
Armenian PM visited RA State Customs Committee

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Armenia: Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan visited the RA State Customs Committee by the Government and introduced to SCC staff newly appointed head of the Committee Gagik Khachatryan

The Prime Minister said in particular:

"You very well know him, the skilled expert who keeps track of the situation and, to our belief, is the one to provide for effective operations of the customs service, program performance and, on the other hand, to carry out such reforms as will ensure that customs services are competitive in the Republic of Armenia and live up to the best of global experience, are acceptable to those citizens and businessmen who make customs payments, the charges on this administration are minimal and fail to create obstacles to business and, on the contrary, promote entrepreneurship in our country. It is not a secret that this is a major problem in the Republic of Armenia. We are a small country and the volume of imports and exports grow every year. This means that from year to year the work of the customs service should vary and comprise such potential to provide for the delivery of high-quality services. The future of our economic system is dependant on the efficiency of your work and the quality of your services. We have no alternatives: the quality of customs services should be the best in the region and meet the best global experience. And this will be brought about through your hard work. We are convinced the Mr. Khachatryan closely follows the developments in this field, and is in a position to carry out the needed reforms. You are on the first line of our front, and your work accounts for the attitude of domestic tax-payers to our State because due to those difficulties which first of all face the authorities and the State, we lose in the trust of our citizens which is extremely dangerous. I want you to realize this responsibility as your success will be the success of our State.

I want to congratulate Mr. Khachatryan and assure you that he will get every possible backing from us in order we manage to address this important task through joint efforts and are proud of having built up the most effective customs service in the region. And this has to be a reality obvious to everybody and our people, first of all. I congratulate Mr. Khachatryan and, at the same time, I have the honor of introducing to you his newly appointed assistant ? Mr. Artak Shaboyan. Mr. Shaboyan is young, but he has quite a long experience in this area, he is a scientist, senior lecturer at the French University of Armenia and the Economic University. For many years now, he has worked in the Central Bank, has supervising skills and experience in macroeconomic analysis and knowledge, and, from this point of view, I feel that that potential which he has is crucial for the realization of reforms in the customs sphere. He is well-known both in Armenia and with the international structures which keep inviting him to attend different missions, to deliver lectures and to introduce practical functions in various transitional economies. This means that this potential will be for us extremely useful during the implementation of drastic reforms. Also, it seems extremely important for us that those concepts which are already submitted by Mr. Khachatryan and concern steps on reforming customs service, its structure, it is extremely important that tax and customs reforms are carried out in parallel and that there was a constructive cooperation.

I want to draw your attention to one more circumstance, namely those allegations that are frequently heard about civil servants accusing them of direct involvement in business, protectionism and so on. This is of course

a major concern for us and it is not a secret that there are such rumors about Mr. Khachatryan, the staff of the customs service, tax officers in a sense that they use the public office to promote their private affairs. Such behavior on the part of our officials is unacceptable to us. At the same time, we seek to protect fair-minded and honest officials, publicity being the only way to it.

You may know that a key point of our reforms is the introduction in the Republic of Armenia of the institute of conflict of interest. Yesterday, as the World Bank presented those analytical materials concerning our country and the areas of cooperation, it was noted that the introduction of the institute of conflict of interest in the Republic of Armenia will be high on the government's reform agenda. Objectively, all of us have relatives and persons related to us who are engaged in business. This is inevitable, though the problem consists in that the individuals closely related to us should be in the center of our attention and, first of all, they should have a confidence-building reputation by paying taxes punctually instead of evading them. It is understood that Mr. Khachatryan and many of you have relatives in the sphere of business. First of all, you must be exacting toward your relatives if we want the customs service to enjoy the confidence of our people. We shall introduce this institute and we shall start from the tax and customs services as they, on the one hand, will create a corresponding atmosphere which will help your activity and, on the other hand, will be free to carry out these reforms with more determination. Once again, I congratulate Mr. Khachatryan and Mr. Shaboyan on appointment and wish them fruitful work."

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