

**PRESS RELEASE**

Tuesday, September 6, 2011

**USAID Supports Improvements to Serbia's Waste Management System**

**BELGRADE** – USAID's Civil Society Advocacy Initiative (CSAI) today launched a Green Initiative campaign to reform waste management practices and provide long-term improvements to Serbia's waste management system. CSAI will build on its previous environmental activism efforts and work on local, national and regional levels with civil service organizations (CSOs) and government leaders to improve waste management.

Ten CSOs signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today to formalize their commitment to the effort and to define their roles and responsibilities. They were addressed by Minister of Environment, Mining and Spatial Planning Oliver Dulic; U.S. Agency for International Development Mission Director Susan K. Fritz; CSAI Chief of Party Albert Cevallos; and the Balkan Communities Initiative Fund's Coordinator Vladimir Radojicic.

The CSOs participating in the project will work to: (1) Establish a system for developing and implementing local and regional waste management plans in 24 municipalities and four regions in Serbia; (2) Work for the inclusion of waste collectors in the waste management supply chain through the provision of support from the Environmental Protection Fund; (3) Establish three social enterprises for waste collectors that promote social entrepreneurship and the inclusion of individual collectors into existing support networks; and (4) Increase the participation of citizens, local institutions and recycling businesses in 24 towns.

USAID will provide over \$250,000 for the 16-month Green Initiative campaign. The project will be implemented by 10 organizations: the Balkan Community Initiative Fund (BCIF), Young Researchers of Serbia (YRS), European Movement in Serbia (EMINS), Group 484, Initiative for Development and Cooperation (IDC) Serbia, Center for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship (CDSE), YUROM Center, Center of Modern Skills (CMS), Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (BFPE), and a network of ecological organizations called the Green List of Serbia (GLS).

It is estimated that more than 40% of waste in Serbia ends up in the country's 4,500 illegal dumps. These dumps are often located near rivers, city squares and parks, endangering health, safety and the quality of life for citizens. Additionally, while EU countries on average recycle 50 percent of their waste, Serbia only recycles 10 percent.

Since 2006, USAID's \$27.5 million CSAI program has worked with 200 Serbian CSOs on more than 300 advocacy initiatives that have impacted key legislative reforms, improved socio-economic conditions, and bettered the environment through awareness-raising campaigns and community clean-up projects. In addition, CSAI has promoted individual gift-giving, corporate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility, as well as supported a variety of social issues identified by Serbian citizens.

USAID's Civil Society Advocacy Initiative Program is working for Serbian civil society to play a constructive advocacy role in building a democratic, prosperous Serbia as it moves toward European integration.

For more information, please contact Dragica Lazic, Public Relations Coordinator of the Green Initiative, at 063 897 4214.

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