

# ELECTIONS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DONOR COORDINATION MEETING no.5

30 July, 2008, 11:00

UN House, Conference Room

## AGENDA

1. Welcome by UN Resident Coordinator
2. Presentation of the Joint project proposal for Electoral Support to Moldova, Ole Holtved, UNDP
3. Presentation of the new initiative of the Soros Foundation, Olesea Stamate, Soros Foundation, Public Administration & Good Governance, Program Director
4. Discussions and AoB

### Participants:

Kaarina Immonen	UN Resident Coordinator
Ghenadie Cretu	IOM
Alexandru Mocanu	IOM
Ylva Sorman Nath	SIDA
Stela Leuca	USAID
Radivoje Grujic	Council of Europe
Timothy Pylate	Eurasia Foundation
Simone Kozuharov	Eurasia Foundation
Sorin Mereacre	Eurasia Foundation
Diana Zaharia	UK Embassy
Staffan Darnolf	IFES
Ludmila Samoila	OSCE
Olesea Stamate	Soros Foundation
Vitalie Vremis	UNDP

### Meeting Notes

#### 1. Welcome by UN Resident Coordinator

Ms. Kaarina Immonen, UN Resident Coordinator, welcomed the participants and appreciated the attendance at the meeting. Due to the fact that new participants are attending a round of introduction was proposed. UN RC has

called for any additions to the agenda. It was also added a round of update from Eurasia, Council of Europe and USAID/IFES

## 2. Presentation of the Joint project proposal for Electoral Support to Moldova

Mr. Ole Holtved has made a brief presentation of the project proposal (attached and circulated by e-mail). He has highlighted that feedback is welcome by e-mail and individual discussions, as well as during the meeting. Every component of the project was briefly described outlining that assistance is designed primarily to suit the needs CEC and national counterparts for the 2009 Elections but also on a longer term. It was pointed out that the first component (IT and Voter Registration) will primarily focus on creating by 2009 an electronic voter register and not electronic or internet voting. The latter are longer term aims. For the out of country voting it was also emphasized that besides the work with the Consular Department a by mail operation might be considered. This component is developed and will be jointly implemented with IOM. The Training/Capacity Development and Media/PR and Voter Education parts will be closely coordinated with other actors since many development partners have operations in this area. The 6<sup>th</sup> component of Material Support is a new but needed operation and is aimed to provide assistance to the CEC and not substitute what the CEC/Government can procure and implement.

Following the brief presentation Ms. Immonen has opened the floor for questions and comments outlining that this proposal is viewed to be a joint one, already brought together by UNDP and IOM.

### Summary of discussions:

- It was pointed out that it is important to provide data for number of voters, age groups, gender, how many are in and out of the country etc.
- There is a need to describe how the results of the media capacity building activities will be measured
- SIDA has highlighted the fact that it supports Eurasia in some activities described by the component 5
- A question was raised on how will the problem of absentees will be solved, namely voters (like for instance students) who are temporarily residing in one place and have their residence permit in another.
  - o Mr. Holtved responded that the project envisages the provision of several options to address this issue (in more general terms the supplemental lists). One solution will be to provide the opportunity for voters to register in a place other than the residence in the database (rather than going on supplemental lists on the election day) before elections. Basically this is also applicable to out-of-country voters as well. Hence by-mail could also be implemented not only for out-of-country but also for in country voters; in other words to provide for absentee voting.

- It was also noted that for this kind of changes besides a mentality change one should think of all aspects including legal, operational, voter education etc. However it is definitely feasible to be implemented.
- A question was addressed if there is a priority list (top three issues) given the multiple components included, the limited timeframe and funding constraints.
  - o As a response it was noted that it would be good to apply a balanced approach and address all of the issues. Several issues are not difficult to address technically as some issues are more political and depend on the shift in will and mentality.
  - o It was also noted by the UN RC that the 6 components are already a shortlist resulted from an analysis of a larger variety of components identified previously and discussed at the previous meeting
- Floor was then open for the Soros Foundation representative to provide a brief outline about the new initiative supported by them

### 3. Presentation of the new initiative of the Soros Foundation

Ms. Olesea Stamate has presented the new initiative which is a project that registered successes in Eastern Europe particularly in Romania.

In the context of the upcoming Parliamentary elections in 2009, seven organizations<sup>1</sup> have established "The Civic Initiative for a Clean Parliament" to investigate and reveal information of public interest about the incumbent candidates for the Parliamentary seats.

