



OCT
2021



HIGHLIGHTS

Editorial: UN Day page 1

COVID-19 Response and other UN activities page 2, 3 & 4

In focus Common Agenda page 4

EDITORIAL by the UN Resident Coordinator

KEY DATES

OCTOBER

- 6** through its Global Firearms Programme UNODC continued providing support to the Working Group (WG) on amending the Criminal Code in North Macedonia through an online meeting and ongoing discussions on various issues with members of the working group, including on special investigative measures and harmonisation with UNTOC and its Firearms Protocol and its Firearms Protocol.
- 20** Youth Climate Declaration adopted at the Youth Climate Summit - a youth led initiative supported by UNICEF and the Italian, Swedish and British Embassies in North Macedonia.
- 25** UN Day in North Macedonia was marked in the Skopje City Park, together with representatives from all segments of the society, from the state institutions and the civil society to the private sector and academia, and the representatives of the diplomatic corps.
- 28-29** the UN Women North Macedonia office hosted an exchange workshop bringing together CSO representatives working on different initiatives for empowering women and increasing women's participation in decision making in North Macedonia and Albania under the gender-responsive budgeting project.

How to ensure that sustainable development is a top priority for all, in all our actions and decisions was at the focus of our UN Day celebration this year, along with the inevitable reminder of our joint commitments within the UN, the Sustainable Development Agenda, locally and globally.

"We the peoples of the United Nations..." These very first words of the UN Charter truly symbolise the importance of the commitment from the UN member countries to jointly work on achieving, peace, prosperity, and respect for human rights. The commitment that we all made. It is on all of us, as it is WE THE PEOPLES that have committed to work together to eradicate hunger and poverty, to protect the planet and to ensure a better, fairer, and greener future for us and for all future generations. It is not on the Governments, on the UN or on anyone else alone.

Progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been made in all segments, globally and locally. And we must commend the efforts done so far. However, that is not enough. Starting with the most obvious - the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing with the increasingly harsh reality of the climate change, we have been receiving stark reminders that those efforts are not enough. Even more than that, it is now clear - unless all of us take action, individually and jointly, the future that we wanted, for us, for our children and grandchildren is in jeopardy.

We the people have to find even more ways to work together and to accelerate sustainable solutions to the world's biggest challenges. Firstly, we must understand that the Sustainable Development Goals are a commitment to better future for all of us and that they don't belong to the UN, to the Government, or to any other organization or a group of people. They belong to all of us.

Whether our efforts are based on the Agenda 2030, the European Union accession process or the National Priorities, we are in principle working on the same platform, and ultimately on the same goal - accelerating sustainable development for the sake of all.

Secondly, we have to put those commitments in practice. We all have to implement a sustainable approach in all of our actions or inactions, in all choices that we make during the day, everyday. The sustainable approach must be an integral part of all conscious and unconscious actions, from the food that we eat, to the impact that we make, on ourselves, on our families, friends, on our communities and on our planet.

And thirdly, we must understand that we have to work on this jointly. We have to put all of our differences and misunderstandings from the past behind us. We have to ensure that there is no greater priority than sustainable development.



North Macedonia has achieved some truly remarkable changes towards achieving the SDGs in the past period. During 2020, amidst the greatest health challenge of the past few decades, the country made its very first Voluntary National Review to measure the progress on the SDG agenda. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, North Macedonia announced new national climate pledges to reduce the greenhouse gases and launched the process of developing National Development Strategy, the instrument that will encompass whole of a society vision for better, fairer and greener future for all.

But it still is not enough. That is why, on this year's UN Day, I announced the start of our first local multi-year open advocacy campaign called "I care" / "Се грижам". The goal of the campaign will be to mobilize organizations from ALL segments of the society, as well as individuals from all walks of life, and to get them to actively contribute to our shared pledge for greener, better, and more sustainable future.

As it is an open platform, everyone can join and advocate for improving the living standards, for more decent and green jobs, for the universal rights to quality, accessible and affordable healthcare, education, and necessary social and child protection and for ambitious climate action and protection of biodiversity. With this campaign we want to instill the sustainable approach in all of us, to make the changes needed and to get the future we want.

These changes can happen only if we truly achieve the whole-of-society approach. We the peoples, we have jointly pledged for a better future for all, and we must show that we truly care, by making it happen.

Rossana Dudziak
UN Resident Coordinator in North Macedonia

COVID-19 RESPONSE AND OTHER UN ACTIVITIES

UN entities continue to support COVID-19 response in the country with specific interventions and in-depth analysis focused on issues within their respective fields of expertise.

