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PRESS RELEASE

Inauguration of Local Economic and Social Council in Strumica

Today, the Municipality of Strumica established a local Economic and Social Council (ESC) with support from the USAID Youth Employability Skills (YES) Network. The ESC will serve as an advisory body on issues such as employment of youth and the link between labor market needs as defined by employers and the skills developed by young Macedonians during their formal education.

Strumica is the first of three municipalities USAID is working with to create a local ESC. These Councils will be instrumental in establishing and maintaining a public-private dialogue between all stakeholders in the local labor market. In addition to municipal representatives, ESC members will include representatives of the local Youth Leadership Council, the Federation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Macedonia and the Employers Organization of the Republic of Macedonia.

"These local groups know, better than anyone, of the challenges and opportunities faced by the community to bring about change that will benefit all its members and create a prosperous future," said U.S. Ambassador Paul D. Wohlers. "The Economic and Social Council will take advantage of its members' knowledge and intimate understanding of the possibilities as well as means for locally relevant change through use of *local* human, material and financial resources."

The USAID YES Network will help the ESCs build their capacities to provide meaningful consultations and proposals to the Municipality. Immediately following the signing of the agreement to establish the local ESC of Strumica, the ESC held its first Constitutive Session.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The USAID YES Network is implemented by the Education Development Center, a global nonprofit organization, headquartered in Waltham, MA, and dedicated to enhancing learning and promoting health.

The American people, through USAID, have invested over \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that create jobs, reduce corruption, and prepare Macedonian students for the workforce. These initiatives improve the quality of life and support Macedonia's transition to a stable and prosperous democracy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.