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**ALBANIA**

1. ESI viewpoint: visa-free travel for Albania and Bosnia in reach

26.04.2010, ESI


On 19 April 2010, the European Commission issued its detailed assessments of progress in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina with regard to conditions of the visa roadmap. This will open the door for the citizens of these two countries to travel visa-free to the European Union before the end of 2010. The message of both reports is encouraging. Albania and Bosnia have made remarkable headway in the past year. ESI's updated Scorecard, which is based on an analysis of the Commission assessments, shows that today they are doing better in meeting the demanding visa roadmap conditions than Montenegro and Serbia were doing at around the same time a year ago.

2. 2010: The year of Europe in Albania?

18.04.2010, New Europe

READ MORE: http://www.neurope.eu/articles/100327.php

A spokesperson for the Albanian foreign ministry, Ralf Gjoni, and Albanian Ambassador to France Ylljet Alicka recently affirmed that European integration remains a top priority for their country. In April 2009, the European Commission has sent a questionnaire to Tirana designed to evaluate the country's capabilities to join the EU, AENews reported. The responses are expected within this month. The Commission will then release an opinion on Albania's readiness and if the latter makes a positive recommendation and the Council of Ministers approves, Albania will gain official candidate status. At a conference in Paris last month, Albanian Ambassador to France Ylljet Alicka declared that European integration is an "absolute priority" for Albania. The country could obtain official EU candidate status and enter the visa liberalisation process. However, Tirana's progress will depend on
its ability to solve the internal political crisis. Following the June 2009 legislative elections, the socialist opposition party boycotted the parliament for months and contests the re-election of conservative Prime Minister Sali Berisha.

### 3. Albania's questionnaire first step in EU integration

18.04.2010, New Europe


In efforts where Albanian Prime Minister Sali Berisha has praised the works of his administration Albania’s Parliament has completed an initial questionnaire posed by the European Commission of 2248 questions which will now open the doorway to review of Albania’s European Integration. "The Commission’s Opinion will be a fair and balanced assessment of Albania’s readiness to comply with the EU membership criteria. We will pay particular attention to the fulfillment of the Copenhagen political criteria and of the obligations under the Stabilisation and Association Agreement," stated Commissioner Füle on 14 April, when he received Albania’s answers to the European Commission questionnaire. The great work which was a 20cm high stacked book embossed in silver and covered in European blue leather was “a work of pride” said Sali Berisha as he stood at the Berlaymont to deliver it alongside a commemorative gift passed on to Commissioner Fule from him as a token of the day.

### II. ARMENIA

1. Heads of delegations of Azerbaijan and Armenia met in PACE

28.04.2010, Trend News


During the framework of the PACE’s spring session on Wednesday there was held a meeting between the heads of delegations of Armenia and Azerbaijan with the participation of chairman of the organization Mevlut Chavushoglu - the chairman of Azerbaijani delegation Samad Seyidov said to journalists. "We met with the head of the Armenian delegation, which was an exchange of views. Discussion of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the Council of Europe is very important. We decided to meet again in June. Our work continues, and the format of the next meeting would be expanded. It will be attended by the Representatives of the opposition, members of the delegations of Azerbaijan and Armenia. I think this is a great achievement and we will try to ensure that such meetings with PACE president held each session. I note that in today’s meeting was attended by the Chairman of the PACE Mevlut Chavushoglu, general secretary of the Assembly Mathias Sorinas and other officials," said Samad Seyidov.

2. Armen Movsisyan: Armenia’s energy system is most established one in CIS countries

21.04.2010, PanARMENIAN


Armenian Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Armen Movsisyan said that currently, Armenia’s energy systems are the first not only in the region, but also in CIS countries. “Armenia’s energy system is the most established one in CIS countries by its production and distribution capacities, distribution culture and electric power calculation system. This is not only my biased estimation, but also international experts’ and specialists’ estimation,” Mr. Movsisyan told journalists at the opening ceremony of Yerevan power plant with gas-steam combined cycle. Besides, the Minister said that second power plant is planned to be constructed at the territory of Yerevan heat and power plant. The electric power produced by the new energy unit first of all will be used for the
internal needs, while surplus will be traded for the Iranian gas. The official opening ceremony of
Yerevan power plant with gas-steam combined cycle took place on April 21 with participation of
Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan.

3. OSCE Office supports entrepreneurship in Armenia by publishing reference guides for business
owners
20.04.2010, OSCE
READ MORE: http://www.osce.org/item/43559.html
Two publications that aim to help Armenian business owners were launched today in Yerevan with
support from the OSCE Office in Yerevan. The publications - an updated version on a guide on how
to register businesses in Armenia and a reference book on support programmes for small- and
medium-sized enterprises - form part of the OSCE Office’s work to support business owners, policy
makers and business associations. "Raising the awareness of the business community, especially in
the remote regions, about recent changes in the business-registration process and about available
support schemes helps improve the overall business environment and reduces the risk for
corruption," said Carel Hofstra, the Acting Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan. Ishkhan Karapetyan,
Executive Director of the SME Development National Centre of Armenia, which developed the
publications, added: "Our co-operation with OSCE Office in Yerevan is vital for the development and
implementation of SME support policies. These publications are the result of our commitment to
promote small and medium-sized entrepreneurship and ensuring a favorable business environment
in Armenia."

III. AZERBAIJAN
1. Azerbaijan defence ministry’s spokesperson: Statement by Armenia’s defence ministry shows they
are really in fear
28.04.2010, Trend News
Head of the press service of the Ministry of Defence of Azerbaijan, Lieutenant-Colonel Eldar
Sabiroglu made a statement in connection with the presence of bellicose statements by the Armenian
side over the recent period. "The well-grounded opinions voiced by the President, the Supreme
Commander-in-Chief of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on April 23 at a meeting at the Ministry of
Defence, Defence Minister Safar Abiyev's report on the readiness of the army and other statements
caused wide resonance not only in the region, but throughout the world," he believes. According to
Sabiroglu, it was a very important meeting, and the international experts also back this opinion.
"The result will undoubtedly be present. If Azerbaijan starts operations to liberate its territories,
Armenia's defeat is inevitable. It will be possible due to providing army with modern weapons and
heavy military equipment, the presence of high morale, the main thing - the unity of the President
and the people," said the head of press service of the Defence Ministry.

2. Turkey and Azerbaijan reach transit accord
28.04.2010, UPI
READ MORE: http://www.upi.com/Science_News/Resource-Wars/2010/04/28/Turkey-and-
Azerbaijan-reach-transit-accord/UPI-63291272484524/
Turkey and Azerbaijan reached an agreement on terms for the transit of Azeri natural gas through
Turkey to Europe. Today’s Zaman reported Wednesday that Energy Minister Taner Yildiz, addressing
journalists after an energy conference, said the state-owned Turkish Pipeline Corporation
BOTAS finalized an agreement with the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic SOCAR of the transit via Turkey of Azeri natural gas to other nations. Yildiz added that a protocol codifying the arrangement would be signed next month at ceremonies Azeri President Ilham Aliyev would attend. Yildiz also said that following prolonged negotiations agreement had been reached on the price Turkey will pay for natural gas from Azerbaijan’s Caspian offshore Shah Deniz project.

3.

Azerbaijan and Turkey - shoulder to shoulder!
18.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily


Eminent Turkish journalist Mehmet Ali Birand wrote recently that Azerbaijan is on the sidelines of the processes in which Turkey is an active player. Ankara’s diplomacy in the past year has shown that Armenia is taking an irrational stance. Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent regions are still under occupation. On the negotiating table are the Madrid principles, which have been accepted by Azerbaijan and rejected by Armenia. In early April, the chief of Azerbaijan’s presidential administration came to Istanbul to meet journalists, including Mr. Birand, who had just gotten back from Yerevan. The meeting seemed to cover all the pressing issues in Azerbaijani-Turkish relations and the prospects for Armenian-Turkish reconciliation. Azerbaijan has been negotiating with Armenia for 22 years and during that time we have often had to hope for friendly support. We have grown in strength politically and economically and shown ourselves to be a regional player. Throughout these years, we have relied on Turkey’s fraternal support when facing geopolitical and geo-economic problems and Turkey has never betrayed us. We can see the same attitude now, when Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan clearly says that there cannot be any change in Armenian-Turkish relations without achievements in the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

4.

Azerbaijani committee head: unemployment halved in country
16.04.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: http://en.trend.az/capital/social/1670910.html

The Azerbaijani economy did not observe serious effects of the global financial crisis on unemployment rate, which was recorded in the U.S. and many European countries, Azerbaijani State Statistics Committee Chairman Arif Valiyev said today. "If the number of unemployed in Azerbaijan was 525,000 people 10 years ago, today the figure is 260,000," Valiyev said. He said under the methodology of the International Labour Organization (ILO), who work at least an hour a week, can not be classified as unemployed. The country's unemployment rate may be significantly lower by this method of calculation, as there are people who have to work several hours a week in the country's agricultural sector.

5.

Azerbaijani President approves loan agreement with Saudi Fund for development
16.04.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: http://en.trend.az/capital/banks/1670822.html

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev approved the loan agreement between the government and the Saudi Fund for Development within the project "Expansion and reconstruction of water supply and sewerage system of towns and villages around Baku". The loan agreement was signed in Baku November 20, 2009. The agreement provides for the allocation of the loan worth 93.750 riyals (about $25 million) by the Saudi Development Fund to finance a project worth $63 million. Under the loan agreement, the loan was allocated by the Saudi Fund for Development for a term of 20 years with a grace period of five years, at an annual rate of two percent.
### 6. Azerbaijan signs LNG deal with Georgia and Romania

**16.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily**


Romania, Azerbaijan and Georgia have signed a memorandum of understanding on the supply of liquefied natural gas from the Caspian region to Europe, the Azerbaijan's News.az Web site reported Tuesday. The natural gas produced by Azerbaijan will be sent via Georgia and Romania for onward delivery to EU consumers. Two LNG terminals will be built, one in Constanta, Romania, and one at a location in Georgia. The project, which is known as Agri, Azerbaijan-Georgia-Romania-Interconnector, is expected to cost around 4 billion euros. The project will be developed by a private company formed by Romanian gas producer Romgaz Medias, Azerbaijan’s State Oil Company, SOCAR, and a Georgian oil company, as well as by a consortium of businesses and financial institutions.

### 7. NATO Special Representative: intensified dialogue is untimely for Azerbaijan

**16.04.2010, Trend News**


NATO Special Representative to the South Caucasus and Central Asia, Robert Simmons, believes it is early to apply the Intensified Dialogue in the NATO-Azerbaijan relations. "Azerbaijan seeks to build strong ties with NATO, but not NATO membership, at least not at the present time. It seems therefore logical to me that the Intensified Dialogue is not the right vehicle for Azerbaijan at least at present," Simmons told Trend in the run up to his Baku visit scheduled for mid-April. NATO's cooperation with the South Caucasus states - Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia - are mainly carried out within the programs of 'Partnership for Peace', 'Individual Partnership Action Plan' (IPAP), as well as 'Process of planning and analysis' program. These documents define the objectives and intentions of the partner countries to hold consultations with NATO on reforms in the spheres of defense, security and military policy.

### 8. European court fines Azerbaijan

**16.04.2010, Trend News**


According to last year's four decisions, the European Court fined the Azerbaijani government in the amount of 30,725 euros. Information on the control over execution of decisions of the European Court of Human Rights is contained in the third report of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The report says that in 2009 the Committee of Ministers reviewed 13 cases related with Azerbaijan. This makes 81 per cent of all cases on the republic and 0.2 per cent of the reviewed total cases.

