

Georgia Human Development Report 2008

The Reforms and Beyond



Report 2008

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The UNDP National Human Development Report comes at an important time in Georgia's relentless pursuit of enhanced economic development for all. The beginning of this administration's second term is an ideal time for reflection on what we have achieved and what we still need to do. As a long-term supporter of Georgian reforms, UNDP is ideally placed to engage with us in this reflection, combining insider knowledge and outsider objectivity.

Any discussion about how to proceed should also include a wide range of opinions, local and international, from inside the government and from wider society. The National Human Development Report has helped incorporate these voices to offer a broad-ranging and independent assessment that should be invaluable in framing the policy discussions.

The title of the Report is indicative. It is not just a testimony to the remarkable reforms that have taken place in Georgia over the last four and a half years. Even more important, it looks at the reform process in a long-term perspective, beyond an account of what has been done. It is also a timely reminder of our shortcomings and the work we still have to do, of the inevitable gaps and the possible ways of addressing them.

In reflecting on the past, the Report is a testimony to our many successes. Since the Rose Revolution the Government finances have been secured through a consistently supply-side approach resulting in low, flat taxes which we strive to reduce further and restrictions on doing business have been removed. As a result, the Government has been able to repair roads, irrigation, electricity and water supply, to improve the infrastructure of education and healthcare and to attract investment that has grown the economy and created jobs. The people are freed from the blight of corruption. They can rely on the police to protect their security and deal with Governments without paying bribes.

However, as we enter the second phase of the reforms we need to be forward-looking. The Report reminds us that the objective of these reforms has always been Human Development

in the fullest sense. We do not only seek to produce a wealthy society. We want our society to be democratic and participatory, educated, healthy and secure. The first round of reforms have taken us on the path towards these goals and provided the general framework for future improvements, which can only be brought about if we continue with our unwavering commitment to further enhance the economic liberties in Georgia and its openness to foreign investment.

The first task of the new Government is to ensure that every part of Georgian society feels the full benefits of what we have achieved and has the opportunity to realize his or her full potential. We have already initiated targeted social assistance, higher pensions as well as a basic package of universal healthcare provisions. This has offered protections for the most vulnerable and is alleviating extreme poverty. While we will expand these programs in the next few years, broadening of the opportunities created by the reforms needs to go further than social assistance.

The Human Development Report, therefore, offers useful insights as we reflect on where to go from here. Since the Rose Revolution, Georgia

has benefitted enormously from its close collaboration with the international community. The Human Development Report is an extension of that collaboration. We hope it will encourage an inclusive policy debate on how we build on current successes to create a just, prosperous and secure future for everyone in the country.

Vladimer Gurgendidze

Prime Minister

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