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1. Introduction

The current document is an update of the 2020 Common Country Analysis (CCA). The CCAs are an ongoing analysis of the national development landscape and are usually updated annually. Specifically, the CCA on Tajikistan examines the major factors influencing the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the national development goals. It aims to identify the underlying causes of inequality and vulnerability in line with the commitment to leave no one behind, UN Charter values, and international norms and standards. As the primary source of reference for the UN System in the country, the CCA aims to guide engagement with the Government and the people of Tajikistan to implement policies and programmes to promote sustainable development. Under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, the CCA updating was done by the Programme Management Team (PMT) which comprises senior programme staff of the UN Agencies. The updating of the CCA was an iterative process that fed into and benefited from the wide-ranging consultations that were organized as part of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) formulation process which was rolled out in 2021. The stakeholders consulted included line ministries, non-state organizations, representatives of the private sector, civil society, academia, and international development partners. More than 100 individuals participated in these consultations at the senior and technical levels. The CCA draws upon various sources including national surveys, administrative data, thematic analysis, global and regional reports, and findings from the Vulnerability and Resilience Atlas (VRA) for Tajikistan.¹ It is important to note that credible and disaggregated data are limited in Tajikistan. This greatly affects the depth of analysis, and a thorough review of development policies to address deprivation and inequality, especially for groups of people left behind.

2. Progress toward the 2030 Agenda

Tajikistan has made steady progress toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but the progress has been uneven which has been further affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.^{2,3} The National Development Strategy (NDS-2030) which was adopted in 2016 provides the overarching development framework. It is closely aligned with Agenda 2030. NDS-2020 is being implemented through three mid-term development programmes (MTDPs) each with a five-year duration. Currently, the second MTDP (2021-2025) is being implemented. The national poverty rate fell from 83% in 2003 to less than 27 percent in 2019 (SDG 1).⁴ There has also been progress in education (SDG 4), with higher enrolment rates at primary and secondary school level. Other SDGs on track include access to clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), and climate action (SDG 13).⁵ However, progress has been relatively modest in the achievement of SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), SDG 5 (Gender equality), and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth). At the current rate, the SDGs that may not be achieved by 2030 are: SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), SDG 15 (Life on land), and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). There are no recent data on responsible consumption and production (SDG 12). Inter-relational analysis of SDGs⁶ shows that SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy) has a major multiplier effect to influence the achievement of other SDGs in Tajikistan, followed by SDG 2 (Zero hunger); SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals); SDG 4 (Quality education); SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth); and SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation). The rankings showed SDG 5 (Gender equality) and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) to be the most dependent on progress in other SDGs.

¹ United Nations Country Team in Tajikistan, 2019, Vulnerability and Resilience Atlas for Tajikistan, online platform.

² See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>, <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

³ Sachs, J. et al., 2020, The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19, Sustainable Development Report 2020.

⁴ World Bank data, 2020. [<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tajikistan>]

⁵ Status based on selected targets and an SDG targets' index. [<https://dashboards.sdginde.org/profiles/TJK>]

⁶ Technical consultations between the UN, government partners, CSOs and think tanks to assess the extent of SDGs interrelation, 2016 (unpublished).

Despite progress on SDGs, inherent vulnerabilities can easily undermine Tajikistan’s development trajectory. Low-level of economic development, high exposure to environmental hazards, and socio-economic disparities make Tajikistan vulnerable to internal and external shocks. A weak governance system and the cascading effects of the COVID-19 have made it even more challenging for the country to achieve all the SDGs and realize the national development aspirations as articulated in the NDS-2030.⁷

3. National vision for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Many SDG targets and indicators have been incorporated in national strategies, but there are still some gaps. The national development framework is broadly aligned with the SDGs,⁸ but SDGs-driven investments and plans have not been developed yet. The NDS-2030 focuses on economic diversification and competitiveness, sustainable jobs, improving energy supply and transport connectivity, ensuring food security, enhancing public administration, and developing human resources.⁹ It is estimated that USD 118 billion can be mobilized for the implementation of NDS-2030 from 2016 to 2030, which roughly translates into USD 7.8 billion annually, equivalent to over 96 percent of the GDP in 2019.¹⁰ In this regard, a national roadmap for financing the NDS and the SDGs was formulated to better understand the gaps and measures needed to increase financing for development. A working group under the National Development Council which is a multi-stakeholder forum chaired by the President of Tajikistan was also established to promote policy dialogue and support for the implementation of the roadmap. These are important developments that should help in developing a coherent response to the emerging development challenges and address the gap in financing. However, there are still major capacity and institutional challenges which need to be addressed.

4. Political and institutional analysis

Tajikistan is a presidential republic with a bicameral parliament. The Constitution defines Tajikistan as a democratic, law-based, secular and unitary state.¹¹ After the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991, the country immediately entered a phase of high political instability, with a five-year civil war. **Since the end of the civil war, political stability and peace has been maintained. Although several reforms have been untaken, institutions and capacities remain relatively weak.** There is a high level of perceived corruption: in 2019, Tajikistan received poor rankings from both Transparency International (TI)¹² and the World Bank¹³ in terms of corruption perceptions and corruption control.

People face obstacles in accessing justice and public services¹⁴ which undermines trust.¹⁵ The Government has undertaken a number of legislative and policy reforms to foster an effective justice system. Implementation lags due to lack of clear mechanisms for implementing legislative acts. Access to justice is negatively affected by weak capacities, insufficient access to information, and lack of transparency.¹⁶ In addition, the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights is weak. Although nearly

⁷ UNDP, September 2020, Impact of COVID-19 on Lives, Livelihoods and Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in Tajikistan. [<https://www.tj.undp.org/content/tajikistan/en/home/library/impact-of-covid-19-on-lives--livelihoods-and-micro--small-and-me.html>]

⁸ The Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) determined that about 64 percent of the SDG objectives are reflected in two national strategic documents (76 of 119 relevant SDG goals). A broad review of 10 national strategies has shown mainstreaming of SDGs in these documents is 78 percent.

⁹ [<https://medt.tj/en/strategy-and-programmes/nds2030>]

¹⁰ Annually in nominal terms over 15-year period; GDP in 2019 was over USD 8.11 billion. World Bank, 2020.

