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EU & UNODC to assist Government to implement victim legislation & policy

The European Union, through its European Commission Delegation to South Africa, and the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), have signed a joint three year commitment to assist the Dept of Social Development with its work in helping victims of crime. The initiative seeks to address the high rates of criminal victimisation in South Africa through support to the country's Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP), which in turn makes up part of the South African Government's National Crime Prevention Strategy.

Under the Agreement the EU commits over €18 mil (R180 mil) to the programme. As implementing partner the UNODC will manage said funding in collaboration with the Dept of Social Development which will be responsible for setting up in the provinces the structures required to direct and monitor this new programme effectively.

To be launched in the first quarter of 2008, and coinciding with the tenth anniversary of South Africa's Victim Empowerment Programme, this package of support has been designed to assist the South African authorities to more effectively translate a wealth of victim empowerment policy and related legislation into action. Key challenges include capacity building amongst all relevant role players, raising public awareness, and building sustainable partnerships between government and non-governmental institutions at national, provincial and local level.

While primarily seeking to improve institutional capacity of both state and civil society/non-governmental organisations (CSO/NGO) dealing with victim empowerment, a number of One-Stop Centres are foreseen under this Programme that will target specifically female and juvenile victims of gender-based violence.

Gerard McGovern, head of Operations and acting head of the European Commission Delegation to South Africa, said: "One of the most tragic outcomes of South Africa's comparatively high crime rate is the ever-increasing number of victims: many of them woman and children. We are indeed pleased to join the United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime in this initiative of support to our South African partners. We are confident that support provided under the Programme will go some way to assist the Department of Social Development in its initiatives to tackle a number of difficult issues head-on."

"I thank the European Union for its generous support in empowering victims of crime in South Africa. More steps are also needed to prevent crime from occurring in the first place", said Mr. Costa, Director General United Nations Office at Vienna and Executive Director United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

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