### IV. BULGARIA

### 1. Bulgaria rejects Russian loan, share at Belene nuclear plant

**26.04.2010, Sofia News Agency**


Bulgaria does not want Russian funding for the Belene nuclear plant but seeks to secure the participation of EU investors, the country’s deputy energy minister said. Maya Hristova, Deputy Minister of Economy, Energy, and Tourism, spoke at a round table in Sofia entitled “The Belene NPP Project and European Energy Security: Bulgarian Dilemmas”, dedicated to the future of the project.
for the construction of the second Bulgarian nuclear power plant, which was also attended by a number politicians, senior officials, and foreign ambassadors. “We are not involved in any negotiations to grant a share of the Belene nuclear power plant to the Russian state. After the German company RWE withdrew from the project in the fall of 2009, the Bulgarian state remained the only shareholder of Belene,” Hristova declared. Her words came in response to a statement by Russian energy expert and representative of the Russian Embassy, Vladimir Kazanchev.

2.  
Bulgaria tourist associations discuss visa rules for Russians with Interior  
26.04.2010, Sofia News Agency  
READ MORE: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=115613  
Bulgaria's largest tourist associations will meet Monday with officials of the Bulgarian Interior Ministry to discuss new visa waiver procedures for Russian tourists. Last week Bulgarian tourist operators dealing with Russian tourists were informed that they could no longer submit online visa applications. Instead, paper copies of the entire documentation are to be delivered to a visa center in Moscow run by the Indian Company VFS Services, which has increased the application processing fee from EUR 9 to EUR 12, due to the rise in its own expenses. Representatives of the Bulgarian Association of Travel Agents (BATA), the Bulgarian Restaurant and Hotel Association (BHRA), the Bulgarian Union of Investors in Tourism, Bulgaria’s Union of Balneology and Spa Tourism as well as the hotel associations of the Bulgarian summer resorts Sunny Beach and Golden Sands are said to attend Monday's meeting according to media reports.

3.  
Commission authorises Bulgaria to grant limited aid to farmers  
22.04.2010, EUbusiness  
The European Commission authorized a Bulgarian scheme with a budget of BGN 20 million (approximately € 10.26 million) which aims at supporting agricultural holdings. The scheme is open to all undertakings in the agricultural sector, provided they were not already in difficulty on 1 July 2008 (i.e. before the beginning of the crisis). Agricultural holdings active in the primary production, marketing and processing of agricultural products who encounter difficulties as a result of the current economic crisis can be granted aid until 31 December 2010. The aid will take the form of a direct grant and it shall not exceed € 15 000 per undertaking. The notified scheme will be applied at national level and administered by the State Fund Agriculture. The scheme is an application of the Commission's Temporary framework for State aid measures to support access to finance in the current financial and economic crisis. In particular, the Bulgarian authorities demonstrated that it is necessary, proportional and appropriate to remedy a serious disturbance in the economy.

4.  
Alternative tourism on the rise  
20.04.2010, Bsanna News  
READ MORE: http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12935&lang=en  
Over 30 guesthouses and family hotels in Bulgaria have Green Home certificates, Kiril Kaloyanov of the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism (BAAT) said Tuesday. The sites are mainly in areas for rural tourism - the Central Balkan Range, the Rhodopes, the Bansko and Razlog valley, along the Mesta river and Northeastern Bulgaria. Green Home is a quality trademark offering addresses for accommodation selected because of their authentic welcome and care for nature in serving their guests. The certificate is awarded to guesthouses and family hotels which have passed successfully compliance assessment with the European criteria of quality accommodation where the negative impact on nature is brought to a minimum.
U.S. ambassador cautions Bulgaria

16.04.2010, UPI


Bulgaria is being watched by the world because of widespread corruption in its judicial system, U.S. Ambassador James Warlick cautioned the government in Sofia. Meeting with Chief Prosecutor Boris Velchev Friday, Warlick directed his criticism of a scandal in which judges bought their positions directly at Prime Minister Boyko Borisov and Interior Minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov, the Focus news agency said. "Let's face it -- there are corrupt magistrates in Bulgaria," Warlick said. "Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Interior Minister, you must deal with this issue and resolve it." Since June, some 30 senior judges have been accused of buying their titles and only two have been dismissed by the Supreme Judicial Council, the Sofia News Agency said. "You must have a clear idea of how to deal with it because the world is watching you," Warlick the government leaders.

V. GEORGIA

1.

Strong Georgia a must for stable Caucasus, Turkish FM says

27.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily


Georgia’s territorial integrity is one of the preconditions of a stable Caucasus, Turkey’s foreign minister told reporters Tuesday. “A strong Georgia will contribute to the stability in the Caucasus,” Ahmet Davutoğlu said at a joint press conference with his Georgian counterpart, Grigol Vashadze. Touching on a Turkish proposal to establish a stability pact in the Caucasus in the aftermath of the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, Davutoğlu said Turkey aimed to turn the region into an area of stability, welfare and security. The minister said Turkey and Georgia had “very strong strategic relations” and added that the country also attached importance to the improvement of Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian relations. The two foreign ministers also discussed the problems encountered by some Turkish fishers in the Black Sea, according to Davutoğlu, who said the countries would continue to utilize all the resources of the sea and keep open the right to transportation.

2.

Georgian FM protests PACE-South Ossetia meeting

23.04.2010, Trend News


The Georgian Foreign Ministry protested a meeting on post-conflict settlement between PACE Monitoring Committee Co-Rapporteur David Wilshire and Special Representative of South Ossetian de facto President Boris Chochiyev in Moscow. The Foreign Ministry reported that Wilshire met with Chochiyev in Moscow April 20 in the de facto South Ossetian Embassy. The meeting was held within preparations for PACE’s spring session where the post-war situation in Georgia should be discussed. In particular, the PACE Monitoring Committee must examine a resolution on the status of the implementation of earlier PACE resolutions. "Georgia's Foreign Ministry expresses strong protest in connection with this shocking fact. Georgia fully respects the freedom of parliamentarians, although PACE member Wilshire must act on the status of a co-rapporteur of the assembly and thus represent the whole organization.
3. Tbilisi says it was informed about Turkish contact with Abkhazia
23.04.2010, Today’s Zaman
READ MORE: http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=208248
Georgia has said it knew about a visit by two Turkish diplomats to the breakaway region of Abkhazia this week. In a statement Georgian Parliament Foreign Relations Commission head Akaki Minashvili said any economic and trade cooperation between breakaway region Abkhazia and Turkey might occur after it secures the approval of Tbilisi and as long as it stays within Georgian law, the Anatolia news agency reported on Wednesday. Minashvili said they are not against these kinds of dealings, adding that it is possible to establish relations with Abkhazia while staying within the scope of Georgian law.

4. U.S. hails Georgia for uranium seizure
23.04.2010, Civil.ge
READ MORE: http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22222
U.S. official said on April 22 Washington was “grateful” for Georgia’s efforts to intercept highly enriched uranium, which the Georgian authorities said were smuggled by a group of foreign nationals in March. Georgia only made the information about seizure of “small amount” of highly enriched uranium public at a high-profile nuclear security summit held in Washington on April 12-13. The Georgian Interior Ministry said that a group of foreign nationals were arrested in connection to this case, but declined to reveal the details. According to the Georgia authorities eight attempts of illicit trafficking of enriched uranium have been foiled during the last ten years. In an interview with The Associated Press President Saakashvili indicated that dangerous materials were smuggled from one of Georgia’s two breakaway regions as they had turned into black holes under the Russian control. Such seizures have come "mostly from the direction of Russia," Saakashvili told The Associated Press. Russian Foreign Ministry official rejected the allegation as “a lie”.

5. Saakashvili: U.S. helping Georgia like never before
20.04.2010, Kyiv Post
The Georgian government has never had so much support from the U.S. administration as it does now, Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili said in a speech at Harvard University. "We have never had such support from the U.S. as we do now and that helps us with democratic reforms and with ensuring the country's security," Saakashvili was quoted as saying by Georgian media. Saakashvili said the charter on strategic partnership signed by Georgia and the U.S. "is being fulfilled and is yielding results." "Unfortunately, our peaceful development is being continuously hindered, primarily by Russia, which wants to resume its influence on the post-Soviet space," Saakashvili said. Saakashvili, who is currently on a visit to the U.S., has met with U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and leading U.S. senators and politicians.

6. Unemployment in Georgia increases by 16.3%
18.04.2010, New Europe
READ MORE: http://www.neurope.eu/articles/100359.php
In the fourth quarter of 2009 the level of unemployment went up by 16.3% which means 329,000 people are unemployed, according to the Department of Statistics. Around two million are economically active people and officially more than 84% of people are employed. Of these 63% are self employed, mainly in the agricultural sector. They own cattle and a plot of land which should create some income and are therefore classified as employed. The statistics shows that around
321,000 persons are employed in enterprises, around 62% of these in large enterprises and 19% and 18% respectively in medium-sized and small ones. However small and medium-sized businesses are not much developed in Georgia, which creates problems in developing a middle class. Challenging the official figures, Chair of the United Trade Unions Irakli Petriashvili stated that the numbers of self-employed in the agricultural sector are very much exaggerated.

VI. GEORGIA – RUSSIA

1. Georgian opposition pleased with results Moscow meetings
29.04.2010, Trend News
Leaders of the Georgian Opposition National Council are satisfied with the results the Moscow visit. The opposition leaders stated that they were able to discuss the Georgian-Russian relations in the State Duma and the Foreign Ministry. "We had a productive meeting, which directly and openly discussed the current contradictions in our relations," Party People leader Koba Davitashvili Davitashvili said at the Tbilisi Airport. He stressed that the council's position is unambiguous. "Russia, as a minimum, should not hinder our," Davitashvili said. Secretary General of the Conservative Party Kakha Kukava noted that the meetings were "necessary", as both sides outlined their positions on the conditions for establishing bilateral relations.

2. PACE: Russia, Georgia must start moving toward each other
28.04.2010, Kyiv Post
The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is urging Moscow and Tbilisi to sit down at a negotiating table and settle the after effects of the August 2008 war in South Ossetia. PACE has little hope for a peaceful settlement of this conflict, if the conflicting parties do not start moving in each other's direction, Swiss representative Heidi Tagliavini, the chief of the European Union's international mission for investigating the conflict in Georgia, said at the current PACE session. After nine months of work, the mission drew up a three-volume 1,150-page report, she said. The mission did not carry out any inquiry that could lead to litigation, and the report presented should not be seen as a tribunal, she said, adding that it was an assessment of the event on its compliance with international law.

3. Russia denies Georgian uranium charges
28.04.2010, UPI
Russia denied Georgian charges that highly enriched uranium is being smuggled into the Caucasus from Russia. The Messenger reported Wednesday that Russian Foreign Ministry Andrei Nesterenko dismissed Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's allegation as an "ungrounded accusation," further criticizing the Georgian administration for "almost every day" making statements about "all kinds of sins committed by Russia." Nesterenko added: "As for the allegations that the Russian Federation has anything to do with the nuclear materials impounded by the Georgian police in March, we want to underline that officials in Tbilisi have no proof that Russia or any other state is linked with this incident. This makes us think that in this case we are dealing not with facts but a badly planned provocation."
4. Georgia blames Russia for regional security gap
22.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily
The president of Georgia confirmed Wednesday that his country seized a shipment of highly enriched uranium, and blamed Russia for creating the instability that allows nuclear smugglers to operate in the region. In an interview with The Associated Press, President Mikhael Saakashvili declined to reveal details of the seizure but said the uranium was intercepted last month coming into his country in the Caucasus region of southeastern Europe. News of the uranium seizure emerged during last week's nuclear security summit in Washington, which Saakashvili attended. The Georgian interior ministry said authorities had detained a group of foreign nationals and seized a small amount of uranium, which is now in a secure location. Saakashvili's government no longer controls two breakaway regions of Georgia, separatist Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which declared independence after the 2008 Russia-Georgia war.

