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**Field visits**

**Report of the Executive Board field visit to the Republic of  
Moldova and Ukraine from 2 to 6 December 2024**

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## Visit to the Republic of Moldova, 2-4 December 2024

### I. Introduction

The field visit to the Republic of Moldova took place from 2-4 December 2024, enabling Members of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS to observe the progress of key United Nations-supported initiatives, identify development challenges, and explore opportunities for enhanced collaboration.

During the visit, the delegation engaged with government officials, United Nations representatives, local partners, and visited various United Nations-supported projects across sectors, including health, energy, gender-based violence, youth, and social cohesion.

Amid ongoing challenges—including the effects of the war in Ukraine, energy insecurity, and social and environmental vulnerabilities—this visit underscored the critical role United Nations agencies play in supporting Moldova's development.

The delegation's findings highlight the need for a strategic and holistic approach that addresses immediate humanitarian needs while fostering long-term resilience, in alignment with Moldova's European Union (EU) accession ambitions.

### II. Key themes of the visit aligned with strategic objectives

#### 2.1. Health sector

**Strategic objective:** Strengthen healthcare access and quality, particularly for vulnerable populations, in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 (good health and well-being).

The Republic of Moldova faces ongoing challenges in healthcare, including limited access to quality services and lower life expectancy, particularly in rural areas. This impacts health outcomes and contributes to a lower life expectancy compared to other countries in the region. Additionally, the influx of refugees from Ukraine places further strain on the health system. Moldova continues to host 123,700 refugees from Ukraine and provides essential support under the temporary protection regime to over 60,200 individuals.

**Orhei District hospital:** This hospital was modernized with UNFPA support, and this second-tier healthcare facility now offers modern sexual and reproductive health services and safe maternity care for women and refugees. Key upgrades included replacing outdated surgical tables, anaesthesia machines, intensive care units (ICUs), incubators, and oxygen systems. The hospital also hosts a gender-based recovery center, established with UNFPA support, providing specialized treatments for survivors of gender-based violence, including both psychological and medical care. During the visit, two women who had recently given birth praised the improved quality of services offered, describing them as faster, safer and more comfortable—a notable improvement from the previous facilities.

**Mobile safe spaces:** UNFPA established 32 static and 11 mobile safe spaces. The delegation visited one of the mobile safe spaces and learned about the critical support these units provide to vulnerable individuals, including women, youth, older persons, and people with disabilities. Implemented through local women-led organizations, these spaces ensure that survivors of violence receive the care and attention they need, particularly during crises and in remote rural areas where refugees and marginalized

groups reside. Beyond providing immediate support, this initiative also contributes to building stronger, more resilient communities where everyone, especially the most vulnerable, can feel safe and supported.

## 2.2. Social cohesion and inclusion

**Strategic objective:** Foster inclusive communities and promote social integration, aligned with SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions).

**Orhei youth center:** This youth center is part of the initiative launched by the Ministry of Education and Research with support from UNFPA. The network also includes mobile youth clinics that focus on engaging youth in remote rural areas. Overall, these youth centers engage approximately 30,000 young people in activities designed to enhance social skills, discuss issues such as gender, violence, and rights, and provide vocational training.

**Active ageing center:** Established with financial support from UNFPA and implemented by HelpAge, the active ageing center promotes social inclusion and improves the well-being of older people, including refugees, through digital training, sports, intercultural clubs and life skills workshops. Volunteers, including youth, assist older citizens in developing essential digital skills.

**Cultural center in Molovata village:** Renovated with UNDP support, the cultural center serves as a platform for dialogue between communities on both banks of the Dniester River. Activities such as folk music, dance, and guitar foster social cohesion and integration by bringing communities together.

## 2.3. Energy security and sustainable solutions

**Strategic objective:** Enhance energy security and resilience through renewable solutions, contributing to SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) and SDG 13 (climate action).

Moldova relies heavily on imported energy sources, a vulnerability exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. Given Moldova's geographic and economic ties with Ukraine, continued cooperation on energy transit, trade, and infrastructure development remains critical to long-term energy security and resilience. To address these challenges, the delegation observed initiatives promoting sustainable and resilient energy solutions:

**Photovoltaic systems for health facilities:** The delegation visited Calarasi regional hospital, one of five hospitals equipped with newly installed photovoltaic systems/solar panels funded by the European Union and implemented by UNDP. These installations have reduced the hospital's electricity consumption by 30 per cent, bolstering the sustainability of Moldova's healthcare system while mitigating energy insecurity.

