



BISNIS BULLETIN

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TO RUSSIA WITH ATA CARNET

by Derek Nowek and Alla Mavrina

Customs clearance of cargo shipments or hand-carried goods bound for Russia, even goods that are only meant to enter the country temporarily, is a serious concern to shippers and travelers alike. The unprepared shipper or traveler can sustain storage charges, fines, or even the confiscation of merchandise, if unfamiliar with Russian customs requirements. Recently, however, Russia took a big step to simplify customs clearance for goods that are entering the country temporarily. On May 17, 2000, Russia became a member of the ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet system, an internationally recognized convention of 59 countries that allows for temporary, duty-free movement of goods within and among the carnet countries. U.S. companies may find that the ATA Carnet provisions can considerably aid their business activities in Russia.

What is an ATA Carnet?

The ATA Carnet, also known as a “merchandise passport,” is a combination of a customs document and a bond permitting the temporary, duty-free importation of goods within the member states. It allows exporters or travelers to ship or hand-carry everything from professional equipment, commercial samples, and trade show materials to ordinary personal goods, such as computers, cameras,

jewelry, and apparel for temporary use abroad. Goods not covered by carnets are consumable food and agricultural products, disposable items, and postal traffic.

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EXCHANGES HELP CREATE U.S.—NIS COMMERCIAL TIES

by Brent Beemer

To foster understanding and relations between the business communities in the United States and the former Soviet Union, the U.S. Government sponsors several business-based exchange programs. One of the largest is the Community Connections Program, a program of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which brings NIS professionals to America for professional development programs. Community Connections has hosted more than 7,300 participants from the NIS since it began in 1994. During 2000-2001, it will host over 1,700 participants from seven NIS countries—Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine. Plans to expand into Azerbaijan in 2002 are already in the works. Although the main goals of the program are to expose NIS businesspeople to U.S. business practices and create links between U.S. and NIS communities, the program’s many side benefits include creating the basis for long-term, profitable commercial relationships.

How the Program Works

The Community Connections program offers home stay-based, three-to-five week practical training opportunities in the United States for entrepreneurs and other professionals from the NIS. Local community host organizations arrange internships for participants based on interests and experience. Companies offering internships range from small, family-run enterprises to major, multinational Fortune 500 corporations.

The goals of the program are to:

- provide participants with professional training and exposure to day-to-day functioning of a free market system;

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New BISNIS presence in Tomsk

BISNIS is pleased to announce that it now has a part-time representative in the Siberian city of Tomsk.

Maksim Masharuyev will collect information on the city and the Tomsk Oblast (region), and will gather trade and partner leads from Russian companies in the region. Stay tuned to the BISNIS website (www.bisnis.doc.gov) for greater BISNIS coverage of this region.

U.S. companies with questions on Siberia, including Tomsk, can address them to BISNIS trade specialist Joan Morgan in Washington, D.C., at joan_morgan@ita.doc.gov.

BISNIS

Business Information Service
for the Newly Independent States

BISNIS is an information resource for U.S. companies doing business in the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union. Operated by the **Market Access and Compliance** unit of the **International Trade Administration**, BISNIS disseminates information in print form, electronically, and through consultations by its staff of trade specialists. For more information, please contact:

202-482-4655 (phone)

202-482-2293 (fax)

bisnis@ita.doc.gov (email)

To call BISNIS toll free, dial

1-800-USA-TRADE (872-8723)

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Director - Anne Grey

Deputy Director - Trevor Gunn

Managing Editor - Ellen S. House

Assistant Editors - Kelly Raftery, Melissa Walters

Contributors - Brent Beemer, Jessica Blond, Philip de Leon, Veacheslav Dodonu, Ellen House, Alla Mavrina, Derek Nowek

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Some October BISNIS Events in Washington

BISNIS and a SABIT representative hosted nine Russian and two Armenian women business leaders at the USA Trade Center in the Ronald Reagan Building on October 18. The visitors were in Washington for the **Business Women's Network (BWN)** Global Business Summit, which provided an opportunity to network, share information, and increase knowledge of how business is conducted around the world. The visitors work for private companies and nonprofit organizations in Russia and Armenia. The group represented only a few of the some 50 NIS women that attended the Summit.

