



**Part 1: The Annual Letter to the Secretary General should address the following issues:**

**I. Brief description of major development or political and economic events that have had an effect on the work of the UNCT. Please limit to half a page;**

2014 was a relatively stable year politically and economically in Georgia allowing for guarded optimism on Georgia's development pathway. Despite low growth in the ECIS region generally, Georgia is forecast to register steady GDP growth of over 5 % in 2014, exceeding by far the regional average of 2.1%<sup>1</sup>. However, the economic outlook remains volatile due to both internal and regional factors and economic growth is still not translating into poverty reduction or more employment.

Good economic growth in 2014 still did not generate jobs in any number and unemployment remains the most significant public policy challenge, in particular for youth and in urban areas. A rise in the average income failed to reduce poverty (31% of the pop. live below the USD 2 poverty line)<sup>2</sup>. While about half of the workforce is employed in agriculture (generally self- and under-employed family-based subsistence farming), it contributes merely 9.3 % to GDP<sup>3</sup>.

The Government clearly moved in 2014 from capital to social expenditure - challenged by a tighter fiscal regime - but key social challenges remain including de-isolating national, ethnic and religious minorities; increasing employment, empowerment of women and reform of education and healthcare.

Georgia also made significant progress in human rights reforms by adopting a Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan. However, a number of challenges remain, including reform of the Prosecutor's office and further implementation of the Plan. Additionally, certain forces within the Orthodox Church continued to question some reforms like Human Rights or Decentralisation, equating European values with moral decadence and excessive tolerance towards ethnic, religious and sexual minorities.

External economic and political factors played an increasingly important part in Georgia's development in 2014. On a positive note, the Association Agreement (AA) with the EU in June marked a significant step towards opening the European market to Georgian products, the creation of conditions for visa liberalization, and increasing European Union's engagement in Georgia's democratic reforms and security. Compliance will, however, surely be onerous and may result in an economic downturn initially. Economic stability may also be challenged by the fluctuation of the exchange rate and risk of decreasing remittances and other potential impact of the downgrading of the Russian economy.

In 2014, Russia and Ukraine reduced exports to Georgia<sup>4</sup>. Ongoing tension between Georgia and Russia remains a major challenge. The EU AA and NATO's offer of a "substantial package" including defence capacity, training, a strengthened liaison, and enhanced inter-operability fosters a widely-held belief that the prompt

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<sup>1</sup> WB; Regional Brief, Oct 2014; <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/eca-regional-brief-oct-2014.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> WB, World Development Indicators, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.2DAY/countries/GE?display=graph>

<sup>3</sup> [http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p\\_id=428&lang=eng](http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=428&lang=eng)

<sup>4</sup> [http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p\\_id=137&lang=eng](http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=137&lang=eng)

implementation of the Agreement and further Europeanization of Georgia's economy could increase Georgia's vulnerability to Russian pressure.

I. **Highlights on progress on joined up work.** Summarize the three most significant achievements in delivering together for development.

i) Support to the national government in tracking the MDG progress

In 2014 the RC Office and the UNCT supported the Government of Georgia in the production of Georgia MDG Progress Report. The process of report preparation was directed and coordinated by the State Administration of the Government of Georgia, namely Donor Coordination Unit (DCU) of the Policy Analysis, Strategic Planning and Coordination Department. The report has benefited from valuable inputs, comments and feedback from various organizations, such as line ministries, National Statistics Office of Georgia, Data Exchange Agency, the Parliament of Georgia, the National Bank and development partners like the UN Agencies, World Bank and others, who have provided essential support through professional data and expert analysis in the fields corresponding to their expertise. Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia has become the key contributor to this report given the exceptional role of the Ministry towards attaining the MDGs.

The report has been based on a series of discussions taken place at the Administration of the Government of Georgia with the leadership of the DCU during the period of May - July 2014. Several working groups had been set up generating active participation of Government Institutions, development partners and Civil Society Organizations. The final version of the report was circulated among the Civil Society Organizations for final review.

The report relies on various studies and surveys, such as 2013 Human Development Index of UNDP, the 2014 Rule of Law Index by the World Justice, the World Bank's Poverty Assessment Report 2014, 2013 Economic Freedom Index by the Heritage Foundation, the World Bank/IFC Doing Business Report 2013, UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, PISA OECD, Higher Education in Georgia by European Commission, "Developing Intra-party Democracy from a Gender Perspective", Intra-party Democracy and Local Governance, NIMD Georgia.

ii) Developments in the area of Human Rights

One of the major achievements in the area of Human Rights in 2014 is the elaboration and adoption of the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP). In the first part of the year a number of UN agencies engaged in assisting the Georgian Government in elaborating the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) which, inter alia, mainstreams human rights based approach in the work of the government. After passing of the NHRAP, the UN helped the Government with implementation of the NHRAP, such as advice on international standards and analysis of recommendations by international human rights mechanisms.

