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**aid to
artisans**
From Maker to Market

PRESS RELEASE

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TOUR OPERATORS SIGN COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH ALTERNATIVA TO PROMOTE HANDICRAFT TOURISM

SAN SALVADOR. This morning twelve tourism companies in El Salvador signed a cooperative agreement with Alternativa Association with the purpose of promoting the importance of handicraft tourism.

Alternativa is a non profit organization which provides advisory for the design and development of innovating products, as well as training artisans to create high quality and competitive products. Alternativa was created in October 2007 from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Aid to Artisans (ATA), under the USAID funded Program for Artisan Development. USAID has provided \$5.5 million in support to the artisan sector in the last four years.

Currently, Alternativa counts with a wide variety of products from more than 65 artisan groups, which are on display in the Alternativa store. "In our store, tourists can observe the raw materials used, which later become innovative products created with artisan techniques" stated Miguel Lacayo, President of Alternativa.

The artisan sector in the country represents an important item which is expected to generate, with initiatives like this one, economic sustainability, social benefit and employment.

The Cooperative agreement seeks that tourism companies include in their trips a visit to the Alternativa store, where the visitors will learn more about Salvadoran artisans appreciating high quality products.

The companies which have joined this promotion effort are: Salvadoran Tours, Network Torus, Mayan Escape, Eco Mayan Tours, Discovery, Avy Tours, Papagayo Adventures, Nahuat Tours, Eva Tours and Anna's Travel.

Alternativa seeks to offer innovative artisan products with competitive prices, with the purpose of strengthening the artisan sector.

The cooperative agreement was signed by Miguel Lacayo, President of Alternativa y twelve representatives of the tourism companies. Mr Lawrence Rubey of USAID and Mrs. Rosa Selva from ATA were witnesses.

Alternativa Store is located at 79 Ave. Norte no. 524, Colonia Escalón.

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