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### **EuFoA hails new dialogue between government and opposition**

Following a week of unusually conciliatory statements from government and opposition representatives, European Friends of Armenia ([www.EuFoA.org](http://www.EuFoA.org)) hails the first steps towards a real political dialogue between the two camps. Traditionally, the political climate in Armenia has been very polarised and personalised, rather than one of dialogue and respect for different views.

"This is a totally new tone in Armenian politics, driven by the personalities involved. If the healthy variety of political blocks in Armenia aim for the best political solutions rather than for harming the opponent, they could regain voter confidence in Armenian politics at large, which today is very low. We now encourage all other opposition and government parties to support this, as the side which will look most mature and reasonable will win most in this process. Above all, Armenia will win!" commented EuFoA Secretary General Dr Michael Kambeck.

On a visit in Yerevan this morning, Stefan Füle, European Commissioner for the Neighbourhood Policy, was pleased to say that "there is a certain encouraging progress since my last visit to Armenia".

During yesterday's rally, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, leader of the Armenian National Congress (ANC), the most vocal of the three main opposition blocks, reacted positively to recent measures and statements by the Armenian President, Serzh Sargsyan. Weeks ago, Sargsyan ordered a new investigation into the events of March 2008, a move which follows several cross-party attempts to clarify the circumstances, all of which so far failed in mutual accusations of the politicians involved. This week, the Yerevan Municipality agreed to re-allow demonstrations on Opera Square, giving priority for the democratic right of assembly over problems of traffic disruption. On Wednesday, Sargsyan publicly praised the ANC for not attempting to stir up more unrest and hinted at efforts to speed up the release of prisoners, who the opposition claims to be detained for political reasons.

These developments are entirely in line with recent calls from the EU and the Council of Europe upon the authorities and the opposition in Armenia. The picture also fundamentally contrasts an opposite development in neighbouring Azerbaijan, where the authorities recently strongly tightened their already firm grip on the country's infant civil society and opposition.

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.

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