



**CONVENTION OF
THE FUTURE ARMENIAN**

10-12 MARCH 2023

Yerevan

HISTORIC RESPONSIBILITY

Framing question:

How can different segments of the Armenian nation take on their historical responsibility to pass down our heritage of Armenian identity, homeland, historical memory, and values to future generations and the world?



**The Armenian
Genocide**

Actuality

In lengthy and comprehensive discussions, the Expert Committee singled out the aspect of the Armenian Genocide as a priority in the context of historical responsibility. *“Continuing to pursue the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide is not merely a matter of a tribute to the past. Today, this is a real problem, because genocides breed new genocides, and such signs are observed in the perspective of Turkish-Azerbaijani cooperation. **The issue of genocide is a question of the existence of the Armenian people and Armenian statehood.** Therefore, this issue is very current. It should be examined with a new perspective and pan-Armenian efforts aimed at the future should be planned.”* This and similar reasoning were highlighted by the experts.

35 countries have recognized and condemned the Armenian Genocide at various levels. According to experts, however, when discussing the issue of international recognition of the Genocide, at least two principles should be adopted. The first is **to be honest with ourselves**, and the second is **to be realistic**. Sometimes we get carried away by the number of countries that recognize the Genocide and start creating fictitious situations or get excited by the pro-Armenian thoughts of one or two Turkish nationals and generalize those thoughts to the whole of Turkey. Meanwhile, the reality is that *“in the context of the emerging realities of 2015-2020, we have a fundamentally new situation, and **we simply cannot talk about the Genocide in the same way as we did before.**”*

The process of recognizing and condemning the Armenian Genocide also has the goal of deactivating and preventing Turkey's aggressive stance. However, after the events of 2020, it became clear that the policy pursued by the Armenian side was no longer sufficient to restrain Turkey. Some experts consider this and continue: *“**Recognition should be more tangible and realistic in terms of the dangers that threaten us.** The recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide by a number of countries did not in any way become a factor preventing the Turkish-Azerbaijani aggression. A number of countries that recognized the Armenian Genocide remained silent during the 44-day war and the events that followed.”* Moreover, the International Union of Genocide Scholars issued a statement saying that **the actions of Azerbaijan and Turkey entail a danger of genocide against the Armenians of Artsakh.**

Policy

Turkey is a strong state today, and therefore the forms of demands and struggle should be clarified. Can we, with our limited resources and capabilities, pressure and force Turkey to recognize the Genocide? The Jewish people have a clear vision and, regardless of the differences within their communities, do everything to pursue that vision with concerted efforts. We Armenians do not have a vision that unites us all. *“**What is the historical responsibility of all Armenians, in particular, the homeland and the Diaspora,***

regarding the Armenian Genocide? We want the world to recognize it, but we haven't decided what we want next. We demand justice, although there is little of it in politics," the experts observed.

"On the one hand, there is the euphoric extreme, where Turkey recognizes the Genocide, and the issue is solved. On the other hand, there is the case where Turkey does not recognize the Genocide, and we move on without having closure to the issue." The real and future life falls between these two extremes, where **we must outline clear actions and plan them accordingly**, as well as consider experts and suggest thinking about **how to do it**.

Armenian institutions, the ANCA, and our traditional political parties have done an immense job in many countries for decades. **Taking the position of preventing genocides**, Armenia and Armenians have also created platforms of international importance, such as the **Global Forum "Against the Crime of Genocide"**, **the AURORA Prize** awarded on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, etc. The adoption of the **Pan-Armenian declaration** on the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide became an important milestone for Armenia-Diaspora unity. Of course, a lot of work has **been and is being done**. However, denial can still be found almost everywhere today. **So how can we join forces to move forward, and what should we change in our steps?** This must be understood first.

Initiatives

Experts talked a lot about the need to have an **Armenian institution equivalent to that of the Jewish Anti-Defamation League (Armenian Anti-Defamation League) human rights organization-mechanism**, observing that such an institution can fight against any manifestation of genocide denial.

"Furthermore, we have communities in various countries of the world that have very different agendas and priorities. If we can assist these communities in coordinating and synchronizing the fight, we can achieve a global response." It was proposed to create **an online coordination council of the Armenian Genocide recognition process**. The council will include a coordinating committee with the participation of all the main actors, organizations and large communities, harmonizing the work of the Armenian Diaspora around the world.