In July 2014, the UN Human Rights Committee considered the fourth periodic of Georgia on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The UN Human Rights Committee, while welcoming a number of positive developments made a number of recommendations in the areas of combatting discrimination and domestic violence, ensuring gender equality, rule of law and fair trials, and protection of rights of minorities and internally displaced persons.

In July 2014 Georgia also reported to CEDAW. CEDAW recommendations have extensively addressed the issue of violence against women and gender equality. In addition, CEDAW has called for the introduction of temporary special measures to increase women's political participation, addressing the issues of child

marriages, and last but not least, adopting measures to narrow and close the gender wage gap. UN Women coordinated and led the development of UNCT Georgia confidential CEDAW report submission and presented the key conclusions and recommendations from this report to the CEDAW members on 6 July at a closed session. It is noteworthy that all the major points flagged in the UNCT report have been reflected in the Committee's conversation with the State Party and more importantly in the CEDAW concluding comments and observations.

Another positive development is the adoption of the Law on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination on 2 May 2014. The Office of the Public Defender is responsible for monitoring the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation. It should also be noted that In this context, the UN Human Rights Committee expresses concern about: (a) the effectiveness of the enforcement mechanism in the absence of an independent body mandated to issue binding decisions and request the imposition of fines on perpetrators; (b) insufficient sanctions to discourage and prevent discrimination; and (c) insufficient resources allocated to the Office of the Public Defender to carry out its new functions effectively.

From May 18 to May 22 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay visited Georgia at the invitation of the Government. During her visit the High Commissioner discussed rule of law issues, including the reform of the judiciary and the need to create an independent mechanism to investigate allegations of abuses by the law enforcement officials. The issues related to the right to private life and surveillance were also discussed. The High Commissioner also discussed issues related to the need to combat discrimination against national, religious, and sexual minorities as well as against women. The HC's statement at the final press conference, among other issues, also served to highlight human rights challenges caused by "frozen conflicts" in Georgia.

### iii) Developments in the area of gender equality

The study of the Perceptions and Attitudes towards Violence against Women and Domestic Violence published by UN Women in 2014 reveals that violence is considered a violation of human rights and 51% of respondents believe that women are more oppressed than men. It is noteworthy, that 57% of respondents consider all instances of violence against women and domestic violence a crime. Physical abuse is considered the most severe form of violence according to 97% of respondents. It is followed by sexual violence (94%), restriction of relationships (91%), restrictions on mobility (89%), economic control (89%) and verbal abuse (83.5%). Comparison of the study findings with other studies carried out in previous years in the country clearly show an increase of intolerance towards violence against women and domestic violence, respondents increasingly perceive it as a criminal offence, rather than a family matter. For instance, according to the UNFPA/ACT National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Georgia (2009), 78.3% of respondents believed that domestic violence is a family matter and 34.1% believed that violence in the family can be justified, while according to the recent 2013 study, only 25% believe DV is a family matter, while 69% believe DV is a crime and 17% believe it can be justified in certain cases.

In 2014 the Inter-sectorial Working Group on Gender Equality Issues was established in the executive branch of the government under the Human Rights Council that is chaired by the Prime Minister. In addition, inter-agency Council on Domestic Violence Issues was re-established on 26 November 2014 for close monitoring of the implementation of the National Action Plan on Domestic Violence (2013-2015) and relevant legislation. Thus, in 2014 we have witnessed proliferation of coordination mechanisms on gender and women's rights issues in the executive branch, but the effectiveness of these mechanisms remains to be seen.

GTG also pro-actively advocated with the government officials to uphold Georgia's national and international commitments in the area of Gender equality and women's empowerment. Namely, the task force on women's political empowerment with UNDP and NDI's leadership has been established that in partnership with IFES,

OXFAM GB and NIMD as well as civil society organizations managed to transform the attitudes of some of the leading politicians in favour of introduction of quotas to enhance women's political participation.

Political will was mobilized and important policy recommendations elaborated for addressing the issue of early marriages in Georgia through series of high-level advocacy meetings and high-profile work conducted by UNFPA in partnership with Public Defender's Office.

Active advocacy actions resulted in signing of the Istanbul Convention by the Minister of Justice of Georgia In June 2014. There is an indication that the government plans to ratify the Istanbul Convention after the second round of amendments are made to the national legislation, sometime in spring 2015.

All the key policy concerns (in relation to early marriages, violence against women and women's political participation) have been reflected in the concluding comments and observations issued by the CEDAW Committee to Georgia State Party in July 2014, after reviewing its joint fourth and fifth periodic reports. Thus, for the year 2015 and beyond the GTG has comprehensive tool from the CEDAW to guide its work.

**Results of joined up approaches:** To illustrate the impact of joined up work, describe the results of joined up approaches of the UNCT.

i) UN Partnership Framework 2016 – 2020 (formerly UNDAF)

In 2014 the UNCT Georgia in close collaboration with the Government, non-resident agencies, civil society, donors, academia and other partners embarked on preparing UN Partnership Framework (formerly UNDAF) for the years 2016 – 2020.

