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Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs Support Project

Quarterly Report (October 1 – December 31, 2008)

Contract No. DFD-I-00-05-00220-00 Task Order No. 8

(KMFAS First Quarterly Report)

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This report was produced for submission to the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Alphonse F. La Porta, Interim Chief of Party, Development Alternatives, Inc.

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This quarterly report is submitted to the project CTO Jeton Cana of the Office of Democracy and Governance of USAID-Kosovo Mission.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the ground for less than three full months, the DAI project for support to the Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs (KMFAS) is entering the work plan assessment and formulation phase. Since mid-November when the project manager and chief of party (COP) arrived in Kosovo, baseline information has been developed on MFA operations, the identification of specific needs, and organizational and systemic changes in order to, in the words of the overarching project objective, **“help the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to become a functioning ministry capable of managing Kosovo’s foreign affairs.”** There have already been several achievements resulting from DAI KMFAS advisory activities; among them: completion of a ministry regulation, implementing diplomatic and consular laws passed in mid-December 2008, on the Competencies of Kosovo Diplomatic and Consular Missions; reorganization of the public affairs and public diplomacy sectors to establish a clear chain-of-command for these operations and to provide for more effective support of overseas posts; and providing alternative proposals for the recruitment and hiring of heads of mission and diplomatic staff for post openings scheduled in 2009.

During the period under review, considerable effort was devoted to setting up a stand-alone DAI project office, now located in close proximity to the ministry and the government building. The office is for the most part fully functioning, although new IT equipment (e.g., printers, a copier, integrated telephone system) remain to be installed. On the personnel side, one long-term advisor, the diplomatic management expert, has yet to be approved. The LTTA legal advisor and two Kosovo national experts – for legal affairs and for public administration – have joined the project, in addition to the COP and the financial and office manager. Two STTA’s, one on public affairs/public diplomacy and the other on consular affairs, joined the project in mid-January for four week assignments.

A final needs assessment and preparation of the work plan are scheduled during the first two weeks of February 2009.

II. ADMINISTRATION AND START-UP

START-UP ACTIVITIES

Following the signing of the KMFAS contract on September 30, 2008, the deployment of personnel to Pristina was delayed because of the need to recruit new project personnel to replace the team proposed by DAI and rejected by USAID. Given the varied specifications for acceptable project personnel, recruitment has proved difficult. Nevertheless, in late October a DAI administrator arrived in Pristina for five weeks to set up the project office, hire a Kosovar financial and office manager, advertise for the two KMFAS local national (CCN) expert positions, canvass for permanent office space, and make financial and other support arrangements. Temporary office space and minor administrative support initially were provided by the local Bearing Point office. Bearing Point is a sub-contractor to DAI for the KMFAS project, an agreement having been signed in Washington on December 2, 2008.

OFFICE SET-UP

The DAI project manager and chief of party (COP) arrived in Pristina on November 18, 2008. Their initial activities included introductory meetings with USAID, Ambassador Tina Kaidanow and others at the U.S. Embassy, and senior MFA officials. Candidates for the two CCN positions – legal and public administration experts – were conducted and initial selections were made for referral to USAID and the ministry. Initial assessment meetings in the ministry began on November 28, 2008; in the next few weeks all office directors and senior MFA officials were interviewed. The project manager departed on November 26, 2008, while the DAI administrator completed her work on December 5, 2008.

On December 18, 2008, a lease agreement was concluded for project offices at Rr. Shaban Polluzha #3, off Rr. Agim Ramadani, close to the government building and MFA offices. The premises were occupied full time during the week of January 5, 2009 upon the installation of internet, telephone and other services. During the ensuing two weeks, the offices were furnished, a generator was installed, and other improvements were made. One constraint has been the limited IT and reproduction services available pending installation of equipment in mid-February. Additionally, DAI obtained its government registration, thus allowing banking formalities to be initiated.

