



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

*July – October 2012*

The turmoil on the Turkey-Syria border and the buildup towards the upcoming presidential elections in Armenia in February 2013 seem to divert the attention of the political elites in both countries from the issue of Armenia-Turkey relations. These developments further downgrade the process of Armenia-Turkey normalization on the list of political priorities, hence pointing to the civil society in both countries as the main actor in facilitating the Armenia-Turkey dialogue.

The highlights of the SATR activities in the last quarter included the following:

- The Consortium, including Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF), International Center for Human Development (ICHHD), Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen of Armenia (UMBA), Yerevan Press Club (YPC) in close cooperation with their partner organizations in Turkey organized a two-day conference in Istanbul on October 22-23, 2012. The aim of the event was to flash back to the achievements and lessons learnt of the SATR project, as well as allow the partners and stakeholders to strategize on the role of non-state actors in promoting the normalization of Armenia-Turkey relations. The conference brought together over 60 participants, including long-time partners of the SATR project, stakeholders representing international organizations, media, businesses and NGOs both in Turkey and Armenia, as well as representatives of the donor community. The conference offered a forum for group work and plenary discussions to reveal opportunities for cooperation in areas of business, media, youth work, and their policy impact on Armenia-Turkey relations. The ideas and suggestions were collected and summarized into a [final paper](#).
- In October 2012, three “Yerkragund” talk shows, 40 minutes each, were produced by YPC and aired on Yerkir Media TV. The talk shows focused on the accomplishments and the lessons learnt of the SATR project, as well as the prospective work in civil society, media and business; the current state and the future developments in the Armenia-Turkey relations, and the role of civil society in the normalization process. Husseyin Bagci, a prominent Turkish policy figure, took part in one of the talk shows. Meanwhile, the number of group members on the “4<sup>th</sup> Wave: Armenia-Turkey” Facebook continued to grow, reaching up to 360. Throughout the SATR project, the group has established itself as a trusted online venue for exchange of information on Armenia-Turkey relations and will continue to function beyond the project.
- On October 2-9, 2012, the High Fest 10th International Performing Arts Festival was held in Yerevan. With support from the SATR project, the Festival featured two dance performances by

Çıplak Ayaklar Kumpanyasi Theatre based in Turkey. “You are not a fish after all”, dedicated to Hrant Dink, and “A Journey with Gomidas” dance performances were played for the Armenian audience in Yerevan State Puppet Theatre. Both performances received positive feedback from the Armenian audience. The Turkish guests also met with a group of Armenian students and art critics to discuss the development of modern art in Turkey. Ms. Berrin Karakas; a journalist from *Radikal* daily, accompanied the group throughout the visit. This was the first-ever opportunity for the journalists writing about the arts in both countries to meet and engage in dialogue, as well as to discuss the influence of politics on arts journalism in Turkey and Armenia.

- On October 5-6, 2012, UMBA and TABDC with co-sponsorship from the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation of the German Marshal Fund organized the fourth Armenian-Turkish Business conference in Yerevan. Over 120 entrepreneurs from light industry, construction, restaurant business, public health, oil production, jewelry, and trade, participated in the conference. The Turkish delegation was represented by over 40 businessmen from Van and other regions of Eastern Turkey. U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, John A. Heffern also attended the conference and highlighted the importance of people-to-people contacts in the process of Armenia-Turkey normalization. The program also included B-to-B meetings and site-visits to companies of interest. Despite the few number of known business deals, such events open up space for identifying prospective business opportunities.
- The Association of Armenian and Turkish Travel Companies (AATT) continued to expand its membership by attracting new travel agencies from Armenia and Turkey. Oselo International Tours based in Kars and Istanbul joined AATT in this quarter. AATT was also helping plan tours and develop travel itineraries together with Armenian and Turkish travel companies. Specifically, AATT organized a tour to Eastern Turkey and Mediterranean Turkey for a group of about 40 Canadian-Armenians in late September 2012. AATT helped organize another visit for 40 Turkish businessmen to Armenia in cooperation with TURSAB. The group of businessmen participated in the Armenia-Turkey Business Conference held in Yerevan in early October 2012.
- YPC organized a media roundtable “Expanding the Scope of Dialogue: Media and Armenia-Turkey Relations at the Current Stage” in Diyarbakir on September 25-26, 2012. The roundtable brought together journalists and media experts from Armenia and Turkey, including participants not only from Istanbul but also from Eastern and South-Eastern Turkey. The roundtable featured a thorough discussion about various issues pertaining to media and freedom of expression, and the current state of Armenia-Turkey relations. This event added a new dynamic to the media discussions as it gave an opportunity both for Armenian journalists and Istanbul-based Turkish journalists to establish links with the regional Turkish media, which has been previously largely left out of Armenia-Turkey projects. The event received coverage both in Armenian and Turkish press.
- YPC and the Department of Communications at Izmir University finalized the “Media Monitoring Report: Coverage of Armenian-Turkish Relations in the Media of Armenia and Turkey” report<sup>1</sup>. The findings of the report revealed a return to the pre-2008 pattern, which was characterized by a more or less constant attention to Turkey on the part of the Armenian media and limited, mostly event-related coverage of Armenia by the Turkish media. In both countries, the overwhelming majority of pieces analyzed during the monitoring period were based on

