The protocol of the 15th session of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee held in Yerevan, on 19-20 March 2015

The 15th session of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee under co-chairmanship of Samvel Farmanyan and Sajjad Karim started at 15:00, on 19 March 2014

Points 1, 2 and 3. Opening speech and adoption of the agenda

The opening speech was held by the Co-Chair Samvel Farmanyan /RPA/. Welcoming the participants, he noted that this session of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee is the first meeting in Yerevan after the parliamentary elections held in Armenia in 2012. He also noted that the year is quite symbolic. First, this year Armenian people commemorate the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, they also mark the relations between Armenia and the EU with mutual understanding and in the foreseeable future. In his speech, S. Farmanyan also congratulated the colleagues in the European Parliament on the European parliamentary elections. In his speech, Mr. Farmanyan said that Armenia is interested in deepening its relations with the EU, based on the common value system and the fact that it belongs to the European civilization. The cooperation should be oriented towards building such a country where human rights and democratic institutions are close to the EU standards, where economic competitiveness and freedom of the media are guaranteed. Touching upon the issue of the Armenian Genocide, he noted that crimes against humanity must never be combined with political priorities and, in that case, it is possible to have more guarantees of non-repetition of such crimes. Mr. Farmanyan welcomed the approaches of the colleagues of the European Parliament concerning the implementation of more differentiated policy towards partner countries, as a result of Eastern Partnership policy review. The member countries of the Eastern Partnership differ from one another by their goals pursued. Armenia can only benefit from the model of EU differentiation policy.
The NA Chair Galust Sahakyan /RPA/ delivered the opening speech. In his speech, Mr. Sahakyan noted that the European Union was and still remains one of the important partners of Armenia, as the cooperation between the EU and Armenia is based first of all on a common value system and spreading pan-European values is the core of this cooperation. Touching upon the cooperation with the institutions of the European Union, the NA Chairman noted that, as a result, they provided huge support to the reforms carried out in Armenia, which were oriented towards socio-economic and institutional development, strengthening of the state institutions, government reform, struggle against corruption, ensuring the independence of the judicial system, good governance and so on. Speaking about the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, the NA chairman emphasised the role of the European Parliament in the recognition of the Genocide, when its 1987 resolution condemned the crime committed against Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, calling upon the Turkish government to recognise it.

Co-Chair Sajjad Karim (ECR, UK) thanked Farmanyan for the cooperation and efforts made. He introduced the members of the delegation, who have extensive experience in dialogues we aim at being engaged in with Armenia. He expressed his hope for the constructive dialogue and that the positive results about the joint statement will be registered. He noted that the South Caucasus is a very important region for the EU and the European side attaches importance to investing political capital in the development of relations.

Point 3. The agenda was adopted.

Point 4. Approval of the minutes of the previous session.

The minutes of the 14th session of the EU-Armenia PCC held in Brussels, on 5-6 February 2015 were handed out and approved.

Point 5. The current state of EU-Armenia relations

On behalf of the Armenian government, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia K. Nazaryan noted that Armenia is willing to deepen its cooperation with the EU, aiming to continue the reforms of the democratic institutions, protect human rights, develop civil society and deepen industrial cooperation. Armenia and the EU agreed on the necessity of forming a new legal basis for their relations, which is an update to the ENP AP. The discussions with the EU partners focused on the legal framework of cooperation ended a few days ago. The purpose of the discussions was to clarify the framework for future relations, based on the international commitments undertaken by Armenia. The increase in the mobility of citizens is one of the priorities of the relations between Armenia and the EU, and there are achievements in the field of deepening the relations between the nations. The facilitation of free mobility of citizens is one of the priorities of the relations with the EU. The next stage of the mobility process is to ensure a visa-free regime, and both sides are waiting for the start of dialogues about the project of future actions for visa liberalisation. The inclusion of Armenia in the GSP+ system of privileges is a strong impulse for the Armenian manufacturers. The Deputy Minister also noted that Armenia is one of the leaders among the CIS countries based on the index of economic freedom. In 2014 Armenia ranked 41st according to the index of economic freedom, in Doing business 2014 business report it ranked 37th out of 185 countries. Since 2009, there has been a structured systematic dialogue with the EU in the field of human rights. This is an important format for the discussion of the issues of mutual interest and for sharing information about the most positive experiences. The adoption of the national project for human rights protection by Armenia was an essential stage in the field of protection and promotion of human rights.
Touching upon the priority of peaceful settlement of conflicts on the European continent, Mr. Nazaryan noted that the NK conflict settlement is still of vital importance for Armenia, and we will continue to seek lasting peace and support the mission of the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. Armenia highly appreciates the unequivocal support for the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs expressed by the EU on different occasions.