¹¹ Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan - Генеральная прокуратура Республики Таджикистан. [www.prokuratura.tj]

¹² Ranked 153 out of 180 countries and dropping from 124 in 2003. Transparency International, 2019, Corruption Perceptions Index. [<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2019/results/ata>]

¹³ Corruption control score of 13.5 on a scale of 0 to 100. World Bank, 2019, Worldwide Governance Indicators. Country Data Report for Tajikistan. [<https://databank.worldbank.org/source/worldwide-governance-indicators#>]

¹⁴ Safarzoda et al, 2017, Analysis of execution of the state programmes of the Republic of Tajikistan in the field of judiciary and legal reform, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵ Sputnik News, 7 February 2020, ‘Рахмон провёл перестановки в судебной системе Таджикистана’.

¹⁶ Among others, see Open Budget Survey & Transparency International.

50 percent of the total population is covered by state run free legal aid, legal aid centres are insufficient with limited funding. Moreover, the Law on Legal Aid adopted in 2020 does not recognise victims of violence as eligible to receive free (state-funded) legal aid in criminal cases.¹⁷

Freedom of expression is restricted and space for civil society is narrowing.¹⁸ Independent media outlets face significant constraints. The ability of the civil society to influence state policy is limited. There are no procedures for public consultations and participation in the decision-making. In 2020, there were 2,773 public associations, registered with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). Over 200 public foundations and unions are attached to legal entities.¹⁹ The Fora on Rule of Law is an informal mechanism which is annually organized by the MoJ. It is the only platform for civil society organizations (CSOs) to voice their concerns. Tajikistan's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index worsened from 149 in 2017 to 161 in 2020.²⁰ In 2019, Freedom House gave Tajikistan a score of 7 or 'not free'.²¹

Achieving a genuine tripartite social dialogue between the government, employers and workers associations remains is a challenge. There is lack of genuine collective bargaining, insufficient compliance with the international labour standards, weak labour administration, and poor organizational capacities amongst trade unions and employers' organizations. Women are under-represented in bipartite and tripartite mechanisms. Labour inspections are a serious concern. The labour code reform in 2016 and Law No. 1505 (2018) present serious concerns with regard to ratified international labour standards.²²

Gender inequality is pervasive and systemic. National institutional mechanisms for ensuring gender equality are underdeveloped and underfinanced. There is no established process for gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting. While there have been some advances, opportunities for women for holding public offices are limited, especially at the top level of the government. After the last national elections in 2020, women constitute 14 out of 63 Members of the Parliament and chair two out of nine Parliamentary Committees.²³ Quota are not prescribed nor used. In 2017, in the judiciary, women were 15 percent of all judges and 25.6 percent of judges in the Supreme Court. A woman was appointed as a Chair of the Supreme Economic Court. The number of women chairing regional, city and district courts is low.

5. Economic transformation

With a per capita GDP of USD 1,199 or USD 3,858 (PPP),²⁴ Tajikistan is the poorest country in Central Asia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).²⁵ In 2021, the classification of Tajikistan was changed from low income to lower middle income.²⁶ Between 2000 and 2019, per capita GDP increased nearly three times. However, aggregate economic growth, driven mainly by domestic consumption

[<https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/country-results/2019/tajikistan> of Tajikistan]

[<https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/tajikistan#>]

¹⁷ Adopted on 4 July 2020, No.1694.

¹⁸ https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session35/Documents/A_HRC_35_22_Add_2_EN.docx.

¹⁹ International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, Civic Freedom Monitor: Tajikistan, [https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/tajikistan#:~:text=Civil%20society%20organizations%20\(CSOs\)%20in,and%20the%20process%20of%20democratization,9](https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/tajikistan#:~:text=Civil%20society%20organizations%20(CSOs)%20in,and%20the%20process%20of%20democratization,9) April 2021

²⁰ Over a total of 180 countries. [<https://rsf.org/en/tajikistan>]

²¹ For example, the civil society rating declined from 1.75 to 1.50 in 2020. Freedom House, 2020, 'Freedom in the World 2020' Annual Report. [<https://freedomhouse.org/country/tajikistan/freedom-world/2020>]

²² With regards to ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81). Comments adopted by the CEACR: Tajikistan. C081 - Observation (CEACR) - adopted 2019, published 109th ILC session (2021).

[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13203:0::NO::P13203_COUNTRY_ID:103547]

²³ Website of the Parliament of the Republic of Tajikistan. [<https://parlament.tj/ru/kumitaho>]

²⁴ GDP in constant USD 2015 (2020). GDP per capita at the current USD is USD 859. The current market value of GDP in purchasing power parity (PPP) adjusts for the price of non-traded goods & services. World Bank database.

[<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.KD?locations=TJ>]

²⁵ Calculations based on national poverty rate latest year in CIS, World Bank database. [<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC>]

²⁶ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/new-world-bank-country-classifications-income-level-2021-2022>

which is fuelled by remittances,²⁷ has not led to better job opportunities in the domestic market and a significant increase in household income. **Low-end services, subsistence agriculture, and commodities characterize the nature of the economy.** Although the share of agriculture has declined, it remains the main source of livelihoods. There has not been adequate economic diversification. While the proportion of people living under the national poverty line fell from 80 percent in 2003 to 26 percent in 2019,²⁸ over 20 percent of the population is still vulnerable to multidimensional poverty and income inequality. Residents of rural areas, Khatlon province and Regions of Republican Subordination (RRS) are particularly prone to poverty. In 2020, the Human Development Index (HDI) score for Tajikistan was 0.668 and it was ranked 125 out of 189 countries.²⁹ Employment disparities are linked to sex, age, and skills. The COVID-19 pandemic has further demonstrated the precariousness of jobs and vulnerability of the economy.

