

**THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE**

July 22, 1999

Dear Melanne:

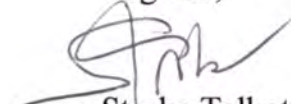
I'm following up on your call the other day about the First Lady's consideration of a trip to the Caucasus around the time of the OSCE Summit in Istanbul in November. It's a terrific idea. The United States has good relations with Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Our aid programs in the region advance goals ranging from democratization and the rule of law to social welfare and women's health.

If her schedule permits, I'd recommend a three-day trip that takes in all three Caucasus countries. If, however, she has time to visit only one Caucasus state, I'd suggest you go to Georgia, which has been a leader of reform in the former USSR and whose president, Eduard Shevardnadze, is one of the great figures both of the region and of our era.

As for the other two states, they should be seen as a package: the First Lady should not visit Armenia unless she visits Azerbaijan as well. Relations between the two remain strained over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, and a visit to one without visiting the other would be damaging to our diplomatic efforts (in which I've been involved as the American co-chair, with Russia and France, of the so-called Minsk Group Process under the aegis of the OSCE).

Let me know whether Georgia-only or all three make sense from your standpoint, and we'll put in place a process to make sure that you get the necessary support for your planning.

Regards,



Strobe Talbott

Melanne S. Verveer

Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff to the First Lady  
Office of the First Lady  
The White House

*file Georgia  
Caucasus*

## **Caucasus Trip Suggested Activities**

The following suggestions illustrate some of the things the First Lady could do.

### **Armenia**

In addition to meeting with President Kocharian, we could structure Mrs. Clinton's schedule so that she spends most of her time within the Yerevan city limits. This would allow her to make best use of available time and to emphasize independent/NGO groups instead of government entities. We suggest the following options:

- A speech at the U.S.-supported American University of Armenia (AUA) to the students who are enrolled in master's programs in public health, law, business administration, political science and engineering.
- An event hosted by Armenian First Lady Bella Kocharian with female political, civic and business leaders. This would be an excellent occasion for addressing our support for economic, democratic, education and health reform and a larger role for women in society.
- A visit to AUA's Mammography Center, whose establishment was spear-headed by Alexandria, Virginia resident Rita Balian and the Armenian American Cultural Association and which has been vigorous in advancing women's health issues in Armenia.

Time permitting, the First Lady could consider travel outside Yerevan to some of the centers of Armenian history and culture:

- Etchmiadzin (approximately 30 minutes by car from Yerevan), the "Vatican" of Armenia. The First Lady could meet the Vicar General, who will head the Armenian church until a Catholicos is elected (probably in the spring) to succeed Karekin I, who died on June 29.

### **Azerbaijan**

The First Lady, in addition to meeting with President Aliyev, could stress contacts with NGO's and organizations promoting the growth of a civil society and

the alleviation of human suffering in Azerbaijan. Other options we recommend include:

- A visit to a camp for persons displaced by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and/or to the Red Cross' Prosthetics Center, which helps those victimized by land mines planted in connection with the conflict.
- A visit to an orphanage supported by the International Women's Club (founded by Anne Kauzlarich, wife of the former U.S. Ambassador to Azerbaijan).
- A visit to one of the local banks receiving technical assistance through the USG-supported Caucasus Enterprise Fund. This program aims at strengthening the private sector.

## **Georgia**

A meeting with President Shevardnadze would be especially important given his demonstrated support for democracy and Western-oriented foreign policy. Other options could include:

- A meeting with the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, a Georgian NGO run by a young woman lawyer. USIA is considering providing the association with a law library.
- A visit to an orphanage or hospital in Tbilisi or a child-oriented institution, such as the children's ballet theater.

The First Lady could also consider a visit to Mskheta, Georgia's ancient capital, about a 25 minute drive outside Tbilisi. In addition to its superb cathedral, Mskheta boasts a nearby ancient mountaintop monastery that arguably offers the best views in the Caucasus. Mskheta has a home for street children, which the First Lady could also visit.