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ypc.am/media\\_research/In/en](http://www.ypc.am/media_research/In/en)

domestic rather than foreign sources, and largely focused on state-to-state relations between the two countries. The monitoring results were discussed at the media round table in Diyarbakir, the SATR conference in Istanbul, as well as the “Yerkragund” TV talk show on Yerkir Media TV.

- EPF and GPoT organized the visit of a crew of journalists from A Haber and SkyTurk TV channels to Armenia on September 19-23, 2012. Vildan Ay, SkyTurk and Duygu Leloğlu, A Haber accompanied by their cameramen, visited political parties, the Museum-Institute of Genocide, SATR project partners and stakeholders, as well as interviewed random passer-bys on the street. A total of four reports were produced, three short reports by SkyTurk<sup>2</sup> and one longer report by A Haber<sup>3</sup>.
- UMBA facilitated a meeting of ICT workers from Microsoft Armenia and Turkey Microsoft premises in Istanbul on September 21, 2012. This was the first-ever attempt to bring together ITC companies from both countries. A potential was identified for conducting joint trainings at Microsoft Armenia’s Innovations Center. In the long term, the parties agreed to advance the idea of establishing joint ICT platforms between the two countries, organizing study tours and holding ICT joint corners in various international exhibitions. As a small step towards long-term cooperation, Microsoft Turkey invited Armenian ICT companies to attend the upcoming Microsoft Summit to be held in Istanbul on November 15, 2012 for the launch of Windows 8, meanwhile the Union of IT Enterprises offered a country booth for Turkish ICT companies at the Digitec Expo in October 2012 and the Digitec Business Forum scheduled for June 2013.
- During August 27-September 2, 2012, a group of 10 Armenian Youth Bank (YB) members visited YB Committees in Samsun and Istanbul for exchange of experience and joint implementation of community projects. During the visits, the Armenian YBs took active part in carrying out two community events organized by the Turkish YBs. The events included painting benches in a public park in Samsun, and a music workshop in Sulukule suburb of Istanbul. The visit was covered in local press in Samsun and in *Today’s Zaman*. The YBs also visited Bilgi University in Istanbul to gain insight into some of the work carried out by Toplum Gönüllüleri volunteers on campus. The model of YBs provides an opportunity for the youth to experience the openness and the willingness of their peers on the other side of the border to establish relationships, share commonalities, explore cultures of each other and, in doing so, to promote peace and open relations.
- On July 11-13, 2012, a group of six female entrepreneurs representing construction, food and cosmetics companies traveled to Diyarbakir to meet their business counterparts from the south-east Turkey. The visit, which included a combination of B-to-B meetings and site visits to company facilities, resulted in signing of six preliminary agreements of cooperation. Two of the Turkish businesswomen visited Yerevan in a follow-up trip in October 2012 to finalize the agreements. As a direct outcome of the B-to-B meetings in Diyarbakir, the Turkish “Jiber” brand for textile products was showcased at the Armenia-EXPO 2012.
- The Armenia-Turkey Cinema Platform (ATCP) held its subsequent workshop for a group of 10 Armenian and Turkish young filmmakers, five per country, in Yerevan along the sidelines of the

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvrbefKJ\\_fg&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvrbefKJ_fg&feature=youtu.be)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDhI0YxLfYA&feature=relmfu>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Go1up0NUlt0&feature=relmfu>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ahaber.com.tr/webtv/videoizle/satir-arasi-1--28092012>

9<sup>th</sup> Golden Apricot International Film Festival on July 9-11, 2012. The workshop included one-on-one meetings and pitching presentations to the jury, which culminated in a USD 10,000 award given for “Manug’s Voyage” documentary film project by Ms. Hatice Ozlem Sariyildiz. To increase public awareness about the ATCP and the Golden Apricot International Film Festival, and to cover Armenian cultural events in Turkey, three journalists from Turkish newspapers also attended the ATCP workshop and covered the ATCP workshop and the festival. The ‘work-in-progress’ versions of the documentaries “Wonderful, Very Nice: from America to Bitlis” by Lusin Dink and “Back to Gurun” by Adrineh Gregorian, produced with the support of ATCP, were also screened at the Festival. Due to certain copyright issues with “Manug’s Voyage”, however, the award was recalled in September 2012 and re-directed to the next best film project – “Ziazan” by Ms. Derya Durmaz. The film is expected to be completed in mid 2013.

