

THE FORMATS AND THE AGENDA OF ORGANIZING PAN-ARMENIAN CONFERENCES IN 1980-2022

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Abstract

Since 1980, several conferences have been held with the participation of representatives of Armenia and the Diaspora, the main purpose of which was to discuss the problems of bilateral cooperation, define the priorities, and clarify future tasks. The question of the necessity of such assemblies was discussed both during the Soviet period and after the restoration of Armenia's political independence, but the search for the most effective format is still ongoing. Based on the political approaches of this or that government and the imperative to effectively solve the defined problems, these assemblies were held in different formats, from representative meetings to conferences and summits. In this article, the agendas and convening formats of the Armenia-Diaspora conferences are examined, considering them under the historical and political reality of the time.

Keywords – Armenia, Artsakh, Diaspora, pan-Armenian conferences.

Pan-Armenian conferences organized on a representative basis

The precedent of the Homeland-Diaspora conference in 1980. In Soviet Armenia in 1964, in order to develop relations with the diaspora and increase their effectiveness, the Committee for Cultural Relations with the Diaspora Armenians was established, which significantly developed relations with the Diaspora with its long-term activity.¹ In 1980 it was decided to hold an Armenia-Diaspora meeting, and the responsibility for organizing it was assigned to the committee. The main goal was to strengthen the Homeland-Diaspora relations and develop the most effective cooperation mechanisms. The meeting was convened as part of the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the creation of Soviet Armenia, on the eve of the official celebration of that event on November 29. Its purpose was undoubtedly to make Diaspora Armenians aware of the events organized on the occasion. The format of the meeting was the “Assembly of Representatives of Diaspora Armenian Communities,” meaning that the conference

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¹ Yeghiazaryan A. & aylq, Hayreniq-Sp'yowr'q haraberowt'yownnery' 1918 t'vakanic minch& mer o'rery', E., 2017, e'j 103-120 (Yeghiazaryan A. and others, Homeland-Diaspora relations from 1918 to the present days, E., 2017, pp. 103-120).

was attended mainly by the representatives of organizations of the Diaspora friendly to the Soviet regime, as well as prominent figures of Diaspora Armenians. The committee's official newspaper, "Voice of the Hayreniq" stated that on November 24-25, 1980, an assembly of representatives of Diaspora Armenian communities will be held in Yerevan with the slogan "Revived Homeland and Diaspora Armenians: Struggle for Peace and Progress." The head of the organizational committee of the assembly was the president of the Academy of Sciences of Armenia, academician V. Hambardzumyan. Invitations to participate were sent on behalf of the organizing committee itself. Leaders of social and cultural "progressive" organizations, prominent social and political figures, writers, artists, journalists, scientists, teachers at Armenian schools, representatives of business circles were invited. A commemorative medal and a badge were issued on the occasion of the assembly.² Finally, the assembly was also referred to as the "Conference of Diaspora Armenians."³ The conference was attended by more than 100 representatives from all Diaspora Armenian communities, as well as figures from various regions of the ASSR.⁴

Although prominent figures from various fields also participated, the fact that it was called the "Assembly of Diaspora Armenians" underscores that the main goal of the conference was to bring together representatives of Diaspora organizations. For that purpose, extensive and informative program of visits was elaborated in Soviet Armenia, as well as ensuring participation in the events marking the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Soviet order in Armenia.⁵

The representatives of the conference sent a congratulatory letter to the leadership of the USSR and the Armenian SSR.⁶ This was also the reason why the documents adopted by the conference (statement, etc.) were considered "historical" in the report. The participants of the conference also issued a message to Diaspora Armenians, urging them to unite around Soviet Armenia and keep the bridge strong between the homeland and the Diaspora.⁷

² «Sp'yowr'qahay hamaynqneri nerkayacowcichneri jhoghovi masin», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», Sp'yowr'qahayowt'yan het mshakowt'ayin kapi komitei shabat'at'ert', 19.11.1980, e'j 2 ("About the meeting of representatives of Diaspora-Armenian communities," "Voice of the Hayreniq," weekly newspaper of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Diaspora-Armenians, 19.11.1980, p. 2).

³ «Sp'yowr'qahayowt'yan nerkayacowcichneri jhoghovy'», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», 28.11.1980, e'j 3 ("The meeting of Diaspora Armenian Representatives," "Voice of the Hayreniq," 28.11.1980, p. 3).

⁴ Hayastani azgayin arxiv, f. 875, c. 8, g. 9, c. 40, t'. 1-2: Te's na& «Sovetakan Hayas-tan», 1980, № 12, e'j 7-34 (National Archives of Armenia, f. 875, l. 8, f. 9, l. 40, p. 1-2: See also "Soviet Armenia," 1980, No. 12, p. 7-34).

⁵ «Sp'yowr'qahay hamaynqneri nerkayacowcichneri jhoghovi masin», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», 19.11.1980, e'j 2 ("About the meeting of representatives of Diaspora Armenian communities," "Voice of the Hayreniq," 19.11.1980, p. 2).

⁶ «SSHМ geragowyn soveti naxagahowt'yan naxagah Leonid Brejhn'in», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», 10.12.1980, e'j 3, «Haykakan SSH geragowyn soveti naxagahowt'yan», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», e'j 4 ("To Leonid Brezhnev, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR," "Voice of the Hayreniq," 10.12.1980, p. 3, "To the Presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian SSR," "Voice of the Hayreniq," p. 4).

⁷ «Owgherd' sp'yowr'qahayowt'yan», «Hayreniqi d'ayn», 10.12.1980, e'j 5 ("Message to Diaspora Armenians," "Voice of the Hayreniq," 10.12.1980, p. 5).

