

---

# How To Build Relations With The Diaspora?

By Armen Tsatouryan  
Hayots Ashkhar Daily - 31/7/2008

---

At the very first stage of the relationship with the Diaspora, the Armenian authorities adopted not only new approaches corresponding to the challenges of the 21st century but also started the process of establishing relevant institutions for putting their plans into practice.

Let's recall the main stages of the activities carried out in the sphere during the past years.

It is well-known that since Armenia's gaining independence, the relationship with the Armenian colonies of the Diaspora has passed two principal stages of development, the first stage being the period preceding the 1998 shift of power and the second stage being the period between 1998 and 2008. And although these two stages drastically differed from each other in terms of the policy trend towards the Diaspora, such differences were of political-ideological rather than practical-organizational nature.

During the tenure of L. Ter-Petrosyan, the Armenia-Diaspora relations acquired an extremely ideologized character, becoming one of the "spheres" of the political struggle inside the country. The Diaspora was artificially divided into two camps, and this created a serious threat in terms of restoring the realities of the Soviet-time Armenia.

After the 1998 shift of power, it became possible to overcome this harmful phenomenon as a result of advancing the formula of cooperation among Armenia Artsakh and the Diaspora. However, the right political-ideological starting point in the relationship with the Diaspora was not yet enough for adopting and applying concrete and clear-cut procedures of implementation.

Following the 1998 shift of power, the political component increasingly developed in the Armenia-Diaspora relations, the common strategic objective of achieving the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide being the underlying thesis of such policy. As regards the clear-cut procedures of cooperation, they continued to remain on the level of the economic assistance and the involvement of the medium-scale investments of the Diaspora.

The fact that the Armenian authorities are seriously inclined to establish a new level cooperation with the Diaspora became obvious due to the initiative of setting up a separate structure dealing with the issues of the Diaspora and granting it the status of a ministry. This kind of ministries exist in many countries, so having a Diaspora community twice exceeding its population, our country could no longer fall behind other states.

This means that the Armenian authorities are no longer satisfied with organizing pan-Armenian conferences or conducting fundraising marathons, and they view the relationship with the Diaspora as a day-to-day painstaking activity.

>From now on, any educational, cultural and other problem of any colony of the Diaspora will become a matter of concern for the Republic of Armenia as well. And each of our compatriots will feel that he/she is not alone in his/her everyday work aimed at the preservation of the Armenian nation and enjoys the support of the Armenian statehood.

The most important component in the process of upgrading the relationship

with the Diaspora from the political-ideological level to the plane of day-to-day practical work is certainly the sphere of economic cooperation.

And as shown by the experience of the past years, there is no progress in this sphere. With their huge capital, the representatives of the Armenian Diaspora have a strictly cautious attitude towards making serious investments in our country. They prefer to satisfy themselves with medium-scale programs which cannot produce a serious negative impact even if they suffer a failure.

Such phenomenon results from psychological complexes which developed in the course of several years. In order to overcome them it is necessary not only to introduce serious changes in the tax and customs policy implemented in the country but also form an absolutely new atmosphere of mutual trust. In this respect, the new authorities managed, in the course of their few months' activity, to do more than did their predecessors in the whole period after Armenia's gaining independence.

As a result of President Serge Sargsyan's meeting with the prominent Armenian businessmen during his visit to Moscow and after their visit to Armenia, a radical turning point was observed in the dispositions of the Armenian businessmen residing in Russia. A couple of weeks later, the amount of the investments promised by the Armenian businessmen reached the borderline of 700 million US Dollars.

This is an unprecedented phenomenon in the whole history of the Armenia-Diaspora relations. The businessmen of the Diaspora have started to demonstrate trust in the reforms implemented in our country and link their future entrepreneurial activity to their motherland.

In such circumstances, the interests of foreign countries' non-Armenian capital will inevitably increase, since the companies (mainly founded by the Armenians residing in Russia) which are going to enter our country will bring others after them.

Thus, all the plans that were discussed during the successive conferences devoted to the Armenia-Diaspora relations for around 1.5 decade are being put into practice by the Armenian authorities from the very first months of their activities.

---