They also touched upon the report on human rights adopted by the European Parliament, in which all members are called on to recognize the Armenian Genocide. Mr. Nazaryan noted that Armenia is grateful for the clear message of European solidarity. The adopted text refers to the situation of religious minorities, especially in the Middle East. In December 2014, the Martyrs' Church in Deir ez-Zor, the place where most victims of the Armenian Genocide had died, was destroyed by terrorists. Thus, there was a sad connection made between the past and the present sad pages in human history. The destruction of cultural heritage is an attempt to destroy the memories of other nations.

They also mentioned the Armenian-Turkish relations, and it was noted that the last closed border of Europe continues to constitute a threat to regional security, which has broader pan-European consequences. It has been two decades since Turkey has closed its borders with Armenia, which is an obstacle for the relations between the nations and it also blocks Armenian communication and transport routes to the EU.

On behalf of the European Union External Action Service, A. Martins noted in his speech that they are making efforts to find areas of cooperation and interests for the purpose of deepening the partnership. The ENP is being reviewed now, that is a usual and natural process, which must take place after a few years of implementation of such a policy. The review is carried out in several key components. The first is differentiation, which suggests taking into account the abilities of each partner country. This principle was also present in the past, but now an attempt is made to simply improve it. Taking into account the lessons from the past years, as well as the viewpoints that the partner countries will express. The principle of respect for sovereignty, equality and promotion of common values is also an important component. The cooperation will be continued in the fields of economic development, energy industry, migration, mobility, security and good governance. It is also important to be more flexible and quickly respond to changing circumstances. The fundamental principles of ENP will remain absolutely invariable, in order to form partnerships based on principles of common values, stability and welfare.

They also touched upon the economic component of the relations, it was noted that the EU is the largest trading partner of Armenia, as it has been in the past, constituting 29% of Armenian foreign trade (acc. to 2014), and 24-25% of Armenian imports. The 2013 data shows that one half or more than one half of foreign direct investments comes from the EU. The cooperation in the financial field also continues.

Martins also noted that the Council will soon have to make a decision about the new negotiating mandate between the European Union and Armenia. The previous mandate cannot be used for the new negotiations, as it refers to the Association Agreement, its preparation and to the DCFTA. In the financial field, the legal basis will also include such fields that were not included in the DCFTA, such as the protection of investors, which will be a novelty compared to the previous one. Now we are ready to submit a proposal for the discussion of the future cooperation framework with scoping process first to the European Parliament, and with their help to the European Council, as well, and to win a new negotiating mandate. The
negotiations will also be opened in other fields, such as a possible aviation agreement and visa liberalisation.

Turning to the steps made in the field of justice, K. Nazaryan noted that the future legal basis of the relations between Armenia and the EU will also include the field of justice and freedom, and the Ministry of Justice, as well as starting discussions about the relevant issues with the EU partners in this regard. There will be a dialogue between the European Council, other international specialised institutions and agencies.

Point 6. The future of relations between the EU and Armenia

S. Farmanyan /RPA/ touched upon the decision on accession of Armenia to the EAEU, which was made based on national strategic interests of Armenia. He noted that if the situation with commercial and economic structures of Armenia is organised so that 1/3 of the Armenian market is held by the EU, then we should identify the products being discussed. It still refers to the mining industry (mostly copper and molybdenum). In other fields the European market is still not completely available, particularly for agricultural products, as it is conditioned by certain circumstances. It is important for Armenia to take steps so that the current economic issues are solved. Armenia is guided by the will not to oppose the economic integration processes, but to combine them. As an EAEU member, Armenia will clarify the basis for commercial and economic relations with the EU.

S. Karim (ECR, UK) noted that the position of the EU regarding Armenia's accession to the EEU is unequivocal, it is a decision made by a sovereign country.

