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PRESS RELEASE

USAID Helps Macedonian Apparel Companies Partner with EU buyers

More than 20 Macedonian apparel companies met and discussed export deals with seven buyers from the United Kingdom, Austria and Germany at the first Macedonia – EU Apparel Business to Business (B2B) event. Buyers included Topshop, Monsoon, Triumph, BMB Clothing, Whistles, Archive Design and Albiro, all of which are interested in extending their supplier base with Macedonian apparel producers. The USAID Competitiveness Project organized the event in a joint effort with the Dutch Center for Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI), the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Swiss Import Promotion Program (SIPPO), and the Macedonia Textile Trade Association (TTA).

“USAID is helping Macedonia become more competitive in the global economy. Through the Competitiveness Project, we support initiatives such as this Business to Business event, assisting Macedonia’s apparel companies to access new and higher value export markets in the EU. By increasing exports, these companies will not only retain jobs, but new jobs will be created,” said Michael Fritz, USAID Mission Director.

“The Macedonian apparel industry is moving away from CMT (cut-make-trim) towards production of value added apparel products. For this initiative to succeed, it is essential to identify and pursue new markets. This B2B event, bringing new potential buyers from the United Kingdom and other countries, is a catalyst for the transition towards full package production,” said Natasa Sivevska, Executive Director of Textile Trade Association.

The Competitiveness Project works closely with Macedonian companies in the targeted - apparel, light manufacturing, and information and communication technology (ICT) sectors to help them identify new buyers and meet their specific demands. The Project supports companies’ participation in trade fairs and B2B events, improves productivity, assists in the adoption of international standards, and facilitates access to new finance. These initiatives lead to new jobs and increased value added exports, thereby building stronger and more competitive companies. The Macedonia – EU Apparel B2B is expected to become an annual event.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly **\$500 million** in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that increase investment, create jobs, reduce corruption and improve the quality of education in Macedonia. These initiatives support Macedonia’s transition to a stable democracy and its successful integration into the European Union. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.