

2007 has been the first year of Bulgaria's membership in the European Union. The significant boost in economic confidence and political sentiment by gaining membership in the EU and the subsequent challenges were central themes of the past twelve months. The mild winter and a series of later floods and fires led to a poor harvest and pushed food prices up throughout the course of the year. When combined with the global rise in fuel prices, the resulting high inflation of over 11% year-on-year resulted in serious doubts as to whether the country would be able to fulfill the Maastricht Criteria on inflation levels in order to convert to the euro currency in 2010. Boosted by EU membership and the new flat tax, 2007 was a strong year for private enterprise. GDP grew at over 6% and the country attracted 5bn euros (almost \$7.4bn) in foreign direct investment. The large inflow of foreign capital into the real estate sector, combined with a rising trade deficit as Bulgarian companies purchased investment goods from abroad, led to a yawning current account deficit in 2007, that is expected to be about 20% of GDP. Perhaps a more significant challenge to the country's long-term sustainable development is the fact that human resources remain at a premium in Bulgaria with employers finding it increasingly difficult to attract sufficient numbers of qualified candidates. If the ruling coalition government (Bulgarian Socialist Party, Movement of Rights and Freedoms, National Movement Simeon the Second) continues to maintain the tight fiscal policy that has reaped rewards in recent years, introduce effective reforms to the nation's education system and use EU funds wisely to improve the country's key infrastructure, the potential for future economic growth remains good. However the low incomes, the slow or incomplete reform of the education and health sector are serious development issues which have yet to be resolved and for which the UN system has relevant expertise to help. The endorsement by the Government of the continued UN system role is a basis for a continuing role for the UN system in Bulgaria in the coming years.

Summary on progress towards UNDAF outcomes

Bulgaria does not have an UNDAF because of the limited size and number of agency programmes.

Summary on progress in UN Reform

The strategic orientations of the UNCT in Bulgaria were directed towards realignment of the United Nations activities with the new status of Bulgaria as EU member state and as an emerging donor country. The year was started with the UN Bulgaria Team Retreat to overview UN activities in Bulgaria and the continued relevance of the UN in the country. The conclusions from the retreat were that the UN is still needed in Bulgaria. It should adjust its priorities and mission in Bulgaria and use the past/existing projects network to build capacities locally. It was agreed that the UN should focus in the following areas: Governance, and regional development; Social development and social inclusion; Environment and energy; Local development, civil society and social mobilization.

REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR POPULATION DEVELOPMENT - National Strategy for Population Development (2006-2020) was successfully adopted by the Government of Bulgaria in 2006. In order to facilitate the process of smooth implementation of the strategy, in 2007 the UNCT was able to respond to a local authorities demand for assistance and thus to consult one pilot municipality in the development of a regional strategy for population development in the frames of the national one. The drafting of the strategy was done in close cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, experts and local authority representatives. It will be submitted for approval by the Municipality Council in the beginning of 2008. As a successful practice of UN agencies and local authorities partnership the strategy will be published both in Bulgarian and English language. The document will be used both from the Kazanlak Municipality and as an advocacy tool for future activities in the frames of the National Population Strategy. The first outcome of the initiative was the training in Public Private Partnerships (PPP) conducted in the framework of the project "Strengthening Partnership in the Planning and Absorption of the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds" (a partnership project of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Bulgaria and the UNDP). More than 35 participants (UN agencies' staff and national partners) took part in the two-day training. Presentations and tools in the area of establishing effective public-private partnerships were distributed among them.

DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND A PLAN OF ACTION FOR IT'S IMPLEMENTATION - The project was implemented in partnership with the United Nations Association, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pedagogic professionals from universities and experienced NGOs. The draft of the strategy was discussed with teachers in seven locations of the country who felt that it gave sufficient information about international experience in the field of human rights education. Having gathered information "on the field" about the applicability of the strategy and having analyzed the teachers' feed-back, the United Nations Association and the UNCT will organize by the end of January 2008 a meeting with Ministry of Education experts and representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, university departments and public training facilities, during which to discuss and review the National Strategy for Human Rights Education and finalize it, so that it can be adopted by the Ministry of Education. The meeting will define

the responsibilities, goals and first steps for the adoption and implementation of the Strategy and Plan of Action.

