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Press Release

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Diplomatic Victory – Legal Capitulation

The Switzerland-Armenia Association (SAA) welcomes the rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey. The Association is pleased that Switzerland has made the rapprochement possible, but has also reservations. The SAA warns not to put into question the Armenian Genocide and Karabakh's right to self-determination. For the genuine reason of the Swiss initiated rapprochement lies with the interests of the United States, the European Union and Russia to use more effectively the region's oil and gas resources.

Swiss diplomacy has made the intent of a step-by-step rapprochement possible between Armenia and Turkey. The SAA welcomes this and is convinced that time has come for Armenia and Turkey to settle their bilateral problems. At the same time, the historical responsibility of Turkey for the Armenian Genocide the 1915 cannot be wiped under the carpet. Furthermore, there can be no preconditions with regards to the Karabakh conflict. However, the protocols between Armenia and Turkey which were published on 31st August 2009 and which will have to be ratified by the respective parliaments within a 6-week period, in addition to understandable declarations of intent contain precisely such preconditions (see enclosed *Position Paper*). These preconditions weaken Armenia's position considerably in the conflict with Azerbaijan. Also, the protocols contain statements on the genocide which are questionable and utterly disadvantageous for Armenia.

Armenia's Interests Are Insufficiently Represented

The pressure to resolve the conflict does not originate with the United States and the European Union only, but also with Russia. This is why a number of points in both protocols are fundamentally against Armenia's interests. Turkey acts upon her growing regional political position (natural gas contracts with Russia/South Stream and with the European Union/Nabucco). She is therefore engaged much more intensively, and with these protocols hopes to acquire the power and authority to neutralize any future demands. As a result, in addition to the rejected recognition of the genocide, the rights of today's Armenian minorities and the maintenance of their historical architectural legacy in Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia are also endangered, to name only a few examples.

A Questionable Use of an Expert Commission with a „Historical Dimension“

The creation of a sub-commission for the analysis of the “historical dimension” and for the “definition of contemporary existing problems” acquires an international profile with direct Swiss participation. This commission cannot, however, present an appropriate solution for the most important international legal conflict. To the contrary, the commission plays with the legitimate expectations for justice of the Armenian people. Its objectives are highly problematic. The commission seems to be interested much more in a redefinition of the events—which would be tantamount to a simple questioning of the genocide—rather than an in-depth investigation of the real circumstances of the genocide. In addition, the commission’s nature will be merely based on recommendations whose results will not be binding in any case. One gains the impression that this expert committee’s sole purpose is to reestablish mutual trust. For this, the protocol uses the term “nations”. The Armenian diaspora is the largest part of the Armenian people and the direct “product” of this genocide. This diaspora, however, is not mentioned in the protocols and has therefore no role within the framework of the complexity’s solution.

The expert commission makes therefore little sense also from an historical and scientific perspective and its utility is very limited, if not damaging. For dozens of comprehensive expert investigations of the United Nations and other international organizations have repeatedly acknowledged that the “events” of 1915 constitute a genocide which claimed 1.5 million Armenian lives. Turkey, however, has a different view. She is the legal successor of the Ottoman Empire which carries the responsibility for the Armenian Genocide. Up until today, Turkey does not only refuse to recognize this crime, but uses all available means to deny it. For this reason, Turkey proclaims a willingness for dialogue which does, however, not exist in reality. The only concrete objective of Turkey is the neutralization of the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Switzerland’s Role

A more careful examination reveals that Switzerland’s role as a mediator appears to have distanced herself from her own basic principles that are the foundation of the rule of law. For instance, the right to self-determination is hardly mentioned in these protocols. However, Switzerland gave his principle utmost priority in Kosovo’s path towards independence. In addition, Switzerland’s judiciary rewrote legal history in the negationist case against Dogu Perincek on 12th December 2007 by defining the internationally recognized nature of the Armenian Genocide. The SAA would welcome if Switzerland applied these core principles also in the Armenian question.

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Attachments: SAA Position Paper on the problematic aspects of the protocols
(in English only)