

## EU News from AGBU Europe

### European Parliament Approves South Caucasus Strategy for EU

On May 20, 2010 the European Parliament voted to pass a resolution on 'an EU strategy for the South Caucasus'. The resolution, which contains a section dedicated to Nagorno Karabakh (NK), had been approved by the EU Foreign Affairs Committee in April 2010.



Plenary Session in the European Parliament

AGBU Europe supported the European Parliament's interest in the region and campaigned for the resolution to be more fair and balanced towards NK. The Parliament voted in favour of EU engagement in, and development aid to NK and conflict resolution there, recommending a series of confidence building measures ([more](#)).

The resolution was successfully amended by MEPs to "ensure the security of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh" in the event of an Armenian withdrawal from the surrounding territories. However, several MEPs criticised paragraphs 8 and 10, which call for Armenia to surrender those territories. This is likely to be interpreted by groups seeking to disrupt the already fragile peace process as a challenge to the approach of the Minsk Group negotiators. The Minsk Group considers the disputed territory as part of a package of issues which must be negotiated jointly.

This apparent contradiction was highlighted during the debate by a number of [MEPs](#) including Dr Charles Tannock (Conservatives and Reformists Group Coordinator) and was acknowledged as an "important point" by Mr Štefan Füle, the EU Commissioner for Enlargement. These criticisms also reflected the mood in Armenia, where the Minister of Foreign Affairs Edward Nalbandyan and much of the media were very critical over what is perceived as an attempt to undermine a fragile peace process.

[The Debate in Parliament](#)

# AGBU

Also in this newsletter:

1. President Serge Sargsyan Completes Working Visit to Brussels
2. AGBU Europe Hosts EU's Special Representative for South Caucasus
3. Armenian Virtual College Presentation in Brussels
4. AGBU Europe Goriz 'Pro democratia' Youth Seminar in Armenia



### EUSR Peter Semneby Addresses AGBU Europe Conference in Paris

On May 17, AGBU Europe organised a conference with Peter Semneby, the special representative of the EU to the South Caucasus. The conference was dedicated to the Karabakh conflict and the role of the European Institutions for its normalisation process.

After a short presentation of the Eastern Partnership Mr Semneby answered questions from two journalists: Ara Toranian, director of Nouvelles d'Arménie Magazine and Gaidz Minassian, journalist at Le Monde magazine and associated researcher at the Foundation of Strategic Research and lecturer at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po).

During the conference the participants discussed the possibilities of EU engagement in the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

Among the participants at the conference were Achot Alexanian, first advisor at the Armenian Embassy in France; Hovhannes Gevorgian, the representative of Nagorno Karabakh in France; and four representatives from the Embassy of Azerbaijan in France.

When the Representative of Nagorno Karabakh in France - who had listened carefully to the contribution of the Azerbaijani delegation - took his turn to address the conference, the Azerbaijani delegation left without explanation.

At the end of the discussion Alexis Govcian, the president of AGBU Europe, concluded that the security, economic development and international recognition of Karabakh society should be a priority.

### AGBU Europe GORIZ "Pro Democratia" seminar in Armenia

AGBU Europe GORIZ "Pro Democratia" seminar took

Many other issues concerning NK were discussed during the debate. In a clear reference to Azerbaijan, Ulrike Lunacek, MEP was critical of increased military spending in the region. Rapporteurs Mr Yevgeni Kirilov, MEP and Mr Metin Kazak, MEP, for their part, emphasised the importance of energy supplies and territorial integrity.

In response, Mr Graham Watson, MEP, cautioned on the dangers of viewing EU relations *"purely through the prism of our need for oil and gas"* and Mr Krzysztof Lisek, MEP, said that *"the EU must acknowledge the right of every nation to self-determination, to shape their own future."* Rejecting what he described as *"a one-sided position in favour of one side"*, Mr Dimitar Stoyanov, MEP, recommended a *"flexible approach"* to the disputed territories *"that would reflect the viewpoints of everybody because the conflict will never be solved in this [one-sided] way."*

Much of the debate preceding the vote concerned NK. The resolution passed with a comfortable majority, and encourages the European Commission to step up its engagement in the region.