**Molovata community water pumping station:** This facility, equipped with a 24kW photovoltaic system funded by Sweden and implemented by UNDP, ensures affordable and reliable water access for local households. It exemplifies how renewable energy can simultaneously address environmental and economic challenges, particularly for vulnerable populations.

## **2.4. Environmental sustainability and transboundary water management**

**Strategic objective:** Support responsible resource management and cross-border cooperation, aligned with SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and SDG 15 (life on land).

Moldova's environmental sustainability relies heavily on the Nistru River, which provides drinking water to approximately 80 per cent of the population. As a transboundary resource shared with Ukraine, it requires cross-border cooperation to address pollution, water quality, and regulatory concerns.

**Sustainable management of the Nistru River:** The delegation visited the Nistru River shore and met with environmental experts and the Deputy Prime Minister for reintegration to discuss a Sweden-funded, UNDP-led project aimed at supporting Moldova's sustainable management of the Nistru River. This initiative strengthens Moldova's capacity to manage the Nistru River at both national and transboundary levels, aiming to improve water quality, reduce flood risks, and ensure equitable and sustainable resource use.

**Regional sanitation and waste management:** The delegation also visited AVE Ungheni, a regional sanitation and waste management operator serving over 11,000 households and 750 businesses. Supported by EU funding and implemented by UNDP, AVE Ungheni evolved from a local provider to a regional operator through intermunicipal cooperation, improving efficiency and coverage of waste collection services, and enhancing overall environmental management.

## **2.5. Coordination and partnerships**

**Strategic objective:** Strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration to align with national priorities and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

Effective collaboration among United Nations agencies, the Government of the Republic of Moldova, and local partners is integral to the United Nations success in the country. The delegation noted the Moldovan Government's commitment to implementing key projects and acknowledged the robust partnership between national authorities and the United Nations agencies.

**Meetings with government authorities:** The delegation engaged with relevant Moldovan Government officials, including the Prime Minister, focusing on ongoing priorities including health sector reform, energy security, justice, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. Moldova's pursuit of the SDGs and its EU accession priorities were emphasized as central objectives.

**Coordination among United Nations agencies:** The United Nations country team, comprised of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, and over 20 other United Nations entities demonstrates effective collaboration in addressing Moldova's development challenges. The delegation commended the close collaboration and cohesive approach between UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, and other United Nations entities in advancing Moldova's recovery and sustainable development.

### III. Observations and findings

**Strong partnerships and effective collaboration:** United Nations agencies, government officials, and civil society in the Republic of Moldova maintain productive relationships, contributing to successful initiatives in health, education, justice, and energy. These efforts foster social cohesion, bring communities together, and promote sustainable development. The United Nations agencies based in Moldova are effectively carrying out their mandates in alignment with the Government's vision and national priorities. The delegation recognized their active participation in the successful implementation of various priorities and initiatives. The delegation observed various initiatives and projects supported by UNDP and UNFPA that have significantly benefited Moldovan communities in the Orhei District and beyond.

**Opportunity through EU accession:** With 76 per cent of SDG targets linked to EU accession, Moldova presents an opportunity for United Nations agencies to align development efforts with international best practices and support national priorities in ways that complement the country's broader reform agenda.

**Governance challenges:** The visit reaffirmed the importance of strengthening governance systems, ensuring transparency, and reinforcing institutional frameworks to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

**Electoral support and reforms:** The central electoral commission, supported by UNDP, has undertaken legal reforms and public education efforts to address disinformation, vote buying, and low voter turnout.

**External and internal risks:** The war in Ukraine, transboundary water issues and gas transit disruptions increase Moldova's vulnerability to external shocks.

**Environmental efforts:** The delegation commended the Government's initiatives for the sustainable management of the Nistru River. Projects such as tree planting along the Nistru River and improvements to the legislative frameworks reflect the Government's commitment to environmental sustainability. These efforts highlight the connection between environmental issues and governance.

