**EU-supported Agency for Regional Development officially launched in Crimea**

***Simferopol, 9 February* 2011** *(to be published after the official launch)*

Vasyl Dzharty, Chairman of the Council of Minister of Crimea, José Manuel Pinto Teixeira, European Union Ambassador and Olivier Adam, UNDP Resident Representative officially opened the Agency for Regional Development of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARD), based in Simferopol. They cut the ribbon inaugurating the premises of the Agency, established by the Council of Ministers of Crimea in mid-2010. The major tasks of the Agency will be to coordinate and manage regional socio-economic development activities and to promote the region at the national and international levels.

*“On 31 January, the Council of Ministers officially entrusted the function of coordinator of all investment promotion activities in Crimea to the Agency. We want to develop our region together with national and foreign investors. Every single investor should feel comfortable in Crimea; every entrepreneur should feel government’s support”*,stated **Vasyl Dzharty**, Chairman of the Crimean Council of Minister, after cutting the ribbon.

The Agency is benefitting from financial and technical assistance of the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme. The European Union has provided EUR 1.5 million for Agency’s setup and capacity building, while UNDP is providing technical support on daily basis through the EU/UNDP ARD Support Project.

*“By providing support to the Crimean Agency, the EU is committed to sharing its own experience and adapting it to the local needs so as to help the region overcome barriers and difficulties which currently hinder its sustainable development and equitable economic growth”,* indicated**José Manuel Pinto Teixeira**, European Union Ambassador*.*

**Olivier Adam**, UNDP Resident Representative in Ukraine, said that *“the EU and UNDP’s support to the Agency for Regional Development of Crimea represents a unique opportunity for this organization and gives it immediate prestige and visibility”.*

The inauguration of the Agency was followed by a short visit of the premises of the Agency for Regional Development, led by **Olexiy Starodubov,** Agency Director**,** and by the signature, by Vasyl Dzharty and Olivier Adam, of a Joint Letter of Intent between the ARC Council of Ministers and UNDP for the successful implementation of the EU/UNDP ARD Support Project in Crimea.

In the course of the launch ceremony, Olivier Adam expressed his confidence that the high professionalism and integrity of the Agency’s staff, supported by international and national experts, will allow the Crimean government to successfully implement its ambitious plans of regional development and investment promotion. He added that investors and donors will certainly expect transparency in Agency’s operations and outputs reflecting best international standards.

*“The openness and the ability to create viable partnerships will be the determining factors of success for this unique model of regional development institution which may be, further on, replicated throughout Ukraine”,* reaffirmed José Manuel Pinto Teixeira in this regard.

On 11 February, the Agency for Regional Development will be one of the key participants of a conference entitled “Regional development of Crimea: planning, interaction, partnership”, organised by the EU/UNDP ARD Support Project.

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