



## PRESS RELEASE

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### EuFoA event on Karabakh conflict:

#### DCFTA is key to Armenia's survival in economic and military race with Azerbaijan

Today, 11 July 2013, European Friends of Armenia ([www.EuFoA.org](http://www.EuFoA.org)) organises a panel discussion about the current situation of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process: "Looking at Europe's next avoidable war: Nagorno-Karabakh". The event starts with short presentations by the panellists followed by questions and answers from the audience and an interactive discussion. Speakers are:

- Richard Giragosian, Founding Director of the Regional Studies Center (RSC)
- Christian Kolter, Conflict Researcher University of Leipzig (based currently in Stepanakert)
- moderated by Michael Kambeck, Secretary General of European Friends of Armenia (EuFoA)

Richard Giragosian contributed to the recently published book "Europe's next avoidable war: Nagorno-Karabakh", which was edited by Michael Kambeck and then EuFoA Research Fellow Sargis Ghazaryan. The three panellists will discuss the situation as it presents itself today, drawing on the analysis of the above mentioned book but also on their extensive work on NK question and their impressions from Armenia, Brussels, Stepanakert and beyond.

Kambeck comments: „The Minsk-Group negotiations are not moving forward much, because President Aliyev believes he can simply outgrow Armenia economically and militarily. In this context it becomes clear that the EU-Armenia Association Agreement and DCFTA have a much stronger geo-strategic relevance for Armenia than is publicly discussed: it seems to be a question of survival in an economic race with Azerbaijan. Aliyev keeps saying that he wants Armenia to be weak, isolated, corrupt, inefficient, with high emigration and without economic perspective. The Association Agreement addresses exactly these issues, while this is no EU interference into this conflict because it was offered to all EaP countries. Only the DCFTA offers Armenia the chance to develop enough strength from the inside to keep up with Azerbaijan. Armenia has neither oil nor gas, so the economic growth relies entirely on the efficiency of the market structures inside Armenia. Faced with the choice to survive or decay, Armenians hopefully unite their forces to implement these reforms, boost economic growth and jobs, and create a new and stronger Armenia, too strong to be outgrown by any hostile neighbour. Paradoxically, this is also in the direct interest of those in Armenia who still criticise or fear the DCFTA today. In the EU, such critical voices come from people who lobby for Azerbaijan.“

Giragosian comments: "In the wake of the recent revelation that Russia has begun the delivery of some \$1 billion in arms and weapons systems to Azerbaijan, there is renewed concern over a possible shift in the already delicate regional balance of power in the volatile South Caucasus. Although this new arms deal does provide Azerbaijan with a significant amount of offensive weapons from Russia, including battle tanks, heavy artillery pieces and multiple rocket launchers, in strictly military terms, it is not sufficient to impact the balance of power on its own."

Giragosian went on to say that “over the longer term, there is a significant, but subtle shift in the regional balance of power now underway, driven by three specific trends: a pronounced and escalating “arms race,” defined by a steady increase in Azerbaijani defense spending; Azerbaijan’s procurement of modern offensive weapons, with little concern for the danger of renewed hostilities; and a pattern of increased Azerbaijani attacks against both Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.”

“The broader context is also important,” he added, explaining that “as Russia is clearly exploiting the unresolved Karabakh conflict and rising tension in order to further consolidate its power and influence in the South Caucasus. Within this context, Russia has not only emerged as the leading arms provider to Azerbaijan, but also continues to deepen its military support and cooperation with Armenia.

EuFoA is happy to provide commenting or background analysis in English, German, French, Spanish, Polish, Russian and Armenian. Members of the Europe-Armenia Advisory Council may also be available for comments; for enquiries please contact our secretariat.

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