

**Summary of the Thematic Discussion on International Relations and Geopolitics
Day 3: Policy Forum Armenia's Diaspora Forum**

Hosted by the Armenian National Committee
Washington, DC; March 2, 2010

Participants: Viken Attarian, Aram Hamparian, David Grigorian, Dzovinar Derderian, Jennifer De Mucci, Ted Tourian, Vahe Heboyan, Erna Mamikonyan, and David Azat.

The discussion started with a short presentation by Aram Hamparian on ANCA's mission and work.

DISCUSSION

- **Armenian Involvement in Politics and Organizations**

The participants discussed how international policy is based on the historical past, ideological position and objective and goals. It was expressed that we need to better understand Armenia's neighbors and their respective perspectives. The participants also touched upon the fact that there is distrust of authorities in Armenia, which hampers involvement. What role cultural norms have in political and organizational involvement was also touched upon. While Armenians have historically lived under foreign rule, which has served as an impediment to organizational and political involvement, the participants expressed optimism in the current generation's potential and ability to foster a cultural change in this respect.

- **Organizations in the Diaspora and Levels of Their Involvement**

There is a new generation willing to give. The participants touched upon we the Diaspora can focus on the young generation in Armenia. One of the participants expressed the idea of working with the Armenian Embassy in engaging Armenian students that study in US universities. Aram Hamparian stressed that the ANCA's role was organizing to shape US policy, and that as such the ANCA can't do much in Armenia. Some of the participants pointed out that while this is a fair assessment in terms of what the organizations goals are, the ANCA has in the past involved itself in the domestic affairs of Armenia by releasing statements on matters pertaining to domestic politics in Armenia. Some of the participants suggested looking at lobby groups of other Caucasus states, such as Georgia and Azerbaijan. It was pointed out that some of these lobbies, such as the Azerbaijani lobby, are able to built strong relationships with academic centers, which the Armenian lobby thus far has failed to do.

- **Reactions to Armenia-Turkey Protocols**

The participants discussed the Armenia-Turkey Protocols in detail, touching upon various aspects considerations pertaining to the Protocols. It was pointed out that issues that divide Armenians were used in a very public way to divide us further. Some expressed their concern that there wasn't sufficient discussion on the Protocols before they were introduced.

Participants also expressed the opinion that the signing of the Protocols itself evinced concessions already made by Armenia, and that ratification was no longer a threat in terms of concessions, since they have already been made. Some pointed out that just like the Diaspora, opinions and emotions pertaining to the Protocols are also divided.

The participants also pointed out that the authorities in Armenia lacked the requisite legitimacy to represent the Armenian citizenry on such a sensitive subject. Given how much is at stake, it is important to have trust in people who lead this process behind the protocols and also in their motives. Also, economically, there are certain disadvantages that the Protocols can pose, particularly in the short run. David Grigorian pointed out that while there has been a lot of propaganda on this issue coming from official Yerevan, there is not enough balanced professional views highlighting the potentially devastating consequences of opening the border on import-substituting industries without adequate preparation. As Mr. Grigorian put it, "the upside is overstated and the downside can be ugly, for which there are ample signs." The participants also discussed how Turkish Premiere Erdogan has used the protocols to expose the "Hidden State". Several high level nationalists opposed the protocols have been incarcerated.