MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
between
THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
and
THE SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION
concerning

the Single-Phase Project: "Enhancing Peace and Economic Prosperity through Women's Leadership and Inclusion (Women for Peace & Prosperity)"

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova, representing the Government of the Republic of Moldova, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, representing the Government of Switzerland, acting through the Swiss Cooperation Office/the Representation of the Embassy of the Swiss Confederation to Moldova (henceforth: the Participants), eager to continue their co-operation in the fields of governance, economic development and gender equality in the Republic of Moldova, have agreed on the following:

Preamble

Respect for democratic principles and fundamental human rights – as set out in particular in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – inspires the internal and external policies of the two Participants and constitutes an essential element of the cooperation between the Participants, on an equal footing with the objectives of the present Memorandum of Understanding.

The Memorandum is based on the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of the Swiss Confederation concerning Humanitarian Assistance and Technical Cooperation dated September 20, 2001.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) shall be empowered to represent their respective Governments in matters concerning the implementation of the Memorandum.

Article 1
Objective

The main purpose of the present Memorandum of Understanding is to ensure the adequate conditions for the successful implementation of the Project "Enhancing Peace and Economic Prosperity through Women's Leadership and Inclusion (Women for Peace & Prosperity)" (henceforth: the Project), which will last from 01.07.2024 until 30.06.2028. The Project document (Annex A) is integral part of the present Memorandum of Understanding.

The overall goal of the Project is that women, including refugees from Ukraine, are socially and economically empowered and have more say in decision-making processes.

The Project aims at achieving the following outcomes:

Outcome 1: Women increasingly engage in public decision making, peace building and social cohesion and contribute to more gender-responsive policies and budgets.
Outcome 2: Women, including the most disadvantaged, have better access to economic opportunities and decent employment and entrepreneurship.

The Project includes two components, implemented by UN Women and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

In the frame of the first component, which focuses on governance aspects, the Project will increase the capacities of local public authorities (LPAs) to develop and implement gender-responsive legal frameworks, policies and budgets. Trough mentorship and coaching, women community leaders will be empowered to embrace diversity and to contribute to participatory local policy making and budgeting. The Project will support up to 60 LPAs, including five at district level, to address community needs, gender equality and cohesion through small grants that communities can invest in their development. The Project will also work with men in leadership positions and young male activists, involving them in the training programmes and dialogue on gender-responsive and resilient governance, as well as in the implementation of community-based humanitarian-development-peace activities aimed at promoting gender equality and supporting the refugee population living in their communities. The Project engages active young women and men, including refugees, in a dialogue with LPAs and relevant institutions aimed at challenging gender norms and stereotypes. All participatory initiatives and dialogues with women and men, including refugees, will be closely linked to economic resilience activities, in particular participation in business development programs, including in the Transnistrian region. The aim is to establish possibilities of communication and participation for women in peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

In the frame of the second component, which focuses on economic aspects, the Project will promote women's economic empowerment by addressing challenges that women face in entering the labour market and developing their businesses, such as access to child care, gender pay gap, and gender stereotypes. The Project will also support job creation for women at the policy, institutional and beneficiaries' levels. Firstly, at the policy level, the Project will focus on promoting gender mainstreaming, equal pay and improved childcare services to be integrated into policies, programs and budgets of national institutions. The Project will also contribute to the development of an improved social protection system for care workers and advocate for decent working conditions in this female-dominated sector. Secondly, at the institutional level, the Project will support through counselling various organizations, such as child care service providers and various workers' associations, in order to strengthen their capacity to provide quality services to their clients. Key stakeholders, including women-owned businesses, employers, and professional associations, will be technically and financially strengthened to promote job creation in the care sector. A key contribution of the Project will be to build networks by encouraging the active involvement of trade unions and women's associations to empower women to actively participate in the labour market. Finally, the Project will support the development of entrepreneurship programs for women, including refugees, also in the Transnistrian region. Women-led enterprises will benefit from business support programs to directly enhance their skills and business development capacity. Overall, the Project will support women's capacity building, among others, in digitalization, financial literacy, supply chain integration, market access, and green business models through the provision of technical assistance, legal advice, collaboration with financial institutions, and enhanced networking. The Project will support increased collaboration among women entrepreneurs, including those from

the Transnistrian region, with the aim of creating an enabling business environment in rural areas.

The overall lead of the Project at national level is with the UN Women. The Project's final beneficiary is the Moldovan society as a whole, benefitting from improved democratic processes, reliable data and targeted evidence-based development interventions. In the spirit of the "leave no one behind" (LNOB) principle, the Project will involve vulnerable groups (people with disabilities, refugees from Ukraine, etc.).

The Project aims to reach more than 40'000 direct and 240'000 indirect beneficiaries. The Project will complement existing initiatives aimed at institutionalizing gender-responsive budgeting in public finance management system at central and local levels. The Project will benefit the entire society by building an ecosystem sustaining women's participation, engaging in broad public-private-civil society partnerships, improving long-term collaboration between relevant stakeholders and creating social networks and new jobs.

Article 2
Swiss Contribution

For the implementation of the Project, the Government of the Swiss Confederation, through SDC, shall make available the following contributions:

a) Co-financing of the Project.

By co-financing the Project, the SDC contributes to the following activities:

b) Joint implementation of the Project by UN Women and ILO.

c) Technical assistance and training to partner institutions, including services provided by international and local expert/consultants, for jointly defined work tasks limited in time and scope.

d) Solution-oriented learning and innovation programs for institutions and practitioners, as well as documentation and dissemination of good practices at the national and local levels with the support of sector institutions.

