and hatred, they had to transcend the past together. Indeed, many nations have founded their spiritual and moral resurrection on exorcising their guilt, on the search for validation through truth, on facing their own past squarely. Redemption and reconciliation without truth will remain forever elusive.

The Millennium Summit Declaration addressed a topic very important to Armenians' right to freedom from fear. The Millennium Declaration provided for the right to self-determination of peoples who remain under colonial domination and foreign occupation. In Nagorno Karabakh, there was both colonial domination by the Soviets and foreign occupation by Azerbaijan, which was given jurisdiction illegally and unjustly over the Armenian region in 1923. For a people whose compatriots lay just over the border, but out of reach, such a divisive act and the ensuing double layer of subjugation was untenable. During the decades of Soviet rule and with the collapse of the USSR, the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh resorted to demanding their right to self-determination, the refusal of which led to military conflict, refugees and loss of life.

During the last six years, the military phase of the conflict has ceased, and Armenia remains committed to a lasting resolution which will provide for peace and security for Nagorno Karabakh, with a continuous geographical link with Armenia. We will continue to work intensely with the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group and wish to underscore their contribution to maintaining the ceasefire regime.

With equal fervor, we are ready to maintain direct contacts with Azerbaijan in order to search for compromise. However, we think that direct negotiation between Azerbaijan and Nagorno Karabakh would be more productive, as it is the people of Karabakh who will ultimately determine their own destiny and future.

In his report, the Secretary General rightly stated that today more wars are being fought within states than between them. Yet no attempt is being made to address this new challenge in a more effective, meaningful and realistic way.

Each conflict must ultimately be addressed on its own terms, and through the actions and the accommodations of its own peoples and its political leaders. What the international community can do is provide not only the support and the potential incentives for this process of transformation, but the intellectual, conceptual models for exploring appropriate and suitable arrangements for the resolution of seemingly intractable conflicts. We believe that in designing appropriate frameworks within which hostile parties can find a common language, reassurances must be designed flexibly and geared specifically to addressing particular types of conflicts. If you would allow me the metaphor, we should think along the lines of form follows function. The function of the probable solutions that must emerge and the broad outline of an eventual peace agreement must rely, we believe, on devices or principles that are tailor-made, highly specific, and perhaps even unique. Without that kind of customization, we believe that generic, standard-issue formulas will not be suited for the resolution of the conflict in which we find ourselves at this moment deeply involved, and whose long-term outcome is of great concern to us.

For us, peace in Nagorno Karabakh is of course the promise of transforming a situation of hostility and confrontation with our neighbor Azerbaijan into one of cooperation and mutually reinforced security. We would like to think of the day when Karabakh is transformed from being a chasm separating our countries to being a bridge built for the benefit of all the populations concerned.

The political document adopted by the Millennium Summit sets the guidelines for the development of the United Nations in the coming years. Armenia is confident that this organization, given its

outstanding role and track record, has the capacity to address the new challenges in a most satisfactory manner. The vast experience accumulated over the last five decades can be successfully applied to secure peace and stability all over the world.

However, and finally, in response to today's new challenges and new demands, United Nations reforms must be carried through to strengthen this dynamic organization. With the proposed expansion of the Security Council, that strategic body will become more representative and endow its decisions with greater legitimacy.

AT EUROPE'S DOORSTEP

Armenia is on the threshold of becoming a member of the Council of Europe. We are looking forward to our membership and that is the main reason for my stop here in Strasbourg _ to appear before you to respond to questions you may have with regard to Armenia's domestic situation, with regard to our region and to the Nagorno Karabakh peace process. I shall try to talk about these three main topics in general terms very briefly so that you will have the opportunity to ask more specific questions.

Let me start with the domestic situation in Armenia. After last year's events in Armenia's National Assembly, the situation in Armenia dramatically changed, because this tragedy was a major shock to the people and to the leadership, and truly shook the foundations of the state. Certainly that kind of event was not foreseen by anyone. We never thought something like that could ever happen in Armenia, but it did.

On October 27, 1999, five people stormed the National Assembly while it was in session, assassinated the Prime Minister, the president of the National Assembly, his two deputies, three other parliamentarians and one minister. Immediately, the domestic situation in Armenia deteriorated, as would have happened in any country without strong democratic traditions. Nevertheless, I should say that Armenia's Constitution survived this test successfully, in that it made possible the maintenance of an albeit fragile, calm in the country. In the period following those events, we have managed to somehow regain the stability that we had achieved.

Delivered in Strasbourg on May 26, 2000, at the 106th Session of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers

It was truly a difficult period for Armenia because the whole configuration of the political system changed and the political structure became distorted. The President of the National Assembly together with the Prime Minister had formed and led the Unity Party which held a majority in the National Assembly. After the assassination of those two leaders, the majority was significantly shaken and gave way to internal disagreements and disputes with the President of the Republic.

What emerged after the event was that the President, who did not have his own party and had relied on the Prime Minister and President of the National Assembly as his base, suddenly found himself in a political vacuum and had to begin consultations and negotiations with the various factions in the National Assembly to come to some sort of a political agreement on who would provide political support to the executive branch. This process took nearly six months, before the President was able to agree with certain parties in the National Assembly on a Prime Minister who would have political support in the National Assembly, and on a Cabinet, which was formed and approved just last week.

As I speak here, the situation in the country is quite stable although some configurations and certain processes are going on within the National Assembly still. There is some ongoing consolidation of certain political forces around the new Cabinet and Prime Minister. The point I would like to make here is that the Armenian Constitution and the democratic foundations that were laid during the past seven years were truly put to the test after these events and I can say with a great deal of confidence that they worked. Whatever transpired after the events of October 27 went according to the provisions of the Constitution and laws of the Republic.

Today much of the stability has been regained and we do feel confident that we can go on with the other processes that were interrupted by this tragedy, processes such as our economic reforms, legal reforms and also the Nagorno Karabakh peace process. The new government is committed to the continuation of the economic reforms, particularly the privatization process, and also institutional reforms. We are closely working with the World Bank and the International

Monetary Fund to proceed with the economic plan that had been undertaken, and we believe that the process will continue.

With regard to the investigation, I do not have much to report at this moment, except that the military prosecutor who is handling the matter announced two weeks ago that within two months, the prosecutors would be ready to present the case in court. As you know, the five who carried out that act of terrorism are detained and they are being questioned. A few other individuals have also been detained in relation to the incident. Where there was a lack of sufficient evidence, they were released.

With regard to the Nagorno Karabakh peace process, which is an issue of concern for us all and a priority issue for Armenia, I have to say that it was also interrupted after the events in the National Assembly. As you know, prior to that tragedy, the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents had held several meetings and some progress had been reported. They had agreed on certain basic principles as to how to proceed. The common position, as expressed in their letter to the Council of Europe, was their agreement to resolve this matter on the basis of mutual compromise and through peaceful means. I think that was a major statement by the two presidents and one which set the overall tone for the process as they committed themselves to first maintaining the existing cease-fire and also to conducting negotiations on that basis.

Next month will be critical for the process because there will be several high-level meetings between the two presidents, and also between the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the presidents of other countries, particularly Russia and the United States. As you know, early next month in Moscow, there will be a US-Russia Summit and we know that the Karabakh issue will be on the agenda. Most probably there will be a Kocharian-Aliyev meeting, too. Afterwards, President Kocharian will visit Washington to meet with President Clinton on June 27; President Aliyev may also visit Moscow to meet with President Putin.

Thus, we do expect a sequence of very important meetings and we believe that by the end of next month, there will be more clarity as to the direction this process will take. There are several draft proposals

on the table now, one or two of them are in written form and are official. There is another proposal that was simply presented orally to the presidents for their consideration and which was rejected by Armenia. The official options have been put to the presidents for their consideration and they will decide which to concentrate on.

A little while ago, the Chairman made reference to a statement that I made last year with regard to the principles of self-determination and territorial integrity. Indeed we do believe that the key to the solution of the Nagorno Karabakh problem lies in finding the right balance between the two principles. One proposal that was put forward by the co-chairs during the Fall of 1998 was pretty much such an attempt to balance these two principles. They came up with the notion of a Common State. That proposal was accepted by Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh but rejected by Azerbaijan. Attempts were made to modify that document to make it also acceptable to the Azerbaijani side. But that process was interrupted. We believe that there are still possibilities to pick up where we left off last year and try to agree on one of the documents and continue the negotiations on that basis. Again, the principle that the two presidents have agreed on and which provides hope and some prospect for a resolution is a status based on compromise and acceptable to all the parties involved.

The events of October 27 slowed the process, because without domestic political stability, it would have been nearly impossible to present to our opposition parties and to the public any compromise deal on the Nagorno Karabakh issue. Now that we have regained that stability, we feel we are in a position to continue the peace process and will be in a position to present compromise proposals to our public and to the political forces in the country.

As to the broader picture in the region, I must say that the Council of Europe has played a very important role in creating a favorable environment in the Caucasus for regional cooperation. The successful attempts by the Council of Europe to bring together the three speakers of the parliaments of the Caucasus republics several times during the past two years were extremely helpful to the ongoing dialogue among these three countries, particularly between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Their successive meetings have produced documents and

memoranda which can serve as a basis for the continuation of this dialogue in the future. We hope that this process will continue and the Council of Europe will maintain its constructive role.

Armenia and Azerbaijan will eventually join this organization, thus providing an additional forum where the two countries can sit together and talk about their differences in a civilized manner. As for the region, we believe that additional measures have to be taken beyond what the three parliaments are doing. We need to engage ourselves in a much more substantive political process than the current one. Such a process could result from the creation of a Stability Pact in the Caucasus.

The Armenian president and also the president of Turkey have presented such an idea. The Russians had their own view of the Stability Pact, the other Caucasus countries have their visions, but the overall consideration is this: something needs to be done in the Caucasus to halt the diametrically differing processes ongoing in the region, processes which are fragmenting and polarizing. Each one of the Pact's possible member countries is pulling the region in its own direction and that is certainly creating tremendous tension. We need to agree on a broader framework within which we can talk about measures that will contribute to peace and stability in the South Caucasus.

The formula that was presented by Armenia was a 3+3+2, by which we mean the three Caucasus states as core countries, plus the three immediate neighboring countries, plus the European Union and the US.

Forming a roundtable and discussing security and economic issues, eventually transforming that roundtable to some sort of a Stability Pact on the model of a Balkan Stability Pact, would, we believe, be extremely helpful for the region in terms of offering a general framework for cooperation on economic and security matters, and certainly a much more favorable environment for addressing more contentious problems such as the Nagorno Karabakh negotiation process.

This is the overall situation in the country with regard to the Nagorno Karabakh process and the region at large.

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY IS NOT A LICENSE FOR SUPPRESSION AND BRUTALITY

I would like to congratulate Lord George Robertson on his appointment as NATO Secretary General. I would also like to join the others in welcoming Ireland into the Euro-Atlantic Partnership community.

This partnership has truly played a significant role in the past. At the beginning of the 21st century, it has the necessary potential to become a key element in the European and global security environment. Armenia is aware of this huge potential and, with this in mind, wishes to expand its involvement in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.

Armenia, in accordance with its individual partnership program, is determined to increase its participation in Partnership for Peace activities for the year 2000, as well. So important is this participation for Armenia, that our bare-bones budget for fiscal year 2000 includes a special government allocation for our Individual Partnership Plan-related expenses.

This Ministerial Meeting is an opportune time to announce that Armenia is currently completing the formalities for a stand-by peacekeeping arrangement with the United Nations. In this way, we intend to bring our modest input to the peacekeeping efforts of the international community.

Perhaps in more than most other regions in the world, in the South Caucasus region we are keenly aware of the need for a lasting peace. We

recognize that cooperation in the areas of energy, infrastructure development, science and the environment can lead to peace and stability. We welcome cooperation in these areas through the EAPC Open-ended ad-hoc Working Group on the Caucasus. At the same time, however, we do not believe that this Working Group should become a substitute for other, already existing negotiating bodies and groups which function under the auspices of various international organizations.

