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MUNICIPALITIES OF CACAČAK, KRALJEVO, GORNJI MILANOVAC, VRNJACKA BANJA AND RASKA JOIN BUSINESSES AND CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS IN USAID PROJECT TO BOOST THE REGION'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ČAČAK (December 6) –The mayors of Cacak, Kraljevo, Gornji Milanovac, Vrnjacka Banja and Raska, together with business and civil society leaders, today agreed to jointly plan, implement and monitor economic development projects in their communities.

Today's signing of their Inter-Municipal Cooperation Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding creates a partnership of communities, businesses and civil society organizations to pool the municipalities' expertise and resources to create a stronger environment for investment and growth.

The agreement is part of the five-year, \$22-million Sustainable Local Development Project supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Through this project, 12 inter-municipal partnerships will be formed throughout Serbia, each comprised of at least three municipalities, plus local business and civil society organizations.

"Municipalities need to work together to compete for investment and jobs in today's global marketplace. For these partnerships to be effective and sustainable, they also need to involve civil society groups and the private sector," USAID Mission Director Susan K. Fritz told participants at Cacak High School Students House, where the signing event took place.

Representatives from Cacak, Kraljevo, Gornji Milanovac, Vrnjacka Banja i Raska have jointly identified several inter-municipal initiatives for cooperation that will benefit the lives and livelihoods of their communities. These include establishment of cargo (transportation and logistics) center near the Morava airport, establishment of a regional network of scientific and technological centers, and tourism development.

The partnership established today in Cacak is the sixth of its kind formed through the USAID project. The remaining six will be launched over the next 12 months.

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Since 2002 USAID has invested more than \$662.5 million to stimulate economic growth, strengthen the justice system, and promote good governance in Serbia.

For more information about USAID, visit <http://serbia.usaid.gov>