



United Nations Development Programme

# PRESS RELEASE

## **UNDP, Norway sign \$10 million agreement to boost development in the Caucasus**

*New York, 11 May 2005*—Zéphirin Diabré, Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Jan Petersen, Foreign Minister of Norway, yesterday signed a Memorandum of Understanding committing Norway to providing \$10 million for UNDP projects in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia over the next three years.

“I am grateful for this commitment from Norway, which builds on the country’s already substantial engagement, in partnership with UNDP, in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States”, Mr. Diabré said during the signing ceremony.

“This Memorandum represents a great opportunity for Norway to promote development by helping to shape projects in the South Caucasus”, said Mr. Peterson.

Norway will provide the funding for programmes in democratic governance, energy and sustainable development. The projects to be funded have yet to be specified, and funding is contingent upon approval by the Norwegian parliament.

UNDP country offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia already collaborate closely with Norway. In Armenia, for example, Norway supports efforts aimed at fighting human trafficking and assisting trafficking victims. In Azerbaijan, Norway is contributing to a UNDP blood bank project aimed at improving the health care system and reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS. And in Georgia, Norway has supported work on a child labour survey, which UNDP has conducted together with the Georgian Department of Statistics.

“This is very welcome support”, said Mr. Diabré. “We are confident that this will provide an excellent foundation for the expansion of our joint efforts.”

The agreement states that both UNDP and the Government of Norway believe that effective democratic institutions are key to mediating and mitigating conflict and crisis by providing non-violent means of resolving political disputes and managing resources. They also provide a base for implementing strong, country-owned development strategies to handle political and economic shocks, to reduce corruption, and, critically, to give the poor a political voice to secure the services and protection needed to provide a better future for themselves and their families.

The Government of Norway plans to deepen its involvement in the South Caucasus by contributing more directly to development on a larger scale, both regional and national, officials said. In order to contribute in an efficient manner, Norway needs the unique development know-how and coordination skills of UNDP – especially in relations with local, regional and national authorities as well as with civil society organizations, according to Norwegian authorities.

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