5. FM on Tbilisi's stance on non-use of force treaty
20.04.2010, Civil.ge
READ MORE: http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22213
Georgia is ready to sign non-use of force treaty with Russia, but not with Moscow's "cronies" in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, Grigol Vashadze, the Georgian foreign minister said on April 19. Speaking at a news conference at UN headquarters in New York, Vashadze said signing of this treaty with directly with Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, as Russia wants it, would be Tbilisi's mistake, because it would help to legitimize Moscow's proxy regimes in the occupied territories. He said that although there was no "legal ground" to have a separate non-use of force agreement with Russia, as there already was August 12, 2008 ceasefire accord, Tbilisi could still sign it if "Russia is willing to get a supplementary agreement on non-use of force." "No problem, Georgia is ready to sign it with Russia anytime, anyplace," he said.

6. Georgia fines Russian tanker for polluting Black Sea
READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Georgia_Fines_Russian_Tanker_Polluting_Black_Sea/2019462.html
Georgian naval vessels have intercepted the Russian-flagged tanker "Saratov City" in the port of Batumi and charged it with polluting the Black Sea, RFE/RL's Echo of the Caucasus reports. A Batumi court today fined the ship's owners 65,000 Georgian laris (about $37,000). The vessel was detained and the crew arrested on April 17, Georgian and Russian media reported. Georgian officials said the crew and its vessel will be held until the fine is paid. According to river fleet.ru, the "Saratov City" belongs to a company named Volgotanker that is registered in Samara. Its home port is the Russian city of Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea. Volgotanker has declined to comment on the charge that its ship was polluting the sea.

7. Georgia President Saakashvili: Russian hostility won't sap our commitment to democracy
19.04.2010, CSMonitor
In 2003, the Rose Revolution in Georgia was the first of a wave of popular standoffs against authoritarianism, fraud, and corruption in the post-Soviet area. Seven years later, some people might
think the recent events in Ukraine or Kyrgyzstan have sparked a re-evaluation of the so-called colored revolutions, believing that they have failed to radically transform our region. In light of the profound transformations in my country, I strongly disagree. Of course, the challenges of building democracy and stable institutions are many, and the path of reform is not always easy to navigate. Changing leadership is possible, seizing a parliament is spectacular, and waving flags in the street is gorgeous – but changing systems and institutionalizing those changes is profoundly difficult. Nevertheless, this process of reform is what constitutes a true revolution, not the colorful images on TV.

VII. GREECE

1. Greece warns not to let its debt crisis 'get out of control'
READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Obama_Merkel_Call_For_Resolute_Action_On_Greece/2027604.html
Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou, pleading for international help, has warned that Greece's debt crisis could prove "catastrophic" for the European and global economies. "We cannot let a small fire - a small fire because Greece is only 2 to 3 percent of the GDP of the European Union -- get out of control," he said. "It would be dangerous for Greece -- damaging for Greece -- and we already feel the damage. But it could be catastrophic for the European Union and the world." There has been increasing concern that the Greek debt crisis could affect the other 15 economies using the euro after a major international rating agency cut Spain's credit status. Earlier this week, the status of Greek government bonds was rated as "junk"; Portugal and Spain were also downgraded. The head of the German Central Bank, Axel Weber, was quoted today as saying the effects of letting Greece go bankrupt would be "incalculable." Germany has come under increasing pressure to agree to a multibillion dollar EU-IMF rescue package for Greece, with Berlin providing the biggest single share of the loans.

2. EU and IMF reportedly eyeing €120bn for Greece
28.04.2010, EUOBSERVER
READ MORE: http://euobserver.com/9/29961
The parliamentary leader of Germany's Green party, Juergen Trittin, has indicated that the EU and the IMF are currently eyeballing a figure in the range of €100-120 billion in aid for Greece, as part of a three-year lending package. Mr Trittin made the remarks following a meeting on Wednesday (28 April) between German parliamentary groups and IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn and ECB president Jean-Claude Trichet. "The package will run over three years," media quoted Mr Trittin as saying. "Greece should be removed de facto from financial markets for three years." The meeting was hastily arranged earlier this week as key players such as Mr Strauss-Kahn attempt to convince the country's lawmakers to approve a Greek loan bill, which German finance Minister Wolfgang Schauble hopes to discuss with the German cabinet next Monday. With Greece due to pay back roughly €8.5 billion to bondholders on 19 May, EU, IMF and Greek officials are currently racing to put a detailed loan package in place, with talks ongoing in Athens.

3. Spain calls 10 May summit over Greece
28.04.2010, EurActiv
Eurozone leaders are discussing the possibility of holding a special summit in Brussels on 10 May to
activate an aid package for Greece, a spokesman for the Spanish government said on 27 April. "There are talks at the highest level, and 10 May is the first available date after the vote for activation in the Greek parliament on 6 or 7 May," said the spokesman, whose country holds the European Union's rotating presidency. "The talks were already going on and have nothing to do with the downgrades by ratings agencies," the spokesman added. Speaking a few hours later, European Union President Herman Van Rompuy said on Wednesday that negotiations on Greece's debt are well on track, and there is no question of restructuring it. "Negotiations are going on, they are well on track, and there is no question about restructuring the debt," Van Rompuy told a news conference in Tokyo, where a EU-Japan summit is taking place. He confirmed that a meeting of Eurogroup 4.

4.

Bulgaria, Greece to promote Rhodopes as tourist destination
20.04.2010, Bsanna News
READ MORE: http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12933&lang=en
Bulgarian and Greek municipalities are promoting the Rhodopes as a jointly managed tourist destination by brochures and information leaflets distributed at a number of international tourism fairs, Zlatka Nikolova of the Association of Rhodope Municipalities (ARM) said in Smolyan on Tuesday. The leaflets published in Bulgarian, Greek and English provide detailed information about tourist routes linking the Rhodopes and the Aegean Sea, Bulgarian and Greek resorts and hotels, as well as a administrative routes guide to help those wishing to do business in the region. Partners within the EU funded project are the ARM, the Border Region Delta Rhodopi (Greece), the Association of Xanthi Municipalities and another association from that city. Nikolova believes that the plans to promote the Rhodopes as a tourist destination will be facilitated by the recently opened Xanthi-Zlatograd border crossing.

5.

Papandreou-Erdoğan meeting key in arms race reduction
18.04.2010, Today's Zaman
READ MORE: http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=207737
Turkey and Greece have once again reiterated their desire to improve relations by reducing defense spending in both countries, a measure that will also help the troubled Greek economy recover. Analysts expect a confidence-building deal to be struck between Turkey and Greece to reduce military spending during Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou's meeting with the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan next month. The deal is of vital importance to Greece as it grapples with severe economic turmoil. Turkey can now play an important role in mitigating the factors that led to the economic recession in Greece. Most analysts believe the primary reason behind Greece's severe economic crisis was its heavy military spending to contain the threat posed by Turkey. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, speaking after a meeting with Greek Alternate Foreign Minister Dimitris Droutsas last week, said there would be no need for arms spending if the two neighbors work to build a "common future."

VIII. MOLDOVA

1.

Romania rallies behind Moldova EU bid
27.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
READ MORE:
http://www.rferl.org/content/Romania_Rallies_Behind_Moldova_EU_Bid/2026333.html
Romania and Moldova today agreed to deepen bilateral economic, political, and cultural cooperation to boost Chisinau's bid to join the European Union. The agreement was announced at the start of a two-day visit to Bucharest by acting Moldovan President Mihai Ghimpu. EU member Romania also
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<th>Signed a financial assistance agreement, providing a nonrefundable 100 million euro ($133 million) grant to Moldova for development projects.</th>
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<td>The Moldovan authorities have been closely watching the case against journalist Ernest Vardanian and have been taking all efforts to set him free, according to a communiqué by the governments press service. Right after his arrest, the leadership of the government and Prime Minister Vlad Filat personally involved in a continuous process of monitoring, raising awareness and mobilizing efforts to release the journalist, resorting to diplomatic levers including. The prime minister informed the diplomatic corps accredited in Chisinau about the case, pointing out the need to take concerted efforts in order to release Ernest Vardanian. The office for reintegration of the State Chancellery, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Victor Osipov, has also taken actions in this direction. Moldova’s government regards as inadmissible the arrest of journalist Ernest Vardanian and advocates his immediate and unconditional release. The government will keep on taking all necessary actions, acting within its remit and possibilities.</td>
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<td>The new pro-European government of Moldova has a clear vision for how to strengthen the country’s institutions and overcome a year-long deadlock in electing its president. Moldova’s deputy prime minister, Victor Osipov, spoke to EurActiv in an exclusive interview. Moldova will strengthen its institutions respecting EU recommendations, said Osipov, who is responsible for “re-integration”, meaning preserving the territorial integrity of Moldova and resolving the conflict in Transnistria. The country, wedged between Romania and Ukraine, has been unable to elect a president since April 2009, after successive votes in the 101-seat parliament failed to secure the required majority of 61 MPs to elect a new head of state. The four pro-European parties have 53 MPs in parliament - enough to form a government but too few to vote through their choice of president. The Communist Party controls the remaining 48 seats (EurActiv 13/10/09).</td>
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<td>15.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty</td>
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<td>The Moldovan government official responsible for affairs in the breakaway region of Transdniester says the chances of achieving any progress on that conflict this year are slim, RFE/RL’s Moldovan Service reports. Deputy Prime Minister Victor Osipov told RFE/RL from Brussels that he is skeptical about Transdniester despite growing international interest in the conflict. Osipov was in Brussels to discuss the Transdniester issue with European Union officials. He told RFE/RL that solving the conflict has become a “top foreign-policy priority” for the EU. But he added that it is unlikely that internationally mediated talks with the Russian-backed separatists will resume anytime soon.</td>
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IX. ROMANIA

1. Romania to sell government energy stakes
22.04.2010, Financial Times
READ MORE: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/80c95dfc-4d64-11df-956000144feab49a.html?nclick_check=1

Romania on Wednesday unveiled plans to sell several government-held stakes in key energy companies as it battles to boost investment in spite of severe budgetary constraints. Adrian Videanu, economy minister, said in Bucharest that the government would raise “a very significant” sum by selling stakes in companies including oil group OMV Petrom and utilities Transgaz and Transelectrica. “Money from the sale of these stakes will be used solely on investment in infrastructure,” the minister said, adding that the process could begin within nine months. The holdings will be divested via stock exchanges or a bidding process. Romania approached the International Monetary Fund for a €20bn bail-out last year when external funding dried up and the government has since been forced to use part of the money to plug a hole in the state budget. Under the IMF agreement Romania is obliged to cut public spending this year in order to lower the deficit from 7.1 per cent to 5.9 per cent.

2. Barroso asks Romania to preserve EU-backed anti-corruption body
22.04.2010, EUOBSERVER
READ MORE: http://euobserver.com/9/29918

European Commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso on Thursday urged Romanian authorities to resolve the legal uncertainty surrounding an EU-backed agency scrutinising public officials' conflicts of interest, after the country's constitutional court stripped it of its main powers. "I am concerned by the possible weakening of the National Integrity Agency (ANI) following the recent ruling of the Constitutional Court. The agency needs a firm legal basis to guarantee full independence and the ability to conduct proper investigations," Mr Barroso said during a joint press conference with Romanian President Traian Basescu. The court last week ruled that most of the powers of the ANI were unconstitutional. Seven of the nine judges in that court were themselves under the scrutiny of the agency.

3. Court decision could 'negatively affect' Romania's EU position
19.04.2010, EurActiv

Romania's Constitutional Court has declared as anti-constitutional the main prerogatives of a body established on Brussels' recommendation. But parliamentarians warned that this could have a negative impact on the country's access to EU funds and upset plans for Schengen accession. EurActiv Romania reports. Two chapters of the law on setting up the National Integrity Agency (ANI) were declared unconstitutional on 15 April, the Romanian press reported, warning of far-reaching consequences for relations between Bucharest and Brussels.

