

Press Release

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Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis encourages Armenia and its neighbours to reconcile ***Excerpts from the speech delivered at Yerevan State University***

Yerevan, 05.11.2007 – "Today, Armenia has several unresolved issues with its immediate neighbours. These disputes originate from the past, but they are a liability for the future of both Armenia and its neighbours.

History has not been kind to your country, and there are many painful memories of past injustices and sacrifices. But it is important to remember that the other side has its own and different perception of the past. You may not agree with it, but you need to recognise and even respect it.

An example which immediately comes to mind is the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh. When Armenia joined the Council of Europe, at the same time as Azerbaijan, both countries committed themselves to pursue efforts to settle this conflict by peaceful means. Unfortunately, the fact remains that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is still the greatest obstacle to peace, stability and co-operation in this part of Europe. I am not here to apportion blame, but I do want to encourage your Government in Yerevan and the Government in Baku to do more – not because they both gave a promise to the Council of Europe – but because a settlement of this conflict is in the interest of everyone in both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Another example is your relationship with your neighbour to the west – Turkey. This relationship is still difficult because of the events which took place not ten years but more than nine decades ago. I understand your pain. Of course you remember the victims, but time is an important factor. It does not erase the past, but it should be given a chance to heal the wounds. Everyone must accept that history can be neither ignored nor legislated. We all know that many people died, but the time has surely come to pay respect to the victims but also look to the future. Everyone in Armenia and Turkey should do so not only for your sake but even more for the sake of your children.

Reconciliation is difficult, and it takes much more courage than confrontation. It is especially difficult, and therefore even more important, to make the first step. But reconciliation is the only way forward. This is the real message of Europe today, born out of our long history of wars and confrontations. Understanding, respect and reconciliation. There is no other way."

[Link to the full version of the speech](#)

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