THE MDGR PROJECT 2007 – 2008 - The first Bulgarian MDGR was produced in 2003. The report launched the Bulgarian debate on the Millennium Development agenda, setting up clear goals, objectives and indicators until 2015. In the meantime Bulgaria entered the EU and NATO. The significant changes in the country, its dualistic status regarding the Millennium agenda raised the need for new MDGs report. In 2007 the UNCT embarked on the preparation of the second national MDGs Report – Bulgaria 2008. The preparation of the report is done in close cooperation with the main government counterpart – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the line ministries, the National Statistical Institute, analytical agencies and NGOs. The objectives of the report are to register the progress made on the Bulgarian MDGs, to update the MDGs data and to adapt the MDGs vis-à-vis the new status of Bulgaria as an EU member state and a donor country. The main messages of the report are: 1) Bulgaria is on its way to achieve most of the MDGs goals, put for 2015. 2) The internal contrasts build the main challenges for Bulgaria after the accession. The social, educational and health disparities may provoke social tension, endangering the overall development of Bulgaria. 3) Entering the EU Bulgaria takes a new responsibility – contribute more actively to the global partnership for development in combating poverty and world contrasts. The first draft of the report was produced in December 2007.

A ROUND TABLE ON MDGS FOR JOURNALISTS was organized in cooperation with the Centre for European Programmes of the American University in Bulgaria in November 2007. The necessity of this event came as an outcome of the problems raised in a MDGs Parliamentary Debate, organized in October, as well as in the preparation of the MDGs 2008 Report. Twenty journalists from leading regional and national media participated in the event. The roundtable further created awareness among journalists on the MDGs policy and the role of Bulgaria as an emerging donor country. Best practices were shared and communication tools discussed on how to promote the issue to the public at large and to the specific target group. The topic of MDGs was included in the Certificate Programme in European Project Management, organized regularly by the Centre for European Programmes of the American University in Bulgaria.

UN SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL RESPONSE TO AIDS NAC 2007 - The National Anti-AIDS Campaign 2007 was held under the patronage of the First Lady of Bulgaria Mrs. Zorka Parvanova. The main goal of the campaign is to increase the knowledge about HIV prevention and also to disperse some existing popular myths about AIDS. The campaign was organized and implemented jointly with the Ministry of Health, the National Committee on AIDS and STI at the Council of Ministers, and the Anti-AIDS Coalition. The following events and initiatives were held during the National information campaign to fight AIDS: 1) Press conference for launching the National information campaign 2) Meeting to present the achievements and challenges of the national HIV/AIDS response in Bulgaria 3) Day for anonymous and free testing and counseling for HIV in 10 universities in the country, provided in Mobile Medical Units of NGOs 4) School visit of the Minister of Health in 73rd secondary school which is part of the national network of 185 schools where health education is being taught as extra curriculum activity with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention. 5) Open Doors Day at the National Confirmatory Laboratory at the National Center for infectious and parasitic diseases in Sofia and the 28 Regional Inspectorates for protection and control of public health 6) Provision of condoms, red ribbons and information materials in popular pubs and bars and venues where young people gather.

Review of the implementation of 2001-2007 National AIDS Strategic Plan. Development of new National Strategic plan on HIV/AIDS for the period 2008-2015 - Within the period of October-November 2007, nine Roundtable discussions were held related to the problems of HIV and AIDS in Bulgaria. Representatives of the UNCT, key ministries, donors, experts, doctors of medicine, various non-governmental organizations, involved in the prevention of HIV among various vulnerable groups, as well as representatives of the groups themselves took part in the discussions. In the course of the discussions, a review of the National Program for AIDS and STD for 2001-2007 was made, taking into consideration the set indicators in the implementation of the "Program Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS" and the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS). The participants performed an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in relation to the situation and response to AIDS among different groups at risk. Achievements and threats for the implementation of the policies and interventions for HIV prevention for the next years were pointed out. The stakeholders also considered the ways for offering of accessible and adequate services as a response to the specific needs of the different groups, methods for scaling up testing and counseling, steps for achieving sustainability through combining prevention and treatment, mobilizing resources, involving other institutions and promoting partnerships. A broad discussion session on the strategic directions of the New Program for Prevention and Control of HIV for the period 2008-2015 was held, building on the in-depth analysis of the current Program for Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and the international recommendations for intensifying HIV prevention.

COORDINATED ADVOCACY MANAGER FOR ONE DAY WITH THE UN FAMILY - IN March 2007 the foundation "Junior Achievement Bulgaria" organized "Manager for a Day!". The initiative gives an opportunity to students from all over the country to share one real working day with the representatives of the business circles, government institutions and NGOs. For the fourth year the UNDP, Global Compact Initiative and as of two years the UNICEF offices are participating in the initiative acquainting the students with their work and activities.

