



BLACK SEA NEWS UPDATE

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I. ALBANIA

1.

No nuclear plant in near future

12.04.2010, New Europe

READ MORE: <http://www.neurope.eu/articles/100184.php>

Albania's Minister of Economy, Trade and Energy Dritan Prifti recently announced that the country is working to be ready to develop nuclear energy, AENews reported. He said, Do not think that the reality of a nuclear power plant in our country is close because we need time to prepare for the legislation and establishment of institutions necessary for this type of industry. Prifti said that in the near future a nuclear power plant in the country is not possible. The investment for the construction of the nuclear plant would be approved only when the country is ready to guarantee the functioning of the Albanian security. It should be recalled that the Albanian government established the National Nuclear Agency in January of this year, decision responsible for development of the Albanian Nuclear Energy Programme.

2.

2010: The year of Europe in Albania?

09.04.2010, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/2010-the-year-of-europe-in-albania-news-426135>

A spokesperson for the Albanian foreign ministry, Ralf Gjoni, and Albanian Ambassador to France

Ylljet Aliçka have affirmed that European integration remains a top priority for their country. EurActiv France reports. 2010 could be the year of Europe in Albania: the country could obtain official EU candidate status and enter the visa liberalisation process. This represents a quick evolution for a country that was in a much worse state than its Balkan neighbours after the fall of its communist dictatorship. Speaking at a conference in Paris on 30 March, Albanian Ambassador to France Ylljet Aliçka declared that European integration is an "absolute priority" for Albania. However, Tirana's progress will depend on its ability to solve the internal political crisis. EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle recently expressed his "concern about the stability of democratic institutions and the lack of political dialogue in the parliament".

3.

Albania opposition moves to bring down government

06.04.2010, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/albania-opposition-moves-bring-down-government-news-418176>

Albania's opposition Socialist Party yesterday (5 April) called for the instigation of daily anti-government protests "to accelerate the end" of the government of Prime Minister Sali Berisha, accusing him of electoral fraud during the last elections. On a recent visit to Albania, EU Enlargement Commissioner Štefan Füle used unusually tough language, warning Tirana that a prolonged political stalemate would harm the country's EU accession prospects (EurActiv 22/03/10). Albania applied for EU membership in April 2009. In July, EU foreign ministers stated that they would return to the country's application once Albanian national elections had been completed last June. But ever since the June poll, the ruling Democratic Party of Prime Minister Sali Berisha and the Socialist party of opposition leader Edi Rama have kept accusing each other of fraud (EurActiv 30/06/09).

II. ARMENIA

1.

IMF: global economy recovery stimulates Armenian GDP growth

09.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/economy/news/46764/>

Mr. Guillermo Tolosa, Resident Representative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Armenia, stated that the forecast 1.8% GDP growth for 2010 may be revised in May, given the positive tendencies of global economy recovery. "I believe that certain sectors of the Armenian economy will develop more rapidly and ensure the GDP growth, affected by Russia's economic growth," he told reporters on April 9. Meanwhile, he noted, that the sectors having no direct linkage to the global economy, will show slow development. "The construction industry, for example, will not promote the GDP growth," Mr. Tolosa said. The RA state budget records a 1.2% economic growth in Armenia for 2010.

2.

World Bank awards two projects in Armenia

08.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/economy/news/46733/>

The Lifeline Roads Improvement project (LRIP) in Armenia and Armenia Rural Enterprise and Small Scale Commercial Agriculture Development Project were named among the 12 winners in the World Bank's third annual "Improving the Lives of People in Europe and Central Asia" 2010 competition, the press service of the World Bank Yerevan Office reported. According to the report, so far out of projected 250 km LRN 150 km have been rehabilitated under the Lifeline Roads Improvement

project. It created 12,000 person-months of employment. Travel time was reduced by 40 percent. More importantly, the project enabled rural populations to travel to urban centers where markets and social services are available.

3.

Armenian parliament deprives itself of right to reservations

07.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/46680/>

On April 7, Armenia's parliament rejected the draft law submitted by the ARF Dashnaksutyun parliamentary group on making changes in the RA Law on International Treaties and amending the RA National Assembly's regulations. The legislative initiative of the ARF Dashnaksutyun foresaw the following: the parliament shall have the right to reservations during ratification of international treaties, the right to withdrawal from an agreement, if it contradicts the country's interests, as well as the parliament shall have the right to initiate a suspension or termination of an international agreement.

4.

Armenian large business entities can benefit from EurAsEC funds by the end of 2010

06.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/economy/news/46573/>

A working group has been established in Armenia to facilitate applications to the EurAsEC Anti-Crisis Fund, RA Deputy Finance Minister Vardan Aramyan said. "The largest projects of transnational importance will be chosen to be submitted for funding by the Fund," he told a PanARMENIAN.Net reporter. Three or four projects in chemical, transport, metallurgy, information technology industries are ready and preliminary applications are now reviewed by the fund. The Deputy Minister expressed hope that the Fund will make a final decision over Armenia's projects by the end of 2010. On April 1, 2010, RA Finance Minister Tigran Davtyan attended the 8th meeting of EurAsEC, where inter alia issues related to economic and financial cooperation between EurAsEC member states, the course of anti-crisis programs and the EurAsEC Anti-Crisis Fund activities were discussed.

5.

Armenia to get 157.3 million euro within ENPI

06.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/economy/news/46563/>

EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy Stefan Fule and RA Minister of Economy Nerses Yeritsyan signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the National Indicative Program 2011-2013 for Armenia. On March 2, 2010, the European Commission based on bilateral negotiations with the Republic of Armenia adopted the National Indicative Program 2011-2013, which foresees an indicative allocation of 157.3 million euro from the European Partnership and Neighborhood Instrument (ENPI). This includes a minimum of 32 million euro earmarked for the Comprehensive Institution Building program and a minimum of 7 million euro reserved for the Cohesion Policy.

6.

Vardan Aramyan: Armenian economy growth rate will exceed the figure stipulated

05.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/economy/news/46546/>

1,2% GDP growth stipulated in Armenia's state budget is a modest forecast, as, recently, global economy growth amounted to 1,3%, to comprise 3,9% at present, according to Deputy Minister of Finance Vardan Aramyan. "Economy growth recently observed in Russia will boost RA economy due

to transfers to Armenia,” Vardan Aramyan told a news conference. Significant funds were invested in RA economy within governmental anti-crisis program, which will ensue in positive changes in 2010. “1,2% GDP growth stipulated in Armenia’s state budget is a modest forecast, explained by possible risks, which, though decreased, did not disappear completely. Before June 2010, Armenia’s growth rate index will exceed the figure stipulated to become stable afterwards,” deputy Minister concluded. 3,1% GDP growth was registered in January-February 2010, according to RA National Statistic Service data.

7.

Former Armenian President meets with U.S. Karabakh mediator

04.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Former_Armenian_President_Meets_With_US_Karabakh_Mediator/2002120.html

Former Armenian President Robert Kocharian has met Washington's top Nagorno-Karabakh negotiator in Yerevan to discuss the current status of Armenian-Azerbaijani peace talks, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports. Viktor Soghomonian told RFE/RL on April 1 that Kocharian and Robert Bradtke, the U.S. co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, spoke about "issues related to the current phase" of the Karabakh peace process during their meeting the previous weekend. He did not elaborate. The meeting took place during the latest visit to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh by Bradtke and his fellow Minsk Group co-chairs from Russia and France. Kocharian -- who was in office from 1998-2008 -- has recently criticized the Armenian government's economic policies and defended his own decisions regarding the Karabakh dispute.

8.

Armenian Prime Minister downplays steep inflation rise

03.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Armenian_Prime_Minister_Downplays_Steep_Inflation_Rate/2001616.html

Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian has called higher-than-expected inflation for the first quarter of the year an indication of the country's accelerating economic recovery, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports. Official government statistics released on April 1 showed the consumer price index for January-March this year was up 8.4 percent from the same period in 2009, and is nearly double the full-year maximum inflation target set by the authorities. The inflation rate was pushed up mainly by double-digit increases in the price of various services, fuel, and other consumer goods.

9.

Armenian government defends secret order

01.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Armenian_Government_Defends_Secret_Order_/2000253.html

The Armenian government has upheld the legality of a secret order paving the way for military involvement in the suppression of the 2008 opposition protests in Yerevan, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports. The written directive signed on February 23, 2008 by then-Defense Minister Mikael Harutiunian was revealed by the pro-opposition daily "Haykakan zhamanak" late last year. It was issued immediately after outgoing President Robert Kocharian ordered Armenia's top security officials to thwart what he called attempts by opposition leader Levon Ter-Petrossian to "seize power by illegal means." He referred to nonstop demonstrations staged by Ter-Petrossian's supporters following the hotly disputed February 19 presidential election. The order placed Armenia's armed forces on high alert and ordered the Defense Ministry to form special groups of officers and give them weapons.

III. AZERBAIJAN

1.

European court finds Azerbaijan guilty of election fraud

09.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/European_Court_Finds_Azerbaijan_Guilty_Of_Election_Fraud_/2007281.html

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has issued its first ruling on a complaint about election fraud in Azerbaijan and found the government guilty, RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service reports. The court ruled that the voting rights of Nemat Aliyev, a member of the opposition Azerbaijan Popular Front Party, were violated. The court ordered the Azerbaijani government to pay him the equivalent in Azerbaijani manats of 7,500 euros (\$10,023) in damages. Aliyev registered as a candidate for the Barda electoral district in the 2005 parliamentary election. Zahid Oruj of the pro-government Ana Vatan Party was declared the winner of the vote in the district. Aliyev appealed to the district election commission, claiming that the vote had been rigged by means of illegal intervention and ballot stuffing at the behest of local officials. The commission rejected his appeal, and the appeals court and the Supreme Court upheld the decision.

2.

European Commissioner: European Commission continues to support Azerbaijan financially and technically

08.04.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/capital/macro/1665918.html>

The European Commission will financially support Azerbaijan to the amount of 122.5 million euros over 2011-2013 years, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Stefan Füle, said in an interview with Trend. European Commissioner will make the first visit to Azerbaijan within the current mandate April 9. "The European Commission will continue to provide financial and technical support to Azerbaijan", Füle said. He said that financial aid has been increased and amounted to 350 million euros for all the participating countries within the "Eastern Partnership". This amount will be distributed to a number of priorities, with emphasis on bilateral and multilateral cooperation, he said. Füle said that the EU and Azerbaijan must seek to further deepening and extending the cooperation in all fields, including trade and energy.

3.

Azerbaijan conducts counter-terror operations along Russian border

08.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=azerbaijan-conducts-counterterror-operations-along-russian-border-2010-04-08>

Azerbaijan's Interior Ministry has announced the start of large-scale operations in the northern Quba, Khachmaz and Qusar districts that border Russia, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported Wednesday on its Web site. The objective of the operations, which began Tuesday, is to search for internationally wanted members of organized-crime and terrorist groups, as well as other criminals, and to confiscate illegal weapons. Interior Ministry official Ehsan Zahidov said such operations were conducted every year in partnership with neighboring countries. This year's operations are being carried out under a mutual cooperation agreement with Russia, he added. According to the ministry, the operation is aimed at neutralizing an organized group that was planning terrorist acts in Baku.

4.

OSCE, Council of Europe and European Union present assistance plans to Azerbaijan parliamentary elections

07.04.2010, OSCE

READ MORE: <http://www.osce.org/item/43356.html>

Representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the European Union today jointly presented their plans for assisting the Republic of Azerbaijan to prepare for the parliamentary elections to be held in November. "The electoral process is a key priority for the work of our organizations in Azerbaijan, as well as for the country itself as a member of the international community," said the organizations' representatives, Bilge Cankorel (OSCE), Veronika Kotek (CoE) and Roland Kobia (European Union), in a joint statement.

5.

Davutoğlu discusses Caucasus with senior Azerbaijani official

21.03.2010, Today's Zaman

READ MORE: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=206147>

Efforts for maintaining stability and peace in the Caucasus region were at the center of talks held between Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and Ramiz Mehdiyev, the head of the Azerbaijani presidential administration, on Thursday, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Burak Özügergin said. Mehdiyev arrived in the Turkish capital earlier this week at the invitation of the Turkish Foreign Ministry. He had talks with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Parliament Speaker Mehmet Ali Şahin later on Thursday, after being hosted by Davutoğlu at the ministry residence at a breakfast meeting that was also joined by the Foreign Ministry undersecretary, Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioğlu.

