



**TABDC TURKISH - ARMENIAN  
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**



*Bridging the Turkish-Armenian Divide  
through Business Cooperation  
across Borders*

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



# TABDC the Only Joint Turkish-Armenian Organization

- BSEC platform : the creation of TABDC decided during a BSEC meeting in Istanbul in 1997
- TABDC co-established on May, 3<sup>rd</sup> 1997 in Istanbul and in Yerevan
- A Turkish and an Armenian co-chairmen, two businessmen from the logistics sector
  - Kaan Soyak, President and CEO of Alyans Logistics and Transportation Management
  - Arsen Ghazarian, General director of Apaven Co.Ltd. and president of union of manufacturers and businessmen of Armenia (UMBA)
- Outreach in USA in 2001 and EU with Brussels office in 2003
  - **USTABC registered in New York** as a Non Profit Organization in Accordance with Section 501 C 6. direct business contacts between Armenian communities in the USA, Turkey and Armenia. First Turkish-Armenian incorporation in American history.
  - **TABDC- EU registered in Brussels:** networking in EU based Armenian organizations, joint advocacy towards EU institutions

# Turkey and Vicinity



International boundary  
National capital  
Road  
Railroad  
Scale: 1:4,000,000  
0 50 100 Miles  
0 75 150 Kilometers  
United States Geological Survey  
30° 37' 31" N 42° 31' W

Boundary representation not necessarily authoritative

UN buffer zone  
Nicosia  
Famagusta  
Larnaca  
Limassol  
Cyprus  
Dhekelia Sovereign Base Area (U.K.)  
Sovereign Base Area (U.K.)

# The Turkish-Armenian Relations in the 1990's : towards a Deadlock

- Turkey discovers new neighbors with the fall of the Soviet Union: Turkey and Armenia are sharing a 325 km long border
- Turkey recognized all the three South Caucasian Republics on December 16 1991
- Bilateral Talks deadlocked in the context of the Nagorno-Karabagh war
  - No agreement upon the bilateral protocol for the establishment of diplomatic relations
  - Context: The exacerbation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict strained the negotiation process and ultimately led to the entire closure of the Turkish-Armenian border.
- Emergence of a new high-ranking item on the inter-governmental agenda: the politicization of the genocide issue led Turkey to integrate it in the official bilateral agenda.



Documents:

Prime Minister  
Ankara  
December 24 [1991]

**Levon Ter Petrosyan**  
**President of the Republic of Armenia**

Dear Mr. President,

I am pleased to announce to Your Eminence that the government of the Republic of Turkey, in order to develop and strengthen relations with the republics that composed the former USSR, on December 16, 1991, we are informing you that we decided to recognize, together with Azerbaijan, all the republics.

Our government in recognizing the Republic of Armenia has acted on the understanding that Armenia will remain bound to the basic principals of international law in its relations with the Republic of Turkey and its other neighbors, and in particular the principals of respect for territorial integrity and the fixity of borders, that it will carry out all the requirements of good neighborly relations, and that its behavior will be in this direction.

I believe that the relations between the Republic of Turkey and the Republic of Armenia can progress, based on the foundation of respect of these basic principals and common interest.

I present my best wishes to you, and in your person, to the people of the neighboring Republic of Armenia.

Süleyman Demirel

# The closure of the Turkish-Armenian border

- **On March 28, 1993**, Armenian forces launched a new offensive to establish a second corridor between Armenia and Karabagh through the town of Kelbajar, north of Lachin, causing a new flood of Azeri refugees.
- **On April 3rd, 1993**, the Turkish government retaliated by stopping the supply of wheat across the Turkish territory to Armenia, and forbidding all transit towards Armenia
- Closure of the official border-crossing between Turkey and USSR : Doğu Kapi/Akhourian connecting Kars to Gyumri.
  - No direct inland communication
  - Major achievement: Opening of an air corridor between Istanbul and Yerevan in 1996
- The fall of the Iron Curtain which triggered the process of the reunification of the European continent, didn't allow Turkey to embrace all of her Caucasian neighbours.

# TABDC more than a Business Group

- Promotion of a business oriented approach and creation of win-win situations
  - facilitate close cooperation between the Armenian and Turkish business circles
  - to help Armenian and Turkish companies streamline their operations and their lines of communications
  
- Engaging with the Armenian Diaspora: Mobilize the Armenian Diaspora in the interest of both Armenia and Turkey
  
- Policy level : maintain close ties between the governments of Armenia and Turkey to help them to forge global economic policies, and act as a communication channel between two governments.
  