To support the national efforts in ensuring access and availability to quality Sexual and Reproductive Health services even in times of COVID, **UNFPA** is leading the procurement of equipment and commodities for sexual and reproductive health, based on the needs assessment conducted jointly with the national counterparts.

WHO delivered five vaccine carriers and 1,250 tests and reagents for viral sequencing to the Ministry of Health/Institute of Public Health, which will contribute to an effective COVID-19 response in North Macedonia. The equipment procurement and project implementation were supported by Germany and the US CDC with technical support from WHO.

WHO Experts completed a technical mission to North Macedonia last in the period 18-25 October 2021, as part of the ongoing close collaboration with the national health authorities aiming at strengthening the public health emergency preparedness and response, including the control of COVID-19.

WHO supported conference "Increase Roma community's recovery from and resilience to emergencies through participatory and proactive action", was organized by the Association for emancipation, solidarity and equality of women - ESE. In partnership with ESE, WHO enables, engages, and empowers community organizations to become "agents of change" and increase Roma community's recovery and resilience to emergencies.

Since risk communication and community engagement is crucial for national COVID-19 responses to be effective and have long-term positive impact, WHO continues to facilitate access to life-saving information and health care services, including immunization against COVID-19, especially for at-risk communities such as health care workers, the elderly and Roma population. As part of these efforts, trainings for family doctors for "Communicating with patients about COVID-19 vaccination" were organized.

OTHER UN ACTIVITIES

A [group of innovative tools](#) that have increased the transparency of the municipalities in the country are competing in the selection for the most influential commitment in Europe at the Open Government Awards, awarded globally as part of the tenth anniversary of the

Open Government Partnership initiative. The commitment to transparent municipalities is implemented by the Ministry of Local Self-Government in cooperation with the **UNDP** and other partners within the project "Empowering Municipal Councils", financially supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

A Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)-funded ["Building Municipal Capacities for Project](#)



Zivka Gjurchinovska, Tumchevishte/Gostivar, North Macedonia, September 2021. Photo credits: UN Women/Mirjana Nedeva

[Implementation](#)" project marks considerable progress in completing the detailed technical documentation for nearly 60 priority infrastructure projects across the country. The up-to-date comprehensive technical documentation opens significant resource mobilization opportunities for subsequent targeted investments in social, environmental, and business infrastructure. In support to these efforts, a high-level resource mobilization conference took place on November 3, 2021, bringing together high Government officials and representatives of the Donor community. The conference also summarized the experiences from piloting the Technical Documentation Fund (TDF) – an innovative funding instrument helping local self-governments prioritize and provide infrastructure that will ensure better living conditions to their citizens.

"On the job trainings" for Public Revenue Office employees on the topic of Transfer Pricing took place as part of UNDP's Support to Public Finance Management Reform in the Republic of North Macedonia project, in the first week of October.

Two consultants from Slovakia and one national consultant shared their tax audit knowledge and skills with PRO officials through a real time "learning by doing" approach. Building capacities for transfer pricing reform is very important in terms of efficient fight against tax evasion and tax frauds. The project "Support to Public Finance Management Reform in the Republic of North Macedonia" is implemented with financial support and expertise provided by the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic.

UNICEF, British Embassy Skopje and Svetot na Bibi launched a [new initiative to support parents develop the skills they need](#) to use play-based activities to build social and emotional development of children. The new initiative includes a series of animated stories, picture books and other material to support social and emotional learning in the earliest years of life. Funded by the British Embassy Skopje, this new UNICEF and Svetot na Bibi initiative was launched at an online workshop where parents were able to engage with experts and get practical tips on activities to help children learn how to recognize and deal with emotions.

At a youth led national ["Youth Climate Summit"](#) in Skopje young people from the country adopted a Youth Climate Declaration calling on decision makers to take specific action on climate and asking for more opportunities and space to drive climate solutions. The Youth Climate Summit was supported by UNICEF together with the Italian, Swedish and British Embassies in North Macedonia and organised after the global ["Youth4Climate - Driving ambition"](#) in Milan and ahead of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP) in Glasgow. It builds on the ["Reimagine the Future"](#) initiative of the Cabinet of President Pendarovski and UNICEF – a youth consultation initiative giving children and young people the space to engage in defining the vision they want for their future.

UNICEF launched the [second series of Eduino Webinars](#) addressing teachers' needs for hybrid methods of teaching and other innovative teaching practices and approaches.