As a first step and in order to identify major national challenges the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) initiated the country assessment process which was split into two phases – (1) the desk review of existing studies and (2) round tables to discuss national challenges in Tbilisi, Telavi and Kutaisi.

Consequently, the country assessment report is based on the findings of desk review analysis and the round table outcomes. The report is organized in three sections covering the issues such as good governance, sustainable development and human capital development.

The UNPF process was launched at the Strategic Prioritization Retreat in October 2014. By the end of 2014 the UN Country Team had a solid first draft that was forwarded to the Peer Support Group (PSG) for comments and suggestions.

ii) Joint Communication

2014 allowed the UN to establish new partnerships and increase public understanding of the work of the UN in Georgia through a series of advocacy products and events, including week-long campaigns around UN international days, a broad outreach in the country through its website and social media and spreading the message beyond the standard capital-based media.

UN Communication Group took the lead on themes of common interest, substantiated by common messaging and coordinating events on behalf of the whole UN. In 2014 the UN agencies promoted messages and showcased results around areas such as violence against women and girls, women empowerment, tolerance, disability and human rights.

The UN Communications Group continued to contribute to the advancement and advocacy of the UN's key development efforts through various joint activities. Special emphasis was put on targeting youth. The UNCG

engaged with students and civil society, and highlighted issues of violence against women, gender inequality, discrimination of religious minorities, migration, peace, refugees rights, road safety, to name a few. It successfully coordinated the UN Day in October under the slogan 'The Future We Want' as well as other joint events demonstrating the value of a joint and harmonized approach to UN wide activities.

iii) CADRI supported joint DRR system capacity assessment

Considering the national importance of reducing disaster risks and vulnerability to disasters, and at the same time recognizing present deficiencies in the disaster risk reduction system, the Government of Georgia officially requested the UN Country Team to provide support in conducting a comprehensive assessment of the system and defining a roadmap for strengthening it, through inter-agency mechanism of Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI)<sup>5</sup>. The DRR capacity assessment mission was conducted in March 2014, under the leadership of the Government and the UN Country Team. The assessment was based on interviews with Government representatives, UN agencies, donors and other national stakeholders, and on a review of the country risk profile, programmatic and policy documents.

The DRR Capacity Assessment Report was produced and validated by the government, providing a set of capacity development recommendations to address gaps and challenges of DRR, risk assessment, early warning, knowledge, reducing underlying risk factors, and disaster preparedness. UN agencies also facilitated and technically supported development of the National Plan of Action for DRR Capacity Development (NPA) that provides basis for the alignment of existing and planned initiatives carried out by various stakeholders into a single comprehensive framework owned by the Government. The process indeed generated greater awareness and, ownership of decision makers that is an achievement in itself. Implementation of the NPA will also contribute significantly to enhancing national disaster risk reduction capacities for increasing the resilience to potential disasters caused by natural and technological hazards. Emerging as key entity with adequate seniority and authority for the coordination, the State Security Crises Management Council (SSCMC) led National Threat Assessment process and plans to develop national risk reduction strategy and action plan in 2015. The NPA is viewed as an integral part of it.

iv) UN Joint Team on HIV/AIDS

The UN Country Team has revitalized the UN JT on HIV/AIDS in May 2014 with UNFPA as a Chair of this Joint Team on a rotational basis. One of the major joint initiatives of the JT has been providing technical support to updating the National Strategic Plan on HIV for 2011-2016 (NSP) and its extension to 2018 for the new proposal submission to the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) through its New Funding Model (NFM). The support is provided on the request and in collaboration with the Country Coordination Mechanism for Actions to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Georgia (CCM) and the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLHSA). The joint initiative is funded through the pooled funds from UNFPA, UNDP and UN Women. The HIV NSP update will be finalized in March 2015.

**II. Upcoming opportunities for 2015: Indicate potential upcoming opportunities for the UN Country Team to support national partners in integrated development policy and programme development**

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<sup>5</sup> CADRI is an inter-agency partnership composed of UNDP, UNOCHA, UNICEF, WFP, FAO and WHO (with IFRC and GFDRR as observers) that provides support in capacity development for disaster risk reduction including preparedness for emergency response to UN Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams and various existing coordination mechanisms with the aim to reinforce their capacities in assisting the Governments and other national stakeholders to develop frameworks for capacity development in a coordinated and coherent manner

Most important upcoming opportunity to support partners in integrated development policy and programme development for 2015 will be the finalization and signing of the 2016 UN Partnership Framework.

There is also an indication from the Government's side that they are willing to produce final MDG Report in 2015.

At the same time the government plans to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). In this context, the UNGTG stands ready to provide expertise in formulating gender sensitive development policies and programmes.