- Public diplomacy : overcome mutual mis-perceptions and to advocate for the opening of the border and establishment of diplomatic relations
  - Media strategy
  - Cultural and academic events
  - Specific actions: TABDC played a very crucial and leading role in the supply of earthquake aid from Armenia to Turkey in 1999
  
- Empowerment of borderland communities by strengthening local authorities and business communities

# Business Cases for the opening of the border

- **Open up new avenues for Turkish businessmen in cooperation with the Armenian Diaspora worldwide : Establishment of business networks for joint investments, manufacturing and marketing capabilities**
  - Between Turkey and Western Diaspora of Armenians through Armenia: Business opportunities through partnerships with Armenians of the EU countries, Switzerland, USA, Canada and Latin America
  - Between Turkey and Eastern Diaspora of Armenians through Armenia: business opportunities through partnerships with Armenians of Russia, Central Asia, Kuwait, UAE, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria
- **The sea-rail combined transport linking The Ocean Routes coming from the West Via Anatolia to the Caspian basin and Central Asia**
  - Black Sea, Anatolia-Caucasus, Caspian: the Samsun-Kars-Baku route
  - Viable access to the Caspian for southeastern Europe and the Mediterranean region: Mersin-Kars route, avoiding extra deviation and transshipment costs (crossing the Dardanelles, the Bosphorus and the later deviation to the Black Sea)
  - The Armenian railway system connects Turkey with the Russian/Soviet railway network, providing access to the Caucasus, the Russian Federation and Central Asia.
  - The rehabilitation of the Kars-Baku railway running accross Armenia, is the best option for Azerbaijan. Ending the isolation of Nakhitchevan.



# UN-UTILIZED RAILWAY



# Turkish-Armenian Cross-Border Cooperation through Practical Projects

- **Virtual Agricultural Wholesale Market, in collaboration with the International Center for Human Development (ICHHD, Yerevan) and the financial support of the Center for Global**
  - Goal: identify regional partners to gather, to identify their needs and update information, creation of a virtual center through a computer network matching the wholesale buyers and sellers
  - Target regions were; Shirak, Tavush and Lory from Armenia, Kars and Erzurum from Turkey
  - Collect of information: market surveys, harvest forecasts, cultivation methods, seed, chemical, fertilizer sources and farm equipments.
  - Organization of a trade fair

# Turkish-Armenian Cross-Border Cooperation through Practical Projects

- **Integrating and Opening up Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kars-Akhalkalaki Initiative**  
(with the European Centre for Minority Issues and the Municipality of Kars, June 2005)
  - The region of Javakheti is located in the southern part of Georgia, nested against the borders of Turkey and Armenia. The central parts of Javakheti (Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda) are almost entirely Armenian.
  - Meeting in Kars of political leaders and business communities of the city of Kars and Akhaltsike, Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda
  - Discussion on how to improve the economic relations between the border regions of Georgia and Turkey.
  - Joint advocacy for the opening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Turkish-Georgian border crossing at Karzakhi – Cildir/Aktas

# Enlarging the Scope of activities to the Caucasus Region

- **Rotary “Caucasus Friendship Days”** : TABDC facilitated the meeting of Turkish, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian Rotary clubs on March, 18th-20th 2005
- **Caucasus Business & Development Network – Turkey Project (CBDN)** in cooperation with International Alert, Economy & Conflict Project
  - Since May, 2003, TABDC has been participating in the The Economy and Conflict Research Group of the South Caucasus (ECRG) : a group of researchers from Tbilisi, Sukhum/i, Tskhinval/i, Yerevan, Stepanakert/Khankendi, Baku and Istanbul/Ankara that seeks to examine the nature of economies in the region with a view to exploring economy-related peacebuilding opportunities. Publication of the book “From War Economies to Peace Economies in the South Caucasus”.
  - The ECRG launched in August 2006 the Caucasus Business & Development Network (CBDN) Project which will lay the foundations for a community of business people engaging in cross-conflict dialogue and economic cooperation. TABDC is implementing the Turkish part of the project.

# Challenge Ahead: Developing a Scheme for Sustainable Projects on Turkish-Caucasian Borderlands

- TABDC, a non-profit organization based on voluntary work and project based cooperation, operational networks
- Need to channel resources and energy of the private sector into NGO activities
- Turkey's integration in the Cross Border Cooperation (CBC) Program of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) might open new opportunities for funding
- Other International organizations , small or large fund raising Institutions to include South Caucasia ( or Transkafkas region) and Turkey in joint projects introducing & promoting interdependency and cross border relations.



*We have never ceased to dream of Mt Ararat and Ani  
becoming the place of reconciliation  
between Armenians and Turks*

*We share the burden of the past and bear a joint responsibility for a bright future for our peoples. We are motivated by the past sufferings and present yearnings and hopes of people in Armenia, Turkey and diaspora. As mature European countries, we must strive to ensure success in our endeavors.*

*Shaping the present and building the future are the only way to deal with the past. From our 9 year-long experience, we have learned that there is no obstacle for Turks and Armenians to start talking and collaborating. The closed border is the only barrier preventing us from intensifying our business and human relations.*

*A closed border that separates us makes no sense. We can foresee the great potential benefits to be realized by Armenia and Turkey. It is widely recognized that the destinies of our nations are interlinked. We share the same history and geography; we can shape our future through our joint endeavors in service of peace.*