

Vienna – APA. On 24th March, in Vienna, the Third Armenian Azerbaijani Public Peace Forum was opened with an international Round Table on Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict – Challenges and Opportunities for Building Confidence Between Societies.

25 Mar 2009 16:29

Almost 40 Armenian and Azerbaijani civil society leaders, experts, intellectuals gave a start to the events that are going to continue in Vienna until 27th March. The three Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group Ambassador Bernard Fassier, Ambassador Yury Merzlyakov and Matthew Bryza, as well as the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office for Nagorno-Karabakh conflict Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk and Mr. Alexandros Katsanis, representative of the current OSCE Chairman-in-Office, took part in the Forum.

During almost 5-hours of open and frank discussion, the international mediators and civil society shared their views on the challenges and possibilities to build confidence between the Armenians and the Azerbaijanis today. This is a very rare opportunity when all international mediators in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process are discussing the different aspects of the conflict together with such a large civil society delegation from all sides of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict divide. In such sense, this is an event that marks a milestone in the Nagorno-Karabakh peacebuilding process.

After the round table, the mediator of the dialogue, International Alert's representative for Eurasia region Dessimslava Roussanova, said: "The three Co-Chairmen had a united message to the Forum – war is not an option. But the Co-Chairmen were there not just to deliver their messages. They were there to listen, to engage in dialogue, and to discuss very frankly with civil society issues and aspects of the Nagorno-Karabakh peacebuilding process and the possible role that civil society could play in it. The discussion was very constructive, the tone was extremely positive. There was a desire among many that this collaboration between civil society and the mediators should become a regular cooperation."

Regnum agency reports that Co-Chairs made interesting speeches in the event. French Co-Chair Bernard Fassier noted that the mediators did not solve the problem, but assist the sides in the process and try to achieve international guarantee.

To him, the compromise is a solution of the problem without defeat, not missing the opportunity. Fassier added that attempts on recognition of Nagorno Karabakh as independent state and returning it to Azerbaijan without any terms can cause new war.

The diplomat stated that Madrid proposals were not ideal and stressed that unideal compromise was better than the war.

“The real version is returning of territories, which are under the control of Armenian servicemen, to Azerbaijan and security of the temporary status of Nagorno Karabakh for Baku and Yerevan. Self-determination of peoples problem can be solved after 5-10 or 15 years, when Azerbaijani community will return back to their lands ,” he said.

The US Co-Chair Matthew Bryza underlined that Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents should achieve the peace.

“They should know that the process will not occur basing on Azerbaijan, but international guarantee,” he said. Bryza added that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supported to assist for the solution to the conflict.

Russian Co-Chair Merzlyakov noted that the difficult problem is divergence of opinion between the sides on status quo. The diplomat added that the monitorings are held to strengthen confidence building between the sides at present.

“One of the last monitorings did not take place because of violation of cease fire . Moreover, the sides did not implement demands of MG on withdrawal of snipers from the front. The mediators support negotiations conducted between Azerbaijani and Armenian civil societies. Such kind of meetings will not be held in Yerevan, Baku , but other cities,” he said.