

## About the Conference

### Aghavni Karakhanian

The Institute for Civil Society and Regional Development (ICSRD) – a Yerevan-based non-governmental think-tank - organised a review of South Caucasian security by inviting scholars, officials and individual politicians from the region, as well as CIS and Western European countries to an International Conference, "Shaping an Environment for Peace, Stability & Confidence in South Caucasus. The Role of International and Regional Security Organisations", that took place on April 25-26 2002 in the American University of Armenia Center in Yerevan, 9 Alex Manoukian Street. This event was sponsored by the NATO Office of Information and Press, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Open Society Institute, the Assistance Foundation-Armenia, supported by the Embassy of Italy to Armenia, and coordinated with the Conflict Studies Research Centre (CSRC), UK. Simultaneous interpretation in three working languages, Armenian, Russian and English, was provided.

Participants at the gathering were recruited from the main regional actors in the South Caucasus, representatives from the CIS Caspian region states, as well as NATO member-states – UK, Turkey, Greece, etc. Experts and representatives from NATO HQ, UN, OSCE and other international and regional organisations were also present. A number of well-known experts, researchers, academicians, MPs, journalists, as well as state officials from relevant agencies, especially defence and foreign ministries, political party representatives, civil servants, NGOs, members of the public and the diplomatic community were involved.

Mrs Aghavni Karakhanian, Founding Director of ICSR, opened the conference with words of welcome to all participants. Her remarks were followed by the opening addresses of General Sir Garry Johnson, Chairman of the International Security Advisory Board (ISAB), and Mrs Despina-Ino Afentouli, Liaison Officer Greece from NATO Country Relations Section of NATO Office of Information and Press.

The conference was arranged as a series of presentations by panellists, followed by discussions and questions. During the first working session on the "Security Environment in the South Caucasus after the Dissolution of the USSR: Realities and Challenges" chaired by HE Paolo Andrea Trabalza, Ambassador of Italy to Armenia, Alexander Russetsky from the South Caucasus Institute of Regional Security, Tbilisi opened the panel discussion with a presentation "From War and Violence to a Regional Security System in the South Caucasus". Razi Nurullayev, Co-Chair of the Society for Democratic Reforms from Baku discussed the prospects for regional cooperation and security in "Disarmament as a Base for Regional Security. Non-Violence Education". Dr Alexander Skakov, Head of the CIS Department of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies from Moscow, delivered a critical paper on "Separatism and Terrorism in the Caucasus. The Russian Viewpoint", which challenged the audience greatly. A very controversial exchange of views on Russian-Georgian relations followed, with the Russian representative giving an overview of Russian policy in the region, and labelling Georgian policy as "supportive for terrorism".

Former Turkish diplomat Ambassador Yalim Eralp, currently an analyst and freelance writer in the CNNTURK agency, concluded the panel with the presentation "Shaping A New Security Environment in the Caucasus and the Role of Third Parties" stressing the main prerequisites for promoting regional cooperation and security and the role of outside forces in this process.

The panel discussions continued during session two on "The New Security Challenges and the Role of International and Regional Security Institutions", moderated by Mrs Anne Aldis, Research Manager in the Conflict Studies Research Centre. HE Paolo Andrea Trabalza opened the session by outlining the main issues of regional cooperation and security and the role of international organisations. Ambassador Roy S Reeve, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, in "The Role of the OSCE in Regional Security and Stability" detailed the role of the OSCE in maintaining and promoting peace and stability in the South Caucasus. Ms Panagiota Manoli, Research Fellow of International Relations from the Hellenic Foundation for International Relations (ELIAMEP), Greece, in "The Role of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation (BSEC) in the Stability of the Region" shared the BSEC experience of cooperation in the sphere of economic and security issues as a positive example of effective activity of an international organisation in this region. Dr Viacheslav A Nikonov, President of "Politika" Foundation from Moscow, in his paper "Russian Interests in the South Caucasus" offered a combined personal-analytical outlook on Russia's place in regional geopolitics.

