



## **Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement**

### **Brief Quarterly Overview**

*October-December 2010*

Over the fall and winter of 2010, the Armenia-Turkey rapprochement process at the government level remained frozen, with political and civil society leaders in both countries voicing a rather pessimistic opinion about the possible success of the current process of ratification of the protocols. Everyone recognizes that the governments will be overwhelmed with national elections in Turkey in June 2011 and in Armenia in 2012 and 2013, which will further limit political maneuvering on the issue of normalizing Armenia-Turkey relations. The mainstream political discourse in both countries suggests that the current format of the protocol process shall not be terminated unilaterally by either side even if it hinders the chance to more quickly improve relations. Meanwhile, some civil society leaders, again in both countries, challenge this approach by arguing that the termination of the doomed protocol process would instigate a new wave of political negotiations, perhaps, with smaller potential for political speculation and higher chances for success.

Despite the political stalemate, however, public diplomacy initiatives between the two countries have intensified. A number of small and larger-scale bi-lateral projects have been initiated and are being implemented since the collapse of the rapprochement process at the government level. One of the largest initiatives supporting the rapprochement - Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement Project -- was launched in October 2010. The Project is implemented by a Consortium comprising Eurasia Partnership Foundation, International Center for Human Development, Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen (Employers) of Armenia, and Yerevan Press Club with funding from USAID. Each of the Consortium members has core partners in Turkey.

Over the first quarter of project implementation, a number of planned and ad hoc activities have already started, with their outputs complementing other non-governmental initiatives and providing background for the dialogue process to continue at the level of societies. One of the major activities of the business strand -- a comprehensive survey involving 200 businesses, 140 from Armenia and 60 from Turkey, has been commenced, with results expected to be published by May 2011. Similarly, the research on identifying the trends in media reporting on Armenia-Turkey rapprochement in both countries has started in the civil society strand. Some initial steps have been taken to boost business cooperation between Armenia and Turkey, such as identification of interested Armenian producers for potential matchmaking with Turkish counterparts, and development of a guide on legal steps and procedures designed for Armenian and Turkish businesses interested in starting business in the neighboring country. Another key event included the launch of the '4th Wave: Armenia-Turkey' page in Facebook that includes information about initiatives related to normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey. To

support innovative Armenia-Turkey initiatives, a Request for Applications will be announced in January 2011, with small grants, i.e. \$3,000 to \$20,000, to be competitively disbursed to partnering Armenian and Turkish organizations.

The quarter was also marked by a number of public events promoting interaction between representatives of various sectors. In November 2010, renowned Turkish social entrepreneur Osman Kavala met with a group of Armenian civil society representatives and businessmen. Another important event included the Advocacy Summit held in Istanbul on December 16-17, 2010, which was organized in cooperation with Peacebuilding and Rights Program at Columbia University and attended by representatives of Armenian, Turkish and international organizations. The meeting contributed substantially towards building programmatic synergies, elaborating successful strategies and creating mutually reinforcing linkages across the partners and the planned activities. Participants also attended a reception at the Swedish Consulate and several cultural events, including ‘Speaking to One Another’ exhibition organized by Anadolu Kultur and Hazarashen NGO, and a large-scale concert of Komitas Vardapet by Anadolu Kultur. Several Turkish and Armenian musicians and singers performed at the concert attended by about 3,000 people, including the Minister of Culture of Turkey and Armenian MFA representative to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

Given the changing environment in Armenia-Turkey relations, a certain degree of flexibility needs to be maintained within the project framework in order to find ways to accommodate change in planned activities to ensure higher impact. With that in mind, a set of additional ideas were taken on board as a result of the events in the first quarter. For instance, an external consultant will be sourced to interview major stakeholder representatives from both sides and to put together a comprehensive research report featuring ideas that can bring about a small- or mid-scale change and can be implemented even if there are no diplomatic relations between the two sides. Another urgent need that was put forward by the new developments was a comprehensive list of currently implemented or recently concluded Armenian-Turkish projects. Upon accomplishment of the survey, a series of meetings will be convened in both countries for all available Armenian and Turkish organizations currently involved in such projects to establish a network of mutual learning and support.

---

*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.*

