

Remarks

Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry

MCC Threshold Program Achievements Conference

September 15, 2009, 10:00 A.M – 12:00 P.M.

GREETINGS: Good Morning. Acting President Ghimpu, Acting Prime Minister Pirlog, Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

BACKGROUND: In December, 2006, Moldova and the United States launched the Threshold Country Program. This program set forth the framework for an ambitious, multi-pronged initiative to combat corruption and increase transparency in Moldova's public sector. Although the Threshold Country Program officially closes at the end of this month, its impact - and the continuing fight against corruption - continues into the future.

This has truly been a partnership of many. On the U.S. side the Threshold Country Program was funded by the United States Millennium Challenge Corporation, administered by the United States Agency for International Development, and implemented by our three U.S. partners – MIP3, the Department of Justice, and the Academy for Educational Development. Most important of all is that the program has been implemented step by step in collaboration with an extremely broad range of Moldovan entities and individuals from both the public and non-governmental sectors – only some of whom are able to be here today.

Although each and every one of you has played a key role in Moldova's Threshold Country Program, this is without a doubt the first

occasion when you have all been in the same room together. I hope that you will take the opportunity to celebrate your accomplishments, and get to know others with whom you can continue to work on deepening and expanding these achievements in the coming years.

SPECIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS: Over the past two and a half years, the Threshold Country Program has cut off many inroads for corruption by introducing policy changes, technological advances, and other reforms that have strengthened good governance and increased transparency. Let me highlight just a few of the achievements in each sector:

In the Judiciary sector:

- A Model Pilot Court program redesigned and renovated three court buildings in Ungheni, Rezina and Comrat that stand as examples for subsequent improvements nationwide;
- An Integrated Case Management System software application was developed and installed in a majority of the Moldovan courts. This software tracks the cases from day one through to the decision, increasing both the transparency of judicial decisions and the efficiency of court administration and operations. In addition, audio recording equipment and more than 1,100 computers were supplied to bring all of the courts fully up-to-date technologically;
- Websites for each Moldovan court are now increasing transparency and improving public access to information; and
- A common Judicial Ethics Code was adopted.

In the Health Sector:

- More than 90 National Clinical Protocols were developed that reflect international standards for the diagnosis and treatment of patients, eliminating individual discretion;
- Primary care facilities were legally separated from hospitals, allowing them to manage their own financial affairs and respond better to local needs, thereby improving the quality of care;
- A common Code of Ethics was developed for medical professionals;
- Mechanisms to monitor quality from the perspective of both the medical professionals and the patients have been introduced. Quality Councils made up of medical professionals now ensure adherence to “best medical practices” in clinics and hospitals. And the first patient satisfaction survey was conducted and made public by MOH.

In the Tax Administration Sector:

- A toll-free customer call center was created to answer taxpayer questions;
- New computer software was created to improve the management of tax auditing and tax collection, thereby reducing the human factor and opportunities for corruption.

In the Ministry of Interior:

- The capacity of the Internal Affairs unit to combat corrupt practices has been enhanced by both training and new equipment;
- As a result, the Internal Affairs unit now has a communications network which will allow investigators working in regions outside of Chisinau to have a secure link to their headquarters for classified data.

In the Customs Service:

- A Single Window system was introduced that enables commercial carriers entering Moldova to deal with only two agencies as opposed to the seven before;
- The legal and technical foundations have been laid for the introduction of the New Computerized Transit System – NCTS -- which will connect Moldova with its trading partners in Western Europe. The necessary software programming is underway, and when fully operational in 2010, this system will create an unalterable electronic record of all cargo that crosses Moldova's border with the European Union.

In the CCECC:

- A Civilian Monitoring Board, the first of its type in Moldova, was established.
- The Center was reorganized and human resources development programs were set in place.
- The Center's outreach to the media and civil society was greatly improved.

Under the Civil Society and Media Component:

- The Anti-Corruption Alliance – ACA -- monitored government performance and advocated for government reforms;
- The Public Private Working Group helped to improve the Law on Access to Public Information, a critical “watchdog” function;
- The quality of investigative journalism was enhanced and in so doing promoted citizens' access to information.

Throughout this long – and still only partial list – you can clearly see the common threads of increasing information and transparency, improving quality and efficiency, and reducing the opportunities for corruption.

PERSONALIZATION: These milestones of achievement translate into real-life and meaningful change for citizens:

- In Ungheni, **Victoria Frunze** has served as the court administrator in the district court since 2003. Back then, she says, she was not able to even imagine working in the conditions she enjoys today. Today, Frunze says citizens now see the building as representative of an institution that is worthy of increased credibility and trustworthiness.
- Thanks to the legal separation of primary care facilities and hospitals, **Dr. Ludmila Capcelea** can now make budget decisions, as director of the Family Doctor Center in Cimislia, that best serve the needs of the clinic's patients. As a result, she has been able to double the number of doctor visits to surrounding villages, thus delivering more frequent health care to rural residents.

These are just two of many success stories that could be repeated across this country.

CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE: We rightfully gather today to celebrate these many achievements, but we also are here – during this time of political change – to commit ourselves to continuing to build upon the groundwork that has been laid by the Threshold Country Program. We know from our experience in the United States that reducing corruption and increasing transparency takes time and will require constant vigilance and hard work, and that the work is never finished. I am confident that the Threshold Country Program has brought greater consciousness in Moldova

of how corruption can, and must, be tamed. Yours is a long-term commitment to address these issues and we, your U.S. counterparts, are here to continue to serve in partnership with you in that quest.