

SUPPORTING ARMENIAN DEMOCRACY

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The following is H. E. Stéphane Dion's letter submitted to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Mélanie Joly. It relates to strengthening democracy in the Republic of Armenia. For the executive summary and the details that follow click on [Supporting Armenian Democracy](#) at Government of Canada official site.

Berlin, April 6, 2022

The Honourable Mélanie Joly
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Global Affairs Canada
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0H5

Honourable Minister,

As you well know, on July 7, 2021, your predecessor as Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Marc Garneau, entrusted me, as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the EU and Europe, with the mission of exploring options for increased Canadian support for Armenian democracy, building on the Prime Minister's visit in 2018 (see Annex 1).

The Minister had clearly defined the parameters of my mission. It was to assess "Canada's current efforts to strengthen Armenian democracy", "what else Canada can do to help sustain Armenia's democratic development during these critical times" and how to "harness all the goodwill that exists in the Canadian society toward Armenia". In doing so, I am to "identify multiple different avenues by which Canada can support Armenia's democratic development, including our representation on the ground". My mission is to conclude with a report, outlining concrete recommendations and steps that Canada may take within the next five years, to best achieve these objectives, and which are to be submitted directly to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and rendered public.

The Minister was very clear that my mission does "not address the situation of Nagorno-Karabakh and issues in the broader region". It is certain that a democratic state will find it much more difficult to improve itself when it incurs problematic or hostile relations with its neighbors and when it suffers the tragic human casualties, destruction and existential uncertainty of an armed conflict, which could reignite at any time. The contents of this reports takes into account this uncertain and highly problematic context, however, this report and its deriving recommendations does not aim to address these geopolitical challenges. It instead focuses exclusively on Canadian support for Armenians' efforts to improve their practice of democracy.

Attached to this letter is the mandated report, which I am signing as Special Envoy, and whose contents do not necessarily reflect your department's endorsement.

Within this attached report, I argue that it is entirely possible for Canada to have a positive and

significant influence on the advancement of democracy in Armenia, if we have a realistic and well-targeted strategy. I will first outline the strategy that I propose for the Government of Canada. After having defined this strategy, I will further substantiate it through the following main aspects:

- link our increased efforts in Armenia to the Government of Canada's new commitment to fragile democracies;
- coordinate our efforts in Armenia with, of course, the Armenian authorities, but also with our international development partners;
- focus a substantial part of our efforts on the implementation of a flagship project, defined through the extension of Canadian support to the Armenian National Assembly in its search for an efficient administration;
- identify other desirable, realistic, targeted and promising Canadian initiatives;
- increase Canadian presence through the establishment of an embassy in Armenia.

In closing this letter, allow me to comment in the next few lines on the ramifications for Armenia, of Putin's brutal invasion of Ukraine. I know that I must not deal with geopolitical factors (and I will not comment on this further in my report) but this horrific attack occurred after Minister Garneau set the parameters of my mission.

The fact that Russia has a strong influence on the security of Armenia should not become an argument to turn away from Armenia. On the contrary, Armenia has even more merit for having advanced its democracy within the context of this additional constraint. Supporting Ukraine also means stepping up our efforts to advance democracy in the region. This is precisely how our allies are responding (US, EU), and it is this resolute commitment to Armenian democracy that I strongly recommend.

Minister, I wrote this report, keeping top of mind the following excerpt from your 2021 mandate letter, from the Prime Minister: "Expanding fast and flexible support for fragile and emerging democracies". It is a noble commitment, which this report seeks to give concrete expression. The accompanying proposals, however desirable and realistic that they may be, will only be implemented if they are backed by political will; willingness which the Government of Canada can draw not only from its commitment to the Armenian people, but also and above all, for democracy in the world.

Please accept, Minister, the expression of my highest consideration.

Stéphane Dion

Prime Minister's Special Envoy to the European Union and Europe

Comments



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Not at all clear. What democracy? In 2018 the Armenian nation was promised the word "democracy". It was euphoria settling into something else. And, now, all "democratic countries" want a slice of what has remained after the Turkish and Azeri attacks on Armenians in 2020. Puzzling as well as to why exclude Artsakh? Fear of displeasing turkey , azerbaijan, and england?