



Rumsfeld Fellowship Reunion, June 23-26, 2012

The Rumsfeld Foundation hosted the first reunion of fellows from its joint program with the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies from June 23-26, 2012 in Batumi, Georgia. Over four days, attendees discussed the importance of the region, its challenges, and how to increase regional cooperation.



Reunion Participants at "Megrul Lazari" Restaurant- Batumi, Georgia

Of the 62 alumni of the Rumsfeld Fellowship Program, 43 fellows with representatives from 10 countries traveled to Batumi, Georgia to participate in the reunion. Also in attendance were the Founders and Directors of the Rumsfeld Foundation, Joyce and Don Rumsfeld, Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Dr. Fred Starr, Research Director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Dr. Svante Cornell, Executive Director of the Rumsfeld Foundation, Sarah Conant, and Fellowship Program Director, David Soumbadze.



Fellows participating in conference discussions

The reunion featured panel discussions, keynote speakers, and cultural activities, including discussion of ways to strengthen the network of fellows from different vocations and countries.



Batu Kutelia, Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia

Panel discussions covered topics relevant to the region including “Regional Cooperation in Greater Central Asia,” “Regional Security Challenges,” and “Business Opportunities Along the New Silk Road.” Reunion participants considered a wide range of issues affecting the region such as transportation, trade barriers, energy security and diversification, Russia’s and China’s foreign policies, ways to improve security in Afghanistan through regional economic development, and business and investment opportunities in greater Central Asia. Mr. Batu Kutelia, Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia and former Ambassador to the United States, presented a keynote address to reunion participants on Georgia’s democratic reforms and anti-corruption efforts. Dr. Fred Starr and Don Rumsfeld also provided remarks to the gathering.

The final session of the reunion focused on the “Future of the Rumsfeld Fellowship” and ways to improve the program and strengthen the alumni network.

To gain a feel for Batumi outside the conference facilities, the fellows spent an afternoon on a guided driving tour with stops to visit the Batumi Botanical Gardens and the Batumi Public Service Hall, an impressive “one-stop shop” providing over 250 administrative services such as passport renewal, property registration, identification cards, business registration, and marriage and birth certificates.



Fellows at Batumi Public Service Hall



Fellows with Georgian Dancers at Final Reunion Dinner

Reunion participants were also provided a taste of Georgian culture at the final reunion dinner where they enjoyed a variety of traditional performances from an impressive Georgian dancing troupe.

Reunion participants departed Batumi on June 26th with fond memories, new friendships, and a firm dedication to continuing to strengthen this important growing network.

Welcoming Reception



Turkmenistan Fellows: Bayram Atayev, Dowran Orazgylyjow, Ashir Ashirov, Ovez Agayev, Bahtiyar Shadyev



Naranzul Bayasgalan and Saraa Galindiv from Mongolia



Azamat Akeleev (Kyrgyzstan), David Soumbadze, and Don Rumsfeld



Khurshid Kholov (Uzbekistan), Artak Shakaryan (Armenia), and Dowran Orazgylyjow (Turkmenistan)

Conference Panels



Panel on "Regional Cooperation in Greater Central Asia": Bakyt Asanov (Kyrgyzstan), Makhbub Radzhabboev (Tajikistan), Kairat Karmanov (Kazakhstan)



Welcoming Remarks from Don Rumsfeld



Fellows Listening to Welcoming Remarks



Panel on “Energy and Regional Cooperation”: Gulmira Rzayeva (Azerbaijan), Asset Yerali (Kazakhstan), Bayram Atayev (Turkmenistan)



Farrukh Irnazarov and Kodir Norov from Uzbekistan with Dr. Fred Starr, Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute

Cultural Activities



Tour Bus on the way to the Batumi Botanical Gardens



Fellows Watching a Presentation in the Batumi Public Service Hall



Kairat Karmanov (Kazakhstan) and Azis Abakirov (Kyrgyzstan)



Fellows at lunch on the trip from Tbilisi to Batumi



Fellows at Dinner at the Grand Grill in Batumi