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New Local Democracy Agency to be opened in Gyumri, Armenia

Strasbourg, 27 October 2011 - The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)* has established with the support of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe a new Local Democracy Agency (LDA) in Armenia, in an effort to strengthen the process of democratisation and local self-government. The new LDA – which will also work on human rights, citizen participation, sustainable development and cross border co-operation in the area - will open on 28th October 2011 in Gyumri, Armenia. It will be the thirteenth LDA opened by ALDA with the support of the Congress, and the second in the South Caucasus area.

The new LDA Armenia will receive financial and political support from three main international partners: the Rhône-Alpes Region (France), the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region (Italy) and the International Committee for the Development of Peoples – CISP (Italy).

A conference on "Co-operation between Local Authorities and Civil Society," gathering local, regional and international representatives, NGOs and citizens, will take place on the day of the opening in Gyumri City Hall.

Fabio Pellegrini (SOC, Italy), Vice-President of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress, will illustrate the engagement of the Congress in the South Caucasus area and its support to LDAs. Congress President of the Committee on current affairs Emin Yeritsyan (EPP/CD, Armenia), will participate in his capacity of President of the Union of Communities of Armenia.

The conference is also part of the European Local Democracy Week 2011 (EWLD), an annual European event held across the 47 member states of the Council of Europe to promote democratic participation at grassroots level.

**) ALDA, a non-governmental organisation dedicated to the promotion of good governance and citizen participation at the local level, was established in 1999 at the initiative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. Its aim is to coordinate and support a network of LDAs. ALDA has established one LDA in the South Caucasus area based in Kutaisi (Georgia) in 2006, and is planning to set up another LDA in Azerbaijan in the near future.*

The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 318 full and 318 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.

President of the Congress: Keith Whitmore (United Kingdom, ILDG), President of the Chamber of Regions: Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC)

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).