Macroeconomic situation remains stable, but the economy is facing several risks. First of all, inflationary pressure is emanating from supply-side constraints which is undermining household consumption. Before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the inflation rate was kept below 7 percent.³⁰ The National Bank directly manages the exchange rate, which has often led to different exchange rates between the official rate and the black market. A fall in remittances and foreign direct investment in 2020 put further pressure on the local currency. Besides direct impact on economic activity, future spikes in Covid-19 or other global imbalances are likely to fuel inflation, reduce tax revenue, and external financing. Global oil prices have risen sharply (40 percent) since the start of 2021 from USD 50 to almost USD 70 per barrel.³¹ After a slight drop in June and July 2021, global food prices are again on the rise.³² A fragile financial sector plagued by bank closures also discourages investments and feeds economic uncertainty. The financial soundness indicators of banks have improved in the last three years, but the industry faces several challenges which can affect financial stability. A high lending rate of banks (over 22 percent) is dampening the demand for credit and investment.³³ In 2020, at one point, the non-performing loan rate (NPL) was as high as 32 percent.³⁴ Almost 60 percent of the loans were denominated in USD. Fiscal space is still narrow with public investments relying mainly on foreign aid. Since 2006, the public expenditure in real terms has gradually risen to over 30 percent.³⁵ Between 2016 and 2020, average tax revenue covered around 61 percent of the total public expenditure, with the budget shortfall being mainly covered by grants for public investment programmes which are mainly funded by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

Lack of appropriate qualifications, skills, and competencies³⁶ are affecting the employability of young people. In 2016, 1 in 3 young people (ages 15 to 24) were not employed, receiving education or enrolled in training (NEET).³⁷ The vocational education system does not meet the needs of employers and entrepreneurs are not engaged in the development of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system.³⁸ ³⁹ A significant number of people have opted for employment in the Russian

²⁷ From 2007 to 2014, Tajikistan had the world's highest remittances to GDP ratio. Remittances were equivalent to 48 percent of country's GDP in 2014, and close to 19 percent in 2015 (World Bank data, 2016). In 2019 remittances amounted to over USD 2.3 billion, equivalent to 28.6 percent of GDP. [<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=TJ>]

²⁸ World Bank data. [<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=TJ>]

²⁹ UNDP, 2020. [<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/latest-human-development-index-ranking>]

³⁰ [https://nbt.tj/en/monetary_policy/maksad.php]

³¹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/energy>

³² <http://www.fao.org/worldfoodsituation/foodpricesindex/en/>

³³ [<https://nbt.tj/en/macroeconomic/tavarrumi-solona-iyun-2017.php>]

³⁴ [https://nbt.tj/upload/iblock/883/2020_06-6.pdf]

³⁵ Calculations based on budget data, Agency of Statistics

³⁶ 21st century *transversal* skills include communication, team work and networking, critical thinking and problem solving, initiative and resilience. See: ILO, Skill-up, dld Nov 2019; AES, What are 21st century skills, dld 2020.

³⁷ Labour Force Survey, 2016. While routine employment periodically updated by the Agency on Statistics do not include disaggregated figures, the Labour force survey is a household survey which captures the employment situation including unemployment, labour underutilization, and NEET.

³⁸ ILO, 2020, Assessment Report State Strategy for Labour Market Development of the Republic of Tajikistan until 2020, Working Paper, forthcoming.

³⁹ Rodrik, D., 2015, Premature Deindustrialization. [<https://www.nber.org/papers/w20935>]

Federation, where the demand for low-skilled workers is high. Many others who enter the labour force in Tajikistan end up in informal employment. A rapidly growing population with an increasing number of young people who enter the labour force can put a major strain on the economy, especially when not enough jobs are being created. The fact that around half a million Tajiks annually go overseas for work has eased the pressure on the labour market. Outmigration for employment is a major coping strategy. Remittances account for nearly a third of GDP. Over the next 30 years, lower fertility rates and a declining dependency ratio⁴⁰ can create a demographic dividend.⁴¹ Matched with significant and quality investments in health, education, employment, especially for women and youth, and family planning services, this can foster rapid, more inclusive economic growth and improve Tajikistan's human development.

A limited role of the private sector is a major constraint to inclusive growth. While investment climate is on the agenda and changes are being initiated, business reforms are not moving ahead at a desired pace resulting. A large proportion of the 315,369 registered businesses in the country⁴² are microenterprises, individual enterprises and own-account workers. Small and medium enterprises number about 20,000. There are 1,100 state-owned enterprises (SOEs) accounting for a large share of production. According to estimates, SOEs produce around 70 percent of the industrial output but available evidence suggests declining profitability and debt loads that are unsustainable.⁴³ Private sector investment is low, amounting to only 4-5 percent of the GDP.⁴⁴ Businesses are overregulated, compliance costs are high, and subjected to numerous inspections. The Doing Business Index ranks the country 106 out of a total of 190 countries. Tajikistan underperforms in several dimensions of the index: Dealing with Construction Permits, Getting Electricity, Paying Taxes, Trading Across Borders, and Resolving Insolvency.⁴⁵ Tajikistan was placed 104 out of 141 countries in the Global Competitiveness Index.⁴⁶

Tajikistan has opportunities to pursue a greener industrialization. The data on carbon intensity of manufacturing in Tajikistan is scarce. Available data show that CO₂ emissions per unit of manufacturing value added (MVA) has been on an upward trend. The use of coal for energy generation and in industrial production – including the growing cement industry - has been on the rise. By 2018, Tajikistan's emission reached 1.05 kg of CO₂ per unit of MVA, a much higher level than in its neighbours.⁴⁷ To reach higher degrees of sustainability, reducing CO₂ emissions must be urgently pursued as part of an industrial strategy. Similarly, the emission of other pollutants in the manufacturing sector should be reduced. Overall, better environmental monitoring, improved waste and water management and regulatory changes to foster green industries with a lower environmental impact are needed for green industrialization in Tajikistan.⁴⁸

Although some budget data are made available, there is limited public participation in the public budget preparation. The Open Budget Survey ranks Tajikistan 101 out of 117 countries in terms of budget transparency.⁴⁹ Public expenditure for energy and social sectors are prioritized. Social spending accounts for the largest share of public expenditure, with education receiving approximately one third of it. Around 60 percent of the public economic expenditure is allocated to the energy sector,⁵⁰ while

⁴⁰ The dependency ratio is the ratio of working-age population (15-64 years old) to non-working age population. United Nations.

⁴¹ This is the boost to economic growth that occurs when there are more working age people relative to dependents. UNFPA, 2020.

⁴² Data of the Tajikistan Agency on Statistics as reported in the UNDP's Impact Assessment on lives, livelihoods, and MSMEs, 2020.

⁴³ World Bank Group, 2018, Tajikistan Country Economic Memorandum: Nurturing Tajikistan's Growth Potential. World Bank Group, May 2018, Tajikistan - Systematic Country Diagnostic.