Armenia will continue to abide by its policy of complementarity: conducting relations with all countries which have political or economic interest in the Caucasus. This approach has worked quite effectively over the last couple of years, and we believe it has contributed to a reduction of polarization and tension in the region – tension which has been created by some of our neighbors as a result of unbalanced and one-sided policies which did not take into consideration today's political realities.

Today, Caucasus security issues must be seen in the context of more comprehensive processes that include all regional forces that in one way or another affect regional processes. Thus, we believe that the three Caucasus states, together with immediate neighbors, must engage in our regional security.

Mr. Chairman, at the end of the 20th century, Kosovo has exposed the fragility of the post Cold-War security environment. What kind of lessons have we learned from Kosovo? I believe, many. One is that the right to protect territorial integrity is not a license for suppression, brutality and murder – this is what we, too, had experienced, in Nagorno Karabakh in 1992. Another is that we need to make a clear distinction between stability and forced maintenance of the status quo. A true policy of stability is one that can put in place mechanisms that can effectively manage inevitable changes in the world.

Mr. Chairman, as we look for new ways to balance the old principles which have governed international relations in the post World War II period, we must distinguish between the central and the inherited, the essential and the convenient, the prudent and the traditional. It is with these lessons and our commitment for peace and stability in the world that we look forward to our cooperation within this partnership in the coming millennium.

TRYING TO RECONCILE SEEMINGLY INCOMPATIBLE PRINCIPLES

As the twentieth century comes to an end, it is evident that all countries in the world – advanced, developing or transitional – will be substantially affected by globalization. Further specialization and widening of markets through trade, a greater division of labor, and more efficient and diversified allocation of financial resources should increase overall productivity and raise living standards. However, no country will benefit from this trend spontaneously and automatically. The major tasks which governments face today are development and the pursuit of sound policies and appropriate structural adjustments to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that globalization offers. While sound domestic economic planning and reforms are critical to meeting the challenges of globalization, regional cooperation and integration processes are essential to maximizing the emerging benefits and opportunities.

We, as a country and a region, are trying to adjust to the multiple stresses of post-Soviet economic, cultural and political transformations. Clearly these problems can stress relations as much within states, as among them. Armenia does not see, either itself, or the region, permanently condemned to marginalization, but rather it believes that close political, economic or security-based cooperation in the region will help bring lasting stability and prosperity based on a sense of solid and shared emergent values.

Delivered in New York on September 29, 1999, during the 54th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Cooperation within the framework of regional economic initiatives such as INOGATE, the EU-sponsored Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe program aimed at improving the security of Europe's energy supply by promoting the regional integration of oil and gas pipeline systems, and TRACECA, (Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia) is essential. Armenia is sincerely open to such cooperation, although we have to state with regret that the blockades imposed on Armenia by Turkey and Azerbaijan are a serious obstacle to such cooperation. It is obvious that the region's high potential cannot be fully utilized if attempts are made to isolate one of its constituents. Such attempts are doomed to failure and will adversely affect all concerned in the region.

Black Sea Economic Cooperation is another mechanism that could contribute to the region's economic development. The activities of the recently-established Black Sea Trade and Development Bank will considerably contribute to carrying out the projects elaborated by the member states of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. In this regard, Armenia fully supports granting BSEC Observer Status in the United Nations General Assembly.

So much for the region. At home, we are a young republic in transition from a long nightmare as part of a totalitarian single party state, to an emergent democratic, free market, open society. Armenia must, simultaneously, consolidate its state structures, move its economy forward and resolve the Karabakh conflict. It must do all three for they are in fact interdependent.

First and foremost, Armenia must ensure that the population of Karabakh continues to enjoy security within its own lands. Our recent memories of vulnerability and insecurity make it impossible to accept anything less than the inalienable right of the people of Karabakh, not to be subjugated, not to be dominated, and not to be subordinate. Armenia understands this and is actively engaged in pursuing, in every possible forum, a resolution of the conflict with Azerbaijan that would achieve peace without endangering the hard-won and legitimate rights of our people to live in secure dignity and freedom.

Mr. President, since 1992, the OSCE has played a key role in the process of finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in Nagorno

Karabakh. It has been actively involved, through the various permutations of the Minsk process to define the elements for durable peace and stability in the Transcaucasus region. Armenia is committed to pursue every possible and credible attempt to resolve the conflicts that linger in the region. It is committed to explore every avenue for peaceful relations with all its neighbors, relations based on mutual respect and recognition.

The OSCE, through the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, is trying to reconcile seemingly incompatible principles. We have always remained opposed to one sided orthodoxy and always advocated a more flexible approach. It is therefore with interest that Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh received the Minsk Group co-chairs' draft proposal during their latest visit to the region. My government, as well as the authorities of Nagorno Karabakh, considered this formulation by the co-chairs a more realistic effort in trying to address the thorny issue of the status of Nagorno Karabakh with minimal prejudice to either of the competing claims.

Indeed, we must distinguish between stability and the forced maintenance of the status quo. Conflating the two is neither wise nor practicable in the long run. A status quo in political life is never inherently permanent and a viable policy of stability requires a mechanism to pursue an evolutionary, dynamic process of managing change. We have new and dynamic challenges to the status quo. We should not be shy to address these challenges creatively and objectively to conceive more adaptive answers than falling back to a comfortable, yet dangerously elusive status quo.

As Armenia actively defends and pursues the right of the people of Nagorno Karabakh to self-determination through peaceful means, we also sympathize with and support all other just self-determination claims in other parts of the globe. Armenia applauded the Indonesian government's courage when it announced the conduct of a referendum on East Timor's independence. Today we are concerned with the latest developments but we hope that the results of the popular consultation will be fully respected. We also commend the role that the United Nations has played in organizing and supervising the popular consultation.

Armenia also welcomes the most recent positive developments in the Middle East peace process. We hope that the Palestinians' right to self-determination will be fully realized thus bringing lasting peace and stability to the Middle East.

Mr. President, the last decade of the 20th century was marked with serious achievements in the spheres of disarmament, global and regional arms control; yet, more remains to be done. At the global level, that would mean reviewing the Non-Proliferation Treaty in the year 2000, completing the work of the Biological Weapons Convention Ad Hoc Group on a compliance and verification protocol; completely eliminating existing stocks of chemical weapons, as well as ensuring the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention regime. Similarly, at the regional level, we attach great importance to the successful conclusion of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty adaptation process, which will be signed by heads of state at the OSCE Summit, this November. We are convinced that the Adapted Treaty will significantly contribute to the strengthening of European security.

In pursuing its national policies, Armenia has made it a priority to support international efforts to secure peace and stability throughout the world. We believe that our full participation in the work of the Conference on Disarmament will allow us to make further contributions to the issues of arms control and disarmament. We hope members will support Armenia in its willingness to become a full member of this Conference.

Armenia welcomes the Millennium Summit initiative. On the threshold of the new millennium, it is important that the heads of state and government discuss the tasks that the United Nations is going to undertake in providing global peace and security.

Believing that the United Nations should play the leading role in the formation of an international anti crime strategy, Armenia supports the idea of holding, in Vienna, in the year 2000, the tenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Treatment of Offenders.

We call for the accession of the maximum number of countries to universal conventions against terrorism and support the Russian

proposal on a United Nations Convention for combating acts of nuclear terrorism. Armenia, likewise, supports the initiative of holding a conference or a special session of the General Assembly against terrorism in 2000.

On October 1, Armenia will sign the Statute of the International Criminal Court, thus becoming the 87th state to do so.

Maintenance of international peace is one of the most important functions of the United Nations. The challenges that the international community faces today are diverse and complicated. This holds true especially for the reform of the Security Council, since ensuring peace and security throughout the world depends on a Security Council which functions effectively.

Security Council resolutions should be unbiased and universal and reflect a common approach to conflicts based on internationally accepted principles and criteria including peace-keeping operations. One way to strengthen the role and function of the Security Council is to ensure a more equitable representation of the membership of the United Nations in that body, in accordance with the sovereign equality of states and other relevant provisions of the Charter, and to make its work more transparent. A more equitable representation in the Security Council may be obtained by increasing the number of its members, taking into account growth in the membership of the United Nations.

After this brief comment on matters that concern Armenia's current affairs, its membership in the United Nations and the pending issues of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, allow me a moment of reflection. We are often so preoccupied by immediate crises that lingering, chronic and fundamental phenomena do not always get our full attention.

At the threshold of a new era, at the end of a century and a millennium, we would not be candid if we did not admit to a certain disappointment, a certain sad recognition that we, as a collectivity, a community of nations, have not come as far as people everywhere would have wished us to come. I am sure we are not alone in our disappointment as we look around us at the last ten years, and see that the hopes of 1989 have not been fully realized. Rwanda, which has just come

out of a genocidal period, Kosovo and East Timor which are suffering violence as a result of their calls for self-determination, are historically speaking, all in the present.

It is not for lack of charter, conventions and universal declarations that tragic events and murderous actions are committed, often by states using their state resources. After the Second World War, and again at the end of the Cold War, we would have been justified to expect a let-up in the organized display of man's inhumanity to man, of citizen's fratricidal war against citizen, or a state's attempt to exterminate part of its own people. But evidently, our most recent experiences tell us that the persecution of innocent civilians for no other reason than their ethnicity, religion or national origin continues unabated.

Armenia and Armenians have a unique history through which to see these events. We notice the more and more frequent use of the term genocide, across various continents. And we are reminded of our own tragic experience as victims of genocide at the beginning of this century. Sad but true, the Genocide of Armenians beginning in 1915, opened this century of horrors. We are convinced that nothing contributes so much to the repetition of horror as the reluctance, the unwillingness, the complicitor's avoidance of the truth.

The denial of evil, its relativization and its banalization have done much to make it possible to see evil as a political event to manipulate, to equivocate, to prevaricate for the so-called defense of realpolitik.

Our democracy and future prosperity count on a time when through peace, the Caucasus fulfils its promise as a region of neighborly cooperation and economic growth. Without regional political stability, economic prospects for all the countries of the Caucasus will remain rocky. And without satisfying the security and life aspirations of the people of the region, there cannot be political stability.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE PROCESSES ARE ENDS AS WELL AS MEANS

The anniversary of the Council is not only that of an institution, of an association of sovereign states, but more significantly, it is the evolving demonstration of the significance of the ideas and values that form the foundation of this organization.

Democracy, human rights, respect for the individual, security and stability, and a Europe free from conflict, are not in themselves new ideas. Born in Europe, they have achieved universal relevance and recognition beyond the borders of Europe itself. What is new however and barely 50 years old is that one can adopt, advocate and pursue these values through appropriate institutional arrangements. It is in that sense that the Council of Europe is both a means to an end, as well as a worthwhile objective in itself. The Republic of Armenia wants to join the Council because it is the appropriate institutional arrangement that embodies the values and makes it possible to enshrine them for those who join it.

We have not undertaken our own democratization processes simply in order to join the Council. But we do recognize that having started the process of our reforms, to consolidate our achievements, and to firmly go forward in an irrevocable manner, we need to integrate into the institutional framework that is the Council of Europe. It is a model, an inspiration, as well as the guarantor of the legitimacy of our own undertakings on the road to democratization.

Delivered in Budapest on May 7, 1999, at the 104th Session of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which marked the 50th Anniversary of the Council of Europe

We have attempted over the last few years to maintain a steady course in preparation for our membership. In doing so, we have continued to look at the way in which those ahead of us, and before us, have attempted to embody the values of the Council of Europe by making those values significant in the conduct of their own affairs. The steps required in making critical transitions from non-democratic political systems to more open political societies cannot be reduced to a mechanical recipe. Sometimes they require legal and constitutional formulas and devices. At times what is necessary is nothing less than the recasting of the entire political culture.