Eventually, the committee also called the conference “Homeland-Diaspora Conference.”⁸

It is clear from what has been said that when organizing the conference, the emphasis was placed on inviting representatives of Diaspora Armenian organizations, which is why it was called the “Assembly of Diaspora Armenians.” However, as prominent Diaspora Armenian figures, officials, and intellectuals from Armenia were also involved, the conference later became more generally called the “Homeland-Diaspora Conference.”

Pan-Armenian Conference of Heads and Representatives of Diaspora Organizations (2011). The precedent of calling the representative meeting a Pan-Armenian conference was later repeated during the first meeting organized by the RA Ministry of Diaspora. It took place in Yerevan, September 19-21, 2011, as part of the 20th anniversary celebrations of RA independence. The focus was on inviting leaders and representatives from Diaspora organizations. 550 leaders and representatives from 151 organizations across 46 countries participated in the conference.⁹ The participants were introduced according to their organizations in the official messages.

During the opening session, the RA President, the Catholicos of All Armenians and others presented their views on Diaspora and Armenia-Diaspora cooperation. In their remarks, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia and representatives of national parties expressed some criticism regarding the situation in Armenia and its relationship with the Diaspora. They highlighted the dangers of ongoing emigration, as well as certain unacceptable manifestations toward the Diaspora that cause mistrust.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, the RA Minister of Diaspora, H. Hakobyan, presented the Armenia-Diaspora cooperation policy and its main principles.

The conference was held in four thematic sessions:

1. language and education issues,
2. youth issues,
3. things to do before the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide,
4. development frameworks of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation.

At the end of each thematic session, summaries were prepared and presented to the plenary session of the conference. Those summaries were of great importance for the development of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation and for joint programs and their effectiveness.

At the conference, the creation of a national body in the Armenia-Diaspora format and the principles for its formation were the subject of special discussion.¹⁰

⁸ Hayastani azgayin arxiv, f. 875, c. 9, g. 40, t'. 4-5 (National Archives of Armenia, f. 875, l. 9, l. 40, p. 4-5).

⁹ «Sp'yowr'qi kazmakerpowt'yownneri ghekavarneri & nerkayacow-cichneri hamahaykakan hamajhoghov», hamajhoghovi nyowt'er, E., 2011: Te's na& «Haykakan Sp'yowr'q» taregirq, 2011, e'j 41. aystegh masnakicneri shrjanaky' nerkayacovwm e'r aveli y'ndgrkown' 50 petowt'yownic 600 masnakic (“Pan-Armenian Conference of Heads and Representatives of Diaspora Organizations,” materials of the conference, E., 2011. See also “Armenian Diaspora” yearbook, 2011, page 41: here the range of participants was presented more comprehensively: 600 participants from 50 countries).

¹⁰ Hamajhoghovi y'nt'acqi manrakrit verlowc'owt'yowny' katarvac' e' Tehrani «Lowys» amsagrowm: Te's «Sp'yowr'qi kazmakerpowt'yownneri ghekavarneri & nerkayacowcichneri hamahaykakan hamajhoghov», «Lowys» mshakowt'ayin ew hasarakakan amsagir, hoktember, 2011, № 166, e'j 7-11 (A detailed analysis of the proceedings of the conference carried out in Tehran's “Luys” magazine. See “Pan-Armenian Conference

Due to the participation of a large number of organizations and individuals from Armenia, Artsakh and the Diaspora, the Pan-Armenian Conference of Diaspora Organization Leaders and Representatives was later considered the Fourth Armenia-Diaspora Conference, as the next assembly was called the Fifth Conference. The numbering started from the Armenia-Diaspora conference in 1999, in fact, ignoring the assembly in 1980.

The first Pan-Armenian assembly, organized by the RA Ministry of Diaspora, followed a format similar to the one used by the Committee for Cultural Relations with Diaspora Armenians in 1980. Therefore, it can be argued that, from the perspective of a state body specializing in Diaspora relations, this format was the most suitable platform for effective discussions and decision-making. It is no coincidence that the RA Ministry of Diaspora, aiming to increase participation in such assemblies, maintained the representative format when organizing the Pan-Armenian assembly in 2015, while also expanding the number of participants.

The 5th Armenia-Diaspora Conference (2014). The conference was held in Yerevan on September 19-21, 2014. Since 2014, the RA Ministry of Diaspora has been organizing Armenia-Diaspora assemblies on the principle of conference, that is, the principle of universal participation. However, the 2014 Armenia-Diaspora conference was still perceived as a gathering of leaders and representatives of Diaspora organizations, with participants counted according to their affiliation with Diaspora organizations and structures. Thus, the conference included 741 participants from the Diaspora (leaders and representatives of organizations and structures) representing around 60 countries, a delegation of 20 participants from Artsakh, and over 300 participants from the Republic of Armenia.¹¹ It is interesting that the very principle of convening the conference became an object of criticism. For example, the editor of Azg daily newspaper considered that the organizations represented by the participants of the conference do not represent the entire Diaspora Armenians, therefore, when specifying the lists of invitees, focusing mainly on their representatives made the conference “imperfect and incomplete.”¹²

The conference was held on the eve of the 100th anniversary of the Genocide, and the need for proper preparation was emphasized. The slogan “I remember and demand...” was highlighted in the statement adopted by the conference.¹³

The conference agenda, discussed during the sessions, were as follows:

1. The process of international recognition, condemnation and elimination of the consequences of the Armenian Genocide,
2. The problems of the Syrian-Armenian community,
3. Current problems and perspectives of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation.

of Leaders and Representatives of Diaspora Organizations,” “Luys” Cultural and Social Magazine, October, 2011, No. 166, p. 7-11).