6.

Belarus, Azerbaijan sign agreement

02.04.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/capital/entrepreneurship/1662569.html>

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko approved the draft intergovernmental agreement signed with Azerbaijan on promotion and reciprocal protection of investments with the modifications and additions of a fundamental nature, made as a result of negotiations with the Azerbaijani side. The president signed the corresponding decree Apr.1, Belta reported with reference to the presidential press - service. Belarusian Foreign Minister Sergei Martynov has been authorized to sign the agreement. In 2009, foreign trade turnover between the countries reached \$141.928 million compared to \$ \$94.786 million.

IV. BULGARIA

1.

Bulgaria drops plans for early eurozone entry

12.04.2010, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/euro/bulgaria-drops-plans-early-eurozone-entry-news-438038>

Bulgaria's centre-right government on 9 April abandoned plans to join the bloc's exchange-rate mechanism, ERM II, after the country recorded a larger-than-expected deficit in 2009 as a result of unaccounted procurement deals signed by the previous socialist-led cabinet. Dnevnik, EurActiv's partner in Bulgaria, reports. Bulgaria will not enter ERM II, seen as the eurozone waiting room, Finance Minister Simeon Djankov announced at a press conference on Friday (9 April). "We have given up applying for the euro zone because for the moment we don't meet the criteria and it would have been insolent to do so," said Prime Minister Boyko Borissov. Bulgaria had planned to join ERM II in 2010 and to become a member of the euro zone in 2013.

2.

Bulgaria, Romania seek role in US shield plans

09.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetaidailynews.com/n.php?n=bulgaria-romania-look-role-in-us->

[shield-plans-2010-04-09](#)

Bulgaria and Romania have expressed their desires to take on active roles in the planned U.S. missile shield program in Europe. The Bulgarian prime minister said his country must be the active partner while Romania announced it would host interceptor missiles as part of a U.S. missile-defense system on its soil. "The question about Bulgaria's support for taking part in a new U.S. missile-defense system in Europe has not been officially posed, but when this happens, the parliament will have the final say," Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov said late Thursday after a dinner hosted by U.S. President Barack Obama in Prague.

3.

Bulgaria opens up ports, airports for private investment

06.04.2010, EUBusiness

READ MORE: <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/bulgaria-rail-port.40e>

Bulgaria will open up several major ports, airports and train stations to private investment to speed up modernisation of its ageing infrastructure, Transport Minister Alexander Tsvetkov said Tuesday. The freight terminals of Bulgaria's two largest airports, in Sofia and the southern city of Plovdiv, will be opened up to private investors in coming months, together with four other airports, Tsvetkov told a press conference. Concession offers will also be made on parts of the two key Black Sea ports in Varna and Burgas, along with the Danube ports of Ruse, Silistra, Tutrakan, Nikopol, Vidin and Lom. Several train stations, including those of Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna, will also be offered to potential investors, Tsvetkov added. The concessions will concern projects that cannot be funded by European Union aid, the minister said.

4.

Bulgaria to command first activation of BLACKSEAFOR in 2010

07.04.2010, Today's Zaman

READ MORE: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=206705>

The Bulgarian Naval Forces will command the first activation of the Black Sea Naval Cooperation Task Group (BLACKSEAFOR) in 2010. Turkey's Naval Forces Command released a statement on Wednesday which said the first activation of BLACKSEAFOR in 2010 would take place between April 9 and 27 under the command of the Bulgarian Naval Forces. The April activation of BLACKSEAFOR will take place in five stages, including 13 days at Turkish port of Eregli, Bulgarian port of Varna and Constanza port of Romania, and six days on sail. Bulgaria will hand over the command to Romania in August. Turkey, Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russian Federation and Ukraine set up the BLACKSEAFOR in 2001 to ensure peace and stability in the Black Sea, boost regional cooperation and good neighborly relations

5.

Bulgaria halts nuclear plant construction

07.04.2010, UPI

READ MORE: http://www.upi.com/Top_News/International/2010/04/07/Bulgaria-halts-nuclear-plant-construction/UPI-63481270655476/

The government of Bulgaria halted more than 20 years of work on a \$5.3 billion nuclear power plant in Belene because of funding shortages. The facility on the Danube River, 150 miles northeast of Sofia, would be the country's second nuclear plant with two 1,000 megawatt Russian reactors, the EUobserver reported Wednesday. Construction was halted in the 1990s because of environmental protests but resumed in 2004. However, Prime Minister Boiko Borisov's center-right government announced because of economic conditions and an unacceptable loan offer from Russia, work would be stopped. Russia had offered about \$2.5 billion in bridge financing for "an unspecified share" in the plant built by Russia's Atomstroyexport, France's Areva and Germany's Siemens, but Borisov said the deal was unacceptable and other investors were being sought, the report said.

6.

Oettinger tells Sofia to be 'wiser' with energy projects

06.04.2010, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/oettinger-tells-sofia-be-wiser-energy-projects-news-406505>

EU Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger paid his first visit to Bulgaria on 3 March, the country's national day. Although the visit received limited coverage, it gave the commissioner an opportunity to criticise Sofia's sometimes questionable energy choices, according to Panayot Angarev of Dnevnik, EurActiv's partner publication in Bulgaria. In Sofia, Oettinger made clear that Brussels is not happy with Bulgaria's energy policy. "Each project in the energy sector should be agreed with the European Commission," he said, stressing that "we are very sensitive about the Belene nuclear power plant project". Such messages are seen by many as long overdue.

V. GEORGIA

1.

EU to hold monitoring of electoral process in Georgia

14.04.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/news/politics/foreign/1669205.html>

The EU will hold monitoring of the electoral process and the media during the local elections in Georgia. Vice Prime Minister Giorgi Baramidze received the relevant letter from the EU. The letter says that the EU is ready to be actively involved in issues related with monitoring of the elections. In particular, based on the agreement of the EU delegation and International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), ISFED will send 90 observers to ensure the long-term monitoring. Thus, there will be oneobserver in each constituency, and one observer will be in the Central Election Commission.

2.

Georgian FM: U.S. will never allow Georgia's int'l isolation

13.04.2010, Civil.ge

READ MORE: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22187>

Georgia's participation in nuclear security summit in Washington is a clear sign that Russia has failed to achieve its goal to internationally isolate Tbilisi, Grigol Vashadze, the Georgian foreign minister said. The Georgian delegation, led by President Saakashvili is participating in the summit held on April 12-13. "The most important in the fact that we are participating in this conference is that despite many efforts, the Russian Federation has failed to achieve Georgia's isolation," Vashadze told Rustavi 2 television station in Washington. He said that although Georgia "has neither nuclear arsenals nor nuclear energy" the country was anyway enlisted among "limited number of countries" taking part in the high-profile summit in Washington.

3.

Georgia gets a timely -- and welcome -- phone call

13.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/A_Timely_and_Welcome_Phone_Call/2011131.html

U.S. President Barak Obama's phone call last week to Georgian counterpart Mikheil Saakashvili came with Georgia's pro-Western political regime increasingly isolated in the post-Soviet space. Russia is on the offensive to restore its dominating influence, and the West has insufficient resources or will to curb this trend. Recent changes in the region are not encouraging for Georgia. After pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich was elected president of Ukraine, Georgia became "decoupled" from Ukraine as a candidate country for NATO membership. It is now alone in its neighborhood in this respect. A coup in Kyrgyzstan has brought to power a government whose first steps suggest it will be more pro-

Russian than its predecessor, and some speculate that it may try to squeeze the U.S. military from its soil.

4.

Georgia foils attempt to sell weapons-grade uranium

13.04.2010, Guardian

READ MORE: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/julian-borger-global-security-blog/2010/apr/13/georgia-nuclear-smuggling>

The Georgian president, Mikheil Saakashvili, has told fellow leaders at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington that his government has thwarted an attempt to sell highly-enriched uranium on the black market last month. Georgian sources said the HEU was intercepted in a sting operation carried out by the Tbilisi authorities without international assistance. They said the uranium was over 70% enriched. The exact analysis is expected in a few days, but it appears to have been pure enough to use in a crude nuclear weapon.

5.

Georgian Parliament urges countries to recognize Russia as occupier

12.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Georgian_Parliament_Urges_Countries_To_Recognize_Russia_As_Occupier/2010005.html

Georgia's parliament has sent an appeal to more than 50 countries urging them to recognize Russia as an occupying force in Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, RFE/RL's Georgian Service reports. The parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee sent the appeal to every European country's parliament as well as the legislative bodies of the United States, Canada, Israel, India, New Zealand, and several African countries. Giorgi Kandelaki, the deputy head of the Foreign Affairs Committee, told RFE/RL on April 9 that "we think this action will increase the Russian occupants' responsibility towards Georgia." Kandelaki said the appeal was written by parliament members but also has the support of Georgia's executive branch.

6.

Georgian president vows visa-free travel to EU by 2013

08.04.2010, Civil.ge

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=georgia-president-vows-visa-free-travel-to-eu-by-2013-2010-04-08>

Georgia is seeking to lift visa restrictions for travel to EU member countries by 2013, its president said Wednesday, adding that his "ambition" is to achieve visa-free access to Europe before the end of his term. "We are moving toward, at first, having [a] simplified visa regime and then visa-free movement with Europe... and also toward having [a] free-trade regime between Georgia and the rest of Europe," the Civil Georgia news Web site quoted President Mikhail Saakashvili as telling an audience at the opening ceremony for the European House in Tbilisi. "It is possible to achieve. [We are] now already undergoing bureaucratic procedures and we will accomplish these procedures," the president added. Georgia has already negotiated visa facilitation and readmission agreements with the EU; the signing and entry into force of these agreements are ongoing through the bloc's internal decision-making procedures.

7.

Obama assures Georgia's Saakashvili of U.S. support

07.04.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: <http://www.kyivpost.com/news/russia/detail/63297/>

President Barack Obama, in a gesture of support before meeting his Russian counterpart later this week, assured Georgia on Tuesday the United States backed the pro-Western country's independence. "The President relayed the strong support of the United States for Georgia's

sovereignty and territorial integrity," the White House said, describing a telephone conversation Obama held earlier with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili. Obama will meet with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on Thursday in Prague, where the two leaders will sign a nuclear arms reduction treaty. Russia invaded Georgia in August 2008 after an assault by U.S.-trained Georgian military on the breakaway pro-Russian territory of South Ossetia.

8.

European Commissioner: Georgia is important partner for EU in European Neighbourhood Policy
07.04.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/news/politics/foreign/1665067.html>

European Commissioner Stefan Fule believes that Georgia is an important partner for the EU under the European Neighbourhood Policy, Tbilisi's office of the European Commission said. "Neighbourhood Policy allows us to be consistent and develop an approach that will allow to cooperate closely with all EU neighbors. This important visit will allow me to reaffirm the commitment of the European Union towards Georgia's territorial integrity," Fule said before the visit to Georgia.

9.

Georgia: state spending ahead of poll under suspicion

02.04.2010, Institute for War and Peace Reporting

READ MORE: <http://www.iwpr.net/EN-crs-f-361637>

The Georgian authorities have come under criticism from anti-corruption activists for raising local government spending in the run-up to local elections. Transparency International Georgia released a survey of government spending on March 29, with two months still to go until the polls, the most important of which will be for Tbilisi mayor. "There has been an unprecedented rise in the sums spent from the state budget on the organs of local government. The total volume of transfers intended for these bodies, compared to the same period of last year, has risen by 34 per cent," the organization said. It said that in 2010 the Tbilisi city budget will be 570.8 million lari (325 million US dollars) which is 84 million more than last year. The ruling party, the National Movement, has not yet announced its candidate for the mayor's position, which will be elected directly for the first time.

10.

