

# WIDER BLACK SEA: PERSPECTIVES FOR INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL SECURITY



## / Short Summary /

On January 14-15 the **Armenian International Policy Research Group** ([www.aiprg.net](http://www.aiprg.net)) together with the **Association of Swedish Graduates of Armenia** (ASGA) organized an International Conference entitled “Wider Black Sea: Perspectives for International and Regional Security”. The Conference was of great interest among several people of the Armenian and international society and hosted about 300 participants including political and social activists, scholars, researchers, students, mass media and civil society representatives from **Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Turkey, Slovenia, Germany, the UK, Portugal and the US** as well as representatives from several international organizations.

This Conference was a result of about five-months of work and thanks only to the generous support of our sponsors it was possible to realize one of the biggest Conferences of 2008. Those are **OSCE Yerevan Office, NATO, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the USAID and YSU Alumni Association.**

The Conference consisted of the following main sections:

- The Notion of the Wider Black Sea: Security, Political and Economic Heritage
- Possible Institutional Role of the Wider Black Sea in Conflict Resolution Process
- Viewing the Wider Black Sea from Armenia
- Institutional and Global Challenges for the Wider Black Sea Region
- Perspectives of Different Regional Organizations and Initiatives in the Light of the Wider Black Sea

The format of the participants was specifically noticeable, as there were politicians retired and acting, NGO activists, researchers, academicians, Mass Media and military representatives. In addition to the local media representatives who covered the event actively both days (Armenian TVs covered the event for two days), there were journalists from Germany, Slovenia (taking into account that Slovenia is the EU presiding country it was essential to have Slovenian coverage as well) and Turkey (on the one hand, Ihlas News Agency the biggest news agency airing TV news (from which CNN Turk covered this conference) and providing information for the key newspapers in Turkey and, on the other hand, Cumhuriyet Newspaper).

The Conference was very unique in the sense of various approaches towards the topic of the Conference and the representativeness from academic and governmental organizations, policy making and private institutions and wide media coverage. There were clashing views whether there is such a geopolitical or economic space as the Wider Black Sea. It was several times underlined that the existing conflicts or inter-state tensions are serving as the main hurdles in viewing this region as one geopolitical or geo-economic entity. Therefore, it was argued that the conflict resolution effort should be increased. The economic arguments were suggesting that the solutions to the existing problems could be found by cooperation on business level (networks of stock exchange centers in all capitals, tariff-free trade among the states, etc.). But then it could be argued that there were so various international organizations and entities involved in this region, among them being the EU, NATO, CIS, GUAM, etc. that sometimes the interests of each one of them was conflicting with the interests of the others. Hence, the existence of the more or less active Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) was the only format of economic cooperation, even though the efficiency of that organization has been somewhat put under doubt.

The keynote speeches were made by Ambassador Vladimir Kazimirov, Vice-President of the Association of the Russian Diplomats and former OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairman from Russia and Matthew Bryza, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, USA and OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairman from the USA. There were welcoming addresses by Peter Semneby, EU Special Representative in the South Caucasus and Robert Simmons, NATO Special Representative for Caucasus and Central Asia. Arman Kirakossian, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia as well as several other distinguished guests had speeches in this conference.

All media reactions can be found at:

[http://www.aiprg.net/UserFiles/File/media\\_reactions\\_Black\\_sea.pdf](http://www.aiprg.net/UserFiles/File/media_reactions_Black_sea.pdf). The page will be updated as there are upcoming media reactions in Europe.

The papers and presentations are also currently available on-line:

[http://www.aiprg.net/en/content/29/#black\\_sea](http://www.aiprg.net/en/content/29/#black_sea)

It is planned to publish a Special Issue of the [Armenian Journal of Public Policy](#) (AJPP) on the Conference materials. You are more than welcome to check AIPRG website for further updates and the e-version of AJPP.

The conference has had such repercussions that there are some suggestions that later this year a follow up seminar should be organized.