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High Level Consultation and Workshop to Launch the UN-NGO-Informal Regional Network in Eastern Europe

In order to promote regular contacts between UN and NGOs, to improve regional and international spread of information on UN's activities towards NGOs, and to strengthen their capacities, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)/NGO Section promoted and launched in 2001 the initiative of establishing an informal regional network of NGOs (UN-NGO-IRENE) to gather organizations from Northern Africa, Western Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Latin America.



From left to right: Soknan Han Jung (UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator), Prof. Mircea Malitza (President of BSUF), Gert Rosenthal (President of UN-ECOSOC) and Mircea Geoana (Minister of Foreign Affairs)

In the above context, on 29 May - 1 June 2003, UNDESA/NGO Section and UNDP Romania, in cooperation with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Black Sea University Foundation, organized in Bucharest a High Level Consultation and Regional Workshop on Capacity Building for the UN-NGO-IRENE in Eastern Europe.

The workshop focused on strengthening coordination, collaboration and partnership between the NGO sector in Eastern Europe and the United Nations, on building and reinforcing capacities of participating organizations (15 countries represented) to effectively contribute to national, regional and international development efforts, and on promoting partnership initiatives in the framework of MDGs' implementation and overall objectives of ECOSOC and UNDP

In his opening statement, Mircea Geoana, Foreign Minister, acknowledged UN's "commitment to modernization and unprecedented opening towards partnership with the civil society". The UN plays a catalytic role, helping NGOs to build alliances and networks of cooperation, with a view that "an organised, effective NGO community can make an immense contribution to the work of the UN and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals", stated Mr. Gerth Rosenthal, President of ECOSOC. "In Eastern Europe, the task is particularly relevant as NGOs in the region have a genuine sense of purpose, but they still need support to match their commitment with operational capacity and to facilitate their networking and experience sharing", underlined Ms. Soknan Han Jung, UNDP Resident Representative.

Keynote speakers at the event included Mr. Octavian Stireanu, designated representative of H.E. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania, Mr. Patrizio Civili (Assistant Secretary-General, UNDESA), Mr. Paolo Garonna (Deputy Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Europe), Mrs. Hanifa Mezoui (Chief NGO Section, UNDESA), Ms. Renate Bloem (President, Conference of NGOs in consultative relationship with the United Nations - CONGO), and Mr. Ricardo Espinosa (NGO Liaison Officer, UN Office in Geneva).

Topics debated at the conference included: identification of priority actions at regional and sub-regional levels; NGO presentation and proposals to contribute to the capacity building of the Eastern Europe Informal Network in line with the Millennium Development Goals. The three day workshop ended with a study tour to Giurgiu to visit "Local Agenda 21" project.



From left to right: Gert Rosenthal, Soknan Han Jung, and Mihaela Blajan (Romanian Permanent Mission of Romania to the UN and Chair of UN-ECOSOC NGO Committee)

For further information, please contact UNDP Romania: governance@undp.ro or access UNDP Romania website at: www.undp.ro