BISNIS trade specialist Kelly Raftery briefed the group on BISNIS programs and other U.S. government resources and served as interpreter for SABIT's David Bridges, who described SABIT training programs, including those focused on recruiting women participants.

*For more information on the members of the group, including contacts and photographs, visit **BISNIS Online** at www.bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/country/001018women.htm.*

On October 25, BISNIS, in conjunction with the America-Georgia Business Development Council, held a roundtable on "Business Opportunities in the Republic of Georgia" at the USA Trade Center in the Ronald Reagan Building. The roundtable featured the following speakers: Alexander Lotuashvili, **BISNIS representative in Tbilisi**; Mamuka Tsereteli, executive director, **America-Georgia Business Development Council**; Dr. Robert Berls, vice president, **Frontera Resources**; Theodore Jonas, attorney, **Baker Botts LLP**; and Alexander Sekhniashvili, first secretary, **Embassy of Georgia**. Some 30 U.S. companies and organizations attended the event. The speakers reviewed general economic conditions in Georgia, and addressed the opportunities and challenges of doing business from their own unique perspectives. The news that the **Overseas Private Investment Corp.** (OPIC) announced its first project in Georgia, a \$26 million loan commitment for the renovation of Hotel Tbilisi, managed by Marriott, was highlighted at the event.

*For more information on Georgia, visit **BISNIS Online** at www.bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/country/georgia.htm.*

VIRTUAL ST. PETERSBURG

The St. Petersburg City Government has launched a number of Internet websites aimed at informing foreign companies about the city's investment infrastructure.

General information about the St. Petersburg City Government, including its structure, full contact information, and official announcements, is at WWW.GOV.SPB.RU.

The site of the city State Property Committee (WWW.COMMIM.SPB.RU), a major player in the municipal real estate market, lists commercial real estate available for lease from the Property Committee.

The local Committee for Architecture's web page (WWW.KGA.NEVA.RU) covers construction and information on implementation of certain real estate projects.

The site (WWW.URBANGOV.RU) of the Construction Committee's lists major city construction projects.

The St. Petersburg Committee on Statistics site (WWW.ABIC.SPB.RU/PETERSBURGCOMSTAT) offers statistics, but most are available only for a fee.

The Registration Chamber of St. Petersburg site (WWW.REGPALATA.SPB.RU) provides information on documents required for company registration.

Other websites related to St. Petersburg that may be useful to U.S. companies include:

The website of the U.S. Consulate in St. Petersburg at WWW.USCONSULATE.SPB.RU.

The St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry website (WWW.SPBCCI.RU) provides information on the Chamber's activities and services.

The website Saint-Petersburg.Ru (WWW.SPB.RU/000/INDEX.EN.HTML) offers links to and information on Internet resources for St. Petersburg, including such topics as business and services, and computers and networking.

The LenExpo exhibition company is the largest organizer of trade shows in St. Petersburg. Its website (WWW.LENEXPO.RU) lists upcoming shows and has a Virtual Exhibition Center.

NIZHNY NOVGOROD MAYOR SPEAKS AT BISNIS

by Philip H. de Leon and Jessica Blond

On Monday, October 2, BISNIS welcomed Yuri I. Lebedev, mayor of the central Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod, to the USA Trade Center to speak about business opportunities in his city. Mr. Lebedev was accompanied by a group of young, Russian CEOs, who represent the progressive business dynamic in Nizhny Novgorod.

The mayor, after being formally introduced by BISNIS Director Anne Grey and U.S.–Russia Business Council President Gene Lawson, spoke positively about Nizhny Novgorod's role as a major industrial center in Russia, as well as about the rapid growth of small- and medium-sized Russian enterprises and foreign companies within the city limits. The focus of the mayor's presentation was to assure his audience, consisting mostly of U.S. investors and companies, that Nizhny Novgorod was ready to continue forging strong international business relationships. "There are great opportunities for American businesses in Nizhny Novgorod. I think that U.S. businesses are underrepresented in the city."

Brief one-on-one meetings between the mayor and U.S. investors and companies followed the presentation. While Mayor Lebedev conducted his meetings, the six Nizhny company representatives held one-on-one meetings with interested U.S. companies to explore joint business opportunities.

For more information on Nizhny, including photos of the mayor's visit, see www.bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/country/volga.htm.