The project envisages several main *activities*:

- o Defining the criteria of political integrity of the candidates in the parliamentary elections. Selecting a group of investigation journalists who will gather information about the candidates and reviewers who will double check it
- o Presenting the project and discussing the criteria with the political parties
- o Collecting information about the political candidates by the investigation journalists and verifying it by the reviewers
- o Introducing the candidates that do not meet the agreed criteria into the "black lists"
- o Presenting the "black lists" to the political parties, thus giving them the chance to remove the unsuitable candidates from their electoral lists
- o Candidates that are on the "black lists" and will not be removed by the party from the electoral list will be made public through the final lists
- o Disseminating the "black lists" as widely as possible using media and other available means

The project will work at the beginning with 7 most popular (according to surveys) political parties.

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<sup>1</sup> Association of Independent Press, Centre for the Analysis and Prevention of Corruption, Centre for Journalistic Investigations, Centre "Access-info", Independent Journalism Centre, Soros-Foundation Moldova and Transparency International

This project has the financial support of the SOROS Foundation Moldova but other donors are welcome to contribute.

Ms. Stamate has called for support of international organizations, donor- and diplomatic community who would oversee the implementation of the project, at the same time guaranteeing its credibility.

#### Summary of discussions:

- Discussions were held around the time span between the preliminary and the final lists of the candidates as parties may use this initiative to withdraw candidates from the lists between the moment they announce the lists and 3-days before elections when final lists are approved. Ms. Stamate specified that the project will actually use also opinion polls and work with parties that have most chances and work very openly. The project has succeeded to sign cooperation agreements with the 5 parties and is waiting to agree with the other 2 (communists and Christian democrats).
- Another issue suggested to be addressed is methodology of measuring results given the proportional list system, in comparison with the ways such initiatives were evaluated in countries like Romania. It was also discussed
- Eurasia has expressed support to the project on a case by case basis given Eurasia's support to media monitoring and domestic observation, as well as the anti-corruption components that are cross cutting the clean parliament initiative.
- Question was addressed regarding the communication channels for the visibility of the initiative.
  - o Soros Foundation will tap on its regional network of independent press and TV stations
  - o It was also stressed that its very important to get support of the media and non-governmental organizations for such an initiative. Eurasia proposed working jointly with Soros Foundation on questions for the upcoming survey that Eurasia is planning to conduct.
- Concern was raised and agreed to be addressed with reference to the transformation of the project into "anti – 1 party campaign". It was suggested that in case there is only 1 party in question (on corruption of candidates), that information will not be made public, but will be discussed with that particular party. Such a perception was the case in Romania for instance where the initiative was perceived as anti- ruling power campaign.
  - o These observations will be taken into consideration for mitigating the risks of interfering in politics

4. It was concluded that the initiative is very welcome and it was useful to conduct the consultations within the group. The meeting further proceeded with updates from Eurasia, Council of Europe and IFES.

Eurasia has updated the donor matrix and has informed that it got an additional grant from the British Government to support its activities under the 2009 Parliamentary Elections. It was mentioned that Eurasia's activities will only complement the proposed UN joint project interventions (particularly on media and voter education). Eurasia has identified experts to assess elections framework and capacities of NGO's for conducting free and fair elections. These will complement and not overlap the UN project's assistance to the CEC. The sociological company for the public opinion survey is in the process of selection. Participants will be invited to the presentation of results.

Eurasia has noted that the UN might want to revise slightly the Media component and adjust the terms of reference of the media expert to facilitate the dialogue between the media associations and the CEC/Audio Visual Council. It was also noted that work on methodology for media monitoring is covered by Eurasia. It was also specified that procurement under component 6 of transparent ballot boxes should be carefully looked at to avoid experiences in Gagauz elections where secrecy of the vote was an issue.

Participants otherwise supported the procurement of election material including voter screens (booths)

IFES has briefly presented the new USAID project implemented with NDI and IRI (the latter focusing on needs of political parties). IFES representative has noted complementarity but also overlaps in its plans. The areas with potential overlap with the joint project, but also with CoE, Eurasia are: capacity building and training, outreach and voter education material, political finance, dispute resolution. It was agreed to conduct coordination meetings to see how to avoid overlaps and seek complementarity. IFES will conduct individual meetings with partners to agree on further cooperation.

It was noted by the UN RC that there were always found ways to coordinate activities with the USAID (like in drought response and others). The USAID and other partners were called to update the matrix so that the UN RC presents it to the ambassadors meeting for information and coordination purposes.

Council of Europe has updated everyone on the date of events within the project. International conference on media coverage and responsibility during elections will take part on 22 September. Invitations will be sent. Another event will take place on 24 - 25 November – Training for judges. It was suggested to also develop and circulate a calendar of events aside of the donor matrix.

The meeting was brought to an end by the UN RC with a call for mutual support between development partners in addressing common concerns in a common way in the context of different development interventions for elections support.