4. Romanian Foreign Minister Teodor Baconschi: Statements made by Ukrainian mass media are ungrounded
17.04.2010, Kyiv Post

Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor Baconschi on Thursday described as ungrounded the statements made recently by the Ukrainian mass media referring to the fact that Ukraine might lose
part of its territory as Romania had territorial claims on the Maikan Island. “The statements made by
the mass media in Ukraine, according to which Romania is said to have territorial claims on this
country, are totally ungrounded. At this moment there is a joint technical commission at experts’
level, which is made up of representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the General Inspectorate of
the Border Police, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Transports, the Environment and
Forestry and the National Land Survey Agency. This commission studies the new border documents
that will come into force for the Romanian-Ukrainian border,” explained Minister Baconschi. He
made it clear that experts observed the provisions of the treaty between Romania and Ukraine on the
state border regime, which was ratified in 2003.

5. After Bulgaria, Romania delays euro adoption
16.04.2010, EurActiv
READ MORE: http://www.euractiv.com/en/euro/after-bulgaria-romania-delays-euro-adoption-
news-448951
Romanian Central Bank governor Mugur Isarescu suggested his country would delay its 2015 target
for adopting the euro, saying "more preparation" was needed, the Romanian press wrote yesterday
(15 April). "A delay of one or two years is less significant than the need to accede to the euro zone
well prepared," Isarescu said. Last week, Bulgaria's centre-right government abandoned plans to join
ERM II, the euro zone's waiting room, after the country recorded a larger-than-expected deficit in
2009 (EurActiv 12/04/10). The Romanian National Bank will continue to mention 2015 as a target
date, Isarescu said, because the ambitious objective would act as a catalyst role in preparing for the
single currency.

6. Foreign Ministry: Ukraine won’t give its island away to Romania
15.04.2010, Bsanna News
READ MORE: http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12882&lang=en
The Ukrainian side is not going to change the line of the state border with Romania on the Danube
River, director of the Information Policy Department of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Oleh Voloshyn
said in a statement on Wednesday. According to him, in a situation involving the Danube Island
Maikan, Kyiv comes from the principle of non-violation of provisions of the agreement between
Ukraine and Romania of 2003, which fixed the inviolability of state borders. "Therefore, the
Ukrainian side has no intention to change the boundary line on the site. Any disputes that arise in
connection with the desire of the Romanian side to make the appropriate changes will be discussed
both by the border services, and at the consultations between Deputy Foreign Minister Kostiantyn
Yeliseyev and State Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Romania Bogdan Mazuru,” Voloshyn stressed.

X. RUSSIA
1. Russia launches full-court press for energy projects in Europe
READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Russia_Launches_FullCourt_
Press_For_Energy_Projects_In_Europe/2026919.html
Russia is launching a new all-out offensive on the European energy market. President Dmitry
Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin have spent the past several days on individual tours
through Europe, securing new natural-gas contracts and partners for Russian-built pipelines,
clarifying Russian claims to oil and gas reserves in the Arctic, and searching for clients ready to pay
for Russia's nuclear-plant technology. On April 27, Medvedev concluded a two-day trip to Oslo,
where he and Norwegian leaders agreed on a plan to delimit their Arctic maritime border. The
decision - combined with recent melting of Arctic ice - paves the way for the area to be opened for oil and gas exploration. The deal is a long-awaited achievement for Russia. In 2008, Medvedev called the Arctic "Russia's resource base of the 21st century." Some energy experts estimate that up to 25 percent of the planet's oil and gas reserves lie beneath the Arctic's Barents Sea.

2. Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan forming common customs territory – Putin

**27.04.2010, ITAR-TASS**


Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan are forming a common customs territory in keeping with the trilateral agreements, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said at a Tuesday conference on the development of the Customs Union borders. Unified mechanisms of foreign trade regulation and the joint customs code will enter into force by July 1, 2010. Besides, border control will be exercised on the external boundaries of Belarus, and formalities will be reduced substantially on the Kazakh frontier. Border control will fully shift to the Customs Union perimeter starting from July 1, 2011, Putin said.

3. Russia shuts down last plutonium reactor

**25.04.2010, New Europe**

READ MORE: http://www.neurope.eu/articles/100506.php

Russia shut down a reactor capable of producing weapons-grade plutonium recently - the last of its kind in the world - days after the country participated in a historic US nuclear security summit, the Ria Novosti reported. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev had announced the imminent shutdown of the reactor, which has been operational in the Siberian city of Zheleznogorsk since 1964, at the summit. Plutonium can be used in nuclear weapons, among other things. Moscow had abandoned the production of weapons-grade plutonium in 1995. Since then, the Zheleznogorsk reactor had only produced electricity and heat. A power station being built with US help will eventually take over that task. Two other reactors capable of producing weapons-grade plutonium had previously been shut down in 1992.

4. Visa-free travel between Turkey, Russia

**22.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily**


Visa-free travel between Turkey and Russia could begin this summer, a Russian official said Thursday. While preparations are ongoing, it might not be possible to finish all the necessary procedures until a visit from Russian President Dimitri Medvedev scheduled for the first half of May, said Russian Ambassador Vladimir Ivanovskiy. "But I believe it might be possible to have visa free travel by the summer months." Speaking at a round table discussion organized by the Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies, Ivanovskiy said it would have been impossible to imagine just three years ago that the countries would be on the verge of lifting mutual visa restrictions. "However, now all the preparations are underway, and I have word a delegation from the Turkish Foreign Ministry will go to Moscow for talks," he said, adding that Russia and Turkey must still finalize a readmission agreement between the two countries before the restrictions are ended.

5. Russia and Ukraine agree on gas, naval base

**22.04.2010, EurActiv**


Russia agreed yesterday (21 April) to a 30 percent cut in the price of its gas supplies to Ukraine in
exchange for a 25-year extension of the lease of its Black Sea fleet based on Ukraine's Crimean peninsula. The concession on the Black Sea fleet was the clearest sign yet of a marked foreign policy shift by Kiev towards Moscow under newly elected President Viktor Yanukovich, and it was immediately portrayed as a sell-out of sovereignty by opponents. "Our Ukrainian partners will receive a discount in the price of gas," Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said at a joint news conference with Yanukovich after the two men had held talks in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv.

6. **Russia proposes Ukraine merge aircraft construction assets**
21.04.2010, Kyiv Post

The Russian government has proposed that Ukraine sell a 50% plus one share stake in the state-run Antonov Enterprise to Russia's OJSC United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) in exchange for shares in UAC. According to a draft intergovernmental agreement posted by the Ukrainska Pravda Internet publication, a decision on merging UAC and Antonov should be taken no later than on August 1, 2010. According to the draft document, the supervisory board of the Antonov Enterprise will consist of Russian representatives, but will be headed by a citizen of Ukraine.

7. **Russia to change its envoy for Transdniestria settlement process**
19.04.2010, Kyiv Post

Valery Nesterushkin, Russia's special envoy at negotiations on settling the conflict over Transdniestria, has announced on Friday that he is to leave the job because of a new appointment. Nesterushkin, who is a special ambassador at the Russian Foreign Ministry, has not disclosed his new job or the name of his successor, saying only that "this is a skilled and experienced diplomat, who is currently studying all documents concerning the problems of relations between Chisinau and Tiraspol. "Commenting on his diplomatic work on settling the Transdniestria conflict, Nesterushkin said his team managed to prevent a lot of critical situations "toward which various events pushed us."

8. **NATO to invite Russia to join in building defense ‘roof’ for Europe**
19.04.2010, Telegraph UK

The radical move would see NATO and the Russian sharing in the development and building of a defence against ballistic missiles launched from rogue nuclear states such as Iran. It would mark the first time that the two sides had joined together in a defence project as NATO seeks to build bridges with its former foe. During a briefing in London last week, NATO spokesman James Appathurai said the Americans have been in direct talks with the Russians over the idea. Nato Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, believes there is a "confluence of interests" and will put the proposal to leaders of the alliance at a summit in Tallinn, Estonia, later this week. Mr Appathurai added: "The Secretary General believes the Russians should be included in a missile defence system that covers Europe. "Instead of focusing on treaties or conferences we should have a real European security architecture - one roof that includes the Russians, that is built with the Russians, that is maintained with the Russians."
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<th>9.</th>
<th>Erdoğan, Medvedev discuss economic relations by phone</th>
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<td>As a follow-up to his meeting with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Washington early this week on the sidelines of the nuclear summit, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Friday spoke with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, on the phone to discuss bilateral economic relations in particular. Speaking to reporters on Friday, Putin’s Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov said the two prime ministers primarily discussed trade and economic relations during the phone conversation, which was also deemed to be in preparation for Medvedev’s visit to Turkey at the start of May. Diplomats and ministers of the two countries will meet in early May to discuss bilateral relations and conclude a strategic partnership deal. The most important article of the deal is believed to be the reciprocal elimination of visa requirements between the two countries. Nearly 3 million Russian tourists are expected to visit Turkey this year. During Erdoğan’s visit to Moscow in January, officials pledged to reach $100 billion in trade between the two countries.</td>
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<th>10.</th>
<th>Moscow, Kiev sign new gas deal</th>
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<td>Russia and Ukraine agreed Friday on a draft resolution redefining the terms of natural gas contracts between the countries, officials said. Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych has complained about existing gas deals signed with Russia by the previous administration. Officials in Kiev said they were able to pay for gas in 2009 because of a discount. That discount expired in December, leaving the battered Ukrainian economy further weakened. Yanukovych is working to restore his country’s regional reputation as an energy transit nation for the European Union. The recession that rocked world markets in 2009 pummeled the Ukrainian economy, forcing Kiev to look to international lenders for support. The new agreement conforms to many of the demands issued by Yanukovych, state-run news agency RIA Novosti said. The agreement is still in its draft stage.</td>
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<th>11.</th>
<th>Russia’s North Caucasus Envoy ‘lacks power’ for reforms</th>
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<td>Russian President Dmitry Medvedev’s envoy to the recently created North Caucasus Federal District has returned to Moscow after a series of visits to the republics in the volatile district, RFE/RL’s Russian Service reports. Aleksandr Khloponin, who is also a deputy prime minister, is due in June to present the Kremlin with a new strategy for the social and economic development of the violence-plagued North Caucasus. Experts say this will necessitate reforming regional government structures to curb the powers of the republics’ leaders. Such reforms could result in a standoff between Khloponin and Chechen Republic head Ramzan Kadyrov over the allocation of federal budget funds for reconstruction in Chechnya.</td>
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<th>12.</th>
<th>Authorities approve Russia-Ukraine gas cooperation agreements</th>
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<td>Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has been informed of the results of Russian-Ukrainian talks on cooperation in the gas sector, which continued in Moscow on Friday, the Russian government</td>
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told Interfax. "The governments of the Russian Federation and Ukraine discussed agreements reached between Gazprom and its Ukrainian partners on cooperation in the gas sector, including price parameters," the government said. "These coordinated decisions are based on proposals forwarded by Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych to Russia," it said. "All reached agreements on gas prices need to be documented in an appropriate governmental resolution," the government said. "Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has already issued an instruction to prepare such a draft resolution as soon as possible," it said.

**XI. TURKEY**

1. Turkey, Georgia seek framework for Turkish-Abkhazia relations

28.04.2010, Today’s Zaman

READ MORE: http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=208692

Turkey reaffirmed that it will continue to work with Georgia to keep Black Sea transportation channels open, during the first visit of Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze to Turkey since becoming foreign minister. Vashadze’s visit on Tuesday at the invitation of the Turkish Foreign Ministry was largely regarded by observers as an attempt to eliminate barriers confronting Turkey’s direct relations with Abkhazia and to agree on a framework for Turkish-Abkhazian relations. The issue is particularly important for Turkey’s Black Sea businessmen who face challenges in trade due to increasing pressure by Georgian authorities to restrict direct trade with Abkhazia. Stating that they discussed with the visiting minister the difficulties Turkish fishing and cargo ships face in the Black Sea, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said during a joint news conference that they will continue to talk with Georgia to make use of all resources of the Black Sea and to keep transportation channels open.