SDC contributes to the Project implementation with a total maximum amount of CHF 8'000'000 via the United Nation's Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) and therefore concluded an agreement in line with SDC requirements.

The release of the Project related contributions shall be made by SDC based on the projects' progress, incurred expenses and actual requirements.

Article 3
Moldovan Contribution

The Government of the Republic of Moldova, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, shall undertake the following actions:

a) Lead the reforming and coordination process in the field of labour, social protection and gender equality, according to the Government's relevant policies and activity programs.

b) Steer the development of the legal/regulatory framework contributing to sustainable changes in the areas of labour rights, social protection and gender equality.

c) Facilitate the collaboration with relevant authorities at national and local level, including capacity building of LPAs.

d) Contribute to the dissemination of innovative knowledge products on innovative solutions developed in the frame of the Project.

e) Participate in the Steering Committee aimed at steering the Project and at supervising the quality of the Project implementation, as well as of its outcomes and outputs, according to the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee (Annex B), which are a part of the present Memorandum of Understanding.

f) Provide support in order to facilitate the necessary visas and permissions required for experts working within the frame of the present Project.

g) Ensure the exemption from payment of taxes, custom duties, fees and other compulsory payments for all the equipment, services, vehicles and materials financed on the grant basis, as specified in the Article 4.2 of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of Swiss Confederation concerning Humanitarian assistance and Technical Cooperation, reference to which is made in the Preamble of the present Memorandum. The exemption also applies to local government (village, district).

Article 4
Conditions for suspending the Swiss contribution

In case the undertakings by the Republic of Moldova according to Article 3 are not met in a timely manner, Switzerland may suspend the Project with immediate effect. In this case, Switzerland may terminate this Memorandum of Understanding by the provision of one month's notice.

Article 5
Anti-corruption clause

Within the framework of this Memorandum of Understanding, the Participants share a common concern in fighting against corruption, which jeopardizes good governance and the proper use of resources needed for development and, in addition, endangers fair and open competition based on price and quality. They shall neither directly nor indirectly propose benefits of any nature whatsoever and shall not accept any such proposals. They declare that any offer, gift, payment, remuneration or benefit of any kind whatsoever and considered as an illegal act or corrupt practice has not been nor will be made, directly or indirectly to any person whomsoever in view of the award or execution of the present Memorandum of Understanding.

Any corrupt or illegal behaviour signifies a violation of the present Memorandum of Understanding and justifies its termination as well as/or the recourse to supplementary corrective measures in accordance with applicable legislation.

Article 6
Procurement of goods and services

The procurement of goods and services to be financed out of the proceeds of the Swiss contribution shall be conducted by UN Women and ILO under their own rules. The procured goods and services shall be directly delivered to beneficiaries in compliance with signed contracts and respective procurement rules.

For the duration of the Project, the goods and services to be used in the Project, which are financed by the Swiss contribution, shall remain at the unrestricted disposal of the Project and shall not be diverted from the beneficiary institutions without prior written approval of the SDC and implementing partners.

The beneficiary institutions shall keep an appropriate inventory of the respective goods. The inventory is to be updated on an annual basis, with an indication of the status, responsible person and location of each individual object.

If, for any reason, the Project should have to be discontinued, the use of the goods provided with the Swiss contribution shall be decided upon in writing by the Participants.

At the end of the Project, both Participants shall agree in written form on the property and use of the goods provided and not yet handed over during the Project.

Article 7
Reporting and other implementation procedures

The Participants shall hold regular Steering Committee Meetings (twice a year) to monitor and evaluate the Project implementation, as well as the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the delivered assistance. At the end of the Project, a Final Review Meeting shall take place in order to review the results achieved by the Project.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova shall provide the SDC with all other information regarding the Project that the SDC may reasonably request and enable Swiss representatives and inspect property, goods, records and documents financed by the Project.

Irrespective of agreed reporting routines, the Participants shall promptly inform each other if a situation arises that makes the Project unlikely to be carried out as agreed.

Article 8
Distribution of this Memorandum of Understanding

The Participants shall undertake to distribute copies of this Memorandum of Understanding to all authorities and other institutions involved in the Project or that otherwise need to be informed of its content.

Article 9
Governing Law

This Memorandum of Understanding does not constitute an international treaty.

Article 10
Annexes

The Project document (Annex A) and the Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee (Annex B) for the "Enhancing Peace and Economic Prosperity through Women's Leadership and Inclusion (Women for Peace & Prosperity)" Project form an integral part of this Memorandum of Understanding.

Article 11
Final Provisions

This Memorandum of Understanding enters into force with its signature and shall remain valid until 30.06.2028, unless terminated earlier by one month written notice, through diplomatic channels, by either Participant.

The present Memorandum of Understanding may be amended by the way of exchange of letters, through diplomatic channels, at the request of any of the Participants. The changes will come into force in accordance with the provisions of this Article.

Disputes as to the interpretation or application of the provisions of the present Memorandum of Understanding shall be settled by negotiations between the Participants.

Signed on 17 September 2024, in two original copies, in Romanian and English languages, both texts being equally authentic. In case of differences of interpretation, the English version of this Memorandum of Understanding shall be of reference.

For the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova

Alexei Buzu
Minister

Place and Date: Chișinău

For the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Didier Chassot
Head of Division
Europe and Middle East

Place and Date: Chișinău