Photo by Philip de Leon

Mayor Lebedev speaks at the USA Trade Center.

(CARNET, continued from p. 1)

The ATA Carnet system originated in Europe in the late 1950s and quickly became one of the most popular instruments to ease customs clearance for temporary admission of goods abroad. The United States joined the ATA Carnet convention in 1968, and the U.S. Council for International Business (USCIB) has been designated by the U.S. Customs Service as the official issuer and guarantor of carnets. "Some 13,000 carnets were issued in the United States last year for the combined value of \$2 billion," according to Cynthia Duncan, USCIB Vice President for Carnet Operations. Worldwide, about 200,000 carnets worth between \$10-\$12 billion are issued annually. Since Russia joined the system in May, already about a dozen carnets have been issued for shipments into the country, said Duncan.

How It Works

The USCIB (www.uscib.org) or one of its authorized agents can issue an ATA Carnet for Russia in as little as 24 hours. A 5-day processing time is standard, however, and allows customers to avoid expedited service fees. Online filing is also available. The processing fee is determined by the value of the shipment and ranges from \$120-250 per carnet. The carnet holder must also post a security deposit equal to 40 percent of the merchandise value with the USCIB. The deposit serves as a guarantee against any customs claims and other fees that may become due if the goods fail to leave the country. The deposit can be posted in a form of a certified check or a surety bond. Carnets are typically issued for one year and can be reused multiple times for multiple countries within that time. Once the carnet is cancelled, the deposit is refunded within a month.

The carnet always travels with the goods. The carnet holder needs to pay careful attention to make sure the document is filled out and properly validated by both U.S. customs officials and customs representatives in Russia. As with other forms of shipments, carnet goods should be insured to minimize the risk of loss. Low-cost coverage is available from insurance brokers or agencies. The document itself may also be insured and a duplicate issued in case of loss.

Russia and the Carnet

In addition to significantly simplifying customs procedures in Russia, the carnet also eliminates the need to register goods with U.S. customs authorities upon departure and re-entry. However, a special Russian surcharge of \$100 is applied for carnets, in addition to the base fee. The surcharge is levied because each time a carnet to Russia is issued, the USCIB advises its counterpart guarantor in Russia, the Russian Federation of Commerce and Industry. This is an atypical procedure for the carnet system but, because the carnet is so new in Russia, the procedure is aimed at helping to reduce potential problems. Making the carnet information available ahead of shipment allows the Russian administrator of the system to intervene with local customs authorities, if necessary.

Ukraine to Privatize its Power Sector

The Government of Ukraine is undertaking a comprehensive program to establish a competitive power market and to privatize its electricity distribution and generation assets. The plan is to sell to strategic investors the Government's shares in 20 power distribution companies (Oblenergos) and 4 power generation companies between November 2000 and the end of 2002. Credit Suisse First Boston is acting as the advisor for the preparation and conduct of the first stage of the program, which involves the sale of share packages in six distribution companies to strategic investors at the end of 2000:

- KyivOblenergo - 75 percent stake
- RivneOblenergo - 75 percent stake
- ZhytomirOblenergo - 75 percent stake
- SevastopolEnergo - 70 percent stake
- KhersonOblenergo - 65 percent stake
- KirovogradOblenergo - 51 percent stake

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is providing technical assistance to the State Property Fund of Ukraine (www.spfu.gov.ua), and has prepared a website with further information on the privatization program, visit www.ukrainepowerprivatize.com. Final tender regulations are forthcoming.

Technically, up to 30 Russian cities have begun accepting the carnet. In the near term, however, the USCIB recommends entry through eight major cities—Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad, Bagrationovsk, Vyborg, Vladivostok, Kingisep, and Murmansk. The system is still being fine-tuned, and it will undoubtedly take some time for Russian customs officials in the interior of the country to become familiar with carnets and process them in a routine way.

*Derek Nowek covers transportation at **BISNIS** in Wash., D.C. Alla Mavrina is a **BISNIS** representative in Moscow.*

For carnet applications or to speak with a carnet consultant, contact the USCIB ATA Carnet Customer Service Department at telephone (212) 354-4480, email: atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit www.uscib.org.

(EXCHANGES, continued from p. 1)

- encourage public-private partnerships in the NIS by including private sector and government participants; and
- create links between U.S. and NIS regions and communities.