Under normal circumstances, these transformations, these adaptations can and should take a very long time indeed. Some might say it took Europe over three centuries to evolve into its present institutional incarnation. It is our desire however to make sure that we do not have to repeat the same waiting period. We must accelerate the process. The model has proved itself and delays can be counterproductive. Europe is no longer an experiment and we ourselves want to move from experimentation to institutionalization.

As we look at these achievements and our aspirations, as we register how far Europe has come and how eager we are to join it, to celebrate together its 100th anniversary one day, we cannot help but express a certain trepidation, an anxiety if you wish. We are witness to an occasional disconnect, between professed standards and their differentiated applications, between assertions of equity, fairness and non-discriminatory values and actions and decisions that appear, at least to us, as discriminatory, unfair and arbitrarily selective.

Some of these issues are exacerbated when we look at a map of an expanding Europe. We notice not only a family of democratic or democratizing nations and states, but also a system of equilibrium on a continent of multiple and diverse sub-regions. The stability and equilibrium within these sub-regions are the building blocks of a sound architecture for security and stability in the construct of the Council of Europe.

We are not reluctant to admit that the South Caucasus is a sub-region whose democratic construction is not yet fully accomplished. A stable and democratic South Caucasus is a work in progress. As

with all works in progress, the promise must not ignore the fragility of the emergent equilibrium. We recognize and we welcome the constructive role that the Council of Europe can and must play to consolidate this sub-regional equilibrium. But it must not, perhaps inadvertently, by the uneven or inconsistent application of its principles, exacerbate existing imbalances.

Our trepidation should not be construed either as self-doubt or doubt about the significance of this historic institution, its past achievements, or the role it has to play in the future of this continent. Realism in this case, perhaps more than arrogance, would lead us to hopefulness. The celebration of this event here in Budapest makes us remember that it was here in 1956, that a people expressed its desire for freedom and emancipation, its resistance to dominance, and its refusal to be deprived of democracy. No geopolitical expert would have ever believed that, this intensely singular act of revolt which took place in the streets of Budapest might one day evolve into Budapest playing host to a united, expanding, democratic Europe.

THIS HAS NOT BEEN A GOOD CENTURY

It was the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that first welcomed the bedraggled Armenian victims of the Ottoman massacres of the 1890s, one hundred or so years ago.

The Armenian Diaspora in the United States was born here, in this state, where the despair of the persecuted was alleviated by the generosity of this land and where the successive waves of survivors came to implant themselves as citizens of Worcester, Springfield and Watertown, blending their hopes and dreams with those of others who had come to escape famine, discrimination, and religious intolerance from the four corners of a Europe struggling with its own demons.

It is also not a coincidence that today – tomorrow to be exact – is the symbolic anniversary of the defining event of modern Armenian history, the Genocide of 1915. When the massacres of the 1890s were being perpetrated, the term genocide was not invented yet. It took the exterminating evil of 1915 to bring the word to its current use.

Allow me to suggest for a moment that this is a distinction my generation and the generation of our fathers would have gladly done without.

Unfortunately, at the very end of this century, neither the word nor the practice of genocide has vanished by disuse. True, there have been many attempts to trivialize the notion of genocide, to relativize it, as well as to contest it by misuse or unscrupulous abuse.

Today, at this very moment, crimes against entire peoples are still being committed for no other reason than the urge to solve political

problems by the destruction of innocent populations asserting their claims to their ancestral lands.

This has not been a good century. Its record of man's inhumanity to man has persisted in challenging our claims to enlightenment, modernity, technological progress, economic development and the growing legitimization of democratic institutions and the respect for human rights. The list of gruesome excesses to eradicate or destroy people is long and painful.

And yet after all the evidence, all the undeniable horrors, the denial persists: denial of the acts and refusal to accept responsibility; rejection of the need to identify the perpetrators and set the historical record straight; resisting bringing the guilty to justice; refusing to restore the memory and banish the ghosts that haunt the victims and their descendants.

At the end of this century, a century that began with a deliberate attempt at our virtual annihilation, we continue to expect that at the very least, our experiences be validated. After all, there are instances where nations have based their spiritual and moral resurrection on exorcizing their guilt, on the search for validation through truth, on facing their own past squarely. Redemption and reconciliation without truth will remain forever elusive.

It is often said that a slavish attachment to history and an unreconstructed replay of historical memory are incapacitating traits afflicting certain peoples. It is said that these traits must be overcome if peaceful progress is to be achieved between former enemies or currently hostile and feuding neighbors. There is a certain inequity in the way certain mature democracies in Europe and elsewhere refer to these peoples as trapped by their history, as if, a long memory were a form of congenital incapacitation.

No nation can escape its history entirely, it can only transcend it. But to transcend it, two conditions must prevail. One, a country must confront its history, both internally and in relation to others. Second, those others, outside its borders, who as participants and actors have shaped that history, they must also jointly confront theirs. There is no national history in a vacuum. For France and Germany, England and France, the US and Japan to transcend their histories of conflict, war and hatred,

they had to transcend the past together. This process is not yet completed in many parts of Europe. In still other parts, the process hasn't even begun.

I would like to take this opportunity today, at a time when this century, begun with massive crimes of continuing implications, comes to a close to call on Turkey to agree to a dialogue with Armenia on what is perhaps the greatest historic and psychological stumbling block to normal relations between our two nations. Given Turkey's record of denial, it bears the responsibility to demonstrate a willingness to honestly confront the past in order to confidently chart the future.

A recent press report made me reflect once more on our struggle to see justice prevail, and to have the world recognize our calamity for what it was: a planned genocide. This report reads, "An Australian historian, who is the director of the Adelaide Institute in Australia was arrested in Mannheim, Germany, and charged with incitement for expressing doubts about the Holocaust. His statements appeared in the Institute's web site and in its newsletters. Friedrich Toben will face up to five years in prison if he is convicted."

Yes, this dispatch makes us wonder. We wonder about all those academic historians, comfortably settled in some of the great universities of this country, making a career by falsifying history. How differently Germany handles the cynical doubters of its crimes from the way in which Turkey, through fame and fortune, seduces its acolytes to counterfeit history. Endowed chairs from coast to coast lend legitimacy to this orchestrated effort to rewrite our memories, exonerate the guilty, and demonize the victims.

However, we shall not despair and we will continue to trust the judgment and integrity of the people's representatives of the great democracies. We turn to you, custodians of the great tradition of this august house, to defend truth, to assert it, and to see that justice is done.

But I have not come here to talk only about the past and its restitution by rightful recognition. Throughout its history, this House has been a place of deliberation, of vision and ambitious imagination. A place where great and fundamental principles have seen the light of day and become building blocks of an enduring tradition of liberty, representative democracy and a multi-ethnic commonwealth.

As Armenia confronts today the most pressing issues of its present and its immediate future, it looks at this state and this House for inspiration and for help. A young republic in transition from a long nightmare as part of a totalitarian single party state, to an emergent democratic, free market and open society, Armenia must simultaneously consolidate its state structures, move its economy forward and resolve the Karabakh conflict. It must do all three at the same time for they are in fact interdependent.

First and foremost, Armenia must ensure that the Armenian population of Karabakh continues to enjoy security within its own lands. Our recent memories of vulnerability and insecurity make it impossible for any Armenian, anywhere, to accept anything less than the inalienable right of the people of Karabakh, not to be subjugated, not to be dominated, and not to be subordinate. Armenia understands this and is actively engaged in pursuing, in every possible forum, a resolution of the conflict with Azerbaijan that would achieve peace without endangering the hard won and legitimate rights of our people to live in secure dignity and freedom.

Here in Massachusetts, dignity, security and freedom do not need to be defended as legitimate aspirations. You have been pioneers. Allow us to strive to settle for nothing less.

Our democracy and future prosperity count on a time when, through peace, the Caucasus fulfils its promise as a region of neighborly cooperation and economic growth. At this moment, Armenia, a landlocked country, is blockaded and isolated by old enemies, and new. The world community must see that without equitable and evenhanded mediation, Armenia cannot be forced to choose between its security and its prosperity especially since the regional framework seems to be conceived in terms of the lop-sided geopolitics of petroleum.

Without regional political stability, regional economic prospects for all the countries of the Caucasus will remain uncertain. And without satisfying the security and aspirations of the people of the region, there cannot be political stability.

It is ironic that state legislatures and Congress seem more attuned to this reality than the executive branch that continues to pursue realpolitik schemes that ignore the founding principles of this great democracy.

Respect for human rights derives its significance from the moral authority that comes with its universality in application.

The rights of some cannot be made more important than the rights of others. Without legitimacy, political solutions will continuously require heavy investments in control mechanisms that cannot be forever sustained.

The events in Europe in the last few weeks have a lot to teach us all. The war in Kosovo, for that is what it is, is not something anyone can ignore. Armenians have particularly singular reflections as we witness those events. The plight of suffering civilians in forced exodus from their homes brings back too many memories. We empathize, for we see in those huddled and frightened masses images of our grandparents, brutalized under the burning sun of the endless Syrian deserts instead of the snowy hills of Kosovo. Yes, we empathize, but not without some bitterness. Does the conscience of the world need CNN to be moved?

Why were the eyewitness accounts of diplomats and missionaries not sufficient to make the great powers resist barbarism? Why is it that even today we deploy our cameras and reporters so selectively? How can we justify these double, and adjustable, multiple standards? How can we justify our claim to humanitarian solidarity and disinterested determination to stop oppression, when we remain blind to equal horrors in the past, and even those going on in the present, where some perpetrators seem to enjoy certain immunity from the prying eyes of self-appointed guardians of righteousness?

It is often said that only the naive and innocent look for ethics in the affairs of state. Let me boldly state here, that perhaps the dismissal of the ethical is itself a very shortsighted, self-inflicted blind spot. It is becoming increasingly difficult to hide behind reasons of state in a world in which images of human beings slaughtered create an instantaneous transparency of method and consequences. Media managers and spin doctors can continue to perfect their tools, but they cannot silence forever those who are courageous enough to speak for and defend human rights – those inalienable rights founded on self-evident truths that continue to reverberate in this House and across this land.

EUROPE AS GUARDIAN, NOT POLICEMAN

Being here today, we are reminded of the one universal contribution and building block that has been born of this building over the centuries. As Armenia has established statehood after centuries of statelessness and decades of communism, we look for the example and inspiration that can be derived from your centuries-old commitment to representational democracy and constitutionalism. As we embark on the beginning steps to build a country based on laws, we grow ever more respectful of what the British Parliament has carried out for centuries. Being here today and seeing the lively debate with the Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, we are reminded of the challenges that lie ahead for us, in our region, as we work to build a democratic civil society.

Britain and Europe have come to represent that to which we aspire and wish to emulate, if not immediately, certainly as part of ongoing social and political transformation. Ever since our independence, we have tried to communicate our interest in becoming part of Europe, to participate in its evolution, to contribute to and benefit from its values and practices, as well as its institutions. In that sense, we are all well aware that we have to continue to make conscious efforts to fulfill our commitments. We have no doubt that Armenia has been the first beneficiary of its own efforts in trying to meet the standards of democratization. We have taken seriously the values of human and civil rights embodied by Europe, because we believe that Europe's – and our – long-term security and stability will depend on the adoption and application of these values.

Delivered in London on March 17, 1999, at the British House of Lords, Moses Room

However, it would be disingenuous on our part, as well as on the part of anybody else, to claim or to pretend that things were uniform or uniformly progressive everywhere, in all the regions of emergent Europe. We recognize that our region, the region of the Transcaucasus, while very eager to move towards closer relations with Europe, suffers at this moment from problems associated with transitional adjustments.

We, as a country and the region as a whole, are trying to adjust to the multiple stresses of post-Soviet economic, cultural and political makeover. Clearly these tensions can stress relations as much within states as among them. Armenia does not see either itself or the region permanently condemned to marginalization. Rather, we believe that European institutions, whether parliamentary, economic or security-based, will help bring lasting stability and cooperation to the region, based on a sense of solid and shared values.

