

EUROPEAN UNION IN ARMENIA NEWSLETTER

EUROPEAN COMMISSION DELEGATION TO ARMENIA

4 (32) April 2006

EU SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE SOUTH CAUCASUS VISITED YEREVAN

On April 5-7, 2006 Peter Semneby made his first visit to Yerevan in his capacity as European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for the South Caucasus. In the scope of his visit, he held meetings with Armenian President Robert Kocharian, Chairman of the National Assembly Artur Baghdasarian, Prime Minister Andranik Margarian, Foreign and Defence Ministers, Vartan Oskanian and Serzh Sarkisian, Catholicos of All Armenians Garegin II, representatives of the opposition and NGOs.

"Historical responsibility of the sides"

Speaking at a joint press conference with Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian on April 5, Peter Semneby said: "I am not happy with the statements about the possible military resolution of the Karabakh conflict, and during my recent visit to Azerbaijan I stated that any militaristic attempts will entail catastrophic consequences."

Peter Semneby pointed out that Armenian and Azeri leaderships bear "historical responsibility" for the conflict resolution, noting that 2006 is a convenient year to resolve the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

"The window of possibilities is still open, and the European Union is ready to render all necessary assistance to the peace process," EU Special Representative said. He noted that "my mandate lays bigger focus on the assistance to conflict resolution rather than the mandate of my predecessor Heikki Talvitie. This is a political signal bearing witness to EU's growing interest in the settlement of frozen conflicts." He also



European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby (left) and Armenian President Robert Kocharian (right)

said EU's bigger interest in conflict resolution is conditioned by the fact that Armenia and Azerbaijan are deepening their relations with the European Union within the European Neighborhood Policy.

According to Peter Semneby, after the signing of the peace agreement the European Union may play a significant role in the realization of projects aimed at the post conflict rehabilitation as well as take part in the peace support operation. At the same time, EU Special Representative added, EU's growing interest in conflict resolution does not mean at all that the format of the OSCE Minsk Group will be changed, as the co-chairs of this group "work perfectly well".

Reforms, preparation to upcoming elections and Action Plan within ENP

On April 6 Peter Semneby met with

Armenian Prime Minister Andranik Margarian. Highlighting with satisfaction the successful and fruitful elaboration of Armenia's Action Plan within the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), Armenian PM expressed the hope that after the end of the third round of talks scheduled for this May, the Action Plan will be approved in the nearest future. He also noted that the Armenian side would like to have an independent European Commission Delegation in Yerevan, especially taking into consideration the growing volume of the work related to the implementation of ENP's Action Plan.

On April 7 Armenian President Robert Kocharian and Peter Semneby discussed issues related to the organization and holding of 2007 and 2008 elections in compliance with international standards.

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EU SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE SOUTH CAUCASUS VISITED YEREVAN

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Armenian President hailed the establishment of the institute of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus "which allowed to make our relations with EU bodies more coordinated."

Peter Semneby noted that the relations between the South Caucasus and the European Union have moved to a qualitatively new level, and the establishment of peace and stability in the region is in the focus of attention of the European Union.

At the meeting, the parties also discussed issues concerning the elaboration of Armenia's Action Plan within ENP. Robert Kocharian stressed the importance of adopting this document as soon as possible.

On April 7 Peter Semneby met with the Chairman of Armenian National Assembly Artur Baghdasarian. The parties discussed a wide range of issues related to Armenia-EU relations, development of democracy and assistance to civil



European Union Special Representative for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby (left) and Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian (right)

society, organization of pre-election and election processes, fight against corruption as well as legislative changes after the constitutional referendum. Artur Baghdasarian and Peter Semneby highlighted the importance of holding the upcoming elections in compliance with democratic norms.

On April 8 EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus met in Yerevan with the leader of Nagorno Karabakh Arkady Ghukasian. During the meeting, the parties outlined their approaches to recent developments in the Nagorno Karabakh settlement process and possible activation of EU's role.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS HELD TALKS IN YEREVAN

On 5 April 2006 Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian received Fokion Fotiadis, the European Commission's Deputy Director of the Directorate General for External Relations, who was in Armenia on a working visit.

Congratulating the guest on his appointment, Minister Oskanian expressed hope that this first meeting will be the beginning of close cooperation. The Minister also noted that Armenia intends to deepen its partnership with the European Commission's Directorate General for External Relations.

They discussed Armenia-EU relationship and focused on regional energy issues, specifically Armenia's energy security and sources of diversification. In this regard, they exchanged views on the energy potential of the South Caucasus and nearby regions, as well as the prospects for safe utilization of the

atomic energy.

The Minister and the Deputy Director General discussed in detail the pace and progress of the elaboration process of the European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan. They highly assessed the two stages of consultations already held in this regard and expressed confidence that it will be possible to conclude the Action Plan during the third round of discussions in May and to start its implementation.

Underlining the need for conflict settlement in the region, the two spoke about the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and prospects for its peaceful settlement. In this regard, Minister Oskanian presented the latest developments in the negotiations process.

The same day Fokion Fotiadis was received by Armenian Prime Minister Andranik Margarian.

Speaking about Action Plan talks, Fokion Fotiadis said these talks are

the beginning of the path which presupposes a new stage in Armenia-EU relations. He stressed EU's interest in the speedy end of the talks and in the establishment of a long-term cooperation with Armenia.

Andranik Margarian and Fokion Fotiadis also touched upon energy security issues, including the closure of the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant and creation of alternative energy sources.

