

## Russian, Armenian Presidents to take bilateral ties to new level

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Moscow hosted a meeting between the Presidents of Armenia and Russia, Serzh Sargsyan and Vladimir Putin, with the latter welcoming the active development of bilateral ties, Kremlin press service said.

At the meeting, the Russian leader specifically stressed the economic cooperation, with the trade turnover between the countries topping 23%. "Russia is Armenia's key trade and economy partner, with the tendency remaining unchanged," Putin added.

As the Armenian President, in turn, noted, a number of pending issues need to be discussed to strengthen bilateral ties and promote positive development. The President expressed hope for the age-long friendly and fraternal relations between Armenia and Russia to continue in accordance with the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance.

"Relations with Russia are an absolute priority for Armenia and we'll take every effort to see them develop. However, there are also some issues that need to be resolved to take our ties to a new level," President Sargsyan said.

Earlier, Russian President's aide said that the prospects of the Armenia-Russia cooperation within Customs Union and Unified Economic Space will be discussed during the September 3 Moscow-hosted meeting between both countries' leaders.

"Development of international processes in the CIS, multilateral cooperation within the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) will be discussed, as well as provision of stability in Transcaucasia, including the Karabakh conflict settlement efforts," Yuri Ushakov said.

Prior to the meeting, Armenian as well as foreign experts were trying to forecast the agenda of a meeting between Serzh Sargsyan and Vladimir Putin. Some believed that the Armenian leader was expected to pick between the Customs Union and EU Associated Membership, choosing between Russia and Europe.

Thus, Sargsyan will have to persuade Putin that the economic element of the Association Agreement won't lead to changes in the military and political sector of cooperation.

Other experts believe the Karabakh conflict settlement in the light of the oncoming presidential election in Azerbaijan to become the key issue of the meeting agenda.

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