



## **Press Release**

# **First Time Mapping of National and Local Capacities Related to Inter-community Relations – Findings Launched Today**

Skopje, Tuesday, 28 September 2010:

The findings of a first time mapping of national and local capacities related to inter-community relations was launched today by the Secretariat for the Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the United Nations. The report delivers recommendations and has paved the way for activities that address community needs.

Over several months, 75 representatives from all stakeholder groups at national and local levels (covering the municipalities of Kičevo, Kumanovo and Struga) came together to assess national capacities and systems for strengthening inter-ethnic dialogue and collaboration, and to identify practical steps which could be taken. The groups then put forward detailed recommendations for action, which are contained in the Report.

The participants have concluded that the cooperation and the capacities of the institutions need to be strengthened, and the laws should be adequately interpreted and implemented. Among other, the participants concluded that the leaders from the civil society and from the religious communities, the local and national media and the business sector should play key role for finding solutions together with the local government.

At today's presentation, **Mr. Abdilqim Ademi**, Deputy Prime Minister in charge for the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, welcomed the findings

of the report, stating: **“The Secretariat will continue to support future activities that are in function of promoting tolerance, mutual understanding and the building of a multiethnic, multicultural and multi-confessional society. In cooperation with our partners, we will work hard to identify new sensitive points which could influence the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.”**

The Ambassador of Spain, H.E. José Manuel Paz y Agúeras underlined that **“the report that is being launched today can serve as a tool for enhancing further efforts in the area of inter-ethnic dialogue, as it reflects the stakeholder’s views on the local and national capacities as well as the gaps, and provides with the recommendations developed by participants”**.

The UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Deirdre Boyd, pointed out that the process that has been undertaken to produce this Report recognizes that the participation of the citizens in this important national development priority – that of enhancing inter-ethnic dialogue and collaboration – is key. **“The process of preparing the report was equally important as the final report itself. The participants who came together to assess the gaps and formulate recommendations had a unique opportunity to get to know one another, and hear one another’s views and perspectives. These participants, who may not necessarily work together on a regular basis, found that they faced the same challenges and that together they can work towards long-term solutions.”** said Ms. Boyd.

The report also confirms “untold stories” of community members working together to solve common challenges. For example, members of the Orthodox Christian and Islamic religious communities referenced positive cases of working together and with local self-government to resolve outstanding issues in their municipalities.

Drawing upon the recommendations that were generated, the UN has launched a series of activities to strengthen inter-ethnic dialogue and collaboration. This includes the **launch of a grants scheme** that provides funds to **nine civil society projects** in the municipalities of Kičevo, Kumanovo and Struga. The selected recipients include: The Centre for Intercultural Dialogue, DROM, Ezerka, Journalists for Children and Women Rights and Environmental Protection, Local Development Agency, Permaculture Peacebuilding Centre, Sirma, Street Festival, and Wake Up.

Note to Editors:

This UN Programme to Enhance Inter-ethnic Dialogue and Collaboration – which aims to enhance national and local-level capacities to effectively maintain and bolster cohesion in multi-ethnic communities - has been funded by the **Government of Spain** through the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund. It is implemented together with the Secretariat for the Implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the Ministries of Education and Science, Culture, and Local Self-Government, the Association of Local Self-Government Units, the surrounding micro-regions and municipalities of Kičevo, Kumanovo and Struga, and members of civil society, with the support of UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO.

The **MDG Achievement Fund** aims to accelerate progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) worldwide. Established in December 2006 with a generous contribution of € 528 million (\$US 710 million) from the Spanish Government to the United Nations system, the MDG-F supports national governments, local authorities and citizen organizations in their efforts to tackle poverty and inequality with 128 active programmes in 50 countries around the world.