2. Turkish Minister says gas deal reached with Azerbaijan

27.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Turkish_Minister_Says_Gas_Deal_Reached_With_Azerbaijan/2026266.html

Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz says Turkey and Azerbaijan have reached an agreement in principle for the price of natural gas, an issue linked to delays on the European Union-backed Nabucco gas pipeline project. Yildiz said he and other Turkish officials met with Azerbaijani officials in Ankara on April 26 to agree on a price and volumes of Azerbaijani gas to be shipped to Turkey. But Yildiz said the issue of transit of Azerbaijani gas through Turkey was still unresolved. The Nabucco pipeline is intended to bring 31 billion cubic meters of gas annually from the Middle East and Caspian Basin to Europe. But no contracts with gas suppliers have been signed so far. Many believe that is because Turkey and Azerbaijan, one of the potential suppliers for Nabucco, have so far failed to agree on transit prices for gas headed for Europe.

3. TPAO's investments in Black Sea reach $4 billion

22.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily


After investing $4 billion in oil exploration in the Black Sea, the Turkish Petroleum Corporation, or TPAO, has announced potentially significant stores of oil and natural gas that could meet Turkey’s energy needs for decades. “We believe there are 10 billion barrels’ worth of producible oil and 3 trillion cubic meters of producible natural gas in the Black Sea,” TPAO general director Mehmet Uysal said Thursday. If TPAO could find this much oil or natural gas in the Black Sea, Turkey’s...
4. Turkish opposition united in criticism of reform package

20.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily


Opposition parties will extend absolutely no support to the government’s constitutional reform package, party leaders said Tuesday during their weekly parliamentary group meetings. “There is no significant change [with the package]. You cannot foist this package upon the public as if you are introducing more democracy. Don’t speak in vain – give up on the insincerity,” said Gülten Kişanak, the co-chair of the Peace and Democracy Party, or BDP. The ongoing debates concerning the constitutional amendments in Parliament, as well as Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s remarks on a presidential system for Turkey, were on the agenda of party leaders during their respective parliamentary group meetings Tuesday.

5. Turkey opens constitution debate

19.04.2010, BBC News

READ MORE: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8630079.stm

Parliament in Turkey has begun debating changes to the constitution that would shift powers away from the highly secular judiciary and army. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan says the changes would improve democracy and help put Turkey on the path to European Union membership. But the nationalist opposition is against reforms it says would threaten the independence of the courts. Parties have banned MPs from leaving Ankara during the two-week debate. The reforms, if approved, would change the way judges are appointed to the highest courts, make it harder to ban political parties, and make Turkey’s military answerable to civilian courts. The governing AK Party was itself nearly shut down by the Constitutional Court two years ago. Critics accuse the party of having an Islamist agenda, and of wanting to take powers away from the secularist establishment, with which it has clashed frequently.

6. Turkey outlines five-year energy plans

16.04.2010, UPI


Turkey aims to diversify its energy sector and use more renewable resources under the provisions outlined in a five-year energy plan, ministers said. Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yıldız outlined a five-year energy plan to lawmakers in Ankara. He said Turkey aims to cut its Russian gas imports by as much as 50 percent as part of the energy plan, Turkey’s state news agency Anadolu reports. Turkey as part of the diversification strategy aims to extend deals for Iraqi crude while wrapping up negotiations for the Nabucco gas pipeline for Europe by the end of 2010. Nabucco construction, Yıldız added, is scheduled for 2011 in Turkey.

7. Turkey has weathered the crisis successfully, says IMF official

16.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily


A senior official with the International Monetary Fund on Thursday said Turkey weathered the
global economic recession successfully. "We believe that Turkey has weathered the crisis successfully," said Caroline Atkinson, director of external relations for the IMF, in a press briefing. Responding to a question, Atkinson said the IMF was yet to schedule a meeting between the managing director and Turkish State Minister for Economy Ali Babacan. "I think as we have said before we do expect that there will be an Article IV consultation mission that goes to Turkey in mid-May," she said. Atkinson also said the IMF agreed with Turkish officials that the country did not need a financial arrangement with the und. On Thursday, Babacan said there was no need for an IMF loan.

XII. TURKEY - ARMENIA

1. Time frame for ratification of Armenian-Turkish Protocols increasingly unclear
27.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Timeframe_For_Ratification_Of_Armenian_Turkish_Protocols_Increasingly_Unclear/2024678.html
Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian's announcement on April 22 that he is recalling from parliament the two protocols on normalizing relations with Turkey signed in Geneva last October does not, as Sarkisian himself stressed, signify the end of the process of rapprochement that he has advocated for the past three years. The protocols were, after all, only submitted to the legislature for ratification two months ago. The effective suspension of the ratification process, and the terms in which both Sarkisian and the three-party coalition government announced it, do, however, raise questions about how and on what terms dialogue with Turkey will be resumed, especially in light of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's repeated linkage of ratification with the withdrawal of Armenian forces from districts of Azerbaijan bordering on the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.

2. Turkish FM urges opening of all borders in region
26.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily
Turkey's relationship with Armenia will normalize in the same way as with other countries, the country's foreign minister promised Monday. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu also called for open borders among all the region's neighboring countries. "We'd like all borders to open, so that businesspeople and goods can freely circulate. We'd like security to reign in the region, not conflicts; we'd like an end to invasions and want solutions to frozen conflicts," Davutoğlu said in Parliament, briefing deputies about the relations with Armenia and the fate of the protocols signed in October 2009 to establish diplomatic relations. "If this perspective is put in place, the locomotive of this region will be Turkey. Turkey will be both at peace and an economic locomotive," he said, repeating that the government does not want the status quo to continue in the Caucasus.

3. U.S. backs Armenia in suspending, not ending Turkey rapprochement
23.04.2010, Ria Novosti
READ MORE: http://en.rian.ru/world/20100423/158712846.html
The United States urges Armenia and Turkey to continue efforts at reconciliation and supports Yerevan's decision to put the process on hold, the U.S. Embassy in Armenia said on Friday. Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan signed a decree on Thursday that put the ratification of Armenian-Turkish protocols on hold, declaring that his country would wait until Ankara showed it was ready to normalize relations. "President Sargsyan's announcement makes clear that Armenia has not ended the process but has suspended it until the Turkish side is ready to move forward. We
applaud President Sargsyan’s decision to continue to work towards a vision of peace, stability, and reconciliation," Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Philip Gordon was quoted as saying on the embassy website. "We believe that the normalization process carries important benefits for Turkey and Armenia as well as the wider Caucasus region.

4. Turkey cool to Armenia's decision to halt ratification of protocols
23.04.2010, European Dialogue
READ MORE: http://eurodialogue.org/Turkey-cool-to-Armenia-decision-to-halt-ratification-of-protocols

Yerevan’s call to halt ratification of an accord on normalizing ties has Turkey evaluating the possible legal and political repercussions, and prompted the country’s leader to reiterate his commitment to the normalization process. It is up to them to decide how they want to move with the ratification process,” Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan told reporters in Ankara on Thursday. “I have expressed our loyalty to the protocols on numerous occasions. We will press ahead with the process on the principle that treaties are binding. The prime minister’s remarks came as Armenia’s ruling coalition announced earlier Thursday that it was halting ratification of the peace accord on account of Turkey’s refusal to ratify the text "without preconditions and in a reasonable timeframe. Soon after the coalition parties’ statement, Armenian President Serge Sarkisian confirmed his country’s freezing of the ratification of the protocols with neighboring Turkey.

5. Armenia puts hold on ratifying Armenian-Turkish protocols
22.04.2010, Global Security

Armenian President Serzh Sargysan on Thursday signed a decree putting a hold on ratification of Armenian-Turkish protocols, the presidential press service reported. "After consultations with the parties of the ruling coalition and a National Security Council session, we have decided not to quit the process of normalizing relations with Turkey, but just to put on hold the ratification of the Armenian-Turkish protocols. I am sure it’s right what our national interests demand,” Sargysan said in his appeal to the nation. Armenia still aims to establish full diplomatic relations with Turkey, and will return to the issue when seeing there is an "appropriate atmosphere" and corresponding readiness in Ankara to normalize relations, he said. Sargysan said he had discussed the prospects for Armenian -Turkish relations with the French, U.S. and Russian presidents as well as with other partners.

6. Turkish PM: Armenia must demonstrate its sincerity in normalization of relations with Turkey
19.04.2010, Trend News
READ MORE: http://en.trend.az/regions/met/turkey/1672172.html

Armenia must demonstrate its sincerity in the process of normalizing relations with Turkey, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said at a meeting of the ruling Justice and Development Party, CNN Turk reported. "At a meeting with Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan, I openly stated Turkey’s position in the process of normalizing relations with Armenia and the ratification of the Armenia-Turkish protocols. At the same time we want to see a sincere attitude of Armenia," Erdogan said, referring to the last meeting with Sargsyan in Washington. Turkey is not the country that can "run away from the table of negotiations, Erdogan said."We do not avoid negotiations; on the contrary, we can hold them simultaneously with the Arab countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Balkan countries. Everything is done to establish stability and peace in the region. Turkey strives for peace in the Middle East and is ready to normalize relations with Armenia," Erdogan said.
7. **We are behind protocols signed with Armenia, Erdogan**

19.04.2010, Bsanna News


Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Turkey was behind the protocols signed with Armenia last year. Speaking on Turkey’s NTV channel on Sunday, Erdogan said that “the protocols carry a statement. The protocols refer to ‘facilitating peace for the region.’” When you refer to regional peace, you have to consider the problem between Azerbaijan and Armenia. We have to facilitate peace this time. The Azerbaijan-Armenia dispute was the reason for the closure of border gates, Erdogan said. We have to solve the problem between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Unless we solve this problem, the Turkish Parliament will not say ‘yes’ to the protocols. We do not wish to see a negative decision by the Turkish Parliament. As such, we are preparing the necessary platform in the parliament, Erdogan said.

8. **Erdogan presses Armenia on Karabakh**


READ MORE: [http://www.rferl.org/content/Erdogan_Presses_Armenia_Over_Karabakh/2017078.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Erdogan_Presses_Armenia_Over_Karabakh/2017078.html)

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey will keep its border with Armenia closed if a territorial conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan remains unresolved. Erdogan was quoted today by the Anatolia news agency as saying that “if the occupation of (Nagorno Karabakh) continues, we will not take such a step.” The reopening of the Turkish–Armenian border is part of an accord the two countries signed in October to establish diplomatic ties and needs parliamentary ratification to take effect. Turkey closed its border with Armenia in 1993 in a show of solidarity with Azerbaijan after ethnic Armenian separatists, backed by Yerevan, seized the Nagorno Karabakh region.

9. **Lernik Aleksanyan: diplomatic tricks ineffective in Armenian-Turkish process**

17.04.2010, PanARMENIAN


The recent tensions between Armenia and Turkey had a particular effect, according to Lernik Aleksanyan, member RPA parliamentary group. “The Washington meetings revealed the true intentions of both sides. Diplomatic tricks are no longer effective in the process,” he told reporters in Yerevan on April 17. Meanwhile, he presumed that the dialogue will be continued after April 24 supporting his party fellow Galust Sahakyan’s opinion that the border Armenian-Turkish border can be opened before ratification of the protocols, he said, “The border can be opened by economic motives, but establishment of diplomatic relations between the two states remains the core issue.” As to the upcoming visit of Armenian President to Moscow, Mr. Aleksanyan said “it’s normal, as Russia is Armenia’s strategic partner and is engaged in regional processes.”

10. **Aram Sargsyan: new Armenian-Turkish process needs to be started**

16.04.2010, PanARMENIAN


Armenia should withdraw its signature from the Protocols on normalization of relations with Turkey, according to Aram Sargsyan, the leader of the Democratic Party of Armenia. “Reasonable terms for ratification of the Protocols have expired. It’s time to start a new Armenian-Turkish process,” he told reporters in Yerevan on April 16. “Being a small country, Armenia has become a
cornerstone in resolution of regional issues and it should be the one who leads but not the one who is led,” he said. As to recognition of the Armenian Genocide, he said, “The 100th anniversary will be the Rubicon for recognition of the Genocide. So, Armenians should pursue an efficient policy to gain maximal results during the next five years.” Mr. Sargsyan also emphasized that in order to achieve success in foreign policy, Armenia should resolve all domestic problems.