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ World Bank Group, 2020, Doing Business Index, Economy Profile Tajikistan.

⁴⁶ [\[https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/country/t/tajikistan/TJK.pdf\]](https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/country/t/tajikistan/TJK.pdf)

⁴⁷ World Economic Forum, Global Competitiveness Report, 2019. [\[www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf\]](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf)

⁴⁸ In 2018 CO₂ per unit of MVA stood at 0.93 kg in Kyrgyzstan, 0.8 kg in Uzbekistan and 0.67 in China with no data available for Afghanistan, <https://stat.unido.org/SDG/TJK>

⁴⁹ https://unece.org/DAM/env/epr/epr_studies/ECE.CEP.180.Eng.pdf

⁵⁰ Open Budget Survey Tajikistan 2019 | International Budget Partnership.

⁵⁰ Major expenditure under fuel & energy sector is for building the Rogun Hydropower Plant.

agriculture and industry account for less than 10 percent.⁵¹ Low public investment in employment-sensitive sectors, such as agriculture and industry suggests that the fiscal policy is not fully aligned to inclusive growth.

Regional integration and connectivity are critical for Tajikistan as a landlocked country. The development of trade and transport links is critical to support income growth and economic diversification. Moreover, Tajikistan is heavily dependent on imports of food grains from its neighbouring countries. Benefits from greater connectivity and trade depend largely on the extent of domestic reforms to create a suitable regulatory environment and tackle logistic and transport bottlenecks. Intra-regional trade amounts to only 5 percent of the total trade volume of Central Asia countries.⁵² A large share of Tajikistan's trade within the region is composed of wheat imports from Kazakhstan.⁵³ The work on improving the capacity of Tajikistan to implement the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement to implement the Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) Trade Facilitation Strategy and its national trade facilitation strategy, assistance for the digitalization of multimodal transport data and document exchange, exchange of information on trade procedures and trade facilitation among the customs services in the region are some of the most important areas for improving regional integration and connectivity.

Besides trade, environmental protection and climate change have a transboundary dimension, which make them an area for international cooperation. Climate change in Central Asia is a major threat that demands prompt action. The need to address competition over water resources, in a context of increasing water scarcity, low water efficiency and strong interdependencies, should lead to integrated and coordinated approaches across the energy, water and land use nexus. Moreover, domestic problems regarding the management of industrial or mining facilities can lead to negative spillovers across countries, thus becoming a preventable source of tension. Overall, resource efficiency, as measured by domestic resource consumption by unit of output, is low, although it compares favorably with other Central Asian countries. There is, therefore, scope for improvement, with multiple potential benefits, including higher resilience, enhanced competitiveness and improved health outcomes.

6. Environment and climate change

Due to its geology, hydrology, and topography, Tajikistan is disaster-prone and highly vulnerable to climate change. Tajikistan has vast natural wealth, including minerals,⁵⁴ rivers with hydropower potential, and rich biodiversity.⁵⁵ In 2013, Tajikistan was considered the most vulnerable country to climate change in Central Asia.⁵⁶ In 2019, disasters triggered internal displacement of 4,800 people.⁵⁷ Climate change and natural hazards affect the agriculture sector and can also trigger technological accidents (so-called "NaTech" events). According to estimates, economic losses from weather-related disasters vary from 0.4 to 1.3 percent of Tajikistan's GDP per annum.

Urgent action is needed to build resilience in agriculture, promote low-emission land use and meet the country's adaptation and mitigation targets. Climate change puts at risk short and long-term economic performance of the country. Agricultural risks could lead to an increase in food insecurity, poor nutrition and worsening of livelihood opportunities for the rural population, especially among women, young persons, and vulnerable groups, who are less likely to have access to information and

⁵¹ Calculations based on data from the Tajikistan Agency on Statistics, World Bank and IMF.

⁵² International Transport Forum, 2019, 'Enhancing Connectivity and Freight in Central Asia', Policy Papers, No. 71, OECD Publishing, Paris.

⁵³ It is estimated that 29 percent of Tajikistan's trade is intraregional. Calculations based on the Agency of Statistics Trade Data, Socioeconomic Report, December 2020. [<https://www.stat.tj/en/news/publications/the-publication-social-economic-situation-in-tajikistan-for-january-december-2020-was-released>]

⁵⁴ [<https://eiti.org/tajikistan>]

⁵⁵ World Bank Group, May 2018, Tajikistan - Systematic Country Diagnostic.

⁵⁶ World Bank Group, 2013, Tajikistan: Overview of Climate Change Activities, Washington, DC. [<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17552>]

⁵⁷ IDMC, 2020, Global Report on Internal Displacement. [<https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/>]

resources.⁵⁸ Moreover, the government has limited resources and capacity to put in place climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

A weak legislative and institutional capacity makes it challenging to effectively manage environmental resources⁵⁹ including land, water, flora, and fauna, as well as management and supervision of business activities to protect the environment. While the NDS-2030 contains ambitious targets for environmental protection, funding is limited. Environmental programmes rely heavily on donor funding. To ensure environmental protection and build resilience of communities and vulnerable groups there is a need to further strengthen governance, rule of law and transparency. An efficient use of natural resources, improved infrastructure, institutional capacity, and higher budget allocation are also needed.

Tajikistan has rich biodiversity⁶⁰ but faces increasing losses. The country hosts part of the Central Pamir-Alai region supporting 4,300 species and 1,400 endemic plants, but data on threatened vascular plant species and location of endangered plants are lacking. Existing programs and strategies to support biodiversity conservation and management of protected areas are insufficiently funded, initiatives are not well monitored, and updated data are lacking and not shared across different institutions.⁶¹

Tajikistan has abundant hydropower resources, but it needs to balance energy security, efficiency, and management of renewable energy sources. It ranks eighth worldwide in terms of gross theoretical capability of hydropower resources.⁶² Tajikistan is also rich in minerals but the price volatility that characterizes commodities impedes strategic investments in the mining sector. Water resources are critically important for the country and the region, particularly its use in the agriculture and the energy sectors. Integrated water resources management needs to be fully operationalized along with greater cooperation at the regional level. The hydro-energy of small rivers, solar energy, geothermal waters, wind energy and bioenergy are potential energy sources but require a sustainable approach to energy production.

