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Government of Azerbaijan and World Bank Sign New World Bank Financing to Provide One Million Azerbaijanis Better Judicial Services

BAKU, November 21, 2011 – Today, the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the World Bank signed a US\$ 9.2 million equivalent IDA Credit and a US\$ 24.2 million IBRD Loan to support further implementation of the Azerbaijan Judicial Modernization Project. The Agreements were signed by Minister of Justice Mr. Fikrat Mammadov on behalf of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and Acting Country Manager Ms Saida Bagirli on behalf of the World Bank. The Project with total cost of about US\$ 62 million including the Government share, will facilitate access of approximately one million Azerbaijanis to better judicial services thanks to the upgrade of 11 courthouses in various parts of the country, improved management of judicial institutions, training of judges and judicial staff, and implementation of modern technology.

This financing will cover additional costs of the original project approved by the World Bank in 2006 due to the inclusion of a number of new technical assistance activities in the project as well as from increases in construction costs. The overall goal of the project is to develop the capacity of Azerbaijan's judicial system to make it more efficient and able to handle future demand as well as improve access of citizens to information and services.

Over recent years, judicial institutions in Azerbaijan have achieved some important progress towards meeting market economy and civic needs, for example, it supported a more transparent and competitive system of selection of judges, improved the physical state and other infrastructure of courts. However, much more needs to be done, in particular, on strengthening institutional capabilities and improving the quality of services.

"It is good to see that the Project is bringing results. Oguz courthouse has been completed and in use of citizens. Few more courthouses will start operations soon. This additional financing will help to upgrade judicial services in other parts of the country" said **Saida Bagirli, Acting Country Manager of the World Bank**. *"Modernization of Azerbaijan's judiciary can play a vital role in the country's future economic development."*

The project has four components, namely: strengthening management capacity; upgrading court facilities; improving quality of operations of judges, judiciary staff and other legal professionals; and improving citizen information and access to justice.

Since joining the World Bank in 1992, the commitments to Azerbaijan total approximately US\$ 3.1 billion for 44 projects.

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