



Photo: Torben Holtze, Head of EC Delegation, Lance Clark, UN RC/UNDP RR, George Papuashvili, Minister of Justice

## **EU and UNDP assist Georgia with bringing the penitentiary system to European standards**

*Tbilisi, 15 February 2005 - Following the transfer of the penitentiary from the Interior to the Ministry of Justice in the context of Georgia's accession to the Council of Europe, the EU, among other donors, has been assisting the Ministry of Justice to improve the management and administration of the penitentiary system to bring it closer to European standards. The EU under its Rapid Reaction Mechanism, launched a project, to be implemented by UNDP, to finance rehabilitation works as well as capacity building for the future staff of Rustavi prison 6.*

On 15 February, Minister of Justice of Georgia Giorgi Papuashvili, Head of Delegation of the European Commission Torben Holtze and UNDP Resident Representative Lance Clark hailed the start of a 6 months project aimed at the full reconstruction of Rustavi Prison 6. The reconstruction works are funded by the European Union and implemented by the Georgian construction company TMM-3 under supervision of UNDP

Georgia. UNDP will at the same time provide capacity-building for the future staff of the prison. The overall budget for the project is EUR 1.7 million.

The objective of the project is to provide the Georgian Government with an operational prison in conformity with minimum European standards to function as a model institution for the Georgian penitentiary system reform. The Georgian government has committed itself to use the prison premises as a prison complying with the standards consistent with the Government's commitments under the 'European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment', E.T.S. 126, and the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment'.

The construction of Rustavi prison began during 20 years ago. Since, there have been attempts to open it, however, due to the lack of main supplies (water, electricity and gas or other heating) as well as facilities, also no staff set aside, it has not become operational.

In his intervention Head of Delegation Mr Holtze said that the transfer from the Soviet system to the Western is a rather difficult process and requires time. "The EU understands that the penitentiary system in Georgia faces huge difficulties. These problems cannot be solved only by constructing new prisons. The Ministry and Penitentiary Department are well aware that management and treatment of the prisons and the staff working in this system needs to be changed.

Appropriate training for the staff is needed as well as proper working conditions and salaries. Concepts for reintegration of released prisoners into society need to be developed and introduced already during their stay in the prisons. Administration needs to be more transparent and efficient. All prisons need more efficient security systems -to name only some of the fields which need reform. And Georgia urgently needs support in all these fields", Holtze said.

"The start of the works at Rustavi 6 is the result of intensive cooperation between the Ministry of Justice, EU and UNDP. The rehabilitation work will be complemented by an equally important capacity building component to ensure that the operation of the prison adheres to international human rights standards, both in terms of management structures, administration and training of staff", said Mr. Lance Clark, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative.

The Minister of Justice of Georgia Mr. Giorgi Papuashvili expressed gratitude to the EU and UNDP for their support and pointed out the importance of penitentiary reform – urgent issue for Georgia - especially from human rights perspective, and as such integral part of good governance. He expressed his hope that cooperation would continue.

Pending the final reform of the criminal and penal management policies for Georgia, the Prison will serve as a pilot one to test and implement new methods of prison management and develop standards in this field. It will be used as a model for organisation and training for the Georgian penitentiary service to introduce modern systems of administration and management of detention facilities and detainees, which in future shall guide the operation of all

detention facilities of a similar type in Georgia.

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