7. Social exclusion

Tajikistan's Constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities for all the citizens. However, some segments of the population experience social exclusion. The population is young (median age is 23) and is growing faster than in any other country in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Deprivations and vulnerabilities are more concentrated in rural areas, where about 74 percent of people live. Social exclusion is generally associated with gender, age, disability, and ethnic identity. Migrants, including seasonal migrants, returnees, stateless persons, refugees and asylum-seekers are at risk of being left behind.⁶³ Limited disaggregated socio-economic data further compounds appropriate policy responses to address social exclusion.

Poor households are often the most vulnerable. Poverty, deprivations, and vulnerabilities are concentrated in remote and rural areas. Lack of quality physical infrastructure and access to services are key challenges that people in remote areas face. Around one-third of the population in rural areas was experiencing poverty.⁶⁴ Poverty rate among women is higher including cases of extreme poverty which is more common among female-headed households. 34 percent of children live in poor households and

⁵⁸ FAO, 2016, National gender assessment of agricultural and rural livelihoods. Tajikistan. Country gender assessment series. [<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5766e.pdf>]

⁵⁹ [www.eco.tj]

⁶⁰ The territory of Tajikistan is recognized by the NGO Conservation International as a hotspot of biodiversity.

⁶¹ Report of the state of environment in Tajikistan, 2018. [http://stat.wv.tj/publications/October2019/tphifzi_muhiti_zist_-_2019_nav.pdf]

⁶² Out of the potential 527 billion kWh per year, the country's technical exploitable and economic capabilities are estimated to be 264 billion kWh per year, out of which very modest resources have been exploited so far. WEC, 2010, Survey of Energy resources.

⁶³ Tajikistan hosts the largest number of refugees and asylum seekers in Central Asia, primarily from Afghanistan, and over 48,000 stateless persons, the majority of whom are women and girls.

⁶⁴ 30.2 percent in rural areas, 18.4 percent in urban areas. World Bank Group, 2020, Poverty in Tajikistan 2020 infographic. [<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2020/10/15/poverty-in-tajikistan-2020>]

16 percent live in extreme poverty.⁶⁵ Living in rural areas is also one of the key determinants of labour migration. In 2019, nearly 90 percent of Tajik labour migrants were from rural areas.^{66,67}

Health system faces a number of challenges, from funding to lack of quality data and capacities. Population growth and increasing health needs⁶⁸ will require higher public investments. Despite government efforts, health spending is insufficient to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and to adequately respond to COVID-19. Despite improvements, efforts are needed to improve the quality and coverage of sexual and reproductive health services. Birth rates for adolescents are high. Too many women and new-borns die from childbirth complications. Young people have a variety of health concerns: mental health, depression, obesity, violence, stigma and discrimination, suicide, unwanted pregnancies. Medical care and psychological support to children, adolescents and youth can only meet a third of the national demand.⁶⁹ Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are increasing. There are also significant gaps in access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services, especially in rural areas.⁷⁰

HIV infections are increasing. The number of people living with HIV in Tajikistan is 12,876,⁷¹ of which about a third are women. There are gaps in the quality of HIV testing and counselling services, particularly in rural areas. Stigma and gender discrimination contribute to the spread of HIV and hinder access to adequate testing and treatment services.⁷² HIV-related stigma worsens pre-existing social inequities based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Women and girls often have less information about HIV and fewer resources to take preventive measures.

Tajikistan faces a challenging food security situation. About 1 in 3 households are moderately or severely food insecure, and nearly 1 in 10 face severe food insecurity.⁷³ Vulnerability to climate change and reliance on imports threatens food availability in Tajikistan. The outbreak of COVID-19 has seen an increase in food prices which can contribute to a higher income poverty rate as many low-income households spend a major part of their income on food.

Malnutrition is a significant health problem, more prevalent in remote areas. Although the rate of malnutrition has decreased in the last decade, the number of those undernourished has remained stagnant.⁷⁴ Tajikistan has the highest rate of malnutrition among the former Soviet Republics.⁷⁵ Access to nutritious food and feeding practices are the main causes of malnutrition. About 1 in 3 children are exclusively breastfed.⁷⁶ Micronutrient deficiencies affect the lives of many infants with high rates of anaemia and iodine deficiency.⁷⁷ According to a survey, only 9 percent of children between 6-23 months of age are given a minimum acceptable diet and 58 percent of children do not consume any vegetables or fruits.⁷⁸

Despite an increase in budget allocations and services, equal access to education is a concern. This is

⁶⁵ Tajikistan Agency on Statistics, 2018, Child poverty report.

⁶⁶ Asian Development Bank, 2020, Migration in Tajikistan.

⁶⁷ Ministry of Labour, August 2020, Migration and Employment of Population.

⁶⁸ According to UNFPA projections, the population at high health risk, 0-5 aged people and childbearing women aged 15-49, will increase by 19 percent and 58 percent in 2030 and 2050, respectively. UNFPA, 2020, Population Situation Analysis Report for Tajikistan.

⁶⁹ UNICEF Tajikistan, 2018, Rapid Assessment of the system response to adolescents' mental health, including prevention of suicidal behavior, in the Republic of Tajikistan, Key Results; Strategic Research Centre under the President of Tajikistan, UNICEF, 2019, Report on findings of the Adolescent Baseline Study.

⁷⁰ According to the 2017 World Bank report, access to improved water on premises is 87 percent in urban areas, and only 36 percent in rural areas.

⁷¹ State AIDS Centre. [<http://www.nc-aids.tj/statistika.html#sdfootnote3anc>]

⁷² SPIN-Plus, 2015, The People Living with HIV Stigma Index, Analytical report, Dushanbe.

⁷³ Average for 2016-2018. The Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia, 2019.

⁷⁴ According to the 2017 Demographic and Health Survey, stunting among children under 5 years of age fell from 27 percent in 2012 to 17 percent in 2017. With an annual population growth rate of 2.5 percent, however, the current decline rate is insufficient to meet the 2025 target of a 40 percent reduction in the number of stunted children under five years of age.

⁷⁵ Global Hunger Index. [<https://www.globalhungerindex.org/tajikistan.html>]

⁷⁶ UNICEF, Drexel University & Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2016, Formative Research on Infant and Young Child Feeding and Maternal Nutrition in Tajikistan, Dushanbe: Polygraph. [<https://www.unicef.org/tajikistan/resources.html>] (Accessed: 10/10/20).

