

Speech by Artak Zakaryan
Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations
National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia

Meeting of the Chairpersons of the Committees on Foreign Affairs of Parliaments of the European
Union and the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy

Vilnius, 27-28 November 2013

Dear colleagues,

Dear guests,

First of all, I would like to say that it is great pleasure for me to participate in the Meeting of Chairpersons of the Committees on Foreign Affairs of Parliaments of the EU and the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy. We would to thank our Lithuanian side for excellent hospitality and organization of the event.

I will be short, just to sum up recent developments in Armenia concerning the co-operation with the European Union.

Armenia attaches great importance to the cooperation with the European Union, especially within the frameworks of the Eastern Partnership. Eastern Partnership is a comprehensive initiative, which includes cooperation at three main levels: governments, parliaments, and civil societies. Our country is actively involved in all three platforms. Our government has undertaken wide-ranging reforms aimed at strengthening of democratic institutions and the rule of law, and good governance, protecting of human rights and fundamental freedoms, improving relevant legislation, promoting the independence of the judiciary, combating corruption, as well as directed to the expanding of the role of the civil society.

In the course of the reform processes, Armenia attaches big importance to the contacts between people, problems on mobility that essentially promotes strengthening of value and cultural fields. In this context we are also happy to recall that the EU-Armenia agreements on visa regime facilitation and readmission has been already approved and ratified both by the European Parliament and the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

Dear colleagues,

By declaring its intention to join Customs Union the Republic of Armenia has not changed the direction of its foreign policy. We have never neglected our strategic interests. In this context I would like to state that Russia has always been and remains a strategic and allied partner for Armenia. But at the same time the European Union has been and remains one of the important partners of the Republic of Armenia. As I have mentioned European integration both on bilateral and multilateral levels in the framework of the Eastern Partnership is one of the priorities in our

foreign policy agenda. Armenia continues to be committed to the European values and principles. I am sure that our political commitments, policy on protection human rights and fundamental freedoms, bilateral and multilateral relations with the European Union, cooperation within the frameworks of the Eastern Partnership will be equally important for us in future as well. The decision made by the Armenian authorities in this historical period is a process directed towards the perspective of economic development, as well as energy and strategic security of the country. It doesn't exclude and will not limit our commitments and active dialogue with the European Union. Rapprochement with Europe means for us continuation of the process of deep reforms in our political and administrative systems directed at the stable development of the country, and we are determined to deepen and reinforce the process of our institutional reforms together with our European partners.

We will do our best to find correct ways and mutually acceptable models for further cooperation on bilateral and multilateral directions, as well as to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding to pursue a multi-vector policy.

Concluding my speech let me wish success for the works of the meeting. I am sure that it has its role in the realization of the Eastern Partnership goals.

Thank you for your attention.