We need and welcome Europe not as a policeman but as a guardian, not so much as a supervisor but as a guide and a role model. We need Europe and in this case, its institutions, to provide the inspiration that comes with its own historic achievements in overcoming centuries-old conflicts. We want its moral authority to stem from its pursuit of principles of fairness, equity, the renunciation of violence and the upholding of human rights.

Armenia seeks to become a member of the Council of Europe and we are hopeful to see our acceptance this year. We appreciate the support that Britain has provided us thus far and look forward to our continued cooperation. Membership in such institutions strengthens the foundations on which we try to build a free and fair society at home.

While Europe and its achievements provide us the inspiration for the future, we are mindful that we are at this moment, witnessing a precariousness that is not only characteristic of certain regions of the world, but of Europe as well. No one can remain a simple spectator, unaffected by the unpredictable forces moving around us; certainly not my country, the Republic of Armenia, only eight years into its independence. Armenia is rightly anxious to make sure that peace and cooperation in Europe, and more particularly in our own immediate

region, will afford us the security and stability necessary to develop and consolidate our human and economic resources and strengthen our democratic institutions.

As usual, it is easier for those whose national aspirations are already fulfilled to transcend them and contemplate engagement in transnational, cooperative, integrative institutions. We know it has not always been so. It took multiple 'nationalist' confrontations to bring part of Europe to its senses. Thus, while some parts of Europe are integrating with countries secure in their statehood and fulfilled in their national aspirations, other parts are disintegrating, with people trying to achieve independent statehood or clinging to their vulnerable sovereignty. These people, who call themselves nations, and whom outsiders, discomforted by their agitation call ethnicities, have a very different idea of stability and status quo. What is usually blamed as the evil of nationalism is no more than the manifestation of frustrated national aspirations and the urge to achieve self-determination, without which security seems elusive.

It is important to see the Karabakh conflict from the security perspective of those whose national aspirations have been denied and trampled on for too long. It is clear to us that the peaceful resolution of this conflict will permit the strengthening of the region's stability and Armenia's development. With this in mind, we remain committed to all ongoing OSCE-sponsored efforts, pursued through the Minsk Group and its co-chairs. The guns have fallen silent. There is no more fighting. And we have communicated our willingness to help create a positive movement in the Minsk Group process.

Since 1992, the OSCE has been an integral part of the process for finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh. It has been actively involved, through the various permutations of the Minsk process, to define the elements for durable peace and stability in the Transcaucasus region. Armenia is part of this region and recognizes the need for stability. It is committed to pursue every possible and credible attempt to resolve the conflicts that linger in the region. It is committed to explore every avenue for peaceful relations with all its neighbors, relations based on mutual respect and recognition. Moreover, Armenia believes that the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh

poses a special challenge since the parties to the conflict, the people of Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan, have valid claims to foundational principles of the OSCE. Previous efforts by the Minsk Group and its co-chairs had failed to recognize the equal legitimacy of the competing parties. That is why both Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh considered the previous proposals as being unacceptably one-sided.

We have always advocated a more flexible approach on the part of the OSCE, through the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, to try to reconcile seemingly incompatible principles. We have always remained opposed to one-sided orthodoxy. It is therefore with interest that Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh received the Minsk Group co-chairs' draft proposal during their latest visit to the region, last November. My government, as well as the authorities of Nagorno Karabakh, considered the co-chairs' proposal a realistic effort in trying to address the thorny issue of the status of Nagorno Karabakh, in a manner that minimizes prejudice to either of the competing claims. Unlike previous attempts, the co-chairs seem to have come to the realization that old orthodoxies and inflexible formulations will not be effective in moving the process forward to a negotiated settlement. Perhaps the boldness with which the co-chairs have proposed to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable principles of territorial integrity and national self-determination, grows out of their concern that the window of opportunity for a negotiated settlement is narrowing, and that cease-fires are inherently unstable.

By rejecting the recent principles submitted by the OSCE, Azerbaijan has not taken a single step towards compromise. Nor has it shown any political will or disposition to take responsibility for peace. Azerbaijan still believes that sooner or later, the resolution of this conflict will be on its own terms. Far from serving the purpose of peace, such an unyielding attitude will lead to the kind of escalation that neither Azerbaijan, nor Armenia nor Nagorno Karabakh can afford.

We feel strongly that European institutions are the best at creating and using adaptive, flexible, even innovative methods, which can become models of operation. We should not suffer from the collective paralyzing fear of precedent setting. And the solutions we would seek, through the OSCE, are solutions exactly because the process lends

itself to dealing with the particularity of every dispute. The implicit recognition of this principle also underlies the negotiations and the involvement of Britain, France and the US in the Rambouillet talks regarding Kosovo. For us, peace in Nagorno Karabakh is of course the promise of transforming a situation of hostility and confrontation with our neighbor Azerbaijan into one of cooperation and mutually reinforced security. We would like to think of the day when Karabakh is transformed from being a chasm separating our countries to being a bridge built for the benefit of all the populations concerned.

The upholding and promotion of the fundamental values and principles enshrined in Europe will undoubtedly play a further role in strengthening cooperation and stability in the region beyond the mere establishment of peace in Karabakh. The strengthening of democratic institutions and the protection of human and civil rights in each country must become the foundation that holds together the regional security space. Regional arrangements between states committed to democracy and the rule of law are more likely to result in the kind of dynamic equilibrium necessary for lasting stability. Europe after World War II is a vivid example. For its part, Armenia is committed to further democracy at home by working consistently on improving its own constitutional processes and the guarantee of individual rights through the rule of law. For all this, it is important to dare to think broadly and not be confined to a Cold War mentality.

A few words about Armenia's perception of its own security, or rather its perceived threats to its security. Our geographic position and our long history have greatly contributed to our desire to define our security needs in terms which take into account very carefully the behavior and the intentions of our immediate neighbors. We look at our security not only bilaterally, but also regionally, in the broader European context. We are convinced that in the long run, our national security must be anchored in regional stability. However, the actions and declarations of certain of our neighbors, not only towards us, but in the region as a whole, give us pause and often cause for concern, if not alarm.

Our own resources are objectively speaking no match to the size, strength or military capabilities of our neighbors with whom our recent

history has had a tragic dimension. We would rather move from a position of anxious insecurity to one of positive, gradual and constructive engagement and resolve our differences through diplomatic dialogue and economic and regional cooperation. However, it is difficult to engage those who maintain their refusal to formalize diplomatic relations with my country. Turkey, to this day, refuses to establish normal diplomatic relations with Armenia, while Armenia is ready to do so without any pre-conditions despite our historic grievances.

It is often said that a slavish attachment to history and an unreconstructed replay of historical memory are incapacitating traits afflicting certain peoples. It is said that these traits must be overcome if peaceful progress is to be achieved between former enemies or currently hostile and feuding neighbors. There is a certain inequity in the way certain mature democracies in Europe and elsewhere refer to these peoples as trapped by their history, as if a long memory were a form of congenital incapacitation.

No nation can escape its history entirely, it can only transcend it. But to transcend it, two conditions must prevail. One, a country must confront its history, both internally and in relation to others. Second, those others, outside its borders, who as participants and actors have shaped that history, must also jointly confront theirs. There is no national history in a vacuum. For England and France, for France and Germany, for the US and Japan to transcend their histories of conflict, war and hatred, they had to transcend the past together. This process is not yet completed in many parts of Europe. In our region and especially in our relations with Turkey, this process hasn't even begun.

We Armenians are often told to forget our history, even our recent history. We are told to forget the past and look at the future. To forget is neither feasible nor always wise. It devalues the national experience that underlies so much of national identity, no matter how painful or glorious. To forgive and to be forgiven are equally necessary. Yet, it is difficult to forgive those who do not believe they need to be forgiven. To ask for forgiveness, one must at least recognize a mistake, admit to an injustice or a misdeed.

Perhaps contrition is too strong a word; it is not a word in the realm of international political discourse and it is better left to the guardians

of our individual souls. But admission of an act of grave and deliberate abuse of the human rights and lives of another people is the least one can do to re-establish the balance and transcend history. Armenians, as a nation who survived genocide, are willing to forgive and to move on. We are hopeful that the day would come soon when the people with whom we have shared a long history are themselves ready to own up to the truth of their own history. Then and only then, can we move on together and build our regional cooperation and security arrangements on sound bases of trust and respect. Europe and Britain have also been witnesses to the Armenian Genocide. Many survivors owe their lives to the rescue efforts of many missionaries. Today, you could help us do justice to those who perished and those who survived by recognizing the horrendous killings for what they truly were: an intentional Genocide by the Ottoman government against the Armenian population. By so doing, you would help us and our neighbors transcend the past together and move into the future.

These thoughts about Armenia are not based on any idea of national exceptionalism. Every country's history is unique, but no one's history is truly exceptional. Europe can and must be instrumental in doing all it can to help history move forward, and find ways to help old adversaries transcend together their troublesome past.

THE CAUCASUS IS IN RUSSIA'S BACKYARD

These are historic times, and we are "present at the creation" borrowing Dean Acheson's book title.

I am honored to be here today and to speak to you about a topic which does not make the headlines or the front pages of the world press, but nevertheless is on the minds of policy makers in important capitals because the Caucasus matters. Why does it matter? Because the Caucasus has emerged as a very distinct geographical area in a very volatile region.

The Caucasus is in Russia's backyard and that is at least partly why it is in everybody's interest today. The Caucasus matters because, at this stage, it is the weakest link in a broader system where Russia, Turkey and Iran, the regional powers have interests. The Caucasus seems to be a region where many are playing politics. It is also a region which is rich in oil, gas and other minerals, and this attracts the attention of the world's major powers.

Armenia is one of the three countries comprising what we call today the Caucasus. Only ten years ago, the Caucasus was a part of the Soviet Union and lay right on the fault line of the East-West confrontation. Today, that has changed tremendously and the Caucasus has emerged as a distinct region, with its own characteristics, and all three countries, individually and collectively, are trying to survive.

There are many challenges that the three countries face, the biggest being the challenge to overcome the legacies of the past. If we look deep

into the history of the Caucasus, we will see all sorts of layers of legacies, starting from the ancient Iranian influence, to Greco-Roman, Christian, then Arab, Turkish and Russian. But the most enduring one has been the Soviet legacy. That is what is affecting our daily lives and that is what we are trying to overcome – the legacy inherited in the economic sphere, the political sphere and in all sorts of different areas, including ethnic conflicts.

The most overwhelming problem we inherited is the economic legacy; that is, the legacy of dependence, the legacy of heavy industry-dependence, the legacy of producing component parts instead of final products, generally of inferior quality, intended to be assembled in another republic of the Soviet Union. As a country, we now find ourselves having to survive and compete alone economically in the international market without the former republics which had been obliged to provide the necessary economic complement and were assigned the role of market. We are no longer in a common economic space. Certainly we see that most of the industries that we have inherited from the past are obsolete. This is a major, major problem facing the country today. Most of our current economic problems, unemployment being the major one, are due to the fact that our industries are not competitive and our factories are not operational. This is the result of the economic policy pursued by the Soviets, as part of their general policy to divide and rule and create as much interdependence as possible.

The other, major legacy that we have inherited is the whole mentality of the Soviet period which is no less consequential than the economic problems we are facing. And truly, this mentality and general outlook stand in the way of most of the reforms that we undertake in different areas of the economy, the judiciary, the whole democratization process and institution building. These are serious issues that most transitional countries of the former Soviet Union faced, as did the Eastern European countries. But for obvious historic and geographic reasons, the Soviet legacy was not as deeply-entrenched in Eastern Europe as it is in the former Soviet Republics.

