



Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement Brief Quarterly Overview, Public Version

October - December 2011

With the official Armenia-Turkey diplomacy suspended, the normalization process between the two countries now is significantly dependent on civil society exchanges and Track Two Diplomacy (T2D) efforts that seek to sustain the momentum and build favorable attitudes inside the societies towards each other until the two sides can diplomatically reengage. Despite the fact that the fall of 2011 added turbulence to Armenia-Turkey relations, the overwhelming majority of the partners and beneficiaries of SATR continued on the work as usual and stood against the strong, however short lived tide of negative rhetoric which took place around the developments in the French Parliament on the bill criminalizing the denial of genocides. This proves the resilience of the network structures built by SATR vis-à-vis upsurges of negative public opinion, which happen from times to times.

The highlights of the SATR activities in this quarter included:

Business-to-business Events and Projects:

- UMBA's and TABDC's joint efforts played an important role in encouraging the Turkish government to extend the expiry of the 200 pilot entry permits enabling 200 Armenian transit trucks cross the territory of Turkey until January 31, 2012. This achievement became possible in the framework of the Pilot Project on the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Permit. The Association of International Road Carriers of Armenia started using BSEC entry permits for transit of Armenian trucks via Turkey, and in November 2011 two Armenian trucks passed Turkey as transit from port Samsun and crossed the point of Sarpi at the Turkey-Georgia border.
- UMBA organized the visit of the Association of Armenian and Turkish Travel Companies (AATTC) and representatives of three Armenian travel companies to Van on October 4-7, 2011 for participation in the second "Van Tourism Fair", a part of Van Asia Silk Road Trade and Industry Fair. The visit resulted in the promotion of Armenian travel agents' services at the exhibition, development of regional tour packages for tourists jointly with other AATTC members, contact-making and recruitment of new members for AATTC.

UMBA and ICHD organized a visit of six businesswomen from Gyumri and Vanadzor to Diyarbakir on October 19-24, 2011, with an aim to develop business cooperation, identify possible partners, and enhance the role of women in the rapprochement process. Among many other exchanges, arrangements were made to share the technology and the recipe of production of ayran with an interested Armenian business.

- On November 22-23, 2011, UMBA organized a business conference in Yerevan, which was followed by business-to-business meetings. Thirty Turkish businesspeople representing light industry, construction, furniture production, mining industry, jewelry and trade participated in the conference. During the conference, UMBA signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Trade Chamber of Diyarbakir on future cooperation. Also, Women's Forum NGO from Armenia and DOGUNKAD from Turkey signed a MOU to support cooperation between women entrepreneurs. Guney Dek, a company producing plastic foam materials from Diyarbakir, and Crown Chemical of Armenia agreed to launch a joint production in Armenia.
- EPF and UMBA helped organize two business forums in Gyumri through the SATR open door grants pool. The Shirak Expo 2011 organized by Shirak Competitiveness Center Foundation on November 24-25, 2011 had a special section for female entrepreneurs from Armenia and Turkey, while the Second Gyumri-Kars Economic Forum organized by the Gyumri Development Foundation on December 14-17, 2011 and co-funded by International Alert brought together small businesses engaged in cheese, wine, honey production as well as hospitality industry. Forums resulted in contacts established and contracts signed between Armenian and Turkish entrepreneurs. Small businesses received new opportunities to cooperate across the border.
- ICHD, GAYA, UMBA and TABDC conducted research on transport and freight forwarding between Armenia and Turkey and produced a report entitled [*"Perspectives for Development of Transport and International Corridors in Armenia, Turkey and the Region"*](#). The report addresses road, railroad and multimodal transportation issues relevant for stakeholders (governments, business and expert community) in Armenia and Turkey, and promotes informed decision-making on business development across the border. It also looks into two possible scenarios of Armenia-Turkey transport interactions: status quo and open border. One of the major arguments in the paper refers to the issue that both Armenia and Turkey are signatories of major international organizations and conventions on trade and transport. However, the potential of these instruments for enhancing cooperation between Armenia and Turkey has been underestimated and little researched. It also recommends that business associations in Armenia and Turkey lobby for acceptance and registration of commercial invoices of Turkish goods with final destination to Armenia by introducing Armenia's international AMD code in Turkey's custom service document circulation, which will significantly reduce corruption risks.

Media related Events:

- YPC and Izmir University published the first (qualitative) part of a large-scale media study entitled [*"Dynamics of Media Representation of the Armenia-Turkey Normalization Process in Armenian and Turkish Media"*](#), which will help media specialists on both sides to understand the strengths and weaknesses of mutual coverage during 2008-2010. The qualitative research showed that the attitudes to the normalization process in Armenian and Turkish media to a considerable extent followed the changing dynamics of the political context, both internal and external. Also, in Turkey, in some cases, publications on the protocols and football diplomacy gave an impression that Turkey is negotiating with US rather than with Armenia. During October 1 – November 15, 2011, simultaneous scan-monitoring was conducted to cover the same 10 media outlets targeted in the qualitative research. The results of the two stages of the study will be analyzed and incorporated into a final policy paper. The paper will contain recommendations on how to improve the quality of coverage, which currently significantly depends on the political interest towards the other side. The "4th Wave: Armenia-Turkey" Facebook group continues to serve as an important platform for exchanging information regarding

Armenia-Turkey relations and stakeholder initiatives and events. It has also become a medium used for spreading important news alongside with imparting them to the general media.