⁷⁷ Anemia: 28 percent; Iodine deficiency: 55 percent. UNICEF & MoHSPP, 2016.

⁷⁸ UNICEF, 2019, The State of the World's Children.

especially the case in rural areas, for girls, and for children with disabilities, and for refugee children and undocumented children. A third of children with disabilities are in residential care institutions.⁷⁹ Although measures are being taken, girls do not enjoy equal access to education compared to boys, especially in upper secondary education.⁸⁰ The projected increase in primary and secondary school students will further stretch resources to ensure that the quality of education improves. There is limited capacity and preparedness to deliver digital learning⁸¹ and to provide 21st century skills for young people to improve their employability and active participation in the society.⁸²

Women, compared to men, face barriers to political participation, access to economic resources, including land, finance, and assets. In 2020, Tajikistan ranked 137 out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index (0.626), a fall of 14 places compared to the 2018 ranking.⁸³ In 2019, less than 29 percent of working age women were in the labour force, compared to over 50 percent for men.⁸⁴ Since 2000, the gender pay gap has narrowed but, on average, women still only receive about 64 percent of the monthly wage for men. Traditional social norms disempower women and limit their contributions to the economy. Family preference to invest in the education of boys, early marriages, limited/lack of decision-making authority in the family (especially among young women) provide women with limited options to pursue their professional careers.

Gender inequality is pervasive and systemic, and fuels high levels of violence against women and girls. In 2017, 24 percent of women aged between 19 and 49 had experienced physical or sexual violence. In 97 percent of these cases it was the current or former husband who was responsible for such acts. Around 80 percent of married women reported that their husbands exhibited at least one form of marital control.⁸⁵ Tajikistan has not yet criminalized all forms of violence against women in line with 2013 CEDAW recommendations.⁸⁶ Lack of investment, weak capacities combined with a culture of deference, low awareness of legal rights, and gender-based stereotypes are some of the key barriers to achieve gender equality in the country.

A social protection system exists but it is fragmented and underfunded. According to 2018 official data, 19 percent of total public expenditure, approximately 4.5 percent of the GDP, was allocated for social protection.⁸⁷ Just over 7 percent of the population received cash transfers in 2018, indicating limited targeting. Results-based budgeting, improved targeting and delivery of benefits, enhanced performance monitoring, and introduction of a database of beneficiaries would greatly improve the effectiveness of existing schemes. Another major bottleneck is the lack of qualified personnel who can effectively manage the social protection system.⁸⁸

8. Compliance with international human rights, norms and standards

Human rights situation in the country has not improved. Gender inequality, child labour, limited freedoms of association, expression, and peaceful assembly, statelessness and limitations to the right to seek asylum are some of the pressing concerns.⁸⁹ Tajikistan lacks a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and there are restrictions on religious freedoms. Conditions in prisons require urgent attention. In 2016, the *Law on Ombudsperson* was amended to bring the institution closer to the Paris Principles, but full compliance with fundamental standards related to its independence were not

⁷⁹ MoES, 2020, EMIS.

⁸⁰ Republic of Tajikistan, 2020, Draft National Strategy for Education Development, 2021-2030.

⁸¹ Internet coverage is low: 48 percent of urban and 32 percent of rural adolescents have access to internet. Rates are lower for girls. UNICEF and EU, May 2020, Rapid Education Needs Assessment.

⁸² 21st century transversal skills and deep skills. EC, 2019, Skills for Industry Strategy 2030; AES, 2020, What are 21st century skills.

⁸³ World Economic Forum, 2020, Global Gender Gap Report 2020, p. 329. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf]

⁸⁴ ILO Modelled Estimate for 2019. [<https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/population-and-labour-force/>]

⁸⁵ Demographic and Health Survey, 2017, p. 208. [<https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-fr341-dhs-final-reports.cfm>]

⁸⁶ [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Sharedpercent20Documents/TJK/INT_CEDAW_CSS_TJK_32597_E.pdf]

⁸⁷ Own calculations using exchange rate of 11.3 somoni for 1 USD and based on data from the Tajikistan Agency on Statistics, 2018.

⁸⁸ There is only one University that trains social workers at bachelor and master's level, and vocational education is lacking.

⁸⁹ [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR/C/TJK/CO/3&Lang=En]

achieved.⁹⁰

Women face violations of their human rights, and protection of women’s rights is inadequate. Tajikistan accepted all the recommendations related to gender equality and women’s empowerment provided under the 2nd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). However, national gender equality policies are not aligned with the recommendations contained in the UPR.

Tajikistan has ratified only 50 out of 190 ILO labour conventions.⁹¹ Moreover, implementation is difficult to assess as Tajikistan does not regularly report to the ILO Supervisory Bodies. These bodies have raised a number of concerns, notably regarding gender equality, the prevalence of child labour and serious restrictions on the labour inspection system.⁹²

Legal framework for refugees and asylum seekers is closer to international standards, but major gaps remain. Asylum seekers and refugees do not have access to free legal assistance and protection other than provided by legal partners of UNHCR.⁹³ Reform of the system is impeded by the removal of UNHCR observer status on the RSD Commission in 2018. Persons arriving in Tajikistan with the intention of seeking asylum are expected to possess valid passports and enter the country with a Tajik visa. Not meeting these conditions results in exclusion from asylum procedures with subsequent penalization and possible deportation.

Tajikistan has not ratified the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Despite this situation, the country progressed well in harmonizing its legislation with international standards and authorities report about 840 *de jure* stateless persons in Tajikistan. . In January 2018, the Government adopted the “Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons”. However, this law considers a stateless person as one who enters Tajikistan as ‘stateless’ and does not provide a status determination procedure.

Juvenile delinquency is increasing. Over the last 10 years it increased from 589 offences in 2009 to 907 in 2018.⁹⁴ Most crimes are theft. Tajikistan has taken steps to reform the juvenile justice system. In 2015, Government policy and practice shifted from juvenile justice to justice for children, recognising children as alleged offenders, victims and witnesses of crime. New codes helped to bring the system in line with international standards, for example by including conditional sentences and educative measures, and prohibiting solitary confinement. In 2017 a National Program on justice for children was approved. The program is based on internationally recognized principles and standards. Data about the status of the juvenile justice system is available but not fully disaggregated.