In addition, there were other problems that most of us have faced, particularly the Caucasian republics, such as defining our national identity and trying to look for ideological and secular alternatives to com-

munism. These were issues that faced us right after independence. Now that I look back at the past six or seven years, I see that in the case of Armenia, we have made a lot of headway in all these areas. Given our history, our distinct language and alphabet, we did not have a problem defining our national identity. We did not have to define who we are as some of our neighbors did. We did however have to decide whether as Armenians, we saw ourselves as being part of Europe, the Middle East or Asia.

This issue was truly a subject that was debated during the early period of independence since the Caucasus is at the crossroads of these three cultures. We oriented ourselves towards Europe and that is how the European direction in our foreign policy was instituted, including our goal to become as quickly integrated into European structures as possible. In this sense, we have certainly made a lot of progress as evidenced by our relations with the European Union, our relations with the Council of Europe which I hope this year will culminate in membership, our involvement in the OSCE as an active member, and our cooperation with other organizations and institutions such as NATO. This is the main direction in our foreign policy, and rightly so, as the values which the European structures embrace are also the values that Armenia's leadership and our people have happily adopted. They are the pursuit of democracy and respect for human rights and we believe they should be at the heart of our society and the pillars of our future state.

By no means would I tell you that Armenia is a full and mature democracy. Certainly not. We understand that democracy building does not happen over days, months or even years. It has to be imbedded in our people's collective thinking. It also has to be part of the mentality and outlook. So it is going to take time. But the important thing is that at the leadership level as well as the grassroots level, we have succeeded in adopting these values and we are moving forward in this direction.

Certainly Armenia would have been in a much better position today had there not been the problems that the region is encountering. Armenia, being part of this region has been affected by the overall environment that has been created. This region is inherently unstable

because there are many, many, destabilizing factors such as political instability in individual countries and the economic hardships that each of us is facing. These are forces of instability. In addition, there is the absence of an all-encompassing regional organization that includes all the countries in the region, particularly the major ones, and that provides a forum to discuss our issues and work on consensus-building. This would certainly help promote stability in the region.

Another destabilizing element is the unequal distribution of wealth. Oil, for example. Some people would argue that oil should be a source of stability. Well, we hoped that it would be, but at this stage it is not. If we look at the oil factor, we see that different rules come into play in the short term and the long term.

In the short term, there is a lot of competition over oil and it seems to be a zero sum game. Russia, the United States, Western European countries, Iran, Turkey are all competing to have a share of the Caspian oil and gas resources. There are only limited amounts as we are finding out, and the volume seems to be much less than was predicted earlier. So the competition is intensifying. This is certainly a source of instability as is the ambiguity over the status of the Caspian Sea. This has led to a rift between Iran and Azerbaijan, between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, and between Russia and Turkmenistan. All this because of oil and how it might be divided.

Another major problem is the number and eventual path of export pipelines. You cannot have ten pipelines. There is either going to be one or two, especially in light of the most recent estimates about the overall volume of oil in the Caspian. Certainly there will be a fight over which country will get the pipeline and what route it will take. This is going to be a major, major problem. So at this stage it is a zero sum game, because when one country succeeds in getting a stake, it will be at the expense of another. That is why the bickering over oil and gas in the Caspian is affecting our region.

For the long run, countries like Armenia hope that eventually oil will become a stabilizing element. If oil is used as a stabilizing factor by the producing countries such as Azerbaijan, and it does not become the weapon of choice, it might contribute to overall peace and stability in the region.

Of course, the most destabilizing elements are the existing ethnic conflicts: in Georgia, in other regions of the Commonwealth of Independent States and in our case, in Nagorno Karabakh. This is a very problematic issue. Our foreign policy basically revolves around this issue. This conflict also determines our relationship with our neighbors, particularly with Turkey, but also with Iran, Georgia, other countries in the region, as well as with European countries. So Nagorno Karabakh is a major issue facing Armenia. Its peaceful resolution is our top foreign policy priority. Consequently, we have adopted a regional policy that is as conducive as possible to the overall peace and stability of the region so that Armenia may survive and benefit economically and politically to the largest extent possible. We are basing our policy in the region on six pillars:

One is to advocate democracy and human rights in the region. We believe that this would be very conducive to overall peace and stability. We believe that Armenia is in a good position to be a leader in these areas. For this, we understand that we must first put our house in order so that we are more credible when advocating democracy and human rights for the region. We have made substantial progress in these areas compared to others in our region and we think that the resolution of the conflict could be facilitated if democracy became the norm rather than the exception in the countries of the Caucasus.

The second aspect of our regional policy is to advocate equal economic development and economic cooperation in the region. Unfortunately, Azerbaijan does not meet us half way on these matters. We think that economic cooperation will help us transcend the political problems and will facilitate the resolution of the political issues. Azerbaijan's policy today in the region is to isolate Armenia. That is clearly visible. We saw this at the TRACECA conference, held in Baku recently, which our prime minister attended against great odds. TRACECA is the European Union's Silk Road project, intended to create a transportation corridor linking Europe to the Caucasus and Central Asia. It is of major importance to the economic development of our region. Armenia is eager to be part of regional economic and other programs. This is a major tenet of our regional policy, but being adamantly opposed by Azerbaijan.

The third aspect of our regional policy is to encourage and support stronger regional organizations. Looking at our region, we see that there is no single regional organization that includes as members the three Caucasus countries and all the regional powers – Iran, Turkey and Russia. Iran is not a member of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation or the OSCE while all the others are. The Commonwealth of Independent States includes the former Soviet republics but Turkey and Iran are out. In the Economic Cooperation Organization, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran and a few other Central Asian republics are members, while Armenia and Georgia are not. This is very critical. We need such an organization. I think the region has become hostage to the West's policy of isolating Iran. This is why we have been unable to involve Iran in an interregional organization, where all the countries in the region and the major players, all having a common interest, can come together to discuss common issues and build a consensus.

The fourth element of our regional policy is to eliminate Cold War thinking and ideology, which still exists in the Caucasus. Our approach differs from that of our neighbors. Azerbaijan's policies contribute to the polarization of the region while Armenia's policies promote reconciliation. We see our relations with both Russia and the West, our military links with Russia and NATO to be complementary to each other, contrary to Azerbaijan's policy of deepening relations with NATO as an exclusionary measure to fend off Russia's influence in the region. This kind of policy leads to regional polarization, which the Caucasus cannot afford.

Armenia's policy is one of reconciliation. We think that with the end of the Cold War the ideology of the Cold War should be rejected and we need to use all available possibilities to augment and strengthen our security while at the same time working for regional cooperation. That is what we are doing and we think that our approach is more conducive to overall peace and stability.

The fifth element in our foreign policy is to engage Turkey in a more positive and constructive way in the Caucasus. If we look at the three major regional powers, Russia, Turkey, and Iran, we see that because of Turkey's Caucasus policy, particularly with regard to Armenia and the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, there is a disbalance in the region. Russia

has equal relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Azerbaijanis dispute this. However, regardless of what they say, Russia and Azerbaijan have diplomatic ties. They trade. One does not blockade the other. They have ambassadors in both countries; they carry out diplomatic relations as well as dialogue. Despite all sorts of problems with Azerbaijan, Iran maintains an equal balance in the region and maintains normal relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The exception is Turkey. Turkey has good, even exceptional relations with Azerbaijan. Turkey has no diplomatic relations with Armenia, however. Turkey blockades Armenia. So if we look at the Caucasus as a three-legged stool, where these three major regional powers create a balance, the Turkish policy vis-a-vis Armenia creates a disbalance in the region. Despite all our historical problems and differences with Turkey, we are trying to engage them as positively as we can because we believe it is important to have equilibrium in this region. But unfortunately that has not happened. Turkish policy is intransigent. They have chosen to put their ethnic affinities with the Azerbaijanis ahead of the geostrategic interests of the region. A more balanced engagement by Turkey in this region will certainly facilitate overall regional peace and stability and enable Turkey to play a much more conducive and positive role in reaching a peaceful resolution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

The last and most important element of our foreign policy is our position with regard to the Nagorno Karabakh issue. This is one of the major destabilizing elements in this region. Generally, the conflicts that we are facing today, and particularly in our region boil down to the reconciliation of two major principles of international law – territorial integrity and the right of people to self-determination. But in some ways, the approach to conflict resolution has given preference to territorial integrity. This policy has been applied across the board to all conflicts in the name of stability and status quo, to avoid opening dangerous Pandora's Boxes or setting precedents for other conflicts or ethnic groups.

Certainly, we need to make a distinction between stability and forced maintenance of status quo. The key words here are "forced maintenance of status quo." A status quo in political life is not

inherently permanent. A viable policy of stability requires the mechanisms to pursue a dynamic process of managing change. The international community has to be ready to adopt a policy where it can manage change in this quickly changing and dynamic international environment. This is what we need to focus on instead of simply applying a blanket policy supporting the territorial integrity of states. Such a narrow approach cannot be applied to every case of self-determination.

In my view there are four categories of self-determination movements in the world today, depending on the level of self-determination that the secessionist movement has reached and the degree of control of the mother state over the seceding territory. That is the relationship between the level of self-determination and the level of preservation of territorial integrity.

The case of Quebec, and perhaps Northern Ireland in the near future, fall in one category. In the case of Quebec we have on the one hand, the full preservation of Canada's territorial integrity, and on the other, the full self-determination of the people of Quebec, expressed in their freedom to conduct referenda. Sometimes, people confuse self-determination with independence. When we talk about self-determination, people think we are striving for independence. In the case of Quebec, the people exercised their right to self-determination but decided to remain part of Canada. Having this right is in itself the expression of self-determination. So in this category of secessionist movements, there is full territorial integrity of the mother state and at the same time, full expression of self-determination.

The second category where most secessionist movements fall is the one where there is a claim for self-determination but nothing is done to achieve anything in that regard. The mother state continues to have full control over its territory. This is the case of the Kurds in Turkey. Despite all the claims and the fighting, the Kurds have not achieved any level of self-determination in Turkey while Turkey keeps control over all its territory.

A third category is where neither the mother state nor the secessionist movement has any control and there is fighting. This was the case of East Pakistan in the 1970s, which eventually led to independence and the formation of Bangladesh. During this period neither India nor

Pakistan had any control. The situation was the same with Eritrea in the 1960s and 1970s, where no one had any control, before Eritrea became independent. So was the case in 1992-1993 with Karabakh, when there was fighting, territories kept changing hands and neither Azerbaijan nor Karabakh had solid control over the territory of Nagorno Karabakh.

The fourth category is when the secessionist movement has achieved full self-determination. This is the case of Nagorno Karabakh today where Azerbaijan has no control whatsoever over the territory of Nagorno Karabakh. There is full self-determination.

We cannot apply the policies of the second category which I mentioned above, such as those applied to the Kurdish situation – talking about autonomy, addressing issues in the context of minority rights and human rights – when the people in question have already attained *de facto*, full self-determination. So the approach needs to be different from one category to another. That is why we believe that the standard blanket approach to self-determination movements will not work.

Armenia has really welcomed the most recent Minsk Group proposals, precisely because for the first time, they suggested something that took into account these dynamics without setting any pre-conditions about the eventual outcome of the negotiations. They introduced the Common State, which is something between independence and autonomy. Certainly it is more than autonomy, but short of independence.

In cases like Karabakh, the issue should not be to try to reconcile the principles of territorial integrity with the principle of self-determination in a way that prioritizes these concepts, but to find the right balance between these two principles. It seems that the international community has truly come to appreciate that in cases like Karabakh, there needs to be a different approach, as demonstrated by the co-chairs' recent proposals and the support lent to these proposals by the European Parliament. Armenia has welcomed this. We hope that Azerbaijan will eventually accept these proposals as the basis for negotiation so that we can move forward in the negotiation process and reach lasting peace and stability in the Caucasus.