Present in Yerevan at the time of the vote, AGBU Europe President Alexis Govciyan and board member Nicolas Tavitian had an opportunity to communicate with the press and the Armenian public the organisation's objectives and the place of significance of the Parliament's resolution.

Following the final adoption of this resolution, AGBU Europe continue their campaign, aimed at the EU Council and Commission as well as to the Parliament for the EU to engage in NK, assist its population and contribute to reducing tensions and promoting contacts between Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

- [The Resolution](#)
- [Summary and Video of Paragraphs and Speeches on Nagorno Karabakh](#)
- [AGBU Europe Position Paper and Campaign for Nagorno Karabakh](#)

**Support AGBU Europe's campaign for Nagorno Karabakh**

place from 19 to 24 May 2010 in Yerevan and gathered 18 young future leaders of Armenian communities from 9 different countries.



*Goriz Participants in the Republic Square, Yerevan*

The seminar aimed to raise participants' awareness on Democracy and its processes, increase their knowledge of the economic and political situation in Armenia among which the relationship between the EU and Armenia, reinforce their dialogue with politicians and decision makers, develop their networking and open new opportunities for common projects.

Among the speakers were Vigen Sargsyan, Deputy Chief of Staff of the President of RA, Vartan Oskanyan, former Foreign Minister of RA, Hovik Abramian, National Assembly speaker, Armen Harutyunyan, Human Rights Defender of the RA, Hranush Hakobyan, RA Minister of Diaspora and Armen Kirakosian, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Onno Simons, First Counsellor, Head of the political, economic, press and information section of the Delegation of the European Union in Armenia.

The seminar will be followed up with a platform enabling GORIZ participants to share information and documents, maintain contact throughout the year and create new collaborative projects coached by AGBU.

The Goriz programme is an ongoing AGBU Europe initiative to promote leadership among young Armenians throughout Europe and to help young leaders develop successful initiatives of community interest. The next GORIZ seminar should take place in Brussels in 2011 and will be focused on the European institutions and political engagement.



*This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.*



**Programme «Jeunesse en action»**

*This newsletter reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.*

For more information please visit: Goriz



*Children playing in Stepanakert square, Nagorno Karabakh*

- Show your support for AGBU Europe's campaign for EU aid to Karabakh: [join us on facebook](#)
- You can also contact your member of the European Parliament or support the campaign financially. Please contact the [EU office](#) for further information.

## **PRESIDENT SARGSYAN COMPLETES WORKING VISIT TO BRUSSELS**

On May 25, 2010, the President of the Republic of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan paid a three-day official visit to Brussels. During his visit the president of Armenia met EU, NATO and high ranking Belgian officials, as well as representatives of the Armenian communities of Belgium and the Netherlands. Closely following the passage of the European Parliament's resolution on the South Caucasus, talks focused on Nagorno-Karabakh, the stalling of the Turkey-Armenia rapprochement initiative and EU- Armenia relations generally.

### Armenia's Integration with the EU

Meetings on EU-Armenia relations focused on a wide range of cooperation issues: Free Trade Agreement, security in the South Caucasus, EU Neighbourhood Policy and European Integration. The President confirmed that the EU is of special significance to Armenia, not only in international terms but also in the development of different spheres of social life in Armenia.



*Mr Serge Sargsyan and Mr Herman Van Rompuy*

webpage: <http://en.agbueurope.org/goriz/>

## **Armenian Virtual College Presentation in Brussels**

28/05/2010 – Brussels, AGBU Europe EU office hosted Dr Yervant Zorian, Founder and Chairman of the Armenian Virtual College (AVC) and AGBU Central Board member. Dr Zorian presented the Armenian Virtual College to some of the Brussels - based Armenian educational organisations.



