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**Position Paper**  
**United Nations in Moldova with Development Partners**  
**National Development Strategy**

The United Nations in Moldova takes particular interest in the successful development and appropriate framing of the follow-up policy to Moldova's current National Development Strategy (NDS) 2008-2011. As Moldova moves to deepen and strengthen reform efforts as part of its European Union integration ambitions, the importance of a finely and appropriately tuned National Development Strategy takes on magnified importance. This discussion paper is designed as a starting point for engagement with government and civil society partners in thinking forward the development of the next NDS ("NDS2"). The issues covered below are those which the UN agencies in Moldova collectively consider key for the elaboration of NDS2. This contribution is provided with a view to the Government's intention to keep the NDS2 brief and strategic.

**1. Supplementing Economic Thinking with Social and Human Rights Approaches to Development (and Development Constraints)**

The NDS2 should establish a vision which is not limited narrowly to economic development, but recognizes the value and importance of social, human advancement, justice and freedom aspects of development.

Constraints on development deriving from social issues, health status and human rights limitations can limit, and even reverse economic expansion. While sustained economic growth is central, this alone is not enough to advance human development. For that, growth needs to be inclusive. For example, existing inequalities in income distribution lowers Moldova's Human Development Index by 19.4 percent.<sup>1</sup> Economic growth needs to be inclusive, equitable and sustainable to enhance the country's resilience to crises, by creating job and income opportunities and enabling all to participate and benefit. A focus on inclusion broadens access to education and health care, which in turn will contribute to inclusive growth in the future. For instance:

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<sup>1</sup> See Global Human Development Report 2010 (p 87, 88, 153). A range of recent sources, including the recently launched Moldova National Human Development Report 2011 ([http://www.undp.md/presscentre/2011/NHDR2010\\_2011/index.shtml](http://www.undp.md/presscentre/2011/NHDR2010_2011/index.shtml)), the Joint Integrated Local Development Program vulnerability study, various UN treaty body conclusions, have drawn similar conclusions and offer parallel and harmonious guidance in this regard.

- Expanding opportunities and participatory involvement mechanisms for women and girls, as well as of persons from marginalized, stigmatized or otherwise vulnerable groups -- investments in these areas have intergenerational benefits, and will drive progress across all Millennium Development Goals. By contrast, neglect of development in these areas sets the stage for future dependence.
- Targeting investments in health and education (including technical and vocational education and training), in clean water and sanitation, and in the professionals who run these services not only saves lives. These actions also lay the foundations for inclusive and sustained economic growth. Healthy and educated people are better able to improve their own lives. Investment in the early years and in children currently most likely to be excluded has consistently been demonstrated to bring the highest rates of return.
- Targeting/scaling-up social protection and employment programmes, including circular labour migration, and other interventions. These are directly linked to social inclusion and developing resilience to present and future shocks.

Attention to tackling socially exclusionary constraints on economic growth, as well as to ensuring that economic growth is inclusive and its benefits equitably distributed should be central themes of NDS2.

In a broader sense, it will be important for NDS2 to set out a vision for the hopes and aspirations of the public during the coming period. An NDS2 which focuses exclusively or even predominantly on wealth creation risks removing from public debate the freedom-related, justice and symbolic aspirations of Moldovans and others invested in Moldova's future. An NDS2 without a vision of human rights progress also risks failing to respond meaningfully to the hopes and the current frustrations of the public.

## **2. Beyond Poverty Reduction: Towards Social Inclusion**

A related matter concerns whether the policy instruments designed or described within NDS2 are appropriately calibrated to Moldova's European integration ambitions. Early discussions on the conceptual basis for the next NDS have suggested that one key element would likely be poverty reduction or poverty eradication. Poverty reduction has indeed been a cornerstone of many development strategies globally. Thus, for example, Afghanistan, Jamaica and Uganda have all made excellent use of poverty reduction methodologies in conceiving and implementing national development plans.

