

Launch of Book and Internet Campaign at the Anti Discrimination Caravan

Bucharest August 22, 2007. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) started the second an Internet-based awareness campaign on the importance of combating discrimination, as well as a new edition of the book "Racial Discrimination" by Ambassador Ion Diaconu, former member of CERD. Both activities are part of the **Caravan for information and training on antidiscrimination**, a project run in by UNDP Romania in partnership with the National Council for Combating Discrimination and the Pro Democracy Association Focşani.

The Caravan covered three of the eight development regions of Romania (North-East, South-East and South-West) and brought together the actors involved in and relevant for combating various forms of discriminations. About 400 people participated in training sessions and public debates organized in the months of June and July in Focşani, Iaşi, Bacau, Giurgiu and Craiova.



L.R: Ambassador Ion Diaconu, Gabriela Obodariu, PDA Focsani, Soknan Han Jung UN RC/UNDP RR, Gruia Bumbu, President of National Agency for Roma, Istvan Haller, NCCD

The project conveyed to the public opinion the message that everyone, regardless of gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation, has the right to equal treatment; as well as that discrimination is not only immoral - but also illegal.

"We aimed first and foremost to open the dialogue on discrimination, a phenomenon that still exists in Romania. We want to enable people to build their own actions to tackle discrimination at a local level, where it is often most effective." said Soknan Han Jung, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in her opening statement. "Intolerance, racism, discriminatory practices as well as people's attitudes and behaviors must be changed, and additional efforts are needed to build a more open and inclusive society. This is why we invite Romanians to a public debate about combating discrimination."

Ms Jung thanked all organizations and institutions which supported the Caravan, and encouraged them to continue what was started with this project. "Since we want to make this initiative as interactive as possible, we launch today an

awareness campaign, via Internet. The Caravan ended, but we move the debate on a different ground, hoping that more and more people will get to hear about the fundamental rights of living a life free of discrimination as well as to get to know the mechanism and legal provisions to seek their justice if they are discriminated," added Ms. Jung. The online campaign will be carried out for a month, spreading information about the existing laws, measures and actions to combat discrimination to a wider audience.

Mr. Istvan Haller, State Secretary, member of the NCCD board, saluted the partnership with UNDP. He said that the Caravan was very successful because "vulnerable groups were especially encouraged to and did participate in these public meetings – they received a forum to speak openly about their experiences of exclusion or discrimination and the problems they face in their communities." He also said that "any manifestation of racism and intolerance should not be tolerated, either in public life or virtual reality, therefore a debate on this topic, on the Internet, is most welcomed."

Mr. Gruia Bumbu, President of the National Agency for Roma, appreciated the initiative to start an awareness campaign via Internet, "because there were many reports about cyber hate and racist attitudes against Roma, especially. "

On this occasion UNDP presented the book "**Racial Discrimination**", a comprehensive study on international human rights provisions, written by Ambassador Ion Diaconu, a former member and Chair of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The volume, published under the auspices of UNDP Romania, is a valuable addition to the existing literature and constitutes another part of the active support UNDP Romania offers to national and regional initiatives that enforce the respect and protection of human rights.



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