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PRESS RELEASE

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Nagorno-Karabakh poll: people want ceasefire consolidation

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

"Our data suggests that people in NK clearly want peace, but following a list of historic and recent events, they have little trust in most international organisations and countries. We were surprised by how clearly they favour a ceasefire consolidation, removing snipers from both sides of the line of contact and installing international observers. People in NK see that this would avoid casualties, reduce the likelihood of war and facilitate the peace negotiations, all of which they apparently rate higher than their potential fears about removing their snipers or mistrusting the observers. This data means homework for the OSCE and other European institutions" commented Dr **Michael Kambeck**, Secretary General of EuFoA.

"This poll was conducted according to the very highest standards, both in the methodology and data collection and in the quality control processes. There are many interesting findings in the data which may spark debate among politically interested stakeholders, but we feel that such an independent poll is an important enrichment for decision makers and the public in Armenia and abroad", added **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, concluded: "The first poll of this kind conducted in NK has revealed some remarkable social differences. The Karabakhi society shows a much higher level of integration and consolidation. The key concerns are peace and security, which are ranked higher than economic prosperity or social justice. Notably, the level of democracy is ranked higher than in Armenia and the level of corruption is perceived to be lower."

The fieldwork for this poll was carried out between 22 and 26 October 2010, comprised 804 face-to-face interviews in Stepanakert and in the 5 regions of Askeran, Hadrut, Martakert, Martuni and Shushi of Nagorno-Karabakh. It has an error margin of 3.45%.

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

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 NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Methodology & quality control

804 interviews were conducted face to face 22nd – 26th October 2010, producing data accurate to a margin of error of +/-3.45% at 95% confidence. Interviews were conducted **across Nagorno-Karabakh, in Stepanakert and in the regions of Askeran, Hadrut, Martakert, Martuni and Shushi**. The sample was distributed proportionally to reflect the population distribution in Nagorno-Karabakh and 40% of interviews were conducted in Stepanakert while 60% in the mentioned regions. Interviewers selected households to approach using the random walking method to ensure no selection bias. The person interviewed in each household was the adult whose birthday was closest to the day of the interview. If a respondent was not immediately available 1 to 3 call backs were made to conduct the interview later. If a call-back was not successful or if a respondent could not take part for other reasons they were substituted with a respondent of the same demographic characteristics (gender, age and educational level).

Completed questionnaires were checked in order to ensure a high quality of interviewing. Route records were checked to ensure that interviews had been selected randomly. 15% of interviews conducted were accompanied by co-ordinators, 21% of the sample was called back by IPSC to confirm demographic details and that the interview actually took place in the conditions recorded. 100% of inputted questionnaires were checked. In total, 4 interviews were rejected (0.4%).

10% of interviews were randomly selected by Populus and called back to confirm key demographic information and two opinion questions. This consistency back-check resulted in the precautionary elimination of 2 interviews. Extensive mathematical checks were conducted on the data file by Populus to see if there were any logically inconsistent or inaccurate interviews. No cases of this sort were found. Randomly selected original poll questionnaires were reviewed by Populus to confirm that they were conducted and recorded professionally and accurately.

POLL RESULTS

Internal situation

People in Nagorno-Karabakh are even more positive about the direction of their country than Armenians are, and they are strongly supportive of President Bako Sahakyan. 80% of the Karabakhi people say their country is going in the right direction, compared to an already high 50% of Armenians who say this about Armenia. While this does not measure happiness, it clearly shows a feeling of progress.

People in Nagorno-Karabakh see progress being made in all areas. They believe that the overall quality of life has improved noticeably over the last five years (on a 1-10 scale of how much NK has developed in the last five years, people rated the overall quality of life as 6.46). NK residents say the biggest improvements have come in security (7.19), education (7.15) and infrastructure (7.14), although positivity about the economy is lower (6.13) and people are less positive about progress in the fight against corruption (5.66). People in NK think that Armenia has developed even more than NK in all areas over the past five years. Interestingly, Armenians think NK has developed better than Armenia, so each one sees more progress in the other one's country.

