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### **OFFICIALS LAUNCH USAID MANUAL TO HELP SERBIAN COURTS REDUCE BACKLOGS AND SPEED CASE PROCESSING**

**BELGRADE, JULY 9, 2012** – U.S. Ambassador Mary Burce Warlick, Head of the European Union Delegation to Serbia Ambassador Vincent Degert, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Cassation Nata Mesarovic today launched a USAID Best Practices Guide for reducing backlogs and improving case processing efficiency. The handbook was produced by the USAID Separation of Powers Program (SPP), which has been working since 2009 in Serbia to help courts resolve cases more quickly.

U.S. Ambassador Warlick said improving court efficiency and transparency are critical for effective judicial reform and for Serbia to meet the requirements for European Union integration.

“We have trained judges and court administrators on the effective management and operation of courts, and we have helped courts improve case management and reduce case backlogs and delays” Ambassador Warlick said.

She added that the Ministry of Justice and High Court Council have developed innovative techniques to improve case management and court operations including standards that determine case complexity and how much time judges should allocate to each case. “This hard work has begun to yield real benefits for the delivery of justice in Serbia”, Ambassador Warlick said.

SPP Deputy Chief of Party Sonja Prostran said the techniques detailed in the Best Practices Guide have been successfully used by 10 Serbian courts – the Higher Courts in Belgrade, Novi Pazar, and Subotica, and the Basic Courts in Cacak, Nis, Sremska Mitrovica, Subotica, Uzice, Vranje, and Vrsac – to resolve cases quickly and efficiently, reduce the number of old cases, and prevent future processing delays.

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***Since 2001 USAID has invested more than \$662.7 million to stimulate economic growth, strengthen the justice system, and promote good governance in Serbia.***

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