**COMMENTS ON THE UNDP DRAFT COUNTRY PROGRAMME DOCUMENT FOR SERBIA (2021-2025)**

*Second regular session 2020*

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| **Comments by France** |  **Response by UNDP Serbia Country Office** |
| * France would like to **request the removal** of the reference to UNDP’s support to the establishment of a government belt and road institute from the draft country-program for Serbia (§23), since the implementation of the Chinese belt and road initiative relies at the bilateral level between Serbia and China and is therefore not intended to be endorsed by UN Agencies. It is furthermore unclear how such project falls under UNDP’s expertise and the country-program purpose to advance sustainable development in Serbia.
 | * UNDP Serbia agrees to remove the reference to the establishment of the Belt and Road Institute (BRI). The amendment in the para 23 will read as follows: “UNDP will support the Government of Serbia’s objective to develop an effective, accountable and transparent means to align its international cooperation with countries with the Sustainable Development Goals, EU and global procurement standards, and Serbian development priorities.”
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| **Comments by Denmark** | **Response by UNDP Serbia Country Office** |
| * Denmark notes that the draft CPD for Serbia references that UNDP will support the establishment of a government Belt and Road Institute (para 23). We further note that this activity is not referenced in the annexed results and resources framework.
* We request UNDP to clarify:
* Whether the establishment of such an institute is explicitly part of Serbia’s national priorities.
* Which of UNDP’s six signature solutions that the proposed activity is considered supportive of.
* The role and nature of UNDP’s support to the establishment of the proposed institute, including whether it entails use of regular resources in light of the fact that the activity is not referenced in the results and resources framework.
 | * UNDP Serbia removed the reference to the establishment of the Belt and Road Institute (BRI) in the CPD. The amendment in the para 23 will read as follows: “UNDP will support the Government of Serbia’s objective to develop an effective, accountable and transparent means to align its international cooperation with countries with the Sustainable Development Goals, EU and global procurement standards, and Serbian development priorities.”
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| **Comments by Japan** | **Response by UNDP Serbia Country Office** |
| * Page 7: para 23
* We would like to request the deletion of the reference to the Belt and Road Institute. We believe this reference is inappropriate, as the CPDs should focus on promoting UN agency’s efforts to advance development in each country, and should not include an activity which would focus primarily on strengthening bilateral relationship and promoting individual Member States’s foreign policy initiative.
 | * UNDP Serbia agrees to remove the reference to the establishment of the Belt and Road Institute (BRI). The amendment in the para 23 will read as follows: “UNDP will support the Government of Serbia’s objective to develop an effective, accountable and transparent means to align its international cooperation with countries with the Sustainable Development Goals, EU and global procurement standards, and Serbian development priorities.”
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| **Comments by UK** | **Response by UNDP Serbia Country Office** |
| Para 23* The UK would like to note that country programme documents should focus on how UNDP will work with host governments and other partners in support of sustainable development outcomes, focused on delivery of the SDGs and Agenda 2030, and should avoid particular reference to individual member-state led initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative.
 | * UNDP Serbia removed the reference to the establishment of the Belt and Road Institute (BRI). The amendment in the para 23 will read as follows: “UNDP will support the Government of Serbia’s objective to develop an effective, accountable and transparent means to align its international cooperation with countries with the Sustainable Development Goals, EU and global procurement standards, and Serbian development priorities.”
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| **Comments by Germany** | **Response by UNDP Serbia Country Office** |
| * The proposed strategy is clear and coherent. Germany shares the views expressed in the situation analysis. The proposed three main fields of activities are of the utmost relevance for Serbia’s development.
 | * Thank you
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| * P. 1, par. 1/2: A reference to the EU integration efforts as major driver of change in Serbia’s regulatory activities would be appreciated.
 | * EU integration is stated as a key national priority and a major driver of change has been underlined a several times throughout the CPD (e.g. par. 1, 20, 22) and referenced in the areas of quality of regulation and rule of law (par. 17), environment (par. 14), social policy (par. 16) and procurement (par. 23).
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| * P. 1, par. 4/5: Point of clarification: If more women leave the country, why is the population going to be “more female” in the future?
 | * Women currently migrate more than men. Still, in absolute terms, the future population of Serbia will be “more female” due to bigger share of women in the total population (51,3 %) and higher life expectancy.
