



Country: Republic of Moldova

**Initiation Plan**

**Project Title:** Strengthening the institutional and technical capacities of the People’s Advocate Office to deliver on its mandate

**Expected UNDAF/CP Outcome(s):** UNSDCF 2023-2027, OUTCOME 2: By 2027, more accountable and transparent human rights-based and gender-responsive governance empowers all people of Moldova to participate in and to contribute to development processes

**Expected CPD Output(s):** CPD 2023-2027, OUTPUT 2.2. Rule of law institutions have strengthened capacities to protect human rights, expand access to justice and legal remedies to ensure social cohesion and security for all

**Initiation Plan Start/End Dates:** 01.01.2023 – 31.12.2023

**Implementing Partner:** UNDP

**Brief Description**

UNDP is committed to supporting national efforts to address the pressing human rights challenges and support the Republic of Moldova to meet its human rights obligations. Thus, UNDP will work under this initiative to design a project proposal aiming at increasing efficiencies and effectiveness of human rights and sustainable development efforts by enhancing knowledge, developing tools and enhancing institutional capacities of the People’s Advocate Office (PAO) to deliver on its human rights mandate.

This intervention aims at laying the foundation for a strategic engagement in the area of human rights implementation that responds to immediate needs and also addresses longer-term aspirations of the PAO, and will be summarized in the Project Document that will be prepared at the end of the Initiation Plan. The Project Document will be built on a three-pronged approach seeking to enhance the overall human rights landscape in the country.

Programme Period: 01.01.2023 – 31.12.2023	Total resources required 178,000 USD
Atlas Project Number: _____	Total allocated resources:
Atlas Output ID: _____	• Regular (TRAC) 4000 USD
Gender Marker: GEN 2	• Ombudsperson’s Office 174,000 USD
	Unfunded budget: _____
	In-kind Contributions _____

Agreed by UNDP Moldova: Dima Al-Khatib, Resident Representative

Agreed by People’ Advocate Office: Ceslav Panico, People’s Advocate

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## I. PURPOSE AND EXPECTED OUTPUT

Human rights are universal, indivisible and inherent to every human being. The respect of human rights is an important requisite for societies focusing on well-being, peace and strengthening of the rule of law. Promoting and protecting human rights is essential for ensuring sustainable development outcomes. At the same time, progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also advances human rights. To protect and promote these rights, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) work with governments, civil society and development partners to address local challenges and foster just and inclusive societies by upholding human rights principles and standards.

The Republic of Moldova expressed its interest for the fundamental values covering human rights when it ratified most of the relevant international treaties. In order to ensure compliance with the international treaties and to fulfil the obligations assumed, national authorities have approved legal and policy frameworks in the area of human rights, setting the action lines of national stakeholders with a view to achieving and safeguarding human rights.

Full compliance with human rights standards, through policy and practices is amongst the chapter of RM UE Association agreement. Whereas issues of human rights are cross cutting in the conditionalities in the context of candidate status the country has received in 2022.

While the Republic of Moldova has a strong legal background securing human rights, there are still considerable challenges in making sure all rights are fulfilled for all. Torture and ill-treatment, corruption, gender-based violence, respect of rights of persons with disabilities or of members of various minority groups, discrimination, right to health, education or fair trial are amongst the main human rights issues underscored by the reports of the People's Advocate Office (PAO), as well as by the human rights NGOs.

At the same time, the scope of human rights challenges is widening, from eroded public trust and shrinking civic space to ongoing inequality and human rights impacts in the socio-economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and emerging risks in the digital sphere. The interlinked crises of climate change, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and pollution threaten the effective enjoyment of human rights of future generations. A healthy environment, in the form of healthy nature, including a safe and stable climate, is a human right in and of itself. It is the foundation for the enjoyment of a wide range of other human rights such as the rights to life, health, food, housing, water and sanitation, and self-determination.

As a national entity with a broad mandate for the promotion and protection of human rights, the PAO is a key element of the national protection system. The institution has an overarching mandate to promote human rights for all. It has the mandate to monitor human rights, to empower rights holders to claim their rights and support the creation of reliable systems to provide effective remedies to human rights violations. The PAO can act as an important 'bridge' within the society – linking Government, Parliament, other state entities, civil society organizations and various groups of population. The Covid pandemic, the war at the border of Moldova and associated polycrises have exacerbated the vulnerability of the least protected and most marginalized. In these circumstances, the pivotal role of the PAO to promote and protect human rights is perhaps more important than ever before.