The deputy T. Poghosyan /“Heritage”/ delivered a speech about the political developments and the perspectives of the EU-Armenia relations. He touched upon the process of cooperation between Armenia and the EU. On 3 September 2013 there was a turnaround. Armenia was considered to be an EU oriented country in the previous three years, the “excellent” label was often applied to Armenia. In December 2014 the negotiations started again. He also noted that Armenian parties started to cooperate with European parties and that integration is taking place in the party frameworks as well. Armenia is also facing the issue of Constitutional reforms. The reforms will ensure that the constitution conforms to the European model. T. Poghosyan noted that he does not believe in the success of the EAEU project, he expressed hope that Armenia would return to the path of the European integration.

In his speech, the deputy T. Vardapetyan /RPA/ touched upon the economic component of the EU-Armenia relations, he noted that several agreements have been signed, and there is cooperation in different projects, which also promotes the development of Armenian economy. Armenia continues to conduct reasonable macroeconomic policy and carry out structural reforms, using special mechanisms for the promotion of stable development and good governance, general preferential tariffs (GSP+/ Generalised System of Preferences+) in the framework of the EU system. The total value of preferential imports from Armenia into the EU under the mentioned system increased, from € 61 million in 2009 to € 90 million in 2012. In 2013 Armenia applied for the GSP+ privileges starting from January 2014 under the new GSP regulations and the EU approved the application. Being a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, Armenia can become more attractive to European investors, meaning that we are already a part of a big market represented by the EAEU. The EU provides budget support to Armenia, in relation to which several agreements between the EU and Armenia were signed and came into force, dealing with different branches of economy: agriculture, food safety, nuclear safety, migration, regional development and so on.
Discussions are also being held in the field of aviation, regarding the possibilities of deepening the cooperation.

S. Farmanyan /RPA/ noted that, as a result of becoming a part of the general Eurasian market, the economic outlook of Armenia still remains as a projection, we must have actual results in order to fundamentally assess if the expectations were realistic.

S. Karim (ECR, UK) emphasised that according to the perception of the Armenian side the moment will come when there will be negotiations between the CU and the EU for obtaining arrangements regarding the Free market agreement.

H. Hautala (Greens/EFA, FI) noted that the connection between these two economic unions entails many challenges. The EAEU has numerous internal issues and there are many obstacles. The standards of the EU internal market impose considerable demands even on the member countries. The EU believes that it will be very hard to carry out any harmonisation, especially when there is a serious crisis (Russia's war against Ukraine).

T. Poghosyan /“Heritage”/ considered it important to discuss the possibility of maintaining economic cooperation with the EU and noted that it is necessary for the EU to show flexibility. Providing the example of Ukraine, Poghosyan remarked that in this case the political part of the agreement was signed separately from the DCFTA. It was decided that the latter would come into force in a year. The same flexibility should be shown in case of other countries, as well. In the beginning Armenia was ready to sign the political part.

T. Meszerics (Greens/EFA, HU) noted that the EAEU countries are WTO members and it becomes hard to harmonize the two trade regimes without taking into account the geopolitical reasons.

A. Martins (EEAS) noted that the purpose of the cooperation is the welfare of Armenia, to deepen the cooperation on a mutually advantageous basis, taking into account other commitments of Armenia. He noted that the European side respects the choice of Armenia and wants to complete the membership process, in which Armenia is involved. The European side will have a positive approach to the possibility of creating a free trade zone with the CU, even though it is impossible at the moment, as Belarus is not a member of the WTO, which limits the formation of a free trade zone. We do not want to limit the possibilities of cooperation with the countries because of the membership of those countries in the CU. The European side is sorry for the choice of Armenia, as time had been devoted to the process and the sides had been negotiating and working for two, three years. The aim of the deepening of cooperation is to enhance the regional security with the help of welfare in Armenia.

S. Farmanyan /RPA/ responded that not a single leader could call into question the security in Armenia and the fragile geopolitical situation the country is in. Armenia was open and honest with Europe about the Armenian-Russian relations. The Russian Federation is a strategic partner of Armenia. Armenia is developing a strategic partnership with the RF. This is due to mutual interests, where the focus is on security. The Armenian security does not have a clear and efficient alternative. Paying attention to the circumstances, it is only possible to make one step forward in the relations between Armenia and the EU. When Armenian president said Armenia supported “both”, not “either/or” politics, not everyone agreed or believed in that, nevertheless, the example of Ukraine proved one more time the reality that in case of small nations the unnecessary oppositions can lead to the opposite result. It was never stated that the relations with the EU would be developed at the expense of the relations with
the RF. S. Farmanyan expressed hope that European partners will show understanding, and that the road that will be travelled together must be travelled in mutual trust.