There are about 70 exhibitions and museums dedicated to the Holocaust around the world, and there are more than nine dozen Jewish museums where the Genocide is talked about and presented in certainty. We have one fully functioning museum dedicated to the Armenian Genocide and two or three other museums carrying out certain research activities. **The opening of 3 foreign branches of the Genocide Museum should be useful.**

Very few of the countries that recognize the Armenian Genocide have any mention of the Armenian Genocide in their educational systems. Meanwhile, the Holocaust is studied and taught almost everywhere. **The inclusion of materials about the Genocide in the educational programs of other countries** should be ranked among the priorities of our lobbying efforts.



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**Responsibility for the security
of Armenia and Artsakh**

The issue

“I believe that the main objective of Historic Responsibility should be to create a unifying idea that brings all Armenians together, and language cannot fulfill such an ambition. Perhaps faith can. Nonetheless, I think that the most significant factor that unites us is our land.” These and similar observations were often heard in expert discussions. The fragile security situation of Artsakh and the Republic of Armenia forces us to **prioritize discussions on security**. From the point of view of historical responsibility, it is necessary to talk first of all about the possibility of adopting potential formulations and solutions aimed at the security issues of the two Armenian states, the challenges and problems facing us.

“The situation is so dire that sometimes there is an impression that all these discussions and conversations are worth very little, and the expressed concerns remain unaddressed.” Ultimately, all of this should be organized around a specific understanding, answering the following questions: **What challenges are we confronting, what problems do we have and how should we tackle them?**

Policy

As a result of their discussions, the experts agreed, that the **preservation of statehood is a matter of common, pan-Armenian responsibility**. We should try to solve the part of the problem that falls to us and not leave it to the next generations. From this point of view, several clear provisions were recorded:

1. The Armenian people have a responsibility to promptly develop their country.
2. We have a historical responsibility to preserve and develop Artsakh.
3. Armenia and the Diaspora should become **one united fist** to fulfill our historical responsibility. And finally, we need to understand why it was not possible to formulate **a unified pan-Armenian way of thinking, mission and formula** and move on to concrete actions that stem from all that.

According to experts, in the context of historical responsibility, today we have the responsibility to stop the continuous series of diplomatic and military-political losses. The realization of this responsibility will contribute to the restoration of the broken solidarity between Armenia and the people living in Armenia. At the same time, our current problems should not keep us from formulating goals for our future. **“Our failures come from not formulating goals and not carrying out proper work aimed at their implementation,”** the experts noted.

On the issue of Artsakh, the experts proposed to choose once and for all one of three possible options and announce to the world that the **issue of Artsakh** is:

1. the issue of the 120,000 people of Artsakh, or
2. the issue of the 120,000 people of Artsakh and 3 million people of Armenia, or
3. the issue of 10 million Armenians around the world.

As obvious as this choice seems, it must be made and then all plans will be made according to that choice. Even after this choice, everything does not become as clear and unambiguous as it seems. For example, those who consider themselves more courageous can claim:

*“The Armenians of the entire world should jointly commit to assuming the responsibility of Artsakh and not leave it only on the shoulders of the state and the citizens of Armenia and, even more so, the people of Artsakh. **The Armenian nation should not be afraid of victories.**”*

And those who consider themselves more prudent can retort:

*“The Artsakh issue is a complex one, a negotiation process. After the 2020 war, the positions of Armenia and the security of Artsakh have weakened. Today the issue has stabilized thanks to Russian peacekeepers and European observers. **Being adventurous can be dangerous.**”*

How do we see reality? This is worth a serious discussion.

Initiatives

“The issue of Artsakh has created a fragmented atmosphere in the Diaspora. Diaspora has a desire to help in the matter of Artsakh but does not know how to help. There is no common, unified direction,” says one of the experts. If we can unite the Armenians of the world to assure the security of Armenia and Artsakh, many risks will be reduced. Azerbaijan and the world should clearly see and understand that they are not dealing with 120,000 Artsakh residents, but with 10 million Armenians from all over the world. **With the convening of the “Artsakh-10 million” forum of Armenians of the world**, it will be possible to significantly raise the united voice of the Armenian people on the Artsakh issue and throughout the event form effective mechanisms that will become permanent institutions "supporting the backs of 10 million" of Artsakh Armenians.

In 2022, Artsakh’s Parliament and Security Council made various statements calling for the unification and help of the Armenian people. Will the Diaspora, for example, financially support Artsakh if necessary? At one time, our Diaspora communities financed our embassies. What if the same is done for Artsakh? *“The All-Armenian Fund was financing infrastructure, maybe we can create an institution that will focus more on development*

projects. If I live in another country, how can I become a part of and support my Motherland?" If there is a united will, then it is possible to create the **"Artsakh" Foundation for Development Projects**, which will finance projects that advance the economy and security in Artsakh, giving Armenians living in any part of the world a chance to become a part of finding the solution to the vital national problem.