Tbilisi protests Moscow's heliport plans in S.Ossetia

01.04.2010, Civil.ge

READ MORE: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22143>

Georgia condemned Moscow's plans to build two heliports in breakaway South Ossetia and called on the international community "to take decisive measures" to stop further militarization of the region. Russian governmental website for state procurements posted on March 12 an announcement for a tender to build heliports - one in Java district and another one in Akhlagori district of the breakaway region. "Georgia expresses its strict protest over Russia's destructive actions and calls on the international community to take decisive measures in order to prevent militarization of Georgia's occupied regions, infringement of Georgia's sovereignty as well as occupation and annexation of its integral territories," the Georgian Foreign Ministry said on March 31.

VI. GREECE

1.

Euro zone aid provides short-term relief for Greece

13.04.2010, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/euro/euro-zone-aid-provides-short-term-relief-for-greece-news-440902>

The euro zone's standby aid package for Greece offers only a short-term solution to Athens's debt

crisis and leaves many questions about the future of the single currency group and the European Union unanswered. Financial markets welcomed the deal reached on Sunday (11 April) by the finance ministers of the group of 16 countries that use the euro, reducing fears of an imminent default by Greece that would further undermine the currency. But economists say the euro zone still looks divided after reaching agreement only at the third attempt, following two failed efforts to boost investors' confidence in Greece in February and March, and did not tackle underlying problems such as slow growth and other economic problems in Europe.

2.

First visa-free travel to US

12.04.2010, New Europe

READ MORE: <http://www.neurope.eu/articles/100168.php>

US Ambassador to Greece, Daniel Speckhard, on 7 April joined passengers leaving Athens on Delta Airlines' morning flight for New York at the airline's check-in desk to check on their progress. The plane was the first flight leaving Athens on which Greek citizens were able to travel to the United States without a visa. Greece was formally added to the US Visa Waiver Program on 5 April, allowing Greeks to forgo the process of getting a visa via the embassy. Those wanting to visit the US can now simply fill in an online application called the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) that gives them clearance to travel.

3.

Turkey, Greece set for better relations

08.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-and-greece-to-be-strategic-partners-in-confidence-building-2010-04-08>

Turkey and Greece are building mutual confidence through a series of measures as part of a strategic partnership agreement to be signed by PMs Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and George Papandreou in May. The leaders of Turkey and Greece will sign a strategic partnership agreement in May as part of mutual confidence-building measures, according to the two countries' foreign ministers. "[Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan will pay a visit to Athens in mid-May to his Greek counterpart, [George] Papandreou," Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said in a joint press conference held Thursday with Greek Deputy Foreign Minister Dimitris Droutsas. "We hope that it will be a historic visit introducing a new vision to Turkish-Greek relations," Davutoğlu told reporters after hosting a delegation meeting in Ankara to finalize preparations.

4.

Greek financial troubles mount as IMF arrives

07.04.2010, BBC News

READ MORE: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/8607213.stm>

Greek government bond yields have hit new highs and Greek banks have asked for further government support as the country's financial woes continue. The euro also slipped further against both the dollar and the pound. The unwelcome developments came as a team from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) arrived in Athens for discussions with government officials. Eurozone nations have agreed that if Greece needs aid, it should come partly from them and partly from the IMF. Leading Greek banks asked for more than 15bn euros (\$20bn; £13bn) of government support under a 28bn euro support scheme launched under the previous administration in 2008. "They want to have additional safety now that the economy and banking system are under pressure," said Finance Minister George Papaconstantinou.

5.

Report: Greece OK with new Macedonia name

06.04.2010, UPI

READ MORE: http://www.upi.com/Top_News/International/2010/04/06/Report-Greece-OK-with-new-Macedonia-name/UPI-87691270559245/

The Greek government is satisfied with a proposal to end a dispute with its northern neighbor over the name "Macedonia," a minister said in Athens. Deputy Foreign Minister Dimitris Droutsas said U.N. mediator Matthew Nimetz's suggestion of Northern Macedonia "fits with the framework for a settlement that we have set out," the Kathimerini newspaper reported Tuesday. For 19 years, Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have been at odds over the name Macedonia, which is also the name of a northern Greek province. Droutsas said Greece was willing to drop its opposition to European Union accession by its neighbor if Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski in Skopje would agree to add "Northern" to his country's name. "He will have to explain to his people why he is depriving them of their European prospects," Droutsas said. "Skopje must demonstrate its political will."

6.

Greece is the tip of the iceberg

01.04.2010, New Europe

READ MORE: <http://www.neurope.eu/articles/100057.php>

Over-indebtedness is not only a Greek illness. In the case of this country, however, the bulk of its debts cannot be attributed to the malaise of the rest of the Western world. It was not Greek banks which forced the Greek state to borrow and save them, but the other way around. In the rest of the Western world it was the credit crisis and the real economy recession that forced governments to borrow heavily in order to save everybody from the chaos. Returning to Greece and the other Eurozone countries though, one finds some crucial points that differentiate their case from the rest of the West. Everybody knows that there are western countries like Canada and Australia which have overcome the crisis.

VII. MOLDOVA

1.

Moldova condemns arrest of journalist in Transdnierster

13.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Moldova_Condemns_Arrest_Of_Journalist_In_Transdnierster/2011432.html

Acting Moldovan President Mihai Ghimpu has condemned the arrest of an independent journalist in the country's breakaway Transdnierster region and promised to seek international support for his release, RFE/RL's Moldovan Service reports. Ernest Vardanean, a 33-year-old stringer for the Transdnierster news agency Novy Region 2, was arrested on April 7 at his home in Tiraspol, the capital of the self-styled republic. Moldovan and Russian media say he is accused of spying for Moldova and could receive a 20-year prison term if found guilty. Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister Victor Osipov, the government's point man for the Transdnierster conflict, told RFE/RL that Vardanean's arrest shows the separatists' unwillingness to talk to civil-society representatives or tolerate freedom of speech. Before his departure today for Brussels and Washington, Osipov said that he will try to mobilize international support to secure Vardanean's release.

2.

Moldovan authorities want Council of Europe's monitoring lifted

06.04.2010, Bsanna News

READ MORE: <http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12793&lang=en>

We welcome the Council of Europe's constant interest in evolutions in Moldova, acting President and Parliament Speaker Mihai Ghimpu today told a meeting with the co-rapporteurs of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Josette Durrieu and Egidijus Vareikis, who are on

a fact-collecting visit to Chisinau, the parliament's media relations department has said. Ghimpu particularly thanked Josette Durrieu, who has been the Council of Europe's rapporteur for Moldova for many years and knows very well the realities in the country, for her involvement and assistance offered during her mandate. Ghimpu expressed regret about the fact that Moldova has been under the monitoring of the Council of Europe for quite a long time but showed optimism about the fulfilment of Moldova's commitments towards this organization.

3.

Transdnestr worried over Moldova, Romania military ties

03.04.2010, Global Security

READ MORE: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2010/04/mil-100403-rianovosti04.htm>

Transdnestr is concerned about the strengthening of military cooperation between NATO member Romania and neutral Moldova, the foreign minister of Moldova's breakaway region said. Moldova and Romania signed on March 29 an agreement on cooperation between their respective air forces and discussed the future development of bilateral military contacts. "The violation of the existing balance of forces could lead to unpredictable consequences because someone would certainly want to explore the results of this military cooperation," Vladimir Yastrebchak said on Friday. He added that military ties between Chisinau and Bucharest undermine regional stability and security. Transdnestr has been considered a "frozen conflict" zone since a brief war in 1992, which was the culmination of tensions between Chisinau and Tiraspol following the breakup of the Soviet Union.

4.

Moldova hopes to progress in Transnistrian settlement under Kazakh OSCE chairmanship

02.04.2010, Bsanna News

READ MORE: <http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12781&lang=en>

Moldova relies very much on the fact that the OSCE Kazakh chairmanship will lead to qualitative progress in the Transnistrian conflict settlement, as well as other problems of security in the OSCE area. Parliament Speaker and acting President Mihai Ghimpu made this statement at a today's meeting with OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Kazakh Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev, the parliament's media relations department has said. The informal consultations in the 5+2 format, scheduled to be held in Astana in late May, are extremely important for Moldova, Mihai Ghimpu said. The president offered to include the issue of the free movement of people, goods and services between the two banks of the Dniestre on the agenda of consultations in Astana. President Mihai Ghimpu said that a final and viable solution to the conflict can be achieved only in the 5+2 format of talks, by an in-depth approach to all the aspects of the problem: political, economic, social, humanitarian and security.

VIII. ROMANIA

1.

Moldova, Romania to sign treaty on state border regime

09.04.2010, Bsanna News

READ MORE: <http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12817&lang=en>

Moldova and Romania will sign a treaty on the state border regime, cooperation and mutual assistance on border issues. The head of the parliamentary commission for foreign policy and European integration, Igor Corman, made a statement to this effect at a today's news conference. The assertion was confirmed by the head of the commission for foreign policy of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies (lower house of the parliament), Attila Korodi. Corman said that the foreign ministries of Moldova and Romania are working on this document entitled treaty on the state border regime, cooperation and mutual assistance on border issues. "This is a treaty which Romania signed with

Ukraine too, exactly with the same name. There are different interpretations of this document, especially the opposition insists on the name of "treaty on state border." But such acts are being signed only by the countries which do not have state borders, or Moldova knows where the frontier is," Corman said.

2.

Report: Romanian social aid blooming

07.04.2010, UPI

READ MORE: http://www.upi.com/Top_News/International/2010/04/07/Report-Romanian-social-aid-blooming/UPI-19201270676061/

The number of Romanians using social aid has almost half of the population drawing money each month, a newspaper reported Wednesday. The Adevarul newspaper report said some 9.5 million people, or roughly half of the population, are receiving welfare, unemployment, housing and central heating aid, or other supplemental benefits. That equates to a national expense of \$3.2 billion a year, the report said. The newspaper said there are some 670,000 elder people and children with healthcare problems receiving federal assistance. The report said heightened awareness of government benefits appeared to be a factor in the surge in recipients. Fewer than 80,000 Romanians were receiving one of more of the 50 social benefits in 1992, while the number rose to 670,000 last year, the report said.

IX. RUSSIA

1.

Medvedev signs national anti-corruption program for 2010-2011

14.04.2010, Ria Novosti

READ MORE: <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100414/158572146.html>

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has signed an order on a national anti-corruption program for 2010-2011, the Kremlin said on Wednesday. The statement said the national anti-corruption strategy and the national anti-corruption plan were designed at eliminating corruption in society and at the federal level, respectively. The Berlin-based non-governmental anti-corruption organization Transparency International has persistently rated Russia as one of the most corrupt nations in the world. In the 2009 Corruption Perception Index, Russia was ranked 146th of 180, below countries like Togo, Pakistan and Libya. The United States was ranked 19th. A total of 4,500 corruption cases were brought to court in the first half of 2009 in Russia, with 532 public officials and 700 law-enforcers being convicted.

2.

Russian President Warns Of Kyrgyz Civil War, Urges START Ratification

14.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Russian_President_Warns_Of_Kyrgyz_Civil_War_Urges_START_Ratification/2011832.html

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has warned that Kyrgyzstan may be plunged into a civil war if the standoff between embattled President Kurmanbek Bakiev and the self-declared interim government is not resolved soon. Medvedev made the comments at Washington's Brookings Institute on April 13 after the close of the White House's Nuclear Security Summit. The Russian leader told the audience that "the risk of Kyrgyzstan breaking apart into the south and the north really exists." Last week the Kyrgyz prime minister resigned and Bakiev fled Bishkek after antigovernment protests turned deadly. More than 80 people died in the clashes and some 1,000 were injured. On April 13, Bakiev said he would step down if security is guaranteed for himself and his relatives.

3.

Ukraine, Russia to work on demarcation of borders

12.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=ukraine-russia-to-work-on-border-demarcation-2010-04-12>

Ukraine and Russia hope that work on delimitation of their maritime boundaries and demarcation of their land borders will step up this year, according to the Ukrainian news agency. "I believe Ukraine and Russia could find a mutually acceptable approach on the issue of delimitation of the Kerch Strait, Black Sea and Caspian Sea," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostiantyn Hryshenko told reporters after a meeting with visiting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov over the weekend. The two sides also discussed issues related to Russian Black Sea Fleet's stationing in the territory of Ukraine, trans-boundary cooperation and customs clearance procedures, Hryshenko said, according to a report by China's Xinhua news agency.