¹¹ «Meknarkel e' Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q hamahaykakan 5-rd hamajhoghovy'», (“The 5th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference has started”), <https://old.hayernaysor.am/archives/62617/19.04.2023/>

¹² Avetiqyan H., Er'ankyownow ankatar ankyowny', «Azg», 26.09.2014, e'j 1 (Avetikyan H., The imperfect corner of the triangle, “Azg,” 26.09.2014, p. 1).

¹³ «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q» hamahaykakan 5-rd hamajhoghovi y'ndownac' haytararowt'yowny'», (The statement adopted by the 5th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference). <https://old.hayernaysor.am/archives/63122/19.04.2023/>

The fourth agenda was the Seventh Pan-Armenian Conference of Journalists, where media coverage of the Armenian Genocide recognition and claim process, issues of knowledge and preservation of the Armenian language, issues of propaganda, anti-propaganda, information security, development trends and perspectives of Armenia-Diaspora cooperation were discussed.¹⁴

RA Minister of Diaspora H. Hakobyan said that the proposals, remarks, theses and recommendations made in 117 speeches at the 4th Armenia-Diaspora conference were compiled and served as a foundation for the development and guidance for Armenia-Diaspora cooperation. The Ministry also developed a program-schedule of measures for the implementation of the presented recommendations, assigning some to other RA ministries based on their respective sectors. Certain recommendations and related tasks were designated as long-term and ongoing.¹⁵

Instead of the five priorities of the previous conference, the Minister of Diaspora introduced seven priorities for Armenia-Diaspora relations:

1. Strengthening of the Armenian state,
2. Independence and security of Artsakh,
3. Strengthening the Armenia-Artsakh-Diaspora trinity,
4. Spread of the Armenian language among all Armenians,
5. The issue of the Armenian Genocide,
6. Unification of Armenians around the church,
7. The problem of Armenians in emergency situations.¹⁶

In their concluding statement, the conference participants affirmed these priorities as the focus for further activities.¹⁷

The 5th Armenia-Diaspora Conference was the last assembly convened by the RA Ministry of Diaspora on a representative basis. After that, in 2017, the Pan-Armenian Conference was convened on the basis of universal participation.

Pan-Armenian assemblies convened on the principle of universal participation as cognitive and consultation platforms

Since 1998, the RA's approach to the Diaspora has changed significantly. At that time, the issue of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide was declared as one of the priorities of RA's foreign policy¹⁸, opening great prospects for Armenia-

¹⁴ «C'ragir Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q hingerord hamajhoghovi», E., 2014, e'j 5-8 ("Program of the 5th Armenia-Diaspora Conference," E., 2014, p. 5-8).

¹⁵ «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 5-rd hamajhoghovi 2-rd liagowmar nistowm nerkayavecine qnnarkveliq chors t'ematik owghghowt'yownnery'», ("At the 2nd plenary session of the 5th Armenia-Diaspora conference, the four thematic areas to be discussed were presented"). <https://old.hayernaysor.am/archives/62902/>, /19.04.2023 /

¹⁶ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q hamahaykakan E. hamajhoghovy'», «Ard'aganq» Kiprahay gaghowt'i, o'gostos-september, 2014, e'j 1 ("Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian 5th conference", "Ardzaganq" of the Armenian Cypriot colony, August-September, 2014, page 1).

¹⁷ «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q» hamahaykakan 5-rd hamajhoghovi y'ndownac' haytararowt'yowny'», (The statement adopted by the 5th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference). <https://old.hayernaysor.am/archives/63122/>

¹⁸ Poghosyan E., Ankax petakanowt'yan hastatman gorc'y'nt'acy' Hayastanowm (1991-2001t't'), E., 2003, e'j 548-549 (E. Poghosyan, The process of establishment of independent statehood in Armenia (1991-2001), E., 2003, p. 548-549.).

Diaspora rapprochement. The problem is that for decades, it was exclusively Diaspora organizations that pursued the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. After the restoration of Armenia's political independence, there were hopes that the RA would adopt a principled position on the issue. However, in the first years of independence, for various reasons (war, complicated political situation, etc.), the RA did not pursue a policy of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Therefore, from the perspective of Armenia-Diaspora relations, the inclusion of this issue in the RA foreign policy agenda since 1998 was a significant achievement.

The new phase of Armenia-Diaspora relations, which began in 1998, was marked by the holding of three consecutive Pan-Armenian conferences. In the absence of a state institution for Diaspora issues, the organization of the conferences was mainly carried out by the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Given the importance placed on Armenia's relations with the Diaspora after the restoration of political independence, it was considered that the conferences should be held with the widest possible participation from the Diaspora. Secular and spiritual organizations, as well as representatives from various fields, took part. Additionally, with the participation of many delegations from Armenia and Artsakh, these conferences can truly be called Pan-Armenian in nature.

The precedent of the first Armenia-Diaspora conference (1999). According to the commemorative medal issued on the occasion of the first Armenia-Diaspora meeting, the event was also called "Armenia-Diaspora Conference."¹⁹ It was the first large-scale meeting held in Armenia-Diaspora format after the restoration of Armenia's political independence.

The purpose of the conference was to align Armenia-Diaspora relations with regional requirements for addressing national problems, to effectively implement the idea of national unity, develop a fundamental concept of Armenia-Diaspora relations, and create the necessary organizational structures. A government commission was established to organize the preparations for the conference.²⁰

One of the important organizational issues of the conference was the selection of participants. The conference was convened on the principle of ensuring universal participation, that is, the participation of all Diaspora communities and groups of organizations, and the Pan-Armenian organizations were represented by separate delegations.