The role of **Twitter, or rather all social networks, including Wikipedia**, should be highlighted. *"Israel, for example, has a platform launched in Persian, which recorded 450 million views last year. Israel has the largest collection of Persian content on the web."* After the war, the volume of work we did on Wikipedia declined. Azerbaijanis continue to fill in new topics, while we are not so active. We need to create a well-managed **"All-Armenian Cyber Army"**.



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**Preserving heritage and
ensuring its recognition**

“To give up your roots means to give up yourself. I have been lighting candles in Armenian churches since I was five years old. And the church is not just faith, but also culture...”.

Henri Verneuil

Actuality

In addition to the issue of the Armenian Genocide, there is also the issue of preserving and recognizing our rich history and heritage. The importance of making the Armenian people more active on various issues is clearly noticeable. *“Many of us are not familiar with our treasures, our heritage and prominent representatives of the Armenian nation, such as Nerses Shnorhali, Grigor Narekatsi and many others.”* Armenians have left the world a great heritage. One of our great treasures is faith, which contributed to our survival and is also a global value. *“We must talk about Tangible and intangible cultural heritage,, referring to our culture in its broad and narrow senses, our art, philosophy, religion and other realities.”* Preserving all this and presenting it to the world is our historical responsibility, but **who should carry out this mission, and how?** It is on this issue that we should come to an agreement as a nation.

It is important to understand **how we can preserve, develop and pass on Armenian identity, spirit and spirituality to the next generations.** One recent study on heritage was named “Hidden Treasures” by experts, implying that a significant amount of our people are unaware of our heritage. *“There is also a problem in the spiritual sense, when many people do not know the essence of our faith. Of course, there are pieces of our heritage exhibited in various places, such as in the Metropolitan Museum in New York City, but we do not have approaches based on serious, strategic foundations.”*

Policy

Experts are also convinced that issues of culture and its preservation in the broadest sense should be our priorities. Our language, literature, and music are rich, and questions about their preservation should be central to our discussions. In a broad sense, culture can incorporate our national cuisine, a number of other components characteristic of the way of living, which have a cultural base and are an inalienable part of our culture. **We have an obligation to protect all of these.** Regarding this, we have issues everywhere, whether it's in Armenia, Artsakh, our neighboring regions, or the Diaspora. There is a lot to do in terms of heritage preservation, for example, in Venice, Vienna and Jerusalem: the Armenian state is not properly represented there, while the local Armenian entities are not very capable of handling the issue on their own.

According to experts, **the formation of a sense of pride and behavioral models among young people regarding our history, victories and successes** should be our responsibility. Currently, emphasis on our historical heritage is severely lacking in the school curriculum. School is the key to many solutions, but also the source of many problems. For example, *“How did it happen that we are Christians, but there suddenly was a struggle against the priests and the church in order to expel them from the schools? Why was the practice of reading testaments and gospels eliminated? This was done before our very own eyes,”* noted a well-known educational expert.

Some experts also highlight the **issue of historical responsibility toward the Soviet years**, which we seem to be avoiding. *“We have created values, and that era is also part of the historical responsibility. We are the bearers of that historic legacy today,”* experts noted.

But **what mechanisms should be put in place, and how should our heritage be popularized?** This is what we need to talk about.

Initiatives

According to experts, first we need to be sure that the pieces of heritage that are important to us are documented. This will allow us to have a large list or system documenting our heritage, **Armenian cultural heritage list**, much like the **UNESCO** cultural heritage list, which will serve as an inventory of our heritage in different corners of the world. Such initiatives are already underway, and there is a need for one unified, impactful program.

“Any Armenian can and should be a fighter for the preservation of their nation's heritage and a “PR-ambassador,” properly representing the homeland and all Armenians,” argued the participants of the discussions. There is an idea to initiate the **“Ambassadors of Armenian Heritage”** movement with its platforms, targeted PR campaigns, and an effective mechanism that will allow all of us to get involved in spreading Armenia, Armenians and our successes.

There are private collections containing samples of Armenian heritage, about which we know little. There is a risk that these samples could be scattered around the world. The experts emphasized the idea of creating an **Armenian Heritage Foundation**, which will coordinate such processes, monitor all auctions and, if there are samples of Armenian heritage, quickly buy them and bring them to Armenia, as well as collect information about existing collections.

There is the “Iranica” platform, which is a good repository, the result of a number of Iranological studies and the cooperation of international universities studying this direction,

and a wonderful way to present Iran with one face and from one place. Any specific material written in Iranica has a scientific basis and justification. The experts proposed to create and advance the “**Armenica**” **program** based on the example of Iran on the basis of some centers of Armenian studies.