With this optimism about their country's progress, almost one in two (44%) of NK residents think their government represents them well (35%) or very well (9%). This is much larger than the 14% of Armenians who think this about their own government. Like in Armenia, people in NK support their President more than other potential presidential candidates. Over half (52%) of NK residents would support Bako Sahakyan as their first choice in a presidential election, while Serzh Sargsyan seems to operate in a different political environment in Armenia, as with 27% support he has more support than all other candidates taken together but 38% saying 'none' or 'don't know'. Support for President Sahakyan is more than ten times the support of the next strongest candidate, Ashot Ghulyan on 5%, and is spread evenly among men and women and people of all ages. Even a third of people who think the country is going in the wrong direction would support the President.

The President is much more popular than any of the parties in Nagorno-Karabakh. Support for the "Azat Hayreniq" Party is 21%, marginally ahead of the Democratic Party of Artsakh (20%) and slightly further ahead of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (17%). However, while these three parties are the most supported, more than a

third of people say they don't know which party they would vote for or that they would not vote for any at all (together 36% of people said this).

As in Armenia, television is the main source of information for people in Nagorno-Karabakh about political and economic issues. There is a clear difference in the amount of interest people in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh take in each other country's political and economic developments. People in NK are much more interested in the socio-political and economic life of their country than people in Armenia are interested in Armenia. Interestingly, NK people are even more interested in the socio-political life in Armenia than Armenians themselves. The interest is also spread more widely in NK, across all ages and educational levels, while in Armenia the young and less educated take much less interest.

Turkey

As in Armenia people in Nagorno-Karabakh are doubtful of Turkey's commitment to reconciliation after the events surrounding the Armenian-Turkish rapprochement over the last 12 months. They overwhelmingly approve (84% to 11%) of the Armenian President's decision to suspend ratification of the Armenian-Turkish protocols, following the ratification problems in Turkey. As in Armenia, many believe it is very hard to conclude a rapprochement with Turkey at all, a sentiment they feel is reinforced by Turkey's problems ratifying the protocols. The vast majority of NK residents think that Turkey's ratification difficulties are just a pretext to derail the rapprochement (7.91 on a 1-10 scale) and most, just as in Armenia, feel that they 'always knew' that Turkey would never complete the rapprochement (8.4). Even when prompted about the reduced role of the military and other democratic progresses in Turkey, they feel strongly that Turkey has not become a more reliable neighbour in the past five years (2.17) or that the Turkish policy towards Armenia is more friendly than five years ago (3.72).

Nonetheless NK residents do see that there would be genuine benefits from an Armenian-Turkish rapprochement. They feel strongly that the Armenian economy would profit from more international trade (80%) and a majority think it would bring Armenia closer to Europe (61%) and provide more options for Armenian foreign policy (54%). As in Armenia, however, NK residents are very doubtful that it would encourage Turkey to recognise the Armenian Genocide or make Turkey a better regional player. Most also think that it would increase trafficking and emigration and that there would be a problem with Armenian property falling into Turkish hands.

Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution

People in Nagorno-Karabakh are more informed about the current stage of the NK conflict resolution than people in Armenia (68% compared to 50%), but their opinions about potential peace deal components are similar. NK residents strongly support measures which they think will keep Nagorno-Karabakh closely associated with Armenia, strongly oppose measures which they think cede too much to Azerbaijan, and are moderately supportive of measures which they believe may encourage peace but without compromising Nagorno-Karabakh's ties to Armenia.

People in NK are very strongly supportive of a corridor linking the two countries (8.5 on a 10 point scale), while the term 'corridor' was generally interpreted in a broader way. They also support a future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will as a final step of a comprehensive peace deal (6.75). Interestingly, like in Armenia, people in NK would support a ceasefire consolidation through the removal of snipers and installation of international observers along the Line of Contact (6.35), even though removing their own snipers could have been seen as a security risk and trusting international observers is not to be taken for granted. People strongly believe that if there were a ceasefire consolidation it would reduce casualties (67%), make it easier for the OSCE to advance the peace negotiations (64%) and reduce the risk of an outbreak of war (60%). Half of NK residents also think it would make it easier to have trust building measures between the conflicting parties.

