MEXICO'S AMBASSADOR TO US ARTURO SARUKHAN COURAGEOUSLY ACKNOWLEDGES "1915 GENOCIDE BY TURKEY"

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By Appo Jabarian, Executive Publisher / Managing Editor, USA Armenian Life Magazine, 3 July 2009

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Among the many nations that have opened their doors and hearts to the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, Mexico stands out as being a pluralistic sovereign state that has appointed a principled and courageous Armenian-Mexican seasoned diplomat, a respected expert on international affairs and an astute political strategist to its most important?ambassadorial post, the one in the United States.

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As Mexico's top diplomatic representative in Washington, Ambassador Sarukhan leads his country's efforts on such crucial issues as trade, proliferation of illegal firearms, immigration, curtailing of the traffic of illegal drugs, among others.
Amb. Sarukhan is also credited for fostering good relations between the Armenian-American and Mexican-American communities. His insightful remarks in late 2008 inspired Shahe Mazbanian, a vice-president of business development at Bank of America, to summon help from his long-time friend and mentor Alberto G. Alvarado, Los Angeles District Director of the US Small Business Administration, to jointly lobby with their respective communities for active co-operation. Their efforts paid off in an impressive way. Both the Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Armenian-American Chamber of Commerce jointly organized a June 25 breakfast meeting in Los Angeles' Biltmore Hotel in honor of Ambassador Sarukhan.

At the meeting, the Consuls General of Mexico and Armenia, Juan Marcos Gutierrez-Gonzalez and Grigor Hovhannissian separately spoke about the necessity of establishing strategic partnership between the Mexican and Armenian communities. As a direct result of this timely initiative, they announced the formation of a task force that would promote cooperation in the sectors of health, economic development, education and culture (Please see related news article by clicking on the following link: http://www.armenianlife.com/Archive/ArchivePDF/English/07-07-2009.pdf).

The Consulates General of Armenia and Mexico spearheaded the co-operation efforts. In a pre-taped video message, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA.) expressed his appreciation for the initiative and congratulated the two consulates.

In a November 21, 2008 interview granted to The Armenian Reporter, Amb. Sarukhan emphasized that "communities like the Armenian and the Mexican communities are natural allies. They share agendas and challenges in this country. Many of them have come here driven by the same problems of lack of economic opportunities. Both are hard working societies. the Armenian community faced the prejudice and racism and discrimination in this country that Mexican communities are facing today."

He stated that "It would make more sense if Armenian and Mexican communities work together especially in the West Coast and New England where we have the highest concentration of Armenian-Americans to bring down the bombastic nature of the debate, to look at the opportunities and the challenges in an objective and forward-looking way."

Mr. Sarukhan's candid position regarding his Armenian roots is not only uplifting for the Armenian Youth, but also enriching for Mexico's international image. His grandparents arrived in Mexico in the early 1930s. His grandfather was a Russian-Armenian also named Artur Sarukhanian, and grandmother, a survivor of the Genocide arrived in Mexico with the idea of coming to Canada. Having read a lot about Mexico, Sr. Sarukhan decided to stop in Mexico on their way to Canada. The elder Sarukhanians fell in love with Mexico and they stayed in Mexico. Amb. Sarukhan was born in Mexico.

The prestigious website of The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars named after Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States from 1913 to 1921, and a great friend of The Democratic Republic of Armenia (1918-1921), writes: "The grandson of refugees in Mexico, Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan is a career diplomat who joined the Mexican Foreign Service in 1993, and currently serves as Mexico's Ambassador to the U.S. He was posted to the Mexican Embassy in the United States as a junior diplomat, served as Chief of Staff to the Ambassador, and was the head of the counternarcotics office at the Embassy. In 2000 he became Chief of Policy Planning at the Foreign Ministry and was appointed by the President as Mexican Consul General to New York City in 2003. He resigned from this post and took a leave of absence from the Foreign Service in 2006 to join Felipe Calderón's presidential campaign as a foreign policy advisor and international spokesperson and became the Coordinator for Foreign Affairs in the Transition Team. In November of 2006 he received the rank of Ambassador and in February of 2007 was appointed Mexican Ambassador to the United States."

During the breakfast meeting's question and answer period, Appo Jabarian of USA Armenian Life Magazine asked: "Amb. Sarukhan, at the beginning of your remarks you have used the term '1915 Genocide by Turkey.' Does it mean that the government of Mexico officially recognizes the

Armenian Genocide, or have you simply stated the facts as they are?"

Amb. Sarukhan posed for a moment and then answered with a humorous flair. He said that "the newspapers are good at killing flies and diplomats," causing an eruption of laughter. He then stated courageously that his remarks reflected his personal belief. He went on to elaborate that by telling the truth we can build a better future. He added that the truth can overcome everything; and can liberate even those who want to hide it.

Through their pro-active co-operation, the Armenian- and the Mexican-American communities across the United States, can achieve substantial moral, political, and economic gains. Both communities come from similar backgrounds of family-values.

The success and the longevity of their inter-ethnic alliance should serve as a model that can be emulated by Armenian-Americans in establishing similarly fruitful alliances with other communities.