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PRESS RELEASE

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**Armenia Tree Project Plants Five Millionth Tree with US Ambassador Richard Mills**

YEREVAN--Armenia Tree Project (ATP) reached a milestone, planting its five millionth tree this spring. Another 68,607 trees were planted at 125 sites throughout Armenia and Artsakh this spring, bringing the total number of trees planted to 5,021,249 since 1994.

The symbolic five millionth tree was planted by Executive Director Jeanmarie Papelian, Country Director Lucineh Kassarjian and US Ambassador to Armenia Richard Mills, Jr. on April 22, which is celebrated as Earth Day around the world.

“We had the honor of hosting Ambassador Mills at our nursery in Karin on Earth Day to join us in planting our five millionth tree,” notes Country Director Lucineh Kassarjian. “We selected a silver birch, a deciduous tree, to celebrate both the milestone and our partnership that goes back to the days of Harry Gilmore, the first US Ambassador to Armenia and a strong supporter of our mission.”

ATP had a busy spring season of community tree plantings, with 30,765 trees planted at more than 100 sites in every region of Armenia, including Martuni in Artsakh. Nearly 4,000 of these trees were provided by families participating in the Backyard Nursery Micro-Enterprise Program. Several thousand fruit trees were also distributed to families in Syunik’s Yeghvard Village and the border village of Nerkin Karmir Aghpyur in Tavush.

ATP partnered with a number of local and international organizations for community tree plantings including AYB School, Armenian Lighthouse Foundation, Birthright Armenia, Impact Hub, Land and Culture Organization, Rotary Club of Yerevan and UWC Dilijan.

“It was a very early spring and we had to get going right away, before the seedlings woke up,” explains Deputy Director Arthur Harutyunyan. “The sudden change in weather surprised us, but we can proudly say it did not get in the way of our work and that we came out of it victoriously!”

In ATP’s forestry division, 50 temporary workers were hired to plant 37,842 trees in a forest in Koghes in the Lori region. This forest now holds more than 90,000 trees. ATP’s foresters experiment with different seed sowing methods in order to grow the trees efficiently and increase survival rates.

Half the trees planted this season were grown in ATP’s nurseries in Karin and Khachpar villages, with others coming from the Mirak Family Reforestation Nursery. ATP’s Karin Nursery now offers tours under the “Get Rooted” theme, which encourages people to visit and join the green movement. The next Karin tours are scheduled for May 30 and June 5.

ATP is also expanding its activities with a new nursery in Chiva, which will provide more trees to the southern regions. Situated in Vayots Dzor, this spot is considered the wine capital of Armenia, is strategically located on the historic Silk Road and is a major destination for tourism and sightseeing. The oldest wine production facilities in the world were discovered in the local Areni caves.

“ATP is well known for tree planting, but we want people to think of more than trees and forests when they think of us. ATP’s environmental education classes teach students about water preservation, recycling, waste management, climate change--all the knowledge they need to care for our planet and make it a greener and safer place. We partner with other organizations to do public cleanups, plantings, conferences and teacher trainings. This is the ATP of the 21st century,” says Kassarjian.

Armenia Tree Project has planted more than five million trees since its inception in 1994. The NGO is the only major tree planting program in the country and in its 22 years has successfully established four nurseries, two environmental education centers and has greened community areas in every province of Armenia and Artsakh. In the process, the organization has provided employment for hundreds of people and provided vital resources to thousands of village residents. For more information, visit the website www.armeniatree.org

**PHOTO CAPTIONS**

ATP’s five millionth tree was planted on Earth Day by Executive Director Jeanmarie Papelian, Country Director Lucineh Kassarjian and US Ambassador to Armenia Richard Mills, Jr.

ATP planted thousands of trees with partners this spring, including more than 50 students at United World College Dilijan who planted trees representing their home countries