In all museums, we need to preserve pieces of our heritage through digitization and other means. The experts emphasized the importance **of a great project of digitization, preservation and dissemination of the values** that we have.



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**The responsibility of keeping
Armenian's national identity**

*“Our ancestors bequeathed us and the world no small heritage.
But we must understand and never forget that the greatest
treasure of our heritage is our language.”*

Paruyr Sevak

Actuality

- According to the research of specialists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Armenian language is among the 60 most influential languages in the world.
- In 2010, Western Armenian was included in UNESCO's “Electronic Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger”
- There are about 10 million Armenians in the world, while only 6 million people speak Armenian.

Issues related to the Armenian language, specifically the preservation of the language and its transmission to the next generation, are essential in the Diaspora. The problem becomes even more acute when the Armenian language is divided into different dialects and language forms in various Diaspora communities. *“I send my kids to an Armenian Sunday school in London. About 100 children attend the school, while there are about 30,000 Armenians living in London.”* How can we unite Armenian representatives of different generations around such schools and educational centers, around Armenian heritage and its unique manifestations? How can we **encourage them to learn the Armenian language**, to attend such schools, to practice Armenian? It can be at home, at school, in any group where there is a corresponding environment, with Armenian-speaking people and friends. These questions were raised by the experts when addressing the topic.

Policy

Work aimed at the issue of learning the Armenian language is always carried out by various Armenian organizations in communities in different countries. However, those efforts are by no means a fundamental solution to the issue. Only creating and opening groups of the Armenian language and, in particular, of the Western Armenian language is not enough. We **need effective mechanisms** that will put the preservation of Armenianness in the Diaspora on a stable foundation.

Experts believe that there is a clear **need to develop and implement an educational policy in the Diaspora**. A widespread and consistent policy not only implies the coordination of everyone's efforts, but also defined steps and concrete processes in the school-textbook-teacher chain.

Experts also believe that those mechanisms will not be sufficient if children are not immersed in a proper environment. This includes communicating with peers and friends and learning through communication and games, all the while enjoying the process. In this case, the policy will turn into a mere imposition of language, which will hardly be useful. *“It is crucial to look at all these questions and **proposals through the eyes of children**, really evaluating the possible outcomes and effects.”* *“Armenian studies is also politics, and so it is necessary **to create Armenian studies centers in the best universities of the world**, and this is a matter of direct state strategy,”* said the participants of the expert discussions.

We have serious problems in preserving the Western Armenian language. If we do not find solutions, Western Armenian, under the pressure of Eastern Armenian, may after some time, turn into a language spoken in very narrow circles, which is no longer used at any level. Meanwhile, it is obvious that the preservation of the Western Armenian language is of strategic importance. *“**TUMO and AGBU Armenian Virtual University** have excellent remote learning methods and experience, and they can respond to these problems,”* experts believe. Some suggested that, as an educational center created by the efforts of the Diaspora, the **American University of Armenia** could become the main forge of the Western Armenian language in the world.

The experts discussed at length the aspect of Armenian diversity. *“We have defined Armenians as one culture, one nation, but by doing so, we have neglected our diversity,”* argued one of the experts and suggested that we should be guided by the well-known Latin slogan **“E pluribus unum”** **“Out of many, one”**. *“Why do they fight against the dialect today and do not allow, for example, children to speak in their dialects in a school in the Shirak region? Why don’t the kids in Shirak study their dialect?”*

Initiatives

Camps, meetings, mutual visits with different goals and contents can be organized. Today, there are “Birthright Armenia”, “Ari Tun” (*Step Toward Home*), “Repat Armenia” and other programs with similar initiatives. More should be added. Educational exchanges, both domestic and international, have great potential to solve the problem. There is a need for serious state support in this matter. The experts proposed the creation of a **Coordination Council for Youth Exchanges**, with the involvement of the state and key institutions, to advance this process.

Inspired by the example of the AGBU, the committee seriously entertained the idea of promoting the creation of **Armenian virtual universities** and ensuring competition. Remote learning can become a lifeline for Armenian studies, considering that physical

presence is not always viable. If we can create a virtual environment with the involvement of the best personnel and specialists, the virtual university can become a unifying and knowledge-creating factor.

“Imagine the possible results achieved if Armenians from all over the world got excited about the idea of receiving high-quality education in the spheres of Armenian language, Armenian history and culture from their homes.”

Diaspora Armenian experts who have young kids were particularly active in discussing the **initiative of “Language through games.”** *“We want our children's connection with the homeland to develop, for them to remain Armenian. It would be very good if there were modern games, where children would go online, earn badges based on their knowledge of Armenian language and Armenianness, and share with each other how many they have collected.”*