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PRESS RELEASE

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Poll in Armenia sheds light on OSCE image and other key political matters

Today, European Friends of Armenia (EuFoA, www.EuFoA.org) is publishing the Armenia poll of the first ever internationally conducted *Comparative Opinion Polls in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh on Socio-Political Issues and Foreign Relations*. The poll in Armenia contains questions about Armenia's internal situation, Turkey, Nagorno-Karabakh, the EU, the OSCE and other international players relevant for Armenia.

"Our analysis reveals for the first time some fascinating data about how the international community is perceived in Armenia. It also shows the current distrust of Armenians towards Turkey following the problems of the rapprochement protocol's ratification. Besides, Armenians think that their country is largely on the right track and they support a ceasefire consolidation in Nagorno-Karabakh, i.e. removing the snipers and installing international observers" commented **Andrew Cooper**, CEO of the UK based opinion polling company Populus (www.populus.co.uk).

Hovhannes Grigoryan, CEO of IPSC (Institute for Political and Sociological Consulting, www.ipsc.am), the Armenian partner for this survey, added: "The data we compiled in this poll provides exciting sociological insights which were so far not available. We hope that our research will allow decision makers and media understand better how the Armenian people think about these very important political questions."

"It was particularly surprising for us to see the low level of information about the OSCE Minsk Group, which is so important for Armenia. The poll also shows the support of the Armenian people for measures leading to a peaceful solution of the Karabakh conflict, coupled with their distrust in measures which could affect the security of the Armenian population. This and a number of other questions should be very interesting for the OSCE summit in Astana" concluded Dr **Michael Kambeck**, Secretary General of EuFoA.

The fieldwork for this poll was carried out between 15 and 18 October 2010, comprised 1208 face-to-face interviews in all regions of Armenia and has an error margin of 2.87%.

Please find the Executive Summary of the opinion poll below. The full report with charts is available on www.eufoa.org as of today.

**The connected opinion poll carried out in Nagorno-Karabakh will be published on
Thursday, 25 November 2010.**

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

For more information on EuFoA and the Europe-Armenia Advisory Council, please visit our website at www.EuFoA.org.

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POLL IN ARMENIA, NOVEMBER 2010 – SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Armenia's internal situation

Armenians are generally positive about the direction of their country but while largely supporting President Sargsyan they are much less positive about the political leadership at large. Half of all Armenians think that the country is going in the right direction and only a third think it is going in the wrong direction, and the majority of people from all demographic backgrounds think this is the case. This is positive compared with many other countries: in the United States, for example, less than one-in-three respondents typically think their country is going in the right direction, and in the UK around 40% do so.

Much of this positivity is due to some of the specific improvements that Armenians say have taken place over the past five years. In particular they think Armenia has developed its infrastructure, security and education, and overall they think the quality of life has improved modestly. However, they think there has been limited progress in democracy and very little progress in the fight against corruption. Against the background of the global financial crisis, they also think that there has been little progress in the economy. Since unemployment is overwhelmingly the issue that most concerns Armenians, the perception that the economy has not developed much over the last ten years results in a quarter of Armenians thinking that the government doesn't represent them at all and a further 59% thinking that it only somewhat represents them.

Serzh Sargsyan is still the politician most people would vote for if there were a Presidential election. He has nearly three times the support of the next strongest candidate, Gagik Tsarukyan (10%), and the majority of people in all age groups say they would vote for him – though his support is stronger among older voters than among younger ones. However, while President Sargsyan may be the most supported politician more people say they don't know who they would vote for, or that they wouldn't vote for anybody (together more than a third of people say this).

Serzh Sargsyan appears, however, to be more popular than his party – something which is true of many leaders around the world. Slightly more people say their first choice in a parliamentary election would be for Prosperous Armenia (26%) than the Republican Party of Armenia (21%). Support for the Republican Party is fairly even across different age-groups, but support for Prosperous Armenia is much higher among younger voters than older ones and among those with lower levels of education, whereas those with higher education are much more likely to vote for the Republican Party. 7% of Armenians would vote for the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, 4% for the Country of Laws party and 3% for the Armenian National Congress.

There are some politicians and parties that a number of Armenians say they will never vote for. More than a quarter (27%) say they would never vote for Levon Ter-Petrosyan while 13% say they would never vote for Artur Baghdasaryan or Serzh Sargsyan. Just under a fifth of Armenians would never vote for the Country of Laws Party, 13% would never vote for the Armenian National Congress, and 10% each say they wouldn't vote for the Republican Party of Armenia or the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. In contrast, only 3% say they would never vote for Prosperous Armenia – a strikingly low figure.

Turkey

Following the past 12 months' events around the attempted Armenia-Turkey rapprochement, Armenians have very little trust in Turkey as a country, or the Turkish people. They strongly approve (75% to 19%) of the Armenian President's decision to suspend the ratification of the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement protocols following the non-ratification by Turkey, and many support the President's decision because they see it as hard to conclude a rapprochement with Turkey at all. Armenians overwhelmingly say that they personally never expected Turkey to conclude the rapprochement process and they think that its difficulties in ratifying the protocols were just an excuse not to do so. Amidst some internationally recognised progress in Turkey's democratisation and Turkey's so-called "zero-problem-policy" for its neighbours, Armenians strongly feel that Turkey has not become a more reliable neighbour or had a friendlier policy towards Armenia than five years ago.