The European framework, however, would suggest that other conceptual bases are likely more appropriate for Moldova. EU candidate countries have generally been requested by the European Commission to prepare so-called "Joint Inclusion Memoranda" setting out the scope and content of existing social inclusion policies with a view to progressive harmonization with European Union frameworks. In countries such as Croatia, the United Nations and the government have worked closely together to provide coherence and depth to these policies, moving the country significantly forward in realizing European ambitions. Such policies are consistently underpinned by the conceptual frame of social inclusion, rather than solely poverty reduction. While poverty reduction would serve to perpetuate a vision of purely monetary social support, the operative European frameworks, in which social cohesion is derived from multi-sectoral and complex efforts at social

inclusion, is by far the richer and more relevant concept for Moldova. Core elements include inclusion policies tailored for the particularities of exclusion, rather than a one-size-fits-all vision of increased (generally monetary) assistance, driven by solely income-based or other material assessments of exclusion. This is also complementary to the MDG agenda.

Human development stresses the significance of access to education, health care and other social services, as well as guarantees of basic political rights and freedoms, including gender equality and freedom of movement, and the ability to participate in the activities of the community with self-respect and without shame. Lack of education, poor healthcare, inadequate economic possibilities, violation of political freedom, and the neglect of citizens' rights restrict people's freedom. What also limits these freedoms and choices is social exclusion, both as a process and as an outcome. If the objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and fruitful lives, exclusion can hamper choices and opportunities, thus reducing human development.

The first imperative is therefore to identify the socially excluded groups, as well as the social, political, cultural and economic processes that may lead to the production and reproduction of exclusion and inequalities. Several analytic works have already been produced in this area, which can further improve our understanding of these processes, including the National Human Development Report 2010/2011 on Social Exclusion.

Ideally therefore, NDS2 would be framed around the concept of "social inclusion" rather than "poverty reduction".

### **3. NDS as a Framework for Action on Normative International Commitments (including MDGs, Treaty obligations, etc.)**

During one scenario currently under discussion, NDS2 would cover the period 2012-2020. A number of milestones lie along the path to 2020.

First, in 2015 Moldova will be expected to report on progress made toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Moldova was able to report progress under a number of the Goals. However, progress was troubled in certain key areas, including action to combat HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, water and sanitation infrastructure, and – perhaps most worryingly – primary (and, consequently, secondary) education. In addition, the reporting process exposed weaknesses in the ability of current data systems to track progress towards MDGs, particularly in terms of proper disaggregation and availability of equality data for certain key groups, and to apply evidence-informed strategic planning.

As a related matter, Moldova is now expected to act on – and will be expected to report repeatedly during the period on – recommendations by treaty bodies assessing the state of transposition of Moldova's international human rights law obligations in the fields of implementing civil, cultural economic, political and social rights, as well as redressing discrimination against women, combating racial discrimination, securing the rights of the child, securing the rights of refugees, persons with disabilities, irregular migrants, identifying stateless persons and reducing

statelessness, and ending torture and related forms of ill-treatment.<sup>2</sup> These commitments will additionally be taken up extensively in Moldova's bilateral relations when Moldova is reviewed for the first time in 2011 under the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, and then again in 2015 and 2019, with interim mechanisms for reporting on recommendations foreseen to become stronger during that period. They will also form a key element of the European Union's interface with the Moldovan government.

Moldova also acts on other international commitments.<sup>3</sup> An NDS2 which neglects to set out modalities for action on these commitments threatens to leave a gap in the policy tool chest – one with potentially repeatedly embarrassing implications for Moldova's foreign policy, as well as – more importantly – one which would deny Moldovans the benefits of progress in these development areas. NDS2 should set modalities and frameworks for acting on Moldova's international law and normative commitments.

#### **4. Environment Protection, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction**

Moldova's population, economy and ecosystem are vulnerable to climate change and environmental impacts. The frequency and intensity of weather and climate related natural hazards such as drought, floods, hail, soil erosion and landslides is expected to further increase, negatively affecting the country's development agenda. The economic cost of environmental degradation is quite significant, and water and air pollution cause significant health costs. Besides the high cost of inaction, environment protection is recognized as an important driver for growth, regional development and technological innovation, while increasing the country's resilience to disasters and increasing the population's quality of life. In that regard, it is important for NDS2 to highlight the opportunities of decoupling economic growth from a growth in emissions and environmental degradation and reducing the country's vulnerability to climate variability and change. The multiple benefits of an improved status and management of the environment and natural resources on economy, ecosystems, health and the society at large and the strong linkages to poverty reduction and economic development are critical issues to be emphasized in that regard.