- On October 26, 2011, at the *Article 27* TV talk show on Yerkir Media TV, a Turk director and cultural figure Cigdem Mater presented her documentary “*Uncle Garabed*”. This event was prominent since a filmmaker from Turkey presented a film she had made about the Armenian Genocide to the Armenian public. This assumingly increased the perspective of the Armenian public regarding attitudinal changes in the Turkish society on Armenia-Turkey relations. Another TV talk show addressed the engagement of youth in the Armenia-Turkey dialogue. Both talk shows were aired on Yerkir Media TV, with up to 10,000 viewers having watched each show.
- EPF and GPoT invited a crew from CNN Turk to visit Armenia in late October 2011. Hande Asik, the head of the foreign news section at CNN Turk visited Armenia and met with experts and ordinary people. Her visit resulted in four Armenia-related reports broadcast on CNN Turk focusing on the Armenian economy, the opportunities in the energy sector, perspectives of the Armenian civil society community on the Armenia-Turkey dialogue, and the human stories of two Gyumri-based families of Armenian migrants working in Turkey. Two journalists, from *Haberturk* agency and *Radikal* newspaper visited Yerevan and covered the 7th International Film Festival for Children and Youth in November 2011. A group of young Turkish animators participated in the above Festival under an open-door grant support from the SATR.

Youth and Culture:

- In November 2011, EPF organized a Yerevan-Istanbul Pecha-Kucha Night (PKN) “*Close Creative Encounters*” in Yerevan, which became the first occasion when PKN was used in the cross-border peace-building context. [Pecha-Kucha Night](#) is a globally recognized Japanese format for presentations that is based on an idea of having 20 images, each 20 seconds long. Five Armenian and five Turkish young presenters talked about civic activism in Armenia for preservation of old buildings, innovative ways of fundraising in Turkey through the use of social media, made a humorous review of the newspaper headlines on Armenia-Turkey relations, and an artistic overview of the commonalities of the Armenian and Turkish cuisines. The audience comprised 80 representatives of civil society, media, and international community of Armenia. The PKN license holders from Yerevan and Istanbul agreed on organizing a follow-up PKN in Istanbul in late spring 2012.
- The film crew of Vahe Ohanyan, Producer and Adrineh Gregorian, Director, whose Armenian-Turkish co-production documentary project was selected by Armenia-Turkey Cinema Platform (ATCP) to receive an award, started shooting in Turkey in October 2011. “Back to Gürün” documentary will explore challenges of engaging Armenia and Turkey in a dialogue regarding the past history as the narrator travels to her ancestral town, Gürün to discover her roots.
- The newly established [Youth Banks](#) in Turkey, catalyzed by [Toplum Gonulluleri](#), implemented and monitored 12 youth-led projects in two communities – Samsun and Istanbul. The projects in Samsun included set-up of food shelters for animals, organization of violin classes for disadvantaged youth, set-up of a basketball court in the community, organizing street theatre performances, establishment of a music studio, while the projects in Istanbul included establishment of a hip hop dance course, organization of a tennis tournament and street performances, as well as replenishment of musical instruments in the youth center. This was a case of a transfer of the developmental know-how – the

Youth Bank model of youth activism in the communities - across the border from Armenia into Turkey.

Policy Research:

- ICHD and TESEV published two analytical papers on the relationship of EU with Armenia and Turkey, and distributed them among expert communities and other stakeholders in both countries. The papers entitled [“Taking the reins: Effects of an open Armenian-Turkish border and its significance on European Integration”](#) and [“Turkey’s Trade Policy Towards Europe, the South Caucasus and Armenia”](#) are public and accessible on ICHD website. On November 10-11, 2011, outlines of the papers were presented during a panel discussion organized as part of ICHD’s Annual Armenia-EU Advocacy Conference attended by representatives of state and public policy institutions from Armenia and countries of the region, such as the Ministry of Justice, EU Member States, Russia and Turkey, bilateral and multilateral institutions attended the special session. ICHD and TESEV published the two analyses and the comparative summary in their respective policy papers, and distributed them among expert communities and other stakeholders in both countries. An important challenge and probably achievement at the same time was the idea of a joint discussion during a special session and a joint analytical research paper. #

Open Door grants:

- In addition to the already mentioned cases of support to the second Gyumri-Kars Economic Forum, and boosting Armenia-Turkey business links among female entrepreneurs via the Shirak EXPO, SATR supported a project on building a professional network of Armenian and Turkish young architects and urban planners to facilitate exchange of knowledge and expertise between the young specialists and trigger off cooperation among them through development of joint projects. SATR also supports translation from Armenian into Turkish of the book of Hasmik Stepanyan *“The Role of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire”*. The book was presented for the 2011 award bestowed by the President of the Republic of Armenia in the area of social sciences. Also, Vahan Ishkhanyan started his expedition to the villages in Hopa region of Turkey to conduct a series of interviews with the Hamshens and to collect photo and video materials on their traditions, daily life, language, degree of integration in the Turkish society, social and economic problems and other issues.

USAID and the Consortium Members support Armenia-Turkey rapprochement by facilitating engagement between civil society groups, establishment and development of business partnerships and regional professional networks, and enhanced understanding between the people, for peace and economic integration in the region. The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the Consortium and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.