Nonetheless, although Armenians are very suspicious of Turkey and Turkish people they also believe that there would be genuine benefits from a successful rapprochement. An overwhelming majority (78%) think that the Armenian economy would profit from more international trade and clear majorities think that it would give more options for Armenian foreign policy (61%) and the open border would bring Armenia closer to Europe (63%). There is still a strong suspicion of the benefits it would bring in relations with Turkey itself, as very few doubt it would make Turkey a better partner for Armenia in the framework of regional co-operation or that it would make it more likely for Turkey to recognise the Armenian Genocide and – a majority of people also believe it would bring increased trafficking and emigration (75% and 71% respectively).

Nagorno-Karabakh

Asked about possible peace deal components, Armenians are positive about those options which they think will help bring peace while keeping Nagorno-Karabakh closely linked to Armenia, but they are overwhelmingly opposed to making concessions to Azerbaijan.

The level of awareness about the current stage of the conflict resolution process varies significantly among the population. A clear majority of older people, men and better educated people say that they are quite or very informed about the current stage of the resolution process, but a majority of younger people, women and those with less education say that they are mostly or not at all informed. This lack of awareness is highlighted by how almost half of people in Armenia could not name one component of a potential peace deal.

Nonetheless, although many people did not know unprompted about the potential peace deal components, they had clear views about them when presented with currently debated options. Armenians are very strongly in support of components that would ensure Nagorno-Karabakh is tightly connected to Armenia, such as a corridor linking the two countries (given an average approval figure of 7.95 on a 10-point scale), and they are overwhelmingly opposed to components that are seen as ceding too much back to Azerbaijan, especially returning territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan (1.55 on a 10-point scale), even if this was part of a comprehensive peace deal and the Azeri military was banned from those territories.

Interestingly, Armenians do not reject all measures. They seem to wish peace and are fairly positive about those measures which they think will help solve the conflict but without conceding too much, such as a ceasefire consolidation and confidence-building measures to create a better basis for further progress in peace negotiations (6.72 and 6.47 on a 10-point scale). They also support international security guarantees that include a peacekeeping operation (6.43) and the implementation of and an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh that provides guarantees for security and self-governance (5.62), as long as these are part of a comprehensive peace deal.

The Armenian support for a consolidation of the fragile ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan, e.g. the removal of snipers and installation of international observers at the line of contact, is striking (second most favoured option, 6.72 on a 10-point scale). They strongly believe it would reduce Armenian and Azeri casualties on the line of contact (71%), reduce the risk of war (64%) and make it easier for the OSCE to advance the peace negotiation (66%).

OSCE

Surprisingly, the attitudes of Armenian people towards the OSCE Minsk Group could scarcely be more damning.

There is extremely low awareness of the group's work, with only 5% of Armenians saying that they are completely informed and barely a third feeling informed at all. Only a quarter of Armenians think that the OSCE Minsk Group is supportive of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh and less than a fifth trust the group.

Fewer than two in five Armenians (38%) think that the OSCE Minsk Group has a role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process, and, perhaps most damning of all, less than a quarter think that the OSCE Minsk Group is one of the countries or international organisations most interested in a peace deal, despite the fact that this is the OSCE Minsk Group's entire *raison d'être*. Values for the Minsk-Group Co-chair countries Russia (70%) and France (35%) rank much higher.

The OSCE Minsk Group has clearly not managed to communicate to Armenians its relevance and importance to the conflict settlement process, though it is not clear if the reasons for this lie more on the side of the OSCE or more in domestic or other factors.

RUSSIA

Perceptions of Russia among Armenians are exceptionally positive; Russia is widely viewed as extremely important, and valued, by Armenians, though we must assume that the very favourable views towards Russia found in the poll are to some extent boosted by the recent high-profile visit to Armenia of President Medvedev.

Russia is by a wide margin the outside actor most trusted in Armenia: 80% of Armenians trust Russia, nearly twice the next-highest figure (42% trusting France). Russia is also viewed as the most supportive of Armenia, 71% of Armenians believing this, compared with 43% regarding France as supportive. Positive views of Russia extend to its values, with almost half of Armenians saying that they would most prefer Armenia's value system to be like Russia's. Older people are especially likely to say they would prefer Russia's value system while younger people would much prefer a European set of values. Young people are still by far the most positive towards Russia of all countries and organisations even though they prefer European values.

85% of Armenians view Russia as having a key role as a mediator in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement process, far more than for any other country or international organisation – and Russia is also regarded as the most interested in achieving a settlement to the conflict.

EU

The EU is viewed much less positively than Russia – in some respects as negatively as the OSCE Minsk Group and Armenians see the EU as no more than a peripheral figure in the region's issues. Less than a quarter of Armenians say it is one of the organisations they trust most, and only a fifth say it is one of the most supportive of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. Just over a quarter think it has a role in the conflict settlement process and even fewer think it is one of the organisations most interested in a peace deal.

Armenians support the EU's involvement in the conflict resolution process when they think it could help bring about peace. There is strong support for EU measures which could sideline the OSCE Minsk Group negotiations, such as a non-military EU peacekeeping force, an upgrading of the EU's commitment to the peaceful settlement by promoting democracy among the conflicting parties, and also brokering a ceasefire consolidation agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, most Armenians see these interventions as positive not because it is the EU doing them but because the actions themselves are positive: a peacekeeping force, ceasefire consolidation and increased democracy are welcomed by Armenians whoever brings them. The minority thinking the EU is interested in a peace deal or has a role in the conflict resolution process suggests that Armenians don't believe the EU has either the will or the ability to bring these about.