#### **5. Public Administration Reform and Institutional Development**

Efficient institutions obeying and implementing the rule of law are crucial to development, and are a core part of the United Nations and other development partners' current support to and future strategies for the Republic of Moldova. Global experience indicates that weak institutions are universally present in dysfunctional states, leading to reversal in development. In this regard, we believe that central Public Administration Reform and Decentralization processes need to be given

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<sup>2</sup> Under, respectively, Moldova's primary international human rights treaty obligations: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).

<sup>3</sup> Such as the International Health regulation and the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, to name only two. Additionally, Moldova reports on progress towards UNGASS Declaration once every two years.

careful consideration in NDS2, emphasizing strong linkages between these two interdependent, ongoing processes. Promotion of information and communication technology tools in governance need to be seen as part of reforms at both central and local levels. The analysis done by the UN agencies reveal important needs connected to the reforms at central and local level.

## **6. Relationship of NDS to Other Policies and Processes**

Useful attention might also be devoted to the relationship between NDS2 and the now extensive field of sector and thematic policies, strategies, action plans and other instruments planned or currently ongoing, including in the areas of the education, health, employment and social protection sectors; the environment, low emission development; climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction; justice, police and prosecution reform; reintegration; regional development; public administration reform and decentralization; human rights; gender equality; combating domestic violence; combating trafficking in human beings; the social inclusion of persons with disabilities; Roma inclusion; educational, science and cultural policy; cultural rights; securing the rights of the aging population, children left behind, and migrants and refugees; providing social housing for persons in need including non-citizens such as refugees; return migration and diaspora engagement; and national response to HIV and AIDS; a non-exhaustive list. In addition, repeatedly present in the public domain is a broader discussion of constitutional reform. Development in the period 2012-2020 will presumably encompass all of these areas. How will NDS2 reflect an overarching framework – and tie together inter-linkages between – these various policy domains?

As a related matter, what will be the relationship between Moldova's international and regional policy frameworks – including multiple European agreements, as well as the next UNDAF – and NDS2? How strongly will the targets in the Strategy's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework be linked to international commitments, such as for example the Millennium Development Goals? While there is a legitimate temptation to look for a possible "NDS2 lite", it is likely that such an option can prove elusive. NDS2 will likely need to provide some guidance as to how a series of policy threads are brought together within a coherent development vision. In this context, another important consideration is whether the new national development strategy will be costed and how it will be linked to the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework.

Finally, given the centrality of European integration to the current priorities of Moldovans, as well as the ambitions repeatedly stressed by the government to undertake reform in a European context, guidance would ideally be provided within NDS2 on Europe reform in Moldova, plans for achieving the Copenhagen criteria, and related goals.

## **7. Process Considerations in the Development of the next NDS**

The law of genuine consultation has been increasingly developed in recent years. It is particularly extensively evolved under international economic, social and cultural rights law. In Europe, relevant standards and norms appear in particular under the European Social Charter and the Aarhus Convention, however also under the European Convention on Human Rights. Pragmatism further indicates that NDS2 provides a valuable opportunity for public involvement in meaningful discussion about the shape, scope and direction of Moldova's development future. An NDS2

produced without such broad consultation risks, on the other hand, a lack of public ownership and resulting ineffectiveness. Extensive support exists for a broad and inclusive consultation process in the development of NDS2.

In addition, measurable results and participatory mechanisms for NDS2 monitoring and evaluation are important prerequisites for proper implementation. Such monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should duly account for contributions outside the public sector in NDS2, and involve civil society organisations, faith-based organizations, and private sector as partners and stakeholders.

## **8. Conclusions**

NDS2 ideally reflects development goals encompassing the economy, good governance, social inclusion, justice in its broadest sense, and human rights. It further sets out a framework for various institutional and legislative development processes, and maps linkages with sectoral and thematic policies, programmes, planning documents as well as with various international frameworks. As a related matter, NDS2 is a map of implementation plans of Moldova's international normative commitments. The development of NDS2 offers an opportunity for genuine consultation with the public-at-large. The United Nations in Moldova stands ready to contribute, including through active engagement in the consultative process, to the development of NDS2, with a view to the elaboration of the best possible development strategy for Moldova's immediate future.