4.

Putin discusses \$6Bln loan to Ukraine for reactors

12.04.2010, The Moscow Times

READ MORE: <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/putin-discusses-6bln-loan-to-ukraine-for-reactors/403689.html>

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said Saturday that Russia might lend \$5 billion to \$6 billion to Ukraine to construct two nuclear reactors, while promising to consider a new deal on gas supply prices. "We discussed cooperation on nuclear energy ... a possibility is to lend \$5 billion to \$6 billion to construct the third and fourth reactors for the Khmelnytsky nuclear power station," Putin said after a meeting with his Ukrainian counterpart, Mykola Azarov, at Vnukovo Airport. Both leaders expressed their condolences to the people of Poland over the Saturday morning plane crash in Smolensk that killed President Lech Kaczynski and many other senior dignitaries. Azarov also said he won a pledge from Putin to remove quotas on Ukrainian large-diameter pipes, a key export for the country that is used in the oil and gas industry.

5.

Medvedev calls for simultaneous ratification of new START treaty

08.04.2010, Ria Novosti

READ MORE: <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100408/158484984.html>

Russia and the United States should introduce the arms reduction treaty for ratification simultaneously, President Dmitry Medvedev said on Thursday, vowing that Moscow would not delay the process. "We will naturally get ready very soon to initiate all the procedures for our parliament, our State Duma, to start considering the treaty. We must make sure the documents are introduced for ratification simultaneously so that neither country feels disadvantaged," Medvedev said at a press conference in Prague with his U.S. counterpart, Barack Obama, after the two presidents signed the treaty.

6.

Medvedev: EU should give Russians visa-free travel

07.04.2010 Kyiv Post

READ MORE: <http://www.kyivpost.com/news/russia/detail/63366/>

Russia's president is urging the European Union to abolish visa requirements for Russians. Dmitry Medvedev says Russia and the EU need proper conditions to do business, "if we are serious partners." Medvedev spoke Wednesday after meeting his Slovak counterpart Ivan Gasparovic in Bratislava while en route to Prague to sign a landmark nuclear arms reduction treaty Thursday with President Barack Obama. Gasparovic acknowledged the EU is divided over the visa issue but said he hopes the bloc will ease the visa rules as it did recently for the Balkans nations.

7.

Russia keen to join EU in revamping Ukraine's pipelines

07.04.2010, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/russia-eager-join-eu-revamping-ukraine-s-pipeline-network-news-421013>

Russian Ambassador to the EU Vladimir Chizhov told EurActiv yesterday (6 April) that his country welcomed recent proposals by the new government in Kiev for a "three-sided" plan to modernise Ukraine's gas pipeline network, with Moscow's involvement. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin threatened last March to review his country's ties with the EU after a European Commission plan to modernise Ukraine's gas pipeline system failed to include Moscow (EurActiv 24/03/10). Putin called the EU-Ukraine gas pipeline modernisation plan, announced on 23 March and signed by then-Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, "ill considered and unprofessional".

8.

Russia's Medvedev calls for tough measures after bombings

01.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE:

http://www.rferl.org/content/Medvedev_Calls_For_Tough_Measures_Against_Terrorism/1999926.html

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has called for tougher and more severe measures to combat terrorism, after a series of suicide bombings killed more than 50 people this week. Medvedev made the remarks after arriving in Daghestan on a surprise visit the day after suicide bombers killed 12 people in the troubled North Caucasus republic. His visit also follows a claim of responsibility by Chechen rebel leader Doku Umarov for twin attacks on the Moscow metro that killed 39 people on March 29. Medvedev said Russia must deal "sharp dagger blows to the terrorists, destroy them and their lairs." The Russian president added that the list of counterterrorism measures "not only in our country, but in general -- should be expanded. They should be not only more effective but also tougher and more severe, if you will, in order to prevent terrorist attacks. We need to punish."

X. TURKEY

1.

Turkish FM: "our vision is not based on perception of threat"

09.04.2010, Bsanna News

READ MORE: <http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12818&lang=en>

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said Thursday when Turkey and Greece establishes their common future together there will be no need for mutual defense. "Our vision is not based on perception of threat," Davutoglu said at a news conference with Greek Deputy Foreign Minister Dimitris Droutsas in Ankara. "Turkey aims at 'zero problem, maximum cooperation' with its neighbors," Davutoglu said. Greek Deputy FM Droutsas said the new Confidence Building Measures which were accepted by the two countries could provide rapprochement between the two peoples and armies. The two countries would exert efforts to boost economic ties, Droutsas said. During Turkish Premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Athens scheduled to take place in May, a business forum will be held, he said.

2.

Turkish, Azerbaijani FMs hold telephone conversation

09.04.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/regions/scaucasus/azerbaijan/1666390.html>

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and his Turkish Counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu had a telephone conversation in the run up to Deputy Foreign Minister Feridun Siniroglu's Baku visit, TRT Russian reported. Davutoglu speak to Mammadyarov about result of Siniroglu's recent

Armenia visit aimed to address the issues on the upcoming meeting between Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan in Washington. Erdogan will leave for the U.S. next week to attend a summit on nuclear safety, which will also be attended by Sargsyan. Davutoglu also conveyed his Azerbaijani counterpart, that during Erdogan's meeting with the president of France, which enters the OSCE Minsk Group, an important place was given to the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.

3.

Turkey hopes better Greek ties lower defense costs

08.04.2010, Today's Zaman

READ MORE: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=206804>

Turkey and Greece say they hope efforts to improve their relations will lead to reduced defense spending in both countries. The countries have been at odds for years over airspace boundaries and flight procedures over the Aegean Sea that forms the border between them. For decades they have engaged in an arms race and their warplanes often engage in mock dogfights. Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said Thursday after meeting Greek Deputy Foreign Minister Dimitris Droustas that there would be no need for arms spending if the neighbors could build a "common future." He says Turkey's prime minister will visit Greece next month. Greece is suffering from a severe economic crisis and plans to cut defense spending in 2011 and 2012.

4.

Turkey to continue on path of growth, says Erdoğan

08.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-to-continue-on-path-of-growth-says-erdogan-2010-04-08>

Turkey's primary aim is to continue its encouraging growth performances, the country's prime minister said late Wednesday during a trip to Paris. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Turkey had successfully overcome its test during the global financial crisis. "We will continue to be cautious. We aim to go on with the pleasing growth performances in 2010 and beyond," Erdoğan said during a meeting at the Movement of the French Enterprises, or MEDEF, in Paris. Turkey's finance sector grew 8.5 percent in 2009, said Erdoğan. Turkey was the only country among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD, which did not require any intervention into financial sector. Erdoğan said the Istanbul Stock Exchange's benchmark ISE-100 topped European stock exchanges and was seventh in the world.

5.

Turkey, Russia to lift visa requirements in May

07.04.2010, Today's Zaman

READ MORE: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=206671>

Turkey and Russia are likely to bring in a visa-free arrangement from May following the signing of a bilateral agreement between the two countries, the Turkish prime minister said while speaking at the Bosniak Institute in Sarajevo on Monday. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said both countries are determined to eliminate visa requirements in May, during the visit of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. The number of countries that have reciprocally annulled visa requirements with Turkey in the recent past has reached 25, and a similar process with Russia has also started. Erdoğan said they considered including the elimination of visa requirements between the two countries in a high-level strategic cooperation agreement that they will clinch during a visit by the Russian president in May.

6.

Istanbul attracts 1.1 million tourists in first quarter

07.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=istanbul-attracts-1.1-million-tourists-in-the-first-quarter-2010-04-07>

Some 1.15 million tourists visited Istanbul, Turkey's most populous city, in the first quarter of 2010, according to statistics announced Wednesday by a provincial tourism agency. The number of visitors was 1.24 million in the same period of last year. Statistics regarding the nationalities of visitors showed German tourists took first place and Russians took second. Iranians, Britons and Italians followed. Istanbul welcomed 7.5 million tourists during the whole of 2009 and expects an even better tourism season in 2010. Despite the recent global economic downturn, Turkey was the only country to see increasing tourist numbers among the top 10 tourist destinations in 2009. Nearly 27 million tourists visited Turkey last year, a 2.5 percent rise over 2008, although global tourism contracted 4 percent and European tourism plunged 6 percent.

7.

Turkish travel agency expects good year for tourism

07.04.2010, Today's Zaman

READ MORE: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=206630>

Turkey is likely to have a good tourism season this year if Spain and Greece do not reduce prices, a travel agency official said on Tuesday. "The possibility of reduced prices in Spain and Greece, major destinations for European tourists, especially for German tourists, would create a risk for Turkey," said Ayhan Bektaş, chairman of Turkish travel agency Odeon Tourism International (OTI). Despite the recent global economic downturn, Turkey has been the only country to see increasing tourist numbers among the top 10 tourist destinations in 2009. Nearly 27 million tourists visited Turkey last year, a 2.5 percent rise over 2008, although global tourism contracted 4 percent and European tourism plunged 6 percent. "There is a 53 percent rise in total reservations when compared to last year," Bektaş said. "We expect to host 30 million tourists in Turkey," he added.

8.

Samsun Port on Turkey's Black Sea is transferred to private hands

06.04.2010 Hurriyet Daily

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=samsun-port-goes-to-private-hands-2010-04-06>

The operating rights to the Samsun Port in Turkey's Black Sea region are transferred to the Cey Group for \$125.2 million. Speaking at the signing ceremony in Ankara on Tuesday, Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek criticizes the long legal process required for such privatizations. Transport Minister Binali Yıldırım says the right to operate the Bandırma Port will also be sold soon. The Turkish government has sold the rights to operate the Samsun Port in the Black Sea region for 36 years, marking another step in its ambitious privatization program. The rights were sold to the Cey Group for \$125.2 million, which the company paid in cash. A signing ceremony was conducted for the sale in Ankara on Tuesday. Top government officials who spoke at the ceremony criticized the legal hurdles that they say are preventing them from selling off state assets more quickly.

9.

Turkey does not want to be EU burden: Erdogan

05.04.2010, EUbusiness

READ MORE: <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/turkey.405>

Turkey does not want to be a burden to the European Union, but rather to help in sharing difficulties it has confronted, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Monday. "Turkey is a big country, but we don't want to become a burden to the European Union. We want to take over our part of the burden," Erdogan said at a press conference at the start of his two-day visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Erdogan added that Turkey "wants a peaceful Europe in which Turkey will take its place." Since starting membership talks in 2005, Turkey has succeeded in opening only 12 of the 35

chapters that candidate countries are required to complete in order to join the bloc. The process has also been slowed by Ankara's sluggish pace of reform and its refusal to allow EU-member Cyprus -- a country it does not recognize -- access to its ports under a customs union accord with the EU.

XI. TURKEY - ARMENIA

1.

Turkish PM: border between Turkey and Armenia to be opened after resolving of Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict

14.04.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/news/karabakh/1669336.html>

It will be possible to open borders between Turkey and Armenia only after resolving of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in Washington. "Only resolving of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict can become the basis for the opening of Turkish-Armenian border", CNN Turk quotes Erdogan. The conflict between the two South Caucasus countries began in 1988 when Armenia made territorial claims against Azerbaijan. Armenian armed forces have occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijan since 1992, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and 7 surrounding districts. Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a ceasefire agreement in 1994. The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group - Russia, France, and the U.S. - are currently holding the peace negotiations. Armenia has not yet implemented the U.N. Security Council's resolutions on the liberation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region and the occupied territories.

2.

Obama urges Turkey, Armenia to implement normalization deal

13.04.2010, Hurriyet Daily

READ MORE: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=obama-urges-turkey-armenia-to-implement-normalization-deal-2010-04-13>

U.S. President Barack Obama has urged Turkey and Armenia to put into effect a stalled deal to normalize their relations. Obama "urged that both Armenia and Turkey make every effort to advance the normalization process and achieve legislative ratification of the protocols of normalization," the White House said late on Monday after a meeting between the U.S. president and Armenian President Serge Sarkisian on the sidelines of a nuclear security summit in Washington. "The president commended President Sarkisian for his courageous efforts to achieve the normalization of relations between Armenia and Turkey and encouraged him to fulfill the promise of normalization for the benefit of the Armenian people," it said in a statement. Separately, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who represented Turkey at the summit, also met with Sarkisian to discuss the normalization process.