11.

‘Turkey ready for dialogue with diaspora’

16.04.2010, Today’s Zaman

READ MORE: http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=207569

Ankara’s ongoing efforts to normalize its relations with Yerevan are not limited to a state-to-state framework, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has said, adding that Turkey wants a reconciliation process that also involves the Armenian diaspora living in Europe and the United States. Davutoğlu said Turks and Armenians “in Paris and Boston” should sit together and attempt to reconcile their memories of the tragic events that took place in 1915, which Armenians consider a systematic extermination campaign but which Turks insist were merely terrible deaths resulting from the collapse of an empire, The Boston Globe reported on Wednesday. The minister’s remarks came as he was delivering a speech and responding to questions from reporters at the Washington office of the Council on Foreign Relations on Wednesday. “We are ready to listen to our Armenian friends concerning our history,” Davutoğlu was quoted as saying by the Anatolia news agency.

12.

Armenia-Turkey relations chilling

16.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/47174/

The meeting between Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan proved ineffective, a Russian expert said. “There are several reasons for it: the Armenian Genocide resolution adopted by the U.S. House panel, Erdogan’s threat to deport illegal Armenian migrants and Turkey’s support to Azerbaijan in Karabakh issue,” Alexander Sotnichenko, senior analyst at the Saint Petersburg Institute of Middle East Studies, told a PanARMENIAN.Net reporter. The Turkish parliament is unlikely to ratify the protocols unless the RA Constitutional Court amends the text of its ruling, according to him.

**XIII. UKRAINE**

1.

EU risks losing Ukraine, minister warns

28.04.2010, EUOBSERVER

READ MORE: http://euobserver.com/9/29960

Ukraine's economy will in the coming years integrate more closely with Russia than with the EU unless the union becomes more open, Ukraine’s EU affairs minister has said. “People in my leadership are extremely pragmatic. If we don’t have real deliverables from contacts with the EU and we just see more and more pre-conditions, of course we will have closer business relations with countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus. In practical terms, our markets will become closer to Russia,” Ukraine’s EU affairs minister Konstantin Yeliseyev told EUobserver in a phone interview on Wednesday (28 April). The minister noted that the EU did not give Ukraine a roadmap for future visa-free travel as a reward for holding democratic elections in March.

2.

Ukraine says Russian naval base deal will not affect EU ties

28.04.2010, Global Security

READ MORE: http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/ukraine/2010/ukraine-100428-
The extension of Russia's use of a naval base in Crimea will have no influence on Ukraine's prospects for European integration, the Ukrainian foreign minister said on Wednesday. The agreement extending the lease on the Russian Navy base in the Ukrainian port of Sevastopol for 25 years after the current lease expires in 2017 has been ratified by the Russian and Ukrainian parliaments. In return for the lease extension, which may be extended for an additional five years, Ukraine will receive a 30% discount on Russian natural gas that will be worth an estimated $40 billion. "This decision was taken by Ukraine alone and it does not affect our European prospects," said Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostyantyn Hryshchenko, a former ambassador to Russia. "The international community views this decision as a step stabilizing the situation regarding bilateral relations [with Russia] and in the Ukrainian economy," he said at a news conference.

Chaos has erupted in the Ukrainian parliament during a debate over the extension of the lease on a Russian naval base in Ukraine. The chamber's speaker had to be shielded by umbrellas as he was pelted with eggs, while smoke bombs exploded and politicians brawled. But the debate continued and the chamber ratified the lease extension. Kiev has prolonged the lease on the Sevastopol base by 25 years in return for cheaper supplies of Russian gas. The deal, which came amid rapidly improving ties between Russia and Ukraine following the election of Ukraine's pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovych in February, has been bitterly opposed by Ukrainian pro-Western opposition politicians. The clashes in parliament broke out as MPs debated ratification of the agreement, which was made by Mr Yanukovych and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev last month.

Ukraine's joining a customs union including Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan is impossible, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych said on Tuesday. "Ukraine has [already] entered the World Trade Organization (WTO) and is integrating into the WTO. We are developing policies according to the organization's principles. Joining the Russian-Belarusian-Kazakh customs union is impossible now because of the WTO's economic principles which do not allow us to join this union." Yanukovych said during the spring session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). In January 2009, Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan agreed to create a single economic space by January 1, 2012. In June 2009, the countries notified the WTO of their intention to join the organization as a single customs union.

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych has said that Ukraine has a real opportunity to launch systemic reforms after the creation of a parliamentary coalition and effective government. He said this at a meeting with EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy Stefan Fule on Thursday. The president said that despite the difficult conditions, the current government had managed to draft a state budget for 2010. While commenting on the agreements with Russia on gas and the extension of the Russian Black Sea Fleet's presence in Crimea, which were signed in Kharkiv on April 21, Yanukovych said that these decisions helped reduce the budget deficit and
balance the budget of national JSC Naftogaz of Ukraine, which will allow the company to start returning debts to its creditors. The president expressed hope that talks on mutual relations between Ukraine and the EU would soon be completed.

6. **Yanukovych defends Russian naval base extension**


**READ MORE:**
http://www.rferl.org/content/Yanukovych_Defends_Russian_Naval_Base_Extension/2021537.html

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych has defended his decision to grant a 25-year lease extension to Russia’s Black Sea Fleet base in Crimea. In return for the extension, Moscow reduced the price Ukraine pays for Russian natural gas by 30 percent in a deal announced on April 21 after talks between Yanukovych and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. Speaking today at a news conference in Kyiv, Yanukovych said the agreement was key to Ukraine’s economic survival. “The main reason [for reaching a new gas deal] was because Ukraine had [an earlier] 10-year gas contract that was driving us into the grave,” Yanukovych said.

7. **Opposition blames Yanukovych for selling national interests**

22.04.2010, Bsanna News

**READ MORE:** http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12951&lang=en

The opposition has regarded the interstate agreement extending the Russian Black Sea Fleet’s stationing in Ukraine for 25 years, which has been today signed by the presidents of Ukraine and Russia, as a sale of Ukraine and its national values and interests by Viktor Yanukovych. The opposition government, led by Serhiy Sobolev, will insist that a parliament to consider the results of today’s Ukrainian-Russian agreements on strategic issues of state development, UKRINFORM reports with reference to the official website of Yulia Tymoshenko. According to Sobolev, the opposition government has already prepared an analysis of the agreements between the Russian and the Ukrainian leadership. He states that the ruling government has no right to take, without consent of the Verkhovna Rada, such strategically important for Ukraine decisions as creation of a gas transit consortium, lease or sale of gas mains and gas storage facilities, or extension of stay of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine.

8. **Ukraine woos Russia with lease deal**


**READ MORE:**

Swiftly carrying out his pledge to improve strained ties with neighboring Russia, the new Ukrainian president agreed to a landmark deal on Wednesday to extend the lease on a Russian naval base on Ukrainian territory. The decision by the Ukrainian president, Viktor F. Yanukovich, represented a sharp reversal in policy and a victory for the Kremlin, which had feared that its military readiness would be undermined if the base were closed. “We have opened a new page in relations,” Mr. Yanukovich said at a news conference in Kharkiv, in Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine, where the agreement was signed. But the lease extension drew criticism from Ukrainian opposition leaders, who view the base as a symbol of Russian interference in Ukrainian affairs and want their country to have a closer alliance with the West. The base is located on the Crimean Peninsula on the Black Sea, a place of historic resonance for Russia, which has headquartered its fleet there since czarist times. Mr. Yanukovich’s predecessor, Viktor A. Yushchenko, who left office in February, was hostile to the Kremlin and had vowed that the lease would not be renewed after it expired in 2017.
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<th>People's Party: Ukraine's reaction to territorial claims by Romania must be tougher</th>
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<td>20.04.2010, Kyiv Post</td>
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<td>The reaction of Ukraine to territorial claims by Romania must be tougher, the People's Party of Ukraine has said. &quot;It is right for the Foreign Ministry of Ukraine to immediately state that the Ukrainian side has no intentions to change the border line with Romania. However, the reaction of Ukraine to unreasonable territorial claims must be tougher, as there are two principles [in this issue] for our country,&quot; reads a statement of the political force. First of all, according to the report, the territorial integrity of Ukraine must be unchanged in any situation and on any conditions. &quot;To give away a small uninhabited island of Maikan means to demonstrate weakness and give reasons for other claims,&quot; the People's Party said.</td>
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<th>Ukrainians split on readiness for EU</th>
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<td>A survey of Ukrainian citizens suggested they were divided on their country’s readiness to join the European Union, Interfax-Ukraine reported Monday. The IFAK Ukraine international research agency in Kiev said 53 percent of respondents did not believe the country was up to meeting conditions for accession. The agency didn’t indicate how many people it polled March 12-24, but said they were adults living in cities of more than 50,000 people. In other EU-related matters, 13 percent of respondents said they didn’t think Ukraine should join the union at all while 16 percent chose not to answer, the report said. Among those who favored membership, 21 percent said Ukraine should become a member in the next one or two years, 25 percent in three to five years, and 16 percent said in five to 10 years. The survey's margin of error is 2.5 percent, the report said.</td>
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<th>MFA predicts breakthrough in Ukraine-EU relations soon</th>
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<td>Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostiantyn Gryshchenko expressed confidence of a breakthrough in Ukraine's relations with the European Union in the nearest future. “When exactly it happens depends on our efforts. It may be even half a year. We hope for that, particularly, in the context of our talks on association, free trade zone, visa facilitation and abolition in the perspective,” he said at a TV talk show. The breakthrough depends on reforms in Ukraine, the minister emphasized, adding committees in charge of developing transformation programs had been set up at the Presidential Administration and the Government. “Rapprochement with the EU and conduct of large-scale reforms are parallel processes that must be unified,” he underscored.</td>
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<th>Ukraine's press freedom declines, says media watchdog</th>
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<td>19.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily</td>
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|   | Ukraine's press freedom has declined since the election of Russia-friendly President Viktor Yanukovych earlier this year, a global media rights watchdog said, The Moscow Times reported Sunday. Paris-based Reporters without Borders said in a statement issued late last week that Ukraine has seen a return of intimidation and physical attacks on journalists and an abuse of authority toward
the media over the past three months. The group expressed concern about Yanukovych's decision earlier this month to disband the national commission on freedom of speech. It urged Yanukovych to explain his move and spell out his media policy. The UNIAN news agency quoted Yanukovych's deputy chief of staff, Anna German, as saying Friday that the commission's functions were given to a newly created body that she heads. Reporters without Borders said Ukraine had risen significantly in its press freedom index in recent years, but positive trends have reversed since Yanukovych's election.

**XIV. EASTERN PARTNERSHIP**

1.

Countries of Eastern Partnership to get 9 million euro to develop culture

22.04.2010, Trend News


The tender for participation in the contest within Eastern Partnership Culture Programme will be launched in late 2010. It will be financed under the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) to the amount of 9 million euro, the Annual Work Programme ENPI East published on the EuropeAid website said. The overall objective of the Programme is to support the role of culture in the region's sustainable development and to promote regional cooperation between public institutions, civil society cultural organizations, and foundations and academic organizations in the Eastern Partnership region and the EU. Azerbaijan, along with Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, has been participating in the EU program "Eastern Partnership" since 2009. This tender will provide grants to civil society cultural organizations, as well as national and local institutions for regional cooperation projects encompassing the entire cultural sector, including cinema and the audiovisual sector, contemporary arts, tangible and intangible heritage, as well as support to heritage conservation projects.

**XV. ENERGY**

1.

Azarov urges EU to decide on creation of gas transport consortium

26.04.2010, Bsanna News

READ MORE: http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12968&lang=en

The Ukrainian government is trying to convince the European Union of the need to speed up the creation of a gas transport consortium on the basis of the Ukrainian gas transportation system, Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov told the press. “Procrastination with deciding on the creation of a gas transport consortium, on the part of the European Union in the first place, because they receive the gas, may lead to a situation that the EU will lose a reliable gas transport means,” Azarov emphasized. He specified he implies the Ukrainian gas transportation system by which Europe may stably receive up to 150 billion cubic meters of gas, and Ukraine in its turn may earn up
to 5-6 billion USD every year.