To strengthen the capacities of the State Council of prevention of juvenile delinquency a report for capacity development initiatives has been produced. In the following period workshops and trainings will be organized to incorporate innovative practices and approaches in conducting research and reaching out to beneficiaries and stakeholders at national and local level. In order to ensure child participation, UNICEF is supporting the engagement of 60 adolescents who will become advocates for justice for children and will design and develop ideas for equitable access to justice. The open call for youth advocates has been published and preparations for the



Youth Climate Summit in Skopje supported by UNICEF together with the Italian, Swedish and British Embassies in North Macedonia.

UN ACTIVITIES (continued)

orientation training on human rights and justice for children that will be held towards the end of October have begun.

As part of the joint efforts of WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA to support Ministry of Health in implementation of Perinatal Care Masterplan 2030, capacity development activities were organized for neonatologists at Level I pediatric teams and Level II neonatal teams, as well as for obstetricians and gynaecologists in effective perinatal care (EPC).

civil servants from the Ministry of Justice, the Ombudsman's office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SEA, judges and prosecutors and other state institutions on different aspects of the EU integration process. These trainings included topics related to Chapter 24 on Asylum and Schengen Acquis, the different aspects of international cooperation in criminal matters and the Hague Conventions.

The training on "Tools for verification of online content and

the EU acquis in the country. This activity was recommended in European Commission Country Report 2020, and the follow-up was recognized in the EC 2021 Country Report .

UN Women marked this year's International Day of Rural Women, 15 October, by putting a spotlight on how gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) can improve the lives of rural women in the frames of a regional GRB initiative. A feature story highlighting the opportunities for women-registered agriculture producers to grow their businesses, by receiving grants under the National Programme for rural and agricultural development in North Macedonia, was included in the UN Women global In Focus section. Read more here

As part of the regional UN Women – EU Funded programme "Implementing Norms, Changing Minds", the National Roma Centrum (NRC) organized a legal counselling session with eight Roma women and girls in Prilep on 21 October, on which the participants discussed protection from violence against women (VAW) and domestic violence and the possibility for obtaining legal assistance/representation. Between 22 – 29 October, NRC will hold five dialogue meetings in Kochani, Shtip, Kichevo and Kumanovo, with Roma community members on VAW, domestic violence, increased violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and early marriages, to identify root causes and identify local solutions. .

Following up on the meeting with the **UNODC** Executive Director in Vienna earlier in September, UNODC organized an online consultation with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Fight against Corruption, Sustainable Development and Human Resources of North Macedonia. During the meeting both parties identified the outstanding priorities in the fight against corruption and agreed on the next steps and the continuation of the dialogue along with the three shared priority goals of the adopted Anti-Corruption and Illicit Finance Roadmap, which will result in the delivery of tangible anti-corruption/anti-illicit finance measures in line with the international standards.

In cooperation with OSCE, UNODC held a train-the-trainer course as part of a multiannual training programme focused on strengthening North Macedonia's capacities in countering terrorist financing. Eight national trainers from Ministries of Defense, Finance, Interior, Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecuting Organized Crime and Corruption, and Customs took part in the course, which focused on how the analysis of financial information can support counter-terrorism investigations and highlighted a range of analytical techniques.

Continuing the efforts to raise awareness about refugees,



Young refugee volunteering at the UNHCR water station on Skopje Marathon 2021 Photo by Leana Taqi/UNHCR

Implementation of the activity was challenged by COVID-19 pandemic but will continue until the end of the year, specifically tailored for the target audience - Level I and Level II facilities, and primary gynaecologists, thus contributing to improved maternal and neonatal health outcomes.

UNFPA agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Bureau for Development of Education within its support in piloting Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) at primary schools in North Macedonia.

During September 2021, UNFPA North Macedonia supported two youth-led initiatives for youth, engaging young people from different regions in the country, and empowering them to share their views, voices and needs related to youth, inclusion and peace. Within the youth initiative "Innovative ideas for inclusion" UNFPA CO North Macedonia organized an online panel discussion on Inclusion and Youth (16 September 2021). The participants had an opportunity to learn about organizations, initiatives and youth groups actively working on improving the lives of people living with disabilities. The second event, virtual exhibition - promotion of art pieces submitted by youth during the Youth Inclusion Contest, was organized on 23 September 2021. Young people had the opportunity to submit their individual art products in the two categories: drawing and photography, to demonstrate the meaning of peace for them.

Within the "Nordic Support for Progress of North Macedonia" project, **UNOPS** and the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) initiated development of an integrated platform for the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire (NPAA) that should meet the functional and legal requirements of the European integration and negotiation process. The platform will be in compliance with the new EC negotiation methodology introduced in February 2020 and will replace all currently operational technical platforms and all sub and standalone systems used in SEA to date for supporting various segments of the integration and negotiation process.

