



## **Media NGOs from Eurasia highlight importance of free and independent media for democratic development**

More than 150 media development organizations from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union gathered at the first Eurasia Regional Forum for Media Development on April 17-19 in Paris to agree recommendations and strategies for their future work.

Their message to donors was clear: Media development, ranging from law reform to journalism training, and aimed at creating free, independent and pluralistic media systems is a crucial factor in building democratic societies. A lot more support to media development is needed, especially in the former Soviet Union, where democratic development has experienced a backlash in many countries.

Media support groups recognized that they have to work more closely together, try to avoid unnecessary competition between different projects and build expertise in monitoring the impact of their work.

One of the main conclusions of the meeting was that media development organizations needed to reach out more to other civil society groups. More coalitions and links must be built with civil society to withstand undue influence on media content by governments and powerful business interests.

The event was hosted by Internews Europe with the support of the Council of Europe, the Maison de l'Europe, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Open Society Institute and UNESCO.

The Eurasia Regional Forum is an initiative that emerged within the scope of the *Global Forum for Media Development* (GFMD), a collaborative process that brings together organizations from over 100 countries and aims at bringing coherence, community and advocacy to the worldwide movement working towards the development of the independent media sector, a cornerstone of democratic and sustainable development.

The Eurasia Forum mobilized local media NGOs ahead of the GFMD's second world conference that will take place in Athens on December 7-10, 2008.

The conference also selected two representatives from the region to be members of the GFMD's Steering Committee. They are Manana Aslamaziyan, Director of Internews Europe and Remzi Lani, president of the South East European Network for Professionalization of Media.

Participants agreed that in order to increase their say in decisions by donors on what type of media programmes to support, they have to define common priorities and lobby jointly for the recognition of media development as a key sector of development work. This will be done within the framework of the Global Forum for Media Development.

A full list of the recommendations developed by the conference as well as background documents can be obtained at [www.gfmd.info](http://www.gfmd.info).

For more information, contact:

Manana Aslamaziyan

Remzi Lani

Bettina Peters, [director@mediagfmd.org](mailto:director@mediagfmd.org)