A. Vardanyan /ARF/ noted that Armenia and Europe have millennial experience. Soon we will be able to evaluate the efficiency of the system. Today we have an opportunity to continue finding a legal basis for the relations with the EU.

E. Marukyan /independent/ noted that the ratification of the Association Agreement with the EU would provide better conditions than those we have now. The Association Agreement with the EU and the DCFTA would promote foreign investments and make it possible to carry out extensive reforms.

A. Martins (EEAS) noted that Armenia should start the forthcoming negotiations with the EU in those areas in which cooperation is possible, taking into account the limitations resulting from the CU membership, and the EU is “open” for it. The future framework of the negotiations should be understood.

T. Vardapetyan /RPA/ noted that Armenia's choice was not connected only with the economic situation of the country, this choice solves security issues, as well. There is an issue of free movement of labour with Russia, since huge manpower is exported from Armenia. Today the situation in Russia is not in western interests. The flow of money from Russia makes for approximately one half of the national budget of Armenia, which is one and a half billion dollars. We must be optimistic and constructive.

E. Esayan /RPA/ touched upon the issue of industrial relations between Armenia and the EU. He noted that Armenia is actively involved in multilateral cooperation in the Eastern Partnership, where it takes part in the meetings related to such issues as democracy, good governance, stability, energy security and contacts between people. On 1 March 2014, the protocol about the general principles for the participation of Armenia in European projects came into force, which gives Armenia an opportunity to take part in different European projects: educational, health, cultural and so on. In 2014, the EU responded positively to the request for the participation of Armenia in the Horizon project. Efforts are being made to join the Cosme project. In July 2013, Armenia submitted a request to the EU to sign the Common Aviation Area Agreement. For this reason in February 2015 a group, collecting information, visited Armenia and held several meetings. During that visit, it was mentioned that there was a need for a political decision by the EU, but it was possible that during the EaP summit in Riga the EU would announce its intention to start negotiations about the aviation agreement with Armenia.

M. Esayan /RPA/ also touched upon the issue that the NKR was not able to run Stepanakert airport. He also reminded that the only closed border in Europe was 20-25 km far from Yerevan.

The second session of the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee under co-chairmanship of Samvel Farmanyan and Sajjad Karim started at 9:30, on 20 March 2014

The deputies N. Pashinyan /ANC/ and E. Marukyan /independent/ presented their reports on the topics of democratisation, rule of law, human rights and freedoms. Mr. Pashinyan highlighted in his speech that the present government has won all the elections since independence, which does not comply with the principles of democracy. He also touched upon the freedom of assembly and the issue of political prisoners, especially of Volodya Avetisyan and Shant Harutyunyan. According to Mr. Pashinyan there are political
prisoners, and their status as such complies with the definition of political prisoners of the PACE. In his speech, the deputy noted that as a result of the meeting, the conflict between the police and demonstrators led into the police incitement in Gyumri in January this year. There were criminal charges filed against some demonstrators. Then he noted that, according to the announcements made by the Armenian government, Armenia is not a democratic country. Armenia will be democratic when the opposition can obtain power in the elections, when political opponents are not pursued, and when the killers of March 1 are revealed and punished. The victory of the opposition will be the first but insufficient step, in order to establish full democracy it is necessary that when the opposition obtains power, the government should resign as a result of democratic elections.

Edmon Marukyan /independent/ noted in his speech that, as a result of the cooperation between Armenia and the EU, reforms were undertaken in numerous fields, and Armenia differed from its neighbouring countries. He noted that the external influence on the implementation of reforms in Armenia is great, there have always been international commitment, monitoring, financial support and, as a result, the reforms were carried out. After Armenia joined the EAEU, many lawyers noted that the current values in member countries in the fields of human rights, democracy and rule of law will sooner or later influence the reforms carried out in Armenia. There is a regression in our country in the fields of human rights and democratisation. We have a well-written electoral code, though there are still many unsolved issues. It is necessary that the political will and constitution coincide. As a result of the reforms in the judicial system, the current issues in other fields can be solved. The fight against corruption in Armenia is an illusion, apart from several arrests of officials, there is no systematic fight. There are numerous issues with human rights and democracy. With the support of the EU we must be able to at least maintain what has been done so far and move forward. Armenia is an islet of democracy compared to other countries of the EEU.

