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NIS, LESKOVAC, GADZIN HAN, DOLJEVAC AND MEROSINA JOIN BUSINESSES AND CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS IN USAID PROJECT TO BOOST THE REGION'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NIS (July 19) – The mayors of Nis, Leskovac, Gadzin Han, Doljevac and Merosina, 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 the Inter-Municipal Cooperation Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding creates a partnership of communities, businesses and civil society organizations designed to pool the municipalities' expertise and resources to create a stronger environment for investment and growth.

It is part of a five-year, \$22 million Sustainable Local Development Project (SLDP) 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, local business and civil society organizations.

"Municipalities that pool their resources, share their expertise, and build on each other's successes are stronger, grow faster, and are best positioned to successfully compete for investment, business and jobs," U.S. Ambassador to Serbia Mary Burce Warlick told participants at Nis's Konstantin Veliki Airport where the signing event took place.

"In today's global economy, Serbian municipalities can no longer afford to view themselves as adversaries in their efforts to attract international investment, but rather as partners in a larger, highly-integrated, and more sophisticated marketplace," Ambassador Warlick said.

Nis, Leskovac, Gadzin Han, Doljevac and Merosina have identified several inter-municipal initiatives for cooperation that will impact the lives and livelihoods of their communities. These include Juzna Morava and Nisava river protection, development of an international agricultural products exchange market "Green Zone", solid waste management, development of Konstantin Veliki Airport as an international airfield, 'cooperation in water supply and waste water treatment, development of renewable energy sources, as well as joint representation and promotion of inter-municipal cooperation and regional projects in Belgrade and Brussels.

The partnership established today in Nis is the third inter-municipal partnership formed through the USAID project. The remaining nine partnerships will be launched over the next 18 months.

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