OSCE'S NORMATIVE AND PRESCRIPTIVE FOUNDATIONS

Through OSCE Ministerial Meetings and Summits, in the last several years, this organization has tried to adapt to new challenges, with a dual approach. On the one hand, it has tried to elaborate and enshrine norms and principles in order to frame the relationships of sovereign and equal states, while on the other hand, it has tried to establish mechanisms for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. These two tracks have had the same broader objectives: the maintenance of peace, security and stability. Within this framework, the OSCE has recognized and transformed into doctrine the respect for human rights both as an ultimate goal and as a very practical, real instrument. It is this that makes the OSCE's foundations both normative and prescriptive.

My government, the Republic of Armenia, fully subscribes to this underlying framework of the OSCE and believes that all progress must come, and can only come, by the continuing reinforcement of this foundation.

Today as some long-suppressed conflicts surface, we notice with satisfaction that the OSCE is willing to rise to the challenge and explore new territory. In its pursuit of solutions or in managing crises, the OSCE, a complex, multinational organization, often needs to reconcile principles and norms that may not always appear to be *prima facie* compatible.

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In any democratic society, the challenge consists in reconciling values from within a range of multiple and competing ideals, all seemingly important and equally valid. It was the contribution of the late great political philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin to draw attention to pluralism as an essential, irreducible ingredient of democracy. This process of ongoing negotiations among multiple values and their advocates can maintain and strengthen the democratic credentials of the OSCE itself. Transparency and consensus in decision-making and the attempt to reconcile competing principles are all essential for the OSCE in pursuing security through dialogue and negotiation, rather than through the imposition of a singular principle overriding all others. The transformation of any principle into inflexible and orthodox dogma risks freezing conflicts or imposing brittle solutions that do not take into account the complexities of competing, legitimate norms and claims.

Since 1992, the OSCE has been an integral part of the process for finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh. It has been actively involved, through the various permutations of the Minsk process to define the elements for durable peace and stability in the Transcaucasus region. Armenia is part of this region, and recognizes the need for stability. It is committed to pursue every possible and credible attempt to resolve the conflicts that linger in the region. It is committed to explore every avenue for peaceful relations with all its neighbors, relations based on mutual respect and recognition. Moreover, Armenia believes that the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh poses a special challenge since the parties to the conflict, the people of Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan, have valid claims to foundational principles of the OSCE. Previous efforts by the Minsk Group and its co-chairmen had failed to recognize the equal legitimacy of the competing parties. That is why both Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh considered the previous formula as being unacceptably one-sided.

We have always advocated a more flexible approach on the part of the OSCE, through the co-chairs of the Minsk Group, to try to reconcile seemingly incompatible principles and claims. We have always remained opposed to one-sided orthodoxy. It is therefore with interest that Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh received the Minsk Group

co-chairs' draft proposal during their recent visit to the region last November. My government, as well as the authorities of Nagorno Karabakh, considered the co-chairs' proposal a realistic effort in trying to address the thorny issue of status in a manner that minimizes prejudice to either of the competing claims. Unlike previous attempts, the co-chairs seem to have come to the realization that old orthodoxies and inflexible formulations will not be effective in moving forward the process for a negotiated settlement. Perhaps the boldness with which the co-chairs have proposed to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable principles of territorial integrity and national self-determination grows out of their concern that the window of opportunity for a negotiated settlement is narrowing, and that cease-fires are inherently unstable.

By rejecting the recent principles submitted by the OSCE, Azerbaijan has not taken a single step towards compromise. Nor has it shown any political will or disposition to take responsibility for peace. Azerbaijan still believes that sooner or later, the resolution of this conflict will be on its own terms. Far from serving the purpose of peace, such unyielding attitude will lead to the kind of escalation that neither Azerbaijan, nor Armenia nor Nagorno Karabakh can afford.

There are signs of indifference within the OSCE community to Azerbaijan's rejection of the co-chairs' recent proposal, which, if left unchallenged, could further deepen the current impasse of the peace process. There is a clear distinction between Armenia's rejection of the previous proposal and Azerbaijan's current rejection. What Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh were offered in the past was nothing more than simple autonomy within Azerbaijan. Had the new proposal of the co-chairs offered outright independence to Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijan's rejection could have been equated with Armenia's refusal. However, what we are presented with today is a clear middle road which may lead to a status that the parties can live with. As the Chairman-in-Office mentioned at the opening of this meeting, there are many notions of federation or confederation that have been used in Europe and can serve as a conceptual basis for the solution of this conflict. Azerbaijan's rejection of this middle road is a clear indication of its unwillingness or inability to reach a negotiated settlement of this conflict on the basis of mutual compromise.

The conflict in Nagorno Karabakh is a conflict in which the OSCE must remain engaged in the search for a political settlement. The OSCE, together with the parties involved – Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia – must help prevent the renewal of violence. It must also not allow the dispute to settle into a protracted, uneasy perpetuation of ongoing low-level hostilities likely to prolong the suffering, deprivation and marginalization of affected populations. This uneasy, unstable, precarious situation is a serious impediment to the region's economic growth and development. My government is willing to look beyond this confrontation and see a future of regional cooperation and stability, a crossroads for exchange and cohabitation rather than animosity, distrust, isolation and wasteful military operations.

My government feels strongly that the OSCE is best at adaptive, flexible, even innovative methods, which could eventually become models of operations. But in the search for resolutions to conflicts, eventual settlement can only be possible by recognizing the uniqueness and particularity that are the hallmark of such conflicts. We should not suffer from the collective paralyzing fear of precedent setting. We are neither a court of law nor a legislative body. And the solutions we would seek, through the OSCE, are solutions exactly because the process lends itself to dealing with the particularity of every dispute. Without the implicit recognition of this principle, we would not have gone to Kosovo.

My government's commitment to all of the OSCE norms, principles and activities is rock-solid. Our participation in its wide-ranging operations is reflected in our joining every decision, every declaration, every document issued by the Oslo Ministerial. Ten years ago, when the Soviet system collapsed, many small and medium-sized countries such as Armenia could have been left in a political and security vacuum. The OSCE had the vision and the leadership to include those countries in its structure, and thus provide a small country like Armenia the opportunity to anchor itself in the community of European nations in accordance with long-established European political and social values. While we hope this integration process will be on-going and comprehensive, we approach our engagement with

Europe knowing that it includes both challenges and opportunities. We want to take the responsibilities implied in our engagement seriously. In spite of our limited resources, we are eager to demonstrate our desire to make our contribution, to share in the burden. Perhaps Armenia's taking on the Chairmanship-in-Office would demonstrate our coming of age, and show to all concerned that OSCE's commitment to equality between large and small, powerful and not-so-powerful is not just rhetoric but concrete reality. It is in this spirit that, with a sense of confidence and humility, but enormous faith and optimism about the OSCE's growing democratization, that we submit our candidacy for the Chairmanship, sometime early in the next century in Armenia's fourth millennium.

We welcome the progress on a Document Charter, and are aware of the direction necessary for the work ahead. Our participation in the adaptation process of the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty is in full accord with our recognition of its critical importance in maintaining stability and reducing tension. It is this spirit of full and equal participation in the various initiatives that my government strongly urges the OSCE to entertain bolder notions, to undertake new operations and assume a wider, more active role in the pursuit of security and cooperation in Europe. We will do our utmost to participate vigorously and vigilantly in the further construction of the European security architecture, an architecture that recognizes the basic and fundamental human values of dignity, freedom and social justice.

CHARTING NEW TERRITORY AND DESIGNING EFFECTIVE STRUCTURES

We are at this moment witness to a precariousness that is not only characteristic of certain regions of the world but of Europe as well. No one, least of all my country, can remain a simple spectator and not feel affected by the unpredictable forces moving around us. The Republic of Armenia has just turned eight. We are rightly anxious to make sure that peace and cooperation in Europe, and more particularly in our own immediate region, will afford us the security and stability necessary to develop and consolidate human and economic resources and strengthen democratic institutions.

We believe in Europe and we believe in the OSCE as a framework for strengthening security and stability in Europe. We believe in the Euro-Atlantic cooperation and partnership structure. We have fully incorporated these into our own national security thinking. We also believe however that there should not be a hierarchy between these various elements, instead they should be complementary and serve as a consolidating framework. We believe in cooperation and regional arrangements that create the infrastructure for regional stability. Security is indivisible. However, the conditions and principles that make for security and stability are also indivisible. Justice, fairness and economic development, and most of all respect and protection of human and civil rights. These are also indivisible. A chain is as strong as its weakest link. Europe therefore, is only as prosperous, free and democratic as the poorest, least free and least democratic member of

its community. While differences in the stages of development are inevitable, the rights of the least favored to participate in Europe's overall growth and security must be assured. The insecurity of one is a potential threat to the security of all.

It may be worth repeating these solemn and ritual principles because their pursuit and application often present the OSCE with some awkward dilemmas. In the coming years, as conflicts and confrontations emerge within Europe's extended domain and as old frictions persist, the OSCE and participating states must come to grips with certain contradictions and tensions inherent in our current principles and values. At this moment, we do not want to presume to make concrete proposals for the resolution of these contradictions. We would like to make only certain observations which may be useful as this organization develops and refines the framework for its charter.

First we must distinguish between stability and the forced maintenance of the status quo. Conflating the two is neither wise nor practicable in the long run. A status quo in political life is never inherently permanent and a viable policy of stability requires a mechanism to pursue an evolutionary, dynamic process of managing change. A dormant volcano is not always a dead volcano. We have new and dynamic challenges to the status quo. We should not be shy to address these challenges creatively and objectively to conceive more adaptive answers than falling back to a comfortable, yet dangerously elusive status quo.

Second, the monitoring and anticipation of emerging conflicts can only lead to effective prevention if we have enough alternate instruments, besides techniques of peacekeeping, for freezing a given situation into a status quo. To be credible, our interventions must design means for reconciling competing claims to legitimacy and political expression.

As usual it is easier for those whose national aspirations are already fulfilled to transcend them into transnational, co-operative, integrative institutions. As we know, it has not always been so. It took multiple "nationalist" confrontations to bring part of Europe to its senses. Thus, while some parts of Europe are integrating with countries

secure in their statehood and fulfilled in their national aspirations, other parts are disintegrating, with people trying to achieve independent statehood or clinging to their vulnerable sovereignty. These people, who call themselves nations, and whom the outsiders, discomfited by their agitations, call ethnicities, have a very different idea of stability and status quo. What is usually blamed as the evil of nationalism is no more than the manifestations of frustrated national aspirations and the urge to achieve self-determination, without which security seems elusive to them.

A few words about Armenia's perception of its own security, or rather its perceived threats to its security. Our geographic position and our long history have greatly contributed to our desire to define our security needs in terms which take into account very carefully the behavior and the intentions of our immediate neighbors. The actions and declarations of certain of our neighbors, not only towards us, but in the region as a whole, give us pause and often cause for concern, if not alarm. Our own resources are, objectively speaking, no match to the size, strength or military capabilities of our neighbors with whom our recent history has had a tragic dimension. We would rather move from a position of anxious insecurity to one of positive, gradual and constructive engagement and resolve our differences through diplomatic dialogue and economic and regional cooperation. However, it is difficult to engage those who maintain their refusal to formalize diplomatic relations with my country.

We look at our security not only bilaterally, but also regionally in the broader European context. We are convinced that in the long run, our national security must be anchored in regional stability. While there are multiple conflicts affecting and afflicting the peace and stability of our region, we are understandably ready to help resolve the conflict that affects us most, the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. It is clear to us that the peaceful resolution of this conflict will permit the strengthening of the region's stability and Armenia's development. With this in mind, we remain committed to all ongoing OSCE-sponsored efforts pursued through the Minsk Group and its co-chairmen. While the guns have fallen silent, our willingness to help create positive movement in the Minsk process has already been communicated.