Speeches of the representatives of the civil society.

Mikael Hovhannisyan noted, in connection with the Eurasian organization, that Armenian government is not accountable to the citizens, there is a deep gap between the government and the citizens. He noted that there are numerous issues on all levels. For example, the fight against corruption includes legislative issues, the judicial system as well, the procedure for appointment of judges is incomplete, it depends on the executive power.

The Armenian representative of the European Youth Parliament, Tatevik Hayrapetyan noted that the attitude among youth is that they are a part of the European family. The public awareness of the formation of the society is growing among youth in Armenia. There is a serious change among young people, oriented towards the implementation and formation of the European value system in Armenia.

Hovsep Khurshudyan, the chairman of the “Free Citizen” Civic Initiatives Support Centre, noted that democracy in Armenia has serious issues. The reforms are mostly an illusion. He noted that it would be preferable if the political part of the agreement was signed at the Riga summit. It causes concern that the educational system party has grown, there is a great influence of Russia on culture, Euronews was considerably limited, instead of it there is widespread Russian propaganda. Youth unemployment has risen, migration affects young people in particular.
Karen Bekaryan (“European integration” NGO) noted that it is important to have an expert institute for specific fields, which could help the process of European integration run more smoothly. Armenia has a unique status in the ENP, it has good connections with the former Soviet Union countries, with the Arabic world, as well as with its southern neighbours, which can allow for considering the question of establishing the ENP regional office in Armenia. The numerous EU projects must have advanced and specialised monitoring mechanisms, including the representatives of the civil society and the parliament. The partners of the European Parliament can have an important role in sending a critical message to the NK civil society institutions to carry out appropriate and extensive work.

Mikayel Zolyan noted that in terms of democracy Armenia could be characterised as a hybrid regime. Nevertheless, there is concern that Armenia could turn into an authoritarian regime. The support of the European institutions is important in order not to lose what we have gained as a result of the cooperation with these institutions.

Samvel Farmanyan /RPA/ noted that it is important to know before the Riga summit whether it is possible for Armenia to get the signed document of the Association Agreement related to the political part. He added that the political commitment of the sides must be followed by granting of the mandate to the negotiating team by the committee of the corresponding EU institutions. And only as a result of the negotiations can the new legal basis be signed. Mr. Farmanyan also noted that the membership of Armenia in different economic integration institutions cannot be considered a threatening factor to the democracy of Armenia. Armenia is committed to follow the path which can promote strengthening of democracy. There are representatives of opposition in Armenian-EU delegation and they speak about human rights. With regard to political prisoners, he stated that Armenia, fortunately, is not moving in the direction of people being imprisoned for political opposition. All the specialised institutions observing the elections (ODIHR, the observation missions of the EU and the EP) submitted their conclusions regarding the election process. As a result of the elections, the transition of political power to the opposition will open up a new page for the formation of stable traditions in Armenian democracy.

T. Meszerics (Greens/EFA, HU) noted that the issue of political prisoners is a troublesome issue from the perspective of politics and phenomenon identification. Amnesty International has the closest and fullest definition of the phenomenon, which does not comply with your opinion about the question of the existence of political prisoners. Democracy is an ideal, but it is important to guarantee some steps, one of which is the accountability of the institutions and the accountable tactics of the state apparatus.

E. Marukyan /independent/, speaking of the tortures, said that the Armenian Constitution says the ratified international treaties are applied when a ratified international treaty stipulates norms other than those stipulated in the laws. Armenia has ratified the Convention against Torture. Still, the formulation in the Criminal Code is not in conformity with the definition in that Convention. He noted at the same time that in political terms there is no obstacle for the formulation to be changed.