3.

Armenian, Turkish leaders meet in Washington

13.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE:

http://www.rferl.org/content/Armenian_Turkish_Leaders_Meet_In_Washington/2011001.html

Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan have met in Washington in an effort to kick-start the stalled process of normalizing relations between their countries. Reports from the U.S. capital said the meeting, held on the sidelines of a nuclear security summit hosted by U.S. President Barack Obama, lasted for about 80 minutes and included the Armenian and Turkish foreign ministers, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported. Before he left Ankara, Erdogan told reporters that 'the priority issue [at the meeting] is developments regarding Armenia.' Neither Sarkisian nor Erdogan spoke to the press after the meeting. Sarkisian held a meeting with Obama later in the day that was also expected to focus on ways of salvaging the U.S.-

brokered agreements to establish diplomatic relations between Turkey and Armenia and open their land border.

4.

Erdogan: Turkish parliament to vote down protocols

13.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/46969/>

The meeting between Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was rather cold, Sabah Turkish newspaper said. According to the report, Turkish Prime Minister confirmed his country's commitment to normalization of relations with Armenia and establishment of peace in the South Caucasus but remarked that "given the resolutions recently adopted by the U.S. House panel and Swedish Riksdag, the Turkish parliament will vote down the protocols, if these are put on the agenda in near future."

5.

Erdoğan's letter to Sarksyian discussed in Erdoğan-Sarksyian meeting

12.04.2010, Today's Zaman

READ MORE: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=207280>

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Armenian President Serzh Sarksyian who met in Washington D.C. on Monday discussed the letter Erdoğan sent to Sarksyian in details. Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioğlu, assigned as special representative by Erdoğan, earlier conveyed the letter to Sarksyian. The parties agreed that foreign ministers of the two countries should continue studies on the issue. The two leaders got together on the sidelines of the nuclear security summit hosted by US President Barack Obama.

6.

ANCA calls on Obama to honor Armenian Genocide recognition pledge

08.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/46693/>

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) went on record, once again, asking President Obama to honor his campaign promise to recognize the Armenian Genocide. The one-page letter, signed by ANCA Chairman Ken Hachikian and sent in the days leading up to President Obama's second April 24th in office, asks, simply, that President Obama keep his commitment and "stand for a policy that is truthful, just, and worthy of the American people." Hachikian also addressed two points of special concern that have further compounded the anger and outrage felt by Armenian American voters over the President's broken promise; his pressure on Armenia to accept the one-sided, pro-Ankara Protocols; his support for Turkey's "historical commission" denial tactic; and his attacks on the Armenian Genocide Resolution.

7.

Füle: ties with Armenia matter for Turkey's EU bid

07.04.2010, Today's Zaman

READ MORE: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=206668>

A top European Union official has called on Armenia and Turkey to progress with their troubled normalization efforts without any preconditions, while emphasizing the importance attached to this normalization process by Brussels in relation to Turkey's accession into the 27-nation bloc. "Good relations with neighbors are very important in the framework of any country's entry to the European Union," EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle was quoted as saying by the Armenian media on Tuesday during a visit to Yerevan. "The EU must also make efforts to help both sides end this deadlock," Füle, whose portfolio also covers European neighborhood policy, added, while speaking at a joint press conference with Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian.

8.

Erdogan offers Armenian President to meet in Washington

07.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/46666/>

Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Edward Nalbandian said that today Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan received Turkish Prime Minister's Special Envoy Feridun Sinirlioglu. During the meeting, Sinirlioglu conveyed a written message of the Turkish Prime Minister, as well as verbal messages of the Turkish President and Foreign Minister to the Armenian President, Mr. Nalbandian stated during a governmental hour in the RA parliament, answering the question of Larisa Alaverdyan, a member of Heritage parliamentary group. "Erdogan's message reads that Turkey wants to continue the Armenian-Turkish process and wants the Armenian side to confirm its position with respect to it," said Nalbandian, adding that during the meeting Sinirlioglu also conveyed the Turkish Prime Minister's offer about a meeting in Washington. Referring to the process of the NKR conflict settlement, the Armenian Foreign Minister said that Armenia's stance has not changed.

9.

Armenian President says history panel with Turkey makes 'no sense'

07.04.2010, Global Security

READ MORE: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2010/04/mil-100407-rferl05.htm>

Armenian President Serzh Sarkisian said there is currently no point in establishing a joint Turkish-Armenian study of the World War I-era mass killings of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports. "The creation of a [Turkish-Armenian history] commission would make sense only if Turkey finally confessed its guilt," he said in an interview with the German magazine "Der Spiegel" that was published over the weekend. "After that scholars would be able to jointly determine the causes of that tragedy." In two protocols signed last October, the Armenian and Turkish governments agreed to set up a joint commission tasked with normalizing their historically strained relations. It would be divided into several subcommissions specializing on various issues.

10.

Yerevan hosts Armenian-Turkish negotiations

07.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/46661/>

Armenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Edward Nalbandian received Special Envoy of the Turkish Prime Minister and Turkish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Feridun Sinirlioglu, who arrived in Yerevan on April 7. Normalization of Armenian-Turkish relations was in the focus of discussion. The Armenian Minister confirmed the international community's position, which states that Armenian-Turkish normalization and ratification of Protocols should take place without preconditions. Mr. Nalbandian noted that efficient steps are expected from Turkey, RA MFA press office reported.

11.

Armenia, Turkey unprepared for normalization

07.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/46643/>

The ongoing process between Armenia and Turkey is unfavorable for the RA but withdrawal from it would be extremely inexpedient, according to Hovhannes Igityan, chairman of the Armenian National Movement board. "If the international community brings more pressure on Armenia and Turkey, both will ratify the protocols. Nevertheless, Armenia and Turkey are still unprepared to normalize relations and open the border," he told reporters in Yerevan. As to the forthcoming Sargsyan-Obama meeting in Washington D.C., Mr. Igityan that the U.S. President will try to urge Armenia upon concessions over Karabakh to inspire Turkey to take action towards normalization.

12.

Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the normalisation of relations between Turkey and Armenia

06.04.2010, Council of the European Union

READ MORE:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/113657.pdf

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission made the following statement: "The European Union encourages Armenia and Turkey to remain committed to the process of normalisation and calls on both countries to ratify and implement the bilateral protocols without preconditions and in a reasonable timeframe. In this context, the EU welcomes the decision of the Armenian President to submit both protocols to the parliament as well as the recent declaration by the President of Turkey to remain committed to the normalisation of relations with Armenia.

13.

Armenia's position concerning NKR status recognition unchanged

06.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/46560/>

EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy Stefan Fuele said that the European Union is ready to facilitate the process of the Armenian-Turkish protocols ratification without any preconditions. The EU is ready to contribute to the development of frontier regions, as soon as the Protocols are signed and come into force, Stefan Fuele said during a joint press conference with RA Foreign Affairs Minister Edward Nalbandian. At the same time, he highly appreciated the activity and courage of the Armenian President who agreed to establish a dialogue with Turkey.

14.

Turkey says sending back U.S. envoy after 'genocide' row

02.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Turkey_Says_Sending_Back_US_Envoy_After_Genocide_Row/2000837.html

Turkey says it is returning its ambassador to Washington, a month after he was recalled to protest a U.S. congressional panel's resolution labeling as genocide the mass killings of Armenians by Ottoman Turks nearly a century ago. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said today that Ambassador Namik Tan would go back to Washington next week, before Erdogan attends a key nuclear security summit there. Turkey's ambassador to Sweden returned to her post earlier this week after she was recalled in protest against the Swedish parliament's decision to approve a similar "genocide" resolution. Armenians say up to 1.5 million of their kin were killed by their Ottoman Turk rulers in 1915 in a planned campaign of extermination.

XII. UKRAINE

1.

Strategic partnership between Ukraine, USA - joint statement by Presidents

13.04.2010, Bsanna News

READ MORE: <http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12849&lang=en>

President Viktor Yanukovich and U.S. President Barack Obama reaffirmed strategic partnership between the two states and their intention to realize its full potential. To this end, they committed to build upon the United States-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership and the Strategic Partnership Commission, UKRINFORM's own correspondent reports with reference to the press service of the White House. The two leaders recognized their countries' interests and shared values mirrored in the

Charter: devotion to democracy, economic freedom and prosperity, security and territorial integrity, energy security, the rule of law, development of cooperation in many spheres and strengthening people-to-people contacts.

2.

Ukraine's Yanukovych resumes cooperation with IMF

13.04.2010, Ria Novosti

READ MORE: <http://en.rian.ru/world/20100413/158555813.html>

Ukraine and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) came to terms over the resumption of cooperation, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych said after a meeting with IMF managing director Dominique Strauss-Kahn. During Yanukovych's official visit to the United States on Monday to participate in the nuclear security summit in Washington, he discussed with the IMF director possible programs of cooperation. Ukrainian president commended IMF's management for the "constructive dialogue they reached." "It seems, we have come to terms, although reaching it is not always easy," Yanukovych's press service quoted him as saying on Tuesday. Ukraine's current stand-by program amounts to \$16.4 billion, with \$11 billion already installed in three tranches. The fourth tranche of \$3.8 billion was due in 2009 but has not yet been installed because of the recent political instability.

3.

TNK-BP interested in development of Ukrainian shelf of Black Sea

13.04.2010, Bsanna News

READ MORE: <http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12851&lang=en>

The Russian-British TNK-BP company is interested in the development of the Ukrainian shelf of the Black Sea and is planning to enter the natural gas market in Ukraine, TNK-BP's Executive Director German Khan has said, UKRINFORM reported, citing the Kommersant-Ukraine newspaper. He said that this issue had been discussed at a meeting between the company's management, Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov and First Vice-Premier Andriy Kliuyev on April 8. "We looked back at what our company has achieved over ten years in the Ukrainian market and spoke about the investments we have made. They said they supported all our investment proposals and are ready for constructive cooperation. This is a clear sign that the investment climate in Ukraine is improving.

4.

Ukraine to dispose of uranium stockpiles

13.04.2010, The Wall Street Journal

READ MORE: http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303828304575180123912535694.html?mod=rss_europe_whats_news

Ukraine will get rid of its stockpile of highly enriched uranium by the end of 2012, the White House said Monday, the first breakthrough to emerge from the summit of nearly 50 world leaders President Barack Obama is hosting here. "This is something the United States has tried to make happen for more than 10 years," White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said, adding that the amount of the material held by Ukraine is enough to make several nuclear weapons. "This demonstrates Ukraine's continued leadership in nonproliferation and comes in an important region where we know a lot of highly enriched uranium exists." He said that details of the announcement were being worked out, but that the U.S. could provide technical and financial assistance to Ukraine.

5.

Party of Regions, Tymoshenko bloc, Strong Ukraine, Front for change and communist Party would get into parliament

12.04.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: <http://www.kyivpost.com/news/politics/detail/63737/>

Ukrainian News The Party of the Regions, the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc, the Strong Ukraine Party,

the Front for Change Party, and the Communist Party would be elected into the parliament if parliamentary elections were held in the near future, according to the poll conducted by Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS). KIIS asked which political party or blocpeople would vote for if parliamentary elections were held the following Sunday. 36.4% of the respondents in the poll said they would vote for the Party of the Regions (led by President Victor Yanukovich), 13.6% said they would vote for the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (Yulia Tymoshenko), 7.3% for the Strong Ukraine Party (Serhii Tihipko), 4.3% for the Front for Change Party (Arsenii Yatseniuk), and 3.1% would support Communist Party (Petro Symonenko).

6.

Defense Minister: Ukraine seeks more concrete, practical relations with NATO

12.04.2010, Bsanna News

READ MORE: <http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12832&lang=en>

Ukraine's Defense Minister Mykhailo Yezhel believes that the existing intensive cooperation with NATO needs to be moved to a qualitatively new level, he said this at a meeting with Lieutenant General P.J.M. (Jo) Godderij, the Director of NATO's International Military Staff, on Friday. "We have many ideas and proposals in this regard. We hope that they will be heard by the Alliance and well accepted," Yezhel emphasized. The minister said that Ukraine is interested in more concrete and practical deepening relations with NATO both in medium and long term prospects. "We want to near NATO standards as close as possible. Therefore, the declarations must now stand aside, and a concrete and practical cooperation should be at the forefront," he said.