Despite various measures to create equal opportunities for people living with disabilities, there are still many unresolved issues. By signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by the President on March 22, 2018 Tajikistan demonstrated its commitment to pay utmost attention to the rights of this vulnerable group of population. According to official statistics there were 149,704 registered people as persons living with disabilities, including 29,517 children.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, these statistics only include registered individuals and there are probably more who are not registered or not aware of such a registry. The situational analysis “State of Rehabilitation in

⁹⁰ Human Rights Committee, 2019, Concluding Observations on the third periodic report of Tajikistan, para 9. [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPRpercent2fCpercent2fJKpercent2fCOpercent2f3&Lang=en]

⁹¹ This includes all eight fundamental human rights conventions of the ILO. In January 2020, the country ratified the Protocol of 2014 to the ILO Forced Labour Convention.

⁹² The Labour Code reform in 2016 presents serious concerns to the compliance with the provision of the ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81). Comments adopted by the CEACR: Tajikistan. C081 - Observation (CEACR) - adopted 2019, published 109th ILC session (2021). [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13203:0::NO::P13203_COUNTRY_ID:103547]

⁹³ Law No. 1182 of 2015 does not provide for free assistance to asylum seekers and refugees.

⁹⁴ Tajikistan Ministry of Interior.

⁹⁵ Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population. Statistics published in 2016 by the Agency on Statistics under the President of Tajikistan: http://oldstat.ww.tj/ru/img/958885d5dec55ce6eba4ebdeac71c911_1470381040.pdf

Tajikistan⁹⁶ estimated that only 12 percent of all registered children with disabilities attended state schools. Children with disability living in remote areas often face barriers. Women and girls with disabilities living in rural areas usually face numerous barriers in accessing legal support. Most of the service providers are located in urban areas and some of the specialized services are provided only in the provinces.

9. Development, humanitarian, and peace linkages

There has been tangible progress to achieve stability and to avoid a relapse into humanitarian crisis. However, owing to Tajikistan's fragilities, this progress can be easily undone. The priority is to strengthen country capacities and reliable response mechanisms to reduce major fragilities and risks. These will help to solidify the work of Government and other partners for sustainable development and resilience and prevent humanitarian crises.

Main risks and fragilities include disasters, socio-economic vulnerability of households, and risks emanating from regional conflicts. Tajikistan is categorized as "above average" in overall risks due to its exposure to climate change and natural hazards, socio-economic vulnerabilities, such as a high dependency on food imports and direct remittances, security threats such as violent extremism, potential risks coming from the southern border with Afghanistan, inequality, and partially inadequate coping capacities. However, the relative risk exposure has slightly diminished over the past decade.

Tajikistan is prone to environmental hazards, including floods, earthquakes, mud flows, landslides, epidemics, droughts, avalanches, insect infestations. Out of all risks and exposures, droughts and floods have affected most of the people. With 63 percent of the population living in highly seismic areas, earthquakes are a constant risk. People without economic means are unable to move and can be "trapped" in environmentally fragile areas. A more systematic approach is needed to analyse, anticipate, reduce disaster risks, and for greater preparedness and response at the community level.

Tajikistan is overly dependent on remittances and on the economic situation in Russia. Since 2005, Tajikistan has ranked as one of the top countries in terms of remittances received as a share of GDP. Any decline in remittances invariably increases poverty and vulnerability of the households. The COVID-19 has further underlined the vulnerability of households who depend on remittances. There was a sharp fall in personal remittances which is likely to have an impact on income poverty.

Food security is a major concern and greatly affected by shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted Tajikistan's dependence on food imports. On average, Tajik households spend 50-60 percent of their income on food.⁹⁷ The combined effects of a lingering COVID-19 pandemic, reduced remittances, higher food prices, and increased poverty could undermine social cohesion.

Since May 2021, the security in Afghanistan has markedly deteriorated. Tajikistan and Afghanistan have deep cultural, ethnic, and linguistic ties and before the takeover by the Taliban, the two countries enjoyed good neighbourly relations. In the past, both countries have tried to build on cultural and social ties to promote cooperation in other spheres such as education and the economy. As the United States and other allied troops completed their withdrawal from the country, the Taliban seized power. In response to rising security threat to the Central Asia region from Afghanistan, including terrorism and organized crime, several large military drills were organized in the Tajik, Kyrgyz and Uzbek border areas, including the Russian military units. Intelligence cooperation and coordination have increased among the Central Asian countries. The Tajik authorities also hosted several meetings and consultations in Dushanbe in various formats, including the Common Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) defence ministers' summit and Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SC) Ministerial Contact Group meeting.

96 WHO, Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the population of Tajikistan. Situational analysis "State of rehabilitation in Tajikistan", 2015, 88 pages. https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/276480/State-Rehabilitation-Tajikistan-Report-en.pdf

97 [<https://reliefweb.int/report/tajikistan/fill-nutrient-gap-tajikistan-summary-report-july-2018>]

Border dispute with Kyrgyzstan in the Fergana Valley can spiral and feed into further hostilities. The ethnically diverse and heavily populated region is both highly fertile and geographically distanced from the capitals. On April 28, 2021, the worst violence in decades broke out at a disputed section of the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The dispute started over the installation of surveillance cameras at water pumping station. Over the next two days, this escalated into a full-scale military conflict between the armed forces of both the countries. More than 50 Tajik and Kyrgyz citizens were killed and over 200 were injured. Houses, schools and shops were destroyed along the border while tens of thousands of people were displaced. In 2017, the two Governments set up a border demarcation and delimitation commission to agree on the disputed segment of the border that the two countries share. The commission has made slow progress and at times have issued contradictory or provocative statements. Both countries have reiterated that they would continue diplomatic efforts to resolve the border dispute.

10. Financial landscape

Achievement of the SDGs and NDS-2020 targets will depend on leveraging diversified sources of financing. Tajikistan is not mobilizing sufficient financing for sustainable development. A financing roadmap aligned with the national priorities and sector strategies is needed. Moreover, a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform can help the country to increase private investments and explore innovative financing for the SDGs. In terms of public spending, education, energy, and social insurance and protection are considered as priorities. Challenges in the area of public spending include transparency, efficiency, and equity. Public financing relies highly on foreign aid and concessional loans. Among others, effective implementation of the Public Finance Management Strategy 2030, introduction of programme budgeting, fiscal decentralization, and control and accountability of public expenditures is critical.

