

## PRESS RELEASE

### GENDER EQUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL LAUNCHED

**Tbilisi, 29 November 2004:** The first ever Advisory Council on Gender Issues established under the Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia was officially launched on 26 November 2004 at Parliament of Georgia. The council will promote gender equality principles in Georgian society and facilitate the dialogue and cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental structures working on gender issues.

The council is the first institutional mechanism established on the governmental level in Georgia with the support of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) that brings together non-governmental and governmental representatives to discuss and issue recommendations on gender issues, to help ensure that women's voices are heard on an equal footing with men in formulating public policy and decision making at the national and local levels.

Ms. Nino Burjanadze, Chairperson of Georgian Parliament said in her opening speech that gender equity is a matter that concerns us all. She noted that the council will support women's advancement and expanding their role in government and wider participation in development.

The council will cooperate closely with the international and local organizations working on gender issues to jointly develop proposals and recommendations and within its competence will observe the implementation of the international agreements and conventions involving the rights of women and gender equality issues.

According to the Coordinator of the Council, MP Ketty Makharashvili, the council will work on proposals and recommendations for a National Gender Policy setting out the actions to integrate gender equality in all spheres and sectors of the political, economic and social life. Makharashvili also stressed the need for Georgian legislation to conform with the European Union.

Mr. Lance Clark, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative noted that the council opens at a most significant time. In September 2000, at the UN Millennium Summit, world leaders, including Georgia, agreed to eight time-bound and measurable goals and targets for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environment degradation and discrimination against women. In particular, Millennium Development Goal 3 aims at promoting the equal position of men and women in society. He stressed that situation of women is one of the most critical areas for development intervention. He expressed his hope that the council would provide a platform for increased co-operation, on capacity building and skills development activities of women in decision-making positions as well as facilitating a dialogue on gender issues.

The thirty-six month project builds on the UNDP Gender and Politics Programme in the South Caucasus which is funded by the Government of Sweden. The Council will be composed of five lawmakers, six NGOs and four representatives of the Executive Branch of the Government. The funds envisaged for the implementation of the project represent a grant.

Ms. Nino Burjanadze, the Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia, Mr. Lance Clark, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Eric Jönsson, Director of SIDA Coordination Office for the South Caucasus, as well as members of the Council and honorable guests from the organizations supporting and participating in gender mainstreaming programmes in the country attended the launch.

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