

## FOREWORDS

On January 13-14 2007, AIPRG convened a conference to evaluate the potential economic and social impacts of opening the border between Armenia and Turkey. This border was unilaterally closed by Turkey in 1993, and in recent years, there has been increased pressure—both external and internal—to open the border and normalize bilateral relations. The conference brought together researchers, policymakers, representatives from international organizations, private businessmen and other stakeholders to examine the potential benefits and costs of opening the border and normalizing relations between Armenia and Turkey. Its goal was to provide policymakers with analysis about ways to maximize potential benefits and mitigate potential costs of border opening. Many researchers and analysts made presentations at the conference, most of which were based on underlying studies and papers that were prepared for the conference. These proceedings provide those studies and papers.

Many of the studies and papers attempt to provide quantified impacts of border opening on various economic phenomena. These studies evaluate how trade flows between Armenia and partner countries might change if the border is opened, how foreign investment into Armenia and military spending by the Armenian government might change, and how different Armenian industries and Turkish geographical regions might be impacted. Some studies discuss impacts qualitatively, such as possibilities for remittance flows from an enlarged regional labor market and prospects for regional investment projects catalyzed by the European Union. The institutional preparedness of the Armenian government for managing a border opening is reviewed. Available evidence on public opinion regarding border opening is comprehensively evaluated. An overview of the key findings of the conference's many studies and presentations, and a summary measure of the potential impact of border opening on the Armenian economy, is given in the opening chapter "The Economic and Social Impacts of Opening the Armenia-Turkish Border: Summary of Conference Research Findings."

AIPRG is pleased to have catalyzed and supported many of the studies contained in this Proceedings, and to have brought together 250 people from Armenia, Turkey, and other countries to discuss their rich findings. The quantity and quality of research that has been done to date on this particular closed border and the potential impacts of opening it is striking in the context of the many geopolitical conflicts that currently exist and prospective impacts of resolving them. We believe, however, that the task is not yet complete. Some impacts have been identified but not yet been quantified, and these might prove to be among the most significant. Just as importantly, it is vital that Armenian and Turkish policymakers and public audiences understand better the nature of the current situation and the potential impacts of changing it. We hope that the reasoned discussion of costs and benefits contained in these Proceedings can help enable rational dialogue to gain its rightful place in the often passionate discourse on the relations between Armenia and its neighbors.

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