



## PRESS RELEASE

### **The First Annual VIRTUS Corporate Philanthropy Excellence Awards in Serbia for the Most Responsible Companies**

**November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007.** – On Tuesday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, *The Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, Božidar Đelić, His Excellency Cameron Munter the Ambassador of the United States of America and the Balkan Community Initiatives Fund* have officially presented the first annual VIRTUS awards in the House of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. These awards, the first of their kind in Serbia, are given to companies and business entities which have distinguished themselves by supporting non-profit organizations working for the public good over the past year.

During the competition which lasted from August 31<sup>st</sup> to October 12<sup>th</sup> 2007, there were a total of 64 nominations submitted. The Selection Committee responsible for reviewing and ranking nominations consisted of known representatives from different sectors: Mijat Lakićević, Editor-in-Chief of Ekonomist magazine, Ana Firtel Vlajić, Executive Director of the Foreign Investors Council, Aleksandar Djukić, Marketing Director of „PriceWaterHouseCoopers“, Ivan Vejvoda, Executive Director of the Balkan Trust for Democracy, Srba Jovanović, member of Exective Board of the PR Society of Serbia, and Vlade Divac, celebrity sportsman, President of the Humanitarian Organization Divac.

The awards were given in six categories, four main and two special categories:

- *Main Award for Contribution at the National Level* goes to media house **RDP B92 a.d.** - An organizer of large-scale civic actions such as “Safe House for Women”, aimed at fighting domestic violence and the campaign “Make a Day for Yourself and Others - Donate Blood”, which has popularized voluntary blood donations.
- *Award for Contribution to the Local Community Where the Company Operates* goes to **Holcim (Srbija), a.d.** - A responsible company that provides long-term support to the development of young talent and the local community in Paraćin municipality (building of sustainable infrastructure), capacity building of local NGOs, support of employees through scholarship programs, trainings, international exchanges, etc.

- *Award for Small and Medium-size Enterprise* goes to **ALFA-PLAST d.o.o. Temerin** - A small enterprise which provides support at the local level in Temerin municipality in health care institutions, non-profit organizations and organization of community events,
- *Award for Support for the Most Innovative Project of the Year* goes to **Erste Bank a.d. Novi Sad** for “Avantura Cooltura” project which looks to motivate six graders in Belgrade elementary schools through cultural and sporting events.
- Also, two special recognition awards were given: *Award for Long-term Partnership Between Business and Non-profit Sector*, which goes to company **Hemofarm A.D. Vršac** for long-term investment in Vršac and surrounding areas, and helping a great number of partners; and, *Special Award for Media Contribution* which goes to RDP B92 a.d. for its coverage of campaigns “For Our Children” and “Safe House for Women” aimed to inform general public about the problem of domestic violence affecting specifically women and children.

These Virtus award, which aim to further promote and stimulate philanthropy development in Serbia, are organized by the Balkan Community Initiatives Fund in cooperation with USAID’s Civil Society Advocacy Initiative implemented by the Institute for Sustainable Communities. Other supporters include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, VIA Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF), Consulting House ‘Hauska&Partner’, Smart Kolektiv, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, ‘Ekonomist’ magazine, ‘E-kapija’, the PR Society of Serbia and the City of Belgrade.

#### **About the Balkan Community Initiatives Fund**

Balkan Community Initiatives Fund (BCIF) is a domestic fund that supports people to take active part in improving the life in their respective communities. BCIF is present in Serbia from 1999, first as a British charity organization and then from 2004 as a local fund. We believe that even small positive changes make a big difference. Therefore, by providing financial assistance and learning opportunities we are helping people who are trying to help themselves. As a matter of fact, we offer them an opportunity to access funds and gain knowledge that might alleviate the problem resolution in their communities. In the last couple of years, we supported more than 340 successful projects, in value more than 850,000 Euros, throughout Serbia and Montenegro. BCIF just launched a systematic campaign for the revitalization and promotion of philanthropic ideas and attitudes in the society. The campaign will include a series of activities aimed at revitalizing charitable actions and making them a part of everyday routine. For more information about the Fund and Award please visit an official web site: [www.bcif.org/virtus](http://www.bcif.org/virtus)

.....

For additional information or materials, please contact Siniša Djurić, Philanthropy Program Manager at the Balkan Community Initiatives Fund, cell: 062/ 1 887 897 or by e-mail: [sinisa@bcif.org](mailto:sinisa@bcif.org).