REACHING OUT TOGETHER TO JOURNALISTS, WHO PROMOTE INTER-ETHNIC UNDERSTANDING - Journalists who contributed to inter-ethnic understanding and tolerance were awarded on the eve of 10 December 2007. In cooperation with the Multiethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation, the Bulgarian News Agency and the Journalism Faculty of the Sofia University the UNCT and its partners organized for a third consecutive year the contest "Excellence in Journalism on ethnic and religious tolerance" and marked once again the International Human Rights Day through the Dimitar Peshev awards ceremony for tolerance in journalism. The competition gives recognition to journalists for stories published in the national print and electronic media during the past year. The selection criteria hinge on commitment to minorities and ethnic rights' issues, contribution to overcoming negative stereotypes towards minorities, inspiration to tolerance and respect and affirmation of multiethnic dialogue. The contest has been highlighted during the First Annual Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative (Madrid, January 2008) as a best practice that could be shared and replicated in other regions of the world.

GLOBAL COMPACT - By September 2007, the UN Global Compact brings together more than 140 members in a semiformal

local network. The number of the big companies' members of GC has increased in 2007 by 50%. In Bulgaria the GC network is seen as a valuable partner and promoter of UN values. Therefore a number of local business associations, as well as international organizations turn to the GC network as partner in events and initiatives, such as: a) Support to a regional UNIDO's project to strengthen CSR culture amongst SMEs; b) Support to the project of establishment a national round table of CSR standards; c) Participation of GC network and members in the activities of the regional project "Accelerating CSR practices in new EU member states and candidate countries"; d) In 2007 the GC network pursued in conjunction with business associations and with the participation of the Parliamentary Anti-corruption commission the initiative to introduce legislative changes to limit the amount of cash payments in the country as a toll to combat corruption. The GC network initiated the translation in Bulgarian of the book A Better Globalization by Kemal Dervis. The network organized the launch of the book in the presence of the author (April 2007). The special launch event was sponsored by GC members; Translation and publication in Bulgarian of: CoP guidelines; of the Responsible lobbying guidebook; and of parts of the Anticorruption best practices took place also during the year.

Key aspects of the proposed 2008 workplan

While EU membership affords Bulgaria tremendous opportunities for development, the capacities to take advantage of the EU funds are still limited. With its experience and partnerships the UN has a role in Bulgaria helping build such capacities in the future.

In 2008 the UNCT will support the pilot municipality of Kazanlak in the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Population Development and will share the Kazanlak model with the other municipalities in the country.

As a follow up to the Human Rights Education project which started in 2007, the UNCT will organize a series of meetings with Ministry of Education experts and representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, university departments and public training facilities, during which to discuss and review the draft of the National Strategy for Human Rights Education. It is expected that the strategy will be finalized by June 2008 so that it can be adopted by the Ministry of Education. The responsibilities, goals and first steps for the adoption and implementation of the Strategy and Plan of Action will also be defined during the meetings.

The first draft of the MDGs Report produced in 2007 will be submitted for comments and approval in 2008 to the readers groups – the UNCT and the consultative groups consisting of line ministries, experts, NGOs and academia. It is expected that the report will be finalized by end of February and officially launched in March under the patronage of the President of the Republic and in the presence of high level government counterparts, the diplomatic community, NGOs and academia.

In 2008 the UN will continue to support the implementation of the Universal Access Initiative – Universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services for all those who need it by 2010 with development of targets for 2010, costed and budgeted and their integration into the new national AIDS strategic plan (2008-2015). The UN will participate and contribute to the Development of a new country proposal to the GFATM for the next six years (2009-2015) through the Rolling Continuation Channel mechanism. The UN will work in partnership with the Government to introduce in the country the methodology and software for HIV estimates and projections and to analyze the cost-effectiveness of interventions. It will lobby and advocate for review and amendment of policies and legislation that create or enforce barriers to HIV prevention programs and access to services. Although Bulgaria is currently providing integrated and balanced national HIV/AIDS response the social environment is dominated by prejudices and misconcepts about HIV/AIDS and people affected by it which fuels stigma and discrimination towards PLH and hampers prevention efforts. In view of this the UN will continue to participate in the design and implementation of National AIDS Campaigns and the development of national communication strategy for HIV/AIDS.

The Bulgarian Global Compact Network will join forces with national and international partners to continue promoting the UN GC principles. A GC Annual Meeting will gather members and partners of the Bulgarian GC Network to formulate a strategic annual working plan of the GC network, elect the new Advisory Board for the next two years and launch the publication "Bulgarian Global Compact Network members Best Practices". Workshops for UN Global Compact Bulgaria members on non-financial reporting and communication on progress will be organized.