UNOPS also organized nine training sessions for around 100

digital investigation - verification of facts, skills for using online tools, practical exercises" organized by UNOPS marked the start of the third cycle of training sessions for the period October 2021 - March 2022 for the Administrative Service of the Parliament aimed to increase their capacities and understanding of the EU accession process.

The Parliament adopted five laws in the area of waste management, whose preparation was supported by UNOPS experts, as part of the targeted capacity building program to the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning in the Environment and climate change sector. Beside the environmental benefits these laws (Law on Management of Packaging and Waste from Packaging, Law on Management of Electric and Electronic Equipment and Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment, Law on Additional Waste Streams, Law on Producer Extended Responsibility for Management of the Special Waste Stream, Law on management of batteries and accumulators and waste from batteries and accumulators) will bring, they also contribute to further approximation of



Students from High School "Dimitar Vlahov" in Strumica setting up the CSA pilot demonstration site ©FAO

UN ACTIVITIES (continued)

UNHCR North Macedonia supported [Skopje Marathon](#) with a dedicated water station. UNHCR mobilized young volunteers from different backgrounds through its newly engaged partners NGO Youth Educational Forum and the private International High School NOVA. A [young refugee](#) from Afghanistan, also took part in the event, distributing water to the runners at the station.

For the third time UNHCR supported the [Media Festival Skopje 2021](#) organized yearly by PINA. As part of the program, the festival organized a [discussion](#) on the topic of Media coverage of refugees and stateless people. The journalists spoke about their efforts to draw public attention to the serious problems, but unfortunately, despite this, they concluded that media are powerless in the absence of systemic change.

UNHCR continued the partnership with Skopje Jazz Festival, with a festival night dedicated to our mutual cause for [Solidarity with Refugees](#). UNHCR supports the efforts of the Skopje Jazz Festival and commitment to educate about jazz and world music, but also about the values that everyone in the society should strive for. This year our cooperation is funded by the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

Some 30 participants from the Macedonian and Slovenian institutions and civil society organizations took part in the UNHCR supported [Online exchange on Integration and Livelihoods](#) between the authorities and CSOs of North Macedonia and Slovenia. The exchange was an opportunity for discussions on strategies and policies related to integration, including essential services such as language acquisition, employment, and education, all in line with the Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027.

UNHCR concluded the Annual Participatory Assessment exercise with the persons of concern in collaboration with authorities, partner organizations and UN agencies as part of a Multifunctional Team. The exercise consisted of field discussions with the refugees and asylum seekers, to hear their perspectives and challenges they face, as well as a workshop with the Multifunctional Team to jointly discuss the findings in the areas of reception conditions, access to rights/ services, RSD procedure and frame the best course of action in a collaborative manner.

As part of a regional project, FAO has been supporting the Government to enhance the climate resilience in agriculture through strengthening the country's seed system, including improving the domestic production of high-quality and climate-tolerant seeds of strategic crops and building the national capacities to ensure proper seed supply for farmers. In cooperation with the Institute of Agriculture in Skopje, FAO established demonstration sites in Kochani and Skopje for production, testing and multiplication of quality seed materials from beans, pepper and cereals, helping to assess the impact of climate change on agricultural production under different conditions, as well as the effects of applying various agro-technical measures with special attention to protection and nutrition of these crops, as important preconditions for sustainable agricultural production. Thanks to these activities, a quality seed material will be obtained and made available for distribution to interested farmers. In addition, 45 farmers, agricultural producers, representatives of seed farms and cooperatives were trained on how to select, test and grow high-quality seeds for each crop, in order to achieve optimal yields under a changing climate.

Through another project, FAO has been promoting climate smart agriculture (CSA) to boost the agriculture sector resilience. Two field pilot sites for demonstration of CSA and sustainable land management practices were established by FAO – one in the Municipal High School "Dimitar Vlahov" in Strumica, which has the highest number of vocational high-school students in the country studying agriculture, and another in the premises of the Agriculture Cooperative

"Petrushka Reka" in Miravci village, Gevgelija. Both, students and farmers from the two regions will participate in field demonstrations and trainings on CSA practices for vegetables production in the modern plastic high tunnels equipped with innovative CSA technologies, including hydroponics.

FAO started a new project assisting the Government and the Food and Veterinary Agency in establishing a modern National Animal Information System to support the country's EU integration efforts in the area of animal health and food safety. Through another new project, FAO is working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy on developing a competitive and sustainable cattle sub-sector that contributes to generating employment in rural areas and improved nutrition for the population.