7.

Ukraine hopes to get international loans next month

12.04.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: http://www.kyivpost.com/news/business/bus_general/detail/63685/

Talks with the management of international financial institutions will be one of the main priorities during Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's working visit to the United States, the presidential press service has reported. "One of the main priorities of the working visit will be talks with international financial organizations that will credit Ukraine early next month," a member of the official Ukrainian delegation, Finance Minister Fedir Yaroshenko, told Interfax-Ukraine on Apr. 12. He said that during the talks, the Ukrainian side would discuss the reforms being conducted by the new government. First Deputy Head of Ukraine's Presidential Administration Iryna Akimova, in turn, said that work had already been carried out with many international financial organizations on "concrete bills proposed by the [Ukrainian] president," and, first and foremost, on the state budget for 2010.

8.

Putin: Ukraine made 'interesting' offers on gas cooperation

12.04.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: <http://www.kyivpost.com/news/nation/detail/63691/>

Ukraine has made several interesting proposals to Russia concerning cooperation in the gas sector, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said after his meeting with Ukrainian Premier Mykola Azarov. Azarov "came up with proposals on several issues in the gas sector. The proposals are interesting but they require examination. This is largely a question of accounting. We should think them over and weigh them," he said.

9.

Ukraine wants Russia to pay higher Black Sea Fleet lease

10.04.2010, The Voice of Russia

READ MORE: <http://english.ruvr.ru/2010/04/10/6236333.html>

Ukraine says it wants Russia to pay more for leasing the Sevastopol naval base for its Black Sea Fleet.

This came in an interview with the Ukrainian TV Channel INTER by Prime Minister Nikolai Azarov. Under the current relevant agreement that's due in effect until 2017 Moscow pays an annual 90 million dollars for leasing the base. The money is used to clear Ukraine's debt for Russian gas, a debt that now stands at 2.3 billion dollars. Azarov explained that when Ukraine signed the agreement, its national reserves made up less than one billion dollars, so Kiev saw the agreement as profitable. The Ukrainian Prime Minister pointed out that Russia has since started charging Ukraine more for its gas, so the agreement on the terms of leasing Crimea's naval base should also be reconsidered.

10.

Investors returning to Ukraine

09.04.2010, Ukrainian Radio

READ MORE: <http://www.nrcu.gov.ua/index.php?id=148&listid=115774>

Ukraine has already received nine offers from market leaders, Prime Minister Mykola Azarov has said, the Cabinet of Ministers' press service reported on Friday. Investors note the stabilization of the economic situation in Ukraine and a significant improvement in expectations due to the arrival of a professional government and a balanced and coherent policy of the Ukrainian president, the parliamentary coalition and the government. Banks pay attention to increasing confidence in Ukraine, which is reflected in a rapid improvement of the spreads of Ukrainian securities. European, American and Japanese investors expressed their great interest in entering the Ukrainian market. Commenting on offers made by investment banks, Azarov said that the government highly appreciated the interest of investors in the resumption of work in Ukraine and welcomed their proposals.

11.

Government intends to sign association, free trade area agreements with EU

09.04.2010, Bsanna News

READ MORE: <http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12813&lang=en>

Prime Minister Mykola Azarov expressed hope for the signature of the Association Agreement till 2010, as well as on a free trade area, he said it during a meeting with the Sweden's Foreign Minister Carl Bildt. "I pose a problem to myself to sign association and free trade area agreements with the EU till the year end," Mykola Azarov noted. At the same time, the Premier emphasized that conclusion of the association agreement is the first important step on the way of Ukraine's integration with the EU that, in his opinion, depends primarily on modernization of the Ukrainian economy and carrying out real reforms.

12.

EU official says Ukraine association talks at crucial juncture

08.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/EU_Official_Says_Ukraine_Association_Talks_At_Crucial_Juncture/2006323.html

A top EU official said on April 7 that Ukraine could wrap up its Association Agreement talks with the European Union within the next six to 12 months. But Hugues Mingarelli, director-general for external relations at the European Commission, also hinted at potential difficulties. He noted that Ukraine's new administration under President Viktor Yanukovich has yet to show its true colors, while the EU itself is split on some of the key issues, and some of Ukraine's "neighbors" -- code for Russia -- are actively working to steer the country away from integration with the EU. In a nutshell, Mingarelli told the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee in Brussels that Kyiv finds itself at a crossroads. If all goes well, Ukraine could within a year's time become the EU's first eastern neighbor to sign an association accord with the bloc.

13.

Tourist-hungry nations ease visa rules for Ukrainians

08.04.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: http://www.kyivpost.com/news/business/bus_focus/detail/63493/

After two years in the doldrums, travel companies should receive a boost this summer as countries ease visa regimes for Ukrainians. The initiatives by authorities in Croatia, Greece and Israel are expected to drive a new spurt in holidays abroad. With airlines rushing to launch flights to these new hot destinations, operators hope for a quick return to the pre-crisis market. "The main reason is visa liberalization," said Vyacheslav Burdyukov, general director of Wind Rose Travel Company. As the crisis hit, incomes dropped and the hryvnia plunged, meaning Ukrainians had less money to spend on foreign holidays, and what they had didn't go as far. In the last two years, tour operators report a drop in clients of 30 to 40 percent.

14.

Rail passenger control may get easier on Ukraine-Russia border

07.04.2010, Bsanna News

READ MORE: <http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12798&lang=en>

Ukraine and Russia are working out the possibility of liberalizing passport and customs control for train passengers on the state border. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostiantyn Hryshchenko said this on the Echo of Moscow radio air, an UKRINFORM correspondent reported from the Russian Federation. In Hryshchenko's words, night passport checks are particularly unpleasant to the passengers. He also promised to take effort and increase the number of trains for which simplified border crossing procedures would be applied. "We are sure to do that, because European standards must become part of our life," he noted.

15.

Analysis: Yanukovich nears moment of truth with Russia

07.04.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: <http://www.kyivpost.com/news/nation/detail/63317/>

Ukraine's Viktor Yanukovich is doing the right things to mend fences with Moscow after five years of bad neighbourly relations, but going too far to secure cheaper Russian gas supplies could hurt his power base at home. In his first six weeks as president, Yanukovich has moved quickly to patch up the relationship with Ukraine's former Soviet master-essential if he is to lighten the burden of expensive Russian gas on his country's struggling economy. A pragmatist with the strong survival instincts of a post-Soviet apparatchik, Yanukovich has no intention of following the nationalist policies of his pro-Western predecessor Viktor Yushchenko, which so riled Moscow. Playing music to Moscow's ears, he says pursuit of NATO membership -- which was close to Yushchenko's heart-is off the agenda and has dismantled internal structures managing it.

16.

Ukraine won't sell gas grid, Kiev says

06.04.2010, UPI

READ MORE: http://www.upi.com/Science_News/Resource-Wars/2010/04/06/Ukraine-wont-sell-gas-grid-Kiev-says/UPI-34931270578717/

Ukraine won't sell its gas network to Russian state-controlled energy giant Gazprom, Ukraine's deputy foreign minister said. "Nothing is for sale in Ukraine," Kostiantyn Yeliseyev, Ukraine's deputy foreign minister, said in an interview with the Euractiv news Web site. "Our gas transport system was, is and will be the property of the Ukrainian state." He added, however: "If we will declare that every part is our property and nobody can be involved, then our gas transport system will become outdated. We need business projects, so let's look at what we can do. "Ukraine is a key energy transit country for the European Union. Nearly 80 percent of Russian gas exports to Europe are sent through

Ukraine, satisfying one-fifth of the continent's demand.

17.

Foreign Minister: cancellation of EU visas for Ukrainians is quite realistic

06.04.2010, Bsanna News

READ MORE: <http://bsanna-news.ukrinform.ua/newsitem.php?id=12785&lang=en>

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Kostiantyn Hryshchenko has said that the cancellation of EU visas for Ukrainian citizens is quite realistic. He said this in an interview with the Profile magazine, UKRINFORM reported. "We're simultaneously maintaining a dialogue on a visa-free regime and on the facilitation of the visa regime... Around 40% of Ukrainian citizens who apply for Schengen visas, according to the European Commission, receive them for free. It's real progress," he said. "We're simultaneously agreeing on steps required for our country to seek the cancellation of visas. It's quite realistic. Positive changes are being seen in our country, and EU experts are already talking about this," Hryshchenko said.

18.

Yanukovych scraps NATO body

06.04.2010, The Moscow Times

READ MORE: <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/yanukovych-scraps-nato-body/403393.html>

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych has scrapped a state body set up to oversee the country's eventual accession to NATO, a presidential decree on his web site said Tuesday. The move was in line with statements by Yanukovych that membership in the Western military alliance was no longer on the agenda, and it was certain to please Moscow, with which he is trying to establish warmer relations. The decree said he had wound up a presidential commission for preparing Ukraine for membership in NATO — a body set up by his predecessor, Viktor Yushchenko, who was on poor terms with Moscow. A separate decree said Yanukovych had also closed down an allied body overseeing Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration. Though both bodies exerted little influence on political reality, the move by Yanukovych to shut them down seemed like a strong message to Moscow.

19.

Kiev courts EBRD for gas transit network

02.04.2010, UPI

READ MORE: http://www.upi.com/Science_News/Resource-Wars/2010/04/02/Kiev-courts-EBRD-for-gas-transit-network/UPI-80091270217624/

Cooperation between Kiev and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development can help modernize a gas transit network, the Ukrainian prime minister said. The new government of pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych is working to restore its regional reputation as an energy transit nation for the European Union. The recession that rocked world markets in 2009 pummeled the Ukrainian economy, however, forcing Kiev to look to international lenders for support. Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov said working with the EBRD was vital to modernizing the gas transit network in Ukraine, Russia's state-run news agency RIA Novosti reports.

20.

President Yanukovych rules out merger of Belarus, Russia, Ukraine

02.04.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: http://naviny.by/rubrics/english/2010/04/02/ic_articles_259_167308

President Viktor Yanukovych has flatly rejected the proposal that Belarus, Russia and Ukraine establish a single state with Kyiv as its capital city. "Is there any right to discuss the matter? For me, the president, there isn't any," Mr. Yanukovych's press office quoted him as saying on April 1, BelaPAN reports. Closer integration with the European Union is Ukraine's strategic goal, the

president said. Earlier this month, a leading Russian lawmaker submitted a plan to his Ukrainian counterparts for the three countries to unite by 2020. Yevgeny Fedorov, a deputy head of the ruling United Russia party and of the economic policy and business committee in Russia's lower parliamentary house, said that the plan would bring prosperity to all three states. He submitted the proposal to the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine's parliament). "There is one undeniable fact: Ukraine is an independent sovereign state. And this is put down in the fundamental law of our country," Mr. Yanukovich said.

XIII. EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

1.

Two formats of partnership

07.04.2010, European Dialogue

[READ MORE: http://eurodialogue.org/Two-Formats-of-Partnership](http://eurodialogue.org/Two-Formats-of-Partnership)

The Summit of the Visegrad Group, held in Budapest, with the participation of all engaged members with the EU program "Eastern Partnership" gave a good ground to compare the two formats of cooperation and the analysis of some results of European initiative development. Before the official start of the European Union "Eastern Partnership" program some diplomats and commentators noted a definite similarity of the two cooperation models. In spring last year the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Ukraine Jaroslav Basta in public compared the "Eastern Partnership" with the project of the "Visegrad Four", within the framework of which the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia managed "not only to help each other to get ready to the EU membership, but keep on cooperate successfully". Polish, Czech and Ukrainian Mass Media made plenty of such comparisons in 2009.

XIV. ENERGY

1.