Grants are awarded to community-based, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations and cover expenses, such as participant airfare, modest per diem for participants during their U.S. stay, administrative expenses necessary for program operations, and local transportation during the program. Almost all of the funds awarded to local community organizations are spent in the local community.

Recruitment is carried out in the NIS by U.S. organizations with representation in those countries. Recruitment is a merit-based open competition, and participants must successfully complete a three-stage selection process: completion of an application, a review of the application by a committee of experts in the particular field of interest, and an in-person interview conducted by members of the professional community. Selected participants are then placed with community organizations in America that prepare the program for them, which includes a hands-on internship with volunteer companies and organizations of similar interests, and housing with American families that volunteer to open their homes.

How to Become Involved

Organizations submit proposals to the State Department. Proposals must demonstrate an applicant's extensive experience in coordinating international exchange programs and show strong support from leaders and institutions in their home communities. Community Connections hosting organizations include International Visitors Councils, World Affairs Councils, community colleges, Rotary clubs, sister city projects, and universities, among others. There are currently 50 host organizations throughout the United States.

Organizations are responsible for the overall planning and implementation of the program, including arranging for all international and domestic travel, internship planning and placement, local transportation, finding host families, cultural programming, hiring of interpreters for non-English speakers, and organization of seminars. A grant award from the State Department covers many of the costs associated with the program. The U.S. hosting organizations work closely with local businesses and public and private organizations, which volunteer their time and resources to develop and implement programs for Community Connections participants. Programs for English-speaking business participants are designed as individual internship experiences and can include seminars, consultancies, training within a U.S. company, and site visits. Programs for professionals who do not speak English are more group focused, and employ a variety of training methodologies.

Did you know that BISNIS can inform you via email as well?

To better respond to your needs and interests, BISNIS can send you country, Russian region, or industry-specific emails containing market reports, trade and partner leads, event announcements, and more.

If you would like to benefit from this free service, email us at bisnis@ita.doc.gov or subscribe via the BISNIS website at www.bisnis.doc.gov/subscribe.htm.

Home stays are another important aspect of the Community Connections program. Participants live with local American families who provide an intimate look at American culture. In many cases, host family members and participants become close friends and continue to maintain contact and visit each other once the program is over.

U.S. host organizations are always looking for local businesses and contacts to host participants and/or offer their expertise for local programming. In addition, host families are always needed to provide home stays for the visiting businesspeople.

Potential Rewards

Community Connection's predecessor, Business for Russia, began in 1994 and created programs for over 1,300 Russian entrepreneurs to the United States over a 2-year period. Many of the participants continued to keep in contact with their new American colleagues and friends after their return to Russia. Several of these participants have signed joint venture agreements with companies they either worked with, or were introduced to, during the program. Community Connections participants are mostly representatives of small and medium-sized NIS companies who are in direct decision-making positions, and are looking to build upon their experiences in the United States to find partners and make new business connections. Several U.S. companies that have been involved with the Community Connections program have reported that hosting an NIS businessperson was not only a useful and interesting learning experience, but has led to long-term business partnerships and an opportunity for expansion into NIS markets.

Brent Beemer is senior program officer in the State Department's Office of Citizen Exchanges.

*For more information on the U.S. State Department's **Community Connections Program** or to get involved, call (202) 401-6884, email: vrector@pd.state.gov, or visit <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/comcon/index.htm>.*

TRICKS OF THE TRADE**TIPS FOR DOING BUSINESS IN AZERBAIJAN**

by the U.S. Commercial Service in Azerbaijan

Business in Azerbaijan can be conducted in Azeri, Turkish, or Russian. English is increasingly used in business, but be prepared to hire an interpreter for \$50-80 per day, depending on experience. All private transactions are in cash—credit cards are only accepted in about 40 establishments. Bring post-1990 U.S. bills in good condition and without any marks or tears.

The telephone system in Baku is oversubscribed and technologically inadequate. International calls are possible, but fairly expensive. Cellular communication services are available (including GSM). Email and full Internet service are available via local Internet providers. The Azerbaijani postal system is functional, but not secure. U.S. courier firms, such as **DHL**, **UPS**, and **Fedex**, are resident in Baku and should be used to ensure delivery of business correspondence.