Point 7. Regional issues

S. Margaryan /“Prosperous Armenia”/ noted that the concepts such as general regional interests and common interests have not yet been adopted by countries in the South Caucasus nor are they showing any such tendency. All the countries cooperate with
international organisations independently, they act separately and often against each other. Moreover, there are no general projects. The region is still not being formed in any sense, for example in economic or other sense. It remains a mere geographic area. Since the events in recent years and the current situation once more prove the historical and logical uniqueness of the region, it means that countries here, especially their societies, do not develop unevenly separately from each other. It is necessary to find ways of establishing regional relations, even if very simple in the beginning. During the last year there have been significant changes in the region, Armenia joined the Eurasian Economic Union and Georgia signed the Association Agreement. One of our most important missions is not to allow new deepening dividing lines in this region. Complicated communications in particular hinder establishment of regional relations. There is a well-developed railway system going from the west to the east and from the north to the south. Still, it functions on a very small scale. Also, in general there is an isolation policy towards Armenia not only in terms of communication, but also in terms of different projects. If the railway blockade by Azerbaijan can somehow be explained by the current conflict, then the border blockade in this conflict by a third party, Turkey, is incomprehensible and unacceptable. Opening the borders is not a condition laid by the EU to Turkey, which aspires to become a member of the EU, although it would definitely have a positive impact on regional cooperation and promote the establishment and development of regional relations. The Kars-Akhalkalaki railway will soon be put into operation, connecting Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan. As a result, Armenia will be more isolated from regional projects. The Eastern Partnership project should have included the entire South Caucasus region. Nevertheless, the project did not take into account regional peculiarities, such as internal conflicts, the existence of different geopolitical interests and factors, challenges faced by individual countries. In case of Armenia these issues include military security, energy security, overcoming isolation and the security of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The issues mentioned are long-term challenges for Armenia, and Armenia cannot take any risks regarding those issues. It is a known fact that there are such risks in this process.

It is obvious today and it can be claimed that the Eastern Partnership project is more complex than it seemed in the beginning. For carrying out any activities we have to proceed from the current situation. Thus, taking into account that the European value system and cooperation with European institutions have no alternatives for Armenia despite the issues before us, and it is obvious that it is necessary for us to create a new agenda in EU-Armenia relations which will take into account regional peculiarities, which may have a regional character in some sense, and which must be oriented towards the establishment of regional cooperation, albeit in small steps. At the same time it must include projects that will help overcome the primary challenges of Armenia in some sense.

It is also necessary to develop a system that will provide an opportunity to condemn and stop active intolerance, regional isolation projects and events.

The deputy A. Arzumanyan delivered a speech about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The deputy noted that the developments in the conflict zone during the last year offer very little hope. Azerbaijan continues to oppose the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and reject offers regarding both the basic principles for conflict settlement and confidence-building measures, endangering the efforts put in by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs during the previous six years. The deputy noted that Azerbaijan exacerbated the situation, increased occurrences of ceasefire violations, targeted civilian objects and used heavy weapons. It is a reason for heavy casualties on all three sides of the conflict. Yesterday the Armenian side suffered three dead and four injured. The provocations by Azerbaijan are also exhibited in the form of constant militaristic rhetoric and anti-Armenian hate propaganda. Azerbaijan increased its defence budget thirty times during the last ten years. According to the regular
annual report published by the Stockholm Peace Institute, in the period 2010-2014. Azerbaijan’s arms imports increased by 249% compared to the previous four years. The most concerning thing is that Azerbaijan acquires 85% of its weapons from Russia. The Minsk Group is the only format for the NK conflict settlement.

The deputy A. Vardanyan delivered his speech about Armenian-Turkish relations. The deputy noted that the discussion on Armenian-Turkish relations in this format is not accidental. He singled out three issues in these relations and the approaches taken by Armenia in relation to them.

The open Genocide agenda - Turkey refuses to face its history and with a special government program it is trying to prevent the international community from condemning it. The Armenian approach is clear. The recognition and condemnation of the Genocide by the global international community and also Turkey has an major significance for the restoration of historical justice and for the creation of an atmosphere of mutual trust in the region. Good-neighbourly relations between the two countries could be established if steps are made to restore the rights of the Armenian nation. The deputy noted that Turkey is not doing its best not to have a closed border in Europe, that it is not ready to open its borders without preconditions and establish diplomatic relations with Armenia. Armenia is ready. Turkey sees the pro-Azerbaijan outcome of the NK issue as a precondition for the settlement.

Mr. Vardanyan also noted that there can be no regional concessions for having relations with Turkey. To concede to any region means to bring the attacks and diversions closer. Turkey does not want to face its history.

