

*Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Eduard Nalbandian  
answers the questions of Mediamax agency*

*- Minister, may I begin by congratulating upon the assumption of the position of the Foreign Minister. And thank you for finding the time for this interview on your first day in office. Could I ask you to share your views regarding the main directions of Armenia's foreign policy?*

- Thank you and with pleasure.

Last week, in his meeting with the Armenian Ambassadors, President Sargsyan stated, that there will be no significant changes in the main course of our foreign policy; we will continue to develop bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the friend and partner states, and our practical engagement in the international organizations.

I would not want you to regard my answers here as program provisions, but rather as views on some priorities.

Shall I begin with our main partners?

Armenia will continue to strengthen our special strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, building upon the traditional friendly ties between our nations.

We will pursue the development and enhancement of the friendly partnership with the United States and an intensified cooperation.

Armenia will continue its consistent effort towards developing increased ties with the Europe, on the basis of the commitments undertaken within the framework of cooperation with the European organizations and the common values, which we share.

Armenia attaches great importance to the relations with those immediate neighboring states, with which we are engaged in a friendly cooperation, and is ready to exert every effort to improve the relations with those of our neighbors with whom problems still exist.

The settlement of the Nagorno Karabagh conflict remains a priority. I would like to reiterate Armenia's commitment to continue the existing process in order to reach a solution. However, our readiness alone is not enough. Azerbaijan's readiness is also needed for reaching a settlement.

I would like to believe that, together with my Azerbaijani counterpart, we will demonstrate due responsibility, put aside the practice of communicating through the media and declarations, and of giving public lessons and advise.

It is impossible to call for compromise and, at the same time, declare that the solution will be in the interest of one party only; to speak of constructive approach and to make militant statements and openly prepare for a war. Why would this be done? I cannot think of any other state which would brag about a several-fold increase in its military budget.

The key issue of the negotiations is the status of Nagorno Karabagh and it should be resolved through the peace process, on the basis of a plebiscite, which will give the people of Karabagh an opportunity for a free expression of their will. This is the essence of the current stage of negotiations. I believe that there is a window of opportunity today, and a solution can be reached with a political will.

*- Minister, would you like to comment on the current stage of the Armenian-Turkish relations and the prospects thereof?*

With regard to our relations with Turkey, we have, on various occasions, expressed our readiness to normalize them without any precondition.

The Genocide is a dark page of our common history and together, we have to turn this page, and together must we build a secure future.

I want to once more reiterate the readiness of Armenia to develop relations with Turkey without preconditions and our commitment to make necessary steps to that end.

Establishment of lasting peace and stability and wider cooperation in our region will continue to remain among our priorities.

The strategic importance of the South Caucasus is not only in its geographic location and natural riches, but in its position on an important North-South and East-West axis, which can only be fully utilized if conflicts are resolved and good-neighborly relations are established. This will benefit everyone! The Republic of Armenia will spare no effort to bring that day closer.