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## Interview Of Minister Oskanian To 'Aztag' Daily

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Question: It is true that the UN vote results carry a message to Azerbaijan, as you mentioned. But don't you think that the event conveys a message to the Armenian side as well? It's obvious that official Baku wants to take full advantage of the internal turmoil in Armenia.

Answer: It is true the resolution passed although of course we wish it hadn't. However, I'm satisfied with the number of countries that did not support it. I assess their decisions positively. This is a non-binding, or consultative pronouncement by the General Assembly, I don't think it will have an affect on the process, unless Azerbaijan is engaged not just in deception but self-deception.

It was unnecessary, ill-timed, mean-spirited, both as a process and a product.

If they expect to use this for anything other than their domestic purposes, if they have convinced themselves that the international community truly supports the one-sided desires they had enumerated in the text of this resolution, then this will cause serious problems in the negotiations. One thing must be clear for Azerbaijan - that no amount of resolutions will make Nagorno Karabakh deviate from its path of self-determination.

Show me one example in history when a conflict has been resolved by the passage or acceptance of a document by an international organization or by third countries. There hasn't happened and it's not going to happen now, certainly not in the case of Nagorno Karabakh. In 1948, the UN General Assembly resolution to partition Palestine didn't solve anything. More recently, the Security Council resolution on Kosovo also didn't manage to bring the sides together in a meaningful way. I remember in Lisbon when the OSCE Chairman-in-Office made a statement about Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijan's joy knew no limits. It took years for Azerbaijan to understand that that document had no value.

As for the patgam to Armenia, it's not the patgam of the international community. It's the patgam of Azerbaijan alone. By insisting on this non-binding, non-collective statement, Azerbaijan demonstrated two things - that it wants to retreat from the Minsk Group process, and therefore from the content of the document on the table; and that it is only willing to negotiate what it wants, and not a compromise. That, unfortunately, is the batgam we have received from all this.

Question: There are signs that such behavior by Azerbaijan may continue both in the form of ceasefire violations and in increased attempts to mislead the international public in the diplomatic arena. What do you foresee?

Answer: Fortunately, we will have an opportunity soon to find out what Azerbaijan's intentions are. There is a possibility that Armenia's President-Elect will meet with the Azerbaijani President in Bucharest, in the framework of the NATO-EAPC Summit. We've stated our readiness to participate, I know the co-chairs will make such a proposal, and I know the Azeris have also hinted that they are ready to continue the dialogue at the highest levels. During that first meeting this issue can be clarified.

President-Elect Sargsyan can ask President Aliyev point blank - if you truly believe in the content of this resolution and if that will be your guideline,

then there's nothing to talk about and let's not waste our time. But if you're still committed to the negotiating document on the table today, then let's get serious and go the short distance that's left. Indeed, the UN resolution text and the content of the negotiating document are incompatible; most of the international community recognized this which is why they did not support it. The international community was also perturbed by Azerbaijan's recent serious breaches of the ceasefire. These two things taken together should indeed make the international community think whether Azerbaijan is serious about its commitments to peace. We are. We will do what we must, adopt new policies if necessary, to secure Karabakh's self-determination and security.

Question: Today there's a need to change Armenia's image, as well as to conduct an accurate and objective assessment domestic political developments. How do you envision that process, especially when it comes to coordinating between the Republic of Armenia and the Diaspora?

Answer: Indeed, Armenia has taken a beating because of the riots and the deaths. And when the international community comes inquiring about the situation, they are not interested in asking or knowing who is responsible for what. They look at this as an Armenian mess, an Armenian tragedy, an Armenian problem and judge us all together. It's not the government that's damaged, it's not the opposition that's discredited, it's Armenia that is dishonored.

We must accept their criticism, listen to their disappointment, share their frustration and try to make certain that this is not a permanent setback, but a temporary aberration from the path to which we're committed. I hope I'm not wrong. We will be tested by what happens in the coming weeks and months. What is very encouraging is that despite all that has happened, there's a lot of good will towards Armenia, a lot of hope pinned on Armenia, and a sincere desire to see us come through this in a meaningful way, not just superficially moving forward with business as usual.

This is also a challenge for the Diaspora. The Diaspora is obviously shocked and disappointed by the way events have evolved. But we all are. Now it is time for Armenia and the Diaspora together to navigate through this polarized and paralyzing situation, find ways to build faith, to encourage sustained, continuous engagement, to insist on and support institutional change. In other words, to continue the difficult task of nation-building.

What the Diaspora cannot do, as some have suggested, is to boycott Armenia, to reject Armenia-based organizations, to blame Armenia for not being the country of their dreams. I understand the disappointment, I don't understand the expectations or the reaction. This is when we in Armenia need the Diaspora, this is when the Diaspora must say what the international community is saying - we are disappointed in what has happened and we stand ready to work with you to bring Armenia out of this crisis. This is not the time to disown the family. This is the time for systematic and broad cooperation.

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