The first Armenia-Diaspora conference was held on September 22-23, 1999, in Yerevan. The organizers managed to solve the problem of the participation of representatives of all Armenian groups and Diaspora Armenians. About 1,300

¹⁹ «1994-1999 t't. t'ogharkvac' metaghadranner», «Hayastani Hanrapetowt'yan howshamedalner», ("1994-1999 issued coins," "Commemorative medals of the Republic of Armenia"). https://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/Հայաստանի_Հանրապետության_հուշադրամներ#/media/Պատկեր:AM_5000_dram_Ag_1999_Diaspora_b.png.

²⁰ «HH naxagahi hramanagiry' 1999 t'vakanin Er&anowm ha-ma-haykakan xorhrdajhoghov hravirelow masin», «HH pashtonakan teghekagir», 1998. 12. 31/33 (66) ("Decree of the President of the Republic of Armenia on convening a pan-Armenian conference in Yerevan in 1999", "Official record of the Republic of Armenia", 1998. 12. 31/33 (66)). See also <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=2506>.

Diaspora Armenians from 50 countries participated in the conference held under the slogan “One Nation, One Homeland, One Language, One Church.”²¹

At the opening plenary session, discussions were focused on elevating Armenia-Diaspora relations to a new qualitative level, defining the roles of Armenia and the Diaspora in solving nationwide problems, the need to make joint decisions,²² and considering the Artsakh issue and the economic rise of Armenia as a borderline in Armenia-Diaspora relations.²³ It was also proposed to participate in the “Hayastan” Pan-Armenian Foundation on the principle of “national duty,” aiming to reform the foundation’s activities.²⁴

The conference adopted several decisions: formation of a unified information platform as an integration tool, implementation of Pan-Armenian initiatives, creation of a Pan-Armenian youth center, creation of an Armenian development agency, and annual trainings for Diaspora Armenian teachers in Armenia.

The conference was held in plenary sessions dedicated to issues of national culture and identity, Armenia-Diaspora relations, communication between Diaspora structures and the RA, propaganda, existing capabilities, opportunities and perspectives, information technologies, and Diaspora support for Armenia. Issues of Armenian identity preservation, dual citizenship, unified spelling, resolution of existing misunderstandings and disagreements and other issues were also discussed.²⁵

The conference adopted a number of decisions: formation of a unified information platform as an integration tool, implementation of Pan-Armenian initiatives, creation of a Pan-Armenian youth center, establishment of an Armenian development agency, annual trainings of Diaspora Armenian teachers in Armenia.²⁶

Eventually, the conference adopted a declaration and a statement regarding Artsakh. It emphasized the commitment of all Armenians to preserving and strengthening the Armenian state.²⁷ It also highlighted the importance of protecting Armenian identity within the Diaspora, underscoring the role and responsibility of the Republic of Armenia. In the statement regarding Artsakh, the participants of the conference expressed their willingness to contribute to the fair and comprehensive settlement of the Artsakh issue, based on the manifestation of the free will of the Artsakh Armenians.²⁸

²¹ «Och t'e orpes tonahandes, ayl kensakerp», «Azg», 23.09.1999, e'j 1 (“Not as a festival, but a way of life,” “Azg,” 23.09.1999, p. 1).

²² «Bacowm` Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q ar'ajin hamahaykakan xorhrdajhoghovi. mo'taworape's 1200 patwirakner masnakowm en nisterin», «Aliq» o'rat'ert', Tehran, 23.09.1999, e'j 1 (“Opening of the first Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian conference: approximately 1,200 delegates participate in the sessions,” “Aliq” daily newspaper, Tehran, 23.09.1999, p. 1).

²³ «Och t'e orpes tonahandes, ayl kensakerp», «Azg», 23.09.1999, e'j 1 (“Not as a festival, but a way of life,” “Azg”, 23.09.1999, p. 1).

²⁴ Ibid, p. 3:

²⁵ Baharyan V., Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q hamajhoghov & hayastanyan o'ra-gir, E., 2001, e'j 3 (Baharyan V., Armenia-Diaspora Conference and Armenian Diary, E., 2001, p. 3).

²⁶ Yeghiazaryan A. & aylq, nshv. ashx., e'j 189 (Yeghiazaryan A. and others, cf. work, p. 189).

²⁷ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q xorhrdajhoghovi hr'chakagrery», «Aliq» o'rat'ert', Tehran, 26.09.1999, e'j 1 (“Declarations of the Armenia-Diaspora Conference,” “Aliq” daily newspaper, Tehran, 26.09.1999, p. 1).

²⁸ Ibid, p. 6.

In fact, the first Armenia-Diaspora conference, although primarily aimed at solving the problem of mutual recognition and trust-building, also laid the groundwork for the adoption of a consistent policy by the RA authorities to coordinate the Armenia-Diaspora relations.

The Second Armenia-Diaspora Conference (2002). The second Armenia-Diaspora conference took place on May 27-28, 2002, in Yerevan. The responsibility for organizing the conference was once again assigned to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁹

The number of participants of the conference reached three thousand, of which more than one thousand represented the Armenian communities and organizations across 48 countries.³⁰ A representative of the organizing committee noted that, unlike the first conference, this time the sessions should be held in a more practical manner.³¹

RA President R. Kocharyan presented a report on the implementation of the decisions of the previous conference. Regarding the formation of a unified information field as a tool for integration, the broadcasting of the public television was launched, extending from Australia to the USA. In terms of Pan-Armenian initiatives, achievements included the organization of the Pan-Armenian sports games, the Pan-Armenian festival "One Nation, One Culture," and various Pan-Armenian assemblies. While the opening of the Pan-Armenian Youth Center was postponed until 2003, periodic assemblies of Diaspora Armenian youth organizations were held in Armenia. Concerning the creation of the Armenian Development Agency, Diaspora Armenians were involved in the agency's board. Regarding the training of Diaspora Armenian teachers, over 500 educators received training both in the RA and within their communities during 2000–2001. At the end of his speech, the RA President proposed to develop a Pan-Armenian agenda on issues of national significance.³²

After the opening plenary session, the conference continued with four parallel thematic sessions:

1. political issues, Armenia-Diaspora relations,
2. information and media,
3. economy and socio-economic development,
4. education, science, and culture.³³

In the thematic sessions, four or five key speakers presented, followed by discussions and a summarization of the results. The discussion on establishing a

²⁹ «Hayastani Hanrapetowt'yan varchapeti oroshowmy' Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q erkrord xorhrdajhoghov' Er&anowm anckacelow masin», ("The decision of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia to hold the second Armenia-Diaspora conference in Yerevan"), <http://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?tid=16578>.