There is a functioning subway system in Baku, but, because of severe maintenance problems, the U.S. Embassy discourages American citizens from using it. Buses and streetcars run, but are crowded and not recommended. Taxis are inexpensive, readily available, and 10,000 manat (\$2.20) will get you to most places in Baku. When taking taxis, only use those that have 'blue' license plates. Business visitors should arrange to be met at the airport when they arrive in Baku.

Hotels and Leisure Time in Baku

There are many restaurants in Baku. One of the most common local dishes is kebab, made of lamb, chicken, or fish. Coffee is not up to Western standards, and many Americans here drink tea. While Azerbaijan is nominally a Muslim country, vodka, brandy, champagne, and beer flow freely. Fruits and vegetables are more readily available, and at lower prices, here than elsewhere in the CIS. Drinking tap water is not recommended. Bottled water is generally available on the local market. Beer and soft drinks are widely sold.

There are several hotels in Baku, built and operated to western standards. The **Hyatt Regency**, **Radisson**, and **Hotel Europe** are the most commonly used. Average room rates range from \$90 to \$300 per night.

Temporary Entry Of Goods

Personal items, tools of trade, and business samples may be imported with little problem. Goods to be displayed or exhibited may be brought in as temporarily imported goods for a period of time, but must be re-exported within the time stipulated to avoid paying import duties and taxes. Businesspeople traveling with laptops must declare them at

time of entry. The temporary entry form covering the laptop must be surrendered on departure.

Business Customs

Business cards are generally exchanged during initial meetings, with one side of the card in Azeri and the other in English (or Russian). Generally, business in Azerbaijan is done either in Russian or Azeri. But in accordance with the new Constitution, all legal documents and records will soon need to be in Azeri.

Azerbaijani business people almost always offer visitors tea and sweets. Azerbaijanis tend to be very polite, but may appear to foreigners as vague and noncommittal about specifics in business transactions. Appointments with potential Azerbaijani partners should be scheduled in advance—"drop-in" meetings are not advisable. You can request appointments either via letter or fax. In doing so, you'll need to personalize your introductory letter to the company and be specific about the purpose of your visit. However, it is important to reconfirm your appointments within 24 hours of the proposed meeting time. Punctuality is not common in Azerbaijan. It is highly recommended to bring along letters of introduction from your local chamber of commerce, trade association, or senior corporate management.

Please don't be surprised or, worse, frustrated by seeing that the meeting is crawling along and no agreement is yet in sight. Be ready to have your proposals carefully scrutinized. This is typical of Azerbaijani businesspeople. They won't believe anything until they can touch it as well as see it. It is a sign that the Azeri partner is not yet at ease with you, and complete trust remains in abeyance. This tentativeness will vanish once you have established a personal working relationship. Personal relationships are the milestones for doing business in Azerbaijan. A U.S. businessperson must cultivate close personal ties with his or her potential partners and associates to earn their respect and trust. These are the basic components of a sound working relationship in this country.

*For more information on Azerbaijan, including a longer report on business do's and don'ts, visit **BISNIS Online** at www.bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/country/azerbaijan.htm.*

*For further information and counseling on doing business in Azerbaijan, contact Michael A. Lally, senior commercial officer, or Kamran Rzayev, commercial specialist, **U.S. Embassy Baku Commercial Service**, tel: +994 (50) 98 03 35, fax: 98 61 17, email: baku.office.box@mail.doc.gov.*

REGIONAL CORNER: *Balti County, Moldova*

by Veaceslav Dodonu

The Balti judets (county) is situated in northeastern Moldova on the Romanian border. The city of Balti (pronounced Belts), also sometimes called the “northern capital of Moldova,” is the county’s main administrative and economic area. The city (population 155,000) is located on the Raut River, 78 miles north of Chisinau, Moldova’s capital.

Economy and Business

Balti county’s agriculture is based on one of the world’s most fertile black soil (chernozem) areas. Tobacco, sugar beets, and sunflower seeds are among the main crops. The county’s three sugar-processing facilities have a total annual capacity of 100,000 tons. In addition, two canning factories producing canned vegetables, jams, and natural juices; a tobacco fermentation plant; a large bakery; and three modern seed-calibration firms are located in Balti county. Of the leading enterprises located in Balti county are three of Moldova’s 14 ISO-9000 certified enterprises—Basarabia-Nord, Moldagrotehnica, and Raut.

