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MEDIA ADVISORY

Georgia

UNDP REGIONAL DIRECTOR MEETS PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER; VOWS CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR GEORGIA'S ECONOMIC REFORMS

Tbilisi, 17 July 2006 - Kalman Mizsei, UN Assistant Secretary General and UNDP Regional Director for Europe and the CIS, has paid a four-day visit to Georgia to discuss economic reforms and development challenges with the country's top leaders and agree on priorities for UNDP assistance to Georgia over the next five years.

"We are very pleased with the fast economic growth and progress made in reforming the country's governance system," said Mr. Mizsei. He pointed out that Georgia has achieved remarkable success in fighting corruption and can serve as a model for other countries in the region. "We look forward to seeing further measures to ensure that economic growth translates into real improvement in people's lives, especially the poor and vulnerable."

On July 16 Mr. Mizsei met with President Mikheil Saakashvili to reiterate UNDP's continuing support for economic reforms - a key area of UNDP's work in Georgia. They agreed that fighting unemployment was a priority, and discussed the need to provide training and small loans to create new opportunities for the long-term jobless.

Thanks to UNDP support, former Estonian Prime Minister Mart Laar has agreed to serve as Senior Advisor to the Georgian President, as a way of helping the country benefit from the experience of Estonia and other successful transition economies.

This assistance continues UNDP support for Georgia's ambitious reforms. In the months after the Rose Revolution, UNDP moved rapidly to help the new government pay decent salaries to civil servants, achieving the dual aim of luring top talent and fighting corruption. This experience has since been emulated in other countries.

On July 17 Mr. Mizsei also met with Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli and discussed the cooperation between UNDP and line ministries. They agreed that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide an ideal framework for poverty reduction in Georgia. Mr. Mizsei offered UNDP's support for complex institutional reforms, particularly in the areas of health, education and justice.

Mr. Mizsei and Mr. Noghaideli signed UNDP's Country Programme Action Plan for 2006-2010. In addition to support for Georgia's reform agenda, priority areas include poverty reduction, democratic governance, environment and energy, and crisis prevention and recovery.

Mr. Mizsei also discussed economic reform with Kakha Bendukidze, State Minister for Reform Coordination, and representatives of the World Bank and IMF.

At the July 17 press conference, Mr. Kalman Mizsei has summarized the results of his visit.

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