In order to do so, the PAO has to have the necessary knowledge, tools and technical capacities. In this context, the main recommendation of the international human rights monitoring mechanisms when it comes to the People's Advocate Office is to strengthen it in accordance with the Paris Principles and to grant it appropriate premises.

The People's Advocate Office has benefitted over the years of assistance from the Council of Europe, EU and other partners. Still as the institution has embarked on the process of developing a new Strategic Development Plan, the support coming from development partners and donor is still to defined. Therefore, timely engagement with the Ombudsman Office on priorities to which UNDP could bring added value is critical to secure a partnering position for UNDP.

UNDP is committed to supporting national efforts to address the pressing human rights challenges and support the Republic of Moldova to meet its human rights obligations. UNDP upholds human rights standards and principles in its programming whilst also recognizing that human rights – as a foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world – is a problem-solving tool for

development. Thus, UNDP will work under this initiative to design a project proposal aiming at increasing efficiencies and effectiveness of human rights and sustainable development efforts by enhancing knowledge, developing tools and enhancing institutional capacities of the People's Advocate Office to deliver on its human rights mandate.

This intervention aims at laying the foundation for a solid engagement in the area of human rights that responds to immediate needs and also addresses longer-term purposes of the PAO. The project proposal will be built on a three-pronged approach seeking to enhance the overall human rights landscape in the country. The proposal will tentatively focus on:

### ***Strengthening the system of rights claiming and providing remedies to human rights violations***

The interventions on strengthening the capacities of the People's Advocate Office will be oriented towards empowerment of the rights holders to claim their rights and facilitation of access of rights holders to remedies in case of violation of their rights.

The first subcomponent on empowerment of rights holders to claim their rights will focus mainly on promotion of human rights education in the schooling system through mainstreaming of human-rights in related study objects and through building the capacities of current and future teachers to address issues of human rights in their activity. UNDP will build on its experience of working with schoolteachers on elections and democratic culture matters.

The second part of the same component will be the development of awareness rising and information campaigns based on data gathered through various sociological studies. Prior to the development of the campaigns the sociological data will be gathered so that the campaigns have higher potential of bringing social change in terms of increased capacities and willingness of rights holder to claim their rights and use the remedies available.

In order to make the intervention on awareness rising sustainable, the capacity of the employees of the People's Advocate office in analysis of sociological data as well as employment of modern tools in communication will be strengthened.

The second subcomponent of the intervention will be focused on strengthening systems of reporting cases of human rights violations. This component will also include the consolidation of the system of protection of whistle-blowers of corruption through the amendment of regulatory framework as well as the development of a more efficient digital system for the reporting of corruption.

Digitalization will serve as an overarching principle of the intervention. It will assess the degree of preparedness of the Ombudsman office to use digital tools in realizing its mandate. Will consider the support on digitalization the People's Advocate office is already and propose a comprehensive action plan for the digitalization of all streams of work but also of the substantial part of the mandate.

### ***Strengthening capacities to analyse and address emerging human rights issues***

The overall societal development expands the human rights landscape to encompass emerging human rights related thematic areas and other issues, such as business and human rights, environmental justice and human rights, human rights in digital era, etc. These topics are highlighted in the institution's Strategic Development Plan, requiring specific attention and institutional capacities to address them. Through these interventions the project will help the People's Advocate Office improve the knowledge and understanding the dynamics of emerging human rights issues, their possible evolution and implications, build capacities to promote and protect emerging human rights issues, as well as develop strategic litigation (including legal reasoning and writing) and policy recommendation capacities to engage in a system-wide dialogue and advocacy efforts on these issues. A combination of assessments and research, capacity building of staffers, public awareness and outreach, building partnerships with public authorities, civil society, private sector and academia will be used to advance project's objectives.

### ***Modernizing People's Advocate Office premises to comply with human rights standards***

Adequate premises is one of the requirements for institution's independence and autonomy in exercising its mandate. The state is obliged to provide the PAO with working facilities suitable for carrying out daily duties. The building used by the PAO is in a poor condition requiring prompt rehabilitation and modernization to comply with human rights standards (for instance, accessibility, user-friendliness, confidentiality, etc.) and to provide proper working conditions to its staffers. This

intervention will seek to support the rehabilitation and transformation of the PAO premises into a user-friendly, accessible and modernized building, providing suitable spaces for daily work, interaction with beneficiaries, training, learning and awareness raising interventions, public consultations, engagement with mass-media, etc. All interventions will be done based on the technical expert reports and technical designs, developed in line with the applicable national regulations. As the People’s Advocate Office building is included in the list of monuments of architecture, the interventions will aim to preserve, to the extent possible, the historical appearance and decorative elements inside and outside of the building for the benefit of the Chisinau community.