³⁰ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q hamahaykakan B. xorhrdajhoghov», «Teghekatow», pashto'nat'ert' Gahire'i Haykakan Baregorc'akan y'ndhanowr miowt'ean, Kahire, 2002, yowlis, t'iw 24, e'j 1; «Azg», 28.5.2002, e'j 1 ("Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian 2nd conference," "Teghekatu," the official newspaper of the Cairo Armenian Benevolent Union, Cairo, 2002, July, number 24, p. 1; "Azg," 28.5.2002, p. 1).

³¹ «Erkrord angam i mi enq havaqvel», «Azg», 28.05.2002, e'j 1 ("We gathered together for the second time", "Azg," 28.05.2002, p. 1).

³² Yeghiazaryan A. & aylq, nshv. ashx., e'j 192-193 (Yeghiazaryan A. and others, cf. work, p. 192-193).

³³ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q hamahaykakan B. xorhrdajhoghov», «Teghekatow», pashto'nat'ert' Gahire'i Haykakan Baregorc'akan y'ndhanowr miowt'ean, Kahire, 2002, yowlis, t'iw 24, e'j 1 ("Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian 2nd conference", "Teghekatu", the official newspaper of the Cairo Armenian Benevolent Union, Cairo, 2002, July, number 24, page 1.).

coordinating body for Armenia-Diaspora relations was very important, and the possibility of creating a corresponding ministry was discussed.³⁴ Pan-Armenian priorities, such as Hay Dat, the fair settlement of the Artsakh problem, and the establishment of the Armenian state, were also discussed.³⁵

The conference adopted several important programs to provide computers to schools in the RA and the NKR, to create an Armenian Genocide research center, to establish an online university of Armenian studies, to support gifted Armenian students, to find a regional high-quality medical center, and to establish a Diaspora museum.³⁶

The Declaration of the second Armenia-Diaspora conference, with the slogan "Armenia is the homeland of all Armenians," justified the need to unite the efforts of all Armenians to strengthen Armenia. It was considered necessary to abolish the ban on dual citizenship in the RA, enabling every Armenian to fully participate in the life of their homeland. The issue of recognizing the right to free self-determination for the people of Artsakh was highlighted as an important concern for all Armenians. Similarly, the process of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide remained at the center of attention of the Armenian community.³⁷

The second Armenia-Diaspora conference, although again consultative in nature, proved to be particularly effective in terms of adopting joint programs within the Armenia-Diaspora format.

Third Armenia-Diaspora Conference (2006). The third Armenian-Diaspora conference was held in Yerevan, on September 18-20, 2006.³⁸ The conference was held as part of the events marking the 15th anniversary of the Republic of Armenia's independence. It brought together representatives from Pan-Armenian organizations, individual communities, intellectuals, businessmen, and other notable figures,³⁹ with a total of around two thousand participants from 50 countries.⁴⁰

³⁴ «Erkrord angam i mi enq havaqvel», «Azg», 28.05.2002, e'j 3; «Avartvec &s mek azgahavaq», «Azg», 29.05.2002, e'j 3 ("We gathered together for the second time", "Azg," 28.05.2002, p. 3; "Another rally has ended," "Azg," 29.05.2002, p. 3).

³⁵ «Avartvec &s mek azgahavaq», «Azg», 29.05.2002, e'j 3 ("Another rally has ended," "Azg," 29.05.2002, p. 3).

³⁶ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q hamahaykakan B. xorhrdajhoghov», «Teghekatow», pashto'nat'ert' Gahire'i Haykakan Baregorc'akan y'ndhanowr miowt'ean, kahire, 2002, yowlis, t'iw 24, e'j 3: «Avartvec &s mek azgahavaq», «Azg», 29.05.2002, e'j 3 ("Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian 2nd conference", "Teghekatu", the official newspaper of the Cairo Armenian Benevolent Union, Cairo, 2002, July, number 24, p. 3. "Another rally has ended," "Azg," 29.05.2002, p. 3.).

³⁷ «Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q hamahaykakan B. xorhrdajhoghov», «Teghekatow», pashto'nat'ert' Gahire'i Haykakan Baregorc'akan y'ndhanowr miowt'ean, kahire, 2002, yowlis, t'iw 24, e'j 2 ("Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian 2nd conference", "Teghekatu", the official newspaper of the Cairo Armenian Benevolent Union, Cairo, 2002, July, number 24, p. 2).

³⁸ «HH kar'avarowt'yan oroshowmy' HH artaqin gorc'eri naxara-row-t'yany' gowmar hatkacnelow masin», ("Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia on allocating money to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia"), <http://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=27224>.

³⁹ «Tpaworowt'iwnner Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhoghove'n», «Masis» shabat'at'ert', Beyrowt', № 13, 2006, hoktember, e'j 13 ("Impressions from the 3rd Armenia-Diaspora Conference", "Masis" weekly newspaper, Beirut, № 13, 2006, October, p. 13).

