

Speech by President of the Republic of Armenia H.E. Robert Kocharyan at the international conference "Ultimate Crime, Ultimate Challenge"

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We pay tribute to the memory of vanished victims as we commemorate the 90th anniversary of the tragic events. We do it with doubled pain, since we are still bound to continue the struggle for the international recognition of the committed crime.

The First World War aimed at global re-distribution of the world and the big ideological controversy of the 20th century that followed became the major obstacles to recognition of the legitimate rights of the Armenian people. We became victims of the First World War even though we were not the initiators of that war. And our right for memory was sacrificed to the Cold War even though we were not its masterminds.

When the planned policy of extermination of the Armenian nation was executed the term "genocide" did not exist. Nor was it defined. There were no international structures that could serve as a floor for discussions to give a united response to that crime of genocide.

Obviously the world is changing. It took time for the world to treat genocides as crimes against humanity with all the relevant consequences. It took time to prevent the practice of sacrificing fundamental humanitarian values to the geopolitical interests of great powers and to include the moral considerations into foreign policy making of the civilized world. The avenue of that change was tragic for many peoples. For the Armenian people the price of that change equals one and a half million of human lives. Today also the Armenian question is kept hostage to some geopolitical interests.

Modern technologies allow watching live the military operations unfolding in different parts of the world, the term "genocide" is well defined, and numerous regional and universal international organizations are put in place. Countries are more determined in responding to a threat or attempt to commit genocide in any part of the world. However, all this did not protect the humanity from new genocides. Yugoslavia, Rwanda, East Timor, Sumgait - in all these places once again innocent people were slaughtered. This comes to prove that there is a need to amplify the efforts aimed at effective suppression of the genocidal attempts.

That is exactly why the recognition and condemnation of genocides is so crucial. Recognition bears in it a huge potential for adequate response. Prevention of that crime is particularly important.

Condemnation of genocides committed in the past is also very important. It first of all comes to prove that the crime has no expiration clause, and those guilty will be brought to justice in any case. It is important in terms of containment of future genocidal intentions.

It is through recognition and condemnation that states educate their citizens. The lesson is: the state machinery shall not become a tool in implementation of that terrible crime. We have the duty of establishing atmosphere that would exclude any extremist divisions based on the nationality, ethnos, and religion or along any other dividing lines, any propaganda of hatred by one group against another.

Another important component is the future fate of a people that has survived genocide. The Armenian people, due to genocide, were displaced, became a refugee people and were scattered across the globe. International recognition of the Armenian

Genocide and necessity of restoration of historic injustice were sacrificed to the grand politics. Most of the criminals who planned and implemented the genocide escaped the punishment. Moreover, the remains of Taleat pasha who was assassinated in Berlin, were returned to Turkey and buried with honors in Istanbul. It was a sad evidence of carrying on the baton in relay race of impunity. The humanity pays a tremendously high price for forgetting such crimes.

Using this opportunity I would like to thank all those countries, which at different levels have addressed the issue of the Armenian Genocide and have recognized it, as well as all those individuals and organizations that have contributed towards that recognition. The role of Diaspora in that regard is absolutely inestimable. By such recognition states also say "no" to all possible future genocides. The number of victims of the Armenian genocide could be incomparably higher and the fate of survivors much more severe if not for a number of outstanding individuals, including Morgenthau, Bruce, Nansen, Verfel, Briusov, Wegner, Lepsius, and many others who stood by our people in those terrible days.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Republic of Armenia, as an independent state, has put its position straight forward: recognition of the Armenian Genocide is also important for prevention of future possible genocides. Recognition is important for Armenian-Turkish relations, since it could give answers to many questions that exist between our two peoples, it would allow to look ahead.

We remember the past with pain, but without hatred. For us it is difficult to comprehend the response of the Turkish side, which is represented not only by the denial of the past, but also by the blockade of nowadays Armenia. We have come across a paradox that still needs to be apprehended. The perpetrator, not the victim is furious with the past.

We are confident that international recognition of the Genocide will help Turkey to come to terms with its own past and to overcome the complex which is inherited from generation to generation and which creates additional complexities in the relations of our neighboring nations.

I once again welcome all of you and wish you effective work. Thank you.