### IV. Recommendations

- **Continue to strengthen cooperation with central and local authorities:** Encourage sustained and expanded collaboration between United Nations agencies and government authorities to ensure alignment with national priorities.
- **Establish impact monitoring mechanisms:** Develop systems to assess the impact and outcomes of projects implemented by United Nations agencies in collaboration with the Government and other partners, and gather lessons learned to scale up effective interventions.
- **Expand renewable energy efforts:** Sustain and broaden initiatives to address the country's energy crisis and promote economic resilience. Efforts to generate alternative energy sources are commendable, and serious attention to expanding renewable energy should be encouraged, which will gradually address Moldova's energy challenges.

- **Combat corruption:** Maintain a strong focus on good governance measures to bolster SDG progress and enhance government service delivery.
- **Enhance election integrity:** Continue supporting transparent, independent election processes through public awareness campaigns, legal reforms, and enforcement.
- **Leverage EU accession:** Leverage Moldova's EU accession process as an opportunity to align development efforts with international standards and best practices, fostering inclusive and sustainable growth.
- **Foster civil society engagement:** Empower non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local volunteers, and community groups to manage and adapt United Nations-supported projects, ensuring their sustainability. The continuous engagement of government and NGOs, civil society, and volunteers in the management, modification, and expansion of projects supported by UNDP, UNFPA, and UNOPS is vital for ensuring their resilience and sustainability.
- **Balance humanitarian and development efforts:** Allocate equal attention to long-term SDG-aligned initiatives alongside immediate humanitarian responses.
- **Resume cross-border engagement:** Resume engagement with Ukraine, in accordance with international rules and regulations, to ensure the equitable utilization of transboundary resources. This is essential for preventing conflicts and fostering collaboration.

## V. Conclusion

The field visit to the Republic of Moldova offered a comprehensive understanding of the country's development priorities, achievements, ongoing challenges, and the significant contributions of United Nations agencies. The delegation was impressed by the notable strides made through United Nations-supported projects in health, social cohesion, energy, and environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, issues such as the refugee influx, energy insecurity, and environmental concerns call for continued efforts and collaboration. Moving forward, strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships—between United Nations agencies, the Government of Moldova, and local communities—will be essential in building long term resilience and advancing progress towards Moldova's development goals and the SDGs.

### Visit to Ukraine, 5-6 December 2024

## VI. Introduction

The field visit to Ukraine took place from 5-6 December 2024 during a pivotal period in the country's recovery and development amidst an ongoing war with severe social, economic, and humanitarian repercussions. The visit provided Board members with a first-hand understanding of how UNDP, UNFPA, and UNOPS initiatives are addressing Ukraine's immediate recovery needs while laying the foundation for long-term resilience. The delegation observed key interventions across sectors, providing valuable insights into where multilateral support is most needed to sustain progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This report highlights the initiatives observed, their contributions to health, social cohesion, sustainable energy, mine action, and economic recovery, and identifies opportunities for scaling up impactful interventions, alongside recommendations for sustained international support.

## VII. Key themes of the visit aligned with strategic objectives

### 2.1. Strengthening health systems for inclusive recovery

**Strategic objective:** Address immediate health crises and build resilient health infrastructure, in alignment with SDG 3 (good health and well-being).

The ongoing war in Ukraine has severely impacted the health sector, reducing access to services and medicines, damaging healthcare facilities, and collapsing critical infrastructure. Rebuilding health facilities remains essential to Ukraine's recovery efforts.

The delegation visited the renovated Odesa City Hospital #8, refurbished with support from UNDP and the EU/European Investment Bank (EIB), which demonstrated significant improvements in healthcare services during the recovery phase, while also building local capacities and empowering communities.

The renovation of Odesa city hospital #8, along with initiatives such as the Survivor Relief Centers (SRCs) and Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS), underscores efforts to deliver life-saving services, build community resilience, and empower vulnerable populations.

**Survivor relief centers (SRC):** The survivor relief centers are social service centers providing free social, psychological, and legal assistance to those affected by the war and -related violence. Supported by UNFPA, the Odesa survivor relief center has assisted over 3,000 individuals since March 2023. During the visit, beneficiaries shared how the center offers crucial psychological support after enduring severe trauma.

**Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS):** The Women and Girls Safe Spaces provide safe environments for women and girls impacted by humanitarian crises, offering psychological support, referrals to gender-based violence (GBV) response services and opportunities for skill-building and leadership training. Since the onset of the war, a significant number of WGSS have been established in Ukraine. The delegation visited the 'VILNA' Friendly Space for Women and Girls, supported by UNFPA, which offers services such as food, medical care, and psychological treatment to GBV survivors, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Beneficiaries shared testimonies of how these spaces help rebuild personal skills and social networks.

### 2.2. Rebuilding social cohesion and community resilience

**Strategic objective:** Promote inclusive and cohesive communities essential for sustainable recovery and peacebuilding, aligned with SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions).

Initiatives such as the VidNOVA UA programme and youth center renovations highlight the importance of engaging young people and fostering volunteerism to rebuild trust, strengthen social structures and support inclusive recovery. The delegation observed efforts aimed at fostering social cohesion and community resilience in Odesa and its surrounding areas. Ukraine's ongoing war has fragmented social structures, and rebuilding social cohesion is critical for long-term recovery.

A key example is the renovated Odesa youth center, developed through the VidNOVA UA program in partnership with UNDP. This center empowers young people to contribute to recovery efforts through volunteerism and active community engagement.

### **2.3. Advancing sustainable energy for long-term development**

**Strategic objective:** Promote renewable energy solutions to meet recovery needs and enhance environmental sustainability, contributing to SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) and SDG 13 (climate action).

The delegation visited a solar power plant at a local wastewater management facility, supported by UNDP. This project exemplifies how local partnerships can drive environmentally sustainable recovery. Given Ukraine's reliance on regional energy cooperation, particularly with Moldova, initiatives like this contribute not only to local resilience but also to broader regional energy stability.

### **2.4. Ensuring safety through mine action**

**Strategic objective:** Mitigate risks to human safety and enable reconstruction by addressing landmine threats, contributing to SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities).

The ongoing war has left many areas in Ukraine contaminated with landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and unexploded ordnance, creating significant barriers to safe movement, reconstruction, and recovery efforts.

The delegation received a presentation about mine action efforts supported by UNDP and UNOPS. These initiatives are critical for protecting civilians and enabling access to areas essential to reconstruction and humanitarian assistance. UNDP has further supported the State Emergency Service of Ukraine (SESU) by providing equipment, including diesel generators, to enhance demining capabilities. This includes underwater demining and the use of advanced technologies such as satellite imagery, drones and trained dogs.

### **2.5. Empowering local economies through small business support**

**Strategic objective:** Bolster economic recovery by supporting small businesses, creating jobs, and fostering local entrepreneurship, aligned with SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).

The war has severely impacted businesses across Ukraine, including in Odesa, leaving many entrepreneurs struggling to sustain operations. Nevertheless, targeted efforts to revitalize such as the "Made in Ukraine" Office, established with UNDP support, demonstrate how local producers and entrepreneurs can rebuild and thrive despite war-related challenges.

The "Made in Ukraine" Office is a government initiative supported by UNDP that offers business development services and facilitates access to grants and loans for local producers. These types of support are vital for reviving war-affected economies by fostering job creation and broader economic recovery through the creation of new opportunities.

The delegation also met with local small business owners who, with support from UNDP and other partners, are rebuilding their businesses and creating new employment opportunities. Their resilience is key to Ukraine's economic recovery and long-term sustainability.

### **2.6. Enhancing coordination and partnerships**

**Strategic objective:** Strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships and governance mechanisms to align with national recovery priorities, contributing to SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).



Collaboration among United Nations agencies, local authorities, and civil society ensures recovery efforts are community-driven, context-specific and sustainable. During the visit, the delegation observed strong collaboration between United Nations agencies and local authorities in Odesa and noted how this collaboration has been crucial in ensuring that initiatives are aligned with local needs and broader national priorities.

The delegation also met with the Mayor of Odesa and other local government officials to discuss ongoing recovery efforts and progress in health, education, and social cohesion. The Mayor underscored the importance of continued international support and the need for further strengthening local capacity to implement recovery programs.

