

## “Armenia: Challenges of Sustainable Development” Second Annual Conference

WHAT: AIPRG to Host Second Annual Conference:

“Armenia: Challenges of Sustainable Development”

WHERE: The World Bank International Headquarters  
([http:// www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)), Washington, D.C.

WHEN: January 17-18, 2004

The Armenian International Policy Research Group (AIPRG) will host its second annual conference on Armenia in Washington, DC, on January 17-18 2004. The theme of this year's conference is “Armenia: Challenges of Sustainable Development”. The primary objective of the conference is to provide a venue for economists, political and social scientists from Armenia and abroad to interact and discuss various topics related to the economic development of Armenia. Another important goal of the conference is the professional development and capacity

building among young professionals in their respective fields.

Over 50 proposals have been submitted by both Armenian and non-Armenian experts. A select number of these will be presented at the conference. The topics to be discussed include international trade, financial and fiscal policies, governance, Armenian capital markets, small and medium enterprise development, health and social sector development.

A number of high-ranking representatives of the US and Armenian governments, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and academia are expected to participate.

Over 175 participants attended the first conference last year. A select number of the papers presented were published in the first issue of AIPRG's Armenian Journal of Public Policy.

For more details visit the AIPRG website at: [www.armpolicyresearch.org](http://www.armpolicyresearch.org)

### Ararat-Eskijian Museum Tribute

On his 90th birthday the Ararat-Eskijian Museum held a tribute ceremony for its founder Luther Eskijian, and recognized the achievements of outstanding contributors and artists to the first Armenian museum on the West Coast, including Mrs. Hasmik Mgrdichian major contributor of the museum and Chairperson Emeritus. The event was held in the Sheen Chapel at the Ararat Home of Los Angeles in Mission Hills, uniquely designed by Mr. Eskijian in ancient Armenian architecture, with a reception in the Museum. Mr. Eskijian lifelong interest in collecting antiques and art, as well as his historic life, as a survivor of the Genocide, World War II veteran, and vast community and faith-based services were recognized. The tribute was filmed by two independent TV stations and televised the following week. Mr. Herald Mgrunlian and Mr. Bob Shamlian spoke on behalf of the Ararat Home, and communicated the selfless services of Mr. Eskijian and Mrs. Mgrdichian, to see the vision of the museum. Additional tributes were expressed by Dr. Prof. Levon Choukaszian, director of Yerevan State University Unesco Chair Art History Dept., Dr. Prof. Verjine

Svazlian, Institute of the Armenian Genocide, and Dr. Prof. Arshavir Toramanian, from Armenia. Nearly 200 persons, including the family and friends of the recognized donors, artists, and Mr. and Mrs. Eskijian attended the event. Mr. Gagik Vartanian displayed many of his beautiful paintings at the reception following.

Several persons were awarded plaques made of Obsidian, designed by Mr. George Balian, and produced in Armenia. The figure of “Mother Armenia Arising from the Ashes” on the plaques in pewter is a small replica of the statue at the entrance of the Museum, representing Armenians who both perished and survived the Genocide of 1915. Additionally, Mr. Eskijian and lifelong friend Mr. Steve Lazarian donated a full size replica of the statue, which stands at the Genocide Museum concourse in Yerevan, where it is highly regarded by visitors.

The Ararat-Eskijian Museum also celebrated its ten year anniversary. Speakers emphasized that this is a Museum that belongs to all Armenians, and will express Armenian historical and cultural values for many generations.

### Armenia Toughens Foreign Adoption Rules

The Armenian government announced on Wednesday a major toughening of its procedures for the adoption of Armenian children by foreign nationals, citing an “alarming” increase in such cases in recent years.

Senior officials dealing with the issue also admitted that the existing rules, adopted in February 2000, leave the process open to government abuse and corruption.

According to official figures, 76 children were adopted by foreigners — most of them U.S. citizens — in the first eleven months of this year, up from 43 such cases registered in 2001. By contrast the number of domestic adoptions has fallen from 135 to 128 during the same period.

Under the new rules foreign couples will be allowed to adopt an Armenian child only after the state exhausts all possibilities of finding the latter local parents. Any child will be available for foreign adoption at least three months after being included into the Social Security Ministry's

adoption database.

According to senior officials involved in the process claimed this summer that Armenian orphans are already allowed to be taken abroad only after failing to attract local adoptive parents.