Tajikistan is considered to be at a high risk of “debt distress”.⁹⁸ Although Tajikistan continues to receive concessional grants and budget support, its external debt has continued to increase. The country attracts different forms of financing from multilateral and bilateral donors, such as equity, quasi-equity and concessional credit directed at public corporations and the private sector.⁹⁹ However, full implementation of the NDS-2030 will require a balance between widening the fiscal space while maintaining a sustainable debt level.¹⁰⁰

A weak policy, regulatory, and tax environment limits the role of private sector role in the economy. The private sector accounts for about 60 percent of GDP. However, domestic private sector investment has been declining and it is low compared to similar countries. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) amounted to only 2.6 percent of GDP in 2019.¹⁰¹ Despite efforts to increase the country’s Doing Business ranking, long-term domestic and FDI are negatively affected by an unfavourable business environment.¹⁰² Innovative financing schemes involving the private sector and IFIs can be leveraged to increase the resource base. Public and private partnerships, social impact investments, business challenge funds, and blended finance are some of the schemes that Tajikistan can tap into for additional financing. Furthermore, through an improved regulatory environment and incentives, remittances and diaspora savings can be mobilized for long-term investments.

11. Conclusion

The national development vision calls for: *‘a steadily growing, competitive country that provides decent*

⁹⁸ [<http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/209181595281237113/pdf/Tajikistan-Joint-World-Bank-IMF-Debt-Sustainability-Analysis.pdf>]

⁹⁹ Claussen, J., Sultanov, F., 2018, Financial Analysis to support the SDGs implementation in Tajikistan, p. 15. [https://untj.org/?page_id=9821]

¹⁰⁰ World Bank Group, May 2018, Tajikistan - Systematic Country Diagnostic.

¹⁰¹ World Bank data, 2019.

¹⁰² The Doing Business Index ranked the country 106 out of a total of 190 countries (2020), gaining twenty positions from 2018. World Bank Group, 2020, Doing Business Index, Economy Profile Tajikistan.

[<https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/country/t/tajikistan/TJK.pdf>]

living standards and equal opportunities for each person to realize his or her potential based on equality, justice and respect for human dignity.¹⁰³ Over the last two decades, Tajikistan has made tangible progress across several socio-economic indicators.¹⁰⁴ While poverty rates have fallen, Tajikistan remains the poorest country in Central Asia.¹⁰⁵ A child born today is expected to be only half as productive as he or she could be with good health and education.¹⁰⁶ 1 in 4 persons is vulnerable to multi-dimensional poverty.¹⁰⁷ The COVID-19 pandemic may push many families back into poverty.¹⁰⁸ Below are four key pillars that provide a framework for future cooperation between the Government and people of Tajikistan and the United Nations System.

Well-being: Invest in people and protect from harm

The provision of quality, affordable and accessible services in education, health, social protection, water supply and sanitation are central for achieving the NDS-2030 goals and the SDGs. As noted in the Voluntary National Report (VNR, 2017), *'empowering women economically, politically and socially'* is essential for more inclusive development in Tajikistan.¹⁰⁹ More effective social services and spending will better protect vulnerable groups, reduce pressures for seasonal migration, and help to counteract polarization. Moreover, a healthy, productive population can better support the shift to a more diversified, digital, and knowledge-based economy that is competitive, resilient, and sustainable.

Sustainable, inclusive economic growth: Unleash private sector capabilities for job creation, develop skills, and invest in greening the economy

The quality of growth since 2000 has not reduced income disparities, nor has it done enough to create adequate number of decent jobs, significantly raise household incomes, and increased investments in human capital. Economic growth has been driven by domestic consumption and remittances and less by private investment. Informality remains a concern. Future policies should invest in digital infrastructure and skills, high technology adoption, environmental sustainability, and effective climate change adaptation and mitigation. Weaknesses in manufacturing growth must be countered through greater private sector investment, improved economic governance, a transparent regulatory environment, and incentives for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). These should promote greater economic participation of women and other vulnerable groups. Agriculture is still the main source of livelihood. Inclusive and climate-smart agriculture can enhance small-holder productivity, increase farm incomes, and generate decent employment.

Natural resource base: Strive for an integrated response to environmental and climate fragilities

Sustainable economic growth, health, and wellness of the population are at risk from the degradation of water, air, forests, agricultural land, and loss of biodiversity. Tajikistan is disaster-prone and climate change is expected to increase both the magnitude and frequency of climate-related hazards. Sustainable management of the country's natural resources *will depend upon* policy and regulatory change and capacity development for climate change adaptation and mitigation, more efficient use of natural resources, especially water, effective disaster risk management and increased community readiness to respond to disasters and emergencies.

Governance and rule of law: Increase effectiveness and accountability of public institutions, open civic space and promote trust

Awareness about rights and due process amongst the population is low. More coherent and

¹⁰³ Government of Tajikistan, 2016, National development strategy of the republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ Sachs, J. et al., 2020, The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19, Sustainable Development Report 2020.

¹⁰⁵ World Bank, 2020, Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population); Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (% of population). The number of people living in extreme poverty, or on less than \$1.90 per day, is unchanged for the past 15 years.

¹⁰⁶ World Bank, 2019, Early Childhood Education and Care: A Focused Review of Preschool Education in Tajikistan.

¹⁰⁷ Government of Tajikistan, 2017, Voluntary National Review, p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ World Bank, October 2020, Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020: Reversals of Fortune. For Europe and Central Asia, COVID-19 is projected to increase the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty (<\$1.90 per day, PPP) from 4.8% to between 5.3 and 5.5%.

¹⁰⁹ Government of Tajikistan, 2017, Voluntary National Review, p. 24.

transparent governance institutions are needed that are accountable and free from corruption. Embedding equality and non-discrimination in the legislative framework and ensuring freedoms of association and participation are central to enhance the fairness and legitimacy of laws and to build trust and social cohesion. Major bottlenecks include gender-based discrimination and exclusion exist at many levels. Lastly, reliable, timely, and disaggregated statistics are essential not only to strengthen the governance but also for effective policymaking and programmes.