- In July 2012 heads of EPF and Anadolu Kultur visited Washington D.C., USA to participate in a half-day meeting titled “Between the Protocols and 2015: What is a Constructive Strategy of Engagement? Views on the Role of Civil Society in Armenian-Turkish Dialogue” organized jointly by Eurasia Foundation, Washington, D.C. and EPF and hosted by the Brookings Institution. Over 60 representatives from the U.S. government, think tanks, NGOs, Armenian and Turkish Diaspora organizations were invited to attend the meeting. The workshop provided a good opportunity to the interested community in Washington D.C. to learn more about the SATR project, as well as to share their views on the role of civil society in the dialogue process and possible strategies for constructive engagement. Also, a smaller-scale talk was organized in Los Angeles, California on July 17, 2012, which was hosted by the Olive Tree Initiative at University of California-Irvine.
- In early July 2012, UMBA, TABDC and TEPAV established the Armenian-Turkish Task Force to comprising prominent entrepreneurs and policy experts to undertake a series of joint workshops, publish a report, and advocate Armenia-Turkey trade facilitation with government stakeholders. The Task Force became a natural conclusion and a follow-up to the SATR Business-to-Business strand’s advocacy sub-strand. The representatives of UBMA and TEPAV met in Yerevan in early October 2012 to finalize a report on addressing the obstacles to trade between Armenia and Turkey and a plan for joint actions.
- ICHD and GAYA organized two training workshops for young journalists and bloggers in Ankara in July 2012 on mitigating stereotypes in new media coverage of Armenia-Turkey relations. The curriculum of the training was developed by ICHD. The workshop included theoretical materials coupled with movie screenings, and practical exercises, including analysis of articles about Armenia-Turkey for detection of stereotypes and their common usage in media language. In October 2012, ICHD organized a follow-up workshop in Yerevan focusing on the opportunities and challenges to encounter the existing stereotypes in social media. The workshop engaged Armenian and Turkish bloggers in a discussion about the shared stereotypes. A research paper on the five-year dynamics of the Armenia-Turkey dialogue in the social media, developed prior to the workshop, was presented for analysis and feedback.
- ICHD and TESEV produced an analytical policy paper [\*Turkey and Armenia Post-Protocols: Back to Square One?\*](#). The paper targets policy circles in Armenia and Turkey respectively and focuses on the aftermath of the current stalemate of the protocol process. The paper arrives at the conclusion that while ambiguity helped to sign the protocols, it also became their halting source.

Both TESEV and ICHD recommended each respective government that any future process should have more contextual clarity and effective communication. Policy paper was distributed by each think tank's electronic channels.

- ICHD and TEPAV worked together to organize a series of workshops titled “Turkish-Armenian Relations, the Way Forward” in Ankara and Yerevan. The workshops brought together a group of academics, policy analysts, officials and representatives of diplomatic missions truly interested in the prospect of reconciliation between Turks and Armenians to overcome the current deadlock and to adopt a broad and long-term perspective. Discussions highlighted the need for a joint retrospective look in an effort to rebuild the distracted path between Turks and Armenians and to move forward towards a more cooperative future. ICHD's summary of the discussion results elaborates on the policy situation in regard to the return of Armenian property, consolidates existing various approaches and opinions around the possible return of Armenian property and sets a base for future discourses of the issue.
- ICHD and TEPAV conducted a small scale research [\*Review of Legal Issues between Armenia and Turkey\*](#) featuring comparative study between Armenia's and Turkey's legal situation in several sectors like diplomatic relations, borders, air communication, people to people contacts, transport, organized crime, trafficking, education, etc. The research looked at existing bilateral legal relations as well as possible cooperation within bilateral structures to which both Armenia and Turkey are members. It recommended a number of legislative changes as well as ratification of conventions that will make legal cooperation more viable.

The “Support to Armenia-Turkey Rapprochement” was completed on October 31, 2012 after two years of implementation that started on October 1, 2010. We do hope that the stakeholders in Armenia and in Turkey will be able to build upon the results of this project. EPF and the Consortium members will continue to seek possible funding for continued efforts aimed at normalizing the relations between Armenia and Turkey.

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*USAID, the Armenian Consortium Members and Turkish partners 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.*