It is important to see the Karabakh conflict from the security perspective of those whose national aspirations have been denied and trampled for too long. It is equally important to bear in mind that Karabakh's claim to independence is fully warranted under international law and the applicable Soviet laws that provided the framework for the Soviet republics to declare their independence in 1991 and thus secure formal recognition by the international community. Under these laws, in opting for independence, those republics which included autonomous units had to conduct referenda in each unit separately, as the people in these units had been granted the constitutional right to determine whether or not they wished to remain in the Union. When the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan declared independence, it did so without any representation from Karabakh, nor did Azerbaijan conduct a separate referendum in Karabakh prior to its declaration, as was required by law. Furthermore, in its declaration of independence, Azerbaijan formally re-established its 1918-1920 independence, thus nullifying those legal acts of the Soviet era that affixed Azerbaijan's authority over Karabakh.

Our convictions notwithstanding, in order to move the peace process forward, let me state here clearly my government's willingness to remove, as pre-conditions for negotiations, the demand for either independence or union with Armenia. We consider the removal of these pre-conditions a serious sign of our commitment to a negotiated peace. However, in order for this to be consequential, we believe that a similar gesture must be forthcoming from our interlocutors. We think that the international community, Europe and the OSCE through the Minsk Group, must encourage a reciprocal posture, a symmetry, whereby Azerbaijan would declare its willingness to remove as pre-condition to talks, its own insistence on an autonomous status for Nagorno Karabakh along traditional lines. Complex and extraordinary situations necessitate innovative, flexible and unconventional solutions in which new forms of statal configurations permit the reconciliation of seemingly irreconcilable principles and political interests.

It is here that the Minsk Group and through it, the OSCE can chart new territory and design adaptive and effective structures and

expand the repertoire of its conflict resolution tools. The rewards for a successful construct in resolving the Karabakh issue cannot be overestimated. It is clear to us that its architecture may have relevance in dealing with similarly engendered conflicts across the OSCE's vast domain.

For us, peace in Nagorno Karabakh is of course the promise of transforming a situation of hostility and confrontation with our neighbor Azerbaijan into one of cooperation and mutually reinforced security. We would like to think of the day when Karabakh is transformed from being a chasm separating our countries to being a bridge built for the benefit of all the populations concerned.

The upholding and promotion of the fundamental values and principles enshrined in the OSCE documents and its emerging charter will undoubtedly play a further role in strengthening cooperation and stability in the region beyond the mere establishment of peace in Karabakh. The strengthening of democratic institutions and the protection of human and civil rights in each country in the region must become the foundation that holds together the regional security space. Regional arrangements between states committed to democracy and the rule of law are more likely to result in the kind of dynamic equilibrium for lasting stability. For its part, Armenia is committed to further democracy at home by working consistently on improving its own constitutional processes and the guarantee of individual rights through the rule of law. For all this, it is important to dare to think broadly and not be confined to a Cold War mentality.

Finally a word about history. It is often said that a slavish attachment to history and an unreconstructed replay of historical memory are incapacitating traits afflicting certain peoples. It is said that these traits must be overcome if peaceful progress is to be achieved between former enemies or currently hostile and feuding neighbors. There is a certain inequity in the way certain mature democracies in Europe and elsewhere refer to these peoples as trapped by their history, as if, a long memory were a form of congenital incapacitation. No nation can escape its history entirely, it can only transcend it. But to transcend it, two conditions must prevail. One, a country must confront its history, both internally and in relation to others.

Second, those others, outside its borders, who as participants and actors have shaped that history, they must also jointly confront theirs. There is no national history in a vacuum. For France and Germany, England and France, the US and Japan, in order to transcend their histories of conflict, war and hatred, they had to transcend the past together. This process is not yet completed in many parts of Europe. In still other parts, the process hasn't even begun.

Armenians are often told to forget history, even recent history. We are told to forget the past and look at the future. If I may borrow the appropriate distinction made by Albert Camus to a German friend, to forgive is not the same as to forget. To forget is neither feasible nor always very wise. It devalues the national experience that underlies so much of national identity, no matter how painful or glorious. To forgive and to be forgiven are equally necessary. Yet, it is difficult to forgive those who do not believe they need to be forgiven. To ask for forgiveness, one must at least recognize a mistake, admit to an injustice or a misdeed. Perhaps contrition is too strong a word; it is not a word in the realm of international political discourse and it is better left to the guardians of our individual souls. But admission of an act of grave and deliberate abuse of the human rights and lives of another people is the least one can do to reinstate the balance and transcend history. Armenians, the nation that survived genocide, are willing to forgive and move on. We are hopeful that the day will come soon when the people with whom we have shared a long history are themselves ready to own up to the truth of their own history. Then and only then, can we move on together and build our regional cooperation and security arrangements on sound bases of trust and respect.

These thoughts about Armenia are not based on any idea of national exceptionalism. Every country's history is unique, but no one's history is truly exceptional. It is therefore our conviction that these observations have relevance for situations across many continents, multiple cultures, several political systems and a multitude of national experiences. The OSCE can and must be instrumental in doing all it can to help history move forward, and find ways to help old adversaries transcend together their troublesome past. Real progress in this situation cannot be achieved by forcing an artificial

consensus when my country continues to believe that its divergent position from that of the majority is grounded in legitimate concerns.

Perhaps there are some among the distinguished representatives here, in this Council, who may dismiss my comments as the wishful utopianism of a small country lost in the Transcaucasian quagmire, a utopianism dressed as political philosophy. May I remind them however that in the last 50 years or so, in Europe alone, the idealism and generosity of spirit of a George Marshall, or a Jean Monet or of a Vaclav Havel proved to be far more realistic and effective than cynical 'realism', far more conducive to cooperation and stability than the 'realism' of the uncritical but faithful practitioners of *realpolitik* who have elevated an essentially narrow and limited instrument of politics into an exalted principle.

BRINGING THE BLACK SEA TO YEREVAN

It is a great honor for me to welcome you to Yerevan for this 11th Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

This is the first time I participate in these meetings as foreign minister. I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm that progress and increased effectiveness in BSEC processes are key foreign policy commitments for Armenia.

We view the BSEC as an important player in the social and economic growth of our countries, in the reinforcement of reciprocal confidence and shared goals, in promoting good-neighborly relations in our region, in assuring stability and security, as well as in integration with European structures.

The recent period has had its unique place in the six-year history of BSEC. The preparatory activities in connection with the signing of the BSEC Charter are completed and we will preliminarily sign it today. I don't want to repeat the essential importance of transforming the BSEC into a regional organization, but I must say that with the signing of the Charter by the members of the BSEC in Yalta in June, and with its approval by national parliaments, the Black Sea process will take a distinct qualitative step forward.

The other recent important development was the official opening of the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank – the BSEC's leading financial institution – in Thessaloniki in February this year. Although not all members have thus far fulfilled their financial

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obligations, nevertheless, everything is set for the bank to operate and I believe that the preparatory stage will be completed by the end of this year.

We have often spoken about advancing effective cooperation in the energy sector. A meeting of BSEC energy ministers was held in Yerevan just two weeks ago. At that time, all countries signed the memorandum on energy-related cooperation as well as the terms of reference for planning the future integration of regional energy systems. It's very important that a preliminary outline for such integration and the ways in which the technical and economic applications of such integration will be financed are clarified at the start. I am confident that cooperation in this arena will progress quickly and will reach its logical conclusion.

During the April 1996 session of the BSEC interior ministers here in Yerevan, there was much discussion about a united and coordinated crime prevention effort. Today, that cooperation has moved forward dynamically, as evidenced by the second meeting of interior ministers in Istanbul, and the March meeting of experts in Athens.

At the same time, I must duly note and welcome the regional advances which have taken place, cooperatively, in the areas of civil emergency planning and in diminishing the effects of natural and technological disasters. A multilateral agreement was signed to that end on April 16 in Sochi by those BSEC ministers whose responsibilities include emergency planning.

There is also progress towards the creation of a BSEC free trade zone. During a working meeting in Yerevan in February, the BSEC Trade and Economic Development working group developed a plan of action for the creation of a free trade zone. I am certain that after further editing, that document will be presented to the BSEC foreign ministers for their approval at our next meeting.

It is essential to continue to focus on cooperation among the region's businessmen. That this kind of effort should be a priority is self-evident. The restructuring of the BSEC Business Council was, justifiably, the fundamental item on the BSEC Business Council Board's agenda when it met in Yerevan in April.

It is essential that better interaction be ensured between different BSEC bodies, with better coordinated rotating presidencies and more interoperability between the BSEC and its Parliamentary Assembly, as well as harmonization of the efforts of the Chairman-in-Office and the Permanent Secretariat.

We welcome the increasing interest by the members of the European Union in BSEC activities. France's application to join BSEC with observer status is an excellent example of this interest. It is important that BSEC further develops, transcending the purely economic sphere and, given the fine line between the economic and political dimensions, facilitates the participating states' membership and integration in other multilateral forums, and firstly, the European Union. It is equally important that BSEC assumes an appropriate and complementary role in the emerging architecture of cooperative institutions from the Atlantic to the Urals.

At the same time, we cannot help but note that the matter of BSEC expansion is one of the difficult issues affecting its development. BSEC participating states have differing opinions on this issue. After signing the Charter, I believe it would behoove us to hold meetings at various levels and develop a unified approach to the issue of BSEC expansion.

BSEC processes should be targeted at strengthening BSEC's position within European and international structures, increasing its influence in the international arena, and securing a stronger political commitment by the participating states towards these objectives. Efficient and effective cooperation among the Black Sea countries will help to consolidate the strategic economic potential inherent in this area, promote free trade, open our roads and other communications, foster the welfare of our peoples thus stimulating the peaceful settlement of existing political disputes and reinforcing the independence, sovereignty, and democratic development of our states.

Europe has fundamentally changed, as have its new geographic and political parameters. We strongly believe that the Black Sea area as a unique security environment should be consolidated as an inseparable part of the common European security space. We call upon all BSEC founding members to contribute to such regional consolida-

tion by engaging themselves at three parallel levels: direct political dialogue, enhanced partnership, and efforts aimed at establishing and implementing a sound future-looking regional cooperation agenda.

To take up the challenge, and to advance our common safety, cooperation and prosperity objectives, active engagement on the part of all responsible members of the Black Sea community, and their cooperative effort are critically important. By combining the interests of all of us and at all levels, we will be able to enter the new 21st century on the basis of stability, security and shared fundamental values.

DETERMINANTS OF ARMENIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

I will be talking about the determinants of Armenia's foreign policy and a starting point in making any decisions about foreign policy is necessarily the concept of national interest. It is a truism that all foreign policy is or should be directed at the protection and advancement of national interests. But the elements that make up national interests and our capacity to advance them are not necessarily self-evident. They require definition and elaboration. In broader terms, Armenia's national interests can be defined as protecting the lives and safety of Armenians; maintaining the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Armenia; and providing for the prosperity of Armenia and its people.

These same premises could equally be applied to any other country. What sets nations apart in the formulation of their national interests are the following: how a nation defines these broader interests in specific ways; the nature, form, scope and origin of the threats and challenges to these interests; and the way that a particular country chooses to respond to threats and challenges.

In 1991, as the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the communist bloc became evident, Armenian intellectuals engaged in a debate about Armenia's future as an independent state, its strategic choices and foreign policy directions.

Delivered as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in Los Angeles on June 30, 1997, at the Los Angeles World Affairs Council,

Three issues were hotly debated. One was the issue of Nagorno Karabakh's self-determination. In 1991, this debate was already concluded. It had been determined that the protection of the people and territory of Karabakh falls within Armenia's national interests and that Nagorno Karabakh's self-determination would be collectively pursued. I don't doubt that if in 1998 the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia had not fundamentally supported the Nagorno Karabakh movement for self-determination, today there would not be a Karabakh to speak of. Azerbaijan would have given the "Karabakh problem" a military solution and there would be no Armenians left in Nagorno Karabakh today.