However, people in NK overwhelmingly oppose measures which they believe would involve ceding too much to Azerbaijan, especially returning territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijani control (1.1 on a scale of agreement of 1 to 10), even if the Azerbaijani military was banned and this was part of a comprehensive peace deal (1.2 on the 1-10 scale).

There are three potential peace deal components which NK residents are noticeably less supportive of than Armenians. They much more strongly oppose internally displaced persons and refugees having the right to return to their former places of residence, mostly in the territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, and the restoration of the USSR census of 1989 (1.78 in NK and 3.73 in RA). They are also less supportive of international security guarantees, including a peacekeeping operation, as part of a comprehensive peace deal (5.44 to 6.43); the implementation of confidence building measures to create a better basis for further progress in the peace negotiations (5.58 to 6.47); and an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance as part of a comprehensive peace deal (4.23 to 5.62).

OSCE Minsk Group

People in NK are more informed about the OSCE Minsk Group than people in Armenia, but their perceptions of its role and activities are no more positive. One in two (51%) of people in NK say they feel informed about the OSCE Minsk Group's goals and activities, compared to 38% in Armenia. Less than a quarter of NK residents say that the OSCE Minsk Group is one of the organisations they trust the most – a strikingly lower level of trust even than in Armenia (38%). Only a quarter in NK say that the OSCE Minsk Group is one of the organisations which is most supportive of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

In NK 43% think that the OSCE Minsk Group has a role to play in the conflict settlement – somewhat higher than in the poll in Armenia – but less than a third of people in Nagorno-Karabakh think that the organisation is among those most interested in a peace deal – while this is the very purpose of the Minsk Group.

While again, this data may have been boosted by the recent visit of President Medvedev, Russia is seen extremely positively in Nagorno-Karabakh, as in Armenia. Levels of trust (85%), supportiveness for NK and Armenia (78%), a strong role in the NK conflict settlement (87%) and interest in peace (80%) are much higher than the next best country or organisation (France: 32%, 40%, 46% and 32% respectively). These responses are similar to those found in Armenia, except people in NK are 16% points more likely to see a conflict settlement role for Russia.

EU

The EU's reputation in Nagorno-Karabakh is even lower than that of the OSCE. Only 16% of people say it is one of the organisations they trust the most and just 14% see it as one of the most supportive of Armenia and NK. Only a fifth in NK – the same proportion as in Armenia – think that the EU has a role in the conflict settlement process and barely one in ten think the EU is one of the organisations most interested in a peace deal – even lower than in Armenia.

Though most Nagorno-Karabakh residents do not regard the EU as having a role in the conflict settlement, they, as in Armenia, nevertheless respond positively to some possible measures, indicating that the EU could in fact play a role. Of the possible EU initiatives, there is strong support for sending a permanent non-military EU observer mission to the region in order to avoid the break out of a war "by accident" and upgrading the EU's commitment for the peaceful settlement of the conflict by promoting democracy in the conflict hit area. Residents also support the EU brokering a cease fire consolidation agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, a measure which they generally support, as outlined above. NK residents, like those living in Armenia, firmly oppose the EU ceasing its support of the ongoing OSCE Minsk Group led negotiations and replacing it with a new EU format.

When asked whether their preferred values system is Russian, European, or Middle Eastern, people in Nagorno-Karabakh are even more likely (47%) than those in Armenia (25%) to insist that their preferred value system is Armenian, even though this option was never read out. NK residents are less likely than Armenians to say that their preferred value-system is Russian (32% compared to 45%). As in Armenia, virtually no-one in Nagorno-Karabakh wants their country's values to be closest to the Middle Eastern values.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, just as in Armenia, the most important goals of the new Association Agreement being discussed between Armenia and the EU are seen as being the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law (most important out of 7 goals). By comparison, EU visa facilitation – potentially of more direct interest to people in Nagorno-Karabakh, is regarded as much less important (among the least important three goals).