III. PROJECT ACTIVITIES – EARLY DELIVERABLES

COP returned to Washington, DC for holiday leave and consultations with DAI, USAID and the Department of State on December 22, 2008, returning on January 8, 2009. In addition to continuing interviews with MFA personnel regarding the ministry's basic needs and gathering baseline information for the KMFAS work plan, COP worked with the Permanent Secretary and Director General on several deliverables:

1. Drafting input for a MFA regulation on the Competencies of Embassies and Consulates which stipulates the reciprocal responsibilities of the ministry and overseas posts for diplomatic representation, ambassador/head of mission duties and prerogatives, internal organization of embassies and consulates, reporting, services to be performed by overseas missions, public diplomacy, communications and archives, security and post management. The draft regulation was circulated to the IC external relations working group in January 2009 and it has been finalized with few changes. After review by the Prime Minister's office, the regulation will be approved by the minister.
2. A review of the implications of the then-draft Laws on the Foreign Service and Consular Service which were subsequently approved by the National Assembly on December 16, 2008. Passage of the laws triggered a 90-day period in which the ministry is obliged to promulgate implementing regulations (i.e., by mid-March 2009).
3. Alternative proposals for recruitment and hiring procedures, including oral and written assessments, for the second cohort of *charges d'affaires*/heads of mission and diplomatic officers for post openings in 2009. The Minister's decision on the procedure to be used is expected by the end of January.
4. Options for establishing a strategic planning process and crisis management and an inventory of ministry and post management functions.
5. An indicative task list for phasing project advisory assistance on ministry operations, post management and other institutional needs.
6. Initiation of a weekly seminar series for in-service training on diplomatic operations and international relations.

COP also consulted, at their request, with the policy offices on several current issues, including inter-ministerial coordination on EU and NATO relations, opening a Kosovo office in New York, and CoE membership and the ratification of CoE agreements and protocols, as well as protocol regulations for the ministry and overseas posts.

The project's expert long-term (LTTA) legal advisor returned to Pristina on January 17, 2009, following his initial visit in mid-December. Once approvals were obtained from USAID and the ministry, arrangements were made to hire the two CCN experts. The legal adviser and the CCN legal expert are engaged in reviewing bilateral treaties agreements regarding the feasibility of Kosovo's accession to them.

Furthermore, two short-term (STTA) experts arrived on January 19, 2009 to begin advisory work in the ministry on consular operations and public affairs/public diplomacy. They will depart on February 14.

The STTA for public affairs/public diplomacy recorded his first achievement on January 28, 2009 - a realignment of responsibilities to place the Office of Media in the chain of command under the Director General and to create a separate public diplomacy office to develop programs and support overseas posts. Because there was no connectivity between the minister's spokesperson and the line office, and no coordination between the media office and the policy offices, it is expected the organizational improvements will give the media office a real home and guidance. The Director General will now control the offices that create policy documents for the entire ministry and the office that supports overseas posts with information and policy materials. A separate PD office will directly benefit overseas posts.

IV. WORK PLAN

The project management team from DAI Bethesda deployed to Pristina on January 30, 2009 to conduct the final assessment for preparation of the work plan. Meetings with stakeholders will occur during the week of February 2 and the work plan will be presented to USAID by February 13. The final assessment will be conducted by the DAI management team and resident LTTA's and CCN's in addition to the visiting STTA's on a selective basis. High level appointments are expected to include the U.S. Ambassador and USAID Director, the Minister and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, officials in the President's and Prime Minister's offices and the chair of the National Assembly's foreign affairs and defense committee. Interviews at other ministries will include the Treasury, Justice, Internal Affairs, and Public Services. Comprehensive interviews at the office director level and above will be conducted in the ministry.

V. DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED DURING THE PERIOD

PERSONNEL

The recruitment of qualified experts has been difficult due to the limited size of the pool of mostly retired U.S. Foreign Service Officers who are experienced practitioners of diplomacy and various sectors of overseas operations, especially post management. Younger experts generally lack the requisite experience or are not releasable from their other occupations.

Processing LTТА nominations through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been slow and there have been occasional mixed signals regarding the type of experts desired. It is hoped that, as project results become more evident due to the deployment of LTТА's and STТА's, the priorities will shift to medium and longer term needs and assistance.

CONTRACT COORDINATION

As noted above, a sub-contract was signed between DAI and Bearing Point on December 2, 2008 for the provision of three experts to KMFAS: the LTТА legal advisor, the LTТА diplomatic advisor, and the CCN legal expert. To enlarge the recruiting pool, it has been necessary to combine the resources of the two organizations, thus requiring intensive coordination. Extensive coordination has also been required on the formulation of the work agreements for those engaged under the sub-contract and on support services provided by the Bearing Point office in Pristina.