Company Profiles

“ Incomlac, the leading dairy in Moldova, is continuously expanding its product line, which currently exceeds 30 items. The company’s factory produces butter, ice cream, various soft cheeses, sour cream, and a number of other products, which it sells across Moldova. The company also exports 800 tons of powdered milk annually to Romania, Bulgaria, and Japan. Incomlac holds about a 45 percent share of Moldova’s dairy market.

“ The county’s high-tech industry is represented by Raut. Established in 1944, Raut designs, develops, and manufactures fixed-line telephones, toasters, roasters, electric porcelain samovars, umbrellas, stereophonic acoustic amplifier systems, irons, and other products. The company seeks to upgrade production lines and develop new technologies.

“ Moldagrotehnica manufactures 14 brands of farm-

ing machinery, including seeding machines, harrows, cultivators, and ploughs. It exports to several NIS countries. It wishes to set up a joint venture with a foreign partner.

“ Basarabia-Nord is a major Moldovan meat processing and sausages factory. It produces over 60 brand names. The company sells its output in Moldova. The meat processor is looking for business partners.

“ A number of soft drink and alcoholic beverage producers operate in Balti. The state-owned Combinatul de Vinuri si Coniacuri (Wine and Cognac Company) is a recognized quality producer of many international award-winning cognacs. The company will be privatized in the near future.

Foreign Investments

Balti county has received a number of foreign direct investments in such sectors as construction, power distribution, farming, dairy production, and textiles. County companies with foreign investment include:

“ Three sugar-processing plants, Glodeni-Zahar, Fabrica de Zahar Falesti and Alexandreni-Zahar, are controlled by Germany’s Sudzucker International and Moldova’s leading bank Agroindbank since 1998.

“ Roua Univers provides custom farm services to agribusinesses in Moldova using Massey Ferguson combines. The Western NIS Enterprise Fund, a venture capital firm funded by the U.S. government, invested \$1.45 million in exchange for a controlling stake in the company.

“ Semger, a joint venture with Germany’s KWS established in 1996, produces and selects new breeds and hybrids of sugar beet seeds.

Additionally, United Parcel Service has a representative office in the city of Balti.

*For more information on Balti county, visit **BISNIS Online** at www.bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/country/0008Balti.htm.*

*Veaceslav Dodonu was **BISNIS** representative in Moldova.*

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)—MIGA, an arm of the World Bank, has launched an online information service featuring privatization-related investment opportunities in Russia. The PrivatizationLink Russia site, <http://russia.privatizationlink.com>, developed in partnership with the Russian Ministry of Property Relations and the Canadian International Development Agency, provides investors free access to business profiles of Russian state-owned companies and assets currently for sale, searchable by sector and region, as well as other direct investment opportunities. In addition, PrivatizationLink Russia provides a wealth of complementary information, such as relevant laws, regula-

tions, and procedures governing the privatization process and foreign investment in Russia. PrivatizationLink Russia aims to increase the transparency of the privatization process by providing equal access to relevant information for both foreign and domestic investors.

The Azerbaijan Ministry of State Property has relaunched its website (www.msp.gov.az/index_eng.shtml), developed with the help of MIGA. The revamped site includes numerous new features, such as an electronic monthly newsletter, a news section, and a comprehensive list of upcoming auctions and tenders.

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Email: info@ite-exhibitions.com
Website: www.ite-exhibitions.com
Sectors: Ingredients for food processing industry
- Upkovka** Nov. 28–Dec. 1, 2000 **Moscow**
Organized by: Messe Dusseldorf International
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Email: info@mdna.com
Website: www.mdna.com
Sectors: Packaging machines and equipment, packaging materials, & packaging printing
- Telecommunications in the CIS and Russia** December 5–7, 2000 **St. Petersburg**
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This notice is provided solely as an informational resource and does not constitute U.S. Department of Commerce endorsement of these events. For a more complete listing of NIS trade events, visit *BISNIS Online* at www.bisnis.doc.gov/bisnis/events.htm. All information published in the *BISNIS Bulletin* regarding trade events is subject to change without notice by the organizers of those events.