2. **EU, Nabucco shrug off Azerbaijan gas delays**
25.04.2010, New Europe

READ MORE: http://www.neurope.eu/articles/100374.php

The European Commission and Nabucco Gas Pipeline International GmbH downplayed statements that Azerbaijan delayed the beginning of the Shakh-Deniz-2 large gas-field development at the Caspian Sea until 2016-17, saying that it should not affect the timeline for the Nabucco gas pipeline project. Azeri state oil company SOCAR has said that as long as the issues of gas supply, gas price, transportation rates and the volumes of supplies to Turkey and Europe remain unresolved, Azerbaijan is going to shift the starting date of the Shakh-Deniz-2 development from 2014 to 2017. But Nabucco Gas Pipeline International GmbH Spokesperson Christian Dolezal said that's old news.

3. **Yanukovych: modernization of Ukrainian gas transport system may be alternative to South Stream**
22.04.2010, Kyiv Post


The project to modernize Ukraine's gas transport system could be an alternative to the South Stream project, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych has said. He said at a press conference on Thursday that Ukraine would not take any decision to "give away" its gas transport system. "We were not planning to do so and we would never do so," Yanukovych said. "It's clear that there is a need to modernize the gas transport system to increase gas pumping volumes," he said. "We offer this as an alternative to the construction of South Stream, because it's already impossible to stop [the construction of] Nord Stream. It's already under construction," Yanukovych said. He said that this project had three stages.

4. **Baku pressed on Nabucco pipeline**
21.04.2010, UPI


The Nabucco natural gas pipeline to Europe will top the agenda for talks between German and Azeri officials in Baku, German ministers said. Europe aims to diversify its natural gas sector by transporting non-Russian supplies through the Nabucco pipeline. The project would move gas from Central Asia and possibly the Middle East, through Turkey and on to Austria. Russia is pursuing its South Stream gas pipeline through the Balkans and the Nord Stream pipeline to Germany, which is under construction. Emilia Mueller, the minister for federal and European affairs at the state of Bavaria, Germany, said she plans to discuss the Nabucco project with her Azeri counterparts during a two-day visit to Baku.

5. **Russian, Ukrainian scientists win 2010 Global Energy Prize**
20.04.2010, Ria Novosti


The 2010 Global Energy Prize has been awarded to a Russian and a Ukrainian scientist, the vice president of the Russian Academy of Scientists said on Tuesday. Russian scientist Alexander Leontyev received the award for "fundamental research in the intensification of processes of heat exchange at power installations," Nikolai Laverov told journalists. Boris Paton, who heads the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, was awarded for his "contribution in solving scientific and technological problems of pipeline transport of energy sources and machinery." The Global Energy Prize, introduced in 2003 by Russia's Gazprom, Surgutneftegaz and UES, is designed to contribute to
international cooperation in resolving the most urgent modern problems in the power-generation sphere. Laverov said that this year the expert committee chose the winners from more than 63 nominees, including 19 foreign scientists. This year the award is worth a total of 30 million rubles ($1 million), to be shared between the laureates.

6. Putin sees new gas developments by 2011
19.04.2010, UPI

Development of the Shtokman gas field in the Russian waters of the Barents Sea is expected to start in 2011, the Russian prime minister said. Russian energy giant Gazprom along with its partners at Norway’s Statoil and French supermajor Total said in February that the market situation, “particularly in the LNG market,” delayed a final investment decision for the field to the end of 2011. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said during the weekend, however, that Shtokman development would start in 2011, Russia’s state-run news agency RIA Novosti reports. "In the spring of next year, an investment decision is due to be made and immediately after that, development work on the deposit will begin," he said. The three companies entered into a joint venture for the Shtokman field in the Barents Sea in February 2008. The field holds an estimated 134 trillion cubic feet of gas, with deliveries of Russian gas slated for markets in the Atlantic basin including the Nord Stream natural gas pipeline to Germany.

7. Gazprom, ENI to discuss EDF joining South Stream
18.04.2010, New Europe
READ MORE: http://www.neurope.eu/articles/100226.php

Russia’s gas monopoly Gazprom and Italy’s energy giant ENI have agreed on the French EDF (Electricite de France) joining the South Stream natural gas pipeline project, Itar-tass quoted a Russian company official as saying. Gazprom CEO Aleksei Miller and ENI General Director Paolo Scaroni met on 12 April to discuss the execution of agreements on their companies' strategic partnership in the energy sector, the Gazprom press department reported. Specifically, the sides confirmed their loyalty to the South Stream project and noted the importance of completing the technical and economic evaluation of the marine section of the pipeline. Miller and Scaroni expressed their support for EDF to join the South Stream project and agreed to begin negotiations with the French company. ENI and Gazprom also agreed on the conditions for the Russian company to join the Elephant project in Libya.

8. Oettinger: Baku in, Tehran out of Nabucco
16.04.2010, UPI

Europe needs a strong energy partnership with Azerbaijan for the Nabucco gas pipeline, the European energy commissioner said in Baku. Gunther Oettinger, the energy commissioner for the European Union, said energy-rich Azerbaijan has the potential to establish a strong working relationship in the European energy sector. "Europe needs import of energy sources," the Azeri news agency News.Az quoted him as saying. "In this sense Azerbaijan can be both the supplier of raw materials and ready production to the EU market." Oettinger added that the Nabucco pipeline was of "special importance" to the European community. The Nabucco pipeline is designed to move 1.1 trillion cubic feet of gas per year to the European community.
**XVI. EUROPEAN UNION**

1. **EU gives Ukraine fresh blueprint for reforms**
   
   28.04.2010, EUOBSERVER
   
   READ MORE: [http://euobserver.com/9/29962](http://euobserver.com/9/29962)

   The European Commission has given the Ukrainian government a to-do list of 18 reforms which could trigger extra EU aid, according to a document seen by EUobserver. "I presented to the Ukrainian side a list of key reforms which Ukraine needs urgently to develop together with possible incentives and responses from the EU," enlargement and neighbourhood policy commissioner Stefan Fuele told MEPs on Wednesday (28 April) following his visit to Kiev last week. The document is a six-paged table outlining concrete measures and possible EU aid in response to them, covering political reforms, macro-financial stability, the business environment, the energy sector, the environment and civil aviation.

2. **The EU strengthens visa cooperation with Georgia**
   
   28.04.2010, Travel Daily News
   

   The European Commission proposed the conclusion of visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Georgia. The draft agreements result from recent negotiations between the EU and Georgia. They aim at enhancing EU-Georgia relations by facilitating short-stay travel of Georgian citizens to the EU while jointly tackling risks of irregular migration. "I strongly support visa facilitation for Georgia. To reduce visa barriers is a way of bringing people closer to one another and to enable citizens to travel, and connect all over Europe," said Cecilia Malmstrom, Commissioner for Home Affairs. "I am pleased to see that enhanced EU-Georgia cooperation is paying off. With these agreements in place, Georgia will be more closely connected to the European Union." Today's draft visa facilitation and readmission agreements are the result of recent negotiations between Georgia and the EU. Once in force, they will make it easier for Georgians to apply for visas, making procedures faster, reducing paperwork and lowering visa fees. At the same time, the readmission agreement will ensure the return of those who illegally stay in the EU.

3. **Statement by the spokesperson of HR Catherine Ashton, on the normalisation of relations between Turkey and Armenia**
   
   26.04.2010, European Union
   

   The spokesperson of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission Catherine Ashton issued a following statement today: "The High Representative has taken note of the decision by Armenia to suspend the procedure of ratification of bilateral protocols relating to the normalization of relations with Turkey. The High Representative is pleased to note that Armenia remains committed to pursue the process of normalization of Armenian - Turkish relations but at the same time expresses concern about the loss of momentum in this process. The EU reiterates its call to both countries to continue their dialogue and remain committed to the process of normalization without preconditions and in a reasonable timeframe. The High Representative believes that the full normalization of bilateral relations between Armenia and Turkey will contribute to security, stability and cooperation in the Southern Caucasus. The EU will continue to provide its political and technical support to this process and stands ready to help..."
implementing the steps agreed between the two countries."

4. EU extends aid for Bulgarian, Romanian bridge: report
22.04.2010, EUbusiness


The European Commission has agreed to extend financial aid for a new bridge over the Danube linking Bulgaria and Romania, national radio reported on Thursday. The radio quoted sources from the EU’s Regional Policy Directorate as saying that Bulgaria and Romania would now have until end-2012 to make use of the 70 million euros (94 million dollars) of EU aid for the bridge. The 1.9-kilometre (1.2-mile) bridge is only the second over the 470-kilometre stretch of the Danube that forms a border between the two countries. Its construction has been severely delayed, placing a question mark over the EU aid which would normally have had to be used by the end of this year. Sofia and Bucharest therefore applied for an extension. Six other infrastructure projects in Bulgaria funded by EU’s ISPA infrastructure fund and worth an additional 157 million euros were also granted a one-year extension by end-2011, national radio reported. The Bulgarian ministry of regional development could not immediately confirm the information, saying it had not yet received official notification from the commission, a spokeswoman told AFP.

5. Fule sees no threat to Ukraine's European integration due to extension of lease of Russian naval base in Sevastopol
22.04.2010, Kyiv Post


EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Fule has said he sees no threat to the European integration of Ukraine due to the extension of the lease of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea until 2042. "I don’t see any challenges that might hamper the general process of European integration ... I don’t see any direct threat in the extension of the Russian Black Sea Fleet's presence to [Ukraine's] conducting the reforms required for European integration," he said while speaking before students of the Kyiv Institute of International Relations in Kyiv on Thursday. Fule said that the process of Ukraine’s European integration might be influenced only by the holding of required reforms, particularly in the economic context.

6. EU officials say Transnistrian issue should be placed higher on EU agenda
22.04.2010, Bssanna News


The European Union supports increasingly stronger Moldova’s efforts to reintegrate the country. EU officials agree that the Transnistrian issue should be placed higher on the EU’s foreign policy agenda. Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Victor Osipov made the statements at a news conference today focused on the results of his 13-17 April working visit to Brussels. Osipov said that the European officials support the approaches of the Moldovan government to the Transnistrian settlement, especially the efforts meant to settle this conflict within the 5+2 talks. Also, European officials showed willingness to enhance the EU’s role in the Transnistrian conflict settlement process. Victor Osipov said that, during a meeting of donors held in Brussels last March, the EU informed that 15 per cent of the financial assistance scheduled for Moldova is meant for projects from Moldova’s eastern districts.

7. EU stresses commitment to Georgia territorial integrity
18.04.2010, New Europe

READ MORE: http://www.neurope.eu/articles/100358.php
A European Union delegation led by European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy Stefan Fule recently paid a visit to Tbilisi where he was due to reiterate EU’s commitment to territorial integrity of Georgia, Civil Georgia reported. He said that EU considers Georgia as an important partner country within the European Neighborhood Policy. During the visit Fule and Georgia’s State Minister for Euro-Atlantic Integration Giorgi Baramidze were expected to sign a memorandum of understanding on allocation of €180.29 million support from EU for the period 2011-2013. The EU delegation had stated that the funding will support the strengthening of democratic institutions, focusing also on media freedom, political pluralism, human rights and civil society.

**XVII. PROTRACTED CONFLICTS**

1. Ukrainian leader avoids recognizing Georgia's breakaway regions
28.04.2010, Armenia.Az
READ MORE: http://www.news.az/articles/14339
Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych will not say definitely whether Ukraine will recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. After meeting the secretary general of the Council of Europe, Thorbjorn Jagland, Yanukovych was asked whether Ukraine would recognize the independence of these two republics, Rosbalt reports with reference to Ukrainian newspaper Pravda. 'Ukraine is ready to support the process of the equality of democratic values and people's rights in the territories of the frozen conflicts,' Yanukovych said. He added that he was 'strongly opposed to the application of a policy of double standards'. 'It is time to consider the criteria for providing independence to the territories of the frozen conflicts, as well as the approach to the localization of these conflicts in the current situation,' the Ukrainian president said.