⁴⁰ «Hayery' 21-rd darown...», «Jhamanak» qaghaqakan jhoghovrdakan o'rat'ert', K.Polis, 18.09.2006, e'j 1; «Menq shat lowrj npataknerov enq masnackowm xorhrdajhoghovin, irenq lowrj chen verabervowm mez»

According to the agenda, in the first part of the conference, Armenian political and spiritual leaders and representatives of Pan-Armenian organizations spoke at the plenary session. The second part of the agenda of the conference was dedicated to a crucial issue: the implementation of the development program for the rural regions of Armenia.

The third part of the conference agenda featured a separate discussion titled “New answers to the old questions. Armenians in the 21st century,” which was divided into four key directions:

1. nation, state, and identity in the 21st century,
2. Armenia-Diaspora relations and the possibilities for their deepening,
3. Emigration and repatriation in the context of Armenia-Diaspora relations,
4. The discussion of Diaspora in terms of perspectives.⁴¹

In his speech, RA President R. Kocharyan emphasized the strong cooperation observed in Armenia-Diaspora relations, which is especially expressed in the important programs implemented in Armenia by the “Hayastan” Pan-Armenian Fund, the “Lincy” Fund and other charitable organizations.⁴² He also mentioned that the rural communities of the RA are weakening and depopulating, and large investments are needed to solve the problem. In this regard, he called for the support of the Diaspora.⁴³ The Catholicos of All Armenians appealed to the participants of the conference to support this crucial initiative: “We bring our patriarchal message and exhortation to our native and Diaspora people to respond to this great and important initiative of the homeland to rebuild the villages.”⁴⁴

In the third part of the conference agenda, a special discussion focused on regulating Armenia-Diaspora relations. The main concern was that in the absence of coordination, the process of implementing the decisions of the previous conferences had become uncontrollable. This was evidenced by the fact that most of the decisions from the second Armenia-Diaspora conference had not been implemented. Proposals were made to create a ministry of Diaspora affairs, though an alternative suggestion was to form a Pan-Armenian council. In his speech, the RA President mentioned that it was not possible to implement such proposals at that time, but they should be kept in mind for the future. He added, “I would consider this conference to be the highest body

(“Armenians in the 21st century...”, political popular daily “Zhamanak”, K. Polis, 18.09.2006, p. 1; “We participate in the conference with very serious goals, they do not take us seriously.”), <https://hetq.am/hy/article/11473>.

⁴¹ «HH AG naxarar Vardan O'skanyani handipowmy' Groghneri miowt'yan andamneri, steghc'agorc'akan miowt'yownneri nerkayacowichneri ew mshakowyt'i gorc'ichneri het» (“Meeting of RA Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanyan with members of Writers' Union, representatives of creative unions and cultural figures”) <https://www.mfa.am/hy/press-conference/2006/09/05/vo/1711>.

⁴² «Y'st R'obert Qocharyani` LGH harcowm mot e'inq paymanagir knqelown, bayc chhajoghvec», «Azg», 19.09.2006, e'j 1 (“According to Robert Kocharyan, we were close to signing an agreement on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, but we did not succeed,” “Azg,” 19.09.2006, p. 1).

⁴³ Hovyan V., Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhghov (Hovyan V., 3rd Armenia-Diaspora Conference) http://www.noravank.am/arm/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=2399 / 19.04.2023 /

⁴⁴ «N.S.O.T.T. Garegin B C'ayragowyn Patriarq & Amenayn Hayoc Ka-t'o-ghi-kosi xosqy' «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q» errord xorhrdajhghovin (18-20 september, 2006 t'., Er&an), «E'jmiac'in», 2006, № 9, e'j 24 (“The speech of the H.S.O.T.T. Supreme Patriarch Karegin II and Catholicos of All Armenians at the third conference “Armenia-Diaspora” (September 18-20, 2006, Yerevan), “Echmiadzin,” 2006, No. 9, p. 24).

of the collective wishes of the Armenian people, during which we make decisions and each of us tries to implement these decisions in our activities.”⁴⁵

The discussion on the issue of Armenian identity preservation in the Diaspora was particularly professional and meaningful. In the first session of the conference, titled “Nation, State, and Identity in the 21st Century” and focusing on the topic “New Answers to the Old Questions: Armenians in the 21st Century,” chaired by the famous theorist of diaspora studies Kh. Tololyan, scientific and applied reports were presented. It was proposed that the responsibility for preservation of Armenians should be entrusted to the RA, which had already been engaged in this mission through initiatives like the Pan-Armenian festival “One Nation, One Culture” and other events. However, the proposal emphasized the need for planning more extensive and systematic events.⁴⁶

During the conference, the Artsakh issue was also discussed, emphasizing that a fair resolution would not be achievable without the support of the Diaspora.⁴⁷

Following that, a discussion was held on the topic “Diaspora in 2020,” where participants envisioned the Diaspora changing over the next 15 years.⁴⁸ An attempt was made to discuss developments that could lead to a stronger and more united Diaspora by 2020. In fact, the third Armenia-Diaspora conference deviated from the traditional format and presented participants with an agenda to discuss basic solutions to fundamental problems.

The 6th Armenia-Diaspora Conference (2017). After convening Armenia-Diaspora conferences on a representative basis in 2011 and 2014, the RA Ministry of Diaspora organized a Pan-Armenian conference with comprehensive participation in 2017. It took place on September 18-20, 2017, in Yerevan. 1612 Armenians from 69 countries, as well as from the RA and Artsakh participated. The conference was held under the motto “Mutual Trust, Unity, and Responsibility.” The following issues were on the agenda of the conference:

1. Development of Armenia’s economy (foreign investments, promotion of tourism, cooperation of business circles),
2. Features of the defense policy of Armenia in the conditions of modern challenges,
3. Armenia’s foreign policy, Artsakh issue, and issues of international recognition of the Armenian Genocide,

⁴⁵ «Avartvec Hayastan - Sp'yowr'q errord xorhrdajhoghov'» ("The third Armenia-Diaspora Conference has ended"). <http://www.azatutyun.am/a/1584134.html>.