Representative of the European Commission voiced European Union's readiness to assist Armenia in solving key issues of energy security. He noted that the special program for the closure of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant will help the international community better understand the urgency of the issue and future steps. According to him, this will create favorable conditions for conducting an international conference of donors to discuss the possibilities of financial assistance.

EUROPEAN UNION TROIKA DELEGATION VISITED YEREVAN

The European Union (EU) Troika delegation, headed by Austrian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Hans Winkler, visited Yerevan on April 19-20 2006.

Deepening of democracy and Nagorno Karabakh settlement

Speaking at a joint press conference with Hans Winkler on April 20, Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian said that "the European Union follows very closely the development of democratic institutions in Armenia." Vartan Oskanian noted that at the meeting with European Union Troika delegation they focused on the holding of 2007 and 2008 parliamentary and presidential elections in Armenia.

Armenian FM said that at the meet-

process," Hans Winkler stressed.

EU interested in the closure of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant

Austrian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Hans Winkler said "the European Union is very interested in closing the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant in Armenia." According to Hans Winkler "outdated technologies, not meeting today's security requirements, are used at the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant".

"On the other hand, EU respects the sovereign right of each country - to choose this or that type of energy that better meets its possibilities and interests," Hans Winkler added. According to him, the prospects of building a new Nuclear Power Plant in Armenia were



Austrian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Hans Winkler (left) and Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian (right)

ing with the EU Troika delegation they have also discussed the settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. "I outlined Armenia's position, we exchanged opinions about possible developments in the negotiation process within the coming several days and weeks," Vartan Oskanian noted. According to the Minister, the Armenian-Turkish relations, the energy security and the situation around Iran have also been discussed at the meeting with the EU Troika delegation.

Hans Winkler expressed hope that "progress will be provided" at the forthcoming parliamentary and presidential elections in Armenia. Speaking about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Austrian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs said the European Union is interested in the speedy resolution of the conflict. "We are ready to render any necessary support to the settlement

not discussed during the talks with the EU Troika delegation in Armenia "as it is outside EU competence."

ENP Action Plan

Armenian President Robert Kocharian received the European Union Troika delegation on April 20. Robert Kocharian positively assessed EU's growing interest in the South Caucasus region and spoke of the importance to adopt Armenia's Action Plan within the European Neighborhood Policy.

According to the President, this document will make the future Armenia-EU cooperation "clearer and more comprehensible."

"We are considering the Action Plan as a guideline for better relations that will allow realizing more coordinated and purposeful reforms," Robert Kocharian said.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MINE AWARENESS OBSERVED IN ARMENIA

On April 4, 2006 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Armenia presented the results of the first country-wide Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) 2005, conducted within the framework of EU funded and UNDP implemented Armenia Demining Project.

Vache Terteryan, Deputy Minister of Territorial Administration of Armenia, Alexis Loeber, Acting Head of the European Commission Delegation to Armenia and Consuelo Vidal, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, presented the survey.

In February 2006 the Landmine Impact Survey of the Humanitarian Demining project received a Certificate of Compliance with international standards.

Consuelo Vidal noted in her speech: "Landmines have a clear impact on the possibilities for development of the communities that are affected. According to experts' estimates, Armenia can become a landmine impact free country in a relatively short period of time, due to the manageable scope of the problem and the continued support of the international community and of the national initiatives in this field."

Consuelo Vidal also said that 102 suspected hazardous areas and 60 impacted communities have been identified in Tavush, Gegarkunik, Ararat, Vayots Dzor and Syunik marzes (in total 320 square km). On the whole, mines and unexploded ordinance currently affect about 69 thousand people in Armenia.

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SESSION OF EU-ARMENIA INTERPARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION COMMITTEE HELD IN YEREVAN

The 8th session of EU-Armenia Interparliamentary Cooperation Committee was held in Yerevan on April 18-19, 2006. The co-chairs of the Committee are the member of the European Parliament, Marie Anne Isler Béguin, and the Chairman of Armenian National Assembly Foreign Relations Committee, Armen Rustamian.

Armenian President Robert Kocharian, Chairman of the National Assembly Artur Baghdasarian and Prime Minister Andranik Margarian received the European MPs on April 19.

Speaking about the importance of the speedy approval of Armenia's Action Plan within ENP, Robert Kocharian said that this will allow firmly moving forward.

"The future of Armenia, that has chosen the European development path, is in the effective management, fruitful political system and economy. We can have it only through deep and large-scale reforms," said Robert Kocharian.

At the meeting, the parties highlighted the importance of deepening democratic processes in Armenia, organizing and conducting the upcoming elections in compliance with European standards. Armenian President also presented to the European MPs the latest developments in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement.

Chairman of the National Assembly Artur Baghdasarian noted that by the mutual consent of political forces a new draft Electoral Code has been



Co-chair of the Committee, member of the European Parliament, Marie Anne Isler Béguin (left) and Armenian President Robert Kocharian (right)

worked out, and the grounds for holding democratic elections are being formed.

Artur Baghdasarian also spoke about energy issues. He noted that Armenia needs EU's assistance in diversifying energy sources, and the provision of energy security is priority for Armenia. The parties stressed the importance of holding serious reforms in the spheres of the fight against corruption, judicial-legal, tax and custom systems, local self-governance and ter-

ritorial administration.

At the meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Andranik Margarian the parties also focused on regional problems. Andranik Margarian and Marie Anne Isler Béguin agreed that the improvement of Armenian-Turkish relations on the whole and the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border in particular will positively affect the regional stability and the security environment.



From left to right: Co-chair of the Committee Marie Anne Isler Béguin, Chairman of the National Assembly Artur Baghdasarian, Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian and Chairman of the parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee Armen Rustamian