
Tigran Sargsyan Discussed Health Care Issues

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Yerevan. "OREANDA-NEWS . July 18, 2008. RA Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan called a consultative meeting to discuss questions relating to the launching of 8 health care centers of regional relevance in Armenia, among which the regional center of oncology, the regional medical rehabilitation center, the regional auricle -transplantation center, the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry and regional stem cell transplantation center; the regional center of cardiovascular surgery, the regional center of diagnostics and sterility care, the regional center of surgical reproductology, the regional stomatological center and the regional spa rehabilitation center in Jermuk.

The meeting was attended by RA Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Territorial Administration, the Minister of Health Care, MPs, the head of national assembly's standing commission on health care affairs, heads of health service institutions and experts representing various directions of the sphere of public health services, the rector of the Yerevan State Medical University after M. Heratsi, heads of managements of public health services of regional administrations and the Yerevan Mayor's Office, representatives of civil society organizations dealing with public health care issues, the Mayor of Jermuk town.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Prime Minister thanked those present for having accepted his invitation and for readiness to debate. The Prime Minister said in particular:

"Dear colleagues, we have informed you in advance that a concept is under development concerning the creation of a system of public health services which is ambitious enough. This ambitious program can take effect in case all of you are involved and assistance us therewith. We see such involvement as your direct participation in the realization of this program. And this means that you should take part first of all in the very development of the project, in the discussions preceding the finalization stage. You should feel yourselves as the proprietors of this project because at your direct participation he should be developed, modified and taken to its logical completion. Then the project will have to be approved, and first of all, naturally, on the part of the Ministry of Health and the government. Afterwards, we will dare to submit it to our colleagues from the council of national competitiveness. Also, upon receipt of your approval, we are going to present this concept to the international association of Armenian doctors which has good traditions of discussing pan-Armenian projects, having in mind the idea of making this project a pan-Armenian one and to provide for a maximum involvement of our compatriots in the reforms which are carried out in sphere of public health services. This is our vision. How we shall work with you and how we plan to realize our idea about the creation of the public health center? Considering the fact that we have presented this project in written form to all of you in advance, I hope that you have come around with comments and proposals which will make our discussion more effective and targeted."

Then the Prime Minister informed the meeting participants that the Government plans to increase sharply the allocations to the sphere of public health services over the next 3 years, as already discussed and approved under a program of medium-term expenditures. At the same time, Tigran Sargsyan noted

the critical need for improving drastically the quality and the level of health services. Speaking about the establishment of 8 regional health care centers in Armenia, the Prime Minister emphasized the importance of ensuring relative competitive advantage for them which will make these centers attractive for foreign investors as well, considering that in addition to public funds, the government intends to attract private investments, too. The Prime Minister similarly suggested discussing how accurately the target areas had been selected for establishing such centers.

During the discussion, Minister of Health Care A. Kushkyan noted that the presented programs are accessible to everyone: they are posted on the website of the Ministry of Health. They have been put into circulation in advance and, according to the Minister of Health, numerous opinions, basically positive ones have already been received, there are observations and recommendations on the basis of which corrections and completions have been made. Then the head of the office of program implementation of the health care ministry S. Khachatryan presented the programs concerning the creation of the above-said 8 centers, noting that the program as adopted by government decision No. 380, stipulates the development of a strategy and an action plan for turning Armenia into a regional health center in the directions of such public health services as are in great demand in our region. Based on this program, on May 4 2008 the RA Minister of Health Care was told by the Prime Minister to set up a working group and, within a month's period, to develop a concept of the national public health project, by discussing it with corresponding experts and stakeholders. The working group, according to the speaker, turned to all interested organizations, establishments of public health services asking them to present proposals and recommendations which should have as a basis the following goals behind the creation of regional health care centers: development of the national health services sector and medical science, introduction of modern medical technologies in the sphere of medical services, cooperation with the Diaspora and corresponding specialized international structures, provision of relevant services to Armenian nationals and foreign citizens in order to cover a regional spectrum.

Welcoming the government's attention to the sphere of public health services, the meeting participants presented their views, comments and observations on the matter.

Summing up discussions, the Prime Minister assured them that the presented comments and proposals will be examined in detail and went on to inform that the submitted projects will undergo most serious examination with the involvement of best international experts. Such examination will be useful in terms of getting an idea of where Armenia stands with regard to health services and what opportunities it has for implementation of such ambitious programs. Tigran Sargsyan promised to inform periodically all meeting participants on the state of affairs by publishing further information on the discussed projects at the website of the RA Ministry of Health Care in the hope to have new proposals and recommendations on the part of stakeholders.