The CNNTURK agency delegation - reporter Murat Utku and cameraman Yilmaz Yardim - were attending the conference, illuminating its proceedings. As a result of their attendance at the conference and visit to Armenia and to the Genocide Memorial in particular, CNNTURK broadcast a programme on 26 April 2002 with Ambassador Yalim Eralp, Mehmed Ali Birand, a prominent Turkish journalist and writer, and David Philips, Head of the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Committee participating in it.

The first day of the conference came to an end in a Buffet Dinner in honour of conference participants hosted by HE Paolo Andrea Trabalza at the Rossini restaurant of the Yerevan Hotel.

The panel discussions of the second day were opened up by session three entitled "Effective Mechanisms and Directions of Regional Security Institutions' Activity in the New Security Environment. Prospects and Limitations" which was moderated by Mrs Aghavni Karakhanian, Director of ICSRD. Mr Charles W Blandy of the Conflict Studies Research Centre noted the security challenges and changing balance of power in the Caucasus-Caspian region in the context of the historical background to the region in "The Caucasus Region: New Security Challenges". The presentation of Ambassador Vladimir N Kazimirov, Former Co-Chair of OSCE Minsk Group "We Must Remove Artificial Obstacles to Settling the Karabakh Situation" evoked a great resonance and discussion among the panellists and the audience on vital issues of resolution of the Karabakh conflict and regional cooperation. Mr Jean-Christophe Fueg, Senior Expert at the Swiss Federal Energy Office from Bern, took the floor with a professionally highly crafted essay "The Caucasus Region at the Crossroads of Major Evacuation Routes for Caspian Oil and Gas. Geopolitical and Regional Implications", pointing out the main oil deliberations of geopolitics in the region. Dr Mkrtych Zardaryan, Analyst on Regional Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at ICSRD concluded the panel with conflict resolution in the context of contemporary geopolitical transformations, addressing the dangerous impact of geopolitical developments on the generation of new conflicts in the region.

### About the Conference

Round-table discussions on “Attitudes to Peace, Stability & Confidence in the South Caucasus” were closed by a brief reflection of Georgian Ambassador-at-Large Konstantine Zhgenti, and gave rise to active interventions, comments and questions from the participants and the audience. The round-table discussions brought out the issues of conflict resolution, bilateral relations in the region, and the role of third parties in the processes of regional cooperation and security building.

In conclusion, Mrs Karakhanian thanked the speakers, sponsor and partner organisations, and the interpreters for their excellent work, as well as the audience, all participants and representatives of mass media. She thanked for their cooperation a number of participants who had officially taken part in the conference discussions but had not made formal presentations: Lieutenant Colonel Wolfgang Blum of the German Army at The George C Marshall European Centre for Security Studies; Dr David Hovhannesyan, Ambassador, Professor of Yerevan State University; Mr Grigor Arakelyan, Expert of the Standing Committee for Foreign Relations of the Parliament of Armenia, Mr Samvel Ramazyan, Representative of the Headquarters of Armenian Army Forces; Dr Lyudmila Haroutyunyan, Head of the Department of Sociology of Yerevan State University and Director of Centre for regional Integration and Conflict Resolution.

The round-table then was concluded by a thematic press conference. The International Conference came to an end with a reception in honour of the participants of the conference on 26 April 2002 at Aram Khachaturian House-Museum, 3 Zarobian St.

During their stay in Armenia, conference participants visited the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial in honour of the victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, the Greek-Roman temple of I Century AD in Garni, X-XIII century Geghard monastery, as well as the Ararat Cognac Factory in Yerevan.

The conference illuminated the dynamics of regional and international security, sustainability and cooperation. The conference helped to show and outline the vital necessity, prospects and limitations of South Caucasus regional security collaboration processes, in its close connections to the role and activity of international security organisations in the region.

In a longer-term view, it allowed all the participants to contribute to regional stability by developing a new approach to the creation of a security system in the South Caucasus region, based on enlarged definitions of security with greater emphasis on human security and common interests, taking into consideration that: firstly, security is a strategy and process, rather than a condition, which has to promote the security of people in region in reality; secondly, that a durable security system has to be grown from the region itself, rather than be just imposed on the region from the outside either directly or indirectly.

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