It also remained unclear whether foreigners will be required to deal with the government directly, and not through international or domestic agents that have carried out all the paperwork and even selected children for their clients until now. Some senior Social Security Ministry officials announced recently that foreigners will have to be present at every stage of the adoption process that may take between three months and a year.

Its integrity was thrust into doubt last June by an RFE/RL report exposing apparent kickbacks paid by foreign adoptive parents and their local “facilitators” to relevant Armenian officials. The report was based on an online investigation conducted by a U.S. citizen of Armenian descent.

## Azerbaijan Watch

### Azerbaijani Parliament Protests to Swiss National Council

The Azerbaijani parliament expressed a protest to the Swiss Parliament for its recognition of the so-called Armenian genocide. Switzerland has become the 15th country to do so. “The historical realities have been distorted in the corresponding decision of the Swiss National Council,” reads the protest statement. It is Azerbaijan that has suffered genocide at times. The massacre of March 1918 has left a negative imprint in the Azerbaijani history as a great tragedy. For that reason, March 31 is marked as the Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis at the state level. The National Council of Switzerland, considering itself to be a parliament based on democratic principles, should not have adopted such a decision, the statement continues, as the world well knows that Armenia has occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory.

### Azerbaijani Police Confiscate Electrical Devices to Reduce Energy Consumption

Police in the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan began forcibly confiscating electrical devices from the population on 29 December in order to reduce energy consumption, Turan reported. Many people have been left without heating, and temperatures in the region are currently around -10 degrees Centigrade. All households pay a flat rate of 20,000 manats (\$4) per month for electricity. LF

### What to Expect from the Revitalization of the Peace Process?

The theme of Karabagh has resurfaced. But will something real come from the revitalization of the peace process? Former Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Tofiq Zulfugarov, who participated in past peace negotiations, does not rule out that certain steps might be made towards a solution to the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict in the near future. Zulfugarov admitted that a certain revival is now being observed, referring to the recent Geneva meeting of Azeri and Armenian presidents and the OSCE Minsk Group cochairmen's separate meetings with the presidents. All this proves that the co-chairmen might have new ideas. But they do not intend to publicize these ideas at the current stage. They simply want to determine how these ideas will be perceived.

According to Zulfugarov, the “package” version which envisages the settlement of the conflict once and for all, sounds rather unrealistic. The issue could be resolved “step-by-step,” he said.

Hailing Russia's participation in the peace process, political scientist Rasim Musabekov said that this was anticipated. Musabekov recalled that to date France and the United States have tried to take the initiative at different times. In this context it was expected that Russia would also demonstrate initiative. But can Russia's activity prove a turning point in the settlement process? Musabekov pointed out that like other countries, Russia realizes the need of practical progress in the Karabagh problem as well. Therefore Moscow is making certain attempts. Musabekov said that anyhow, as the first step Azerbaijan would demand the release of its occupied territories. Armenia, for its part, will seek to restore transport communications and solve the status of Nagorno-Karabagh. At the current stage it is impossible to include the status issue on the agenda, Musabekov argued. But it makes sense to talk about the opening of transport communications and release of some occupied territories. In other words, the “step-by-step” approach is more realistic.

(Shahnaz Beilergizi)

### BP-Azerbaijan to Start Drilling Third Well In Shahdaniz

After completing the second pre-drilling well, BP-Azerbaijan is scheduled to start drilling the third well as part of the Shahdaniz Phase 1 project late January of 2004.

BP-Azerbaijan told AssA-Irada that the drilling process would take about six months to complete. Drilling of the first pre-drilling well was completed on August 25, 2003 to a depth of 6566 meters. The drilling of the second well that has a design depth of 6610 meters and is located 101 meters of water depth has now reached a depth of 6244 meters. The first gas is considered to be drawn as part of Phase 1 project amounting to \$3.2bn late in 2006.

Investments in development and production activities make up \$2.3bn, while those in transportation constitute \$0.9bn. Partners in Shahdaniz Production Sharing Agreement are: BP (operator – 25.5%), Statoil (25.5%), SOCAR (10%), LUKAgip (10%), NICO (10%), Total (10%) and TPAO (9%).



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The new broadcaster will be headquartered in the former editorial offices of Dashnaksutyun's Yerevan-based official newspaper. Incidentally, it is called “Yerkir” (Country).

The Armenian law on broadcasting bans political parties from owning or controlling TV and radio stations. Amalian argued that Yerkir-Media technically meets the requirement as it has no “official connection” with Dashnaksutyun.