Mr. Farmanyan /RPA/ noticed that Turkish leaders have tried to manipulate the international community. There was nothing about the preconditions in the protocols and negotiations. The Turkish side brought forward the preconditions connected with the ratification of the protocols in Milli Majlis. As a result, the protocols were not ratified. The border remains illegally closed, and the prospects of the normalisation of Armenian-Turkish relations do not seem reasonable any more. Touching upon the Genocide issue, he noted that they started to talk a lot about this issue in the Turkish society, which is good. Azerbaijan has recently passed a law which prohibits spreading any information about security, military sphere and the events happening at the frontline without a statement issued by the Ministry of Defence. Armenia remains committed to a peaceful solution of the issue through negotiations and does not see any alternative to peaceful settlement. At the same time he emphasised the extent to which constructive attitude of Azerbaijan to this issue is necessary. He also noted that to allocate five billion dollars to the defence budget and to consider it a great achievement is really surprising.

1. Touching upon the NK conflict, T. Poghosyan /“Heritage”/ pointed out several aspects of the issue. First, that the representatives of the NK and Armenia must have equal status, as the NK conflict has three aspects. Second, Azerbaijan often tries to introduce the conflict as an inter-communal conflict, which is not consistent with reality. For example, during the first referendum, the Azerbaijani living in the NK had the possibility to freely go and take part in it. They left as a result of the war started by Azerbaijan. There are different offers, in which the NK is ready to take part, the most important being the project of borderline villages, as true conflict is felt at the border.

The Deputy Minister of Economy, G. Melkonyan, delivered a speech about the EU-Armenia economic relations. The EU is Armenia's important commercial and trade partner.
Trading operations between Armenia and the EU represent a significant portion of the total trade by the country.

Armenia is focused on developing commercial and economic relations with the EU in the future, as well. The EU-Armenia relations at present and also in the future will be a good platform and it will be possible to start an active process of possible reforms in different areas in Armenia. There are discussions in the field of aviation in which it will be possible to sustain progress. Armenia announced its “open air” policy in the previous few years. He expressed hope that the European side will also be active in using these opportunities. We consider the EAEU membership in some sense to be an opportunity for foreign businesses and also for Europe to come to Armenia. Armenia, having a more liberal business environment under the EAEU, considerably improved its legal framework for investment, which can be a good platform for the development of cooperation, since Armenia can help by making business connections with the EAEU market and promoting industrial cooperation. Free trade is a trade regime that suggests zero customs taxes. From the commercial and economic perspectives there are some norms conditioned by the membership of Armenia in the EAEU, which make it impossible to include EU-Armenia relations in the new package. The free trade component in particular. Nevertheless, there are areas which can be included in the new signed package and the commitments of Armenia to the EAEU do not hinder it.

**Point 8. The final statement and recommendations**

The final text of the statement and recommendations of this Committee session was unanimously approved.
List of participants

European Parliament

Mr Sajjad Karim (UK, ECR)
Ms Heidi Hautala (FI, GREENS)
Mr Jaromír Štětina (CZ, EPP)
Ms Sandra Kalniete (LV, EPP)
Mr Béla Kovács (HU, NI)
Mr Tamás Meszerics (HU, GREENS)
Mr Georghi Pirinski (BG, S&D)
Mr Kosma Zlotowski (PL, ECR)
Mr Philippe Kamaris, European Parliament Secretariat
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Mr Marek Hannibal, EPP Advisor
Mr Wojciech Jan Danecki, ECR Advisor
Mr Jakub Semrau, S&D Advisor
Mr Manlio Massei, NI Advisor

European External Action Service

Mr Adriano Martins, Deputy Head of the Eastern Partnership Bilateral Division,

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H.E. Traian Hristea, Head of EU Delegation to Armenia

Armenian Parliament

Mr Samvel Farmanyan, RPA
Mr Alexander Arzoumanian, Heritage
Mr Vahram Baghdasaryan, Republican
Mr Karen Botoyan Not included
Mr Levon Dokholyan, Rule of Law
Mr Stepan Margaryan, Prosperous Armenia
Mr EdmonMarukyan Not included
Mrs Margarit Yesayan, RPA
Mr Nikol Pashinyan, Armenian National Congress
Mr Tevan Poghosyan, Heritage
Mr Aghvan Vardanyan, Armenian Revolutionary Federation
Mr Tatshat Vardapetyan, Republican