

## AUA Hosts Tobacco Free Armenia Conference

YEREVAN - On March 2, 2007, the American University of Armenia hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Meeting of the Coalition for Tobacco Free Armenia (<http://www.tobaccofreearmenia.am>). The Coalition was formed in June 11, 2004 and is a voluntary union of 25 NGOs.

The last few years were a time of tangible changes in tobacco control legislation and public movement. The main purpose of the meeting was to report on the activities of the Coalition for Tobacco Free Armenia and to discuss the role of civil society in future enhancement of tobacco control policies.

Dr. Haroutune Armenian, the President of American University of Armenia, and Dr. Artavazd Vanyan, Chief of Sanitary Epidemiological Control Department greeted the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Meeting participants.

Dr. Armenian mentioned that adoption of the Law was just the first step. He was confident that it was important not only to strive for European standards in tobacco control but also to demonstrate leadership to go beyond:

Dr. Vanyan mentioned that legislative changes alone could not be enough to change the

situation in general; he emphasized the important role of NGOs.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Meeting, 22 organizations participated in the NGO anti-tobacco exhibition demonstrating their anti-smoking posters, fliers, educational materials, calendars, children's pictures, as well as social ads on healthy lifestyle.

With support from the Open Society Institute, the Armenian Public Health Alliance (ArmPHA, a union between Arme-

nian Public Health Association, Armenian Public Health Union and the American University of Armenia) published a brochure summarizing thirty anti-smoking programs implemented by 23 NGOs in Armenia in 2004-2006.

As a part of this meeting, the American University of Armenia in close collaboration with the ArmPHA partners organized a workshop on Tobacco Control Policy with support from the Open Society Institute.

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with leaders of the country Prime Minister and the NA Speaker of Armenia promised him that the Armenian leadership will do everything possible to hold free and fair elections in the country.

Speaking about cooperation between Armenia and the "Millennium Challenges" Corporation, John Hjukko stressed that his organization insists on keeping three main parameters in those countries, which claim to get financial means for realizing the projects of "Millennium Challenges". "Our priorities remain the same-development

of democracy, investments to "human resources" and establishment of economic freedoms," Hjukko stated.

Armenia received \$225 million grant from the American Corporation for developing her agriculture in the past, "Interfax" reports.

Parliamentary elections in Armenia will be held May 12 this year. Registration of party lists and candidates will take place from April 2 till April 7. The electoral campaign will launch soon after this process and will last till May 10. The Armenian National Assembly has 131 members.