Azerbaijan, Romania and Georgia to sign memorandum on gas supplies

13.04.2010, Trend News

[READ MORE: http://en.trend.az/capital/pengineering/1668498.html](http://en.trend.az/capital/pengineering/1668498.html)

Today Azerbaijan, Georgia and Romania will sign a memorandum on cooperation in gas sphere in Bucharest. "The signing will take place between the Ministry of Economy, Commerce and Business Environment of Romania, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Industry and Energy and the Ministry of Energy of Georgia. The project envisages construction of two terminals for liquefied natural gas - one in Georgia, another in Romania. According to preliminary data, the project cost will amount to 4-6 billion euros. Memorandum on the implementation of this project was signed between Georgia and Romania in October 2009, as well as between Romania and Azerbaijan earlier this year. It envisaged establishing a working group to sign a memorandum.

2.

Construction of Nord Stream gas pipeline begins in Russia

09.04.2010, Trend News

[READ MORE: http://en.trend.az/capital/pengineering/1666740.html](http://en.trend.az/capital/pengineering/1666740.html)

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on Friday attended a ceremony near the Finnish border to celebrate the beginning of construction work on the Nord Stream gas pipeline, DPA reported. The 7.4-billion-euro (9.9 billion dollars) pipeline will from 2011 transport Russian gas to Europe, which the European Union hopes will help to ensure the bloc's future energy security. Former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, chairman of Nord Stream's board, also took part in the ceremony at Portovaya Bay. Nord Stream said that the first three kilometers of the pipeline, which will eventually stretch 1,220 kilometres under the Baltic Sea to Greifswald in northern Germany, had already been

laid near the Swedish island of Gotland. Three specially commissioned ships will be responsible for laying the pipeline. The Castoro 6 is already on the job and in June will be joined by the Castoro 10, which will be based off the coast of Germany.

3.

Russia to sign last document on South Stream gas project by May

08.04.2010, Ria Novosti

READ MORE: <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20100408/158479362.html>

Russia expects to sign the last document required to launch the South Stream gas pipeline construction by the end of April, Energy Minister Sergei Shmatko said on Thursday. "The last agreement, with Austria, will be signed already in April," Shmatko said. The South Stream project is designed to pump annually 31 billion cubic meters of Russian natural gas along the bed of the Black Sea to Bulgaria and further on to Italy and Austria. The pipeline's capacity could eventually reach 63 billion cubic meters annually. The gas pipeline is expected to start operating in late 2015 and account for about 35% of Russian natural gas supplies to Europe. Russia has already signed inter-governmental agreements with Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia to implement the onshore part of the project.

4.

Delors backs 'enhanced cooperation' on energy

06.04.2010, EurActiv

READ MORE: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/delors-backs-enhanced-cooperation-energy-news-418308>

Not all EU countries are ready to embark on a common EU energy policy just yet. But a smaller vanguard of countries could decide to go ahead without delay, according to former European Commission President Jacques Delors. Europe's existing energy policy is "suboptimal," states Delors in a policy paper published by Notre Europe, a think-tank founded by the iconic former Commission chief himself. In his foreword, Delors laments that despite a dramatic increase in regulatory activity designed to establish a broad European energy market and fight climate change, the European Union has struggled to develop a common energy policy. "The national solutions adopted by member states [...] have proven inadequate to the task and have increased the risk of diverging and even conflicting responses to common challenges," Delors writes. Without naming Russia, Delors says that to ensure that no "third country" can engage in targeted reductions of energy supplies, the EU must present a single interface in its relations with its external partners.

XV. EUROPEAN UNION

1.

South Caucasus: EU must play greater role in stabilising the region, say MEPs

08.04.2010,

READ MORE: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/030-72203-096-04-15-903-20100406IPR72190-06-04-2010-2010-false/default_en.htm

The EU must steer a strategy for stability, prosperity and conflict-resolution in the South Caucasus, MEPs insist in a draft resolution adopted by the Foreign Affairs committee on Thursday. The region is central to the EU's energy interests as it hosts the South Caucasus Pipeline, transporting gas from the Caspian to the Black Sea. The implementation of the Eastern Partnership, which covers the three South-Caucasian republics, and the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty offer the EU a prime opportunity to conceive a comprehensive strategy for the region, says the report, drafted by Evgeni Kirilov (Bulgaria, S&D). Europe will have to deal with a complex geopolitical situation, however, in a region marked by conflict in the Nagorno Karabakh area and in Georgia, as well as tensions between Armenia and Turkey.

2.

EU frustrated by South Caucasus divisions

08.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE:

http://www.rferl.org/content/EU_Frustrated_By_South_Caucasus_Divisions/2006805.html

The three South Caucasus countries represent a particularly frustrating challenge for the EU's Neighborhood Policy. The compact region is of great strategic interest for the bloc and as such forms a natural target for its considerable potential for aid and assistance. But the EU finds much of its ambition thwarted by the rivalry and outright conflict between Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. A debate on April 7 at the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee on a draft report advocating the need for a comprehensive EU strategy for the region underscored the frustration felt in Brussels. The author of the report and the European Parliament's rapporteur for the South Caucasus, Evgeni Kirilov, a socialist deputy from Bulgaria, highlighted the importance of regional cooperation. "I am absolutely convinced that regional cooperation is vitally needed in order not just to enhance economic development, but to create the necessary climate, stability, to activate people-to-people contacts and so on," Kirilov said.

3.

EU interested in socio-economic development of Armenia

06.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/economy/news/46595/>

RA Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan received a European Union delegation headed by EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood Policy Stefan Füle, being on a regional visit in Armenia, press office of the government of Armenia reported. Welcoming the guests, the prime minister noted that Armenia is satisfied with the progress of ongoing joint programs with the EU, adding that much work has to be done in this direction. In turn, Stefan Füle noted, that the EU is interested in socio-economic development of Armenia. He said, the formation of new contractual relations between the EU and Armenia will help to review and evaluate the programs carried out to date and discuss possible ways of deepening relations furthermore. The officials discussed the National Indicative Program for 2011-2013 in frames of "Eastern Partnership". The Prime stressed, that formation of democratic structures and effective management system are priorities for the country.

XVI. PROTRACTED CONFLICTS

1.

Armenian Prime Minister pledges support for Nagorno-Karabakh

13.04.2010, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

READ MORE: http://www.rferl.org/content/Armenian_Prime_Minister_Pledges_Support_To_NagornoKarabakh/2011435.html

Nagorno-Karabakh -- Armenian Prime Minister Tigran Sarkisian has promised continued economic assistance to the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reports. "The Armenian economy, which stands by Nagorno-Karabakh, can solve any problem," Sarkisian said at a meeting of the Armenian and Karabakh governments in Stepanakert, the capital of the unrecognized republic, over the weekend. Sarkisian stressed that Armenia last year did not cut its annual financial assistance to Stepanakert. The aid totaled 33 billion drams (about \$90 million) and was provided despite a serious shortfall in Armenia's own tax revenues resulting from a sharp contraction in its economy. Sarkisian said the funding, which is key to Karabakh's budget, will continue this year.

2.

Turkey responsible for pledges given to Azerbaijan, Erdogan assures
10.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/46846/>

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent a letter to Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev in the Azerbaijani language. Erdogan wrote in his message that "Turkey responsible for pledges given to Azerbaijan and asks it not to worry." Erdogan mentioned that "Turkey's position on Karabakh issue did not change." "Yes, we want to normalize our relations with Armenia, meanwhile we take into consideration Azerbaijan's interests. For us, normalization of relations with Armenia is linked with the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement," he said, 1news.az reported.

3.

Serzh Sargsyan: key to Karabakh conflict resolution is in our hands
09.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/46795/>

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan said that the possibility of resumption of hostilities in Nagorno Karabakh has always persisted. "The threat of resumption of hostilities will persist until stability is established in the region," Mr. Sargsyan told journalists in Tavush region. At the same time, he noted that the danger of war becomes more substantial for the Armenian people in two cases – when Azerbaijan, having no other way to resolve the problem, resorts to militaristic statements, and when internal political forces exploit this issue. "I do not know what makes Baku use the language of threats, as I do not see its superiority over us," President Sargsyan said, adding that he does not see the threat of a new war in the near future. Referring to the current negotiation process over the Karabakh conflict settlement, the Armenian President estimated it as "normal." "I have repeatedly stated that the key to the Karabakh conflict settlement is in our hands," he said, adding that if the issue on the NKR people's right to self-determination is settled, it would be much easier to address the others.

4.

FM: Azerbaijan welcomes all efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in region
09.04.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/news/karabakh/1666582.html>

Azerbaijan welcomes all efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in the region and rapid resolving of Armenian-Azerbaijani Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in accordance with the principles and norms of the international law within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry spokesman Elkhan Polukhov told Trend. "The first condition is de-occupation of Azerbaijani territories", Polukhov said, commenting on the initiative of Iran's mediation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Official Tehran presented proposals for resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to the conflict parties, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said. "We hope that parties will take positive actions in connection with resolving of the problem," Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said today at a press conference held in Tehran, MEHR agency reported.

5.

Does EU intend to participate immediately in Karabakh process?
08.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/world/news/46754/>

EU Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Fuele said that he welcomes the efforts of the parties, specifically, the Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents' actions aimed at peaceful resolution of the Karabakh conflict. According to him, activation of efforts within the framework of OSCE Minsk Group is a certain signal proving that the parties do their utmost to

find a solution. "The EU absolutely supports these efforts," Fuele said. At the same time he noted that after the entry into force of Treaty of Lisbon, the EU gained a clearer position in the foreign political arena. "The unresolved conflicts of countries of the European neighborhood remain a serious problem for us. Thus, I consider our immediate participation in their settlement to be possible," said Fuele, adding that with respect to this, great attention will be paid to the interested parties' stances, Trend news reported.

6.

MPs make int'l appeal for declaring Abkhazia, S.Ossetia as occupied

08.04.2010, Civil

READ MORE: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22166>

Georgian parliamentary committee for foreign relations has requested lawmakers from 31 countries to "declare the two Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as being territories under Russian occupation and recognize the ethnic cleansing committed by Russia" in those territories. "We sincerely hope that you can adopt appropriate statements of support on these matters," a letter by the parliamentary committee reads. The letter, according to the parliamentary committee for foreign relations, was sent to its counterpart committees of legislative bodies from 20 EU-member states, plus Norway and Island, as well as Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Japan, Israel and the United States. "Russian policy continues to pursue the systematic undermining of Georgian sovereignty, the increased militarization of the territories Moscow has occupied, and the justification of ethnic cleansing campaigns used against Georgians in those territories.

7.

Georgian FM protests against agreement on deployment of military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia

08.04.2010, Trend News

READ MORE: <http://en.trend.az/news/politics/foreign/1665683.html>

"Instead of fulfilling its international obligations, Russia reinforces its military presence on the Georgian occupied territories, to which clearly attests the treaty on the creation of a joint military base in Gudauta signed between Russia and the so-called "republic of Abkhazia" in Moscow Feb.17, 2010, the Georgian Foreign Ministry reported. The treaty shall be valid for 49 years with possibility of extension for 15 more years. The Ministry protested the agreement between Russia and the so-called "Republic of Abkhazia" and issued a statement on it. Exactly with the aim of legalizing such unlawful action, the Russian Federation tries to impose on the international community its concept of "New European Security Architecture, the statement reads.

8.

Moscow, Tskhinvali sign military base Treaty

08.04.2010, Civil.ge

READ MORE: <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22162>

Moscow and Tskhinvali signed on April 7 an agreement according to which Russia will operate military base in the breakaway region for 49 years. According to the agreement, signed by Russia's Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov and Defense Minister of breakaway region Yuri Tanayev, the military base will protect "sovereignty and security of South Ossetia" and "to counter acts of armed attacks by international terrorist formations." A similar agreement on operation of a military base in Abkhazia was signed between Moscow and Sokhumi in February, 2010. The Georgian Foreign Ministry said that such agreements "signed between the occupant country and the proxy regime created" by Russia "has no legal effects and is invalid." "Instead of carrying out its international obligations, Russia strengthens military presence on the occupied territories of Georgia and tries to place the process of creation of military bases for its occupation troops within 'quasi legitimate'

frames,” the Georgian Foreign Ministry’s statement reads.

9.