While a strategic Project Document aiming at strengthening the institutional and technical capacities of the PAO to deliver on its mandate will be designed during the Initiation Plan period, the activities related to the modernization of People’s Advocate Office premises to comply with human rights standards will be started to cover the technical design stage, development of Bill of Quantities and undertaking necessary verifications and clearances. Using these deliverables, the PAO will engage in 2023 with the Ministry of Finance to mobilize additional funds needed to complete the reconstruction of the building. The following instalments transferred based on the Financing Agreement signed between UNDP and PAO will be used for reconstruction works. UNDP and PAO will engage in additional resource mobilization efforts to secure funding for the other components, envisaged by the full-fledged project document.

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## II. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The responsibility of the overall management and coordination of the Initiation Plan lies with UNDP Moldova, while a technical coordination group, composed of representatives of the beneficiary institution and UNDP Moldova, will meet regularly to guide the implementation of activities under this Project Initiation Plan and help achieving its overarching goal.

UNDP Moldova’s Effective Governance Team will provide quality assurance inputs into the deliverables submitted. UNDP Moldova will be also responsible for the implementation of activities, procurement of goods and services, engagement of project personnel and national and international consultants, connecting to national and international expertise and knowledge networks etc. Procurement of goods and services, engagement of project personnel will be in accordance with UNDP Moldova regulations, rules, policies and procedures.

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## III. MONITORING

In accordance with UNDP Moldova programming policies and procedures, the Initiation Plan will be monitored through the following activities:

Monitoring Activity	Purpose	Frequency	Expected Action	Partners (if joint)	Cost (if any)
Track results progress	Progress data against the results indicators in the Work Plan will be collected and analysed to assess the progress of the project in achieving the agreed outputs.	Quarterly	Slower than expected progress will be addressed by project management.	N/A	Project Management and Project Quality Assurance costs
Monitor and Manage Risk	Identify specific risks that may threaten achievement of intended results. Identify and monitor risk management	Quarterly	Risks are identified by project management and actions are	N/A	Project Management and Project Quality Assurance costs

	actions using a risk log.		taken to manage risk.		
Reporting	Describe major results against set indicators and targets, recommendations for the development of a full-fledge initiative.	Reporting at the end of the initiation plan	Major results and outline of future intervention designed.	N/A	Project Management and Project Quality Assurance costs

#### IV. WORK PLAN

The total preliminary contribution of People's Advocate Office is the equivalent of circa USD 1.29 M. Out of this amount, the equivalent of circa USD 174 K will be used for the purpose of this Initiation Plan.

**Start Date: 01 January 2023**

**End Date: 31 December 2023**

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES <i>List activity results and associated actions</i>	TIMEFRAME				RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PLANNED BUDGET	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Funding Source	Budget Description
<b>Output 1</b> <b><i>The component of the project document on the consolidation of system of rights claiming and providing remedies to human rights violations is developed</i></b>  <i>Indicator: Component of the project developed (Yes/No)</i> <i>Baseline: No</i> <i>Target: Yes</i>	1.1. Perform the analysis of the situation in the field of opportunities/technical tools for the rights holders to claim their rights offered by the Ombudsman and remedies available;  1.2. Develop the component of the project document dedicated to the enhancement of the system of right claiming and offering remedies to human rights violations.	x	x	x	x	UNDP	Consultancy services	2000 USD

<b>Output 2</b> <b>The component in the project document on building the capacities of the People's Advocate Office to address emerging human rights issues developed</b> <i>Indicator: Component of the project developed (Yes/No)</i> <i>Baseline: No</i> <i>Target: Yes</i>	1.1. Asses the needs of the People's Advocate Office to build its capacities on emerging human rights issues; 1.2. Draft the component of the project document in line with the identified needs. 1.3. Develop the strategy of joint resource mobilization for the implementation of the project		x	x		UNDP	UNDP	Consultancy services	2000 USD
<b>Output 3</b> <b>PAO infrastructure modernized and compliant with human rights standards</b> <i>Indicator: Technical design package developed and cleared (Yes/No)</i> <i>Baseline: No</i> <i>Target: Yes</i>	2.1 Develop technical design documentation, BoQs and undertake relevant verifications and clearances for the rehabilitation and modernization of People's Advocate Office building	x	x	x		UNDP		Local Consultants	154,715
	Management costs	x	x	x		UNDP			10,000
	DPC	x	x	x		UNDP			1,000

	<b>Total</b>	<b>165,715</b>
	<b>GMS (5%)</b>	<b>8,285</b>
<b>GENERAL TOTAL</b>		<b>178,000</b>