The second debate was about Armenia's political and economic survival. There is a sense of insecurity and vulnerability in the Armenian populace as a result of Armenia's permanent geopolitical predicament and the uneasy and often tragic relations with neighbors. This had resulted in the belief that in order to cope in such a hostile environment, there is a need for a third power as protector. The leaders of the national movement began to question the validity of this traditional thinking. They argued that through the establishment of normal relations with all neighbors, Armenia would minimize or altogether eliminate the danger and the threat to its existence and thus diminish the need for an outside protector.

The third debate surrounded Armenia's geopolitical orientation. Armenia's location at the crossroads of three distinct geographic regions – Europe, Middle East and Asia, the diversity of the political and cultural influences Armenia has experienced throughout history, and the sudden disappearance of the frontiers defining the bipolar world order of the Cold War era had all blurred Armenia's sense of belonging and geopolitical orientation. What introduced clarity however was Armenia's objective assessment of the emerging political and economic undercurrents and realities, and more importantly, its perception of itself, and its vision of a future endowed with the kind of values and standards that would be conducive to Armenia's evolution as a modern and viable state.

Today, while there is no written Armenian foreign policy manifesto, the direction Armenia has taken during the past five years of

independence pretty much reflects the consensus that emerged from those debates. That direction is: collective pursuit of Nagorno Karabakh's self-determination, establishment of normal and good-neighborly relations with all immediate neighbors, maintaining political and economic ties with Russia in a way that transcends the center-periphery relationship of the past and is based on the principle of sovereign equality and mutual interests, and finally, development of strong relations with the Euro-Atlantic community.

The regional environment today presents a diverse set of threats to Armenia and hence to its security. These threats can be generally grouped within three, often intertwined, categories: military, economic and political.

The biggest military threats to Armenia come from its neighbors to the east and west – Azerbaijan and Turkey. As long as the Nagorno Karabakh issue remains unresolved, there will always be a serious military threat to Armenia's security and the likelihood of such a danger merely increases over time. Only a peaceful negotiated settlement of the Karabakh conflict based on some sort of balance can dissipate this risk.

The military threat from the Turkish side has two components: one directly linked to Nagorno Karabakh; the other, as manifestation of Turkey's domestic problems with regard to the Kurdish issue. In the past, particularly at the height of the fighting between Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan, Turkey repeatedly threatened to intervene militarily and even amassed troops along the Turkish-Armenian border. On many occasions, Turkish forces entered the Azerbaijani exclave territory of Nakhichevan, which borders Armenia on the west. Even during the current cease-fire, Turkey continues to provide arms to Azerbaijan and trains the Azerbaijani army. As for the Kurdish factor, Turkey regularly blames Armenia for supporting the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey. Such charges are both false and unjust.

The threats to Armenia's economic security also come from its immediate neighbors. Armenia is a small country with a population of 3.5 million with no natural resources and a devastated industrial infrastructure. Its biggest economic challenge is to revitalize its industry and to achieve macroeconomic stability. To do this, Armenia needs foreign investment and a strong export-driven economy.

Given Armenia's domestic market potential, Armenia can not reach an acceptable level of economic prosperity relying solely on its own domestic market. The continuing blockade imposed on Armenia by its neighbors, together with regional instability and Armenia's uncertainty about an uninterrupted energy supply jeopardize Armenia's ability to revitalize its industry and achieve macroeconomic stability through investments and exports.

Finally, the political threats are those that undermine Armenia's domestic stability, sovereignty, independence and its ability to aggressively adopt core values such as representative governance, market economics and respect for fundamental human rights. Such threats may come from within the country and from without.

Armenia has no illusions about its future and its ability to shape it. Armenia knows and values its potential and at the same time recognizes its limitations and handicaps, determined by political, economic and environmental restraints. As Armenia's leaders contemplate responses to Armenia's national security threats and determine foreign policy moves and actions, they find themselves affected, influenced and restrained by forces, factors and perceptions on a multitude of levels – global, regional, domestic and individual.

Does the Russian-American rivalry and disagreement over NATO enlargement affect Armenia's foreign policy decisions? Does American-Iranian hostility and the absence of relations affect Armenia's foreign policy decisions? Do Iranian-Azerbaijani relations or Georgian-Azerbaijani relations or the prospect of Russian-Azerbaijani relations affect Armenia's policies in the region?

The answer to all these questions is, certainly, yes. It is the combination of these factors together with Armenia's own definition of its interests and Armenia's perception of the threats to its interests that eventually shape and determine Armenia's foreign policy.

Establishing good neighborly relations has been Armenia's motto for the past five years. While Armenia has developed good relations with two neighbors – Iran and Georgia – such has not been the case with its two other neighbors – Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Turkey, for understandable reasons, occupies a unique position in Armenia's foreign policy. Turkey recognized Azerbaijan's independence

in November 1991 and a month later also recognized Armenia and the other 13 former soviet republics. Five years later, however, it has not yet established relations with Armenia and since 1993 has closed its border with Armenia.

Since the first days of independence, Armenia urged Turkey to establish normal relations. Ankara, however, placed conditions for such a move. First, it demanded that Armenia explicitly reject any territorial claims and disavow the Genocide. Later, it modified its position, and made the return of all the territories occupied in the course of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict a pre-condition to the establishment of relations. Today, Turkey demands that Armenia accept the principles in the OSCE Chairman's Statement at the 1996 Ministerial Council meeting in Lisbon principles as a basis for the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Turks sensed a new international prominence for themselves: that of a major regional power in the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans. But Turkey did not live up to that challenge mainly due to its failure to address the problems in those regions. Specifically, as regards to the Nagorno Karabakh issue, Turkey did not approach the conflict from the perspective of its broader, national geostrategic interests. Rather, Turkey was caught in the tangle of narrow, ethnic interests and emotional determinants.

The ideological and emotional context that affects Turkish foreign policy in the Transcaucasus is complex and confusing. There is Turkey's natural, ethnic and religious affinity with Azerbaijanis, on the one hand, compounded by a historical hostility towards Armenians on the other. Although Turkey can see that such a biased and one-sided approach has resulted in the undermining of its role and prestige in the region, it continues to adhere to this policy.

Today Turkey has fundamental problems of governance and stability, as well as issues of national identity, which further undermine its role in the region and its ability to provide leadership and vision for the region's future. Armenia, however, remains committed to its policy: establishing diplomatic relations and developing normal economic and commercial ties, without pre-conditions.

Iran is another matter. The extraordinary length of Iranian history and the breadth of its sophisticated civilization have provided Iran with a multi-faceted and complex national experience. This means dealings with Iran are both easy and difficult. The good thing about Armenia-Iran relations is that they are not hampered with baggage from the past. Furthermore, Iran's mastery of the principle of equilibrium, which it has employed as a foreign policy tool throughout its history, has enabled it to successfully adopt a balanced and even-handed policy towards both Armenia and Azerbaijan and more importantly, towards the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. Even at the height of the military conflict, Iran never threatened to close its borders with Armenia.

Armenia has no political problems with its neighbor to the north either. Georgia holds strategic value for Armenia by providing Armenia access to Russia, the Black Sea and Europe. Georgia's domestic turmoil in 1992 and 1993 severely curtailed Armenia's ability to maintain its links with the world. Since Eduard Shevardnadze's election as president, those difficulties have been eliminated. Armenia's access to the north has been restored and Armenian-Georgian bilateral relations have been put on firmer footing.

Observers of Armenia-Russia relations arrive at the erroneous conclusion that Armenia is a Russian satellite. This is often fueled by Azerbaijan's misrepresentations.

The presence of Russian troops in Armenia, some critics argue, undermines Armenia's sovereignty. We believe that, on the contrary, their presence here, with Armenia's consent and on the basis of common needs, is an expression of Armenia's sovereignty and ability to choose its own security arrangements in view of foreign threats. The fact is that Armenia has succeeded, since independence, in developing Armenian-Russian relations based on sovereign equality and shared economic and security interests.

As for Europe, Armenia has made a great deal of headway in those relations which are of particular importance for Armenia, not simply for their apparent political and economic implications, but more so as an indicator of Armenia's resolve to fashion a country where the rule of law guides a liberal and democratic society whose goals are growth

and development. Indeed, Europe is the one political entity that espouses progressive values, has fully developed political and economic security structures, and is prepared to embrace those who are willing to accept and practice its norms and values.

Armenia's European policy has progressed on four fronts.

Politically, Armenia is fully engaged in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, where the issue of Nagorno Karabakh is being deliberated and where a new security model for Europe for the 21st century is being developed.

Economically, Armenia interacts with the European Union. Last year the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Armenia and the European Union was signed. It has already been ratified by Armenia's National Assembly and the European Parliament.

On matters of law, democracy and human rights, Armenia is guided by the Council of Europe where Armenia has special guest status. Given Armenia's progress in accepting human rights and democratic norms, it is expected that by the end of this year, Armenia will be granted full membership in the Council of Europe.

Finally, on security matters, Armenia is fully engaged in NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

Let me say the obvious: The pursuit of Nagorno Karabakh's self-determination is Armenia's main foreign policy priority. It is more than mere policy. It is the expression of the Armenian national will to assure the safety and security of this endangered population of 150,000 Armenians living within a historically Armenian territory.

Azerbaijan's claim of territorial integrity is based on 75 years of jurisdiction over territory given to it by Stalin, as a pay-off to Turkey for many things. Nagorno Karabakh's claim is based on the history of the region, the legal basis of the conflict, the process undertaken by Nagorno Karabakh to secede from Azerbaijan, and its population's right to national self-determination.

The international community's main concern is that the success of a self-determination movement could set a dangerous precedent and undermine the political unity of other countries. However, dismissing all self-determination claims in favor of the status quo out of this fear of the domino effect is a cowardly, albeit, convenient way to deal with

the most pressing issue facing the world order today. The international community's reluctance to acknowledge the legitimacy of self-determination claims and its refusal to consider each case on its own merits and to recommend solutions accordingly may only exacerbate already explosive situations.

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EXCERPTS FROM SPEECHES

The international community's main concern is that the success of a self-determination movement could set a dangerous precedent and undermine the political unity of other countries. However, dismissing all self-determination claims in favor of the status quo out of this fear of the domino effect is a cowardly, albeit, convenient way to deal with the most pressing issue facing the world order today. The international community's reluctance to acknowledge the legitimacy of self-determination claims and its refusal to consider each case on its own merits and to recommend solutions accordingly may only exacerbate already explosive situations.

Los Angeles, 1997

If the international community genuinely and persistently addresses the many challenges of September 11, that date too, will be marked for two opposite yet monumental occasions: not just for the terror it wreaked on all mankind, but also for the wisdom demonstrated since that day by a humanity which chose the tough path of understanding and security over the obvious path of cynicism and violence.

Bucharest, 2001

The principle of complementarity that Armenia adopted several years ago, and which was met with skepticism, has been vindicated. It is indeed possible to engage all countries that have a political or economic interest in the Caucasus. In the absence of such competition and conflict, regional stability in the Caucasus has a real chance to take root. This is important for a world looking to minimize security concerns and to enhance peace and cooperation at all levels.

Brussels, 2001

Today's Turks do not bear the guilt of the perpetrators, unless they choose to defend and identify with them. Armenians and Turks, together with the rest of the modern world, can reject the actions and denounce the crimes of the Ottoman Empire. Some Turkish writers and academics have begun down that difficult road to introspection and study. Some are doing so publicly and with great transparency. In this context, it is essential that the international community doesn't turn a blind eye, but instead consistently extends its hand, its example, its own history of transcending.

London, 2005

The American Declaration of Independence is about rights. It is a testament to the rights of individuals, of peoples, of society. But no man was ever endowed with a right without being at the same time saddled with a responsibility. We are privileged to be the generation that is consolidating independence. We do have wide and generous opportunities to turn a dream into a country, a stable country with a promising future.

Washington DC, 2006