⁴⁶ «Hay linenq y'ndownelov orosh arjheqner, t'e jhxtelov...», «Azg», 20.09.2006, e'j 1; «Ayso'r awartwec Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhoghov'», «Aliq» o'rat'ert', T'ehran, 20.09.2006, e'j 1; «Ezrap'akich hangrowan», «Jhamanak» qaghaqakan jhoghovrdakan o'rat'ert', K.Polis, 20.09.2006, e'j 1; Hovyan V., Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhoghov ("Should we be Armenian by accepting certain values or by denying..."), "Azg", 20.09.2006, page 1; "The 3rd Armenia-Diaspora conference ended today," "Aliq" daily, Tehran, 20.09.2006, page 1; "Final milestone", "Zhamanak" political popular daily, K. Polis, 20.09.2006, page 1. Hovyan V., 3rd Armenia-Diaspora Conference) http://www.noravank.am/arm/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=2399.

⁴⁷ Hovyan V., Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhoghov, (Hovyan V., 3rd Armenia-Diaspora Conference) http://www.noravank.am/arm/articles/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=2399.

⁴⁸ «Ayso'r awartwec Hayastan-Sp'iwr'q 3-rd xorhrdajhoghov'», «Aliq» o'rat'ert', T'ehran, 20.09.2006, e'j 1 ("The 3rd Armenia-Diaspora conference ended today," "Aliq" daily, Tehran, 20.09.2006, p. 1)

4. Problems of Armenian identity preservation.⁴⁹

At least the political circle of the participants viewed the purpose of the conference mainly in the development of tactics to stop emigration and the creation of the Pan-Armenian council.⁵⁰ The need to stop emigration was also mentioned in the speech of Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia.⁵¹ He also emphasized the lack of responsibility both from Armenia toward the Diaspora and from the Diaspora toward Armenia.⁵² Before the conference, intellectuals had highlighted the insufficient level of trust the Diaspora had toward Armenia.⁵³

It should be emphasized that the conference took place in 2016, shortly after the April four-day war. Therefore, the strengthening of Armenia and Artsakh, as well as the increase in their defense capabilities, became central topics in the broad discussions and the core agenda. It is no coincidence that at the closing of the conference, the RA Minister of Diaspora emphasized: "We said a lot to the world and our 'neighbors' and 'we gathered to show that we are together,' 'unity was established, we are together.'"⁵⁴

The participants of the conference emphasized the increasing volumes of assimilation in the Diaspora.⁵⁵

The importance of the Diaspora's participation in strengthening the homeland's defense capabilities was at the core of the discussions on Armenia's defense policy.⁵⁶

In the statement adopted by the participants of the conference, it was mentioned that the participants were guided by "the imperative of consolidating the potential of all Armenians, continuous dialogue and multi-layered involvement in strengthening the trinity of Armenia-Artsakh-Diaspora." The following national priorities were emphasized: the unity of Armenia-Artsakh-Diaspora, the strengthening of Armenia, protection of Armenians, Artsakh security, international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, etc. The participants expressed their readiness to pursue the implementation of these priorities and underscored that they accepted the statement as "a landmark for all Armenians, the state bodies of the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of

⁴⁹ Azatyan E., Gorc'nakan aknkaliqner Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 6-rd hamajhoghovic, «Azg», 08.09.2017, e'j 4 (E. Azatyan, Practical expectations from the 6th Armenia-Diaspora conference, "Azg", 09.08.2017, p. 4).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ «Aram A. Hayastany' parpvowm e', isk Sp'yowr'qy' mashvowm» ("Aram A. Armenia is being captured, and the Diaspora is being worn out.")

<https://www.panorama.am/am/news/2017/09/18/%D4%B1%D6%80%D5%A1%D5%B4-%D4%B1-%D5%AD%D5%B8%D5%BD%D6%84/1836097>.

⁵² Avetiqyan H., Xoher' 6-rd hamajhoghovi avartin, «Azg», 22.09.2017, e'j 1 (H. Avetiqyan, Thoughts at the end of the 6th conference, "Azg", 22.09.2017, p. 1).

⁵³ Melqonyan A., Inch spasel Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q hamajhoghovic, «Azg», 30.08.2017, e'j 8 (Melqonyan A., What to expect from the Armenia-Diaspora conference, "Azg", 30.08.2017, p. 8).

⁵⁴ «Miasnowt'yowny' kayacav. y'ndownvec Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 6-rd hamahaykakan hamajhoghovi haytararowt'yowny'» ("Unity took place. The statement of the 6th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference was adopted.") <https://www.tert.am/am/news/2017/09/20/Arm-diasp/2488574>.

⁵⁵ «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 6-rd hamajhoghovi masnakicnem amp'op'el en ashxatanqi ardyownqnery'» ("The participants of the 6th Armenia-Diaspora conference summarized the results of the work") <https://armenpress.am/arm/news/905996>.

⁵⁶ «Amp'op'el en Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q 6-rd hamahaykakan hamajhoghovi ashxatanqnery'» ("The works of the 6th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference have been summarized.") <https://www.mil.am/index.php/ru/news/4957>.

Artsakh, the Armenian Church, Pan-Armenian community structures and organizations to pursue the realization of Pan-Armenian goals.”⁵⁷

In fact, the agenda of the 6th Armenia-Diaspora conference covered almost all issues of Pan-Armenian importance. After the four-day war in 2016, such a massive Pan-Armenian event attempted to show the unity and determination of the RA and the Diaspora to support the just cause of the Artsakh Armenians.

