



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

July-September 2011

After the Turkish parliamentary elections in June 2011, a new opportunity arose to address the Armenia-Turkey relations. Important segments of civil society and the media in both countries have expressed their determination to contribute to sensitizing the two governments to the need for rekindling the bilateral dialogue and the Protocol ratification process. However, by early fall 2011 hopes for a revived dialogue had diminished, with both the Armenian and Turkish governments exchanging statements that reiterated their negative positions regarding the Armenia-Turkey normalization.

The status quo in Armenia-Turkey formal relations necessitated a re-conceptualization of the Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement (SATR) project in early summer 2011. In the absence of political dialogue, Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF) and the Consortium members undertook steps to further strengthen business and professional partnerships and alliance-building among civil society groups.

Over the fourth quarter (July-Sept 2011), SATR project resulted in progress in a number of areas contributing to improved Armenian-Turkish relations. These include:

- Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia (UMBA) helped to establish the Association of Armenian and Turkish Travel Companies (AATTC) aiming to develop regional tourism through elaboration of joint tour packages and joint participation in tourism fairs and exhibitions. While not formally registered in either Armenia or Turkey, the Association is open for new travel companies willing to join. An English- and Armenian-language study report titled “Armenian-Turkish Business Relations through the Eyes of Business Opinion Leader” was produced by joint efforts of UMBA, Turkish-Armenian Business Development Council (TABDC), and EPF. In September 2011, as part of the visit of SATR project partners to Ankara [led by International Center for Human Development (ICHD)], UMBA and Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) established a policy level partnership, which will make it possible for UMBA, TABDC, and TEPAV to work together to increase the number of transit entries and explore the possibility of granting Armenian trucks permission to enter Turkey both for transit purposes and upload and download of goods in Turkey.
- The SATR project continues its efforts directed at fostering more balanced media coverage of Armenia-Turkey relations in the two countries. Yerevan Press Club (YPC), Izmir University, and Global Political Trends Center (GPoT) organized the second Armenia-Turkey Journalism Award Ceremony in July 2011 hosted by the Consulate of Belgium in Istanbul, Turkey. Mr. Kadri Gursel, a columnist from *Milliyet*, who published a series of objective articles on Armenia-Turkey relations,

received the award. YPC and Izmir University published the qualitative research on the dynamics of media representation of the Armenia-Turkey normalization process in Armenian and Turkish media, jointly produced by YPC and Izmir University. The report will contribute to more balanced media coverage of bi-lateral relations by way of demonstrating the main trends in the mutual reporting of Armenia-Turkey relations and thereby helping media professionals in both countries move beyond clichés and stereotypes.

- In July 2011, EPF, YPC, and GPoT organized an Armenia-Turkey Policy and Media Discussion in Heybeliada and Istanbul, Turkey, that was attended by 25 experts from Armenia and Turkey. The discussion provided a forum for exchange of opinions on the impact of the parliamentary elections in Turkey and developments in the Middle East related to Armenia-Turkey relations, which increased mutual understanding of important political issues among Armenian and Turkish specialists. To showcase the engagement of youth in Armenia-Turkey normalization and the role of cultural dialogue in Armenia-Turkey relations, EPF produced two TV talk shows that were broadcast by Yerkir Media TV. Five Armenian-Turkish documentaries supported by the Armenia Turkey Cinema Platform (ATCP) premiered in Yerevan, Armenia during the 8th Golden Apricot International Film Festival in July 2011. Participating film critics and film professionals highly acclaimed the work of ATCP and, particularly, the films. The ATCP-supported films will be submitted to various regional and international festivals, and screened at the Middle Eastern Studies Centre of the New York University.
- Further to identification of transport and freight forwarding as an important area for research, ICHD initiated a small-scale study on issues of transport and freight forwarding between Armenia and Turkey. In addition, ICHD accomplished two large-scale consultations based on the Town Hall Meetings (THM) methodology in Armenia and Turkey to identify the current political climate in relations between Armenia and Turkey.
- The Consortium disbursed five grants with a total value of approximately USD 90,000. The grant recipient organizations include: Independent Journalists' Network (BUS | A Mobility Reporting Project), Rolan Bykov Foundation (7th International Film Festival for Children and Young People), Narekavank Tour LLC (Information and Assistance Center for Armenian and Turkish Entrepreneurs), Gyumri Development Foundation NGO (Gyumri-Kars Second Economic Forum), and Inknagir Literary Club (Armenian-speaking Hamshen Muslims).

The achievements, challenges, and lessons learned in the 1st year of the SATR implementation guided EPF and the Consortium during the elaboration of the Annual Work Plan for the 2nd year of the project. Along with the objective of strengthening the Business and Civil Society objectives of the project, the 2nd year work plan includes media and policy research and a number of cross-cutting activities. The project will continue building upon the successes and achievements registered in the 1st year to expand and enhance the dialogue between various groups in Armenia and Turkey.

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.