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| * P. 2, par. 8: Please, specify the source of these statistics.
 | * Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SILC, 2018) https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2019/PdfE/G20191281.pdf. Footnote was removed by omission. Thank you for pointing out.
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| * P. 4, par 14: What does it mean when it is stated that „[UNDP’s work] will entail the creation of partnership platforms with the Government and international stakeholders”? How does it fit into the existing framework of donor coordination and the work of the Energy Community for SEE? In how far has UNDP taken into account the capacities of the Ministry of Mining and Energy when it plans to increase financing in the energy sector where we are already seeing a large multitude of donors, with several new entries over the past years?
 | * UNDP adopts a platform approach that identifies challenges and solutions and combines policy dialogue and implementation capacities of both the Government and donor community, science, research institutions, civil and commercial sectors.
* UNDP is a member of coordination fora in the area of climate change and energy in Serbia including the informal donor group and the sectorial working groups of the Government of Serbia for the implementation of the energy and environment and climate change acquis. UNDP supports the Government of Serbia’s participation in the Energy Community for SEE meetings on renewable energy (RE) and energy efficiency (EE).
* UNDP has a long history of successful cooperation with the Ministry of Mining and Energy (MME). Since 2011, cooperation has focused on RE and EE. UNDP supports Serbia to achieve its commitments to Energy Community regarding RE and EE targets, acknowledging Serbia’s largely untapped potential for increasing the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency. Currently the concrete contribution comes from implementation of two GEF projects (totalling 6 mil USD) on reducing barriers to accelerate the development of biomass markets and supporting energy management systems in municipalities.
* UNDP is aware of the limited capacity of MME when it comes to financing and planning energy projects. In the forthcoming period UNDP will support implementation of EE investment projects in cooperation with Council of Europe Development Bank.
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| * P. 4, par 14: We highly support stronger engagement in the mentioned fields of circular economy, resource efficiency, commodity chains, civil protection, environment/ EU accession Ch. 27, and are open for further cooperation.
 | * UNDP Serbia sees the Republic of Germany as a strategic partner. UNDP Serbia has recently made efforts to increase the frequency of coordination and contact exchange with GIZ and the German Embassy so as to align work and intensify collaboration. There is potential to deepen joint work in the areas of circular economy, environment, disaster risk reduction and energy.
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| * P. 4, Strategic priority 2: The identified challenge within strategic priority 2 are at the heart of systems, policies and practices is compatible with ongoing efforts of German development cooperation in Serbia. German Development Cooperation has already established a strong partnership in the framework of mentioned Strategy for Economic Migration 2021-2027. We would welcome the opportunity to explore jointly alignment and harmonization of ongoing and planned interventions in this area.
 | * UNDP Serbia is eager to align interventions and deepen cooperation with the Republic of Germany in the area of depopulation, also by using the Germany funded Accelerator Lab facilities.
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| * P. 5, par. 17: Please, take into account that Germany/ GIZ advises and will continue to advise the Serbian government on the implementation of structures for Ch. 22 (e.g. absorption of cohesion funds), as does the EU with a project implemented by GIZ International Services. Until now, the commentators have not been aware of UNDP activity in Chapter 22 and would hence suggest further consultation.
 | * UNDP is implementing a small-scale Slovak funded project which targets local self-governments planning capacities. The goal is to raise awareness and capacitate municipalities to prepare local development plans and compete for community programmes (e.g. Horizon) in line with PRAG, as the current absorption capacities at the local level are insufficient. UNDP welcomes further consultations to more efficiently support the national authorities to strengthen the capacities at all levels for the absorption of external financial assistance in line with Chapter 22 requirements.
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| * P. 5, par. 17: *“**UNDP will pursue a portfolio of interventions to improve the transparency, accountability and efficiency of public institutions at central and local levels, supporting the creation of high-quality services for citizens and businesses, and a public administration that enhances economic stability and living standards.”*  This co-relates to intervention areas 1&3 of the PAR2EU project through which citizens’ offices (improvement of service delivery) and certain public administration services will be supported.
 | * UNDP Serbia is ready to deepen cooperation with the Republic of Germany in the area of good governance.
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| * P. 5, par. 19: “*UNDP will pursue the unifying principle of leaving no one behind, particularly targeting women, youth and Roma.”*

Strong interlinkage and possibly synergies with the GIZ projects Roma Inclusion (InR) and Social Services for Vulnerable Groups (SVG).  | * UNDP Serbia is ready to deepen cooperation with the Republic of Germany in inclusive innovation and Roma inclusion.
