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NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND TOLERANCE IN GEORGIA PROGRAM LAUNCH AND INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR TOLERANCE CELEBRATION

TBILISI – On November 16, 2006 at 5:00 PM at the Terrace, Business Center *Metekhi*, United Nations Association of Georgia (UNAG) will hold an official launch ceremony for the USAID funded National Integration and Tolerance in Georgia (NITG) Program.

The ceremony will be attended by Ambassador John Tefft; Giorgi Arveladze, Head of the Administration of the President; Robert Wilson, Acting DCM; Zinaida Bestaeva, State Minister on National Integration; Rowena Cross-Najafi, Public Affairs Officer; Nick Higgins, DG Office Director; Ketik Bakradze, DG Project Management Specialist; Gocha Lordkipanidze, Prime Minister's Advisor, Members of Parliament, representatives of the Council of Europe, European Commission Delegation to Georgia, OSCE Mission in Georgia, Eurasia Foundation, representatives of other International Agencies, Civil Integration and Tolerance Council Members, General Director of Georgian Public Broadcaster, NITG partner agencies, representatives of minority groups, Georgian NGOs, and civil society leaders.

The program will be officially launched on International Tolerance day. This will be the first ever significant celebration of Tolerance Day in Georgia. The event will take place in the old part of Tbilisi, and will include a photographic exhibition on "Diversity & Tolerance," as well as a program presentation to stress the importance of the initiative and to raise awareness.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND TOLERANCE IN GEORGIA PROGRAM (NITG) AND INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR TOLERANCE

The main objective of the NITG program is to promote an increased sense of national unity among the citizens of Georgia through support to the Government of Georgia in the formation of a national integration strategy and action plan. The program will also empower people and organizations to effectively discuss, debate, and resolve a range of issues related to building a cohesive multi-ethnic nation. The NITG Program will work in close cooperation with the principal counterparts in the Government - State Minister on National Integration and President Saakashvili's Advisor on Integration Issues, as well as international and local partner agencies,

including Freedom House, the Georgian Public Broadcaster, Eurasia Foundation and other NGO partners.

In 1996, the General Assembly invited Member States to observe the International Day for Tolerance on 16 November, with activities directed towards both educational establishments and the wider public (resolution 51/95). Looking ahead, NITG plans to use International Tolerance day as an opportunity to celebrate Georgia's diversity and update citizens on the work of the program.