*Dr Zorian presents AVC to Armenian educational organisations in Brussels*

The Armenian Virtual College is the latest major educational project of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). It allows groups and individuals anywhere in the world to learn Armenian language, history and culture, using the latest in e-learning technologies and methods.

The program is available in six languages: Armenian (Eastern and Western), English, Russian, French and Spanish in order to reach as wide an audience as possible. AVC courses are open to all from age 17. During his presentation Dr Zorian explained that the AVC aims to help make up for the lack of opportunities for learning Armenian language and culture available to students in the Armenian Diaspora.

"AVC not only gives an opportunity to learners around the world to receive Armenian education, regardless of their age, country of residence or knowledge level, but also helps to create a virtual communication network between people, which is also an important factor", said Dr Zorian.

To learn more about the Armenian Virtual College, please visit the following website:

[www.avc.org](http://www.avc.org).

AGBU Europe is the European branch of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). Established in 1906, AGBU ([www.agbu.org](http://www.agbu.org)) is the world's largest non-profit Armenian organization worldwide.

You can visit AGBU Europe's website at:

This follows statements made in Yerevan during the recent visit of Wilfred Martens – the former Belgian prime minister leading the European People’s Party (EPP) – when President Sargsyan expressed his belief that Armenia should eventually be admitted to the European Union. During these talks the President said that the people of Armenia consider themselves to be Europeans.

#### EU and Nagorno-Karabakh

In joint press conferences following talks with EU and NATO officials on Nagorno-Karabakh, President Sargsyan presented an unambiguous position in favour of the Minsk Group process and critical of deviatory initiatives, warning that "*staging performances on separate scenes ... should be seen as a concern.*" The President was joined by Jose Manuel Barroso and NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen in identifying the Minsk Group process as the only route to a resolution in NK.

The President reminded officials that the war in Karabakh was "*a result of a failed attempt to annihilate the Karabakhi people.*" He stated that the consequences of the war, such as displaced and dispossessed people, are impossible to redress without first solving the causes of the war, at the centre of which lies the "*self-determination of the Karabakhi people*". Mr Barroso agreed that a peaceful settlement "*should include all the main elements*" of which one is the "*right to self-determination.*"

The President touched upon the recent Parliamentary elections in Nagorno Karabakh, whose legitimacy was not recognised by the EU. The President confirmed that in his view there "*is no alternative to the elections*" and that the only alternative - military rule - is not an option.

#### Armenia-Turkey Relations

In a joint Press Conference with EU President Van Rompuy, President Sargsyan also clarified the Armenian position on relations with Turkey, saying that whilst the door was still open for dialogue, by introducing pre-conditions into the process "*Turkey has left no other choice for us but to freeze the ratification process of the protocols.*" On Turkey’s attempts to join the EU, he added that "*Armenia would only be glad if Turkey could meet all the standards for EU membership as this will mean we deal with another, more reliable and stable country with values very close to us.*"

<http://agbueurope.org/>

As an independent, non governmental organization AGBU Europe is dependent on the involvement of all those who share its purpose and objectives. Help, donations and feedback are always welcome. Please contact :

#### **Anush Nazaryan**

131, rue de Stassart,  
Brussels, Belgium

[anazaryan@agbueurope.org](mailto:anazaryan@agbueurope.org)

Tel: :+32 27 62 67 97

For further information please visit the following links:

- [Official Website of the President of Armenia](#)
- [Panorama News Website](#)

131, rue Stassart, 1050, Brussels, Belgium. T: + 32 27 62 67 97, F: + 32 25 02 62 30, E: anazaryan@agbueurope.eu, W: agbueurope.org

This message was sent from Anush Nazaryan to liana.mikayelyan@avc-agbu.org. It was sent from: Anush Nazaryan, 131, Stassart street, Brussels, Brussels 1050, Belgium. You can modify/update your subscription via the link below.

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