Global Armenian Summit in 2022: a new approach to the Pan-Armenian meeting

Speaking on the issue of convening a new conference, Chief Commissioner of Diaspora Affairs Z. Sinanyan stated that the goal was to organize a more practical and effective conference than the previous ones.⁵⁸ In other words, he believed that the time has come to organize more practical and effective discussions in terms of decisions and their implementation.

The Global Armenian Summit was held on October 28-31, 2022, in Yerevan. It was organized by the Office of the Chief Commissioner of RA Diaspora Affairs. The summit aimed to serve as a platform for diaspora representatives and local partners to discuss challenges and issues of universal importance. The proposals, solutions, and outcomes voiced during the summit were intended to form the basis of the Pan-Armenian agenda.⁵⁹

About 600 participants from more than 50 countries took part in the summit. The participants represented various organizations, structures, and fields of activity, including science, business, the military, community structures, healthcare, education, technology, art, etc. About 130 specialists from approximately 15 countries were invited to lead and participate in the panel discussions.⁶⁰

Chief Commissioner of RA Diaspora Affairs Z. Sinanyan, welcoming the participants of the “Global Armenian Summit,” spoke about the importance of the summit, Diaspora and Armenia cooperation.⁶¹

The summit was held in the aftermath of the military operations launched by Azerbaijan against the Republic of Armenia on September 13-15, 2022, during which significant areas of Armenia were occupied. The difficult situation surrounding Artsakh was also a major concern. It is no coincidence that the summit featured a

⁵⁷ «Hayastan-Sp'yowr'q hamahaykakan 6-rd hamajhoghovi haytararowt'yowny'» (“Announcement of the 6th Armenia-Diaspora Pan-Armenian Conference”) <https://old.hayernaysor.am/archives/259632>.

⁵⁸ «Che'inq owzowm hamajhoghov ankcacnel' naxkini nman t'oz p'cheinq sp'yowr'qi jhoghovrdi achqin, heto twamp'ow dneinq' xorovac' owtelowc ow mi erkow hamerg lselowc heto». Sinanyan (“We didn't want to hold a conference, that would blow dust in the eyes of the people of the diaspora like before, and then go on our way after eating barbecue and listening to a couple of concerts.” Sinanyan,) <https://www.aravot.am/2021/03/17/1178071/>.

⁵⁹ Hamashxarhayin haykakan gagat'najhoghov (World Armenian Summit) <http://diaspora.gov.am/hy/events/103/globalarmeniansummit>.

⁶⁰ Hamashxarhayin haykakan gagat'najhoghovi manramasner (Details of the World Armenian Summit) <http://diaspora.gov.am/hy/news/881>, Ezrap'akich ditoghowt'yownner, ar'ancqayin ezrahangowmner & hajordogh qayler (Concluding remarks, key conclusions and next steps,) <http://diaspora.gov.am/hy/news/915>.

⁶¹ Hamashxarhayin haykakan gagat'najhoghov: O'r 1 - Oghjowyni xosqer (World Armenian Summit. Day 1 - Greetings), <http://diaspora.gov.am/hy/news/883>.

special session on Armenia's security issues, where participants engaged in a direct dialogue with Artsakh Republic's State Minister, R. Vardanyan, who provided an update on the current situation and potential developments in Artsakh.⁶²

The security of Armenia, the protection of Armenian interests in the world, repatriation, education, healthcare, agriculture, issues concerning the communities and the Diaspora youth became topics of discussion at the conference.⁶³

The summit consisted of eight consecutive thematic (panel) discussions and 17 concurrent sessions. Many Armenian and Diaspora Armenian experts participated as moderators and panelists in these discussions. The panel discussions focused on Armenia and various current issues related to the Armenian people.

The summit differed from previous ones in that the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the Cilicia See of the Great House, and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation did not participate. Additionally, there was no delegation from Artsakh. The focus was placed on completing professional-expert discussions and their outcomes.⁶⁴

Judging by the fact that the formats of participation, topics, and discussions at the summit were completely changed compared to previous ones, it can be inferred that, if the new approach proves effective, there is possibility for future Armenia-Diaspora assemblies to be held in a similar format.

Conclusion

Summarizing the results of the study, we can note that the first Armenia-Diaspora conference, initially organized as a representative meeting of Diaspora Armenian communities or individuals, later began to be called "Armenia-Diaspora conference," due to the wide range of participants. However, the idea of organizing Armenia-Diaspora meetings on a representative basis did not fade, and the meetings in 2011 and 2014 were also organized on the same principle. Moreover, they were later called "Armenia-Diaspora Fourth" and "Armenia-Diaspora Fifth" conferences. The practice of organizing conferences with wide participation of Diaspora Armenians continued during assemblies in 1999, 2002, 2006, and 2017, where hundreds of representatives from Diaspora Armenian communities, organizations, and various individual figures from both the Diaspora and Armenia took part. In this regard, the example of the Global Armenian Summit in 2022 is interesting, which, in fact, was significantly different from the previous ones.

⁶² Owghigh. Hamashxarhayin haykakan gagan'najhoghov, o'r 2-rd (Live. World Armenian Summit, day 2) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7HznFxRBT4>.

⁶³ «Hamashxarhayin haykakan gagan'anjhoghovi c'ragir», E., 2022 ("Program of the World Armenian Summit," E., 2022).

⁶⁴ Qani or gagan'najhoghovi qnnarkowmneri ardyownqnery' der'&s minch& verj i mi chen bavel & dranc himan vra hamapatasxan c'ragrer chen mshakvel ow irakanacvel, djhvar e' xosel dra y'ndhanowr ardyownavetowt'yan masin (Since the results of the summit discussions have not been brought together to the end and corresponding programs have not been developed and implemented based on them, it is difficult to talk about its overall effectiveness).

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