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| * P. 7, par. 23: Request the deletion of references to UNDP’s support for the establishment of the ‘government Belt and Road Institute’. Bilateral projects are outside the scope of the UNDP multilateral mandate. The draft CPD does not clarify how this support will benefit Serbia in its contribution to the achievement of the SDG 2030 Agenda, and it is unclear how such support (e.g. academic and cultural collaboration) falls within the area of UNDP’s mandate and expertise.
 | * UNDP Serbia removed the reference to the establishment of the Belt and Road Institute (BRI). The amendment in the para 23 will read as follows: “UNDP will support the Government of Serbia’s objective to develop an effective, accountable and transparent means to align its international cooperation with countries with the Sustainable Development Goals, EU and global procurement standards, and Serbian development priorities.”
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| * P. 7, par 24: We welcome the emphasis on environmental topics for which regional cooperation is crucial. Can you explain in more detail how SEE cooperation will be encouraged by UNDP?
 | * UNDP has Country Offices across the Western Balkans, positioning us well for region-wide work. UNDP implements a number of regional projects on transitional justice and is exploring new regional programming areas such as digitalization and environment to address issues around the regionally shared resources such as air (pollution) and water (management).
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| * Germany would welcome further elaboration on UNDP’s strategy of collaboration with other development partners in the country, beside UN agencies.
 | * UNDP will seek to maintain and strengthen longstanding partnerships with bilateral partners such as SIDA, SDC, EU and UK, including through new phases of projects. The CO will also seek to partner with other bilateral partners i.e. the Republic of Germany, USA, the Slovak Republic and Norway to support the reform agenda in Serbia.
* We seek to expand existing cooperation with development banks (e.g. EIB, CEB & WB) so as to increase project funding channelled through the government and blend funding and financing for sustainable development.
* UNDP will explore engagement with the private sector on how to align their ways of working and investments with sustainable development, particularly in the area of circular economy. The domestic private sector is relatively small. UNDP will explore ways of working with micro, small and medium sized businesses to promote inclusive growth, local entrepreneurship and job opportunities especially among young people. UNDP will continue innovation awards for the companies that are best in identifying climate smart and innovative solutions and as well as performance-based payments. UNDP will also explore ways of moving the discussion from funding to financing, with ways of attracting additional investment in the SDGs, such as through impact investment, green bonds and other innovative financing instruments.
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| **Comments by The Netherlands** | **Response by UNDP Serbia Country Office** |
| * The Netherlands would like to request the deletion of references to UNDP’s support for the establishment of the ‘government Belt and Road Institute’. The draft CPD does not clarify how this support will benefit Serbia in its contribution to the achievement of the SDG 2030 Agenda, and it is unclear how such support (e.g. academic and cultural collaboration) falls within the area of UNDP’s mandate and expertise.
 | * UNDP Serbia agrees to remove the reference to the establishment of the Belt and Road Institute (BRI). The amendment in the para 23 will read as follows: “UNDP will support the Government of Serbia’s objective to develop an effective, accountable and transparent means to align its international cooperation with countries with the Sustainable Development Goals, EU and global procurement standards, and Serbian development priorities.”
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| **Comments by the U.S.A.** | **Response by UNDP Serbia Country Office** |
| * The proposal to build a government Belt and Road Institute goes beyond the normal UNDP development work by promoting a third country’s signature foreign policy initiative.
 | UNDP Serbia removed the reference to the establishment of the Belt and Road Institute (BRI). The amendment in the para 23 will read as follows: “UNDP will support the Government of Serbia’s objective to develop an effective, accountable and transparent means to align its international cooperation with countries with the Sustainable Development Goals, EU and global procurement standards, and Serbian development priorities.”UNDP Serbia will further support the strengthening of capacities for the absorption of external financial assistance and development planning at the local level. |
| * A UNDP CPD should not include projects that are part of a third country’s signature global foreign policy platform.
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| * Aside from the issue of promoting the foreign policy of a third country, many projects from this policy, the Belt and Road Initiative, are known to cause significant problems for recipient countries, including debt burdens and environmental problems, which undermine the SDGs.
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| * The United States would, on the other hand, support UNDP strengthening the capacity of Serbia's existing government institutions to review potential investments in order to meet international standards for aid effectiveness and sustainable development.
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