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Sustainable Armenia and Artsakh

Armenia, Artsakh, and the diaspora are parts of one nation. Today, there are more Armenians living outside of Armenia than in Armenia. As diaspora Armenians, we have as much responsibility, if not more, for our country as Armenians living in Armenia and Artsakh. The Armenian diaspora is fortunate to have many successful businessmen, doctors, engineers, and educators all around the world. It is through our collaborative efforts that we can improve and support the development of our country. Armenia has encountered many economical, social, and national security challenges after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the recent war between our homeland and Azerbaijan and the Covid-19 pandemic have left our country with serious challenging issues. Therefore, the Armenian diaspora must help facilitate changes by helping overcome poverty, improving infrastructure and agriculture, and educating in order to benefit and create a sustainable future for our country.

Poverty is one of the biggest problems in Armenia and Artsakh. Twenty-three percent of Armenians living in Armenia and Artsakh experience poverty, which makes their daily buying power below \$1.90 per day. Unemployment and poverty are closely related since unemployment is the main reason many people in Armenia and Artsakh face poverty. The unemployment rate in Armenia is about 30 percent making a great impact on its economy. This is demonstrated through the numbers of Armenian workers leaving the country to find better jobs and earn higher wages. Researchers estimate that about 14 percent of the Armenian population emigrated to places like Russia and the United States to find employment. To overcome poverty in Armenia, we need to bring job opportunities to many of the unemployed Armenians. Currently, one-fourth

of the jobs in Armenia are low-paying jobs. Therefore, if any Armenians from the diaspora have manufacturing businesses, companies, etc. they should relocate them to Armenia and create middle-income positions for many unemployed workers. By doing so, we will create more job opportunities. More jobs means improved employment rates and less poverty. Additionally, increasing jobs can also mean building better than ever infrastructure, greater crop production, and better education for all Armenians.

Our homeland is known for many fruits and vegetables such as apricots, grapes, peaches, plums, pomegranates, mulberries, potatoes, etc. However, only 17 percent of the country's land is suitable for farming, and the agricultural system does not create enough jobs or affordable food. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Armenia had to replace some of its industrial economies with agriculture to feed its people. The government, therefore, started rapidly creating more small farms and sold them to citizens. These farms were created in rough mountainous regions, and many of the farmers often lacked agricultural knowledge. In addition, many of these small farms lacked sufficient infrastructure and farming technology. We, the diaspora, can help by introducing efficient farming technology to the farmers. Armenians in the diaspora who are knowledgeable in agriculture and farming can help by teaching farmers and unemployed citizens how to sufficiently grow many quantities of crops. If we can develop thorough education and start building adequate infrastructures for farmers, Armenia and Artsakh will be able to produce a greater quantity of food on their own and improve the standard of living. Also, if we can produce large quantities of crops, we will be able to export internationally.

Infrastructure is the economic anchor for growing the economy and creating new jobs. The infrastructure in Armenia and Artsakh needs substantial improvement. Due to the recent war, there are numerous damaged buildings, cities, homes, churches, and schools. Many of their

roadways were built during the Soviet period, and they were greatly damaged during the war. They require extensive repairs and renovations. We can help rebuild and design new infrastructure by bringing engineers from the diaspora. Engineers from the Armenian diaspora can come together to renovate and rebuild broken-down structures. Since Armenia and Artsakh are not rich in oil, engineers can create new ways to collect energy using natural resources, such as the wind and sun. Engineers can cooperate with the government to hire unemployed Armenians to help build solar and windmill farms all around Armenia and Artsakh harnessing energy to power the country. Armenia can be self-sufficient for energy. In addition, engineers need to build and create technology, including aqueducts and canals, that can help farmers around Armenia and Artsakh. Moreover, we must also help rebuild schools and hospitals. Schools are one of the most important infrastructures that must be built and renovated because they educate all Armenians and continue our Armenian Heritage.

An ancient Chinese philosopher wrote “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” Education is the essence of improving lives. Education is a powerful tool that allows people to think, solve problems and create. Technology has made it possible to connect and educate even oceans away. I, as a seventh-grader, am facilitating change in Armenia by volunteering my time and teaching Armenian youth. I connect via Zoom and spend an hour on Saturday mornings teaching my peers how to speak English. Any Armenian with any expertise can facilitate change in our homeland by educating a fellow Armenian in Armenia.

The diasporic Armenians have an enormous role and responsibility in facilitating the advancement and restoration of our country. Our homeland is facing many difficult challenges such as economic downturn and social and national security. Every Armenian in the diaspora can

play a role in improving the lives of Armenians living in Armenia and Artsakh. It is through our collective and collaborative efforts that we can facilitate changes in areas such as overcoming poverty, improving agriculture and infrastructure, and advancing education toward a sustainable future for our homeland.

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