

UNDP Supports Romania to Seek Balance in Chaotic Landscape Development

Astra Traditional Romanian Civilization Museum, Sibiu 20-21 September 2007 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-sponsored the *6th Meeting of the Council of Europe for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention*, a programme that will help bridge Romania's gap between the new chaotic landscape development and the need to preserve the cultural heritage.

With historical villages and small townships dating from the 13-14th century threatened either by depopulation or by excessive residential development disregarding both proper rural planning and cultural identity, it has become a priority for Romania to adopt a smart Landscape Law as soon as possible. To this end, 300 national and international experts gathered in Sibiu to share best practices and discuss ways to guide growth and preserve the landscape's natural beauty.

"UNDP has considerable experience with cultural heritage restoration and environmental protection," said Mr. Thore Hansen, UNDP Resident Representative a. i., at the opening of the meeting. "Two of UNDP's projects, *Beautiful Romania* and *Local Agenda 21* have promoted sustainable development in 50 Romanian towns and villages since 2003."

UNDP's cultural heritage regeneration activities in Romania are pursuing the principle of "Integrated Conservation" as promoted by European legislation. This means that cultural heritage, restoration and new functionality for buildings or public spaces must reveal both their economic and social as well as their cultural values.

Ms. Maguelonne DeJeant-Pons, Head of the Spatial Planning and Landscape Division, Council of Europe, urged everyone to understand that ugly or environmental unfriendly developments that sprung up in Romania will rest in place for many years. "Landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures," said Ms. DeJeant-Ponce, "and all new developments should contribute to the European natural and cultural heritage."



New and old windmills match harmoniously in the Astra Museum landscape.



There are 1300 villages in Romania that need protection with a future Landscape Law.

Romania is the only country in the EU that allows individuals to draft Plans of Zonal Urbanism that dramatically modify the Plans of General Urbanism. Mr. Patrascu, director of the General Direction for Landscape Development, Urbanism and Inhabiting Policy said that "Romania won't have a Landscape law sooner than 2009, and even then, only great political will could stop the highly chaotic and decentralized rural and urban development."

The meeting, organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing, Ministry Culture and Cults, Sibiu County Council and Sibiu City Hall, unfolded on the premises of the Astra Traditional Romanian Civilization Museum. Astra is the second largest open air museum in Europe with over

300 old households from each region of Romania spread over 90 hectares of breathtaking landscape.

For more information please email:
Catalina Preda, Beautiful Romania Project Manager, catalina.preda@undp.org
Alexandra Ares PhD, Communications Officer, alexandra.ares@undp.org