Russia, S.Ossetia sign agreement on military base

07.04.2010, Global Security

READ MORE: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2010/04/mil-100407-rianovosti01.htm>

Russia and South Ossetia have signed an agreement on establishing a permanent Russian military base in the former Georgian republic, Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov said on Wednesday. The agreement was signed between Serdyukov and his South Ossetian counterpart Yury Tanayev who is on a working visit to Moscow. "From now on, the status of our military base is changing. With the signing of this agreement, Russia assumes full responsibility for the protection of South Ossetia," Serdyukov said. The agreement is for a 49-year term and can automatically be extended at 15-year intervals, Serdyukov said. A similar agreement was signed in Moscow on February 17 with Abkhazia, another former Georgian republic.

10.

Azerbaijan repeatedly accepted Karabakh as party to negotiations

07.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/46677/>

Armenia's Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian said that Azerbaijan has repeatedly accepted Karabakh as a party to negotiations on the NKR conflict resolution – both de facto and de jure, as Azerbaijan signed the agreement on ceasefire together with NKR. The sooner Karabakh returns to the negotiations process, the more the process will gain, Mr. Nalbandian said during a governmental hour in the RA parliament, answering the question of Artak Zakaryan, a member of the Republican Party parliamentary group. Meanwhile, answering the question of Stepan Safaryan, the head of Heritage parliamentary group, about possible trilateral meeting of Sargsyan-Obama-Erdogan, Nalbandian said: “Such an offer has not been received; if there is no meeting, what shall we discuss?” According to him, currently the possible meeting of Sargsyan-Erdogan is being discussed.

11.

Affirmation of NKR people's right to self-determination is the key to conflict resolution

07.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/46635/>

There’s no sense in referring to other problems unless the status of Nagorno Karabakh is determined, according to Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian. “Affirmation of Nagorno Karabakh people’s right to self-determination is the main point in talks,” he told a news conference in Yerevan on April 7. “Madrid Principles are still serving as a basis for negotiations and the OSCE Minsk Group will continue proposing solutions until the conflicting parties reach a comprehensive agreement,” Minister Nalbandian said.

12.

Opening of Armenian-Turkish border deadly for Azerbaijan

06.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/46569/>

Head of the Analytical Center on Globalization and Regional Cooperation Stepan Grigoryan says that the threat of resumption of hostilities in Karabakh exists, increasing periodically. “Azerbaijan’s threats to use of force have nothing to do with the Karabakh conflict. They target Armenia-Turkey rapprochement process. Opening of Armenian-Turkish border will be deadly for Azerbaijan,” Mr. Grigoryan said during a joint news conference with political scientist Alexander Manasyan. Yet, according to him, Karabakh conflict will not be resolved unless the superpowers reach unanimity on the issue. “The European Union is interested in resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, Russia

is not, Obama remains undecided on South Caucasus policy,” Mr. Grigoryan said. For his part, Alexander Manasyan said that Baku will not venture a new war without permission of the major world powers.

13.

Russia ratifies deals on border protection with S.Ossetia, Abkhazia

05.04.2010, Global Security

READ MORE: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2010/04/mil-100405-rianovosti03.htm>

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has signed a law on ratifying treaties with the former Georgian republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on joint border protection, the Kremlin press office said on Monday. Under the deals, South Ossetia and Abkhazia delegate to Russia the authority to secure their borders with Georgia. Russia recognized the independence of the former Georgian republics in August 2008 after repelling Georgia's assault on South Ossetia in a five-day war. Only Nicaragua, Venezuela and the tiny Pacific island state of Nauru have followed suit. The deals stipulate cooperation with Russia in state border protection, the struggle against terrorism, the smuggling of arms, ammunition, explosives and poisonous substances, radioactive materials, illegal movement of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors across the border.

14.

Senior official says Baku might resort to war if Karabakh diplomacy fails

03.04.2010, Today's Zaman

READ MORE: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=206262>

Azerbaijan is committed to a peaceful resolution of its Nagorno-Karabakh dispute with Armenia, but it may resort to military measures in the future if efforts to end the dispute through talks fail, a senior official of the Azerbaijani administration said on Friday. Ramiz Mehdiyev, the head of the Azerbaijani presidential administration, complained that the international community was not doing enough to pressure Armenia, which invaded Nagorno-Karabakh and the adjacent territory in a war following the collapse of the Soviet Union, to take steps for peace. International mediators of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), comprising representatives from the US, Russia and France, have been working for almost two decades now to find a negotiated solution, but their efforts have not produced a concrete result yet.

15.

Armenia has the right to demand financial compensation from Azerbaijan

02.04.2010, PanARMENIAN

READ MORE: <http://www.panarmenian.net/eng/politics/news/46500/>

Armenakan-Ramkavar Azatakan party issued a statement in which presented its position on the recent processes in the Karabakh conflict settlement. The statement says in particular: "We believe when security of Karabakh is not ensured and bellicose threats are voiced on a daily basis by Azerbaijan, nor concession can be spoken about, because it is inappropriate and dangerous". The Party believes that the territories liberated at the cost of lives of thousands of Armenian men, cannot become a matter of negotiations. "On the other hand Armenia has the right to demand from Azerbaijan the economic compensation for the war unleashed in Karabakh and killing of thousands of innocent citizens," reads the statement. "He issues of Shaumyan and other Armenian-populated areas, as well as of 400 thousand Armenian refugees should be raised at the state level," Armenakan-Ramkavar Azatakan party says in its statement. "Armenian public and government bodies must clearly realize that the liberated territories are the guarantor of security not only of Nagorno Karabakh, but Armenia as well," the statement of Armenakan-Ramkavar Azatakan reads, press service of the party reported.

16.

Abkhazia believes Ukraine to acknowledge its independence

01.04.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: <http://www.kyivpost.com/news/nation/detail/62952/>

President of unacknowledged republic of Abkhazia Sergey Bagapsh believes that Ukraine will acknowledge independence of Abkhazia, he told the Segodnia newspaper. At the same time, he said that Abkhazia does not intend to force this issue. Bagapsh also said that Abkhazia has always supported policy of President Viktor Yanukovich, as the president of Ukraine has always been friendly to whole country. Besides, he expressed hope for acknowledgement of independence of Abkhazia by Belarus, and did not rule out that certain form of economic union could be established between Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. Besides, he expressed readiness for the cooperation with Ukrainian investors and noted that Abkhazia hopes for arrival of Ukrainian tourists and said that traveling Abkhazia is safe.

17.

OSCE Chairperson meets Moldovan government, Transdnestrian leadership, praises constructive efforts towards settlement process

01.04.2010, OSCE

READ MORE: <http://www.osce.org/item/43318.html>

The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Kazakhstan's Secretary of State and Foreign Minister Kanat Saudabayev, in meetings with the Moldovan government in Chisinau and the Transdnestrian leadership in Tiraspol today, urged the sides to continue their dialogue and work towards renewing official talks on a comprehensive political solution to the Transdnestrian conflict . "Kazakhstan's 2010 OSCE Chairmanship is committed to building on the efforts of previous Chairmanships to address protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. We have seen positive developments in the Transdnestrian settlement process in recent months, including the consistent promotion of direct contacts and the resumption of the Expert Working Groups on Confidence-Building Measures," said Saudabayev.

XVII. SECURITY

1.

Obama and Medvedev sign disarmament treaty

08.04.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: <http://www.kyivpost.com/news/russia/detail/63405/>

The United States and Russia signed a landmark disarmament treaty on Thursday they hope will herald better bilateral ties and raise pressure on countries seeking nuclear weapons to renounce such ambitions. Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev signed the pact at a ceremony in the mediaeval Prague Castle after talks that covered nuclear security, Iran's atomic programme and an uprising in the strategic Central Asian state of Kyrgyzstan. The agreement will cut strategic nuclear arsenals deployed by the former Cold War foes by 30 percent within seven years but leave each with enough to destroy the other. Both major nuclear powers needed to show they were serious about reducing their vast stockpiles to lend weight to efforts to curb the atomic ambitions of countries such as Iran and North Korea, and avoid accusations of hypocrisy.

2.

Lytvyn: Russian Fleet's further presence an economic issue

08.04.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: <http://www.kyivpost.com/news/nation/detail/63430/>

Whether or not the Russian Black Sea Fleet will remain based in Sevastopol beyond 2017 must be decided on the basis of Ukraine's economic interests, parliamentary speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn said.

"If Russia wants to discuss the Black Sea Fleet's further presence, it must say how it sees the economic component of this issue. Ukraine must state its position, too, and calculate everything," Lytvyn said at a news conference in St. Petersburg on Wednesday. "The Russian fleet's presence in Ukraine "costs less than \$100 million a year. And this is an arrangement in settlement of the debt," he said. "A serious and matter-of-fact discussion is needed, which we have not had so far, Lytvyn said."

3.

Russia's President orders new anti-terror steps in North Caucasus

07.04.2010, Global Security

READ MORE: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/news/2010/04/sec-100407-rianovosti01.htm>

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has ordered a range of new measures to improve Russia's fight against terrorism in the volatile North Caucasus region, the Kremlin announced on Wednesday. The president ordered the creation of a special anti-terrorism task force in the North Caucasus Federal District. Federal Security Service head Alexander Bortnikov and Russian Security Council chief Alexander Bastrykin are expected to have the group up and running by April 19. Medvedev also ordered officials to prepare by the end of the month a proposal on a new program to combat crime and terrorist acts in the North Caucasus.

4.

Russian Black Sea Fleet ship to take part in Blackseafor exercises

08.04.2010, Kyiv Post

READ MORE: <http://www.kyivpost.com/news/russia/detail/63395/>

The Cesar Kunikov large landing ship will depart from Sevastopol on Thursday to join the Blackseafor exercises, a Navy spokesman told Interfax-AVN on Thursday. "The exercises will focus on the suppression of terrorists," he said. The warships will train for assisting vessels in distress, tactical maneuvering, naval combat and air defense, he said. They will also visit ports in Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania.

5.

Russian Black Sea Fleet poses no threat to Ukraine – Grishchenko

07.04.2010, The Voice of Russia

READ MORE: <http://english.ruvr.ru/2010/04/07/6100281.html>

The Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea poses no threat to Ukraine, despite claims to the reverse by Ukraine's previous "orange" government. This came in a statement by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Konstantin Grishchenko. The high-ranking official said in an interview with the Moscow-based Ekho Moskvyy radio station that the Russian Black Sea Fleet has been based in Sevastopol for centuries. He added that the Ukrainian authorities sought to remove the problem from the Russian-Ukrainian agenda. Moscow and Kiev signed the agreement on the status and terms of stay of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine on May 28th 1997. The agreement authorizes Russia's leasing the Sevastopol naval base for 20 years, until 2017, and is subject to prolongation. The RIA-Novosti news agency says in a report that the previous Ukrainian leaders were opposed to any extension of the agreement

6.

Russia warns against missile increases

06.04.2010, UPI

READ MORE: http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2010/04/06/Russia-warns-against-missile-increases/UPI-43261270568114/

Significant increases in U.S. missile defense could prompt Russia to withdraw from a new arms treaty, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned Tuesday. Lavrov said a "quantitative and qualitative" increase would have an impact on the effectiveness of Russia's strategic nuclear forces, the Russian

news agency RIA Novosti reported. "Russian has the right to withdraw from the strategic nuclear weapons treaty," Lavrov said. He said Washington's plans for a missile defense shield don't constitute a threat to Moscow now but may do so in the future. His warning came just two days before Thursday's scheduled signing by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama of a new strategic arms accord to replace the post-Cold War START 1 treaty that expired Dec. 5. The new treaty calls for a reduction of 1,550 nuclear warheads and a limit of 800 delivery vehicles for each country.

7.

Russia's Black Sea Fleet may be moribund

03.04.2010, UPI

READ MORE: http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2010/04/03/Russias-Black-Sea-Fleet-may-be-moribund/UPI-11431270312843/

The majority of warships in the aging Russian Black Sea Fleet would not be fit for sea missions by 2015, a navy source tells the Gazeta newspaper. "The crews will certainly try to keep their ships in decent condition until the last moment, but the 'iron' has its service life. Nobody would dare to set sail on a ship whose bottom has rotten away," the source told Gazeta, RIA Novosti reported. The Russian news agency said it had earlier been reported that the Black Sea Fleet was set to decommission the destroyer Ochakov and a diesel submarine built in 1982, as well as the destroyer Kerch and several large support vessels.

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The contents of the BSNU are exclusive responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the ICBSS.

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