## VIII. Observations and findings

- **The ongoing war has had profound social, economic, and psychological consequences** for the people of Ukraine damaging infrastructure, displacing people, greatly increasing stress, and causing injury, loss of life, and loss of homes and livelihoods on an extensive scale.
- **United Nations agencies in Ukraine are fulfilling their mandates with great commitment**, working to help the country recover from the impact of the war. United Nations agencies are actively rebuilding critical infrastructure, promoting inclusive community development, empowering civil society, and enhancing public safety despite operational challenges in war-affected areas.
- **Initiatives supported by the United Nations agencies have benefited affected communities** by saving lives, building confidence, fostering social cohesion, creating jobs, and supporting the country's recovery.
- **Declining United Nations financial support to Ukraine risks undermining recovery efforts.**
- **The delegation observed the United Nations commitment to supporting GBV and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) victims** by enhancing essential services and empowering communities.
- **The ongoing war has posed significant operational challenges for United Nations agencies**, particularly in areas beyond government control, where access to humanitarian assistance remains restricted. Given the denial of United Nations access to these areas, United Nations agencies have been forced to cease operations in certain regions following the full-scale war and have had to close their offices/presence in the occupied territories. As a result, the civilian population in the occupied areas is deeply concerned about humanitarian needs and serious human rights violations, which have been reported to the international community.
- **Leveraging local partnerships for sustainability:** Strong local partnerships observed in Odesa showcase the importance of building local capacity and trust to ensure that recovery efforts are sustainable and community driven.
- **Investing in long-term recovery:** While humanitarian needs remain urgent, long-term development projects are critical to fostering resilience and should receive equal attention and resources.

## IX. Recommendations

- **Sustain United Nations engagement:** Continue the United Nations active participation in Ukraine's recovery efforts until the country is fully restored from the war's consequences.
- **Reassess and increase financial support:** Advocate for a review of United Nations financial allocations to ensure both immediate humanitarian needs and long-term development priorities are adequately funded.
- **Prioritize long-term development:** Provide equal attention to development projects aligned with the SDGs and national priorities alongside humanitarian interventions, thereby strengthening resilience and sustainability.
- **Scale up innovative approaches:** Expand successful models such as renewable energy projects and mine action technologies to other war-affected regions, promoting efficient and replicable solutions.
- **Continued and enhanced stakeholder engagement:** Collaborate closely with national-level authorities to integrate recovery efforts into overarching policy frameworks, ensuring alignment with broader development goals.
- **Prioritize local capacity building:** Continue to invest in training and resources to empower local governments, civil society, and communities to spearhead recovery initiatives and foster long-term stability.
- **Advocate for expanded humanitarian access:** Continue diplomatic efforts to advocate for safe, predictable, and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance, particularly in areas where operational constraints limit direct engagement. Strengthening coordination with partners and leveraging international mechanisms will be key to addressing urgent humanitarian needs.

## X. Conclusion

The field visit to Ukraine offered the delegation valuable insights into the country's ongoing recovery efforts, highlighting both significant progress and the challenges that remain. Despite the ongoing war and the significant challenges, the delegation observed remarkable resilience and determination from the Ukrainian people, as well as strong, coordinated efforts between United Nations agencies, national and local governments, and civil society.

Looking ahead, sustained international support and innovative recovery approaches—particularly in health, energy, social cohesion, and economic recovery—will be essential to ensuring Ukraine's long-term stability, resilience, sustainable and inclusive recovery, and progress toward the SDGs.

## Annex 1. Delegation list

<b>EXECUTIVE BOARD FIELD VISIT DELEGATION</b>	
H.E. Mr. Muhammad Abdul Muhith	Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, President of the Executive Board
H.E. Mr. Cornel Feruță	Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations, Vice President of the Executive Board
H.E. Ms. Leonor Zalabata Torres	Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, Vice President of the Executive Board
H.E. Mr. Fergal Mythen	Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations
H.E. Mr. Thomas Peter Zahneisen	Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Vice President of the Executive Board
Mr. Beyene Ejigu Sefera	Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations
<b>REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD SECRETARIAT OF UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS</b>	
Ms. Mahsa Jafari	Secretary of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS
Ms. Dalita Balassanian	Deputy Secretary of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS
Ms. Elena Pirondini	Chief, Executive Board Branch, UNFPA
Mr. Rahul Malhotra	Director, NY Board and External Relations Office, UNOPS
<b>OTHER MEMBER STATE REPRESENTATIVES AND SUPPORT STAFF</b>	
Mr. Rodrigo Méndez	First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Colombia to the UN