2. Yanukovych: double standards cannot be applied to South Ossetia, Abkhazia
27.04.2010, Kyiv Post
Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych has called for working out criteria for resolving frozen conflicts. "Ukraine is ready to support the equality of the values and democratic rights of the people living in frozen conflict areas," said Yanukovych, when asked whether Ukraine could recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. "We are categorically against the use of double standards in this issue. The time has come to consider the criteria for granting independence and to work out approaches towards resolving frozen conflicts," the Ukrainian president said.

3. Council of Europe monitor rejects Georgia's bias allegations
READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Council_Of_Europe_Monitor_Rejects_Georgias_Bias_Allegations/2025118.html
A Council of Europe monitor has rejected criticism that his meeting with a South Ossetian official in the breakaway region’s Moscow mission indicates bias, RFE/RL's Georgian Service reports. David Wilshire, a British lawmaker and monitor for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), met on April 20 with a South Ossetian envoy at South Ossetia’s Moscow legation. The Georgian Foreign Ministry said the meeting venue indicates Wilshire's partiality on issues resulting from the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008. It said Wilshire is biased in favor of South Ossetia and Georgia's other breakaway region, Abkhazia.
4. **Azerbaijani official: Armenia ignores resolutions on Nagorno Karabakh**

22.04.2010, Trend News


Armenia is ignoring the international decisions and resolutions on Nagorno Karabakh, Azerbaijani Parliamentary Speaker Ogtay Asadov said at a meeting with an Indonesian delegation headed by Indonesian House of Representatives Deputy Chairman Anung Vibo, the Parliamentary Press Service reported. “The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a painful problem of a dynamic Azerbaijan. The aggressor, Armenia, continues to ignore international organizations’ decisions and resolutions on the issue. We stand for a just solution to the problem within international legal norms," Asadov said.

5. **Excluding Azerbaijan can’t bring stability to the South Caucasus**


READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Excluding_Azerbaijan_Cannot_Bring_Stability_To_The_South_Caucasus/2020228.html

The United States has recently stepped up efforts to repair relations between Turkey and Armenia. Turkey closed its border with Armenia in 1993 in response to the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding Azerbaijani territories by Armenian forces. Lately, U.S. officials have been urging Turkey to ignore Armenia’s continuing occupation and reopen the border. While Washington says that its aim is to improve stability and development throughout the region, in reality U.S. policies have become increasingly pro-Armenian - and exclusive of Azerbaijan. Washington believes that a Turkish-Armenian rapprochement could kill two birds with one stone. First, it might smooth over - at least temporarily - one of the major trouble spots in U.S.-Turkish relations: the issue of Armenian genocide claims. Second, some U.S. officials argue that improving ties between Armenia and Turkey will ultimately contribute to a resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

6. **Power struggle under way in South Ossetia**


READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Power_Struggle_Under_Way_In_South_Ossetia/2018098.html

Over the past week, Vadim Brovtsev, who was named in August 2009 as prime minister of the unrecognized republic of South Ossetia, has been subjected to a torrent of criticism by government officials and the local media, which are controlled by de facto President Eduard Kokoity. Not only have Brovtsev and his cabinet proteges been accused of incompetence and sabotaging the work of the media; he has also been charged with turning a blind eye to, and possibly even profiting from, the embezzlement of funds allocated by the Russian government for reconstruction of homes and government buildings damaged or destroyed during the August 2008 war. To what extent that criticism is justified, or whether on the contrary Kokoity has chosen to make Brovtsev the scapegoat for criminal financial activity within his own administration, as the Coordinating Council of Social and Political Organizations of South Ossetia suggested two months ago that he would, is not yet clear.

7. **PACE may once again tell Russia to repeal recognition of S-Ossetia, Abkhazia**

19.04.2010, Bsanna News


The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) may once again demand that Russia must repeal the recognition of independent Abkhazia and South Ossetia, deputy head of the Russian
Black Sea News Update No. 28

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<td>Nagorno-Karabakh - Campaigning officially began today for the May 23 parliamentary elections in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, RFE/RL’s Armenian Service reports. Four political parties and 45 candidates are vying for 33 seats in the parliament of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. The Nagorno-Karabakh region and much of the adjoining territory was taken by Armenian forces after a war with Azerbaijan that ended in 1994. The territory is recognized internationally as belonging to Azerbaijan. The main contenders are the three parties that make up Karabakh’s governing coalition. One of them, Free Fatherland, is led by Karabakh’s de facto Prime Minister, Ara Harutiunian, and has the largest faction in the current Karabakh legislature. Also running for seats are the Democratic Artsakh Party of parliament speaker Ashot Ghulian and the Karabakh branch of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutuyun).</td>
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<td>Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey will keep its border with Armenia closed if a territorial conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan remains unresolved. Erdogan was quoted today by the Anatolia news agency as saying that “if the occupation of (Nagorno Karabakh) continues, we will not take such a step.” The reopening of the Turkish-Armenian border is part of an accord the two countries signed in October to establish diplomatic ties and needs parliamentary ratification to take effect. Turkey closed its border with Armenia in 1993 in a show of solidarity with Azerbaijan after ethnic Armenian separatists, backed by Yerevan, seized the Nagorno Karabakh region.</td>
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<td>The spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Azerbaijan, Mr. Terry Davidson countered the criticism, Ali Hasanov, a top political advisor to President Ilham Aliyev, leveled against the U.S. activity as a mediator in the Nagorno Karabakh talks. He said that as one of the three countries co-chairing the Minsk Group, the United States balanced its efforts, understanding that both Azerbaijan and Armenia must accept the principles of the peaceful resolution of the conflict. “The United States has long been supporting efforts aimed at the achievement of a long-term, peaceful and fair resolution of the Karabakh conflict,” Mr. Davidson said. Ali Hasanov said earlier this week that the government is not happy with U.S. efforts to broker a peace agreement ending the long-standing conflict in Nagorno Karabakh.</td>
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11. **UN chief talks Abkhazia, S.Ossetia with top Georgian diplomat**  
17.04.2010, Ria Novosti  
READ MORE: http://en.rian.ru/world/20100417/158621465.html

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called on Georgia to expand dialogues with its former republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and to ensure methods of trust in the region. Ban Ki-moon met on Friday with Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze at the UN headquarters in New York. During the talks on the former Georgian republics the UN chief also appraised Geneva consultations on South Caucasus. The format of the discussions on security and stability in the South Caucasus was established after the five-day war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008. Delegations from Abkhazia, Georgia, Russia, the United States and South Ossetia participate in the Geneva meetings on an equal footing.

12. **Round-table on threats faced by South Caucasus held in Baku**  
16.04.2010, Trend News  

International and national experts discussed global trends and threats facing the South Caucasus region at the round-table in the Center for Strategic Research under the Azerbaijani President today. Environmental threats and threats of military conflicts were mentioned at the discussions. In his speech Secretary-General of the international organization International Alert Dan Smith focused on environmental threats in the region. He stressed the importance of proper and effective governance while helping people confronted with the problems of climate change. "It is important to hold open debates on the pressing threats and bring as many people as possible to the existing problems," he said. A cultural dialogue was marked as one of the ways to solve international conflicts. "From this point of view, Azerbaijan is the traditional place of intercultural dialogue. Azerbaijan is actively cooperating with the European Union. Its Islamic traditions are strong.

13. **Baku, Yerevan divided over Turkish role in Karabakh**  
16.04.2010, Today's Zaman  
READ MORE: http://www todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=207574

Talks between Turkish and Armenian leaders in Washington this week have sparked a debate in Armenia and Azerbaijan about Turkey's role in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. While Armenia categorically dismisses any Turkish role in the dispute - saying its efforts to normalize relations with Ankara are not linked to this territorial rift - Azerbaijani experts and politicians insist that peace is not attainable in the Caucasus without a solution in Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey has increased its efforts to normalize relations with its estranged neighbor Armenia in the run-up to a speech traditionally made by the US president on April 24, the day the world commemorates the victims of atrocities against Armenians in 1915.

14. **Azerbaijani official: Country seeks alternative ways to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution**  
16.04.2010, Trend News  

Might South Ossetia’s army go over to the opposition?
READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Might_South_Ossetias_Army_Go_Over_To_The_Opposition/2014776.html

Plans by Eduard Kokoity, the leader of Georgia's breakaway republic of South Ossetia, to reduce the manpower of the region's army might impel the military to side with the opposition to Kokoity, RFE/RL’s Echo of the Caucasus reported on April 14. Some South Ossetian military units reportedly planned to participate in a protest meeting on March 20 organized jointly by opposition parties (mostly based outside South Ossetia) and an informal organization uniting people whose homes were destroyed during the August 2008 war. That protest never took place. On March 24, Kokoity explained that the planned cutback would affect in the first instance personnel approaching retirement age, or who for other reasons are incapable of participating in combat operations. That statement failed, however, to reassure many younger military personnel, given that alternative employment prospects are minimal.

XVIII. SECURITY

1.
Blackseafor warships successfully complete drills in Black Sea
27.04.2010, Global Security

The warships of the Black Sea Naval group successfully completed exercises in the Black Sea on Tuesday in an effort to maintain stability in the region, a Black Sea Fleet commander has said. During the exercises, which took place April 9 -27, more than 50 drills were conducted, including joint operations on tactical maneuvering, combat conduct by surface ships, air defense and anti-terrorist activity, the commander said. The main focus was on maintaining stability and peace in the region, further cooperation and strengthening of mutual understanding among the Black Sea countries, Bulgarian Navy Rear Admiral Georgi Motyev said. The warships involve the Bulgarian frigate Verni (Faithful), the Caesar Kunikov Ropucha-I class large landing ship (Russia), the Macelariu corvette (Romania), the Yildirim frigate (Turkey) and the command ship Slavutych (Ukraine).

2.
Blackseafor warships leave Bulgaria to conduct next stage of drills
20.04.2010, Global Security

The warships of the Black Sea Naval group left the Bulgarian port of Varna on Tuesday to conduct the next stage of exercises, a Black Sea Fleet commander said. The first stage of the drills, conducted in the southwestern region of the Black Sea, involved the monitoring of civilian aircraft, search and rescue operations, and replenishment and refueling at sea. After leaving Varna, the warships held exercises escorting a Bulgarian minesweeper. The main task was to rescue a vessel in distress and coordinate efforts with the international crew, the Blackseafor commander said. In the next stages, the Blackseafor warships will practice tactical maneuvers, conduct combat operations against surface ships, hold exercises in air defense and communications, assistance to ships in distress, and ship inspection. "We are responsible for the stability and security in the Black Sea," Bulgarian Navy Rear Admiral Georgi Motyev told journalists at a press conference on a Bulgarian frigate.
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<th>New START agt with Russia to promote ABM development-Pentagon</th>
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<td>The new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) signed with Russia not only sets no obstacles for the creation of the American anti-ballistic missile (ABM) defence system, but on the contrary, lifts the earlier restrictions, Director of the Pentagon’s Missile Defence Agency (MDA) Lieutenant General Patrick J. O’Reilly said in the US Congress on Thursday. He took part in hearings that were held in the Armed Services Committee of the House of Representatives and focused on the Obama administration’s 2011 National Defence Authorization Budget Request for Missile Defence Programmes. The Department of Defence, in particular, would like to get for these purposes 9.9 billion US dollars. A Republican Congressman Michael Turner touched upon the issue of the interrelation between the strategic offensive and defensive weapons that was fixed in the START on Russia’s demand. He said that he is still worried that such a link may potentially result in the US self-restriction of activities related to missile defence.</td>
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