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CLOSING CONFERENCE

Promotion of Implementation of the Freedom of Information Chapter of the General Administrative Code in Public Institutions II stage

Tbilisi, December 9, 2004 - On 4-5 December, 2004 the United Nations Association Georgia (UNAG) arranged the conference on closing the second stage of the project- Promotion of Implementation of the Freedom of Information Chapter (FOI) of the General Administrative Code in Public Institutions. The transition to democratic governance poses new challenges and calls for new actions from the public servants. The project was designed in order to assist local public servants to improve their performance by offering an incentive to recognize the rule of law.

FOI chapter has long been perceived as a source and guideline for public servants, however, they often failed to properly implement it. The project has piloted the endorsement of the Freedom of Information chapter in Public Institutions throughout Georgia, including 7 regions, 15 rayons/towns and 7 villages. The project goal was activating the usage of the FOI chapter in public institutions and thus increasing the efficiency of public servants' work in compliance with the principles of FOI of General Administrative Code.

Expectations were undoubtedly justified as the FOI chapter was established in approximately 200 public institutions of Georgia. As a result the ordinary citizens were advised on the Freedom of Information chapter, its usage and importance. One of the activities that significantly contributed to project's successful outcome was elaboration of four model documents, that were designed in three languages- Georgian, English, Russian and were distributed Georgia-wide. They have become the manual for local public servants as currently 165 target public institutions apply the model document- Job Description of the Officer Responsible for Provision of Public Information and 155 target public institutions expressed their will and readiness to compile and submit Report of December 10th for the year 2004.

The package of 27 draft laws and the draft law on "Dues for copying public information" has been prepared by the UNAG and discussed with the Committee of Legal Issues of Parliament of Georgia. The committee in its turn will use the authority provided by the Constitution and address the Parliament of Georgia with legislative initiative to examine the prepared draft amendments for passing. Upon completion of extensive activities amendments to draft laws will be made in accordance with General Administrative Code.

The Conference aimed at the presentation of the project outcomes to public as well as discussion of issues related to the endorsement of General Administrative Code.

The outcomes of the project, problems revealed while project implementation, future plans of the UNAG related to the implementation of the General Administrative Code, as well as general issues addressing the code implementation were covered on the conference. Conference participants who were the following.: representatives of three branches of the state- executive, legislative and

judicial, non-governmental organizations and mass media, were involved in extensive discussions, developed valuable recommendations regarding code introduction and expressed their will for further cooperation.

The project has been implemented by the UNAG in cooperation with IRIS at the University of Maryland under the financial support of United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It was based on the outcomes and the experience gained by the project staff during the first stage of the project covering the period from November 2002 -April 2004 – Promotion of Implementation of the Freedom of Information Chapter of the General Administrative Code in Public Institutions.

To learn more about Democracy and Governance direction and UNA Georgia's operations, please visit the organization's web site: <http://www.una.ge>