

May 16, 2007

Newport-Kutaisi Twinning Association and Kutaisi-Newport Association Delegation visit
to LDA Georgia Office

Meeting Venue: 29 Titsian Tabidze Street, Kutaisi, Georgia

Meeting attendants:

Mr. Derek Butler, Ms. Silvia Mason, Mr. Colin Mason, Ms. Elizabeth Luck (Newport-Kutaisi Twinning Association)

Ms. Madonna Megrelishvili (Kutaisi-Newport Association)

Mr. Joseph Khakhaleishvili (LDA Delegate)

Ms. Thea Nutsubidze (Assistant to Delegate)

Meeting minutes

Joseph Khakhaleishvili, LDA Delegate, chaired the meeting. He briefly shared the organizational histories of Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) and Local Democracy Agency (LDA Georgia) and that the LDA Georgia Office was opened on September 8, 2006 as the 12th Agency in the network of Association of ALDA, which for its part is the first such agency in the South Caucasus. The lead partner on international level is Newport City Council; among the local partners, we should emphasize Kutaisi, Tbilisi, Kutaisi-Newport International Association, and National Association for Local Self-government, the Young Lawyers Association and other partners also. Joseph informed that the Agency has already passed the registration process and is able to participate in different grant programs and projects.

Joseph shared the feedback about the 2nd Local Democracy Agency (LDA) Partners Meeting held on April 16, in Strasbourg, in the building of European Council. During that meeting, the Delegate reported on the activities undertaken by the LDA Georgia and the report got positive evaluation by the partners and by the ALDA. He highlighted that representatives of Strasbourg officially confirmed their membership in LDA and after arranging some technical questions, they will officially sign the Memorandum of Understanding for LDA partners. The same time, ALDA carries negotiations with the city of Lyons about its LDA partnership.

The LDA Delegate talked about LDA Georgia organizational activities. He mentioned some new projects that will start from summer 2007. Mr. Butler was interested how LDA Georgia interacts with local government and what initiatives took place. Joseph informed meeting participants that there were actively processed numbers of meetings held with local self-government representatives on possible projects. And as a result he highlighted the attempt of doing a joint projection of common local issues by local self-government and LDA Georgia and accordingly, starting from June 2007, the agency starts implementation of two new projects. It is important that one of the project ideas comes from local self-government and it is about to train two branches of government, municipal units, and non-governmental organizations and media representatives in General Administrative Code and its requirements. The project will last 8 months and will be guided by invited experts who will conduct 12 trainings. The duration of another project is the same and aims to conduct trainings on women's rights. The target audience will be the same but representatives from schools will be added. It is actual project because an ordinary woman does not possess enough information or does not know at all about her rights. The frequent cases of violence happen in Georgian families. LDA Delegate truly believes that on this stage, we should direct our attention to women's rights. According

to Georgian Legislation, in the normative part of it, a woman and a man are equal. However, in practice we exercise cases, when a woman suffers from violence of a man. In this case, women's rights are not only humiliated but ignored as well. It is rather difficult to find a way out of a situation because of the some reasons. First: a woman does not possess the sufficient knowledge of her rights; second, there is lack of organic units that could help with consultations and support to protect her rights.

Guests were curious about a project related to trafficking issues in Georgia. Joseph informed them that LDA Georgia plans to conduct 2-day business meeting funded by Georgian Representation in the European Council, dedicated to Human Trafficking issues. The members of the Parliament of Georgia, Heads of Imereti District Municipal Units and representatives of the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Education will be the participants of the above-mentioned meeting.

As Ms. Mason mentioned the human trafficking and child protection is type of same and extremely actual and real projects because worldwide, this is one of the main issues in the different society groups and needs to be somehow resembled and attempted that will support the problem to be solved in it's initial stage. Joseph mentioned that human trafficking, especially women trafficking is more actual problem in Georgia rather than children rights protection but it does not mean that it is not a essential problem in Georgia. Mainly, it is related to child adoption issues and initial problem comes with sham adoption.

Then, Joseph briefed about LDA Georgia plans that the Agency actively works with ALDA and local non-governmental organizations on different grant proposals. There are some draft projects and soon they will be submitted to donors. Starting from June 1st, the Agency will move to the building of Mayor's office.

Meeting attendants appreciated and thanked LDA Delegate for his detailed information and for sharing very interesting facts and updates about LDA. The meeting was held with engaged interaction between the attendants and in a warm environment.