In addition to the ongoing agricultural land consolidation

activities, FAO has supported integrated local community development in several villages, including refurbishment of the local cultural home in the village of Spanchevo (Cheshinovo-Obleshevo Municipality), installation of a modern lighting equipment in the primary school in Sokolarci village (Cheshinovo-Obleshevo) and refurbishment of the primary school in Egri village (Bitola Municipality). Similar pilot actions are ongoing in the village of Optichari in Bitola Municipality.

Through the EU-FAO MAINLAND project, construction of new agricultural infrastructure has been progressing in the 336 ha of agricultural land consolidation area in Egri village, including construction of new drainage channels, extension of the existing irrigation network and construction of gravel roads – aiming to boost the productivity and competitiveness of 214 farmers/landowners.

IN FOCUS Common Agenda

"We are at an inflection point in history. In our biggest shared test since the Second World War, humanity faces a stark and urgent choice: a breakdown or a breakthrough."

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres

In 2020, amidst the COVID-19 outbreak that took a massive toll on lives and livelihoods and reminded us how global crises can be only solved with global cooperation and solutions, world leaders convened virtually to endorse a [declaration marking the United Nations' 75th anniversary](#) with 12 key commitments for our future. At the same time, they asked Secretary-General António Guterres "to report back" before the end of the 75th session of the General Assembly "with recommendations to advance our common agenda and to respond to current and future challenges."

In his report "Our Common Agenda" Secretary-General presents his vision on the future of global cooperation through an inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism. In preparing it, UN engaged with a broad array of stakeholders, including Member States, thought leaders, young people, civil society and the United Nations system and its many partners.

Our Common Agenda is an agenda of action, designed to strengthen and accelerate multilateral agreements – particularly the 2030 Agenda, making tangible difference in people's lives. It contains recommendations across 4 broad areas:

First, a renewed solidarity between peoples and future generations, starting by vaccination plan for all and especially those who most need it, as well as bold steps to address the interlinked environment issues such as climate disruption, biodiversity loss and pollution destroying our planet

Second, a new social contract between Governments and their people and within societies, to rebuild trust through listening consultation with all citizens. The social contract needs to be anchored in human rights for people to see results reflected in their daily lives. This include active and equal participation of women and girls, enhanced governance arrangements to deliver better public goods and a new era of universal social protection, health coverage, education, skills, decent work and housing, including universal access to the Internet by 2030 as a basic human right.

Third, a better management of critical global commons, such as a joint, empirically backed consensus around facts, science and knowledge. For that, it is essential to end the "infodemic" and the "war on science". Policy and budget decisions must be based on scientific and expert arguments,

which requires a global code of conduct that promotes integrity in public information.

Forth, global public goods that deliver equitably and sustainably for all. The gross domestic product (GDP), as it is measured today fails to capture the human and environmental destruction of some business activities. Hence SG calls for new measures to complement GDP, so that people can gain a full understanding of the impacts of business activities and how we can and must do better to support people and our planet.

It is essential to ensure long term thinking, to assist the future generations be better prepared for the challenges ahead, through active and meaningful engagement of the youth within and outside the United Nations, including through better political representation and by transforming education, skills training and lifelong learning. This could be accomplished with a repurposed Trusteeship Council, a Futures Lab, a Declaration on Future Generations and a United Nations Special Envoy to ensure that policy and budget decisions take into account their impact on future generations. UN will assist in response to the major global risks, by issuing a Strategic Foresight and Global Risk Report on a regular basis, as well as a proposed Emergency Platform, to be convened in response to complex global crises.

Finally, SG strongly argues for effective multilateralism, in a time of division, fracture and mistrust. This requires an effective United Nations, able to adapt to global challenges while living up to the purposes and principles of its Charter. In this spirit, SG proposed a Summit of the Future to forge a new global consensus on what our future should look like, and on what we can do today to secure it. A High-level Advisory Board, led by former Heads of State and Government, may be instrumental in identifying global public goods and other areas of common interest where governance improvements are most needed, and to propose options for how this could be achieved.

During the COVID19 crisis in particular, we have demonstrated again that the humanity is capable of great achievements working together. Therefore the Common Agenda present a road map to recapture this positive spirit, rebuild our world and regain mutual trust in at this moment crucial historic moment.

The latest version of the Sustainable Development Bulletin is available on UN North Macedonia website. For additional information, please contact rc-northmacedonia@un.org. Produced by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in North Macedonia | 11 November 2021

www.un.mk