

## Welcome to Armenia



**Dear AGBU delegates,**

**The Melkonian Alumni Worldwide Associations extend their warmest greetings to delegates attending the 83rd World Conference of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) in Armenia.**

**We are sure you have a busy agenda with meetings, conference sessions, panel discussions and site visits, as well as a trip to Karabakh. We wish you all the best and hope that you will be able to address and find practical solutions to the many problems confronting our nation.**

**One of the most important issues that needs to be raised and discussed in full transparency is the unilateral decision of the AGBU Central Board to close the Melkonian school, located in Cyprus, in June 2005.**

**Unfortunately, the decision was made in total defiance and against the wishes of the majority of AGBU members, friends and sympathizers in Cyprus, the Middle East, Europe, the US, Australia and Canada.**

### **HOW TRUSTWORTHY?**

**The Melkonian case is not a simple issue of maintaining or closing a secondary boarding school.**

**It has now become a major pan-Armenian issue, which for the first time raises important questions such as how the AGBU Central Board administers the Trusts under its management, whether it remains a trustworthy organization, and how far it has strayed from its objective of preserving and promoting the Armenian heritage and culture.**

**Closing a school certainly does not fit this profile, when there is an alternative plan in place.**

**We fully support the attempt by the AGBU to set up new projects in Armenia, but this cannot be done at the expense of Melkonian or other schools operating in Europe and the Middle East.**

**The AGBU cannot break its own rules, violate Trusts dedicated to specific purposes, or use the money from the sale of the Melkonian properties for unspecified purposes.**

**The AGBU has become the largest international, non-profit Armenian organization in the world because it enjoys the trust of all Armenians who are confident that it does not violate its own rules and the objectives of the Trusts under its management.**

### **SPLIT**

**For the first time in the history of our great organization, the leadership of AGBU is isolated and has lost touch with its members.**

**We fear that if the Central Board proceeds with its unilateral decision to close the Melkonian in June 2005, then it will cause an irreparable split in AGBU ranks, with damaging effects on the future of the AGBU, on the eve of its centenary celebrations in 2006.**

## **WORLDWIDE SUPPORT**

**The Melkonian Alumni Associations around the world are determined to fight the Central Board decision and will do their utmost to preserve Melkonian.**

**Fortunately, our campaign to save the Melkonian enjoys the broad support and backing of thousands in Armenia and the Diaspora, including AGBU rank-and-file members who have joined in the crusade to keep Melkonian open in order to serve the interests of all Armenians.**

**Our efforts to save the Melkonian also enjoy the unconditional backing of the government of the Republic of Cyprus, which recently authorized a supplemental financial aid package of USD 220.000 annually to help relieve the budget gap, caused by financial mismanagement and over-spending initiated and authorized over the years by the Central Board.**

## **VIABLE PLAN**

**The Melkonian Alumni Associations have a coherent and viable plan to keep the Melkonian open, which will not impose any future financial or administrative obligations on the AGBU, other than what is rightly due to the school under the Trust established by Krikor and Garabed Melkonian, as well as the rent from the Melkonian Commercial Center, established in 1986 when part of the school's property was sold to generate income.**

**We promise to fight to keep our great school, the Melkonian open.**

**Join our cause and make this your fight.**

**Raise the Melkonian issue at the Conference. Do not take the leadership's response that "it is a done deal". On the contrary, it is just starting.**

**Furthermore, you have every right to demand full transparency, full accountability and full democracy.**

**The above declaration has been prepared and sponsored by the Melkonian Alumni Associations in Armenia, Australia, California, Canada, Cyprus, Greece, Lebanon, Turkey, the UAE and the UK.**

**For further information go to [www.savemelkonian.org](http://www.savemelkonian.org) and [melkonianforever.org](http://melkonianforever.org) or contact [meialumnicy@yahoo.com](mailto:meialumnicy@yahoo.com)**