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# Armenia-EU Action Plan Has Become A Guiding Line For RA Reforms

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/PanARMENIAN.Net/ On 3 September, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy, will host in Brussels the first ever meeting of Ministers and other representatives from all of the countries covered by the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) with their counterparts from the European Union.

Armenian Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian represented our republic at the conference titled "Working Together - Strengthening the European Neighborhood Policy".

His statement read, "Madame Chair, You'll forgive me if I look at our mission here from a distance - both a geographic distance from Brussels, and the space provided by time, by the decades from the beginning of this integration process until today.

The Schumann-Monet dream was for peace and prosperity - at a time when both seemed to be out of reach.

Today, both can be taken for granted by Europeans who have begun to create a bond between human beings that transcends older boundaries and makes out of this new institutional form something that really is a community.

The first community was formed around coal and steel.

Energy was the means to economic integration, and economic integration would be the safeguard, the guarantor, the catalyst for peaceful coexistence in a common search for prosperity.

That community flourished, proving that the formula of economic and political interdependence and sharing does work. Indeed, stability and prosperity were achieved. So, the success of the vision was sufficiently attractive and convincing that the community turned into a union.

Peace and prosperity remain the most critical items on the union's and the world's agenda. Solving energy-related and environment-related problems again provide the means again to address this bigger agenda.

Neither these problems nor their solutions recognize borders. At the same time, with distances shrinking, with national and domestic actions having international influence and impact, the Union for its own sake and for ours, made the historic decision to welcome its neighbors to share its values, duplicate its economic successes and meet its democratic standards.

We in the neighborhood and in Armenia embraced this invitation. We appreciated deeply the farsightedness and the generosity of spirit. From where we sit, the results, even in the first year of this policy have been extremely gratifying.

First, there is the actual value of the development process itself. In preparing our Action Plans, we acquired the discipline to understand each other's expectations and limitations as we analyzed, assessed, summed up our accomplishments and our needs.

Most interesting and gratifying for me has been joining the CFSP. Not only does this make our political dialogue with the EU more immediate, it brings us into the loop more frequently and give us a reference point by which to regularly review our policies in light of international and European developments.

The onus remains on us to continue actively with needed political, economic and institutional reforms.

This is more than a moral obligation. There is much that we have each done - in our case in the spheres of judicial and administrative reform specifically. Our Action Plan has been transformed into a clear blueprint of what needs to be done

Those of us with conflicts in our areas each have a paragraph in our Action Plans providing a general vision for a resolution that we dearly need and want.

What's most important is that this provides a context, integrational context, within which to view this conflict anew.

The guided and accelerated approximation of our legislation, norms and standards to those of the EU is an invaluable benefit that opens the doors for many kinds and levels of economic integration. We will begin to have a stake in Europe's markets, Europe will have a stake in ours. We are committed to this process and we've formalized our commitment not just through the Action Plan, but also by formally adopting our list of priorities and measures to be taken by a government resolution.

This is the difference between the European Neighborhood Policy and everything else that we have done with the EU over this last decade of transition.

Within the Neighborhood Policy, the integrational elements are greater and therefore the relationship is now qualitatively different. In addition, if as President Barroso and you Madame Chairman stated, with new financial resources, stronger economic integration, education opportunities and visa facilitation, I believe we will have smoother sailing.

Madame Chair, again thank you for this invitation.

Looking around the table, one can't but be impressed by the geographic breadth of this gathering. It is testimony that the EU is an axis around which to rally our energies, rather than an exclusionary fortress.

In Europe's capital and in each of our capitals today, the echoes of this meeting will raise awareness that we are all working together, deliberately, seriously and productively.

Although the European Neighborhood Policy is individualistic in its implementation, the spirit and the vision is collective. It takes us all in the same direction. So the success of the program shall be measured not just by the extent and number of individual projects, but also by the audacity of our intent to work regionally together for a common goal and a common future."

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